

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



Statement of the Coalition for Media Advocacy

The Coalition for Media Advocacy is addressing to Chief Prosecutor of Georgia Murtaz Zodelava, Minister of Interior Affairs Vano Merabishvili and Secretary of Security Council Giga Bokeria with an official appeal to declassify the photojournalists' case.

The photojournalists, Zurab Kurtsikidze (European Photo Agency representative), Giorgi Abdaladze (a photograph of the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Georgia) and Irakli Gedenidze (a photograph of the press service of the president's administration) were arrested by the Interior Ministry's department of counter intelligence.

The Coalition for Media Advocacy is demanding to be provided with an official written response on whether the case of the arrested photojournalists entirely constitutes information designated as state secret or whether only parts of the case have been classified. Furthermore, the Coalition is demanding to be informed about level and duration of the classification and identify of officials that have authorized classification of the case.

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According to lawyers of the detainees, the case materials have fully been classified as secret, while the lawyers themselves have signed a legally binding document obliging them not to disclose information related to the case.

At the meeting with representatives of the Coalition for Media Advocacy, the Minister of Interior Affairs declared that the case had not been completely classified but only a certain part of it was designated as secret. Furthermore, the Head of the Analytical Department at the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Shota Utiashvili in his official statement that was aired on TV on July 15, 2011, confirmed that the case of the photojournalists had not been entirely classified as secret.

As according to the remarks of MIA officials =, part of the case only has been deemed as secret information, the Coalition is demanding that conditions of the legally binding documents signed by be changed accordingly, so that they have an opportunity to disclose the information and the case materials are open and accessible due to high public interest in the case.

The Coalition hopes that the statement will be immediately responded.

Member organizations of the Coalition are:

1. Association of the Regional Media of Georgia
2. NGO for Civil Society
3. Association of Regional Broadcasters of Georgia
4. Network of Regional Broadcasters
5. The Journalists' Charter of Ethics
6. Media Club
7. Transparency International
8. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
9. Civil Development Institute
10. The Open Society – Georgia Foundation
11. Eurasia Partnership Fund