



2020 Parliamentary Elections

Third Interim Report of Pre-Election Monitoring

(August 4 – September 5)

8 September 2020

This report is made possible by the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU). The opinions expressed herein belong solely to the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID, the United States Government or the EU



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I. Introduction

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy has been monitoring the pre-election period of the October 31, 2020 parliamentary elections of Georgia since June 1. The monitoring is implemented with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU). The third interim report of the pre-election monitoring covers the period from August 4 through September 5, 2020, as well as individual developments that began prior to August 4 and continued or became known in the reporting period.

II. Key Findings

In the reporting period, ISFED has found: **17 facts of possible vote buying; 2 projects initiated by the authorities in the pre-election period, to win the sympathy of large groups of voters; 3 cases of dismissals based on alleged political motive; 4 cases of intimidation/harassment based on possible political motive; 1 case of physical violence based on possible political motive; 18 cases of possible use of administrative resources; 6 cases of interference of the Church in the pre-election campaign; 2 cases of possible interference with journalistic activities; as well as cases of damaging campaign posters in 13 municipalities.**

According to the organization, signs of possible vote buying and use of administrative resources during the reporting period continues to be the main challenge of the election environment. In addition to attempts of possible vote buying by the ruling party, we have also found vote buying by the Alliance of Patriots and the Free Georgia parties, as well as individual cases of representatives of the United National Movement distributing groceries in an attempt to win the sympathy of voters.

In addition to vote buying, ISFED found use of administrative resources in involvement of the ruling party's majoritarian candidates in events funded by the State and local budgets, which essentially blurs the line between the State and the ruling party. Even though the election campaign officially began on September 1 and restrictions set in the Election Code about the use of administrative resources did not apply prior to that period, facts described in this report have a negative effect on the pre-election environment and run against the principle provided in paragraph 5.4 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document, according to which States should maintain a clear line between the State and the party – in particular, a political party should not be identified with the state.

As the parliamentary elections approach, authorities are initiating various social projects in large numbers, aimed at financially catering specific social groups. These projects were not known two months prior to the elections. The purpose and the extent of these projects lead us to believe

that these initiatives are related to elections and their motive is to increase support of the ruling party during the elections.

It appears that the ruling Georgian Dream is trying to use all administrative resources available at its hands for electoral purposes. Therefore, a number of public institutions, instead of implementing social and economic policy priorities, focus on garnering votes and putting the ruling party in a more preferential situation than its competitors.

In view of the grave social situation in the country, existence of social programs tailored to the needs of various social groups is important, but these programs should be a part of a common, well-thought-out social policy.

Noticeably, high-ranking clerics of the Georgian Orthodox Church are in attendance at the ruling party events, conveying an impression that the Church supports the Georgian Dream.

During the reporting period, ISFED recorded instances of physical violence against a political party activist, based on an alleged political motive. In addition, instances of intimidation/harassment and dismissals based on alleged political motives have increased.

In **Batumi** Drama Theatre, employees received 77 grocery baskets on behalf of Irma Inashvili, the Alliance of Patriots and company Carrefour. According to Davit Okitashvili, head of the Georgian Chamber of Culture, provision of the assistance was made possible by Irma Inashvili and the Alliance of Patriots. In **Ozurgeti**, with support of Inashvili and the Alliance of Patriots, employees of a local folklore center and the Aleksandre Tsutsunava State Theatre also received grocery baskets. In **Abasha**, under the initiative of the municipality mayor, in the process of free-of-charge provision of free medical/prophylactic examinations to locals, the medical personnel displayed the Georgian Dream campaign materials. In the process of distribution of products by Kobuleti City Hall produced in a **Kobuleti**-based greenhouse within a program of the Ministry of Agriculture of Ajara, the city hall representative did not explain to locals the source and the purpose of assistance. Consequently, locals considered that the assistance had been provided by the Georgian Dream. In **Gori**, head of the Gori regional organization of the United National Movement handed out grocery packages to three socially vulnerable families. In **Poti**, majoritarian candidate of the ruling party, Irakli Khakhubia gave monetary rewards to winners of a football tournament, co-sponsored by a company 25% of which is owned by Mr. Khakhubia. The **program of “cheap Medications”** announced by the Free Georgia party leader contains elements of vote buying. Within the program, the party opened an alternative pharmacy store that sells certain medications imported from Turkey at lower price than their market price in Georgia. PSP also offers medications at the price that they are sold for in Turkey. Leader of the **Georgian Idea** party together with the director of the Primakov Georgian-Russian Social Center gifted a car, kitchen equipment, home appliances and livestock to a family.

In **Oni and Marneuli**, ISFED found cases of alleged vote-buying by the ruling party's majoritarian MPs. In **Oni**, a candidate participated in distribution of flour sacks to locals together with municipal officials, while in **Marneuli** a candidate had a meeting over a table with sweets and tea. In Senaki, at Tsikhegoji premises, the European Georgia party held a gathering and a reception for guests. According to a party representative, the reception was organized for party members and coordinates only.

Alleged facts of intimidation and harassment have mostly been reported against opposition party activists and supporters. And in one case, a ruling party supporter accused the United National Movement of issuing threats. **Tianeti Mayor** Tamaz Mechiauri, who is planning to run in the election as a majoritarian candidate has also spoken of blackmail and threats against him. According to him, he is receiving phone-calls threatening to leak compromising information ahead of the election in order to harm his candidacy. In **Zugdidi**, representatives of Lelo stated that their activist was hired as an intern at Credo Bank, but he was forced to terminate his contract because the employer prohibited political activities. In Telavi, a supporter of the Georgian Dream party said representatives of the United National Movement are threatening him that unless he stops supporting the Georgian Dream, he will be punished after the National Movement returns to power.

