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HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE NEW GEORGIA

Major human rights violations go far to explain the ouster of Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Helsinki Watch hopes that the new rulers of Georgia are mindful of these violations as they consolidate power and establish a new government. There are, however, several disturbing incidents which suggest that this may not be the case:

-- The new Military Council twice used unjustified lethal force against pro-Gamsakhurdia demonstrators:

-- On January 4, gunmen shot at a crowd, killing four and injuring 23. Paramilitary leader Dzhaba Ioseliani, member of the Military Council, stated he intends to use such methods in the future.

-- On January 7, gunmen attacked a crowd with automatic rifles and smoke bombs, injuring two. Under gunpoint, photographers were forced to surrender their film. Military Council spokesmen apologized and returned a CNN cameraman's film.

-- The new Georgian Prime Minister, Tengiz Sigua, stated he thinks Zviad Gamsakhurdia is mentally unstable. To support this view, Sigua referred to a 1977 finding by Moscow's Serbsky Institute -- notorious for its political abuse of psychiatry. By relying on this "authority," Sigua gives scant grounds for hope that Gamsakhurdia will receive a fair hearing.

-- A reliable source has informed Helsinki Watch that three leading supporters of Gamsakhurdia have been imprisoned by the Georgian opposition:

- Nemo Buchuladze, former Deputy Chairman of Parliament;**
- Taniel Gelantia, Head, Parliamentary Budget Commission;**
- Merab Kiknadze, Member of Parliament**

Helsinki Watch condemns these acts of violence in the strongest terms. There is no justification for violence against unarmed demonstrators, a clear violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The new rulers of Georgia must comply with international human rights obligations if they wish to distinguish themselves from their predecessor and gain international recognition.