

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



## Visit of NGOs to Rustavi N16 Penitentiary Facility

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On October 31, representatives of the following NGOs: Georgian Young Lawyers Association, The Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (GCRT) and the Penal Reform International, who have been delegated with the right to enter penitentiary facilities without a special permit.

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The visit was necessitated by report of a tense situation in Rustavi N16 Penitentiary Facility.

Representatives of the NGOs met with and interviewed director of the facility, convicts held in solitary cells and in units "A" "A" and "A" as well as members of families of prisoners rallying outside the facility.

The situation is peaceful in the prison; prisoners are refusing allegations about any attempts of disorder on their end. During the visit two prisoners held in the solitary cell were on a hunger strike, as well as several of their cell-mates - convicts in unit "a".

In interviews prisoners noted that they were subjected to psychological pressure from the newly appointed warden. These allegations are categorically rejected by the warden himself, also saying that there are the so-called "privileges" in the prison, striving to gain certain privileges; he however says that he is not going to make any illegal concessions with them.

According to prisoners, their negative attitude has also been caused by illegal actions allegedly perpetrated by the prison current warden during his previous tenure in law enforcement authorities, which directly affected up to 30 prisoners currently serving time in Rustavi N16 Penitentiary Facility.

Prisoners are also protesting against appearance of old employees in the prison, who allegedly perpetrated inhumane and degrading treatment of prisoners. They have implicated several individuals in particular. It is noteworthy that the warden was appointed two days ago and according to him, he is planning to substitute old employees with the new staff for which he needs about a week.

Prisoners are mostly demanding dismissal of the warden and old employees who are perpetrated inhumane treatment of prisoners. They are also protesting against certain illegal restrictions placed by the administration.

During their meeting with a representative of GYLA, the prisoners handed to her a subsequent petition signed by 444 inmates.

Further, prisoners claim that poor access to healthcare, press and use of disciplinary measures remain problematic.

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Representatives of the organization call on the management of the penitentiary system to thoroughly examine the situation in the penitentiary facility N16. They also remain hopeful that the facility will maintain peace and order, and prisoners' claims will be treated with particular attention. There is a lack of communication between the prisoners and the administration as well as the ministry.

Following the visit to Rustavi N16 penitentiary facility, the NGOs plan to provide the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance of Georgia and the penitentiary department with information about problematic issues at the facility, the list of officers who prisoners allege are involved in ill-treatment and remain at the facility, as well as the petition handed to us by the prisoners.