During the reporting period, we have identified a fact of physical assault against activists of the opposition party Lelo. Investigation has been initiated and 1 person has been arrested.

Dismissals possibly based on political motive have been found in **Khulo, Gori and Ninotsminda**. In Gori, an individual who used to work for local farmers for daily work, reported that employers refused to hire him because he criticized a member of the local assembly from the ruling party for supporting Alexander Lukashenko.

Signs of use of administrative resources mostly manifested in attendance of majoritarian candidates at presentations of projects funded by the State in **Gurjaani, Kharagauli, Telavi, Lagodekhi, Ambrolauri, Samgori, Poti**. At these events, MP candidates together with central and local government officials attended opening and site visits of enterprises and newly rehabilitated facilities. After that, their majority made it seem like it was their own activity on their social media accounts.

Attendance of candidates at events funded by the central or local budgets contains signs of campaigning and therefore, use of administrative resources, blurring the line between the state and the ruling party, which is a serious challenge undermining equal and competitive pre-election environment.

In **Abasha**, a meeting was held at the Georgian Dream office during working hours, attended by some employees of the local self-government, including mayoral representatives in villages. The

representatives had lists at hand, which according to them were lists of kindergarten students, however first on the list was a school principal and her cell-phone number was also indicated. Presentation of majoritarian candidates by the ruling party leaders was also attended by local civil servants in Khelvachauri, during working hours. Even though prohibition of participation in election campaigning became applicable to civil servants starting from September 1, their participation in campaign events contains signs of use of administrative resources.

Before the announcement of the official election campaign, activists of the European Georgia party were fined for displaying party posters at Tianeti Highway and in Ortachala. In addition, posters placed by the party in several municipalities were damaged in large numbers.

During the pre-election period, use of hate speech has been found in campaigns of the Georgian March and the Alliance of Patriots parties. ISFED has filed an application with the CEC over the Alliance of Patriots campaign ads. Administrative proceedings have been subsequently initiated.

III. Recommendations

Central and local authorities:

- investigate instances of physical violence and pressure on political activists in a timely and transparent manner and ensure prevention of such facts;
- observe the two-month period prescribed by the legislation when planning social assistance programs, to avoid a perception of vote buying by announcing these programs during the pre-election period
- to avoid the use of budget-funded events for campaigning in favor of a party and its candidates;
- civil servants should refrain from participating in campaigning and pre-election events of political parties and candidates;
- for objective coverage of pre-election processes, it is important to protect media outlets from intimidation/harassment and to investigate such acts in a timely and transparent manner.

Political parties:

- to ensure integrity of their actions and not engage with voters in a manner that contains elements of vote-buying;
- officially nominated as well as possible majoritarian candidates should refrain from directly providing social assistance, to not violate requirements of the law and create a perception of vote buying and influencing the will of voters;

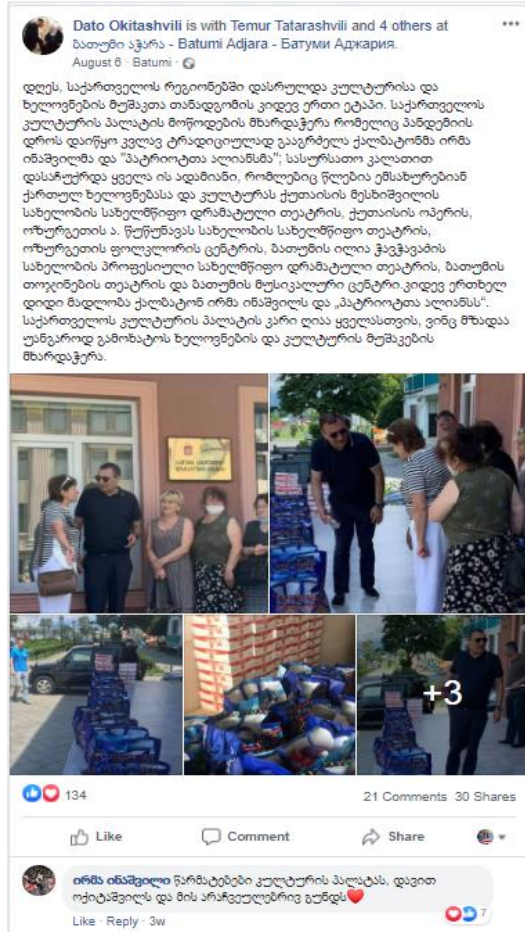
- majoritarian candidates should refrain from participating in events funded by the state and/or local budgets;
- not allow intimidation/harassment and physical violence against candidates and supporters of their competitors;
- refrain from interfering with activities of media outlets.

Religious organizations:

- The clerics should refrain from participating in campaign events of political parties and candidates.

IV. Possible Vote-Buying

Batumi



On August 6, in Batumi, actors as well as other individuals employed in this field, received grocery baskets with the support of Carrefour and Irma Inashvili: 40 baskets were distributed at the drama theatre, 14 at the puppets theatre and 23 at the musical theatre, a total of 77.

In an interview with ISFED, representatives of Batumi Drama Theatre administration confirmed distribution of groceries, while the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia neither denied nor confirmed the fact.

Information about the assistance was disseminated by the head of the Georgian Chamber of Culture Dato Okitashvili, [on his Facebook page](#). According to the information, yet another stage of supporting culture and arts professionals in the regions was implemented by the Georgian Chamber of Culture, with the support of Irma Inashvili and the Alliance of Patriots. In addition to Batumi, grocery packages were also distributed in Kutaisi and Ozurgeti.

