



MEDIA ADVOCACY COALITION BELIEVES THAT ADJARA BROADCASTER AVOIDS PERFORMING ITS FUNCTION IMPOSED BY LAW

We, the members of the Media Advocacy Coalition, want to once again draw public attention to the alarming processes taking place in the Adjara broadcaster. Yesterday, 23 March 2020, the director of the broadcaster announced two more decisions that, on the one hand, raised doubts about the persecution and harassment of journalists with different positions in the broadcaster and on the other hand, confirms that the broadcaster evades fulfilling the function prescribed by the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting. We know that according to the decision of the director, journalist Teona Kharabadze was sent to Kutaisi without a cameraman. The journalist was restricted from working on television and was only instructed to continue working for the radio and website. The journalist believes, that by this change the management forces her to resign because it is impossible for her to fulfill new tasks perfectly.

We remind, that Teona Kharabadze is one of the distinguished journalists of News

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Service of Adjara Broadcasting and she is highly skilled in covering political and economic issues and raising public awareness of social issues. We assume that the critical questions asked by her caused discomfort to the authority.

On the other hand, the management of the broadcaster has replaced the TV and radio broadcasting network, the social project "hashtag" was suspended for an indefinite period. The program was aimed at bringing the interests and needs of different groups to the public, especially decision-makers, which was suspended for an undefined period. At the same time, the team abovementioned show comprises critically and differently positioned people in the broadcaster.

We believe that the management of the broadcaster by this decision has refused to fulfill the function prescribed by the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting. Unfortunately, fundamental changes have been made in a non-transparent manner without proper awareness of the funders of the public channel. While the pandemic threats and obligation of the coverage of the needs of the population broaden the needs of the public broadcaster. Instead, the management of the broadcaster responded to a major challenge in the world and in Georgia by shutting down critically needed programs and continuing to persecute people. Given that the Public Broadcaster is designed to provide the public with a variety of public interest programs, we believe that Adjara Public Broadcaster TV and Radio refuses to fulfill its legal obligations. This is the basis of the responsibility of the management of the broadcasting and the Advisory Board.

- We call on the management of LEPL Adjara TV and Radio to review the decisions they have made;
- We call on the Board of Trustees of the First Channel of JSC Georgian Public Broadcaster, one of the members of which is nominated by the Supreme Council of Adjara, to take an interest in the ongoing processes and to inform the public about the persecution of the people and non-compliance with law in the Adjara broadcaster.