

Image not found or type unknown

Nongovernmental Organizations Address Senators With a Letter, Calling for Greater US Involvement in Resolution of Crisis in Georgia

Nongovernmental organizations have addressed US senators with a letter concerning the crisis in Georgia. According to the letter, prolongation of the crisis in Georgia only benefits the Kremlin at a time when the country is facing serious geopolitical threats, while resolving the crisis and ensuring the country's democratic development are important factors for Georgia's quick accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Georgia is in a state of deep political crisis today. After the Parliamentary elections last fall, the opposition called for snap elections and decided to boycott the parliament, resulting in virtually a single-party legislature under control of the Georgian Dream. In February, Georgian Dream-led authorities decided to arrest the leader of the biggest opposition party, United National Movement, turning a political impasse into a full-blown crisis. On top of many failed reforms in the areas of Judiciary, Anti-corruption policy, and Elections, the unwillingness of the ruling political elite to share power and responsibility with the opposition, has led to single-party dominance over all branches of government. We believe that, hovering over everything is ruling party founder Bidzina Ivanishvili's influence over key state institutions. Mr. Ivanishvili does not have any official position, yet he is believed to be making all key decisions on the main issues and priorities of Georgia's foreign and domestic policies, including reforms or the Euro-Atlantic Integration, as well as personnel matters, including selection of Prime Minister. On the other hand, former President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili also is influencing decisions of leadership of the UNM, which further complicates the process," the letter says.

To end this crisis, Georgian Dream should agree to share power, abandon its

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



undemocratic practices, including by politically motivated investigations, and undertake commitments to implement specific urgent reforms, A says the letter addressed to Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Chairwoman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee [] Subcommittee On Europe And Regional Security Cooperation, and Senator Ron Johnson.

Stating their gratitude for the 23 March hearing on Georgia in the Senate and, generally, for the years-long support for democracy-building in Georgia, members of Georgian civil society are asking for the US Senators [] assistance in the achievement of the following goals:

1. Increase US engagement in supporting EU efforts to mediate a solution to the current crisis. Make clear that the status quo [] a single-party parliament [] is incompatible with membership in the Euro-Atlantic community.
2. Deescalate the crisis by releasing the defendants and terminating cases (Nika Melia, Giorgi Rurua), which, on subsequent stages, shall be adjudicated by a reformed judiciary.
3. Push for judicial and electoral reform. Opposition consent should be required when appointing supreme court judges or non-judge members of the High Council of Justice, members of the Central Election Commission, including the Chairperson. Both, the Parliamentary and the Municipal Elections must be held through a Proportional System with a near-natural threshold. This systemic change should start during the 2021 Spring sessions.
4. Encourage power-sharing within various institutions, including the Parliament. Opposition consent should be required when confirming the General Auditor and the Prosecutor General.
5. Once the ruling party makes these commitments to the Georgian people and the international partners, the opposition must take up the parliamentary seats won in the 2020 elections, engage in institutionalized politics and participate in both the development and the implementation of the reforms described above.

The organizations which have signed the letter (Transparency International Georgia, the Georgian Young Lawyers [] Association, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, the Open Society Georgia Foundation, and Liberal Academy Tbilisi)

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია
GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



have noted that now is the time in the process of the country development when external involvement is necessary in order to end this crisis.