Ozurgeti

In Ozurgeti, on August 6, employees of a local folklore center and Aleqsandre Tsutsunava State Theatre received gift baskets with the support of Irma Inashvili and the Alliance of Patriots. In an interview with ISFED, representative of the folklore center administration confirmed this fact. However, leader of the Alliance of Patriots in Ozurgeti categorically denied this fact. Employees of Ozurgeti folklore center and Aleqsandre Tsutsunava Theatre administration were informed that the grocery baskets were from the Alliance of Patriots.

Poti

On September 1, at “Maltakva Beach Fest” in Poti, the final of Boris Paichadze Football Tournament was held. The event was attended by the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate for Poti, Khobi and Senaki, Irakli Khakhubia. He gave the winners certificates and financial rewards – in particular, first place holders received 2,000 GEL, 2nd place holders – 1,500 GEL and

3rd place holders – 1,000 GEL. The best forward, goalkeeper and referee also received gifts. [The family of Kakhubia](#) was the initiator and the supporter of the tournament.

25% of shares of Ltd Iceberg, sponsor of the monetary gifts, is owned by incumbent majoritarian MP and majoritarian candidate of Poti, Khobi and Senaki, Irakli Khakhubia.

Kobuleti

[On August 5, in Kobuleti](#), it was reported that the Georgian Dream was distributing vegetables free of charge. In an interview with ISFED, Kobuleti Municipality City Hall's chief of staff said that vegetables and in particular, products grown in Kobuleti greenhouse were distributed within the agricultural program of Ajara. According to him, mayoral representative in Kobuleti Davit Zoidze, who was assigned to distribute the assistance among locals, stored the products in his father's facility and distributed them from there. Since Davit Zoidze did not explain to locals what the source and purpose of the assistance was, locals thought that it was from the Georgian Dream.

In an interview with ISFED observer, majoritarian MP of Kobuleti, Koba Nakaidze ruled out participation of his party's representatives in the case.

Abasha

On July 25, at the family medicine center Shani in Abasha, under the initiative of Abasha Municipality Mayor Levan Makalatia, and with the support of the director of the Western Regional Center of Medical Technologies and the director of Ltd. Shani, free medical/prophylactic examinations were provided to the population of Abasha Municipality. Information about the event was published [on the Facebook page of Abasha Mayor](#).



In a [media report about the event](#) (at the 5:55 – 6:00 minute mark), the Georgian Dream flag on doctor's table is clearly visible. Within the initiative, nearly three hundred beneficiaries received the service.

Representative of the City Hall told ISFED observer that the City Hall did not participate in this particular activity, and that it merely helped the Ltd. Shani to organize the event and inform locals about it. The representative also added that the City Hall ensured transportation of locals, in order for those who could not cover the long distance to be able to participate in the medical examination. Notably, such activity also took place in the pre-election period of the presidential election. Director of Ltd. Shani Nana Shengelia was an active supporter of the Georgian Dream in previous elections.

Oni

[On August 5](#), the incumbent majoritarian MP of Racha-Lechkhum-Svaneti and a candidate for the office of MP in a unified district of Amrbolauri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi and Mestia, Gocha Enukidze together with Oni Municipality officials participated in distribution of flour sacks in villages Chiora, Glola and Ghebi for 75, 160 and 250 families, respectively. Notably, finances for the assistance were allocated from the municipal reserve fund.

Marneuli

- On August 3, in village Dashtapa of Marneuli municipality, chairperson of the United National Movement in Marneuli, Agil Mustapayev met with locals. At the campaign event, participants were offered tea and sweets. Photos of the event were published by the chairperson of the UNM in Marneuli, Agil Mustapayev [on his Facebook page](#).
- On August 22, in Marneuli, a majoritarian candidate Zaur Dargali held a meeting with [village elders](#) together with the PM and other leaders of the Georgian Dream. Meeting participants were sitting at a table set with fruits and sweets.

Senaki

On September 5, the European Georgia had a meeting at the premises of Tsikhegoji in Senaki Municipality. According to the party, they were meeting with party coordinators and activists. Following the meeting, guests were offered a dinner. According to the party representative, it was meant for party members and coordinators only.

Khelvachauri

- On August 19, chairperson of the Georgian Idea party, Levan Chachua visited the family of Putkaradze in Khelvachauri together with Dimitri Lortkipanidze, director of the Primakov Georgian-Russian Social Center founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia in Georgia.

Levan Chachua and Dimitri Lortkipanidze, together with other individuals, gave kitchen equipment, a car, livestock and other goods to the Putkaradze family. It was reported that an assistance worth of 45,000 GEL had been provided by a citizen of Russia. The video of the fact is available on personal Facebook accounts of the Primakov Fund director, Dimitri Lortkipanidze, as well as the chairperson of the Georgian Idea party.

- On August 22, ISFED observer was visited by Ts.D. from a neighboring district to report that under the instructions of the Georgian Dream she was interviewing people. The questionnaire included the following columns: name, last name, address as well as party

affiliation, which according to the party coordinator meant who the individual was going to vote for. In an interview with ISFED observer, Ts.D. said her assignment was to write down a list of socially vulnerable families during the door-to-door interviews and with their consent she was going to provide the list to the Georgian Dream. After that, the party would provide medications and other essential items to these families.

Dedoplistskaro

The United National Movement [offers assistance](#) to local population. In particular, it provides free of charge online registration to receive the state assistance of 200 GEL for children under the age of 18. According to დედოფლისწყარო ენმ/Dedoplistskaro UNM, beginning from August 20, information about a point of contact in each village will be posted on Facebook. These individuals will help beneficiaries of the assistance register online free of charge.

