

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



## NGOs address regarding possible reduction of the number of self-governing units

In parallel with turbulent countrywide public review of the recently elaborated constitutional amendments where besides other issues citizens claim from the authorities the right of self-government for their cities and villages, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure without any consultations with representatives of civil sector, prepared an initiative concerning abolishment of 14 municipalities (including 7 self-governing cities) that actually means restoration of the former regional territorial arrangement common to Soviet times. This initiative was presented to the municipalities as to be “agreed upon”.

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According to Government representatives, it is slated to merge self-governing communities with self-governing cities that actually purports depriving 7 cities and villages part of self-governing community of their self-governing right.

Moreover, reportedly representatives of local governments of these particular municipalities are being induced as to have city councils discuss and unanimously support initiative introduced by the Ministry in a speedy manner.

It's very unfortunate that the Ministry entirely ignored a possibility to involve civil sector representatives and relevant experts in the process of drafting the draft law. This is even more strange given the fact that on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March circa 130 NGOs, community-based and media organizations appealed to Government of Georgia and Parliament expressing readiness to discuss together with the Ministry all the relevant aspects of the given initiative. Unfortunately, this our appeal remained unresponded by the authorities in terms of expressing intention to develop any dialog or consulting.

The proposed by the government initiative was negatively accepted not only by civil sector but also by the majority of population of the municipalities in question. This mood was distinctly underlined once again in the process of public review of the constitutional amendments in the regions when local citizens debated and expressed their perceptions and expectations in this regard.

It should be stressed that at the public reviews of the constitutional amendments, government officials did concealed the truth from the population and did not say that the package of amendments is practically drafted and the issue of merging community municipalities with self-governing cities will be very soon raised on the agenda.

We consider inadmissible to prepare that kind of crucial alterations and implement the latter without ensuring proactive public involvement in the process. Hence, we resort to the Regional Policy and Self-Government Parliamentary Committee, likewise, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia to organize a meeting between representatives of the authorities and civil sector both proponents and opponents of the announced initiative in timely fashion prior to city/municipality councils reach a decision on this issue in order to discuss elaborated by the ministry propositions in regard with abolishing status of self-governing cities and communities.

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1. Regional Development Center
2. Local Democracy Network Center
3. Civitas Georgica
4. Open Society Georgia Foundation
5. International Center for Civic Culture
6. Georgian Media Club
7. Management Systems Development Centre
8. Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia
9. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
10. Transparency International - Georgia
11. Institute for Development of Freedom of Information
12. Human Rights Center
13. The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
14. Democratic Involvement Centers Network
15. Gori Information Center
16. "Saunje" (Zugdidi)
17. Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters
18. Article 42 of the Constitution
19. Europe Foundation
20. Community Development Centre
21. Soviet Past Research Laboratory