



Civil society organizations respond to the events that took place on July 8, 2023

It is alarming that the Ministry of Internal Affairs still continues its tolerant policy towards hate groups. Instead of fulfilling their constitutional obligations to provide preventive and crime-response measures to protect public safety, it allows them to interfere with the freedom of assembly and expression of others, to spread unhindered calls for violence, and to carry out such actions.

On June 2, Tbilisi Pride, a non-governmental organization supporting the LGBTQ+ community, [announced](#) that they were going to join the "Month of Dignity and Pride" and Pride Week, consisting of closed events, would be held in Tbilisi during July 1-8. On July 8, Tbilisi Pride Fest 2023 was to be held in Lisi Wonderland.

In the days leading up to July 8, hate groups publicly issued various [statements](#) which, in their content, made the Ministry of Internal Affairs clearly aware of the real risk of

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violence, coming from them. In addition, numerous homogenous videos were circulated online calling on citizens to demonstrate against Tbilisi Pride Fest 2023 on July 8. At the head of the given campaign, there were those, who are the organizers of the mass violence of July 5, 2021, and despite a large amount of evidence against them, neither the Ministry of Internal Affairs, nor the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia has taken any effective measures.

On July 7, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued a statement regarding the July 8 event, in which it was stated, that in order to conduct the closed event in a peaceful environment, relevant police units would be mobilized at all necessary locations and would protect the law and security within the scope of their competence.

Contrary to this, despite the fact that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was well informed and knew the purpose of the hate groups - to attack the "Tbilisi Pride" event with violent methods (see, for example, Zurab Makharadze's [speech](#)), the representatives of the counter demonstration, gathered at the Vazha-Pshavela monument, were allowed to move freely to Lisi lake, and they have not encountered any serious obstacles from the representatives of the law enforcement structure. Near Lisi Lake, hate groups [were able to freely break through](#) the police cordon and move to the main entrance to Lisi. Footage analysis shows that the strategy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs could not/did not adequately counter the risks coming from violent groups. By around 14:55, the [police cordon had been completely breached](#). The footage also shows [the facts](#) of interference in journalistic activity. Around 15:10, the participants of the rally [completely occupied](#) the festival site. [Members](#) of hate groups broke into the property, dispersed the festival area, broke the stage and stage equipment built for the Pride Festival, and burned some of the inventory.

Instead of expressing solidarity with the oppressed groups and guaranteeing protection of their rights from the law enforcers, [The footage](#) shows how Zura Makharadze, one of the leaders of "Alt-Info" and Vato Shakarishvili, the leader of the anti-Western movement, are being led by the police into the area at 15:17, where the festival was supposed to be held, to show them that the festival organizers had indeed left.

We believe that the events unfolding today are a continuation of July 5, 2021, investigation of which, left totally unresponded the issue of responsibility of the organizers of violence and the state, which was in charge of protecting people from

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aggressive groups on July 5, 2021. Also, until now, based on the story aired on [TV "Pirveli"](#) on June 12, it is not known whether the investigation regarding the possible criminal actions of state security employees has been started yet. Instead of creating guarantees for the unhindered enjoyment of freedom of assembly and expression, the state continues to promote the dominance of violent groups.

We, civil society organizations, express solidarity to members of the LGBTQ+ community and call on state institutions to act in accordance with the Constitution of Georgia and international agreements of Georgia:

- To have a timely and appropriate legal response to violent calls and actions; to identify the responsibility of the organizers of violence, in order to properly respond to violence and prevent further violent actions;
- To protect the rights and safety of LGBTQ+ people, including their right to hold an event at their desired location without any interference;
- To protect the media representatives from illegal interference in their journalistic activities, to ensure their safety and proper realization of freedom of expression, as well as to ensure timely, effective investigation of crimes against media representatives and punishment of criminals.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

Green alternative

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)

Transparency International Georgia

Rights Georgia

Platform "Salami"

Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS)

The *Georgian* Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims

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(GCRT)

Social Justice Center

Human Rights Center

Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) - Georgia