Gldani/Samgori/Mtsatsminda

- [On August 2](#), during a meeting in Gldani, leader of the Free Georgia party, Kakha Kukava spoke about a program of cheap medications carried out by the party. In particular, Free Georgia imports certain types of medications from Turkey and sells them cheaper than the pharmacies in Georgia. The party also opened a [pharmacy](#). Kakha Kukava told the people who had gathered for the meeting to familiarize themselves with information about the election platform in brochures that were distributed, and that one of the points in the platform concerned cheap medications. The brochure also includes a list of medications with pharmacy prices, as well as lower prices offered by the party. The election platform indicates that full list of medications can be obtained by going to the party website or by calling a special phone number. According to the Free Georgia representative, medications are not distributed free of charge, they are sold without any profits to the party. According to Kakha Kukava, he is planning to implement similar program about fuel.
- [On August 10](#), Kakha Kukava presented the majoritarian candidate for Krtsanisi, Irakli Jalagonia during a public event in the Vilnius Garden. At the meeting, Kukava announced about the party's program of "cheap medications". According to him, the party had imported certain medications from Turkey, which individual citizens could buy at the initial purchase price. According to him, pharmacies that have monopolized the market, are selling these medications at a much higher price. In Kukava's words, they imported medications in large quantities, including heart disease medications, which cost 70 GEL in Turkey and 220 GEL in Georgian pharmacies.

- [On August 15](#), when presenting the majoritarian candidate of Samgori District in the third micro-district of Varketili, leader of the Free Democrats party, Kakha Kukava spoke about the “free medications” program initiated by the party. Within the program, the party offers interested individuals medications imported from Turkey at a price lower than their market price in Georgia.

Tbilisi

On September 1, the pharmaceutical company [PSP released a statement](#) according to which it will import medications from Turkey for Georgian citizens without any profit. According to the statement, based on individual requests of Georgian citizens (Form 100), the company has been importing from Turkey expensive hematological, oncological, rheumatological and cardiological medications without any profit, selling them at the initial purchase price. Over the last year, 15,000 individuals have benefitted from this service offered by PSP. The company offers interested individuals to call PSP’s special numbers, order their medications based on Form 100 and receive them from Turkey within 2 weeks, without any extra charges.

[95% of Ltd. PSP Pharma](#) is owned by majoritarian MP Kakhaber Okriashvili, who will be running in the election in Dmanisi, Tsalka, Bolnisi and TeTritskaro District on the bloc [Strength is in Unity ticket](#).

Gori

On August 11, head of the United National Movement regional organization in Gori, MP of the Parliament of Georgia Badri Basishvili, who is viewed as a potential majoritarian candidate for the same party in Gori electoral district, provided groceries to [3 families as an assistance](#). In connection to this, Basishvili posted information on his Facebook account, as well as on the official page of the party’s organization in Gori. According to the party representative Vasilisa Jabakhadze, because election date had not been announced at the moment of the distribution of groceries and Badri Basilashvili has not been nominated as a candidate, they do not consider that provision of groceries amounts to vote-buying.

V. Programs Initiated by the Government in the Pre-Election Period, for Gaining Sympathy of Voters

The Ministry of Defense initiative

[Under the decision of the Minister of Defense](#), thousands of civilians will have their debts before the Gori Military Hospital, amounting to a total of 1,600,000 GEL written off.

Initiative of the Georgian Dream MPs

[The initiative submitted to the Parliament of Georgia](#) by MPs Dimitri Khundadze, Koba Nakaidze and Dimitri Mkheidze introduces amendments in the following three laws: “On Social Assistance”, “On the State Pension” and “On the State Compensation and Academic Stipend.”

According to the bill on “**Amendments to the Law of Georgia on Social Assistance**”, subsistence allowances¹ and social packages provided in excess from December 1, 2016² to July 20, 2020 will be legalized and beneficiaries will not have to return them.

According to the explanatory note of the bill, families that receive the subsistence allowance and belong to the category of the socially vulnerable, despite the funds provided in excess, are burdened by the requirement to return these funds to the State budget, which is eventually enforced through court. According to the current/obtained data, adoption of the bill will benefit **3,478 socially vulnerable families**, while the amount of subsistence allowance to be returned to the State budget is approximately 658,512 GEL. In addition, 230 beneficiaries **will not have to return excess social package**, with a total amount of 69,000 GEL.

According to the bill “**On Amendments to the Law of Georgia on State Pension**”, state pensions provided in excess will be legalized and corresponding individuals will be relieved of obligations caused as a result of crediting and providing pensions in excess. Pensions³ provided in excess from December 1, 2016 to July 20, 2020 will be legalized.

According to the explanatory note, based on current/obtained data, **adoption of the bill will benefit 1,594 pensioners**, and the amount to be returned to the State budget is approximately 727,733 GEL.

According to the bill on “**Amendments to the Law of Georgia on State Compensation and State Academic Stipend**”, compensation provided in excess from December 1, 2016 to July 20, 2020, will be legalized.⁴ According to the explanatory note, based on current/obtained data, **adoption**

¹ Subsistence allowance and social package is provided in excess due to the following circumstances – families that receive subsistence allowance are required to notify the Social Service Agency in an event of change of address, demographic changes in the family and other reasons, but sometimes they fail to do so. Before receiving the corresponding information, the Agency continues providing allowance. See: explanatory note of the bill -

<https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/259715?>

² Subsistence allowance provided in excess prior to December 1, 2016, was legalized based on the amendments of December 22, 2016 - <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3508585?publication=0#DOCUMENT:1>;

³ Beneficiaries are required to inform the Social Service Agency if grounds for terminating the pension arise within 15 days after such grounds arise. However, often beneficiaries fail to provide this information to the Agency. As a result, the pension is terminated belatedly. Further, within the measures for prevention of spread of COVID-19 and to provide support to the population the Government of Georgia adopted a resolution N184 on March 23, 2020, based on which April pension was provided to the beneficiaries by the LEPL Social Service Agency in May. According to the database of state assistance, 1056 pensioners who received the April pension in March had died, while according to the legislation, their pension should have been terminated as of April. See the explanatory note - <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/260058?>

⁴ Beneficiaries of compensation are required to inform the Social Service Agency if grounds for terminating the pension arise, within 15 days after such grounds arise. However, often beneficiaries fail to provide the information on grounds for terminating

of the bill will benefit 178 beneficiaries of compensation, and the amount to be returned to the State budget is approximately 85,883 GEL.

