



## NGOs Condemn the Release of a Secretly Recorded Video

We would like to express our extreme concern over the secretly recorded video released on May 3, making details of private life public. It is particularly horrifying that the video involves a journalist, raising suspicions about attempts to exert pressure on media. It is difficult to draw any preliminary conclusions before the authorities conclude the investigation; however, clearly there are individuals seeking to discredit the journalist. These suspicions are further reinforced by the fact that the journalist himself alleges that the release of the video on the Internet has to do with uncovering of corrupt deal between representatives of current and ex-officials by him. Further, he alleges that these officials are responsible for leaking the video.

Representatives of the new government that came into power following the parliamentary elections have vowed to destroy and guard any footage of someone's private life, and to eliminate the malicious practice of illegal use of video and audio recordings by former authorities. The foregoing incident is not the first case a secretly recorded video was released. As early as in December, reports indicated an assistant to Tbilisi City Court's judge was blackmailed with threats to have footage of his private life released. This has raised suspicions about whether the authorities have taken meaningful actions to destroy footage and fully eliminate the practice. The investigation needs to address the following issues: when was the secret footage recorded, who had access to it and how it became available on the Internet.

Timely and effective investigation is of vital importance for establishing the truth and preventing similar incidents in the future. As the video has been uploaded on the Internet, the investigating authorities should have no trouble determining the original source. Notwithstanding the time the footage was produced, all individuals involved in

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production and release of the video in any way must be prosecuted to the full extent of law.

It is important that the Interior Minister Irakli Gharibashvili has pledged to personally oversee the investigation; however, we believe that effective, prompt and impartial investigation is in the best interest of not only the Interior Ministry but the new Government of Georgia as well, particularly in light of the fact that the journalist has leveled accusations about involvement of senior law enforcement officials in the case. We remain hopeful that no one else will fall victim to blackmailing with secretly recorded video footage released illegally or interception.

We welcome that during the April 29, 2013 press conference on civic control for combating illegal interception, representatives of the legislative and the executive authorities have expressed their readiness to reinforce safeguards against violation of the right to privacy. Further, we believe that unconditional and strong support of the Government is essential for reinforcing the institute of inspector for protection of personal information, which is yet another effective mechanism for protecting of the right to privacy.

*Transparency International – Georgia*  
*Georgian Democratic Initiative*  
*Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center*  
*Georgian Young Lawyers' Association*  
*Article 42 of the Constitution*