



**2020 Parliamentary Elections**  
**Fourth Interim Report of Pre-Election Monitoring**  
**(September 6 – September 28)**

**29 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



## **Contents**

<b>I.</b>	<b><i>Introduction.....</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b><i>Main Findings.....</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b><i>Physical Confrontation.....</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b><i>Harassment/Intimidation/Interference .....</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b><i>Dismissals Based on a Possible Political Motive .....</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b><i>Participation of Unauthorized Individuals in Election Campaign .....</i></b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b><i>Alleged Vote-Buying.....</i></b>	<b>14</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b><i>Use of Administrative Resources .....</i></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b><i>Participation of TV Presenter in Elections.....</i></b>	<b>18</b>
<b>XI.</b>	<b><i>Damaging Campaign Materials .....</i></b>	<b>18</b>
<b>XII.</b>	<b><i>Composition of PECs .....</i></b>	<b>19</b>
<b>XIII.</b>	<b><i>Observation Mission and Methodology .....</i></b>	<b>21</b>

## I. Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy has been monitoring the pre-election period of the October 31, 2020 presidential 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 fourth interim report of pre-election monitoring covers the period from September 6 through September 28, 2020. It also covers individual events that started to unfold prior to September 6 and continued or became known during the reporting period.

## II. Main Findings

In the reporting period, ISFED identified **7 cases of physical violence based on a possible political motive; 24 cases of harassment/intimidation based on a possible political motive; 8 cases of possible vote-buying; 1 case of dismissal from work based on a possible political motive; 13 cases of possible use of administrative resources; 8 cases of participation of unauthorized individuals in election campaign; cases of damaging campaign materials in up to 20 municipalities and districts of Tbilisi.**

According to the organization, during the reporting period, facts of intimidation, harassment and interference with voters, activists and opposition politicians remains the biggest challenge. Sharp increase of such cases as the voting day approaches is an important challenge harming the election process. On the one hand, this makes it difficult for politicians to have a free communication with voters and on the other hand, it interferes with expression and realization of voters' free will. Instances of physical retribution also remains a challenge; the number of such incidents is growing as the election processes becomes more active and the voting day approaches. It is the assessment of the organization that conducting a timely, impartial and transparent investigation into the facts of harassment, intimidation and interference and punishing the perpetrators is extremely important.

In recent days, the situation became especially tense in Marneuli and Bolnisi. On September 28, in village Sadakhlo, an activist of the European Georgia was possibly shot with a gallery gun and wounded in his leg. Opposition believes that the incident is connected to the Georgian Dream. On September 27, in Bolnisi, as a result of a confrontation between representatives of the ruling party and the Strength is in Unity representatives, several individuals sustained physical injuries. In addition, according to an opposition candidate, Kakhaber Okriashvili, supporters of the ruling party candidate were firing shots in the air. We believe that the situation in Bolnisi and Dmanisi district warrants a particular attention. Law enforcement authorities should investigate the incidents of violence in an objective and timely manner, while parties and their supporters should abandon the use of violent methods.

Cases of blackmailing female politicians by threatening to disclose details of their private life is especially alarming. In Zugdidi, a female member of Lelo was publicly threatened on Facebook by the chief of staff of State Representative (Governor) in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Lasha Gvasalia. In particular, he threatened to disclose certain facts about her private life. According to the party representatives, blackmail and harassment of Lelo members by the authorities has become a malicious practice. Leader of Strategy Agmashenebeli Giorgi Vashadze reported that a female member of his team has been blackmailed through disclosure of details of her private life. To protect his teammate's personal information, Giorgi Vashadze didn't specify her identity. It should be a priority for investigative authorities to adequately investigate and punish such cases of blackmail against female opposition members.

Otherwise, statements about supporting women's participation in politics will remain empty slogans, devoid of any meaning.

In several municipalities, opposition representatives reported that their supporters were harassed and attempts to recruit them were made. According to these politicians, for that reason it is difficult to find staff locally. They also said their supporters and representatives have refused to continue working with them.

Representatives of Lelo for Georgia have pointed out instances of surveillance of their leaders and members in different municipalities, and attendance of local government representatives at their meetings, which – they argue - makes their supporters feel uncomfortable.

Notably, school and kindergarten teachers remain one of the most important human resources for political parties and attempts to involve them in campaigning are frequent, mostly by the ruling party. In light of this, they are often pressured. Head of the Educational Resource Center of Telavi, Levan Mrelashvili discussed together with public school principals intimidation of principals and teachers by parties of the united opposition. In particular, he noted that many principals had recently received anonymous calls, urging them to quit cooperating with the authorities since Georgian Dream's days were numbered and when the opposition came to power, they would lose their jobs. Several school principals told ISFED that they have heard about such facts from their colleagues. They asked to remain anonymous.

Unauthorized individuals remain actively involved in election campaigning. Local officials, employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities, and precinct election commission members attend campaign meetings held during working hours. Participation of citizens of foreign countries was also found. The United National Movement is conducting a campaign called „Give a Task to Misha“. According to the initiative, Mikheil Saakashvili is involved in the campaign, who is currently a citizen of a foreign country and has no right to participate in elections in Georgia. There are many video statements of Mikheil Saakashvili disseminated in social media, where he gives election promises on his and the party's behalf.

Possible vote-buying attempts by individual political parties remains a problem. This includes cases when a candidate realizes possible risks of violating the election legislation but disregards them.

