



ISFED

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
FAIR ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

2018 Presidential Election

Interim Report of the Pre-Election Monitoring of the Runoff

(October 29 – November 19)

21 November 2018

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I. Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) began long-term observation of the pre-election period for the 2018 presidential election runoff on the day after the first round of the election. Since October 29, nearly 70 long-term observers (LTOs) of the organization have been involved in the monitoring nationwide. The monitoring is implemented with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The interim report of the pre-election monitoring of the runoff covers the period from October 29 to November 19.

II. Key findings

The election campaign before the runoff was far more polarized and negative than the campaign ahead of the first round of the election. During the period between the first and the second round of the election, aggressive rhetoric has intensified. Right after the first round ended, the ruling party representatives made alarming statements and prognoses about threats of civil war and possible destabilization if the opposition candidate wins. Later, the independent candidate endorsed by the ruling party made an announcement about receiving death threats through messages. In the period between the first and the second round, media is markedly polarized. In the beginning of the second round, Imedi TV made an announcement that it would start operating in the “emergency mode”, against the *United National Movement* and Grigol Vashadze¹, while Rustavi 2 TV clearly expresses support for the opposition candidate.

During the reporting period, ISFED found: **40 cases of intimidation/harassment; 1 case of threat against a presidential candidate; 3 cases of dismissal from work on possible political motive; 5 instances of physical confrontation; 13 cases of possible vote buying; 14 cases of misuse of administrative resources; 2 incidents of interference with pre-election campaign; 6 acts of damaging campaign materials and 1 act of interfering with observer’s activities.**

During the reporting period, intimidation/harassment became widespread. According to ISFED observers, in different municipalities civil servants and employees of municipal bodies are pressured, so are private sector employees and other vulnerable voters. ISFED observers learned that municipal officials in different municipalities are holding systematic meetings with civil servants and employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities of municipalities, demanding that they support Salome Zourabichvili. In certain cases, threats about dismissal from work were made. Notably, individuals that report acts of intimidation/harassment to ISFED ask observers to refrain from disclosing their names publicly due to fear of dismissal from work or other retaliation.

In addition to intimidation/harassment against opposition supporters or regular citizens, facts provided in this report also contain elements of abuse of administrative resources because in majority of cases intimidation is carried out by high-level officials through abusing official powers.

During the monitoring period, acts of physical confrontation took place, which were not characteristic of the first round. In four cases, opposition activists and their supporters were subjected to physical violence and in one case a person was physically abused for not voting in favor of Grigol Vashadze.

During the reporting period, ISFED found instances of dismissal from work on possible political grounds, which also did not take place during the first round election campaign.

The pre-election period of the runoff was marked by vote buying at an unprecedented scale as PM Mamuka Bakhtadze announced about the initiative to write off a total of GEL 1.5 billion worth of unpaid financial liabilities for 600,000 citizens of Georgia. In addition, ISFED observers reported that money was offered to voters in some municipalities, in exchange for voting in favor of Salome Zourabichvili.

The Government of Georgia and local authorities have made extensive promises about a range of social and infrastructural projects. The PM and other members of the Government have unveiled new projects that aim to benefit specific social groups. The scale and timing of these new initiatives leave the impression that these projects have to do with the results of the first round of the election and they aim to garner support of voters in the

¹ Imedi TV Company starts operating in the emergency mode, Channel 1, 30 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Fz9Tmm>

runoff in favor of the presidential candidate endorsed by the ruling party. Therefore, these initiatives contain elements of misuse of administrative resources.

During the pre-election period, isolated cases of interference with election campaign were again found, both against Salome Zourabichvili and Grigol Vashadze campaigns. In addition to the interference, Salome Zourabichvili was also insulted.

ISFED has observed that during the runoff campaign five public movements became active with the aim of carrying out a campaign against the UNM presidential candidate. These movements are organizing different events and campaign activities, which creates suspicions that they are making donations in favor of Salome Zourabichvili. Movement members operate with declared electoral goals – in particular, with the intention is to influence political processes and strive to maintain the existing political state. To this end, they resort to using financial resources and provision of services. Their actions manifest in open support of the independent candidate endorsed by the ruling party, Salome Zourabichvili and calls not to support the UNM candidate. Under art.26¹ of the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Association of Citizens, the principle of financial transparency also applies to the person with declared electoral goals, who is using adequate financial and other material resources for accomplishing these goals.

III. Recommendations

High-level officials of the government and the ruling party should:

- Publicly distance themselves away from political intimidation and possible acts of vote buying; urge the *Georgian Dream* representatives and activists to immediately cease all attempts of influencing will of voters;
- Refrain from unveiling any large-scale initiatives, social and infrastructural projects during the electoral period, abide by requirements of the OSCE Copenhagen Document and draw a clear line between the state and the campaign activities of the ruling party.

Law enforcement bodies should:

- Examine, investigate and take adequate legal action in response to threats/intimidation on possible political grounds and alleged cases of vote buying;
- Ensure timely, effective and impartial investigation of instances of physical confrontation in the period between the first and the second round, as well as threats made against the presidential candidate and make results of the investigation public.

Political parties and electoral subjects should:

- Prevent use of hate speech and aggressive rhetoric in the election campaign and demonstrate high degree of responsibility when making public statements;
- Refrain from mobilizing their supporters to attend public meetings of opposing parties/candidates; prevent their supporters from interfering with campaign meetings and activities of other electoral subjects, in order to avoid tension and physical confrontation;
- Refrain from any such forms of interaction with voters that create risks of vote buying;
- Urge their supporters not to damage campaign materials of their competitors;
- Refrain from mobilizing coordinators and pressuring voters at polling stations on Election Day.

Local self-government bodies should:

- Eliminate the practice of intimidation and coercion against civil servants and employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities;
- Observe political neutrality – prevent forcing career subordinates to engage in the election campaign and use of budget or human resources to advance party interests;
- Prevent campaigning by civil servants during work hours;
- Provide local self-government employees with information about their rights and responsibilities during the electoral period.

IV. Physical confrontation on possible political motive

Akhalkalaki

On October 30, relatives of Akhalkalaki majoritarian MP Enzel Mkoyan and his supporters attacked members of the united opposition office, injuring four members of the united opposition that were subsequently taken to Akhalkalaki Hospital.

According to information obtained by ISFED observer, Enzel Mkoyan's son, brother and nephews together with about 30 people invaded the office of the united opposition and beat Melik Raisyan, his son Ashot Raisyan and three other members of the united opposition. According to Ashot Raisyan, he was hit with a gunstock several times. He also stated that Mkoyan's people had been armed with truncheons and sticks. According to the united opposition members, Enzel Mkoyan did not get out of the car. Together with his son, GD members and his son's friends, he ambushed UNM member Mikheil Aghababian on the road to Khospio village. He was physically assaulted. According to Ashot Raisyan, the following people were at the scene: Enzel Mkoyan's brother, Martun Mkoyan and Chair of Akhalkalaki Sakrebulo Nairi Iritsyan.

