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The Coalition Calls on the Parliament to Start Working on Justice Reform

The Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary calls on the Parliament of Georgia to start working on justice system reform promptly and to ensure that the High Council of Justice is made up of qualified and trustworthy members.

As it is known to the public, one of the key issues of the [agreement](#) signed between the government and the opposition on April 19, is the ambitious reform of the judiciary. The conscientious implementation of the terms of this agreement is important for the stability of political processes in the country and for reducing severe effects of the current multi-layered crisis. At the same time, the work on each clause of the agreement must be carried out with high public involvement and mutual respect of political actors to follow the spirit of the April 19 agreement.

As for the justice system, despite four waves of reform, public trust towards the judiciary is still critically low; the High Council of Justice also fails to ensure the system's independence and efficiency. The lack of trust in the judiciary and the signs of selective and politicized justice also contribute to the aggravation of the political crisis and the escalation of the situation.

One of the most important of the many challenges of the court system is the reform of the High Council of Justice -- the development of fair decision-making rules and staffing of the Council to minimize the instrumentalization of this institution for internal and external influences. The importance of this issue is magnified by the fact that nine of the fifteen members of the Council (four judges and five non-judges) will have to be elected during the 2021 Spring Session. Accordingly, it is critically essential that judge and non-judge members of the Council are selected as a result of a fair process, and selected candidates have high public and professional trust and legitimacy.

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Given all of the above, the Coalition calls on the Parliament of Georgia:

- To timely start working on fundamental justice sector reform and, for this purpose, create a working format. Interested parties, such as civil society organizations, professional and academic groups, the Public Defender, and international partners should be able to participate;
- To assess the impact of the [] of judicial reforms with an aim to carry out the reform in the right direction and avoid mistakes committed in the past;
- To promptly improve procedures for the selection and appointment of High Council of Justice members in such a way that non-judicial members of the Council are appointed through a consensus-based process, and to minimize internal and external systemic influences on the selection of judge members of the Council.