On July 24, the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia charged the founders of TBC Bank - Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze - with money laundering over transactions that allegedly took place 11 years ago. The case against the founders of TBC was opened in August 2018 and a number of legitimate concerns were raised in regard to the basis for the launch of the investigation. A series of suspicious decisions were carried out by state agencies against the founders of TBC in the follow-up to the launch of the investigation.

We, the undersigned organizations, are of the opinion that the existing circumstances, such as the launch of the investigation and the charges levelled against Khazaradze and Japaridze, could be an indication that the case is politically motivated. This suspicion is further reinforced by the fact that Khazaradze announced his intention to establish a public movement on July 9, 2019.

Moreover, Mamuka Khazaradze is the founder of the Anaklia Development Consortium, which is the main responsible body for the construction of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port - a major and strategically important project for Georgia. At the sitting of the Budget and Finance Parliamentary Committee held in March 2019, Mamuka Khazaradze spoke openly about the instances of intimidation and blackmail carried out against him by the Minister of Internal Affairs and the National Bank.

The aforementioned circumstances further strengthen the concerns of various organizations over the alarming increase of signs of informal rule and state capture, which implies the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the ruling party and influential informal groups, as well as the use of public institutions for private interests. In order to dispel any concerns of the public over the motivations of the case, we call on the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia to make public the hard evidence connected to the case against Khazaradze and Japaridze. Moreover, it is important to notify the public about the status of the investigation related to the cyber attack against TBC Bank. Leaving these questions unanswered will only serve to hinder the pace of democratic development and have a significant negative impact on the country’s international reputation.
We call on the Government of Georgia to consider the gravity of the situation and the potential consequences that will follow if suspicions of selective or political justice are further reinforced. Moreover, any attempt to hinder the construction of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port will be a major blow to the economic and security interests of the state.

We address the international partners of Georgia to pay close attention to the recent developments around TBC Bank and the Anaklia Port project, in order to prevent any irreversible loss to the long-term democratic development of Georgia.

*Transparency International Georgia*

*Open Society Fund Georgia*

*Georgian Democracy Initiative*

*Media Development Foundation*

*World Experience For Georgia*

*In Depth Reporting and Economic Analysis Center*

*Georgia’s Reforms Associates*

*Green Alternative*

*Atlantic Council of Georgia*

*Sapari*

*UN Association of Georgia*

*Economic Policy Research Center*

*Civil Development Agency*

*International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy*

*Initiative For Social Changes*

*Institute for Development of Freedom of Information*

*Human Rights Center*

*Tolerance and Diversity Institute*

*Georgian Institute of Politics*