Martun Mkoyan informed ISFED observer that the conflict began at 02:30, when Melik Raisyan's younger son together with Mikheil Aghababian and his other friends invaded Enzel Mkoyan's gas station, a fight broke out and they removed Salome Zourabichvili's posters by force. According to employees of the gas station, Raisyan's son was threatening that unless they circle number 5 on December 2, he would blow up gas stations. Martun Mkoyan reported that there is a video evidence of the incident and he will provide it to interested parties.

According to Martun Mkoyan, they were not going to physically confront Grigol Vashadze's supporters. He denied having a weapon and a truncheon.

The MIA launched investigation under paragraphs 2 and 3 of art.239 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (hooliganism perpetrated by a group, using firearms or other objects as a weapon).

Akhalkalaki

On November 7, activist of the united opposition Remo Poghosyan was taken to Akhalkalaki Hospital. He had two wounds on his head. According to head of Akhalkalaki headquarters of the united opposition, Ashot Raisyan, activist Remo Poghosyan was beaten on political grounds, however Poghosyan himself informed ISFED observer that he had not been beaten; he said he fell down and injured himself while working at home.

According to Ashot Raisyan, Remo Poghosyan called him five minutes after the incident and said that he was ambushed by several people on a village road. They hit him in his head with a truncheon and were asking him whether he was from "number five". He confirmed that he was. According to Ashot Raisyan, Poghosyan retracted his initial statement in twenty minutes and declared that he fell down and injured himself at home. According to Raysian, Remo Poghosyan was probably intimidated.

Head of the *Georgian Dream* local office, Nairi Iritsyan has a different version. According to her, there was a regional championship in football in Akhalkalaki. An argument broke out five minutes after one of the championship games was over, however there was no political confrontation between the parties.

Notably, Remo Poghosyan was participating in an event held against an independent candidate, Salome Zourabichvili on October 2 in Akhalkalaki. He was saying that Salome Zourabichvili had no right to be a president. Poghosyan was also a respondent of a TV program P.S. on Rustavi 2, he talked about the clan of MP Enzel Mkoyan and his corruption scheme in Akhalkalaki.

Chief Doctor of Akhalkalaki Hospital, Aleksandre Toroyan said that injuries of Remo Poghosyan have been sustained as a result of falling.

Kaspi

On November 29 it was reported² that in Khidiskuri village of Kaspi municipality, supporter of Grigol Vashadze – Aliosha Guliloghly was beaten by his fellow-villagers, *Georgian Dream* supporters Gulo Bayramov and Guraza Bayramov. He was subsequently taken to Medalfa Clinic where he was diagnosed with head trauma (concussion).

Initially the conflict between Gulo Bayramov and Aliosha Guliloghly began on Election Day on October 28. In the center of Khidiskuri vullage, GD supporters Gulo Bayramov and his fellow villagers swore at Aliosha Guliloghly for being a supporter of Grigol Vashadze.

The verbal conflict that began between the fellow villagers on October 28 later continued in the center of Khidiskuri village on October 29 and grew into a physical confrontation. Gulo Bayramov's grandson Guraza Bayramov intervened on behalf of his grandfather and they both physically assaulted Aliosha Guliloghly. Investigation has been launched under art.126 of the Criminal Code (beating).

Sighnaghi

At night on November 6, in Bodbe village, activist of the *European Georgia* Besik Lazariashvili was physically attacked by three men wearing masks. According to the party, the strangers were also verbally insulting Lazariashvili, demanding that he stop his political activities for the second round.

Besik Lazariashvili himself refrained from talking to ISFED observer to provide additional information. Investigation has been launched.

Gurjaani

On November 13, local media outlet Spektri³ reported that a resident of Vejini village, Gulnazi Tsankashvili filed a police report about domestic violence. According to Gulnazi Tsankashvili, she experienced violence by his son and daughter-in-law because she voted for Salome Zourabichvili on October 28. According to Gulnazi Tsankashvili, her daughter-in-law Natia Karaulashvili took some money from the UNM coordinator Elmira Betsiashvili in exchange for votes and when she learned that Gulnazi Tsankashvili did not vote for Grigol Vashadze, she physically abused her and bit her.

UNM coordinator Elmira Betsiashvili denied giving money to Natia Karaulashvili and announced that this fact has been provoked by a majoritarian member of Gurjaani Sakrebulo from Vejini village, Zurab Mukhulishvili. Gulnazi Tsankashvili's son Davit Tsankashvili and daughter-in-law Natia Karaulashvili have also denied the allegations, and Zurab Mukhulishvili stated that he had nothing to do with the incident.

Notably, Gulnazi Tsankashvili, her son and daughter-in-law have a long history of family conflict. Investigation has been launched in connection to domestic violence.

² In Khidiskuri, Grigol Vashadze's supporter was beaten, Shida Karli Information Center, 20 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OVAX8B>

³ Domestic violence in Vejini, Spektri, 13 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Q68oQQ>

V. Threats against a presidential candidate

On November 12, independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zourabichvili made a statement about threats made against her and her family. More specifically, she said that on November 9, 10 and 11, she and her children received death threats through voice and text messages.

According to the candidate, the threats were real because, as she stated, persons that made these threats have been identified as former military servicemen, who because of their status have ties with the *United National Movement*.

Ministry of Internal Affairs has launched investigation into the fact under para.1 of art.284 and para.1 of art.151 of the Criminal Code of Georgia.⁴

VI. Intimidation/Harassment on political grounds

Marneuli

An activist of the *United National Movement*, Novruz Mekhtiyev posted on his personal Facebook page that on November 12, a criminal police officer stopped his brother in the street and told him that “they were going too far”. The police officer took out a list of Mekhtiyev’s family members from his pocket with their personal information and said that he had been ordered to arrest one of the persons on this list before the runoff.

On November 13, an official visited Mekhtiyev’s brother and offered to solve problems that village mosque has if they “cooperate with number 48”.

On November 14, another official visited Mekhtiyev’s father and told him that they should either be a campaign worker for “number 48” or not cooperate with any party. Otherwise, he was told that their store and teahouse would be fined or closed down by the Revenue Service. To convince Mekhtiyev’s father that these words were true, the official said that the Revenue Service was going to visit him that day but they offered to “talk” first.

Akhalkalaki

On November 18, in the center of Akhalkalaki, *Georgian Dream* MPs, Ministers and representatives of the local authorities held a public meeting/event with locals to support Salome Zourabichvili.

On November 17, in an interview with teachers in Akhalkalaki, ISFED coordinator found that school principals had prepared lists to collect signatures from teachers that were going to attend the meeting on November 18. Teachers were told that if they did not attend the meeting, they would have problems at work. In addition, head of Akhalkalaki Resource Center Tereza Chivchiani ordered school principals to take photos at the meeting.

In an interview with ISFED, Tereza Chivchiani denied the report and said that the public meeting is held on a weekday and she has no right to order school employees to do something. She also said that since concerts in Akhalkalaki are rare, the local population would be happy to go to the concert.

