



## On June 14 NGOs will hold a manifestation in support of the local Muslim population in the village of Samtatskaro

Tomorrow, on June 14, civil society representatives will hold a manifestation to protest against acts of interference with religious practice by the local Muslim population in the village of Samtatskaro, Dedoplistskaro District over the last three weeks, and to show their support for tolerance and rights of religious minority.

Over the last three weeks local population of the village of Samtatskaro that identify themselves as Christian congregation has been resorting to clearly illegal forms to interfere in holding of a traditional prayer (Juma) of Muslim community every Friday in a specially designated house. Actions of the local Christians and their statements against ecomigrant Muslims from Adjara are mostly xenophobic and abusive, posing the risk of further escalation of the conflict on religious grounds.

Regrattably, the state's engagement for peaceful and legal resolution of the conflict has proven to be inadequate, as it failed to ensure full freedom of religion for the Muslim community but rather, limited itself to providing safety which is clearly insufficient. Furthermore, analysis of actions of municipal authorities and the police engaged in the processes shows that they perceive themselves as a side to the conflict and fail to observe the principle of religious neutrality in discharging their powers. We believe that similar passive approach of the state conflicts with its positive obligation to ensure effective protection of rights of religious minority, putting already disadvantaged minority in a less favorable position. Furthermore, dynamics of recent religious conflicts (in villages of Nigvziani, Tsintskaro) illustrate that the state's failure to act further encourages religious conflicts in these communities and

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



contradicts the idea of secularism.

We believe that by taking effective actions the state should visibly demonstrate its respect to the rights of religious minority and undertake appropriate measures for due protection of freedom of religion of the Muslim community in the village of Samtatskaro. Efforts of political and civil actors in response to these issues are essential in the process of building a society that is based on freedom, equality and tolerance.

*Georgian Democratic Initiative (GDI)*

*Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC)*

*Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA)*

*International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED)*

*Transparency International – Georgia*

*Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations*

*Article 42 of the Constitution of Georgia*