

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



GYLA, TI Georgia urge authorities to handle Maestro satellite dish seizure in transparent manner

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The Georgian Young Lawyer's Association and Transparency International Georgia urge the Tbilisi City Court and the Prosecutor's Office to release relevant evidence and present an adequate legal justification for the seizing of satellite dishes imported by Maestro TV.

Preventing the distribution of satellite dishes – which [Maestro has claimed](#) will be financed [by its owners](#) – may be publicly perceived as a step that could limit citizen's access to media. Any actions taken against media outlets should be proportionate and be carried out with a maximum of transparency. It should also be clearly explained to the public how the distribution of satellite dishes by Maestro qualifies as vote buying for the opposition Georgian Dream coalition.

To our knowledge, Maestro has not started the distribution of antennas yet, and the terms and conditions of this action are not clear yet. On July 3, Maestro's director, Ilya Kikabidze, [had told media.ge](#) that users will receive "the equipment after concluding (a) contract. Our lawyers are working on the contract. Now I cannot tell you exactly what the antennas will cost, or what the conditions will be but we shall establish a symbolic amount, a very minimal fee."

In a [press release, the prosecutor's office](#) said it had obtained authorization from the Tbilisi City Court and seized thousands of satellite antennas that Maestro TV recently imported "under the instructions of Elita Burji Ltd - a company associated to Georgian Dream Coalition".

The prosecutor's press release states that "The investigation has sufficient evidence to believe that the antennas will be distributed in accordance to the scheme of vote-buying previously used by Global Contact Consulting Ltd another company associated with Georgian Dream Coalition. Prosecutor's Office has obtained an authorization from the Tbilisi City Court and sealed the antennas.

The investigation aims at avoiding criminalization of electoral processes and ensuring respect of the rights and freedoms of individuals and political parties."