These three bills envisage termination of administrative, judicial and enforcement proceedings related to repayment of the money.

VI. Cases of Intimidation/Harassment based on Possible Political Motive

Akhalkalaki

On August 10, Tariel Murmanishvili, lawyer of the Georgian Dream majoritarian MP of Ninotsminda-Akhalkalaki, Enzel Mkoyan, [announced](#) that Enzel Mkoyan was blackmailed and threatened. In an interview with ISFED observer, Enzel Mkoyan confirmed the information provided by the lawyer to media outlets. According to him, he received a call and was told not to participate in elections. Otherwise, they threatened the life of his family members. [On August 21, a car of Enzel Mkoyan's brother exploded](#). According to the MP, recently he had been driving the car, so he was the target and he believed that the explosion had to do with the elections. Investigation has been launched under paragraph 1 of article 229 of the Criminal Code.

Telavi

On August 27, [Radio Hereti reported](#) that in village Karajala of Telavi Municipality a supporter of the Georgian Dream party was pressured by a member of the United National Movement. According to Aghajala Oghujov, he, as a supporter of the Georgian Dream, was approached by several individuals at night and was told that unless he stopped supporting the party, he would be punished after the United National Movement came into power. Oghujov has implicated a majoritarian candidate of Akhmeta-Telavi-Kvareli-Lagodekhi, Giorgi Botkoveli. He thinks that his intimidation was in Botkoveli's interests.

Oghujov refused to speak with ISFED observer. According to the Georgian Dream Sakrebulo member Zurab Musaev, he only knows what has been reported in the article and can neither confirm nor deny it. However, he added that he trusts Oghujov and believes him.

In an interview with the observer, the UNM candidate Giorgi Botkoveli categorically denied his and his supporters' participation in such incident.

Tianeti

the compensation (mostly, public activities). As a result, the compensation is terminated belatedly. See the explanatory note - <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/260061?>

Tianeti Mayor Tamaz Mechiauri has reported [blackmail and threats](#). In an interview with ISFED, he said that he was being blackmailed and was told that they would leak compromising materials prior to the election, in order to harm his candidacy. He did not specify any names.

Zugdidi

On August 26, Lelo for Georgia majoritarian candidate in Zugdidi, Aleksandre Akhvlediani reported that a member of the party's youth association, Berdia Pipia was pressured. According to him, Berdia Pipia was told by his employer to stop political activities or they would terminate the relationship/cooperation with him.

Berdia Pipia told ISFED observer that several days ago he was hired as an intern at Credo Bank, where he was introduced to internal regulations, according to which employees may not engage in politics. He had two choices – he could either stay at Credo and continue working or leave. He protested and left the bank. He said that the state system is intimidating businesses and as a result, companies are forced to enact such policies.

VII. Physical Violence based on Possible Political Motive

Tbilisi

[On September 4](#), an activist of the Lelo for Georgia party, the manager of Levan Samushia's campaign office, Giorgi Glurjidze was attack by several individuals and insulted physically. According to the press office of the party, the assailants were asking him why he supported Lelo. Glurjadze had a brain concussion and was hospitalized. According to him, he can identify the assailants.

[On September 5](#), the police detained one of the assailants. Investigation has been launched in connection to violence, under paragraph 1¹(b) of the Criminal Code of Georgia.

VIII. Dismissals based on Possible Political Motive

Khulo

A member Lelo's campaign office and an activist, Zviad Diasamidze was dismissed from the position of a head teacher and a teacher at Ltd. Saint Abuseridze Tbeli School of Khulo. Diasamidze told ISFED observer that the school administration issued an ultimatum to him – to choose either politics or school. According to him, he wrote a letter of resignation and left the

position of the head teacher, but he wanted to continue pedagogical work. The school administration dismissed him entirely.

In an interview with ISFED, the school principal Evdemoz Alelishvili said that they do not interfere with politics and Zviad Diasamidze was dismissed based on his own resignation letter. The school belongs to the Patriarchy of Georgia.

Gori

On August 23, [Mtavari TV Company](#) reported that a resident of village Dzevera was claiming that she was dismissed based on political motives. In particular, according to an individual named Maia Sichinava, representatives of the authorities were taking away the only source of livelihood from her and her mother. In an interview with ISFED observer, Sichinava said she criticized a majoritarian member of the municipality assembly from the village – Ioseb Mumladze for voicing support of Alexander Lukashenko. After that, the farmers who previously hired her for daily work, refused to hire her again stating that their business would have problems if did so.

Ninotsminda

There were mass dismissals at the City Hall of Ninotsminda in August. A total of 29 individuals left their jobs for various reasons – in particular, 22 employees did not have their contracts renewed following their expiration, while six employees wrote letters of resignation. According to [Ninotsminda Mayor Anivard Mosoyan](#), employees over the age of 70 wrote letters of resignation, since they “often had to visit doctors and miss work for medical reasons.” Some of the resigned employees said that they wrote letters of resignation based on the regional administration’s request. It has been reported that the dismissals are based on political motive, especially in case of mayoral representatives because most of them are believed to openly support Enzel Mkoyan and after nomination of the new majoritarian candidate, the ruling party may have faced problems in these villages. Nonetheless, they refrained from openly talking about it. Several mayoral representatives participated in a program aired on Parvana TV in support of Mkoyan. Later [director of a sports school, Andranik Karslyan also announced about his resignation](#). He is a close friend of Mkoyan.

