



# ISFED

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR  
FAIR ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

## 2018 Presidential Election Third Interim Report of Pre-Election Monitoring (October 1 - 24)

**25 October 2018**

*This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Views expressed in this publication belong solely to the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government or the NED*



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## I. Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) has been conducting long-term pre-election monitoring of October 28, 2018 presidential election since August 1, 2018. Since August 10, up to 70 long-term observers have been involved in the monitoring nationwide. The monitoring is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Third interim report of the pre-election monitoring mostly covers the period of **October 1-24**, as well as events that began to unfold prior to October 1 and continued or became known during the monitoring period.

## II. Key Findings

During the reporting period, the election campaign entered its final phase and became noticeably polarized. Presidential candidates completed their meetings with voters nationwide. As the Election Day drew near, instances of violation of law that put equal and free pre-election environment for electoral subjects at risk became frequent.

During the reporting period ISFED identified: **13 cases of possible pressure and coercion; 5 cases of physical confrontation and violence; 7 instances of misuse of administrative resources; 4 cases of possible vote buying; 11 cases of interference with election campaigning; 14 cases of participation in campaigning in violation of law; 40 cases of damaging campaign materials.** A case of suspicious donations and facts of resignation of officials in certain municipalities are also worthy of attention.

Attempts of high-level government and ruling party officials to attack and discredit monitoring organizations became even more intense. On October 8, the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia personally attacked ISFED Executive Director Mikheil Benidze and referred to him as “accomplice of fascism”. The authorities took obsessive attempts to interfere with activities of observer organizations and influence their agenda. Emergence of sponsored smear campaign on a number of Facebook pages aiming to discredit leaders of major non-governmental organizations suspiciously coincided with the statement of the Speaker of Parliament. Executive Director of Transparency International – Georgia was also attacked. During an international conference Minister of Justice of Georgia, who also serves as the chair of the Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections, made slanderous accusations against her.

As Election Day drew near, ISFED observers in different regions learned that civil servants and employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities of municipalities were instructed by managers to collect the so-called “lists of supporters”. According to evidence obtained by observers, such lists indicate names of family members and relatives of employees of these budgetary organizations, their personal identification numbers, registration address and electoral precinct number. Person who prepares such list must ensure that people on the list vote for Salome Zurabishvili, the candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*. These facts, in addition to elements of pressure and coercion also contain signs of misuse of administrative resources. ISFED has also found other cases of pressure and coercion, including threats to cancel benefits for socially vulnerable individuals, unless they confirm to the *Georgian Dream* coordinators that they support Salome Zurabishvili.

Possible vote buying was found in four electoral districts, which mostly entailed distribution of different products and promises about financial assistance.

Acts of interference with election campaigning during meetings of presidential candidates are frequent. Such actions turned into a physical confrontation in Kaspi, Rustavi and Chughureti. ISFED found 9 cases of interference with campaign activities of Salome Zurabishvili and 2 cases of interference with campaign activities of Grigol Vashadze. Activists and supporters of the *United National Movement* meet Salome Zurabishvili, the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, outside of buildings where the candidate has her meetings with public and hold rallies while shouting offensive words and holding protest banners.

ISFED observed a trend of damaging campaign materials of presidential candidates in different municipalities of Georgia. On October 16-17, in Tbilisi and in 28 other municipalities, campaign posters of Grigol Vashadze, the

UNM presidential candidate, and the party offices were vandalized with red paint and “KGB” was inscribed. 10 days before the election, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze instructed TbilService Group to remove campaign posters from places other than specially designated areas. Notably, within 10 days after the elections are called, list of places where placement of campaign materials is allowed and/or prohibited should be published. As of now, it is unclear whether the cleaning service is following the list of places where placement of campaign materials is prohibited or whether it is cleaning all areas where there are no special display stands.

As of the date of this report, ISFED has filed 32 applications/complaints with the electoral administration over illegal campaigning, abuse of administrative resources and violation of campaigning rules, including 15 complaints filed during the period from October 1 through October 24. The administration has already made its decisions about several of these complaints. By now, on the basis of ISFED complaints, Ninotsminda and Tkibuli DEC's have prepared two protocols of administrative offence in connection to use of means of communication for campaigning purposes.