Abasha

On November 12, Georgian Dream majoritarian MP Otari Danelia was visiting Abasha. Under his guidance, City Hall employees were ordered to have door-to-door meetings with local population and to strongly urge them to support Salome Zourabichvili. The same day, civil servants had door-to-door meetings with voters.

Two civil servants reported to ISFED observer about the pressure and the assignment that they were given; however they ask to keep their names confidential fearing that they would lose their jobs.

⁴ Statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 12 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2DA1mgs>

Zugdidi

A teacher reported to ISFED observer that in Kortskheli village of Zugdidi Municipality, teachers have been ordered by the city hall representative Merab Tordia to put their initials on the ballot paper next to a circle indicating their choice in favor of Salome Zourabichvili.

Kashuri

According to ISFED observer, employees of the Georgian Railway have reported to him that people working for Khashuri section of the railway are threatened with dismissal unless they vote for Salome Zourabichvili in the runoff. The observer has also learned that railway employees were promised GEL 300-300 as a bonus for St. George's day on November 23, while no such bonuses were provided in previous years for this particular holiday.

Borjomi

According to ISFED observer, employees of a kindergarten in Borjomi are ordered to go to the precincts and vote for the candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zourabichvili.

In addition, GD campaign workers have unified lists of voters, according to their places of registration, indicating who voted in the first round and who did not. In light of this, civil servants are strictly ordered to take all members of their family to the polling stations, for voting in favor of Salome Zourabichvili.

Kutaisi

On October 30, it was reported by media that as a result of pressure from local authorities an independent media agency Imereti News was closed down. Founder of the agency, Kote Tsirekidze, whose mother Eleonora Archaia is a deputy chair of the *Georgian Dream* faction in Kutaisi Sakrebulo stated that because of direct and indirect threats made against him and his family by Kutaisi Deputy Mayor Giorgi Iobashvili and Deputy Governor of Imereti, Grigol Dalakishvili, he was forced to temporarily suspend operations of Imereti News Agency.⁵

Kutaisi Deputy Mayor Giorgi Iobashvili held a special briefing to respond to the allegations about possible pressure against Imereti News Agency. The Deputy Mayor denied the allegations and stated that if the owner of the agency provides evidence, he is ready to take responsibility.⁶ Later founder of the media agency Kote Tsirekidze talked about concrete examples of pressure.⁷

Khulo

On October 29, chairs of Khulo precinct electoral commissions no.12 and no.7 submitted their resignation requests to the DEC. ISFED LTO reported that in the area of the polling station no.7, the local office of the *Georgian Dream* that also serves as the campaign office of the presidential candidate Salome Zourabichvili has hired as coordinator a local – Ednar Bolkvadze. On October 28, after results of the polling station were summarized, Ednar Bolkvadze was summoned to the headquarters and reproofed for low number of votes cast in favor of Salome Zourabichvili at the polling station. Ednar Bolkvadze said that the low level of support was PEC Chair Tengiz Mekheshidze's fault. According to the observer, both were summoned to the *Georgian Dream* office on October 29 and reproofed. Chair of the PEC no.7, Tengiz Mekheshidze said that he is tired and does not want to continue working in this field. He confirmed to ISFED that he has submitted his resignation request to the DEC.

⁵ Why Imereti News was closed, Kutaisi Post, 30 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Qgg2YZ>

⁶ Deputy Mayor about possible pressure on Imereti News, Kutaisi Post, 30 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2qXMall>

⁷ Imereti News owner is making concrete facts of pressure public, Newspress, 30 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2A5r8FT>

Marneuli

Employees and activists of the *Georgian Dream* office in Marneuli are pressuring activists of the *United National Movement*. In particular, they are telling students that if they continue working for the party, company SOCAR will stop paying their tuition fees. Two students that live in Marneuli informed ISFED observer about it.

Sagarejo

On November 6, a member of the *United National Movement*, Garsevan Bukhnikashvili informed ISFED that representatives of Sagarejo City Hall and department heads have already submitted their resignation requests, without specifying the date of their resignation. According to him, if Salome Zourabichvili loses the election, these individuals will resign.

Akhaltzikhe

On November 14, Samkhretis Karibche reported that employees of a kindergarten in Vale, Akhaltsikhe stated that they were forced to submit resignation requests. They were also demanded that they go to the elections and vote for “number 48” on their ballots. ISFED observer contacted an employee of the kindergarten to verify the information. She denied the report and said that she had not talked about this issue with a reporter, however she confirmed that she signed a document. According to her, this had to do with organizational changes because the association of kindergartens will be renamed. Other employees of the kindergarten have stated the same and have denied the report about pressure.

Kareli

On November 13, in Kareli Municipality, kindergarten teachers were promised salary raise in exchange for supporting Salome Zourabichvili. ISFED observer reported that all personal identification numbers were taken from all employees of the kindergarten during a meeting and they were also demanded to provide identity documents of their family members. Employees of the kindergarten confirmed to ISFED that the information is true, however they asked to remain anonymous because they fear that they will lose their jobs.

Khashuri

In Khashuri, GD officials and local authority representatives are forcing firefighters/rescue officers to vote for Salome Zourabichvili, demanding that they take a photo at the voting booth to prove that they voted for her. One of the firefighters confirmed to ISFED that the report is true. Another firefighter was promised a phone by the ruling party representative, in order to be able to take the photo.

Chokhatauri

An employee of Chokhatauri City Hall reported to ISFED LTO that the city hall leadership are instructing their employees to work door-to-door and ensure maximum results for the runoff, so that their relatives and family members that did not support Salome Zourabichvili because of their different political beliefs vote for the candidate endorsed by the ruling party. Otherwise, they will have problems.

Gori

According to ISFED observer, authorities are requiring civil servants to campaign in public and inform citizens that if Salome Zourabichvili does not win and the UNM comes into power in any way or form, they will absolutely seek revenge and civil war will be unavoidable. Civil servants are not required to campaign during work hours but they are required to disseminate this information among their friends and relatives.

Sighnaghi

In the territorial bodies of Sighnaghi villages, representatives of the *Georgian Dream* party are meeting with school principals, representatives of kindergartens and village libraries. One of the village librarians reported to

ISFED that she received a call from the manager of the non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity telling her to go to the mayor's representative, he would then give her a specific assignment for the pre-election period.

Gurjaani

Owner of Gurjaani Ice-cream Factory, Guram Berikashvili who is a *Georgian Dream* activist and supporter of the candidate endorsed by the ruling party, is urging the company employees and their family members to support Salome Zourabichvili. An employee of the factory initially agreed to let ISFED make this fact public but after some time he decided to remain anonymous stating that he did not want to create problems for his family and friends.

Abasha

On November 8, head of the UNM office Davit Dartsmelidze informed ISFED observer that in Dzveli Abasha, Etseri and in some districts of the city, voters are told to hand in their ID cards if they or their family members are not planning to cast a ballot. They will receive their ID cards back following the election.

