

Unidentified Men Attack Crews with Georgian Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi

State reply

On 16 and 17 May 2021, group violence occurred in Dmanisi, which involved illegal interference with a journalist's professional activities.

Consequentially, in the Kvemo Kartli Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, an investigation was launched under the articles 126 (1¹) (c) (violence against two or more persons) of the Criminal Code of Georgia on the fact of the confrontation that took place, in Dmanisi, on the May 16-17, 2021.

Later, the investigation was expanded to the facts of organisation of group activity disrupting public order or active involvement in it and unlawful interference with a journalist's professional activities (CCG Article 225 §1 and §2 and Article 154 §1).

On May 18, 2021, the Kvemo Kartli Police Department received a statement from Ms. Tinatin Berdzenishvili, Director of the Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi, regarding the illegal actions committed against the representatives of the Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi at the entrance of Dmanisi Municipality, which was included in the above-mentioned case.

Within the scope of the investigation, the crime scene, adjacent territory, cars and video recordings were inspected, relevant forensic examinations were ordered and other information having significance for investigation was requested.

For the proper investigation of the facts mentioned in the statement of the Director of the Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi, a photo-reporter - Mirian Meladze and Shota Chokheli - an operator of the Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi, were interviewed in connection with the facts of possible violence against them and unlawful interference with the journalist's professional activities. In addition, both of them were assigned a forensic medical examination, which was refused by interviewees stating that they were not bodily injured during the incident and thus did not require the medical examinations. According to their statements, they were not able to name or identify specific individuals who committed violence against them. Mirian Meladze recounted that on 17 May 2020, unknown to him person unlawfully interfered with his professional activity – physically abused him, after which he could not capture important footage.

On 8 June 2021, photo-reporter Mirian Meladze was recognized as a victim under the Article 154 (1) of the Criminal Code of Georgia (Unlawful interference with the journalist's professional activities) and he was personally informed about it.

Currently, an investigation is underway and intensive operative-investigative activities are carried out in order to identify the perpetrators of violence against the employees of the Public Broadcaster Pirveli Arkhi.