Cases of possible use of administrative resources were identified again. In Abasha, a crane that belongs to the municipality was used to place a banner of a majoritarian candidate, Aleksandre Motserelia. In addition, 300 university students from Rustavi were funded from the local budget; as noted by the local Assembly chair and his deputy, this year the number of students has been unprecedentedly high; 33 students in 2018 and 157 students in 2019 with high academic performance received one-time funding. The amount of funding is based on scores received by students and it ranges from 800 to 1200 laris. Zugdidi Municipality Assembly violated the prohibition provided in the Election Code and increased infrastructural expenses in the municipal budget by 1 032 100 laris within the period of 60 days prior to the elections.

According to the head of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Association of Musical Schools of Kvareli municipality, the mayor dismissed her from work due to her husband's political activism – for supporting the United National Movement.

There has been a massive surge of cases of damaging campaign materials across Georgia. At this stage, cases of massive destruction of the European Georgia campaign materials has been found in 20

municipalities. Majority of posters have been torn and damaged, while in Zugdidi, Akhaltsikhe and Aspindza, the party posters were covered up by photos of the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidates. In addition, in various municipalities, UNM, GD, Strategy Aghmashenebeli, Labor Party and Free Georgia campaign materials have been damaged. In some cases, damaged posters are near surveillance cameras of private facilities but they have not been scrutinized.

During the reporting period, precinct electoral commissions were composed. Notably, on the most part, this was a pro forma process. In most districts, commission members had already made a decision and had marked persons to be elected on the list of contenders. They were indicating their decisions on papers printed out according to precincts. Opposition representatives were requesting to include an additional item on the agenda, in order for individual candidates to be discussed separately and precinct commissions be composed after that. In some precincts, the request was put to a vote but it did not receive sufficient number of votes. Therefore, the process took place amid opposition protest. In a number of districts, they refused to participate in casting of lots.

Some of the newly elected commissioners have ties with the ruling party – their relatives or family members are activists or coordinators of the party. Those elected as PEC members include civil servants, employees of local assemblies or mayor's offices, as well as employees of administrative units and municipal non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities. Based on the information obtained by ISFED observer, these individuals have taken a leave of absence. Even though this does not amount to a direct violation, it calls their impartiality into question.

### **III. Recommendations**

#### **Central and local authorities should:**

- Investigate facts of harassment/intimidation against political party activists and supporters, as well as facts of interference with political party campaigns in a timely and effective manner;
- Refrain from using resources financed from central or local budgets for party purposes;
- Civil servants and school and kindergarten employees should refrain from participating in campaign events for political parties and candidates during working hours.

#### **Political parties should:**

- Refrain and prevent their supporters from committing physical violence;
- Not allow intimidation/harassment against opposing political party candidates and supporters;
- Not allow use of administrative resources for the advancement of party goals during the campaign period;
- Not engage with voters in a manner that contains elements of vote-buying and act within constraints of the law;
- Not allow involvement of unauthorized individuals in election campaign in their favor.

## IV. Physical Confrontation

### Marneuli

[On September 28](#), in village Sadakhlo, an activist of the European Georgia was possibly shot with a gallery gun and wounded in his leg. The victim didn't see the assailant. Opposition believes that the incident is connected to the Georgian Dream.

European Georgia majoritarian candidate in Marneuli-Gardabani District, Ahmed Imamkuliev told ISFED observer that the injured individual has been taken to a hospital. They have also found the bullet fired from the gallery gun. According to Imamkuliev, EG activists were trying to place campaign materials and a banner, which the ruling party supporters and self-government representatives did not allow them to and head of the supervision service gave the party one day to remove illegal construction (a banner). The activist was shot in the leg exactly when he was setting up a campaign banner. Even though they have reported it to the police, they do not have high hopes for the investigation.

Investigation has been initiated based on article 120 of the Criminal Code (light damage to health).

### Bolnisi

[On September 27](#), in village Nakhiduri, a physical confrontation occurred between the united opposition members and the ruling party supporters. According to the opposition, the assailants included a brother of GD majoritarian candidate Gogi Meshveliani. The parties are blaming each other for initiating the confrontation.

According to UNM majoritarian candidate in districts of Dmanisi, Tsalka, Bolnisi and Tetrtskaro, Kakhaber Okriashvili, the assailants were possibly drunk and they were firing shots in the air, possibly for intimidation purposes but no one was hurt.

According to the ruling party candidate, Gogi Meshveliani, GD activists that were campaigning in village Nakhiduri were assaulted by local UNM leader Arip Usupov, with his friends and relatives using batons. As a result, two activists were hospitalized.

Investigation was initiated based on paragraph 1<sup>1</sup>(b) of article 126 of the Criminal Code (violence perpetrated by group).

### Tbilisi

- [On September 27](#), in Gldani, UNM leader and Gldani majoritarian candidate Nika Melia was having a campaign meeting when, according to him, unidentified individuals started throwing rocks at him, possibly from a roof or a window of an apartment building. Melia believes that the incident is connected to the Georgian Dream.
- [On September 24](#), according to UNM member Zviad Kuprava, a member of his campaign office Ninia Tsiskarishvili was attacked by two individuals, who "twisted her arms and dragged her on the ground". Investigation has been initiated based on articles 126(1) and 187(1) of the Criminal Code (battery and damaging someone else's property).

- [On September 18](#), UNM activist Lasha Tsutskiridze was attacked by unknown individuals and physically insulted. According to the victim's wife, the assailants were armed with brass-knuckles and had their faces covered. The party believes that the incident has to do with political retribution. Investigation has been initiated based on article 126(b) of the Criminal Code (group violence).
- On September 19, a physical and verbal confrontation took place in a square near Gldaniskhevi settlement N1. The square has been recently rehabilitated by Gldani District Gamgeoba and local GD members have placed flags with the party's symbols in it. About ten representatives of the Labor Party youth organization came to the square and tried to replace party flags by flags of Georgia, to which GD supporters protested. The disagreement grew into a physical and verbal confrontation.

