



CSOs to Internal Affairs and State Security Service

We, the signatory organizations of the appeal, would like to respond to the public statements made recently by the members of the Auditorium 115 student movement regarding the possible pressure on their relatives and family members following their active participation in the students' protests.

According to the students' public comments and those made to the media, as the student movement became more active in March and April, there were several attempts by the law enforcement bodies to obtain information about the members of the student movement through either direct communication with the family members of the activists or enquiries among their relatives.

As the representatives of the movement claim, there have been some rough forms of

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communication towards their family members as they were threatened with being forced out of the civil service.

According to the students, the persons involved did not try to hide their identities since they introduced themselves as the representatives of the law enforcement bodies. In some cases, they could be distinguished by their uniforms and official documents.

One common approach, that is characteristic to those occasions, needs to be highlighted. Specifically, the threats or offers targeted the active members of the movement, whose relatives serve in the public sector. In other cases, there have been further attempts at data collection and control measures. On one occasion, according to a student, there was an intentional dissemination of false facts in order to obtain information from the relatives (the police officer claimed their data collection process was necessary since the member of Auditorium 115 was supposedly to be employed in a law enforcement agency).

Those incidents coincided with various stages of the student protests. The first incident took place in March when the student protest was becoming more and more active and the rest of the cases occurred when the movement resumed.

Some students have avoided publicity for the sake of the safety of their family members and relatives. However, the facts that we already know are enough to understand the seriousness of the matter.

Importantly, the movement's resistance was directed towards the state security service and one of their demands was for the so-called [] (active reserve officer) to leave the university. The demand of the movement, the content of the protest and its target (law enforcement system), as well as the incidents cited by the students, raise suspicions about the possible attempts of the law enforcement bodies to restrain the student protest through these actions.

We believe that the information should draw the attention of the heads of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Security Service of Georgia. Moreover, it is necessary to begin an examination of the cases as there might have been instances of abuse of power. It is interesting to determine whether those processes were organized by senior officers.

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A timely and objective response is also important in order to create a fair and safe pre-election environment. Politically and socially active groups should feel secure. For those reasons, it is essential that the government bodies' actions be politically neutral and distances from political parties. The law enforcement and state security services should be separated from the control of the political processes and should not be used as a means of suppressing the public protests.

We therefore urge:

- The heads of Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Security Service of Georgia to respond to the incidents and provide the society with their ideas how they are going to avoid the involvement of the law enforcement agencies in public and political life;
- The general inspectorates of the corresponding offices to start an inquiry into those incidents and publicize their findings;
- The Parliament of Georgia to exercise effective parliamentary control over the activities of those bodies and discuss the creation of the temporary investigative committee about the 'ODR' cases.

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)

Open Society Georgia Foundation

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

The Center for Human Rights

Transparency International – Georgia

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association