With regard to illegal campaigning on social media, almost all district electoral administrations acted similarly and did not impose administrative penalty on offenders. Commission chairs take as credible evidence the statements of individuals that have violated law, who are blaming their family members for violating the campaign rules.

Notably, during the reporting period, local self-government high-level officials in Khulo and Poti municipalities resigned. The Election Code prohibits any such staff changes during an election period. These cases raise serious suspicions on whether the officials resigned voluntarily.

### **III. Recommendations**

#### **High-level government officials should:**

- Immediately stop the pressure and attacks on NGOs and their leaders, aimed to discredit them and harm their reputation.

#### **Political parties and electoral subjects should:**

- Refrain from mobilizing their supporters to attend public meetings of their opposing parties/candidates. They should not allow their supporters to interfere with meetings and campaign activities of other electoral subjects, in order to prevent tension and physical confrontation;
- Eliminate any forms of such interaction with voters that create risks of vote buying;
- Respect electoral legislation and not allow any calls or promises in the election campaign that go against the law;
- Urge their supporters not to damage campaign materials of their competitors;
- Refrain from mobilizing coordinators and pressuring voters at polling stations during Election Day.

#### **Local self-government bodies should:**

- Eliminate the practice of instructing civil servants and employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities to collect the so-called “lists of supporters”. They should refrain from involving career subordinates into participation in election campaigning and prevent abuse of administrative resources;
- Abide by political neutrality and not allow use of local budget or human resources for advancing party interests;
- Restrict campaigning by civil servants during working hours;
- Provide local self-government employees with information about their rights and responsibilities during election period.

## IV. Pressure and coordinated attacks on observer organizations

During the pre-election period of the 2018 presidential election, observer organizations are forced to work amid unprecedented coordinated attacks of high-level government and ruling party officials. In its second interim report, ISFED underlined<sup>1</sup> attacks to discredit observer organizations as the pre-election campaign for the 2018 presidential election became active, which initially began by heads of administrative bodies involved in elections and was later continued by intense verbal attacks by high-level officials of the government and the ruling party. Main rhetoric of these attacks aimed to accuse NGOs of being politically charged and biased.

On October 8, concurrently as ISFED was presenting its second interim report, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Irakli Kobakhidze held a press conference on which he personally attacked ISFED Executive Director Mikheil Benidze and called him “accomplice of fascism”.<sup>2</sup> The same day, with the aim of discrediting non-governmental organizations, statements with similar rhetoric were made by almost all main leaders of the ruling party. By their statements, Speaker of Parliament and other leaders of the ruling party attempted to set the agenda for observer organizations and demanded that in their statements and reports NGOs express positions that favor the government and the ruling party narratives.

On the same day, the statement made by the Speaker of Parliament was followed by a discrediting smear campaign against NGO leaders on various Facebook pages using sponsored content. Posts with obscene photo and video manipulations using satire to indicate supposed ties between NGO leaders and the opposition started appearing on various anonymous pages that were before also used to discredit opposition and civil activists. The organized nature of the attacks and message coordination create impression that the anonymous discrediting pages are in reality run by individuals that are close to the ruling party.

The coordinated attacks by the Speaker of Parliament and other leaders of the ruling party amount to attempts to delegitimize observer organizations ahead of the election and discredit their findings.<sup>3</sup> Such rhetoric from high-level officials of the government and the ruling party intensified in response to the critical statement of NGOs concerning current situation in the country, allegations of elite corruption, informal governance and signs of crisis in democratic institutions.<sup>4</sup>

During the reporting period, attacks on the civil society continued on a regular basis. During an international anti-corruption conference in Copenhagen, on October 22, Minister of Justice Thea Tsulukiani accused Executive Director of Transparency International – Georgia Eka Gigauri of possibly contributing to the crackdown of a peaceful rally on November 7, 2007. Tsulukiani also talked about “internal confrontation” within the NGO sector. She made this statement in response to the comment of TI – Georgia representative, who criticized the Open Government Partnership (OGP) process in Georgia and talked about ruling party’s attempts to discredit NGOs.<sup>5</sup> Same messages were voiced during the television interview of the *Georgian Dream* Chair, Bidzina Ivanishvili on October 23. The continuous nature of the attacks was assessed by NGOs as a trend that damages democracy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Second interim report of pre-election monitoring of the 2018 presidential election, 8 October 2018, ISFED, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1421/eng/>