The incident was defused after the police patrol interfered. The sides were taken to a police station for questioning and investigation was initiated in connection to facts of verbal and physical confrontation by both sides.

Head of the GD regional organization in Gldani, Beka Mikautadze believes that the incident was a planned provocation. In an interview with ISFED, he said Gldani residents placed flags on their own initiative and there was nothing illegal about it.

## **Dmanisi**

On September 15, in Dmanisi, on the territory of the mayor's office, supporters of the party Progress and Freedom leader, Kakha Okriashvili were attacked. [Okriashvili believes that the incident](#) was politically motivated. Investigation has been initiated based on articles 126 and 187 of the Criminal Code (battery and damaging or destroying someone else's property).

## **V. Harassment/Intimidation/Interference**

### **Zugdidi**

In Zugdidi, a female member of Lelo was publicly threatened on Facebook by the chief of staff of State Representative in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Lasha Gvasalia. In particular, he threatened to disclose certain facts about her private life.

According to the party representatives, blackmail and harassment of Lelo members by the authorities has become a malicious practice, with the law enforcement agencies failing to take adequate actions in response. [According to Lelo Women's Council leader, Medea Metreveli](#), the party demands dismissal of Lasha Gvasalia from the office and implementation of measures provided for in article 157<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code.

### **Tbilisi**

Leader of Strategy Agmashenebeli Giorgi Vashadze [reported](#) that a female member of his team has been blackmailed through disclosure of details of her private life. To protect his teammate's personal information, Giorgi Vashadze didn't specify her identity.

### **Dmanisi**

[On September 16](#), in village Nakhiduri, following opposition's public meeting, an assemblyman from GD, Vugar Isaev threatened Mtavari Arkhi reporter Jeikhun Muhamedali that he would wound him. He said: "once the elections are over, I'll call you here and tell you completely different words, go ahead, work for the Nationals [UNM]."

Isaev told ISFED observer that a disagreement between him and the reporter began in 2018, when the assemblyman gave an interview about the problem of drinking water in the village, but the report aired on the TV was biased. According to Isaev, on September 16, together with several of his fellow-villagers, he was standing near the public meeting. He said as soon as the reporter saw him, he demanded an interview. The assemblyman refused, saying he would not speak to a biased reporter. According to the assemblyman, he decided to leave, but the reporter followed him stubbornly, trying to provoke him, which – in his words - others also witnessed.

### **Gardabani**

According to the party European Georgia majoritarian candidate in Rustavi and Gardabani, Irma Nadirashvili, on September 12, in village Vaziani of Gardabani Municipality, a local official sent GD activists to the volunteers of the European Georgia campaign office. Nadirashvili said they were yelling, shouting and trying to interfere with the volunteers' work. [According to Irma Nadirashvili](#), the activists were followed by Levan Menakhshirishvili in a black SUV and he was giving them instructions.

ISFED observer contacted Levan Menakhshirishvili, who denied the allegations about his participation in the incident and said he was at the scene of the meeting by accident. ISFED has found out that Levan Menakhshirishvili is employed as a specialist in Martkobi Administrative Unit based on an administrative agreement.

### **Gori**

- [On September 10](#), European Georgia majoritarian candidate for Gori and Kaspi reported that GD members – Vano Nonikashvili and Lela Lukashvili were intimidating the coordinator of the party's Khidistavi area, Shalva Kvrivishvili, in the name of the ruling party. Vano Nonikashvili is a member of the Municipality Assembly of Gori.
- In an interview with ISFED, Levan Tarkhnishvili said Nonikashvili was not personally intimidating individuals, but rather, through sending their own relatives to them. He said, for instance, Nonikashvili's cousin approached Kvrivishvili in Nonikashvili's name and told him that he would be in a big trouble if he did not stop.

- On September 13, UNM majoritarian candidate in Gori and Kaspi, Badri Basishvili had a campaign meeting with constituents in village Mejriskhevi. During the meeting a confrontation occurred between the party representative – Vasilisa Jabakhidze and mayoral representative in Mejriskhevi, Aleksandre Bujiashvili. According to Vasilisa Jabakhidze, he saw that someone was taking her photos from across the street in a car and she tried to find out the reason. She found Lekso Bujiashvili and his co-worker in the car, who reproached her for having a meeting near the memorial for those who died in the 2008 war. According to her, based on the instructions of the mayoral representative, his co-workers were taking photos, which amounts to intimidation of voters. ISFED observer contacted the mayoral representative in Mejriskhevi, who, in turn, accused the UNM representative of defamation and categorically rejected having taken photos. According to Bujiashvili, he was participating in the renovation works of a nearby castle when Jabakhidze approached him and insulted him.

### **Telavi**

- On September 12, UNM majoritarian candidate Giorgi Botkoveli reported that authorities initiated repressive actions against the owner of a commercial center Limbo, located in the central area of Telavi, on the grounds that his campaign banner was placed on the exterior of the commercial center. Several days after the banner was placed, the commercial center received a message that the Revenue Service would be auditing their work. Ltd Limbo confirmed that they had received the message from the Revenue Service, which suspiciously coincided with placement of the UNM candidate’s campaign banner on their facade.
- On September 17, head of the Educational Resource Center of Telavi, Levan Mrelashvili held a press briefing together with public school principals to talk about intimidation of school principals and teachers by parties of the united opposition.

