



Statement of NGOs on Launch of the Decentralization Reform and the Situation in Self-Government Agencies

The new political force that came into power in Georgia following the October 1, 2012 parliamentary elections, declared self-government reform in Georgia as one of the key priorities.

Recent reforms in the field throughout the last 20 years envisaged formation of a vertical dimension of the government instead of reinforcing self-government, in which local self-government grew to be a function-less supplement of the central authorities. It is the flaw of the existing system that transfer of power in the central authorities triggers the process in which members of the former ruling party in the self-government are voluntarily or forcefully leaving the ruling party for the new political force in power. This was the case when the Round Table, the Citizens' Union and Aghordzineba lost power.

Regrettably, the trend is still there and there are a number of instances when self-government members elected through the UNM list left the party for the Georgian Dream. We believe that maintaining the existing system of self-government and continuing the practice will pose similar problems in the future both to our country and to public in general, as well as to the ruling party in particular.

Without a meaningful self-government, it is impossible to form a democratic and a legal state, and free society. Therefore, prior to the upcoming 2014 elections we deem the following necessary:

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- Launch a large-scale public dialogue about the local self-government reform with the active involvement of all stakeholders and Georgian public at large;
- Elaborate and practice the model of administrative and territorial arrangement that will promote the process of meeting the needs of all regions, cities, towns and villages in Georgia as much as possible and will bring together meaningfully the municipal authorities and the local population;
- Free self-governments from political pressure; clearly determine the regulations for their formation (elections) and activities and equip them with legal mechanisms for protection of their rights;
- Provide a clear separation between powers of the central authorities and self-governments, human and material (finances, property) resources needed to fulfill these powers and rule out any possibility for the central authorities to illegally interfere with municipal authorities;
- Establish institutional mechanisms for public control on the work of the municipal authorities that will eliminate at the grassroots level any possibility for a political force to manipulate with public interests.

We, the non-governmental organizations, welcome the statement made by the Prime Minister on December 24, 2012, about the launch of a comprehensive decentralization reform in 2013 and we remain hopeful that current government will learn from mistakes made by the previous authorities.

We further call on the authorities and political parties not to allow further escalation of the situation and take immediate measures for eliminating any possibilities of manipulation with public interests and practicing European-style self-government in the country.

International Center for Civic Culture
Open Society – Georgia Foundation
Network of Local Democracy Self-Government
Caucasian Institute for Economic and Social Research (CIESR)
Human Rights Center

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Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
Coalition Healthy World
Public Movement Multinational Georgia
Tiflisis Hamkari
Regional Media Association
Coalition for Free Choice
Foundation for Civil Integration
Union of Democrat Meskhs
Lanchkhuti Information Center
Gori Information Center
Media Club of Georgia
Youth Center Georgia
Association – Public for Development
Argomedia Association
Women's Informal Network of Lentekhi and Tsageri
Media and Public Association