NGOs urge Members of Parliament against casting vote of confidence for Gakharia's candidacy

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On September 8, the Parliament of Georgia will be casting vote of confidence for the new government. We urge the Members of the Parliament of Georgia, regardless of their party affiliation or political stance, not to support the appointment of Giorgi Gakharia as a Prime Minister.

There are many legitimate concerns in the society about Giorgi Gakharia's activities. These include the cases of Khorava Street, of poet Zviad Ratiani, special operations in Tbilisi clubs and Pankisi Gorge. At the moment, however, we are focusing on the issue of the violent dispersal of the June 20-21 rally. As it is known, more than 200 citizens and dozens of journalists were badly injured during the dispersal of the rally, while several people sustained irreparable physical as well as psychological damage. Public protest against the violent dispersal of the June 20-21 rally is ongoing up to date.

For the past three months, the Georgian government and the parliamentary majority have been assuring public that respective authorities were investigating the cases of excessive use of force by the police. According to Gakharia himself, in case systemic errors committed by the police during the dispersal of the rally were discovered, he would not only resign but would bear legal responsibility along with the political one.

The promised investigation of June 20-21 rallies has not been completed yet, and the responsibility of the head of the Ministry has yet to be established. Under these circumstances, the nomination of Giorgi Gakharia as a Prime Minister fails to deliver on the political promise and disregards critical public sentiment. Such an approach would undermine the already weak and fragile public trust in state institutions and in fact, would make it impossible to proceed with the ongoing investigation in an objective and fair manner.
The situation underscores the role of the Parliament, country's top political body overseeing the government, in fairly assessing the results of Gakharia's activities. We believe that the Parliament should refrain from appointing him on the leading position of the executive government until the nature and scope of his responsibility for the violent dispersal of the June 20-21 rally is established. Assumption of this responsibility by the Parliament will give an extra impetus to the governing political force to select a candidate for the Prime Minister's post in consensus with the public opinion, and to ensure the peaceful conduct of the proportional parliamentary elections of 2020. Otherwise, the Parliament will be promoting increased polarization in the country and create a risk of civil confrontation.

Signatory organizations:

Open Society Georgia Foundation
Human Rights Centre
Green Alternative Georgia
EU Georgia Info
Union Sapari
Article 42 of the Constitution
Georgian Democratic Initiative
Democracy Research Institute
Atlantic Council of Georgia
Economic Policy Research Centre
Georgian Young Lawyers Association
Georgian Reforms Association
Regional Centre for Strategic Studies