



For immediate release – 2 June 2011

PRESS RELEASE

**GEORGIA: ARTICLE 19 Calls on the Georgian President to
Condemn the Attack on Journalists**

Georgia, 02.06.11: Today, ARTICLE 19 sent a letter to Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, expressing grave concerns about the physical assaults against journalists carried out by the Police Special Forces on 26 May 2011. In the letter, ARTICLE 19 called on the President to condemn the attack and ensure that the competent authorities carry out an effective, independent, prompt and transparent investigation into the police actions.

“The 26 May attack on journalists by the Police Special Forces is an attack on freedom of expression” says Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *“We call on the Georgian President to condemn the use of force against journalists and ensure that no one can abuse journalists’ rights with impunity,”* Dr Agnès Callamard continues.

On 26 May 2011, several journalists were injured during an action by the Police Special Forces against demonstrators in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. The police action started a few minutes after the permit for the demonstrators’ rally expired. Tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons were used to disperse the protesters from Rustaveli Avenue in an effort to make way for the military parade scheduled in the morning. According to official information, four people died during the police operation while 37 were injured. Journalists who were performing their professional duties at the venue were also attacked by the police. It has been reported that Tamaz Kupreishvili from *Netgazeti* newspaper, Darejan Paatashvili from *Interpressnews*, Nato Gogelia from *Guria News*, Zaira Mikatadze from *Resonance* newspaper, David Mchedlidze from *Media.ge*, Diana Khoperia from radio *Obiektivi*, and Beka Sivsivadze and Giorgi Mamatsashvili from the *Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper were injured. The police seized the cameras of Avtandil Surmava from *Palitra* TV and of Tamaz Kupreishvili and Nestan Tsetskhladze, both from *Netgazeti*.

In its letter, ARTICLE 19 also reminds the Georgian President about the duty to uphold the international obligations related to safety of journalists; that include both a duty to prevent attacks against journalists and a positive obligation to investigate them when they do occur. ARTICLE 19 urges the President to condemn the 26 May attack and to use his powers to ensure that the competent authorities carry out an effective, independent, prompt and transparent investigation into the police actions.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For media interviews, please contact Mona Samari, Senior Press Officer, ARTICLE 19, mona@article19.org or call + 44 (0) 7515 828 939.
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- For a copy of the letter to President Saakashvili in English, please click on the following link:
<http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/letter-to-the-georgian-president-en-.pdf>
- For a copy of the letter to President Saakashvili in Georgian, please click on the following link:
<http://www.article19.org/pdfs/letters/letter-to-the-georgian-president-ge-.pdf>
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.