<sup>2</sup> Irakli Kobakhidze believes that some representatives of NGOs are “co-participants of fascism”, Radio Tavisupleba, 8 October 2018, <https://bit.ly/2yFb0ez>

<sup>3</sup> Statement of NGOs about the briefing of Irakli Kobakhidze, ISFED, 8 October 2018, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1422/eng/>

<sup>4</sup> Informal governance has triggered the crisis of democratic institutions, joint statement of 13 NGOs, 1 October 2018, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1422/eng/>

<sup>5</sup> A video excerpt from the international anti-corruption conference in Copenhagen, in which Thea Tsulukiani is discrediting civil society organizations: <https://www.facebook.com/TransparencyInternationalGeorgia/videos/191375408422176/>

<sup>6</sup> Coordinated attack of the government on civil society harms democracy in Georgia, joint statement of NGOs, 24 October 2018, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1425/eng/>

## V. Cases of possible intimidation and coercion

### Kobuleti

Leaders of Kobuleti Municipality are forcing employees of the City Hall and non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities to support the independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili. Under their instructions, these employees were provided with empty forms to be filled out with personal information of 15-20 supporters, including their names, surnames, personal numbers, addresses based on the place of registration and telephone numbers.

ISFED long-term observer (LTO) verified the report and saw the actual “lists of supporters” filled out by several employees of the City Hall, with 15-20 people on each list. The observer even has a form of the “list of supporters” collected by one of the employees of the City Hall but the employees are reluctant to publicly talk about it because of fear to lose their jobs.<sup>7</sup>

The long-term observer met with employees of several kindergartens to verify the report and interviewed them about collection of the list of supporters. In kindergartens where the LTO identified herself as a representative of NGO in advance, principals and teachers denied that the lists existed and were collected.

However, in one of the kindergartens in Kobuleti Municipality, where they thought that the LTO was from the *Georgian Dream* office, teachers confirmed that they were collecting the lists of supporters. Furthermore, they openly said that all employees of the kindergarten (including the cleaning lady, nannies and teachers) had “completed the assignment”. According to them, they had already collected lists of supporters of the presidential candidate favored by the *Georgian Dream*, with 15-20 people on each list, and submitted them to the principal. The principal in turn provided the lists to Kobuleti Educational Resource Center.

At the end of the conversation, when teachers realized that they were talking to a representative of an NGO, they became very concerned and got nervous. To calm them down, the LTO promised not to disclose their names or the name of the kindergarten.

### Samegrelo and Kakheti

ISFED observers found similar cases in the regions of Samegrelo and Kakheti. According to their reports, employees of non-profit (non-commercial) legal entities are required to fill out pre-made forms with personal information of their family members by including their names, personal identification numbers, number of relevant polling station and type of their relationship.

Employees of the non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity informed ISFED observer that leaders of the municipality had provided them with empty forms, each to be filled out with personal information of ten supporters. They also stated that the lists are prepared in order to ensure that the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* wins in the first round of the election. Employees of the non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity also state that the previous government also required them to prepare such lists.<sup>8</sup>

### Ozurgeti

During interview, three individuals that live in Mtispiri village informed ISFED LTO that Roman Vanadze - deputy representative of the Mayor, member of the local Assembly from the same village – Vladimer Chavleishvili and coordinators of the *Georgian Dream* are instructing them to mark their vote on the ballot by a square around the electoral number of Salome Zurabishvili on the election day and take a photo of the ballot.

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<sup>7</sup> ISFED has chosen not to disclose the information in order to protect labor rights and personal information of the employees.

<sup>8</sup> Joint statement of ISFED, GYLA and TI-Georgia, 11 October 2018, <http://www.isfed.ge/main/1423/eng/>

## Chokhatauri

Teachers from several schools of Chokhatauri reported to ISFED LTO that school principals, under the instructions of the head of the Educational Resource Center – Shorena Sikharulidze, were urging teachers to support Salome Zurabishvili.

## Marneuli

According to a teacher in Marneuli, who asked to remain anonymous, head of Marneuli Resource Center Kamran Omarov is instructing school principals and teachers to work in favor of the candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* and bring her supporters to polling stations on Election Day. If they fail to do so, the teacher states that they will be fired.