In an interview with ISFED observer, Mrelashvili said many directors had recently complained about receiving anonymous phone-calls, telling them to stop being active and quit cooperating with the authorities because the GD days were numbered and when the opposition came into power, they would lose their jobs. According to Mrelashvili, because of the pandemic he often visits different schools and several principals have told him the same thing. Therefore, he decided it was necessary to disclose these facts. ISFED observer asked him to provide names of principals and teachers who were intimidated. Mrelashvili said they had asked to remain anonymous, but added that if such facts continued in the future, he would certainly disclose the information.

Several school principals who talked to ISFED said that they have heard about such facts from their colleagues. They asked to remain anonymous.

### **Zugdidi**

- On Septmeber 9, in Zugdidi, in the yard of the Dadiani Palace, before presentation of Lelo for Georgia majoritarian candidate, several individuals had a verbal argument with Mamuka Khazaradze. ISFED has found out that these individuals included Zugdidi Library director Madona Makatsaria and GD activist Dali Lataria, who are active supporters of the ruling party. Photos disseminated by the party also show several employees of a municipal non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity.

- On September 12, Lelo for Georgia majoritarian candidate for Zugdidi, Aleksandre Akhvlediani reported that a member of the party's youth organization, Irakli Matua was subjected to pressure. According to him, an assemblyman from GD, Otar Kadaria gave 600 laris to Irakli Matua on the territory of school no.11, in exchange for leaving the party. Irakli Matua confirmed this with ISFED observer. He said Otar Kadaria was acting under the instructions of Sakrebulo chairperson, Tazo Patsatsia. According to him, Kadaria told him to leave Zugdidi and not to contact anyone. When he received the money, he was also promised a job at one of the non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities in Zugdidi Municipality. There were no threats voiced during the meeting, but Matua says he still was scared because Zviadists (supporters of late president Zviad Gamsakhurdia) are the government's power base at the local level and Lelo had a severe confrontation with them recently. Kadaria also bought a bus ticket to Tbilisi for Matua, took his phone and made a statement about leaving Lelo on Matua's Facebook page on his behalf. As soon as the bus left Zugdidi, Irakli Matua managed to contact the party members, then he got off the bus near village Tsatskhvi and the party members took him to Lelo office.

### **Rustavi**

According to UNM majoritarian candidate for Rustavi, Davit Kirkitadze, on September 7, in village Martkopi of Gardabani Municipality, the party volunteers who were distributing campaign newspapers, had their materials taken away. He reported the fact to the police.

### **Chokhatauri**

- In Chokhatauri, according to the European Georgia representative Lia Chigogidze, in villages of Chaisubani, Chachieti and Khidistavi, the ruling party was trying to recruit former PEC members from the 2018 elections appointed under the European Georgia quota. According to Chigogidze, GD representatives are urging certain individuals not to cooperate with the European Georgia and are trying to recruit them. Lia Chigogidze did not specify names, in order for them not to have any problems.
- Based on the information provided by Lia Chigogidze, on August 25, following a statement made by the European Georgia majoritarian candidate for Guria, Khatuna Gogorishvili at a briefing, [concerning the program for socially vulnerable people in Chokhatauri](#), Assembly Chairperson Zaal Mamaladze threatened her and told her that Gogorishvili would leave Chokhatauri following the elections and Chigogidze would have to stay in the region. To verify the information, ISFED spoke with the Assembly Chairperson Zaal Mamaladze, who denied the allegation and said he did no such thing.
- A representative of UNM in Chokhatauri, Bacho Akhaladze reported to ISFED observer that their supporters and commission members who represented the UNM during the 2018 elections were subjected to psychological pressure. In village Buknari, the UNM representative, Iamze Kvachantiradze, who was a PEC member from the UNM, refused to cooperate with the party because she and her family have been subjected to pressure from the Georgian Dream and the Buknari School principal, Marina Gogishvili for years. ISFED representative interviewed Iamze

Kvachantiradze, who confirmed the foregoing and said that for years, she and her family have been pressured. Marina Gogishvili was the chairperson of the Buknari PEC in 2018, while Iamze Kvachantiradze was a member of the same PEC from the UNM. Kvachantiradze worked as a practitioner at Buknari School and according to her, because of being a member of the UNM she often experienced psychological pressure at school, as well as at the election precinct. She refused to cooperate with the UNM because she is going to take teachers' exams, to join the school as a seeker (entry-level teacher) and she does not want her or her family members to have any problems because of her membership of the UNM. According to her, Buknari School principal and a member of the PEC, Marina Gogishvili is an active supporter of the Georgian Dream.

### **Vake**

On September 18, outside Lelo's campaign office in Vake, the Georgian March organized a rally with participation of over 50 people. They scattered fake money outside the campaign office. According to Georgian March representatives, Lelo is a party of usurers and this is what the fake money symbolized. The rally ended in about 30 minutes. According to Lelo representatives, the performance aimed to interfere with their work.

### **Kutaisi**

On September 19, local representatives of the Georgian March [staged a rally](#) outside the office of Lelo in Kutaisi, with the aim of discrediting the party founders and leaders. They were shouting and using hate speech against Lelo leaders.

### **Samgori**

- On September 16, [Lelo held a briefing](#) to talk about vehicles that, according to them, are keeping Lelo members under surveillance. One of the leaders of Lelo said that campaign office of majoritarian candidate Pikria Chikhradze identified a vehicle with license plate number II252HH, which was conducting surveillance. The fact was confirmed by one of the leaders of Lelo, Tazo Datunashvili to ISFED observer.

