



Statement of NGOs on Alleged Political Persecution of Employees of Tbilisi City Hall

Once again, we would like to react to reports of political persecution of employees of Tbilisi City Hall. Individuals who allege persecution have informed us that they have been subject to systematic pressure since August 2014, in an attempt to force them into resigning for personal reasons. They have also reported that these illegal activities are perpetrated with the involvement of head of the department, his deputy and as well as unidentified individuals (presumably police officers).

These individuals have reported the following:

Giorgi Khaburdzania explains that due to his political affiliation he was forced by head of the department Gega Nizharadze and his deputy Davit Meduashvili into writing a letter of resignation. Giorgi Khaburdzania presented an audio recording to GYLA lawyers. We are unable to testify to the authenticity of the recording; however, its content solidifies allegations of illegal actions perpetrated against G.Khaburdzania.

Giga Makatsaria has stated that head of Tbilisi City Service of Supervision and his deputy summoned him, demanding that he write a letter of resignation. Otherwise, they threatened to look into the things he had done at his previous job (Giga Makatsaria used to serve in police department), [redacted] his personal file A and then sack him. Giga Makatsaria explains that there also was an unidentified individual present at the meeting, possibly a law enforcement officer, who reiterated the threat made by the head of the supervision service and his deputy.

Kakhaber Buskivadze, who has been working in the city supervision service since 2008, stated that in late August 2014 head of the service [redacted] A that [redacted]

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come and go. And everyone holding leading position had to leave their jobs. According to K. Buskivadze, the head of the service also stated he would do his best to keep him but he would probably have to demote him; however, this was not entirely up to him and that he was waiting for instructions. K. Buskivadze states that under the circumstances he was forced to agree to demotion and take the position of a lead specialist.

Nikoloz Namicheishvili used to work as head of the office of the supervision service. From August 18 to September 5, 2014, he was demoted two times for "personal reasons".

Although demoted for personal reasons, it is less likely that these individuals requested demotions themselves and voluntarily abandoned their managerial positions.

Notably, reasonable doubts about the practice of dismissal of public servants from Tbilisi City Hall by means of exerting pressure secretly or openly have been expressed before. We released subsequent statements on a number of occasions, urging authorities to take further actions but we are still unaware of any measures that law enforcement authorities are taking in response to these reports.

We would like to reiterate that pursuant to Article 169 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, it is a crime to "coerce" an individual into writing a voluntary letter of resignation. We urge all relevant authorities to probe the foregoing reports and take adequate further actions. We also urge Tbilisi Mayor to ensure that the impending accreditation and competition in Tbilisi City Hall is conducted in an objective and transparent manner.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)

Transparency International – Georgia (TI)

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)