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### **Torture in the Georgian Prison System**

The members of the Civic Solidarity platform<sup>1</sup> support the statement of a number of leading Georgian non-governmental organizations condemning the practice of torture and inhumane treatment in the Georgian penal system.<sup>i</sup> The Georgian government must launch a full scale investigation of both these practices and the potential criminal liability of the responsible authorities, as well as prosecute all those captured on video mistreating prisoners and anyone involved in efforts to cover up these crimes.

We also call on the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and foreign diplomatic missions in Tbilisi to monitor the Georgian government investigation. Bearing in mind that the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting is currently in progress in Warsaw, we call on the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to send a mission to assess the situation and propose comprehensive measures to address the systemic problem of torture and inhuman treatment in the Georgian penal system.

While this dramatic, documentary evidence has focused attention on torture and cruel and inhuman treatment in the Georgian penal system, it is important to note that these problems are widespread in many Eurasian countries. It is essential for the international community to address this problem, including by developing international standards for independent NGO monitoring of places of detention. While in past years we have been pleased to observe the establishment of National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM) in a growing number of countries in the region, an alarming number of NPM are either not truly independent or their establishment has actually helped close the space for independent NGO monitoring, as is the case today in Georgia. NGO monitoring of places of detention is an essential component of the fight against torture, but is only fully possible if NGOs have a firm legal basis that ensures their ability to gain access to places of detention and conduct meaningful monitoring of conditions there.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1468%3Astatement-of-non-governmental-organizations&catid=45%3Anews-eng&Itemid=1&lang=en](http://www.gyla.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1468%3Astatement-of-non-governmental-organizations&catid=45%3Anews-eng&Itemid=1&lang=en)

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<sup>1</sup> The Civic Solidarity Platform unites over 50 civil society organizations committed to improving the human rights situation in Europe, Eurasia and the US. It provides a common space for these groups to share their experience in conducting research, advocacy, and public organizing and to find new channels of communication and improved methods for working cooperatively. Its aim is to serve as a conduit through which civic activists can build alliances, strengthen mutual support and solidarity, and improve their influence on national and international human rights policy. The Civic Solidarity Platform was born out of recognition that nongovernment groups need to work in a more effective and coordinated way in order to counteract negative trends in the field of state protection for human rights and defense of democratic principles.