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South Ossetia civil society activist beaten

Amnesty International is calling on the de facto authorities in South Ossetia to conduct a full, prompt and impartial investigation into an attack on a prominent journalist and civil society activist.

Timur Tskhovrebov told Amnesty International that on 24 July, he was attacked in the centre of Tskhinvali by a group of up to 10 people, leaving him with a knife wound to the neck, a broken finger and injuries from punches to his face and body. He is still in hospital recovering from his injuries.

He said one of his attackers threatened him with a gun and that he was also knocked down by a car accidentally as he tried to escape.

The activist said he recognised his three main attackers, all of them members of the South Ossetian parliament, and that he believed he was targeted because of his journalistic work, dissenting political views and civic activism.

“The de facto authorities must carry out a prompt and impartial investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice irrespective of the identity of the attackers. The authorities need to demonstrate that such acts will not be tolerated,” said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director.

In July Timur Tskhovrebov attended the Georgian-Ossetian Civic Forum in the Netherlands and co-signed a document which calls the parties of the Geneva talks on Georgia to ensure that the humanitarian needs of those affected by the 2008 Georgian-Ossetian conflict are addressed and, as a matter of priority, enable free movement of people in the region.

On 22 July, Boris Chochiev, a senior South Ossetian official, condemned the forum as traitorous and harmful to the position of the South Ossetian delegation at the Geneva talks.

The official specifically singled out Timur Tskhovrebov among the forum participants.

South Ossetia, a breakaway territory from Georgia, was at the centre of a five-day war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008. Following the conflict, severe mutual travel restrictions were introduced by Tbilisi and Tskhinvali.

As part of the truce established in September 2008 between Georgia and Russia, delegations of the two countries meet in Geneva to discuss post-crisis management.