In another case, voters are promised a certain amount of money in exchange for bringing 10 voters to a polling station. As proof, voters brought to a polling station by a certain individual have to put some sign that has been agreed beforehand – a number or some other symbol –near the sequence number of Salome Zourabichvili on the ballot. UNM representative demands that ballots that contain any suspicious symbol should be invalidated.

Chokhatauri

In Chokhatauri Municipality, individuals that sympathize with the opposition are subjected to intimidation by the GD coordinators, mayor's representatives in villages and Sakrebulo members from villages. Managers and employees of kindergartens are also subjected to pressure. Several citizens and a kindergarten teacher reported to ISFED LTO about acts of intimidation.

Khulo

According to the head of the UNM organization in Khulo, Irakli Jorbenadze, on November 13, Chair of Ajara Government Tornike Rizhvadze and Head of the State Security Service Vakhtang Gomelauri were visiting Khulo late at night. UNM and Khulo Sakrebulo member Otar Shainidze talked about this during Facebook live at 20:21 on November 13, however neither Gomelauri nor Rizhvadze are seen on the video.

According to the UNM organization in Khulo, Gomelauri, Rizhvadze and Bolkvadze met with GD coordinators and demanded a response for votes not received in the first round. They also demanded that money given to voters be returned. According to Jorbenadze, several coordinators contacted him and provided the list based on which they demanded that the money be returned. UNM did not provide names of these coordinators. Ajara TV and TV25 reported about this fact.

ISFED contacted several coordinators. They denied meeting Gomelauri and discussing the above issues. Head of the local GD office, Anzor Bolkvadze confirms that Gomelauri visited him, however he said that they did not discuss any issues related to the election.

Gurjaani

Civil servants at the city hall of Gurjaani Municipality are pressured. In particular, the municipality leadership warned them that if Salome Zourabichvili does not win in their precinct, they would have to say goodbye to their jobs. This was reported to ISFED observer by civil servants that asked to remain anonymous.

Khashuri

ISFED observer learned that in a kindergarten in Khashuri, teachers are demanding copies of parents' ID cards. One parent asked why does she need to bring her ID card to the kindergarten but the kindergarten employee did

not respond and quickly changed the topic of the conversation. The parent suspects that this has to do with the presidential runoff.

Kareli

On November 13, Kareli Mayor had a meeting with kindergarten principals. One of the principals informed ISFED observer that during the meeting the Mayor said he knows by heart how their families have voted and starting from January he will fire everyone that does not vote for Salome Zourabichvili. Kareli Mayor has denied the allegation about intimidating kindergarten principals and stated that this is not what they talked about during the meeting.

Chokhatauri

In a private conversation ISFED LTO was informed by an employee of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity in Chokhatauri Municipality that her husband who supports the united opposition is experiencing psychological pressure by law enforcement officers. She cannot talk about this openly because she fears that she will lose her job.

Poti

On November 6, ISFED LTO learned that chair of Poti PEC #16 Manana Kabzinadze, who is also an employee of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity – Office for maintenance of cemeteries, was subjected to disciplinary punishment, possibly in relation to the election. At PEC #16, Grigol Vashadze gained more votes than Salome Zourabichvili.

Notably, at PEC #16 Kabzinadze assigned functions of PEC members without casting of lots and violated the Election Code. Dato Khomeriki, representative of the presidential candidate, Grigol Vashadze filed a complaint about it. Poti DEC has not imposed a sanction on Kabzianidze.

ISFED observer contacted Manana Kabzianidze, who denied the that the disciplinary sanction was in any way related to the elections.

Chokhatauri

According to information obtained by ISFED LTO, DEC-elected members of PECs are intimidated by representatives of the authorities. One of the PEC members stated that she is under pressure and she may not even join the precinct commission for the runoff.

Gurjaani

ISFED observer was informed that under instructions of director of a soup kitchen Zaza Jgudishvili, beneficiaries of the establishment are surveyed to find out who they are voting for and lists are being prepared. The person who reported this to ISFED observer asked to remain anonymous.

Gori

In early November, in Gori, possibly representatives of the ruling party conducted a telephone polling, asking respondents whether they had cast a ballot, who they voted for and whether or not they are still employed (specifying their place of employment), possibly to make voters believe that their personal information was known to the callers.

Gurjaani

Employees of Gurjaani City Hall conducted telephone polling, asking voters who they are voting for. The person that reported this to ISFED observer asked to remain anonymous.

Kareli

At the local GD office of Kareli, meetings with party supporters are held almost on a daily basis. ISFED found out that chair of GD organization in Kareli, Zaza Guliashvili is also holding these meetings with employees of budgetary organizations, especially with employees of local non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities that operate in the sports field. During these meetings he gives them instructions to vote for Salome Zourabichvili in the runoff and ask their relatives and friends to do the same.

Khashuri

On November 10, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of establishment of Khashuri Eparchy, clergymen and parishioners from different eparchies gathered at the premises of Bana Monastery Complex currently under construction. During dinner, at the dining table, clergymen were urging parishioners to vote for Salome Zourabichvili in the runoff. This was reported to ISFED observer by a member of the parish.

Kharagauli

On November 13, GD representative Davit Gvelesiani contacted ISFED observer and said that in Ubisa village, UNM coordinator Davit Makhatadze made threats against the DEC chair Beso Sakhvadze.

Beso Sakhvadze told ISFED observer that on November 9 he was contacted by Davit Makhatadze, who demanded that his son Beka Makhatadze be included on the electoral list. According to Beso Sakhvadze, he promised Makhatadze to take this issue up with the DEC, however on November 10 Makhatadze contacted him again and threatened to physically abuse him (break his nose and mouth).

Sakhvadze stated that the issue had been settled, however if this fact occurs again he will take a legal action against the UNM coordinator Davit Makhatadze.

DEC Secretary informed ISFED observer that Beka Makhatadze had an expired ID card, which he replaced on October 25, so he will be able to vote in the runoff.

Kaspi

Supporter of the united opposition that lives in Teliani village of Kaspi municipality, Maia Sidamonidze reported that director of the village club Zhana Tagviashvili is distributing firewood vouchers only among her supporters – those who support the *Georgian Dream*, at the same time opposition supporters are denied these vouchers. Maia Sidamonidze provided another example of Grigol Vashadze's supporters put at a disadvantage – in particular, she stated that outdoor light fixtures on the main street are installed only outside homes of GD supporters.

According to the trustee of the territorial body, Mikheil Kelaptrishvili firewood vouchers were provided to majority of Teliani village population, only eight households remain that also include GD supporters. Distribution of firewood vouchers will end on November 15, and outside homes where outdoor light fixtures were not installed, there were no lighting poles before and it has nothing to do with political affiliation. Based on Kaspi Mayor's decision, remaining districts in the village will soon have outdoor lighting.