IX. Interference with Journalistic Activities and Harassment

Kobuleti

[On August 5, in Kobuleti](#), reporters and camera crew of TV Pirveli who had arrived for covering a possible incident of vote-buying, were aggressively met by the Georgian Dream supporters, who insulted them verbally and physically. In an interview with ISFED observer, journalist Erekle Noghaideli confirmed that Mamuka Shatirishvili (who was writing down names and personal

numbers of individuals during distribution of vegetables) threatened him with the following words: “Don’t you want [to be able] to walk [freely] in the street?!” In addition, locals that participated in distribution of vegetables urged reporters not to report the information.

Supporter of the Georgian Dream, Achiko Bajelidze verbally insulted journalist Nato Gogelia, who was at the premises of the Georgian Dream campaign office at that moment.

Akhmeta

On August 29, [a rally](#) against Pankisi community radio WAY was held in village Duisi of Akhmeta Municipality, organized by Lia Margoshvili, head of the Roddy Scott Foundation. Participants of the rally threatened to invade the studio of the community radio and demanded the founder of the community radio, journalist Gela Mtvlishvili to abandon his professional activities in the Pankisi Gorge.

[According to the radio](#), their office and the office of the foundation are in the same building. The foundation wants to purchase the entire building. After the radio requested information on possible privatization of the building, Akhmeta Mayor Ioseb Karumashvili told the head of the Roddy Scott Foundation that they would no longer give them the building and advised her to gather people and demand transfer of the building. According to the radio, Lia Margoshvili is an activist of the Georgian Dream and their representative for the elections in the Duisi area, and that the rally was organized under the instructions of Akhmeta City Hall officials and the State Security Service representatives. Representatives of the radio believe that this is related to their impartial activities and critical coverage of the local authorities. According to them, participants of the rally included: minor students of the Roddy Scott Foundation, their parents, relatives of young men who recently beat up a father and son for wearing shorts in the street in Kvareltskali village, as well as members of Akhmeta Assembly from Pankisi villages, employees of the administrative unit of Duisi of Akhmeta Municipality City Hall, several teachers of Duisi public school, up to four employees of a non-governmental organization working in the area and the State Security Service officers’ family members. The municipality council members did not object to calls containing signs of violence voiced at the rally.

Lia Margoshvili told ISFED observers that she has her own arguments and that she did not intimidate or harass Gela Mtvlishvili and the radio because the management of the British foundation would disapprove of such actions. Further, according to her, she was reprimanded by the Municipality Mayor for organizing a rally in the pre-election period, because it would not benefit anyone.

X. Signs of Using Administrative Resources

Gurjaani

- [On August 14](#), the majoritarian candidate for Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Dedoplistskaro, Signaghi, Davit Songhulashvili, together with the Prime Minister and other leaders of the Georgian Dream, visited a cold storage facility in village Chumlaki and attended the process of factory purchases of peaches. The cold storage facility was created within the “Unified Agricultural Project”. 1,100 000 GEL were invested in the project, including 800,000 GEL for affordable agricultural loans. The information about it was [published by the MP on his Facebook page](#).
- [On August 14](#), majoritarian candidate Davit Songulashvili and government officials visited Hotel Ampelo in village Kardenakhi, funded by the state program “Preferential Agricultural Credit”. Sixth of the total budget of the hotel – 1 million GEL are from the agricultural credit. Information about the visit was [published by the MP on his Facebook page](#).

Sagarejo

[On August 14](#), the majoritarian candidate in Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Dedoplistskaro, Signaghi district, Davit Songulashvili visited a dried fruit production facility Geo Organics opened with the state’s support, together with the Prime Minister of Georgia and the General Secretary of the Georgian Dream. The facility is a beneficiary of the Ministry of Agriculture programs and its total investments amount to 5 million GEL, including the state grant of 345,000 GEL and a preferential agricultural credit of 1,500,000 GEL. Information about the visit was [published by the MP on his Facebook page](#).

Kharagauli

- [On August 4](#), at 13:00, the majoritarian candidate of the Georgian Dream in Sachkhere, Chiatura, Kharagauli district met with civil servants, municipality assembly members, school principals, mayoral representatives in administrative units, employees of non-profit (non-commercial) enterprises and party activists. Information about the meeting had not been announced in advance.
ISFED observer found party activists and acting mayors in Kharagauli, outside the building. There were about 60-70 people in the meeting room. The meeting ended at 14:00. Several participants told the observer that they received information about the meeting from the party office. They were asked to confirm their attendance because seats were limited due to the pandemic. In response to a question about keeping the meeting a secret, MP of Kharagauli and Baghdati Koba Lursmanashvili said that it was an introductory meeting with party activists, not with the wider public.

- On August 17, during working hours, local governmental officials, including acting mayor Temur Chkheidze, heads of city hall departments and non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities met with incumbent MP and Kharagauli mayoral candidate Koba Lursmanashvili at the parliamentary bureau.
- On August 14, [Kharagauli Municipality Assembly published information on its Facebook page](#) about an agreement reached as a result of recent activity of MP Paata Kvizhinadze, Kharagauli Mayor and Kharagauli Assembly and majoritarian MP Koba Lursmanashvili about important problems affecting the population in Kharagauli Municipality. Notably, Paata Kvizhinadze is a majoritarian candidate in Sachkhere, Chiatura, Kharagauli District, and Koba Lursmanashvili is Kharagauli mayoral candidate. Facebook page of the Assembly shared the information from the page of **Koba Lursmanashvili, Kharagauli and Baghdati Majoritarian**.