According to a majoritarian candidate for Mtatsminda-Krtsanisi, Saba Buadze he is personally under surveillance by a vehicle with license plate numbers AA055EE. However, according to him, there have been no incidents of interference and intervention in the campaign.

- On September 17, at night, office of the UNM majoritarian candidate Levan Khabeishvili was raided at Chichinadze Street. The incident occurred at 2am. In an interview with ISFED observer, head of Levan Khabeishvili campaign office, Irakli Nadiradze said at 4am he received a call from an investigator, who informed him that the office had been raided. At the scene they found windows smashed with stones, possibly brought at the scene for that purpose. Next to the office is a 24-hour supermarket and according to Irakli Nadiradze, they have heard that there are witnesses, but no arrests have been made. The party does not expect any actions from the law enforcement agencies.

## **Bolnisi**

[On September 22](#), in Bolnisi, offices of opposition members were damaged and vandalized with paint. Unknown individuals left lewd drawings and inscriptions on walls of offices of Bolnisi, Tetrtskaro, Tsalka, Dmanisi majoritarian candidate Kakha Okriashvili and the UNM. The incident has been reported to the police.

Kakha Okriashvili's campaign manager informed ISFED that the footage from video surveillance outside the office shows three masked individuals and then it shows nothing because the camera was damaged. According to a representative of the UNM office in Bolnisi, GD formed groups that committed such actions. In addition, that same day posters of opposition candidates were torn across the town. Both offices accuse the authorities of the incident.

Investigation has been initiated under article 187 of the Criminal Code (damaging or destroying property).

## **Gldani**

On September 19, 2020, GD majoritarian candidate Levan Kobiashvili had a campaign meeting in the third district of Gldani. Several individuals approached the meeting participants and started calling them traitors, which disrupted the meeting. Chairperson of the GD office in Gldani, Beka Mikautadze told ISFED that those individuals were from the campaign office of UNM Gldani majoritarian candidate Nika Melia. Campaign manager of Nika Melia, Tornike Bikashvili told ISFED that he is not aware of the incident or its participants.

## **Tianeti**

On September 18, 22-year-old driver of Tianeti Mayor Tamaz Mechiauri, Giorgi Khumarashvili attempted suicide. According to the victim's mother, GD representative Zurab Bekauri, who serves as a mayoral representative in village Khevsurtsopeli, was forcing his son to gather information on Tamaz Mechiauri, where he was going and what plans he had. According to the mother, because Giorgi refused to comply with the demand, Bekauri was blackmailing him and drove him to the point of suicide. She noted that they had a fight and that Bekauri was drunk, and was swearing and threatening her son. Notably, Khumarashvili attempted suicide after the physical altercation.

The state of Khumarashvili's health has improved, but, [according to his doctor](#), certain post-hypoxic elements are still evident in his awareness. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has launched an investigation under article 115 of the Criminal Code.

It's worth noting that Tamaz Mechiauri reported being threatened also [last month](#).

## **Mestia**

Lelo representative Gegi Gulediani reported that he is being pressured. He published the information on his Facebook account, stating that he had a meeting with an employee of a law-enforcement entity, who is his acquaintance and he categorically warned him to abandon Lelo or else, he would be arrested. In an

interview with ISFED observer, Guledani confirmed this fact but he didn't specify the name of his acquaintance.

### **Gurjaani and Sagarejo**

On September 22, within the interval from 18:30 to 19:00, a member of the Gurjaani DEC from the United National Movement, Inga Kitiashvili received a call from a phone number 511 15 49 73. The caller introduced himself as Giorgi Nozadze and told her that he was calling under the instructions of a majoritarian candidate Giorgi Botkoveli to tell her that it was necessary to write as many complaints as possible on the Election Day, in order to interfere with the work of precinct and district level commissions. Inga Kitiashvili immediately contacted Giorgi Botkoveli, who denied knowing such person or having given such assignment. The number where the call was made from is no longer in service and according to the mobile network operator, the number is not registered. On September 22, the same person contacted a member of Sagarejo DEC N11 from the UNM, Giorgi Bukhnikashvili, with the same instructions.

One of the leaders of the United National Movement, Tina Bokuchava talked about these facts during a press-conference. According to her, such facts have occurred in Tkibuli, Vani, Gori and Shuakhevi, where the same individual called UNM-appointed DEC members with the same instructions.

## **VI. Dismissals Based on a Possible Political Motive**

### **Kvareli**

Head of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Association of Musical Schools, Tamar Gigiashvili said that Mayor Rostom Sesiashvili dismissed her [from work](#) because of her husband's active involvement in the UNM campaign and also, because he placed a UNM banner on the commercial space they own. According to her, the order of dismissal does not specify grounds for the dismissal, she has not received any warnings about disciplinary misconduct and she is going to appeal the mayor's decision.

Municipality Mayor Rostom Sesiashvili has denied the report of dismissal of an employee based on a political motive.

## **VII. Participation of Unauthorized Individuals in Election Campaign**

### **Participation of Mikheil Saakashvili in Election Campaign**

Mikheil Saakashvili, who is a citizen of a foreign country and according to the Georgian election law he is prohibited from participating in election campaign, is actively involved in UNM election campaign in various forms.

For example, the UNM is conducting a campaign called [„Give a Task to Misha“](#). With this initiative, Mikheil Saakashvili is involved in the election campaign of the party. In addition, many of his remarks published on social media confirm his active participation in the election campaign.

### **Kutaisi**

On September 18, in the yard of the Bagrati Church in Kutaisi, presentation of GD majoritarian and mayoral candidates was held. Clerics including the Metropolitan of Kutaisi-Gaenati, [Ioane \(Gamrekeli\)](#) were in attendance.