Chokhatauri

ISFED observer was informed by three socially vulnerable families that GD coordinators and the city hall representatives are threatening to cancel social assistance for their families unless they support Salome Zourabichvili in the runoff.

Ozurgeti

European Georgia coordinator in Dvabzu village, who asked to remain anonymous, informed ISFED observer that he was offered GEL 300 from the local GD office to work in favor of the ruling party.

Chokhatauri

ISFED observer was informed that GD coordinators, activists and campaign workers are visiting villages, going door-to-door and urging pensioners to support Salome Zourabichvili, otherwise their family members that are employed in public or private sector will have problems. One of the pensioners informed ISFED observer that Sakrebulo Member from the village urged her to support Salome Zourabichvili and said that he would find out anyways who she voted for.

Ozurgeti

Several residents of Likhuri village informed ISFED observer that former prisoners Kakha Urushadze, Chelidze and Tsetskhladze are going door-to-door, demanding that locals vote for the candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, otherwise they promise to create problems.

Chokhatauri

In Chokhatauri Municipality, individuals with previous conviction for use of drugs are pressured, so are the youth that were serving a sentence for certain crimes. ISFED observer examined and verified these reports. Several people confirmed that the so-called “old boys” are pressuring the youth, urging them to support Salome Zourabichvili. Another individual reported to ISFED observer that her son, who has a previous conviction, is pressured by GD campaign workers.

Batumi

GD supporters visited an apartment in Batumi, which is currently rented out by the owner, to find out why the owner of the apartment did not participate in the election; where is the owner now and whether or not he plans to participate in the runoff. The fact that GD coordinators knew that the owner of the apartment did not vote in the first round raises certain questions how this information became available to them.

Chokhatauri

In villages of Chokhatauri Municipality, mayor representatives, GD coordinators and Sakrebulo members that represent villages are promising to provide social assistance to individuals that sympathize with the opposition in exchange for supporting Salome Zourabichvili. ISFED observer verified this report. Several individuals confirmed in a private conversation that mayor representatives and Sakrebulo members that represent villages are urging them to support Salome Zurabishvili. In return, from January 1, they will start receiving social assistance after they submit an application to the city hall.

VII. Allegedly politically motivated dismissal from work

Gurjaani

Manager of kindergarten in Vejini, Tamar Sibashvili was dismissed from work on November 7, based on findings of the audit service that had started the examination of the kindergarten the day before. The order of her dismissal cites inadequate fulfillment of duties as grounds. According to Sibashvili, she was dismissed for violation of safety and hygienic/sanitary norms in the kindergarten, to which she somewhat agrees but she also states that these norms are violated for reasons outside her control because material and technical equipment of the kindergarten and its space make it impossible to observe these norms.

In an interview with ISFED observer, Tamar Sibashvili alleges that she was dismissed from work on political motive. More specifically, Chair of Gurjaani Sakrebulo Vano Beridzishvili and Mayor Archil Khandamashvili view her as supporter of the previous government. Besides, she did not participate in campaigning in favor of Salome Zourabichvili. She is also accused of bringing a cake to the kindergarten to celebrate the fact that Grigol Vashadze got most votes in the electoral districts of Vejini village during the first round.

It should be noted that on October 27, Kviris Aktsentebi TV program on Rustavi 2 aired a report about secret recordings. In this report, mayoral representative in Vejini village, a majoritarian member of Gurjaani Sakrebulo and a public school principal were saying that voters that arrive at the polling station should show who they marked on the ballot to one of the members of the commission. Tamar Sibashvili is accused of recording this fact and making it public.

Sibashvili believes that she has been illegally dismissed and plans to take a legal action.

Kaspi

On November 7, activist of the united opposition Jambul Soynoghly was dismissed from the improvements service of Tbilisi on grounds that he left work one hour early. According to Soynoghly, he was dismissed on political motive because in the first round of the presidential election he served as coordinator of the united opposition in Khidiskuri village.

Jambul Soynoghly worked as a janitor at the improvements service of Tbilisi for years. He had never once received a warning or a reproof.

Akhaltzikhe

An employee of the cleaning service, Manana Egidkhanishvili states that she was dismissed from work on political motive. According to her, on October 30 she was contacted and notified about her dismissal. She says she was dismissed due to her activity in favor of the united opposition.

According to the cleaning service, Manana Egidkhanishvili's contract expired on October 30. To not be considered as dismissed, she should have requested extension of the contract.

Later it turned out that the cleaning service extended the term of Manana Egidkhanishvili's contract. She thinks it is due to the fact that her dismissal was made public.

VIII. Possible vote buying

Statement of the Government of Georgia about Cartu Foundation writing off unpaid loans

During a briefing on November 19, PM Mamuka Bakhtadze announced that loans for more than half a million people will be written off. According to the PM⁸ “*we are talking about financial obligations of 600,000 people before banks, online organizations and other institutions, with a total amount of about 1.5 billion Laris. According to the decision made today, 1.5 billion in unpaid loans will be written off.*” He also stated that the process will start on December 15 and end on December 31, and it is guaranteed that 600,000 people and their families will be removed from the registry of debtors and have a debt-free New Year’s Eve.

The same day, Minister of Finance Ivane Machavariani⁹ stated that Cartu Foundation will cover debts of about 600,000 “blacklisted persons” entirely. This concerns individuals that have not paid their loans during the period of 1 year and their initial loan was no more than 2,000 laris.

The decision announced by the authorities amounts to vote buying and it aims to mobilize voter support for the ruling party supported candidate Salome Zourabichvili for the runoff. Notably, vote buying of such scale is unprecedented in Georgia.

Abasha

In an interview with ISFED, local resident Mikheil Uchaneishvili stated that Abasha Sakrebulo Member that represents a village, Avto Gunia offered him GEL 50 in exchange for him and his family supporting Salome Zourabichvili in the runoff. In a phone conversation with the observer, Avto Gunia denied this report.

In addition, UNM member Anzor Barbakadze informed ISFED observer inert material – gravel that is being distributed among population, along with paying gas and electricity bills for citizens ahead of elections.

Gardabani

On November 16, in Gardabani Natik Sadikov and his cousin were distributing potatoes and onions among locals. ISFED observer asked people that had arrived there who was giving them these products. Some responded “*Georgian Dream*”, others responded “*National Movement*”. According to the GD representative Gabil Gasanov, products are distributed under the instructions and with financial support of majoritarian deputy Savalan Mirzoyev, in support of the *Georgian Dream*.

On November 17, they continued to distribute the products. The observer introduced herself as ISFED representative to the people that were there and asked who organized the distribution. Initially they aggressively responded that she should take the product if she wants to and not ask questions about organizers. Later ISFED observer interviewed the organizer, Natik Sadikov. Sadikov said that he is a businessman that feels sorry for the population and wants to help them with products. He also said that he will continue to help the population with sugar and other products. He said he does not belong to any of the parties, he got a loan from the bank to help locals. To observer’s question as to why were they recording names and personal numbers of individuals that received the products, Natik Sadikov responded that they need the information to give them other products in the future.

During the conversation, Natik Sadikov showed the observer a photo and asked if she could tell which one was he on the photo. He said that the photo features members of the world of “thieves’ in law”, who he has ties with.

⁸ Debts of over half a million blacklisted persons will be written off – Bakhtadze, Netgazeti, 29 November 2018, <http://netgazeti.ge/news/320491/>

⁹ Minister of Finance: Cartu Group undertook the burden of paying bank debts for 600,000 people, On.ge, 19 November 2018, <http://go.on.ge/wd1>

Marneuli

During campaigning in villages of Marneuli, GD representatives offer sweet treats to voters. Photos from these meetings were posted by MP Ruslan Gajiev on his Facebook page and show a table with sweets, tea, etc.

Chokhatauri

It was reported in Chokhatauri Municipality that individuals without ID cards or with expired ID cards are offered money by GD representatives, activists and campaign workers in exchange for taking new ID cards. ISFED observer checked credibility of this report. One of the individuals confirmed that he was offered money for taking a new ID card if he votes for Salome Zurabishvili.

Gori

During a private conversation with ISFED observer certain individuals have stated that GD coordinators are promising people 30 GEL in exchange for voting. Such promises are seemingly targeted towards individuals that usually do not participate in elections.

Gurjaani

ISFED observer reported that in Gurjaani GD activists are offering UNM supporters 50 GEL in exchange for their ID cards on the day of the runoff.

Lagodekhi

ISFED observer reported that a family was offered 50 GEL for every vote cast in favor of Salome Zourabichvili. Another family received baby diapers from the municipality as assistance.

Poti

On November 10, in Poti Polyclinic medical company Evex organized free medical examinations for local population.

A group of different types of doctors equipped with contemporary medical equipment participated in the event, including surgeons, angiology specialist, traumatology specialist, allergy specialist, dermatologist, nephrologist and gastroenterology specialist. After consulting with doctors, patients underwent laboratory tests and ultrasonoscopy, as needed.

The following officials visited the event to see how it was going: Minister of IDPs from the occupied territories, labor, health and social affairs Davit Sergeenko, majoritarian MP from Poti Irakli Khakhubia, Mayor of Poti Municipality Gocha Kurdghelia, Deputy Mayors Kote Topuria and Mamuka Papaskiri.

Batumi

On November 9-10, an ophthalmological clinic at March 9th Street in Batumi offered ophthalmological services for free. According to the clinic, free screenings were offered to mark the international day of Keratoconus.

Poti

On November 13, at 22:26, head of the GD youth organization Zaal Kvinchia posted about “real chance of employment” on his personal Facebook page, urging job-seeking youth between the ages of 18 and 30 to participate in the program of employment. According to this statement, they will be employed at different institutions in Poti.¹⁰

¹⁰ Zaal Kvinchia’s post about employment offer:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=727123920986342&id=100010662219008

Mtskheta

ISFED coordinator was informed that unpaid water bills of Mtskheta population will be written off. The individual that disclosed this information asked to remain anonymous.

Poti

On November 18, at 13:00, it was reported that in the territorial service of Maltakva District, socially vulnerable people were provided with second hand clothes. According to this report, in Maltakva Municipality, the *Georgian Dream* was going to distribute packages of second hand clothes according to a pre-made list. Other socially vulnerable individuals that lived nearby learned about it, they gathered and demanded that they also be provided with the assistance. It was also reported that the management of the territorial body of Maltakva Municipality closed the door and refused to provide assistance to other individuals. They stated that they were giving the packages only to the people on the list. Locals protested, they broke down the door and grabbed the packages.

ISFED observer visited the territorial body of Maltakva Municipality to verify credibility of the report. By the time the observer arrived at the offices of the territorial body, the packages had already been taken and locals had already been gone. ISFED coordinator interviewed the head of the territorial body, Ucha Dolidze who denied the report. He also said that there was no pre-made list and no one was denied a package. He also said that they provide such assistance several times a year, so this was just another assistance that a private person provided from an offshore zone.

Press office of the city hall explained that company Kavlatex provided 60 tons of second hand clothes to Poti City Municipality free of charge. The clothes will be distributed in two parts. 40 tons have already been distributed among the socially vulnerable people. According to the press office, the municipality has been distributing the packages throughout the year, on a regular basis, and this process has nothing to do with the election campaign.

IX. Misuse of administrative resources

Kareli

In Kareli Municipality, kindergarten teachers were promised an increase in salary, in exchange for supporting Salome Zourabichvili. According to ISFED observer, during the meetings all kindergarten employees were asked to provide their personal numbers, they were also told to provide ID cards of their family members. Kindergarten employees confirmed this report to ISFED, however they asked to remain anonymous because they fear to lose their jobs.

Khashuri

On November 8, Khashuri Mayor Giorgi Guraspashvili promised 20% increase in salary for employees of kindergartens and non-profit (non-commercial) entities. Information about 20% increase in salary was confirmed to ISFED observer by Khashuri Mayor. Guraspashvili said that the raise will become effective as of January.

Principal of kindergarten no.7, Liana Sabanadze told ISFED observer that the meeting focused on the increase in salary and the mayor did not ask the employees to support Salome Zourabichvili.¹¹

Kareli

Kareli Mayor held a meeting with kindergarten teachers and in addition to promising a raise he also promised to create better conditions for work and hire more cleaning staff, which would alleviate their workload. This was reported to the observer by kindergarten principals, however they asked to remain anonymous because they fear

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7M_aD-qXk8

to lose their jobs. They also stated that heads of the kindergartens' association are holding meetings to tell their employees about works that have been completed in the municipality and works that are planned to be performed. During these meetings, participants are also told to vote for Salome Zourabichvili and more will be done.

Salaries of military servicepersons, military police officers and border security personnel will increase

During a briefing on November 8, Mamuka Bakhtadze announced¹² about rank-based increase of salaries for 7,526 military servicepersons in 2019-2020. Starting from 2019, salaries will also be increased by GEL 250 for border guards of MIA Border Police and personnel of coast guard vessels - a total of about 2,900 people. Starting from January 1, salaries will be increased for other units as well including employees of the Special Protection Service.

Salaries of school principals, teachers and administrative personnel will increase

In early November it became known¹³ that under the initiative of the Ministry of Education of Georgia, in 2019-2021, salaries of school principals and administrative personnel will be increased and teacher salaries will continue to increase. By 2022, average teacher salary will be GEL 1,800 and average high school teacher salary will be GEL 2,000 and more.

Teachers that improve their status will receive increased supplemental wage

Currently senior teachers receive GEL 320 supplemental wage while according to the next year's budget the amount of supplemental wage will be increased by GEL 150.¹⁴ Increase of supplemental wage is planned for 2020-2021 academic year as well.

