



The statement of the “No to Phobia!” civil platform regarding the physical violence and xenophobic expression by Tamaz Mechiauri

We, non-governmental organizations comprising the “No to Phobia!” civil platform, condemn the violent action and Armenophobic attitudes displayed by Tamaz Mechiauri, Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee of the Parliament of Georgia. We believe that representatives of the authorities have an obligation of high tolerance toward any form of public protest, while their public assessments are an object of public interest, which obligates them to refrain from any such expression that contains xenophobic content.

On January 21, 2016, citizens were holding a protest against the draft law related to prohibition of registration of vehicles with a right steering-wheel near the former Parliament building in Tbilisi. According to news reports, Tamaz Mechiauri who went up to the building was greeted with whistles and calls by the protesters. Due to this, the MP physically insulted one of the protesters, Artur Arutinov. This incident is clearly visible in the disseminated [footage](#).

The [comments](#) made by Mr. Mechiauri after the incident are no less alarming. In the comments, he displayed an Armenophobic attitude and declared: “I didn’t know he was Mr. Artur... If I had known who he was, I may have ... more strongly.”

It should be noted that Tamaz Mechiauri’s speeches and statements are distinguished by discriminatory expressions, including [homophobic and Armenophobic](#) remarks; his

attitude to the civil society sector is also unacceptable, as he [refers to](#) representatives of the civil society as “members of some Soros NGOs”.

Unfortunately, it has recently become particularly frequent for representatives of the authorities to use hate speech towards concrete groups of the public. This is also indicated by [studies](#) conducted on this topic by various NGOs. The results of the monitoring have shown that representatives of the ruling party often make anti-Western, homophobic statements and those containing hate speech.

At the same time, against the background of recent ineffective response by the state, the number of hate crimes has increased sharply.

We believe that the Regulations of the Parliament of Georgia and the Law of Georgia on Civil Service should prescribe strict mechanisms of disciplinary responsibility for discriminatory statements by MPs and civil servants. In addition, political parties should develop self-regulation mechanisms to ensure internal response to manifestations of rhetoric that contains hate speech, xenophobia and discrimination on various grounds.

It is a duty of representatives of the authorities to appeal to the public in their statements to show respect for various ethnic and confessional groups. Contrary to this, manifestation of hateful attitudes by representatives of the authorities creates an encouraging effect for hate crimes and hinders the possibility of formation of society that is based on pluralism.

Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI)

Media Development Foundation (MDF)

Georgia’s Reforms Associates (GRASS)

Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)

Identoba

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Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA)

Article 42 of the Constitution

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)