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Cases of dismissal of employees allegedly on political grounds

GYLA has also been observing cases of dismissal from jobs on allegedly political grounds and, if necessary, representing the interests of dismissed persons in court. In the reporting period, we have documented three cases of job dismissals on allegedly political grounds. In particular:

On the basis of an order of August 29, 2016, the Head of the **Tskaltubo** Municipal Administration dismissed Badri Oniani, a member of the political association National Forum, from the position of the Head of the Healthcare and Social Protection Service of the Tskaltubo Municipal Administration. In a conversation with GYLA monitors, Mr. Oniani explained that he had been dismissed due to his political affiliation and activity. GYLA is representing the interests of Badri Oniani in court.

On June 16, 2016, Ilia Metreveli, Chairperson of the **Gori** Town Council, dismissed five employees of the Gori Town Council – among them three staff employees and two temporary employees – from their jobs. The orders on dismissal, dated June 16, were handed over to the dismissed persons on June 17.

On the basis of the June 16, 2016 orders of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council (no. 2P-32, 2P-33, and 2P-34), specialists of the Town Council – Sopiko Otinashvili, Medea Makharashvili and Ani Papelishvili – were dismissed “due to inappropriate performance of their duties on multiple occasions”.

In accordance with Order No. 2P-35 of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council of June 16, 2016, the labor contract concluded on August 15, 2014, between the Gori Town Council and Davit Gudadze (an employee of the Commission on Spatial-Territorial Planning and Infrastructural Issues at the Town Council) was terminated “with the aim of saving the expenditures of the Town Council”.

In accordance with Order No. 2P-36 of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council of

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June 16, 2016, the labor contract concluded on April 11, 2016, between the Gori Town Council and Giorgi Aptsiauri (an employee of the Commission on Property Management and Natural Resources at the Town Council) was terminated “with the aim of saving the expenditures of the Town Council”.

On the following day, on June 17 this year, Ilia Metreveli decided to reinstate the dismissed employees to their jobs, explaining that he had changed his mind after political consultations.

On the basis of Orders No. 2P-37, 2P-38, and 2P-39 of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council of June 17 this year, the orders (no. 2P-32, 2P-33, and 2P-34) on dismissal of specialists of the Town Council- Sopiko Otinashvili, Medea Makharashvili and Ani Papelishvili – which had been issued on the previous day were revoked.

On the same day, the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council issued Order No. 2P-40 by which Davit Gudadze was appointed as a member of the Commission on Spatial-Territorial Planning and Infrastructural Issues at the Town Council, and his rights and obligations were defined by a relevant labor contract.

Also on the same day, the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council issued Order No. 2P-41 by which Giorgi Aptsiauri was appointed as a member of the Town Council’s Commission on Property Management and Natural Resources, and his rights and obligations were defined by a relevant labor contract.

Developments that took place in the Gori Town Council before the aforementioned events

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On March 4 this year, after impeachment of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council, Papuna Koberidze, on February 5, 2016, Ilia Metreveli, Chairman of the Georgian Dream faction, was elected the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council. A week after his election, on March 11, he demanded that his advisor and assistant, Natia Omadze and Giorgi Aptsiauri, who had been appointed through a job competition, write statements on resignation. This demand was motivated by his desire to appoint his fellow party members, Irakli Okruashvili and Kakhaber Ergemlidze, in these positions. Natia Omadze refused to resign and expressed her readiness to apply to a court to protect her rights in the case of dismissal. Ilia Metreveli said the orders on dismissal of Natia Omadze and Giorgi Aptsiauri had already been prepared, but on the following day he stated that he no longer intended to dismiss them.

The Chairperson of the Town Council still appointed three members of Georgian Party in various temporary positions at the Town Council – Kakhaber Ergemlidze was appointed as assistant to the Chairperson, Irakli Okruashvili as advisor to the Chairperson, and Ramaz Sharikadze as provider of technical support at the Town Council's meetings.

Due to exceeding the limit of the number of employees, the Gori Town Hall refused to pay salaries to the newly appointed individuals and, as the Chairperson of the Town Council left the orders on their appointment in force, the City Hall filed a complaint in the Gori District Court, demanding revocation of the orders. The case is still pending final decision.

The decisions of the Chairperson of the Gori Town Council were presumably taken on political grounds. GYLA is representing the interests of the dismissed persons in court.

Tkibuli

The director of Makvala Kasrashvili School of Culture in the Tkibuli Municipality, Maia Kuznetsova, was dismissed from her job on June 21, 2016. The dismissal was based on an audit report. She learned of her dismissal during a phone conversation with the Deputy Head of the Municipal Administration. Ms. Kuznetsova believes that she was dismissed on political grounds and links it to earlier developments, in particular:

In January 2016, a team of auditors started a planned audit of the School of Culture, which lasted for three months. During this period, the Georgian Dream – Democratic

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Georgia party elected its chairperson in the conference hall of the school, for which a rent contract was concluded. Some time later, Paata Burchuladze's Development Fund of Georgia held a meeting with the population of Tkibuli in the same hall. A rent contract was also concluded for this meeting, which, according to Maia Kuznetsova, had been agreed with the Head of the Municipal Administration.

Shortly after the meeting, Maia Kuznetsova was dismissed from her job on the basis of an audit report. The dismissal was presumably caused by the conclusion of the contract with the Development Fund of Georgia. Doubts about political grounds of her dismissal are also reinforced by the fact that the Head of the Municipal Administration denied that the conclusion of the contract with Paata Burchuladze's Development Fund of Georgia had been agreed with him.