

The Messenger

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TV Pirveli cameraman dies following July 5 violent events



Lekso Lashkarava was found dead in his home

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Lekso Lashkarava, a cameraman of TV Pirveli, who was mercilessly beaten by hate groups during the raid on the office of Shame Movement on July 5 died yesterday.

On July 8, the Ministry of Internal Affairs detained two people, Tornike Davlasheridze and Akaki Nakashidze, for assaulting Lekso Lashkarava and Miranda Baghaturia. They have been sentenced to imprisonment as a measure of restraint.

According to the prosecution, they beat and kicked media representatives occasionally using blunt objects. Lekso required urgent surgery after receiving multiple injuries in his head including broken face bones.

Journalist Miranda Baghaturia, recall-

ing the fact of violence, told FormulaTV that up to 20 people had abused them. When violent groups were trying to raid Shame's office and were harassing the media, the severe lack of law enforcement was evident.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, Carl Hartzell issued a special statement regarding the death of a TV Pirveli journalist. The Ambassador offered his condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the cameraman.

"While we are still awaiting the outcome of the investigation into the causes of his death, let me reiterate that the EU strongly condemns the violence and strongly and unwaveringly supports freedom of the media and assembly," noted the EU Ambassador.

The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili also offered her condolences,

saying that she "didn't know what to say to Lekso's mother". She also added that everyone who had to do anything with his death must be punished.

Yesterday, 20 NGOs have issued a joint statement calling on the resignation of Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili, and the Minister of Internal Affairs Vakhtang Gomelauri.

The NGOs say that the government of the country is responsible for the violence that took place on July 5. The Ministry of Internal Affairs held a special briefing yesterday, where among the probable causes of death of the late cameraman of TV Pirveli, they focused on his 'possible

drug overdose.'

Despite the fact that Mamuka Chelidze, the head of the criminal police, insisted that he did not want to voice any version in advance, he still focused on the investigation's unsupported version of the fact of substance abuse. Yesterday, two rallies were held in Tbilisi to protest the violence against journalists, and the protesters called on the authorities to resign before today noon.

The Messenger offers condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Lekso Lashkarava and stands by the media in protest.



Lashkarava was injured on July 5 violent protests



President paid a visit to the family and offered her condolences

Protest in front of Parliament held in solidarity with the death of TV Pirveli cameraman

By NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

Yesterday, a rally was held in front of the Parliament on Rustaveli Avenue calling on the government as well as the Prime Minister of the country to resign. The protesters said that the government of Georgia is responsible for the death of the TV Pirveli cameraman, Lekso Lashkarava.

Opposition parties, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations and certain media outlets, joined the rally. In honor of Lashkarava, candles were symbolically lit, and flowers were brought to the parliament. Rustaveli Avenue was blocked due to a large number of protesters present in front of the parliament building.

There were numerous people present at the rally, including the journalists of numerous media outlets, including TV Pirveli, Mtavari TV, Imedi TV, Formula, and numerous others.

Inga Grigolia, TV Pirveli anchor, addressed the people gathered on Rustaveli Avenue. She talked about the death of the TV Pirveli cameraman and noted that Irakli Garibashvili should resign, and with him, every member of violence groups should follow.

Another Journalist, Vakho Sanaia said that "Garibashvili is no longer the Prime Minister of Georgia." According to him, the government should resign and should be held accountable for the death of Lekso Lashkarava.



Numerous people attended the rally on Rustaveli avenue



Representatives of almost all legit media outlets were present at the rally, including TV Pirveli, Mtavari TV, Imedi TV, Formula and many others.

The former President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, was also present at the rally on Rustaveli Avenue. He said that yesterday's tragedy was the responsibility of the Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili. He said that people should not leave the protest and should stand there together, until the Prime Minister pays the political price for what happened on July 5.

According to him, he does not believe in the investigation conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The director of the TV Pirveli, Vato Tsereteli said that Bidzina Ivanishvili has a very short time to get rid of Garibashvili as the Prime Minister of the country. He also added that the whole government should resign.

Protests were held in other parts of Georgia as well. Journalists and media representatives, as well as civilians, gathered in numerous cities of Georgia, including Batumi, Kutaisi, Gori, Rustavi, and many others.

A rally was held in front of the Georgian Embassy in Belgium. Activists left banners at the embassy, reading 'Violence against the media is unacceptable', 'Journalists are being beaten and killed in Georgia', 'No to abusers', 'Georgia is in danger, no to Russian propaganda', 'Human rights are being violated,' etc.

On July 5, out of the 55 injured, 53 were media representatives.

News in Brief

PREPARED BY
THE MESSENGER STAFF

Lietuva Foreign Ministry: Government must take immediate action against criminals

"Violence against journalists in Georgia is shocking and unacceptable. The government must take immediate action against the perpetrators and allow an independent investigation into the tragic death of Alexander Lashkarava. Any other courses are unacceptable for Georgia's

democratic achievements," states the official Twitter post of the Foreign Ministry of Lietuva.

Media holds a joint mass protest, demands government resigns by noon today

Media representatives held a mass rally in front of the parliament and government administration buildings. Journalists and cameramen laid down their cameras and microphones in solidarity and protest for the series of the government's organized crime.

Yesterday, on July 11, the media issued a joint statement to the embassies to respond immediately to the persecution of journalists on July 5 and the inaction of the authorities.

On July 5, while journalists were already being abused, Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili, blamed the mem-

bers of the March of Dignity, for the possible aggravation of the situation and called on them not to march on Rustaveli Avenue. Gharibashvili said that the planned 'March of Honor' was 'inappropriate' and 'dangerous'. According to him, the opposition is behind the pride march.

MIA blames drug abuse in Lashkarava's case

The Ministry of Internal Affairs has hinted at drug overdose in connection with the death of Lekso Lashkarava.

The head of the criminal police, Mamuka Chelidze, released video footage at the briefing, which allegedly shows Lekso Lashkarava riding a moped with a friend yesterday, July 10.

Chelidze said he refrained from voicing preliminary versions "in the interests of the family and the deceased."

According to him, for now, he

refrains from specifics, however, the version of a drug overdose is also being considered.

Government-orchestrated fake accounts and pro-government, Russian-affiliated, news platforms on social media kept spreading false information about the murdered cameraman's 'Methadone addiction' yesterday.

The Interior Ministry is demanding to be handed Lashkarava's phone for investigation purposes.



Aleksandre Lashkarava, a TV Pirveli cameraman who was mercilessly beaten by a large group of radicals on the July 5 counter-protest, was found dead in his bed on the morning of July 11.

Weather

Monday, July 12

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 34°C
Night Clear
Low: 20°C

Tuesday, July 13

Day Partly Cloudy
High: 32°C
Night T-storm
Low: 20°C

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43, Chovelidze st., Tbilisi,
0108, Georgia
Founded by Prof.

Zaza Gachechiladze
Tamar Gachechiladze
Publisher

Mob.: +995 599 565621; +995 577 760000
E-mail: messenger@messenger.com.ge
http://www.messenger.com.ge/

Nino Metreveli
Commercial Director

Mariam Mchedlidze
Editor-in-Chief

Natalia Kochiashvili
Executive Editor

Khatuna Gogichaishvili
Layout Designer, Photographer

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