#### **Tskaltubo**

On September 19, presentation of GD majoritarian candidate in Tskaltubo was also attended by [Metropolitan Ioane](#).

#### **Terjola**

On September 20, presentation of GD majoritarian and mayoral candidates in Terjola was attended by Bishop Giorgi (Shalamberidze) of Tkibuli and Terjola Eparchy, together with other clerics.

#### **Isani**

- An employee of Isani Gamgeoba, Khvicha Chalabashvili shared a post on Facebook during working hours, in favor of GD candidate Kakha Kakhishvili
- Head of the Kindergartens Agency, Kakhaber Gvantseladze shared Kakha Kakhishvili's campaign materials on his personal Facebook account during working hours.

#### **Dusheti**

On September 10, at 18:00, GD candidate met with employees of Dusheti kindergartens. Kindergarten teachers arrived outside the Culture House of Dusheti half hour early, before working hours had ended. According to ISFED observer, the teachers had received an assignment to attend the meeting from their principals, who in turn had received the assignment from the head of the local Kindergartens Association.

#### **Akhaltsikhe**



On September 5, campaign meetings of GD majoritarian candidate Anton Obolashvili, in villages of Akhaltsikhe Municipality was attended by Akhaltsikhe DEC member Naira Samsonadze, who is a GD-appointed member of the commission. Photos that prove her presence during the campaign meetings were posted by Anton Obolashvili himself on his Facebook page, however they were soon deleted. Akhaltsikhe DEC secretary, Sopo Nabadze told ISFED that she is not aware of this issue and she hasn't spoken to Naira Samsonadze herself.

### **VIII. Possible Vote-Buying**

#### **Poti**

[According to Tamar Chergoleishvili](#), a supporter of the European Georgia and a wife of the majoritarian candidate of the same party for Poti, Khobi, Senaki – Giga Bokeria, she founded an organization that will help youth in Poti, Khobi and Senaki to prepare for life and give them social capital. Within the program, free public lectures will be delivered in Poti, in the European Georgia office, while transportation will be provided to youth from Senaki and Kobi.

### **Ninotsminda**

On September 16, there was a public meeting in Ninotsminda in connection to opening of an independent candidate Enzel Mkoyan's campaign office, with participation of about 100 people. Supporters that drove to the meeting received 20 liters of fuel each at a gas station owned by Mkoyan's family.

### **Ozurgeti**

In village Shroma, an electrical transformer was installed as a campaign promise. ISFED observer interviewed locals, who asked to remain anonymous and said that they collected signatures, filed applications and managed to have the authorities install an electrical transformer. In return, they promised to "stand by their side" in the elections. Cost of the transformer is 1200 laris according to an Energo Pro employee. Locals don't know names of those that provided funding but they clearly stated that the funding was secured in exchange for a promise to stand by the authorities' side in the upcoming elections.

### **Senaki**

A source reported to ISFED observer that on September 9, at an art gallery conference hall in Senaki Municipality, Mayor Levan Kupreishvili and Giorgi Gamsakhurdia held a joint meeting with veterans. The source explained that Giorgi Gamsakhurdia asked veterans to help him and support him: "if you support us and work in favor of the Georgian Dream, we will support you in every way."

### **Abasha**

On September 11, UNM representative Davit Dartsmelidze said the mayor's office distributed wine and meat for barbecue among locals in some villages and neighborhoods (in public gathering places for men). The information was confirmed by all opposition parties in Abasha, as well as by locals.

Video and photo material provided by Dartsmelidze shows loading of vehicles with vessels filled with wine from the basement (storage area) of the Abasha mayor's office. It also shows Zaza Chanturia, who is the mayor's driver.

### **Kutaisi**



European Georgia majoritarian candidate in Kutaisi, Otar Kakhidze presented his view of election campaign, which entails the following: master classes, training courses on different topics. According to Kakhidze, professionals working in various fields will be the trainers, who will donate to his election campaign in such a form. He promises free legal consultations to Kutaisi residents on certain days and hours of the week. ISFED observer asked him if participants will be urged to support him in exchange for these consultations and he responded yes – he will urge everyone that enters his office to support him.

**Rustavi**

Party “Georgian Roots” majoritarian candidate Beso Chubinidze has a Facebook blog where he talks about his campaign „[Let’s gift children a smile](#)“. Within the campaign, he urges everyone to bring different items to his campaign office, where everything will be collected, packaged and distributed among children living in poverty. According to the candidate, he does not care whether or not such action violates the law.

**Tbilisi**

Political party Reformer, which is running in the parliamentary elections, [is disseminating an advertisement](#) on its Facebook page urging users to participate in a giveaway on TikTok and win iPhone 11.

**IX. Use of Administrative Resources**

**Zugdidi**

[On September 4](#), Zugdidi Municipality Assembly adopted a resolution N33 – on amendments to December 30, 2019 resolution no.51 on the adoption of Zugdidi Municipality budget for 2020, and increased the local budget by 1 032 100 laris. According to the municipality, these funds have been allocated for infrastructural projects.

According to paragraph 3 of Article 49 of the organic law of Georgia “the Election Code of Georgia”, „from the 60th day before and including the Election Day, it is prohibited to implement such projects/programs that have not been previously included in the State Budget of Georgia, budgets of the autonomous republics, or budgets of the local self-governments.

**Dedoplistskaro**

[On September 7](#), GD majoritarian candidate in Gurjaani, Sagarejo, Dedoplistskaro and Signaghi, Davit Songulashvili attended opening of a community center in Dedoplistskaro with representatives of the authorities.