Baghdati

On August 27, during the opening of a community center in Baghdati, Minister of Justice Thea Tsulukiani campaigned in favor of the incumbent majoritarian MP of Baghdati-Kharagauli and Kharagauli Municipality mayoral candidate Koba Lursmanashvili.

Telavi

[On August 10](#), the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in the election district of Telavi, Akhmeta, Kvareli and Lagodekhi, Irakli Kadagishvili visited a new hotel Esquisse in village Kurdgelauri, together with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense and Tbilisi Mayor. The hotel has been supported by the state-funded Enterprise Georgia program. The candidate shared the information [on his Facebook page](#).

Lagodekhi

[On August 11](#), the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in Telavi, Akhmeta, Kvareli and Lagodekhi electoral district, Irakli Kadagishvili visited a school construction site together with the Prime Minister and other government officials in village Kabali of Lagodekhi Municipality.

Notably, Kadagishvili resigned from his office of the state representative in Kakheti on August 1. He was attending these events in his capacity as a majoritarian candidate.

Abasha

- On August 14, chief of staff of the Abasha municipality council, Gocha Khurtsilava visited the Georgian Dream campaign office during working hours. He asked the ISFED observer

to meet there. The meeting concerned a case about official duties of the assembly chief of staff – in particular, provision of public information and transfer of a letter.

- On August 21, at 3:00pm, a meeting was in progress at the Georgian Dream office in the town of Abasha. According to the party representatives, it was a meeting of district campaign coordinators and canvassers; they also discussed the issue of election commission members to be nominated by the party. The meeting was attended by mayor representatives and members of the municipality assembly. ISFED observer found that civil servants were also in attendance, including: Ruslan Bokuchava, mayoral representative in the administrative unit of the town of Abasha; Akaki Bokuchava – second category lead specialist of municipal property and local tax division, as well as Nestor Dzidziguri – mayoral representative in village Pirveli Maisi and a member of the assembly from the same community, Iago Todua.

At the meeting, ISFED observer noticed two individuals by the entrance, holding lists in their hands. According to them, they were ordinary citizens. The observer found out that it was a list of kindergartens and schools, with names and phone numbers. It was also established these individuals were mayoral representative in village Pirveli Maisi Nestor Dzidziguri and a member of the assembly, Iago Todua. According to them, these were lists of kindergarten pupils. They were checking whether or not they received the assistance of 200 GEL. The observer verified if Rita Gogishvili, first on the list, was a kindergarten pupil. It turned out that she is a principal of village Pirveli Maisi school. Therefore, it is likely that those were the lists of teachers with their phone numbers.

- On August 26, during working hours, meetings of the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate Aleksandre Motserelia with voters in the town of Abasha and village Dzveli Abasha were held. The meetings were attended by employees of municipal bodies, in particular: Davit Tsanova – head of the department of organization and administrative units, Abasha administrative office; Niaz Shotadze – assistant to Abasha assembly chairperson; Ruslan Bokuchava – representative of the municipality mayor in the administrative unit of the town of Abasha; Akaki Bokuchava – second category lead specialist of municipal property and local tax division. The latter has been noticed at party meetings during working hours several times.

Khelvachauri

[On August 31](#), the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia and Tbilisi Mayor Kakhi Kaladze presented the Georgian Dream candidates in Khelvachauri. The pre-election meeting was held during working hours and was attended by civil servants of Khelvachauri Municipality. ISFED representative was able to identify some of them, including: head of the city hall's

financial/budgetary office, Taniel Nakashidze; head of the administrative office, Mirza Bakhtadze; head of the education and culture service, Ketevan Devadze.

Samgori

[On August 17](#), the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate Sozar Subari and other leaders of the party visited Varketili Community to visit a newly rehabilitated sports facility near Public School #215. The rehabilitation was funded by Tbilisi City Hall. Sozar Subari met with locals in Varketili Community and listened to their problems.

Poti

[On August 26](#), at an event organized by the Poti Municipality Mayor's Office, best graduates of 2020 received certificates and financial rewards. The event was attended by incumbent majoritarian and majoritarian candidate in Poti, Kobi and Senaki district, Irakli Khakhubia. Information about the event is published on the Facebook page of the Poti Municipality Mayor's Office.

Khashuri

On August 27, Khashuri Mayor Giorgi Guraspashvili and his deputy Zurab Rosebashvili inspected the riverbed cleaning works for the Suramula River. During a meeting with locals, the mayor indirectly implied that at the parliamentary elections they should support the ruling party candidate. The Mayor spoke on infrastructural works in the municipality and said that during the Georgian Dream governance, millions of GEL worth of works have been carried out in Khashuri and that these works would continue if the Georgian Dream won the elections.

Oni

- On August 22, the [Facebook-page of Oni Municipality City Hall shared](#) a statement [concerning nomination](#) of political officials of self-government bodies and Ajara Supreme Council majoritarian candidates by the party. The Facebook-post was accompanied by the following inscription – “Oni mayoral candidate Davit Chikvaidze.” The post also features the party logo.

The same page also shared materials published by various media outlets about nomination of candidates by the Georgian Dream for by-elections, including those by [Imedi TV](#) and [Regional Week](#).

In addition, the [Facebook page of Oni Municipality City Hall shared](#) a post of Bidzina Ivanishvili for Georgia, concerning a meeting with regional governments at the Government Administration.

- On August 27, the [Facebook page of Oni Municipality City Hall shared](#) a statement of incumbent majoritarian MP and a majoritarian candidate in Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi, Mestia district Gocha Enukidze congratulating on the occasion of Maximus the Confessor remembrance day.

