



## **NGOs are responding to the negotiation process related to Namakhvani HPP**

We, organizations involved in the meetings organized by the Energy Union on the Namakhvani HPP would like to inform the public about our position on the current process. Participation in these meetings is primarily aimed at overcoming the crisis around Namakhvani HPP. For this, it is necessary, first of all, to suspend the ongoing construction works in the Rioni Valley, as well as to ensure an independent, qualified evaluation process of the project.

Signatory organizations welcome the fact that during June-July, we were given the opportunity to be involved in developing a "technical assignment", which in the future

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should be used as a guide by independent experts. However, unfortunately, it still remains a challenge and a task to be fulfilled to select experts on the principle of professionalism and impartiality, find a reliable source of funding, and create guarantees of trust in the evaluation process for the parties and the general public.

Currently, one of the most recognized institutions with the greatest experience and reputation in the field is considered to be one of the contenders for performing qualified and impartial assessments from our friend EU member state. The involvement of this organization in the process is fully acceptable both for the representatives of the civil society and for the energy union itself. However, the government is trying to exclude this one of the most credible and competent international organizations from the ongoing negotiations and, consequently, from the process of revision of documents in the future.

We believe that the unilateral and unjustified "exclusion" of such a highly reputable international organization by the state representatives within the framework of these negotiations weakens the public confidence in the process and puts the parties on unequal terms. Therefore, government officials must present publicly in the near future arguments as to why the involvement of this European organization in the process is unacceptable to them. Otherwise, the next process of selection of experts, its validity, and transparency will be endangered.

At the same time, in the negotiation process, our principled position is that the company should suspend the ongoing works in the valley until the completion of the independent evaluation process to prevent irreversible and irreparable damage to the natural and social environment of the valley.

We are pleased that the situation in the Rioni Valley is currently stable, although we would like to remind the public that, among other issues agreed by the government at a meeting in Natakhtari on June 12, the government has not properly fulfilled any of the preconditions for mediation. Several weeks of negotiations have made it clear that it is not in the government's interest to suspend the construction of the HPP as a temporary measure and to eliminate the threats or risks posed by the construction process, which does not mitigate the risk of a sudden escalation of the situation in the Rioni Valley. This issue is particularly critical of the fact that Enka company has refused to engage in negotiations. In return, the company says in public statements that construction in the valley is not suspended, and the issue will not even be

considered.

Critical to the establishment of stability in the region is the fact that the government has not fulfilled its commitment to restore smooth and free movement in the Rioni Valley, which it had undertaken through negotiations. Instead, police only removed an iron barrier erected illegally in the village of Gumati.

**To uphold the principle of environmental protection and harm mitigation during the assessment process, we call on the government to:**

- Explain to the public the reasons why it is unacceptable for them to involve an international, highly reputable, and qualified organization in the project review process;
- Do not interfere with any reputable international organizations, participate in the evaluation process of Namakhvani HPP project and act following their positive commitments so that the most reliable and qualified organizations are invited to this process;
- To prevent the alleged damage to the natural environment in the gorge and the re-escalation of the situation, to submit a plan to suspend the construction of Namakhvani HPP as a temporary measure;
- Analyze clearly the obligation to restore constitutional order in the gorge and immediately lift the unjustified and illegal restrictions on movement in the gorge.

*Green Alternative*

*Social Justice Center*

*Georgian Green Movement / Friends of the Earth*

*Georgian Young Lawyers Association*

*Greens*

*Fair Energy Politics*

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