Socially vulnerable youth under the age of 16 and families with children will receive five times more assistance

On November 2, PM Mamuka Bakhtadze announced¹⁵ during a briefing that socially vulnerable youth under the age of 16 and families with children will receive five times more assistance. According to Minister of Finance Ivane Machavariani, GEL 70 million will be allocated from the budget for 50-lari assistance of children in socially vulnerable families.¹⁶

Socially vulnerable persons will keep their benefits if they find a job

On November 2, the Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, Davit Sergeenko announced¹⁷ that very soon a resolution will be prepared to allow socially vulnerable individuals to keep their pecuniary social benefits for a year and non-pecuniary social benefits for two years after they find a job and start working.

For 2020, responsibilities undertaken before contracted military personnel under the 2007 agreement will be fulfilled

Mamuka Bakhtadze announced¹⁸ that since 2013, families of 1,634 military servicepersons have been provided with apartments. To provide the remaining 728 military servicepersons with apartments, funds will be mobilized from the central and the defense budgets to start construction of residential buildings.

¹² Mamuka Bakhtadze's briefing, 8 November 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/bakhtadzemamuka/videos/498442463986072/>

¹³ Salaries of school principals, teachers and administrative employees will be increased, Imedi, 6 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2DxRkfk>

¹⁴ Teachers that will improve their status will have their supplemental pays increased, Imedi, 5 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2qZEWNT>

¹⁵ Mamuka Bakhtadze's briefing, 2 November 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/bakhtadzemamuka/videos/490515731442983/>

¹⁶ GEL 70 million will be allocated for socially vulnerable families, Imedi, 2 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2zjFlzi>

¹⁷ Statement of Davit Sergeenko, Channel 1, 2 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2PjQ28P>

¹⁸ Salaries will be increased for soldiers, border guards, coast guards and special protection service employees, 8 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2KkurxG>

Tkibuli

Following the explosion in Tkibuli on July 16 and the death of 5 workers, Mindeli Mine has suspended its operations until the investigation is over and forensic examination is performed. Back then the PM told miners that they would continue to receive their salaries as usual. According to miners, on November 2, management of Saknakhshiri, the company that manages the mine, notified them that due to suspension of the production process they were unable to pay salaries. Miners protested to this.¹⁹ The same day, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Giorgi Kobulia announced that miners would continue to receive their salaries as usual until the forensic examination is completed.

Tkaltubo, Zugdidi

On November 1, the Municipal Development Fund of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure held an open day about construction of residential buildings for IDPs. During the open day it became known that 9 residential buildings will be built in Tskaltubo and Zugdidi for 780 IDP families²⁰, the buildings will include water heaters and gas; external infrastructure, squares, recreational areas and children's playgrounds will all be arranged. They are also planning to build access roads and parking areas.

Telavi

On November 3, it became known that the so-called "Legion" apartments owned by the Ministry of Economy will soon be transferred into the legal ownership of people that live there. According to Imedi TV, the issue will be put on the agenda of the meeting of the cabinet. Afterwards, apartments will be gradually given to the population.²¹

Rustavi

For a symbolic price of GEL 1, residents of communal housings in micro districts #6 and #11 in Rustavi will become owners of apartments where they live.²² On November 5, Rustavi Mayor Irakli Tabaghua and deputy governors of Kvemo Kartli met with local population and discussed details of transfer of the property.

Gasification of the entire Samegrelo will be completed in two years

On November 8, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava announced during her visit in Samegrelo Region that in two years entire Samegrelo will be fully gasified.²³

¹⁹ Tkibuli miners demand restoration of the working process, Radio Liberty, 2 November 2018,

<https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/29579041.html>

²⁰ 9 residential buildings will be built in Tskaltubo and Zugdidi for IDPs, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, 1 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2S54XqS>

²¹ Apartments owned by the Ministry of Economy will be transferred into legal ownership of population, Imedi, 3 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2OTTRTi>

²² Apartments in Rustavi will be transferred into legal ownership of people that live there, 5 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2FzFdkO>

²³ Statement of Natia Turnava, ipress, 8 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2DPQcoH>

X. Interference with pre-election campaigning

Kareli

On November 8, Salome Zourabichvili presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* visited Atotsi village by the occupation line, where barbed wire has been installed since 2008, however Russian militaries started mounting the so-called “border” posts on the rest of the perimeter several days ago.

Salome Zourabichvili talked to the local population and announced that the government must ensure peaceful and dignified life for people that live near the occupied territories.

Presidential candidate was verbally insulted by the Anti-Occupation Movement member, Lana Gvinjilia near the occupation line. According to Netgazeti, Ghvinjilia is head of the development and public relations department of Saakashvili Presidential Library.²⁴

Gldani

On November 5, opposition presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze had a meeting with Gldani population at night. He was moving on the territory outside Akhmeteli Theater subway station, talking to citizens and vendors there and thinking them for their support. Representative of UNM office in Gldani, Gocha Kokaia informed ISFED observer about interference with the campaign meeting. According to him, a group shouting “No to Misha” was interfering with Grigol Vashadze. He identified Shalva Kuchashvili as one of the members of the group; he is a self-proclaimed activist, who according to Gocha Kokaia has been perpetrating such actions throughout Tbilisi. According to Kokaia, the group first assembled outside the UNM office in Gldani and then moved to Grigol Vashadze’s meeting place. According to Kokaia, the activists were acting arrogantly, trying to provoke the UNM. There was no verbal or physical confrontation at the meeting.

XI. Damaging of campaign materials

Akhalkalaki

At night on October 29, supporters of the united opposition *Power In Unity* damaged and tore off posters of Salome Zourabichvili at a gas station.

Gldani

In the first micro-district of Gldani, someone vandalized with red paint a billboard of Salome Zourabichvili posted near a bus station at Khizanishvili Street. GD office in Gldani says that they do not know who damaged their candidate’s campaign material.

Sighnaghi

At night on November 10, a poster of the united opposition presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze was torn off from the UNM office wall. Chair of UNM office in Sighnaghi, Giorgi Babakishvili told ISFED observer that he left the office at 01:30am and when he returned in the morning he found that the poster had been torn off.

Gori

Posters of Grigol Vashadze have been massively destroyed in Gori. They have been vandalized with inscriptions “KGB” and “agent” in red, as well as different illustrations.

²⁴ Statements of Salome Zourabichvili in Atotsi and interference with her campaigning: <http://netgazeti.ge/news/317945/>

Baghdati

In Baghdati, Salome Zourabichvili's campaign poster has been covered up with an advertisement of mineral water Saime.

Kutaisi

In Kutaisi, near the so-called red bridge, posters of the UNM presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze were vandalized, different inscriptions have been made on the posters. UNM representative Giga Shushania told ISFED observer that the campaign material was damaged by Kakhaber Abzianidze, who according to him is head of the office of the movement "No to Misha".

ISFED observer interviewed Kakhaber Abzianidze. He said that the territory where the posters had been placed belongs to him. He believes that the posters were placed on his territory for provocation purposes. Abzianidze denies being head of "No to Misha" movement, however he says that he supports ideas of the movement.