XI. Damaging Posters with Political Content

On August 7, three activists of the European Georgia district organization in Gldani were fined for placing party campaign posters on Tianeti Highway, on a fence of a building currently under construction. A representative of the European Georgia, Giorgi Shalikashvili told ISFED that all three of them were fined 200 GEL by the patrol police. According to him, police officers threatened activists that if they continued placing posters, they would be arrested.

The video provided to ISFED by the party shows that the activists were fined by the municipal inspection of the city hall, based on paragraph 1 of Article 150² of the Code of Administrative Offences – for placing posters, mottos, banners in areas that have not been designated for that purpose in the municipality of Tbilisi City. Municipal Inspection of Tbilisi fined the party activists also in Ortachala, for placing party posters on a fence of a construction area, across from the Ministry of Justice.

According to the European Georgia representative, Giorgi Shalikashvili, 23 individuals have been fined throughout Tbilisi under administrative procedure, for distorting the visual image of the city. The party has appealed 23 administrative offence protocols. Court hearings have not yet been scheduled.

Posters of the European Georgia party have been damaged in large numbers in Tsalka, Ambrolauri, Borjomi, Sachkhere, Gori, Kharagauli, Lanchkhuti, Khashuri, Tetritskaro, Sighnaghi, Akhaltsikhe, and Dusheti municipalities, as well as in districts of Tbilisi.

XII. The Church's Involvement in the Election Campaign

Presentation of the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidates in the regions of Kakheti and Shida Kartli were attended by high-level clerics of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Lagodekhi

[On August 11](#), in Lagodekhi, the majoritarian candidate for Telavi, Akhmeta, Kvareli and Lagodekhi, Irakli Kadagishvili was presented. The meeting was attended by [Metropolitan Sergi \(Chekurishvili\) of Nekresi](#).

Akhmeta

On August 11, [Metropolitan Davit \(Makharadze\) of Alaverdi attended](#) a presentation of Irakli Kadagishvili before voters in Akhmeta.

Dedoplistskaro

[On August 14](#), in Dedoplistskaro, presentation of the majoritarian candidate for Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Dedoplistskaro and Sighnaghi, Davit Songhulashvili [was attended by Bishop Dimitri \(Kapanadze\) of Khornabuji](#).

Gori

[On September 2](#), in Gori, presentation of the majoritarian candidate Giorgi Khojevanishvili was attended by Metropolitan Andria (Gvazava) of Samtavrisi and Gori.

Kareli

[On September 3](#), presentation of the majoritarian candidate Zaal (Zaza) Dugladze in Kareli was attended by Metropolitan Iobi (Akiashvili) of Ruisi and Urbnisi.

Sighnaghi

On August 19, Bishop of Bodbe Iakob (Iakobishvili) [addressed the parish during his sermon and spoke about elections](#). According to him, the country been going around the same cycle for 30 years already, and that people in politics are very weak, who cannot apologize for and recognize their horrible mistakes and that they should be forgiven by the parish. However, the bishop added that they will not have the right to “impose certain things on us”. He also urged the parish to make an “appropriate choice” and announce that everyone who insults him is unacceptable to him.

XIII. Use of Hate Speech in the Election Campaign

Alliance of Patriots of Georgia

In late August 2020, the Alliance of Patriots party placed a campaign banner on Batumi-Sarpi Highway, showing the party name, its leaders and the electoral number as well as a map of Georgia where the Autonomous Republic of Ajara was marked in red, similar to the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, and Turkey was referred to as an occupier. This indicates that it is the intention of the party to portray Turkey as an enemy of Georgia, similar to Russia, and fuel hostile attitudes against it.

Among political ads placed on the official Facebook page of the Alliance of Patriots party, “Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Irma Inashvili Alliance of Patriots of Georgia” (Page ID 1804396213176893), six contain anti-Turkish appeals, as well as signs of incitement of religious and ethnic hatred, and aim to create and reinforce hostile attitudes towards Turkey among citizens of Georgia.

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of article 45 of the organic law of Georgia “the Election Code of Georgia”, in the pre-election period a political party, an election subject candidate, an election subject and their supporters may present their program of future action. However, according to the same norm, the program should not contain propaganda for war or violence, appeal for change or overthrow of the existing state and social order by violence, for violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, for national strife and enmity, or for religious or ethnic confrontation.

ISFED has already applied to the Central Election Commission with a request to study the videos and take respective actions.

Gldani

On August 23, the leader of the Georgian March party, Sandro Bregadze announced about registration as a majoritarian candidate in Gldani constituency. He published the information [on the official Facebook page of the party](#). The text contained threats against the United National Movement candidate in Gldani, Nika Melia. The party leader used the same rhetoric to address the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in Gldani – Levan Kobiashvili. The statement also expressed hate toward sexual minorities.

XIV. Monitoring Mission and Methodology

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is monitoring parliamentary elections in all electoral districts of Georgia, through 68 long-term observers.

Main areas of the pre-election monitoring include:

- Activities of the election administration;
- Public meetings and political activities of electoral subjects;
- Cases of harassment/intimidation or alleged politically motivated dismissals;
- Possible instances of vote buying;
- Use of administrative resources;
- Social media monitoring.

Sources of information in the process of the monitoring include public information requested from administrative agencies, as well as information provided by electoral subjects, media, NGOs

and individual citizens and discovered by social media monitoring. ISFED verifies each report by interviewing witnesses and all sides of the incident.

ISFED publishes statements and reports to keep public informed on a regular basis about violations and trends identified during the pre-election period.

ISFED places all reports of pre-election incidents and possible violations on the interactive incident map available at the Georgian Elections Portal: <http://www.electionsportal.ge/eng/>.

Anyone can report a possible violation to the Elections Portal by sending a text to a toll-free number 90039 or by going to http://www.electionsportal.ge/eng/new_incident.

The pre-election monitoring of ISFED is made possible by the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU).