## ᲡᲐᲥᲐᲠᲗᲕᲔᲚᲝᲡ ᲐᲮᲐᲚᲒᲐᲖᲠᲓᲐ ᲘᲣᲠᲘᲡᲒᲗᲐ ᲐᲡᲝᲪᲘᲐᲪᲘᲐ **GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION** ւչոչ GYLA

## The Statement about Recent Developments in TV Company Maestro

We would like to voice our position about recent developments in TV Company Maestro questioning editorial independence of the channel and professional freedom of journalists, as well as violating labor rights of Maestro employees guaranteed by the legislation of Georgia.

As it became known, some leading journalists have left Maestro for the past several months. As they allege, the decision was motivated by an attempt of the owner of the

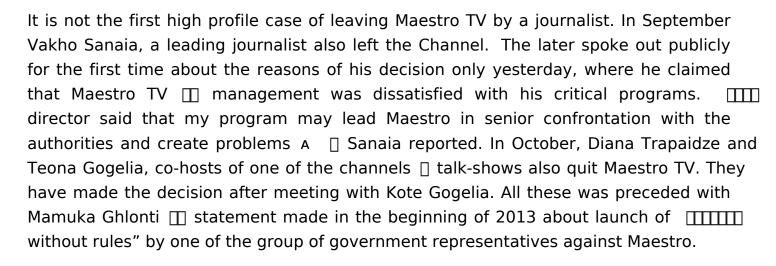
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channel to interfere in the activities of the independent TV Company.

A group of	<sup>20</sup> journ	alists, includ	ding Nino <sup>-</sup>	Tolorda	ıva, d	one o	f the	new	s anchors	and th	e
team of o	comedy	program		Pills	a∏ l	have	left	the	company	after	Nino
Zhizhilash	vili, senic	r manager	and jour	nalist	in c	harge	of	new	sroom wa	as fired	d.
Representatives of TV company, however, did not accept journalists [] charges and link											
the recent developments to the reorganization process in Maestro.											

Nino Zhizhilashvili says that she was going to quit anyway, when actual owner of the Maestro TV Kote Gogelia launched changes on the channel intending to remove news program ITTTTTALLA from TV program. Reportedly, the program will be replaced by a new one ITTTTTTALLA hosted by Koka Khandiashvili, PR consultant of the administration of government. Khandiashvili, though makes only general remarks on the issue. Employees of the news program, including Nino Zhizhilashvili reacted negatively on the decision and afterwards she was fired from the office by Kote Gogelia.



As former journalists of the Maestro TV allege, the actual owner of the channel Kote Gogelia intensively intervenes in editorial activities of the Channel, which contradicts editorial independence of the broadcaster and public accountability principles established by Law. We regret, that authority of the TV fails to protect their employees and can not ensure their editorial independence.

As Nino Zhizhilashvili alleged, employees of TV Company who should make decision on formation of TV program were not involved in the process, while Koka

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Khandiashvil, an unauthorized person and PR consultant of the Administration of Government of Georgia participates personally in creation of TV program. We believe that such conduct is inconsistent with the principles of freedom of journalistic activity, especially when as journalists report, owners of TV company attempt to keep good relationships with the government.

We should note that forgoing changes on TV Company Maestro have been carried out with gross violation of journalists  $\square$  labor rights. These alterations and termination of labor relationships with journalists are often unexpected for them and such attitude of an employer may make adverse affect on other journalists of the channel and restrict their professional independence.

We opine that obligation to observe freedom of media and editorial independence rests on the owner and management of the Channel along with the state authorities. Accordingly, we call on relevant authorities to respect forgoing principles and to act in compliance with these principles and legislation of Georgia.

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