



## Another court dispute threatens the editorial independence of Rustavi 2

According to the lawsuit filed with Tbilisi City Court, Nino Nizharadze, the owner of 9% shares of Rustavi 2, demands 26 million GEL from the Director and the owners of the TV Company.

If taken into consideration the events that have developed around Rustavi 2 since 2015, legitimate questions arise regarding the above complaint.

Rustavi 2, one of the influential and critical broadcasters, has been facing the threat of editorial policy change for years. Irrespective of the fact who and to what extent shares the editorial policy of Rustavi 2, the existence of critical and diverse media platforms is vital for maintaining the pluralistic media environment.

**The court dispute will not only hinder the work of the broadcaster, but also threaten media pluralism and free media environment in our country. The possible change of the editorial policy of Rustavi 2 will undoubtedly affect the 2020 pre-election environment and democracy in general.**

It is noteworthy that in recent years, a number of processes have developed concerning other media outlets, such as TV Pirveli, Iberia TV and Adjara Television, which raises doubts about an alleged interference of the government with media independence. These issues will be indeed reflected negatively in all international

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reports that assess the state of media and democracy development in Georgia. For Georgia, the State of transitional democracy, it is of utmost importance to maintain a high standard of freedom of speech and expression, which cannot be achieved without the pluralistic media environment.

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