



Statement of Non-Governmental Organizations on the 20 June Events

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to express our grave concern over the events that took place on June 20. To our greatest regret, the public has once again witnessed the disproportionate use of force by the police against a large-scale civil protest, which resulted in the arrest of tens of individuals and instances of severe injuries.

A legitimate civilian protest was launched from the early morning of June 20, following the symbolic act of Russian MP Sergey Gavrilov delivering a speech from the chair of the Parliamentary speaker. The scale of protests over having a representative of an occupying country sitting in the legislative body grew over the course of the day and culminated in a large-scale demonstration at the footsteps of the Parliament.

Unfortunately, the Government did not act reasonably and instead failed to deliver to provide an adequate reaction to the developing political turmoil. This inaction on behalf of the Government intensified the demonstrations at the Parliament.

Over the course of the demonstration, the situation was further escalated due to a

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number of political leaders calling on the protestors to seize and occupy the Parliament and strategic objects. With the attempts of a group of demonstrators to forcefully gain entry into the Parliament building, the law enforcement received the right to the use of reasonable force against the demonstrators. Nevertheless, it should be clearly noted that the actions used by the police went beyond the boundaries of law.

In spite of clear requirements envisaged by Georgian law, the respective bodies didn't provide the protestors with a clear message that the use of force would be applied if the demonstrators did not voluntarily disperse. Moreover, the use of special means, including its intensity, form and purpose were very problematic. Videos from the event show that rubber bullets were aimed from a short distance at the face and head area of the protestors, which leaves the impression that the purpose was to inflict injuries instead of dispersing the protest.

Media representatives are amongst those injured during the event. One of them states that his journalistic activity was the reason for him being a target for the use of force and his subsequent detainment. It is vital for any instances of police interference in journalistic work be immediately subject to timely and thorough investigation.

The police arrested tens of people on June 20. In some cases, there may be clear instances of arbitrary and groundless arrests of the protestors. It is alarming that there is information about the physical violence against protestors before and after they were arrested. The court has already commenced the hearings of the cases of the arrested protestors. It is important for the arrested individuals to be given the right to communicate with their lawyers and to defend their case. The court should ensure that the cases are held through the strict application of the principle of individuality and that due attention is made in regards to the possible injuries sustained by the arrested individuals.

In spite of the heavy turmoil, the Government still remains silent, while a citizen group is announcing the launch of a new demonstration at the Parliament in the evening. In these conditions, it is vital for the Government, as well as political and civil groups, to understand the importance of a peaceful continuation of processes, deterring any further escalation and avoiding any risks to the democratic development of the country.

We call upon the Government to take political responsibility for the events that transpired yesterday evening:

- In light of the reasons that sparked the political crisis, the Chairperson of the Parliament should resign from his position;
- Due to the disproportionate use of force by the law enforcement against the protestors and the subsequent severe consequences, the Minister of Internal Affairs should resign from his position;
- Within the nearest hours the Government should take credible steps to deescalate the situation and start a real dialogue with political and civil groups. Given the political turmoil in the country, the Government should consider holding the next parliamentary elections through the proportional system.
- We call upon the police to protect the right to peaceful demonstration at today's planned event and not allow for the use of disproportionate force;
- We call upon the Prosecutor's Office to conduct a thorough and objective investigation into the instances of the police's use of disproportionate force, arbitrary arrests, physical violence against the arrested protestors, etc;

Moreover, **we address the political opposition to understand its role and responsibility in the development of the events, to refrain from making calls to violence and to deter any possible escalation of the situation.**

Signatory Organizations:

- *Open Society Georgia Foundation*
- *Transparency International Georgia*
- *Georgian Democracy Initiative*
- *Georgian Young Lawyers' Association*
- *International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy*
- *Human Rights and Monitoring Center – EMC*
- *Article 42 of the Constitution*
- *International Justice*

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- *Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG)*
- *Institute for Democracy and Safe Development (IDSD)*
- *Society and Banks*
- *Tolerance and Diversity Institute*
- *The Media Development Foundation*
- *Civil Development Agency*
- *Georgia's Reforms Associates*
- *16.Rehabilitation Initiative for Vulnerable Groups*
- *Georgian Institute of Politics*
- *Green Alternative*
- *Atlantic Council of Georgia*
- *Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies*
- *Women for Regional Development*
- *World Experience for Georgia*
- *Friendship Bridge "Kartlosi"*
- *UN Association of Georgia*
- *Nabiji Kharagauli*
- *Public Monitoring and Research Center*
- *Lda Georgia*
- *Education Development and Employment Center*
- *Ecological And Environmental Protection Association DEA*
- *Community Based Organization "Hereti"*
- *Partnership for Human Rights*
- *Civic Integration Foundation*
- *Demosi*
- *Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)*
- *For Better Future*
- *Democratic Institute*
- *Kutaisi Information Center*
- *Saunje*
- *Center "Empathy"*