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## Ivanishvili is open to public discussions regarding ministerial revision

By Keti Arjevanidze

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Bidzina Ivanishvili commented on NGO recommendations to review the candidacy of the minister of internally displaced persons, from the occupied territories, accommodation and refugees of Georgia, Davit Darakhvelidze on October 20. NGOs have appealed to Ivanishvili to express caution and principality while choosing ministers.

NGOs made the appeal to Ivanishvili on October 19, the statement was signed by Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Transparency International Georgia, and International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, Multinational Georgia, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Article 42 of the Constitution, Charter of Journalists' Ethics of Georgia, Georgian Regional Media Association and Green Alternative.

"NGOs are concerned that the ministerial candidate used hate speech and racial expressions, as well as aggressive language in relation to the media. These expressions are in conflict with European values and the course towards Euro-Atlantic integration, which is Georgia's declared foreign policy priority and [this behavior] violates fundamental rights and freedoms," read the statement collectively signed by a group of civil society organizations.

Ivanishvili appointed Darakhvelidze in his incoming government as the minister of IDPs. Darakhvelidze was the majoritarian MP candidate in Ambrolauri, where he lost to the UNM's candidate. Two video records were disseminated after the elections, where Darakhvelidze makes discriminatory comments about other nation representatives and aggressively insults journalist during one of his speeches. "Every Negro you meet in Tbilisi is a citizen, Indian and Chinese as well ...Georgia must be for Georgians," said Darakhvelidze, while meeting the population in Ambrolauri, during his pre-election campaign.

Darakhvelidze apologized for his action and expresses a readiness to meet with the authors of the statement, although he stated that there was not any racial and xenophobic attitude before and will not be in future. "The election campaign is a difficult campaign, and I endured it until the end [...] I made a mistake and could not control my action," Darakhvelidze explained.

Eka Giaguri, a representative of Transparency International Georgia, positively estimates Darakhvelidze's apology, she said that the organization will observe Darakhvelidze's actions, "if he makes the same mistake again we will remind Georgian Dream, but we can't do more than provide our recommendation," added Giaguri.

Multinational Georgia's head, Arnold Stepanian said, that it is an unacceptable, xenophobic approach, as well as his aggressive attitude toward journalist, "we think that there is no place for such kind of person on the new government," Stepanian said.

In his official response, Bidzina Ivanishvili said that he is ready to collaborate with all the NGOs who expressed their opinion about the appointment of the government's members. Ivanishvili also remarks that it is the first time that minister candidates have publicly responded to the members of NGOs. According to Ivanishvili, he is ready to hold a discussion on the issue that will include the minister candidate and the NGO representatives.