



CIVIL PLATFORM “NO TO PHOBIA” RESPONDS TO THE RECENT STATEMENT MADE BY MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI

We would like to react to the statements containing discriminatory and hate speech made by Mikheil Saakashvili, the leader of the National Movement Party and the third President of Georgia, in which he mentioned various ethnic groups and women in the humiliating and insulting context through comparisons.

In one of the statements Mikheil Saakashvili notes: "Georgia is not Russia, right. I deeply believe that Georgia is not Russia and Georgia and Georgians will never be Russified, and even more Chechnified. What the Georgian Dream did in Marneuli was Chechnisation, and God save us from Chechenization and Kadyrovism. Everything has its limits. "

In addition, Mikheil Saakashvili spoke about Shota Shalelashvili, a member of the party "Georgian Dream", in the TV program "Week Accents," and declared: "Give my regards to the swindler Russian Jew brought here by him [Ivanishvili], who as it turned out is a Georgian citizen, because ... of his surname, but he has had no connection with Georgia. I have met a lot of patriots and friends, including in Israel there are great patriots of Georgia and great people with whom I maintain a warm relationship. This man is an ordinary Russian, working for Russia ..."

Irrespective of the fact whether or not Mikhail Saakashvili intended to insult any ethnic minorities / national groups with the above mentioned comparisons, he mentioned the Chechens and the Jews in a humiliating context by ascribing some negative features to the whole nation. Consequently, his statements contained xenophobic connotation.

In addition, Mikhail Saakashvili's official Facebook page released a sexist statement where he writes the following about Natia Mezvrishvili, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs: "She is a well-known lady of pleasure and Ivanishvili's hand-handled "Prosecutor"(the original version of the post was as follows:" She is a well known "Prosecutor" of loose morals seated in Ivanishvili's lap).

It is noteworthy that public officials, including politicians particularly, bear a high level of responsibility to refrain from expressions that may encourage racism, xenophobia or other forms of discrimination or hate. Although the political expression is particularly protected and guaranteed, due to the fact that politicians have a high impact on public opinion, it is important that they should understand the dangers lurking under hate speech and discriminatory statements and expressions, which may reinforce the stereotypes existing in the society and promote intolerance to a certain group.

We urge Mikheil Saakashvili and other politicians to refrain from using hate speech and while criticizing political opponents not to insult voluntarily or involuntarily different groups of the society, such as women, ethnic or other minorities.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI)

Transparency International Georgia (TI - Georgia)

Equality Movement

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)

Sapari

Georgian Reforms Association (GRASS)

Institute for Democracy and Safe Development (IDSD)

Media Development Foundation (MDF)

Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)