## Chokhatauri

On October 1, Guria News newspaper published an interview of Ia Lominashvili, resident of Shua Amaghleba village in Chokhatauri Municipality, in which she states that she was not elected as a PEC member as a result of attempts of Mayor's representative Bela Shatirishvili. She was accusing Bela Shatirishvili of persecution and harassment. On October 5, ISFED LTO contacted and personally met with Ia Lominashvili to verify the information. During the meeting, Ia Lominashvili confirmed that she was persecuted and harassed by the Mayor's representative. She also said that she has sufficient experience of working at a PEC and she participated in the competition announced by the district but she was not selected.

According to Ia Lominashvili, Bela Shatirishvili made a list of PEC members in advance, which included a wife of the *Georgian Dream* coordinator, Tariel Jibuti – Tamar Kacheishvili.

According to Lominashvili, she is persecuted because she has information about Bela Shatirishvili and people around her. Lominashvili states that had she been chosen as a member of the PEC, she would not have allowed election fraud, which is why they got rid of her.

According to Lominashvili, she met with Mayor of Chokhatauri Municipality Irakli Kuchava concerning the issue and told him about the situation but the mayor responded that commissions had already been composed and there was nothing he could do to help. However, because of the economic hardships that Lominashvili was facing, Mr. Kuchava offered one-time assistance of GEL 200 from the reserve fund if she submitted documents that were needed. Lominashvili turned down the offer. Chokhatauri Mayor Irakli Kuchava is a chair of the district organization of the *Georgian Dream* regional office and the head of the campaign office.

Bela Shatirishvili dismissed Ia Lominashvili's allegations as 'ridiculous'.

## Dmanisi

On October 5, Gogita Barbakadze, who represents the *Movement for Building* in Dmanisi District, opened an office. Three days later the landlord refused to continue with the lease. According to Gogita Barbakadze, the landlord decided to terminate the lease agreement as a result of pressure by Sakrebulo Chair Merab Okroashvili.

## Chokhatauri

On October 8, it was reported that a member of Chokhatauri DEC no.20, Lia Kutaladze, who has been appointed as a member of the commission by the UNM, was offended by swear words by Zurab Ezieshvili, an activist of the *Georgian Dream*, while she was in the central area of Kokhnari village at 12:30.

To verify this report, ISFED LTO personally interviewed Ms. Lia Kutaladze. She confirmed the report and said that representatives of the *Georgian Dream* are persecuting, threatening and verbally insulting her. Notably, Ms. Kutaladze also filed a police report. She is demanding timely actions in response to the incident.

### **Baghdati**

In August-September 2018, in kindergartens of the city of Baghdati, a competition was held. Based on results of the competition, several people were dismissed from work. According to ISFED observer, the following supporters of the UNM did not succeed in the competition: Marina Danelia, Matsatso Gugunava, Tsira Kobakhidze and Madona Makharadze. In an interview with ISFED these individuals state that they were dismissed from work on political motive. They have filed a complaint in court about it. Notably, two other individuals who are supporters of the *Georgian Dream* (coordinators and activists) also did not succeed in the competition but they have already been reinstated.

### **Lentekhi**

Local chair of the party European Georgia, Mirian Liparteliani has reported an act of pressure that took place in Lentekhi. In particular, coordinator of the *Georgian Dream* Mzevinar Liparteliani was demanding that Z. Liparteliani give her his personal identity card and vote for Salome Zurabishvili, otherwise she threatened that she would cancel his social assistance.

### **Kvareli**

In Zinobiani village of Kvareli Municipality, Georgian Dream coordinator Mikheil Kulatamishvili threatened a socially vulnerable person, who did not confirm her support for Salome Zurabishvili, that he would cancel her social assistance if she “continues to be annoying.”

### **Dusheti**

In Dusheti Municipality, villages from Bichnigauri to Shatili are in the highlands status area and therefore, its residents enjoy a number of social benefits. According to the population, they are approached by the *Georgian Dream* representatives, telling them that they will revoke the highlands status if Salome Zurabishvili does not win the election.

