

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Georgia: Amnesty International and non-governmental organizations of Georgia urge the government to promptly approve Action Plan on Domestic Violence

One year ago, on 9 June 2006, the Law of Georgia on Combating Domestic Violence, Prevention of and Support to Its Victims (Law on Domestic Violence) came into force. It stipulated that the government of Georgia should approve the Action Plan on Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence (Action Plan) on 9 October 2006. Eight months later it has yet to be approved. The signatories of this statement call on the government to promptly approve and swiftly implement the Action Plan.

Thousands of women in Georgia are subjected to domestic violence on a regular basis. They are hit, beaten, raped, and in some cases even killed. Other forms of domestic violence include deprivation of economic necessities and verbal and psychological abuse. Violence in the family is also often directed against elderly people and children. The authorities acknowledged the problem but have not done enough to combat it.

In a positive move, on 25 May 2006, Parliament adopted the Law on Domestic Violence. One of its stated aims is to provide “access to justice to victims of domestic violence”. The law introduced for the first time a definition of domestic violence into Georgian legislation and provided a legal basis for the issuance of protection and restraint orders. It also stipulated that temporary shelters for victims of domestic violence and rehabilitation centres for batterers should be set up in 2008.

In addition, the law requested the government to approve a special plan outlining measures and activities necessary to implement the law, within four months after the law’s publication, i.e. until 9 October 2006. In this context the Action Plan covering the period 2006 to 2008 was drafted with significant input by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It set out time frames for the implementation of activities and specified which stakeholders, including government agencies and NGOs, would be responsible for implementing strategies to raise public awareness, protect and assist victims of domestic violence, prepare further legislation, and consider budgetary implications.

The signatories to this statement are concerned that the failure to date to approve the Action Plan has led to delays in implementing measures to eradicate domestic violence. We call on the government to demonstrate its commitment to combat domestic violence by:

- o Promptly approving an updated version of the draft Action Plan on Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence;
- o Ensuring that all relevant government agencies including the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs; the Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Justice; and the Ministry of Finance swiftly move towards its implementation;
- o Ensuring that sufficient funds are promptly made available to implement activities necessary to end domestic violence in Georgia and provide protection to the victims.

Background information:

Although the Law on Domestic Violence stipulates that the authorities should maintain statistics on domestic violence, there are still no comprehensive statistics on the issue. A study by the non-governmental Caucasus Women's Research and Consulting Network, published in 2006, reported that 5.2 per cent of women experienced frequent physical abuse by their partner, adding to the data produced by UN Population Fund studies in Georgia in 1999 and 2005 which found that five per cent of women reported physical abuse.

Among obstacles to eradicating domestic violence are the widespread impunity enjoyed by its perpetrators, and insufficient measures and services to protect victims such as temporary shelters, adequate, safe housing, and a sufficient number of crisis centres.

Domestic violence severely restricts the enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, such as, for example, the rights to mental and physical integrity, the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to health, and sometimes the right to life. Apart from its immediate negative consequences for victims of domestic violence, such violence also has a brutalizing effect on societies.

Georgia is a party to international and regional human rights treaties, all of which require the government to protect, respect and fulfill the human rights of those persons in its territory and subject to its jurisdiction. Thus, Georgia is obliged under international law to act with due diligence to prevent and investigate domestic violence and hold perpetrators of violence accountable, and ensure protection and reparation including compensation to victims.

Amnesty International
Caucasus Women's Research and Consulting Network
Centre for Protection Of Constitutional Rights
Georgian Association for Psychosocial Aid "Ndoba"
Georgian Young Lawyers Association
Sakhli – Advice Center for Women
Union "Saphari"
Women's Centre
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