

Statement of organizations to the Human Rights Protection Secretariat of the Georgian Government Administration

The signatory organizations remind you of our previous letter (28.02.2023), in which we expressed our desire to prepare written opinions and present them in a coordinated format regarding the Human Rights Action Plan. However, in the same letter, we pointed out that due to the initiation of draft laws on the transparency of foreign influence, taking into account the already existing Russian experience of increasing control, harassment and repression, we found it impossible for these two processes to coexist in parallel.

Despite the draft laws, we would like to confirm once again that the use of derogatory and hateful language against human rights defenders and any attempt to shrink the space for civil society (in the form of the mentioned bills or other legislative or practical manifestations) undermines the constitutional principles and endangers the idea of establishing the democratic, social state of rule of law.

On April 11, 2023, more than 140 non-governmental organizations issued a joint appeal, in which we declare that the main goal of the activities of civil society organizations will be to make maximum efforts to obtain candidate status. In addition, we consider that any legislative initiative or action that would oppose the fundamental values of the European Union would be sabotage of the Candidate status and an action contrary to Article 78 of the Constitution.

Based on all of the above, we believe that in the process of developing the human rights action plan, it is critically important to represent the voice of the people whose interests we have been protecting for years in various legal ways or by providing services. Especially considering that some rights groups are not mentioned in the strategy at all. However, we would like to confirm that for the continuous involvement of civil society, it is important that there is a real, tangible possibility that the decision-makers will consider the proposals. Otherwise, the involvement of civil society will have a fictitious character and it cannot provide the legitimate goals that the existence of inclusive processes in a democratic society serves. In this regard, please notify us in writing of the following:

1. In what timeframe is it planned to develop the human rights action plan?
2. Has the Secretariat developed a formal rule that defines the organizing and timeline for the development of the action plan? When are the stakeholder meetings scheduled?
3. Which stakeholders do you plan to develop the action plan with? Is the involvement of civil society considered in the process of developing the action plan? If the answer to this question is positive, what is the format of involvement of civil society organizations? The mentioned information is important for effectively planning our activities in relation to the action plan, including from the point of view of presenting opinions.

Signatory organizations:

1. Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)
2. A/O "Let's make friends";
3. Movement "Inclusive Society - Georgia"
4. Rights Georgia
5. SAFARI
6. Women for a Common Future (WECF) - Georgia
7. Equality movement

8. Caucasus Open Society (COS)
9. Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)
10. Rule of Law Center (RLC)
11. Association "Dea"
12. "Tbilisi Pride"
13. Queer Association - Themida
14. Human Rights Center (HRC)
15. "Families against discrimination" - FAD
16. Women's Initiatives Support Group (WISG)