



GYLA's Statement Regarding the Renewal of Works at the Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani Site

According to the official information aired by media, on December 13, 2014, the company [] Gold A has renewed mining works at the license section #1 of the Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani site. The company has cited the following decrees as the grounds for the renewal of the mining works: the decree #03/226 of the Minister of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia (the Ministry) and the decree #2/271 of the Director General of the National Agency of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage (the Agency), issued on December 12. The immediate execution of the decisions of the Ministry and the Agency by the company has practically put under the question the possibility of appealing the issued decisions.

The decisions made by the Ministry and the Agency are particularly outrageous since there is still no information on whether the prosecution is conducting the investigation on the fact of damaging Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani as the archaeological site (the facts of damage were properly documented on January 8 and March 13, 2014). Unfortunately, despite a number of efforts of GYLA to obtain information on whether the investigation has started or not, such an information was not provided.

Regarding the renewal of the mining works by the [] Gold A on the Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani based on the above decrees of the Ministry and the Director General of the Agency, we would like to note the following:

According to the decree #2/271 of the Director General of the National Agency of the Cultural Heritage Protection of Georgia (issued on December 12, 2014), Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani was stripped of its status of the immovable cultural heritage site. Despite deprivation of the status, according to the legislation of Georgia, Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani

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maintains the status of an archaeological site and represents the cultural heritage. Therefore, all of the state institutions have an obligation of protecting Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani and not destroying it;

We would like to emphasize that based on the ruling of the Tbilisi City Court (May 30, 2014), the March 13/2014 decree of the Ministry of the Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia is suspended until the court decision enters its force. Therefore, renewal of the wide-scale mining works by the [] Gold A at the Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani site without the document of legal force, contradicts the law.

The Ministry and the Agency have made their December 12 decisions neglecting the transparency and the existing legal situation surrounding Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani. Despite the high level of public interest, the stakeholders/interested actors were not given the possibility to engage in the process.

The Ministry and the Agency did not take into consideration that the processes relating to the Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani have long moved to the court and the decisions should have only been made following the court [] final decision. Unfortunately, the decisions of the Ministry and the Agency reflect the level of respect the Ministry and the Agency have towards the court and the entire public.

Despite the statement, publicized by the [] Gold A and regardless of whether such statement is truth or not (the statement relating to the worsening of the financial conditions of the company, avoiding the social chaos by the state and undertaking the responsibility to preserve the work places, not to mention the evaluations on the scientific aspects), the actions undertaken in Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani cannot be justified - especially, starting of the wide-scale works through accelerated procedures.

It is unclear, why does [] Gold A cite the conclusions of the foreign experts and why does it cite the low possibility of new discoveries, while the new (future) discoveries are not the only components defining the value of the site. At the same time, the government has practically neglected the recommendations provided by the Bulgarian and German experts.

At the same time, it should be mentioned that the various research reports raise a number of questions regarding the [] Gold A and the activities of the companies affiliated with it. Among others, the questions exist in relation to the work conditions of the workers employed at the company, the issues relating to the environment

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protection, groundless (and free of charge) prolongation of the license under the suspicious circumstances and the alleged existence of the corruption agreements. In this context, the decisions of the Ministry and the Agency raise even more questions regarding the compliance of the new decision with the law.

We would also like to note that GYLA will continue active engagement in the processes surrounding Sakdrisi-Kachaghiani and will provide the public with the information on the latest developments.