XII. New social-political movements

Public movement "I Defend Freedom"

On November 7, supporters of the independent presidential candidate endorsed by the ruling party, Salome Zourabichvili held a rally within the framework of protest movement "I Defend Freedom" on Rustaveli Avenue. Participants of the rally were actively urging population to support presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili. Main message of the rally was "No to Nazism", participants of the rally were urging public not to support the UNM. During the rally members of the movement presented their action plan and announced about rallies in the regions.²⁵

Public movement "Angry Dwellers of Batumi"

On November 8 in Batumi, representatives of the public movement held a presentation. According to them, even though at this stage they do not support the *Georgian Dream* they believe that the country is facing a threat and they will not "allow the past to return". The same day members of the movement announced about a large-scale meeting for November 18.²⁶

Public Movement "Right Choice"

On November 9, former MP from Zugdidi Gocha Pipia founded a new movement "Right Choice". According to Pipia, purpose of the movement is to help people make the right choice.²⁷ According to media reports, Gocha Pipia called the UNM a Nazi party and he considers the primary objective of the movement to defeat such way of thinking.

Public movement "No to Misha, No to the Nazis"

On November 12, public movement "No to Misha, No to the Nazis" opened two offices in Kutaisi. According to representatives of the movement, their purpose is to prevent return of the UNM.²⁸

ISFED observer was at the office. She asked about funding sources of the organization and was responded that the movement is funded "out of our own pocket". The observer asked who the leader of the movement was. The people who were there got irritated and expressed aggression toward the observer.

²⁵ Movement "I Defend Freedom" is holding rallies in the regions, Tabula, 7 November 2018, <http://tbl.ge/38oe>

²⁶ Movement Angry Dwellers of Batumi was founded in Batumi, presa.ge, 8 November 2018, <http://presa.ge/?m=politics&AID=70297>

²⁷ Former majoritarian MP is offering help to Zugdidi dwellers for making "the right choice", Livepress, 9 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Bme2G2>

²⁸ Campaign offices opened in Kutaisi, Top News, 12 November 2018, <http://topnews.com.ge/news/15127>

Public movement “No to Nazism”

On November 14, public movement “No to Nazism” was founded, which offered to provide transportation for the runoff for citizens that are unable to travel to the region and vote. According to members of the movement, public attitudes have been radically changed ahead of the second round and this is one of the reasons why the movement was created.²⁹

Khashuri

In Khashuri, there are several offices of the *Georgian Dream* including the central headquarters, which was open before the first round of the presidential election, and other so-called “conspiratorial” offices. One of the “conspiratorial” offices was opened by former majoritarian MP Valeri Gelashvili at his hotel Iveria. Supporters of Salome Zourabichvili meet there every evening, however no one answered ISFED observer’s questions about what are they talking about during the meetings, what is their strategy for the second round or why alternative campaign offices had to be opened. Another “conspiratorial” office was opened by current MP Simon Nozadze in his relative’s home at Lomouri Street, where there are no signs indicating that this is the campaign office of Salome Zourabichvili. Another office is located at Rustaveli Street in Daba Surami, where ISFED observer captured voter lists with photos. Another office has been opened by the head of a non-governmental organization Bridge of Hope. The organization was created after the first round of the election. Reporter of Dia TV, Givi Licheli serves as the head of the organization. He told ISFED observer that the purpose of the organization is to identify problems in the municipality, however he does not deny that he supports Salome Zourabichvili in the election. Licheli is meeting with population and urging them to support Zourabichvili.

XIII. Electoral administration

Setting the date for the runoff election

Despite the call of NGOs³⁰ not to do so, the CEC scheduled the runoff for a weekday, November 28. In addition, under the CEC decision the voting process in polling stations created abroad will last until 24:00 local time.

The CEC made the decision by overlooking interests of Georgian citizens residing abroad and their right to participate elections and created an artificial obstacle for them by scheduling elections for a weekday. To reduce the harm caused by the very problem that it created, the CEC has extended voting time until 24:00. However, it is unlikely that extension of the voting time will help voters that study or work and have to travel to a different city to vote.

Additionally, by adopting such regulation the CEC acted outside the scope of its powers and violated the Election Code of Georgia because the Code clearly stipulates that polling stations close at 20:00, with the exception of extension of voting when voters stand in the line at the polling station to cast a ballot by 20:00. The law does not allow any other exceptions.

Furthermore, before the runoff date was announced by the CEC, it was mentioned by Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze. Before that, two speakers at the meeting held by the movement “I Defend Liberty” in Telavi announced that the runoff would be held on November 28. These facts possibly indicate that the ruling party and its supporters knew about the runoff date before the CEC officially made the decision. These facts have created suspicions among a certain part of the society about political bias of the CEC members, which negatively affects the reputation of the electoral administration.

The CEC decision to extend the voting process until 24:00 at polling stations created abroad was appealed by ISFED and TI – Georgia in court, however the court upheld the CEC decision.

²⁹ Movement “No to Nazism” offers transportation to citizens that are unable to travel to regions to vote, Interpressnews, 14 November 2018, <https://bit.ly/2KlhWC4>

³⁰ Second round of the presidential election should be scheduled on a non-work day, a joint statement of observer organizations, ISFED, 14 November 2018, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1444/geo/>

XIV. Interference with observer activities

Lanchkhuti

On November 17, in a ritual hall of Lanchkhuti, representatives of the united opposition – Paata Burchuladze, Nika Machutadze and Levan Khabeishvili as well as the head of the UNM regional organization Kakhaber Askurava and local activists of the party had a campaign meeting with supporters and locals. The meeting, attended by nearly 200 voters started 40 minutes late instead of 12:00. Before the meeting began, ISFED LTO who was there to observe and had been informed about Burchuladze’s visit in the region, the date and time of his meeting with the population two days before, talked to a UNM representative standing nearby Givi Tsintsadze about the reason why the meeting was starting late.

At 12:50, in the entrance of the ritual hall Paata Burchuladze was stopped by a TV reporter for an interview. The reporter asked him a few questions, which did not please the united opposition representative. Head of the UNM regional organization even made insulting remarks about media: “your boss is a drug user”, “you’re not a television”, “they should not be allowed to enter” – said Askurava. He did not allow reporters as well as NGO representative – ISFED LTO to attend the meeting. It was subsequently announced that the meeting was closed and they locked the door.

XV. Observation mission and methodology

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) conducts monitoring of the pre-election environment for the runoff in all electoral districts of Georgia through nearly 70 long-term observers.

Main areas of monitoring of the pre-election period for the runoff include:

- Election administration activities;
- Public meetings of electoral subjects and their political activities;
- Cases of harassment/intimidation or alleged politically motivated dismissals from work;
- Possible instances of vote buying;
- Cases of misuse of administrative resources, etc.

During the monitoring ISFED relies on public information requested from administrative agencies, as well as information provided by electoral subjects, media, NGOs and individual citizens. ISFED verifies each report by interviewing witnesses and all sides of the incident.

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

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