

On the Special Statement of the CEO of Rustavi 2

On May 6, the CEO of Rustavi 2 - Nika Gvaramia and the employees of the TV channel issued a special statement. According to the CEO, the channel was under the audio and video surveillance. Nika Gvaramia presented the video and audio surveillance footage, recorded in the offices of Gvaramia and Deputy CEO Nino Shubladze, to the media. According to Gvaramia, the video footages were obtained from their informant from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the footages depict the conversations taking place in the offices.

Media Advocacy Coalition believes, that obstructing the work of any media channel, especially, through the secret surveillance and eavesdropping, represents an intervention in the media independence and is absolutely unacceptable in the democratic society.

European Court constantly emphasizes the decisive role of the media independence and the freedom of expression in a state, based on the rule of law. Media is under the special protection, because it provides the society with the information that is of public interest.

It is important for the started investigation to be conducted in compliance with the international and domestic standards, set for the professional activities of journalists. One of those fundamental standards provides the right of a journalist not to reveal the source of information (this standard protects media even if it has the information regarding the presumable crime). A number of international documents and recommendations of the international organizations protect this standard; the standard is strengthened by the case law of the international courts, is protected under the domestic legislation of Georgia and represents the component of the

freedom of expression.

In addition, the right of a journalist not to reveal the source is his/her right and not an obligation. Considering the circumstances, the gravity of the presumable violation and the high public interest towards establishing the truth, we believe that Rustavi 2 officials should cooperate with the investigation and support the process of establishing the truth at their best.

The reaction of the Prime Minister on the developments around Rustavi 2 causes concern. The high level official of the state, as the representative of the government, should not evaluate the activities of any media outlet in a biased manner. The comments of the Prime Minister that Rustavi 2 “is active”, “has new ideas” and that the information on surveillance is not true may be considered as the government interference in the media freedom. In addition, the statement of the Prime Minister may affect the process and the results of the investigation.

The Media Advocacy Coalition calls upon the relevant government bodies to ensure that the started investigation on Rustavi 2 case is conducted in consideration of the vital interest of the media freedom protection and in a timely, objective and impartial manner.

Member organizations of the Coalition:

- **Georgian Regional Broadcasters' Association (GARB)**
- **Georgian Regional Media Association**
- **Regional Broadcasters' Network**
- **Media Club**
- **Journalistic Ethics Charter Council of Georgia**
- **Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI)**
- **Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)**
- **Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)**
- **Civic Development Institute**
- **NGO for Civil Society**
- **Levan Mikeladze Foundation**