## **VI. Physical confrontation and violent facts**

### **Kaspi**

On October 16, independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili held a campaign meeting in Kaspi. Members and supporters of the UNM staged a rally in parallel with the meeting. They were holding protest banners, calling the candidate “a traitor”.<sup>9</sup> They were also saying that they wanted to ask questions to the candidate.

One of the persons who accompanied Salome Zurabishvili referred to the head of the UNM district organization in Kaspi, Nugzar Noniashvili as “an impolite person”. This was followed by a verbal and later a physical

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.qartli.ge/ge/akhali-ambebi/article/9528-kaspshisalomezurabishvilissaarchevnoshekhvedrazenmstsevbimividnen>

confrontation between supporters of the ruling party and the UNM representatives. Police patrol was mobilized at the scene but the clash between the activists still occurred.<sup>10</sup>

## Rustavi

On October 9, at 12:00, at Giga Lortkipanidze Theatre in Rustavi, Salome Zurabishvili, the independent candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* held a meeting with voters. The meeting lasted for about an hour.

By the entrance of the theatre, representatives of the youth organization of the UNM staged a protest rally in parallel with the meeting. They were also holding posters, chanting slogans against Salome Zurabishvili and demanding access to the meeting, in order to ask questions to the presidential candidate. Law enforcement officers and the *Georgian Dream* representatives created a human chain to prevent the protesters from entering the building; a verbal confrontation between them ensued.<sup>11</sup>

After the meeting ended, verbal confrontation between the protesters and the *Georgian Dream* representatives turned into a physical clash. According to one of the organizers of the protest, Tako Metreveli, she was taken away by a *Georgian Dream* representative by force and hit in her back. An ambulance was called at the scene. The police have launched investigation of the incident.

## Chughureti

On October 9, at 20:00, head of the UNM campaign office in Didube, Vakhtang Petriashvili contacted ISFED LTO and reported that an incident occurred during their meeting a day before, on October 8. In particular, a member of their party Tamar Zerekidze is accusing the principal of kindergarten no.15, Mariam Kapanadze of politically motivated violence.

According to UNM representatives, on October 8 at 18:00, Zaal Udumashvili and UNM supporters held a campaign meeting with voters at Palermo Garden on Tsereteli Avenue. The meeting was later joined by four women, who engaged in polemic with the UNM representatives, signs of provocation were evident in their actions.

According to the UNM member Tamta Danelia, she was able to identify one of the women as Mariam Kapanadze, who used to be their teammate in the past. Currently Kapanadze is a member of the *Georgian Dream*, so-called “head of the zone”, and principal of kindergarten no.15.

According to the UNM, the confrontation began after identities of the women were disclosed. Despite requests of the UNM members, supporters of the *Georgian Dream* refused to leave the meeting place. Assistant of Zaal Udumashvili, Tamar Zerekidze started recording a video and asked Kapanadze whether or not she was a principal of the kindergarten and whether or not the *Georgian Dream* had instructed her to attend the meeting. In response, Kapanadze became more aggressive and started yelling. She covered her face with a handbag and walked away fast. During this process, in order to prevent Tamar Zerekidze from recording a video, Kapanadze swung her purse and hit Zerekidze in her face with it; she also tried to take away her cellphone.<sup>12</sup>

The party filed a complaint with Didube Police; subsequent investigation has been launched under art.126 of the Criminal Code (violence).

## Khobi

On October 11, a member of Khobi Sakrebulo from the UNM, Ia Jishkariani contacted ISFED observer and reported that during a meeting with voters in Akhali Khibula village, Khobi Municipality, MP Irakli Beraia urged

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<sup>10</sup> See the video recorded by ISFED LTO: <http://www.qartli.ge/ge/akhali-ambebi/article/9535-piriromelmackaspshimushtipirvelmagaiqnia>

<sup>11</sup> See the information published in local media: <https://www.facebook.com/TV4.ge/videos/324778184998604/>

<sup>12</sup> Information published by the UNM member: <https://www.facebook.com/zere.zerekidze/posts/2174285192596087>

people to “hit immediately in the head” any activist or supporter of the UNM that they may see and to not allow them to become active. According to Jishkariani, Tengiz Jishkariani, who arrived at the meeting and asked which of them was the MP, was verbally insulted by Jano Lashkhia and Mevlud Jishkariani – persons accompanying the MP. The MP left the meeting venue after the situation got tense.

