

საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



Statement of Non-Governmental Organizations

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We would like to respond to the statement made by the President of Georgia on September 19 about torture and inhumane treatment at penitentiary establishments. In his statement the president said that several individuals involved in torture of prisoners must be strictly punished, and certain measures must be carried out in penitentiary system, which as of now means temporarily bringing in patrol police to key penitentiary establishments.

We believe that these measures are inadequate and disproportionate reaction to these terrible and systemic acts of human rights violation, recently witnessed by public. Senior officials who have been directly linked to mass violations of human rights in the penitentiary system have not yet been held politically liable. Neither did President of Georgia address these concerns. Further, the investigation failed to look into the purported guilt of officials who were personally involved in acts of inhumane treatment or failed to take their responsibilities seriously, leaving these terrible acts without a response.

Further, in his statement the president said that the Ministry of Interior Affairs would be tasked with formal supervision of the penitentiary system, while the person in charge of the Interior Ministry has been directly linked to establishing the methods of inhumane treatment and gross and mass human rights violations in the penitentiary system. This is confirmed by the public defender's report.

Firstly, we demand that the authorities treat the existing situation with great responsibility and take adequate and proportional measures. The Interior Minister, the Minister of Justice and the Chief Prosecutor must be held politically liable, in order to prevent them from influencing the investigation. Otherwise, investigation conducted by the authorities will fall short of public trust.

Further, we still demand

- That in addition to officials arrested, the investigation also examine culpability of senior officials, including the Minister of Correction and Justice and the Chairmen of the Penitentiary Department, as it is virtually impossible that they were unaware of that such systemic and mass violation of human rights;
- Ensure safety and protection of those who made facts of torture and corresponding video footage public, as well as of their family.
- Conduct independent, objective and effective investigation into all other facts of ill-treatment that occurred throughout the last couple of years. Further, the investigation should be conducted in an accountable and public manner, to ensure public trust;
- Allow alternative mechanisms of monitoring in penitentiary establishments.