



## STATEMENT OF NGOs REGARDING THE PROTEST RALLY

We would like to react to the events that have taken place during the protest rally "Do not kill me" today, on June 11. Once again, we express our solidarity towards Zaza Saralidze, Malkhaz Machalikashvili and their families. We point out that timely progress of the investigation into these cases and identification and punishment of all responsible persons remain the main demand of the society and the obligation of the government.

Hereby, we would like to respond to the events occurring during the rally and the incidents in connection thereof. It is important that the Ministry of Internal Affairs should ensure the right to peaceful manifestation and give the participants the opportunity to express their opinions in a desirable form within the scope of the law. In addition, the Ministry of Internal Affairs must further explain the necessity of using police measures against Nika Melia, a member of parliament. The MP may be detained only with the consent of the Parliament, unless the MP is caught red-handed. The

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explanation provided on the issue stated that the MP was [REDACTED] away from the events by the police, but the video footage disseminated through the media proved that the police restricted his freedom of movement, forced him into a police car and rushed him away from the perimeter of the rally, which is equal to the person [REDACTED] detention.

As for removal of the tents, according to the law, it is permissible to block a road only if holding the rally due to the number of participants is otherwise impossible. However, the law does not envisage any right to artificially block a part of the road with tents or other structures. Considering the above mentioned requirement of the law and the number of participants of the rally in the first half of the day, we believe that removal of the tents from Rustaveli Avenue motorway and their placement on the sidewalk by the police was in line with the law and the right to manifestation.

However, later, dismantling of the tents placed on the sidewalk by the police was arbitrary and an unjustified interference in freedom of assembly and expression. In contrast to the vehicle part of the road, the law does not prohibit protesters to set camps on the sidewalk. In the given case, the tents were placed on the pavement in Rustaveli Avenue, and did not hinder the movement of pedestrians and normal functioning of the Parliament. All things considered, we believe that removal of the tents by the police was unlawful, which posed an additional risk of escalating the situation.

With the view to ensuring the fair and legitimate protest of the victims and their supporters, we call on the organizers of the rally to take into account the requirements of the law and maintain the peaceful and legitimate nature of the rally. Moreover, we urge the government to act in compliance with the principles of the right to assembly and manifestation and if necessary, hold negotiations with the organizers and participants of the rally and refrain from using unreasonable and disproportionate police measures against rally participants.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association - GYLA

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center - EMC

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Transparency International Georgia -TI - Georgia

Open Society Foundation Georgia - OSGF

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy - ISFED