Notably, Irakli Beraia voiced same messages during a meeting with voters in Chaladidi village. The meeting was attended by ISFED LTO. The LTO asked Beraia what he meant exactly. He responded: *“I am not urging anyone to engage in violence. This is not violence against anyone in particular. The party that was thrown in the dumpster by the people in 2012, we should not allow them to raise their heads [from the dumpster]. As soon as they do it, we should hit them, so they fall back into the dumpster. I don’t think that this is violence. Same statement has been made by the Chair of Parliament. This is my attitude towards them.”*

According to the MP, Tengiz Jishkariani’s aim in Akhali Khubula was to engage in provocation during the meeting. He was asking cynical questions to the meeting participants, however no serious confrontations took place.

### **Lanchkuti**

According to a video material released on social media on October 13, following a meeting of DEC no.61, deputy chair of PEC no.24, Nana Vasadze grabbed a cellphone from the hands of a member of the UNM regional organization Givi Tsintsadze, who was recording the meeting, and threw it in a nearby garbage bin. As a result, Tsintsadze verbally insulted the DEC Chair Tamar Biseishvili. In an interview with ISFED observer, chair of the PEC no.24, Nana Vasadze stated that she only feels guilty for being absent at the polling station during working hours, for which she has been rebuked, however she was irritated by Tsintsadze’s actions and in particular, by the way he insulted her verbally, which is why she acted that way. A complaint has been filed and the DEC no.61 is studying the incident.

## **VII. Abuse of administrative resources**

### **Abasha**

On October 11, at around 12:00, office equipment was taken out of the *Georgian Dream* local office in Abasha, in a Nissan pickup truck owned by Gamgeoba, license plate numbers CJC-949. According to information requested from Abasha City Hall by ISFED, the vehicle NISSAN NAVARA with license plate numbers CJC-949 belongs to the City Hall of Abasha Municipality.

### **Ninotsminda**

On October 2, on the official Facebook page of Ninotsminda Municipality Assembly that operates in the form of a personal account, information about the meeting of Salome Zurabishvili, the independent presidential candidate endorsed by the ruling party, was published, which amounts to misuse of administrative resources. ISFED filed a claim with the electoral administration and demanded drawing up of a report of administrative offence. Ninotsminda DEC granted the claim.

### **Marneuli**

- Majoritarian MP from Marneuli, Ruslan Gajiev is using the office of Majoritarian MP in Marneuli as Salome Zurabishvili’s local campaign headquarters. At the office campaign meetings in support of Salome

Zurabishvili are held with the youth and other citizens. In addition, employees of the office visit Marneuli villages together with Ruslan Gajiev and participate in campaign meetings. A total of 6 people work at Gajiev's bureau.

- Principal of the public school of Kirovka village in Marneuli Municipality, Khazein Mamedov placed Salome Zurabishvili's campaign posters on school walls.

## VIII. Possible vote buying

### Kaspi

According to Rusudan Sukhashvili, a resident of Kaspi, unidentified individuals are distributing food items among the *Georgian Dream* supporters, using an Opel cab with plate numbers 595.

According to Sukhishvili, different types of grains, oil, butter, condensed milk and a sack of potatoes weighing 6kg were distributed among several families residing in her neighborhood at Kostava Street. According to Sukhishvili, distributors of the food items announced that they supply beneficiaries of a soup kitchen with additional products.

ISFED LTO verified the report and interviewed one of the persons that received the distributed food items- Mzia Zozrashvili. She showed the LTO products that she had received but said that she had gotten them from the church as a gift.

Clergymen of Theodore Tiron and Vakhtang Gorgasali churches in Kaspi said that they know nothing about distribution of products in the name of the church.

### Kutaisi

On October 12, in the forest of Saghoria in Kutaisi, presidential candidate of *Free Georgia*, Kakha Kukava staged a rally/performance together with the head of *Free Georgia* office in Kutaisi, Giorgi Tsulaia and other supporters. According to them, it is very difficult for farmers to obtain the right to use firewood in Georgia, while foreigners often use lots of wood for production purposes. To protest this, they cut trees that had already fallen on the ground, prepared firewood and gave it to one of the socially vulnerable families in Kutaisi.<sup>13</sup>

### Zugdidi

Food items are distributed in villages of Zugdidi. To this end, on October 12, Zugdidi Municipality City Hall announced four different calls for tender for purchasing sugar, pasta, wheat flour, sunflower oil, potatoes and onions, and allocated a total of GEL 39,441. These food items will be distributed among a total of 413 individuals. Each family will get 10 kilos of sugar, 5 kilos of pasta, 25 kilos of flour, 5 kilos of oil, and potatoes and onions 10 kilos each.