### **Rustavi**

[300 students from Rustavi will be funded from the local budget](#), which was announced on September 11. As noted by the Assembly chair and his deputy, this year the number of students has been unprecedentedly high, 33 students in 2018 and 157 students in 2019 with high academic performance received one-time funding. The amount of funding is based on scores received by students and it ranges from 800 to 1200 laris.

### **Mtskheta**

[According to Mtskheta Municipality Mayor Giorgi Kapanadze](#), beginning from 2020, students with good academic performance will receive one-time stipend from schools of his municipality amounting to 250 laris.

### **Abasha**



- A crane that belongs to the municipality was used to place a billboard of GD majoritarian candidate, Aleksandre Motserelia. The photo clearly shows the type of the car and its number, as well as the process of setting up the banner.

- On September 16, GD majoritarian candidate had a campaign meeting in village Pirveli Maisi of Khobi Municipality. The meeting was held during working hours and it was attended by a mayoral representative in village Pirveli Maisi – Nestor Dzidziguri, who has been noticed at party

meetings during working hours many times before.

### **Adigeni**

- On September 8, GD majoritarian candidate of Akhaltsikhe-Aspindza-Borjomi-Adigeni, Anton Obolashvili held a campaign meeting with locals in village Arali, at 15:00. The meeting was attended by Arali public school teachers: principal Maro Chkhitunidze, school teacher – Vazha Tatehvili, Adigeni Mayoral representative in Arali administrative unit, Davit Akopashvili, employee of Arali library Manana Khachidze (Apriamashvili). Notably, Arali school principal also attended a meeting in village Ude the same day, at 17:00.
- The meeting in v.Ude was attended by teachers of Ude public schools no.1 and no.2, as well as by teachers of both public kindergartens, and deputy mayor of Adigeni Municipality Arsen Balakhashvili.

### **Dmanisi**

[On September 8](#), in Dmanisi, a new square funded from the local budget was opened by Municipality Mayor Giorgi Tatuashvili, together with the incumbent Dmanisi-Tsalka majoritarian and Bolnisi, Tetrtskaro, Tsalka, Dmanisi majoritarian candidate Kakha Okriashvili.

### **Gldani**

On September 17, Gamgeoba of Gldani District [reported on its official Facebook page](#) that on the bridge that connects the 7th and the 8th micro-districts of Gldani, in the courtyard of a residential building, restoration and reinforcement works were carried out and a total of 380 355 laris was allocated for that purpose. According to the information, the completed works were inspected by representatives of local authorities, as well as the majoritarian candidate for Gldani, Levan Kobiashvili.

### **Lagodekhi**

On September 16, during working hours, campaign meeting of the Georgian Dream held in village Mskhalgori was attended by Mskhalgori public school teachers.

### **Ozurgeti**

- On September 16, in village Melekeduri, at meetings of GD majoritarian candidate Vasil Chigogidze, vehicles owned by the State Representative's (Governor's) Administration were found, however the State Representative himself was not attending the meeting.
- On September 10, during working hours at 16:03, Head of PR Office of the State Representative in Guria Nino Lomjaria shared GD campaign material on her own Facebook page.

## **X. Participation of TV Presenter in Elections**

On September 23, UNM nominated [TV presenter Nanuka Zhorzholiani as majoritarian candidate in the district of Vani-Samtredia-Khoni-Tskaltubo](#). She will be running in the elections on behalf of the Strength is in Unity. In the meantime, she intends to continue journalistic activities. Because of the nature of the candidate's job, essence of the regulations provided in the Election Code on political advertising are called into question and unfair advantage is created for a candidate that works on television. In addition, there is a risk of receiving illegal donations.

## **XI. Damaging Campaign Materials**

There has been a massive surge of cases of damaging campaign materials in different municipalities of Georgia. At this stage, massive damaging of the European Georgia campaign materials has been found in 20 municipalities. Majority of posters have been torn and damaged, while in Zugdidi, Akhaltsikhe and Aspindza, the party posters were covered up by photos of the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidates.

UNM posters have been massively damaged in five municipalities, including in Gori, where according to their activists, damaged posters are near surveillance cameras of private facilities but they have not been studied.

In seven municipalities, posters of GD candidates have been damaged, including in Gurjaani, where candidate Songulashvili's posters have been massively torn.

In some municipalities, campaign materials of Strategy Agmashenebeli, Labor Party and Free Georgia were damaged.

## **XII. Composition of PECs**

During the reporting period, the process of composition of PECs was taking place at DEC's, which was observed by ISFED. DEC's chose so-called professional members of PECs, 6 each. The process had a number of shortcomings and irregularities.

Notably, there was no real competition at some precincts because the number of applications was equal to the number of vacancies. In addition, the process was conducted within a short period of time, within two days after the deadline for submission of applications. It was impossible to adequately examine and evaluate each competitor within the given timeframe. For example, in Batumi the DEC meeting was held within 2 days after the deadline for submission of applications, even though they had available time until September 15. Therefore, on the most part it was a pro forma process. Often, resumes of candidates were not examined during DEC meetings, DEC members circled candidates of their choice and the outcome was announced publicly.

The following example clearly demonstrates how inappropriate the timeframe for selection was in consideration of the number of PEC members to be selected: Gurjaani and Telavi DEC's selected members of PECs within the limits of their respective districts during a meeting that lasted 4 hours each. In particular, Gurjaani DEC selected 954 members of 159 precincts and Telavi DEC selected 900 members of 150 precincts.

