

18 January, 2010

To the President of Georgia Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili:

The upcoming 2010 local government elections are seen within and outside Georgia as another democratic litmus test by which conclusions will be drawn as to whether or not the Georgian government and political spectrum of Georgia as a whole are ready to hold free and fair elections and indeed support the strengthening of democratic institutions.

While Georgian non-governmental organizations have positively evaluated the initiative on the part of the ruling party and of the president to agree on candidates for the chairmanship of the Central Election Commission, there remain several questions among the twenty-seven non-governmental organizations¹ who participated in the selection of the joint candidate which we would like to share with you. These are:

1. Why did you decide to choose the three candidates that were nominated by single, non-governmental organizations and reject the candidate that twenty-seven non-governmental organizations supported? Please, let us remind you that among these twenty-seven non-governmental organizations are those which are the most active in the area of election monitoring and improving electoral processes.
2. While your press-speaker informed the public about the education backgrounds and work experience of the three finalists chosen by you, it remains unknown to us in what regard was our joint candidate's education and work experience less sufficient, especially in regard to her experience in elections, in comparison to the experience of the candidates who were chosen. Please, would you elaborate?
3. Why did you decide to include Mr. Levan Tarkhnishvili among the three finalists, when his dismissal was one of the main demands of a large part of the opposition and when during your July 20, 2009 address to the Parliament of Georgia you said that the Central Election Commission chairman would be chosen on the basis of a broad consensus among the main political players?

Please, let us know your thoughts on these questions. Clarifying these issues will have a positive impact on the attitudes of Georgian and international communities toward the upcoming elections.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
Multinational Georgia
Transparency International Georgia

¹ International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Open Society - Georgia Foundation, Transparency International Georgia, Multinational Georgia, International Foundation of Election Systems, 21 Century, Human Rights Center, Caucasus Women's Network, International Center of Geopolitical Research, Law for People, International Center of Conflicts and Negotiations, Network Against Discrimination and Intolerance, Constitutional Rights Protection Center, Human Rights Priority, Helsinki Group Georgia Association, Multiethnic Resource Center of Civic Education Development, Institute of Democracy, Young Scientists Union Intellect, Free Journalists' House, Rehabilitation Center, Union in Support of Development and Cooperation Progress, Georgian Institute of Democratic and Economic Development, Journalists for Freedom, Regional Development and Initiatives Center, Young Journalists' Association, Civil Society Development Union Borjghali.