



Human Rights Organization's response to the use of police forces in Pankisi Gorge

The signatory organizations express the deep concern regarding the critical situation created in Pankisi Gorge related to the cascade construction of HPPs and call the government of Georgia to immediately cease the demonstration of police power against the local population and to immediately withdraw the forces from the Gorge.

In the Morning of 21st of April, Ministry of Interior Affairs mobilized a massive number of police forces, including Special Operation Forces, in order to secure the renewal of “Khadori 3” HPP construction.

It is more than 1 year that local population actively protests planned constructions of [REDACTED] 3 A and [REDACTED] 2 A and court proceedings on these cases are still ongoing. The critical analysis of construction authorization documents clearly reveals

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that they are unreasonable and environment impact assessment is not properly conducted, including the impact on drinking water. The locals point out that 4 HPPs in the small territory of the Gorge will have a devastating impact on its unique nature as well as on the social environment and sustainable economic development.

Totally surprisingly, on 21st of April 2019, the construction of [REDACTED] 3 A was renewed and special police forces were used to secure the protection of this process from the expected public resistance. Police used rubber bullets, batons and tear gas against the gathered population who protested the continuation of construction works. [1] The information regarding the injury of peaceful members of the demonstration is also spreading.

It needs to be highlighted that the restoration of construction process happened with the assistance of Special Forces while the government representatives have not exhausted the opportunities of negotiation with the local population. At the visits of a high-level government representatives in the Gorge, including during the visits of Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, State Ministry of Reconciliation and Civic Integration, it was clearly mentioned that the government was planning to discuss the issue with the involvement of experts. Obviously, the government did not fulfill its public undertaking.

According to the declaration of Ministry of Interior Affairs, [2] the mobilization of police forces in relation to the HPP construction was conducted due to the application of Ministry of Economy in order to guarantee security and law on the ground.

It is also noteworthy that Ministry of Economy, who was appointed on this position a couple of days ago, declared energetic sector as a priority of her future work. [3] Natia Turnava was a deputy executive director of [REDACTED] Fund A in 2013-2018, she was also a member of the governing board in a Georgian private entrepreneurship group (GIG) and an Executive director of Georgian International Energetic Corporation. Her biography demonstrates that she is a lobbyist of business and energetic interests and it is evident that within the first days of her appointment, according to her decision HPP construction in Pankisi Gorge was renewed with the application of police forces.

It is also noteworthy, that the police and other repressive power in order to suppress the local population [REDACTED] protest on HPP or other environmental issues was applied by the

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government number of times which makes the problem even more systematic and demonstrates the important influences of business lobbyists on the government authorities.

In light of abovementioned, we demand:

- **Ministry of Interior Affairs** immediately ceases the use of police force in Pankisi Gorge and withdrew its additional forces as well;
- **Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia** Natia Turnava immediately resign, who obviously has a conflict of interest between state and business interests and within the first days of her appointment created a crisis in the Pankisi Gorge.
- **Public Prosecutor** **office** immediately commences an investigation of the events ongoing in Pankisi Gorge in relation to the excess of power;
- **Parliament of Georgia** should express its interest and use its supervisory mechanisms for the protection of the local population's interests and rights;
- **Donor Organizations, EU member states** should get interested in the damaging environmental and social results caused by the energetic projects funded by their financial resources, which was conducted with total ignorance of EU and international financial institutions policies.

Signatory Organizations:

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

Green Alternative

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[1] <https://primetime.ge/news/1555829040-%E1%83%A4%E1%83%98%E1%83%96%E1%83%98%E1%83%99-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%9F%E1%83%94%E1%83%AA%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%96%E1%83%A8%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1>

[2] <https://reginfo.ge/people/item/13943-pankisshi-samartaldargvevis-nebismieri-paqti-iqneba-agkvetili-%E2%80%93-shss?fbclid=IwAR26Gzgb9oCvMxOCu1719IKelfDLBDPOFBy52Lchg8YUtWP396w-YVLWJR8>

[3] <http://netgazeti.ge/news/358135/>