As an exception, some DEC's were not able to compose their respective PECs at their first attempt – for example, in Oni competition for selection of PEC members was announced for the second time at precincts #6, # 7, #16, #17, #21. Applications were accepted on September 15-16, the meeting was held the same day and all precincts were composed. Applications received for Ambrolauri precincts #06, #07, #16, #17 and #21 were insufficient. Therefore, the competition at these districts was announced for the second time, while those who had already submitted their applications were selected directly. The competition was announced for the second time in several precincts of Mestia. In mountainous municipalities and in municipalities with smaller populations, there was essentially no competition.

In most districts, commission members had already made a decision and had marked persons to be elected on the list of candidates. They were indicating their decisions on papers printed out according to precincts. Opposition representatives were requesting to include an additional item on the agenda, in order for individual candidates to be discussed separately and precinct commissions be composed after that. In some precincts, the request was put to a vote but it did not receive sufficient number of votes. Therefore, the process took place amid opposition protest. In a number of districts, they refused to participate in casting of lots.

At Gori DEC (since it is a core district, selection of members of PECs that fall under Kaspi DEC N30 was also done there) PEC members were mostly selected by putting each individual candidate to a vote, without interviews and evaluation of professional skillset. It was found that several competitors that openly expressed their support for the ruling party, knew in advance which position they would hold at the PEC – the position of a chairperson, secretary or deputy chairperson.

In Gurjaani, we identified a case where 30 applications for the position of PEC member were written by the same individual, with identical handwriting. 23 candidates from this list were selected as PEC members. The UNM has filed with the prosecution service over this fact. ISFED observer found cases where during telephone conversations with appointed DEC members by UNM-, candidates confirmed that they had written the applications in one of the offices inside the building of the Gurjaani Assembly. In one case, a candidate said he knew who was going to be the commission chairperson and secretary at the electoral precinct.

Based on the amendments to the Election Code, individuals that have been previously appointed by any of the political parties as a member of a commission at any level for the last general elections may not be elected as a PEC member. This prohibition was violated at the following precincts:

- In Khulo District, at precinct no.41, an individual that was appointed by the UNM as a member of the same precinct commission for the 2018 presidential elections has been elected as a professional member of the PEC;
- In Shuakhevi, Makvala Diasamidze, who was a member of PEC no.4 from the Georgian Dream for the 2018 elections, has been elected as a member of the same PEC.
- In Adigeni District, an individual who used to be a PEC member from the Georgian Dream was elected as a PEC member. However, according to the DEC chairperson, the DEC was not aware of this fact. A UNM representative and the chairperson had a verbal argument over this fact, which ended with expulsion of the party representative from the meeting.

Even though this is not a formal violation of law, it is also worth noting that individuals elected as PEC members include those sanctioned for disciplinary misconducts during previous elections.

In Chokhatauri, among individuals elected as PEC members are those, who [according to information obtained by ISFED](#), took money from GD at the second round of the 2018 presidential election (chairpersons of PECs #37, #35, #18, #03, #14, #17, #23, #22 received 100 laris for meals from GD coordinators for the Election Day, at each precinct).

Notably, some of the newly elected commissioners have ties with the ruling party – their relatives or family members are activists or coordinators of the party. Those elected as PEC members include civil servants, employees of the mayor's office and Sakrebulo, as well as employees of administrative units, municipal non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities. Based on the information obtained by an ISFED observer, these individuals have taken a leave of absence. Even though this does not amount to a direct violation, it calls their impartiality into question.

Party affiliations have been found among DEC members also. In Sagarejo N11, Gurjaani N12, Telavi N17 and Akhmeta N18 district election commissions the CEC has appointed as temporary DEC members family members of individuals associated with the Georgian Dream. For example, since 2016, the CEC has been

regularly electing Teona Bzishvili, who is directly affiliated with the Georgian Dream, as a member of DEC N50 of Sachkhere.

Family members of local self-government employees/politicians have also been appointed as DEC members. As an example, temporary (independent) member of Chiatura DEC is a wife of Teimuraz Chumburidze, an assemblyman from the Georgian Dream.

Ties between DEC members and majoritarian candidates are also worth noting. Cousin of GD majoritarian candidate in Akhaltsikhe-Adigeni-Aspindza-Borjomi District Anton Obolashvili, Ketevan Obolashvili has been appointed as the sixth professional member of Adigeni DEC by the CEC. Ketevan Obolashvili was a temporary sixth member of the commission appointed by the CEC for the 2018 presidential election. At the same time, she is a principal of a school in Abastumani. Ketevan Obolashvili told ISFED observer that currently she is on a paid leave. For the elections, she is going to take an unpaid leave. [According to the chairperson of Adigeni DEC](#), as of now the GD candidate has not been registered and even if he were, Ketevan Obolashvili is not prohibited from becoming a member of the commission because of her family ties with him.

In the above-mentioned case, formal requirements of the law have not been violated. However, close relationship between a commission member and a candidate may contain certain risks in terms of objectivity. A DEC may handle violations of election law by the candidate and in such case, the commission member should be able to review such complaints impartially. This issue is also related to public trust and trust of politicians toward decisions of the election commission and it creates challenges in that respect as well, especially considering the existing polarized election environment.

Many DEC members are not cooperating with ISFED observers and refuse to provide them with accurate information about the commission meeting dates. In addition, when requesting public information, they provided only the list of members that have been approved and they did not provide how many votes each winning candidate received in the competition. Such conduct of competitions and composition of DEC members in such form does not contribute to transparency of the process.

### **XIII. Observation Mission and Methodology**

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is monitoring the 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 the information provided by electoral subjects, media, NGOs and individual citizens and the information identified by social media monitoring. ISFED verifies each report by interviewing witnesses and all sides of the incident.

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

ISFED maps 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](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).