



## **NGOS CALL UPON TBILISI MAYOR TO FACE HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AND IMMEDIATELY BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH METRO STAFF**

Today, on June 4, at 6:00 am the work of the Tbilisi Metropolitan was suspended. "Ertoba-2013", the professional union of subway employees, launched a strike yesterday, June 3 at 15:00 p.m. The strike was initiated by the employees of the subway who were not restricted the right to strike in accordance with the court ruling, and metro drivers who were off work at that moment also joined the strike. In parallel with the strike taking place during off hours, subway drivers were on hunger strike, which deteriorated their health status and made it impossible to operate the subway system properly.

As it is known to the public, on May 21, 2018, the Tbilisi City Court, on the basis of the application filed by the LLC Tbilisi Transport Company, restricted indefinitely the right

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of metro drivers who are the members of the "Ertoba-2013", the professional union of subway employees, to participate in a strike during the working hours. According to another court judgment, the right to a strike of members of the professional union "Ertoba-2013" was resumed on June 3 due to the postponement of the strike for 30 days.

The Metropolitan employees fully complied with the requirements of both court rulings and started the strike procedures along with the hunger strike during non-working hours on June 3, which resulted in deterioration of the subway drivers' health status, which medical personnel assessed unsatisfactory for performing their official duties. Consequently, subway employees were not able to carry out their duties, which ultimately led to the suspension of the metro operation.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned circumstances, the statement made by Kakha Kaladze, the Tbilisi Mayor, on the unlawfulness of the strike is not true as the subway employees launched the strike in full compliance with the requirements of the legislation and court judgments. In addition, the city mayor's statement on the amount of reimbursement of metro drivers is untrue either. It is problematic that Tbilisi Mayor in his statement tries to show the sufficiency of salaries of the subway staff by mentioning insufficient compensation of persons of other professions, which, instead of proving the adequacy of the salaries of metro drivers, once again highlights the hard socioeconomic condition of employed people in the country, for which the responsibility lies first of all on the government. Besides that, we still do not have access to the information about the salaries of the LLC Tbilisi Transport Company authorities, which is essential for evaluation of fairness of the payroll policy existing in the metropolitan.

Under the conditions of the court rendering the judgments limiting the right to strike and subway staff accurately adhering to the requirements of the law, the assessment provided by the Mayor accusing subway workers of blackmail, who are exercising their constitutional right to strike is particularly alarming, as it completely disregards the essence of the right to strike and aims at discouraging public to support the subway employees' protest. Moreover, an inflexible attitude expressed by the Tbilisi City Hall towards the participants of the strike is problematic, which prevents transforming the labor dispute into negotiations.

In addition, the Tbilisi City Hall, instead of taking and facing the responsibility over the

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possible transport collapse, is trying to impose the liability for the consequences on the metro employees, which is absolutely unacceptable under the conditions when the Company and the Tbilisi City Hall have not even attempted to take steps for holding negotiations with subway employees and avoid the consequences or renew negotiations after the strike.

We believe that it is extremely important the Tbilisi Municipality to fully understand its role and responsibility towards the ongoing events and take effective steps to start negotiations based on the principles of human rights protection and civil dialogue.

We call upon the Tbilisi City Hall and LLC Tbilisi Transport Company to:

- Immediately launch negotiations with Metro strikers in order to discuss the demands of the metropolitan staff on the one hand, and timely eliminate any consequences and possible threats facing the population due to the transport collapse, on the other hand;
- Ensure full and consistent protection of the right to strike for the Metro staff, which must exclude any possibility of imposition of possible disciplinary, social or criminal liability against subway employees.

**Georgian Young Lawyers' Association - GYLA**

**Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center - EMC**

**Open Society Georgia Foundation - OSGF**

**Solidarity Network - Workers' Center**

**Young socialists**