### Chokhatauri

Several individuals reported to ISFED LTO that representatives of Chokhatauri Municipality City Hall and Members of the Sakrebulo from different villages are urging locals to write applications and request one-time assistance from the City Hall.

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<sup>13</sup> Kakha Kukava and Gogi Tsulaia provide firewood to a socially vulnerable family: <https://bit.ly/2CYyKt8>

## **IX. Interference with pre-election campaigning**

### **Poti**

On October 19, at 16:00, independent presidential candidate supported by the ruling party, Salome Zurabishvili was meeting with local population at Poti Basketball Court. Before the meeting began, UNM members staged a protest rally nearby, chanting “No to the betrayer”, “traitor”, “leave us alone”. Protesters were trying to get inside the basketball court but the police did not allow them to.

The meeting was attended by MPs Eka Beselia, Gedevan Popkhadze, Zviad Dzidziguri, Poti Mayor Gocha Kurdghelia, Deputy Mayor Mamika Papaskiri, Sakrebulo Chair Irakli Kakulia, members and activists of the *Georgian Dream* organization in Poti.

### **Khashuri**

On October 12, at 12:00, Salome Zurabishvili was meeting with voters in Khashuri. Before the meeting began, there was a commotion outside the music school where they waited for Salome Zurabishvili to arrive. Civil activist Zaza Mekhrishvili tried to approach the presidential candidate and ask a question, but the *Georgian Dream* representatives did not allow him. Later ISFED observer asked Kakha Mekhrishvili what question was he going to ask. He responded that he wanted to ask about the war but he was not allowed to.

### **Gldani**

On October 10, presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze held a meeting with population in Gldani. The meeting was attended by up to 200 people. Two women at the meeting had an argument with three young men that were possibly under the influence of alcohol. The young men soon left the area willingly.

### **Aspindza**

On October 2, Salome Zurabishvili, the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* met with voters in the Culture House of Aspindza. The meeting inside the building was incident-free, however before the meeting began, several activists of the UNM waiting for Salome Zurabishvili outside Aspindza Culture House were making insulting statements about her.<sup>14</sup>

### **Akhaltzikhe**

On October 3, at 12:00, independent presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili met with voters in the building of Akhaltzikhe Theatre. Outside the theatre one of the leaders of the UNM in Akhaltzikhe confronted her. According to him, Akhaltzikhe is the place where Archil Tatunashvili’s mother comes from, which is why it is embarrassing to stand by her in this city.

### **Akhalkalaki**

On October 2, Salome Zurabishvili, the independent candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* met with voters in Akhalkalaki Municipality. The meeting was held in the Culture House of Akhalkalaki.

UNM activists staged a protest in parallel with the meeting of Salome Zurabishvili outside the Culture House. Activists were calling her a traitor. Marina Gegidze, activist of the united opposition was especially active. When they asked her which party she represented, she responded that she was “an ordinary citizen of Georgia.”

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<sup>14</sup> See the information about interference by activists at: <http://sknews.ge/index.php?newsid=19504>

## Gurjaani

On October 4, at 16:00, independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* – Salome Zurabishvili held a meeting with voters at Culture House of Gurjaani. UNM activists met her outside the culture house, calling her a traitor. Ninia Tsiskarishvili, a reporter from the Law Enforcement Reformers Center also met her outside the building, she wanted to give the candidate an empty canvas put in a frame and ask her what she did to the map of Georgia but the *Georgian Dream* activists did not allow her to approach Zurabishvili.

## Kaspi

On October 16, the meeting of independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream* – Salome Zurabishvili was followed by a clash between the ruling party activists and the UNM representatives. During the meeting, before Salome Zurabishvili made her opening remarks, a young man started clapping to get attention of the audience and then he called Zurabishvili a liar and a traitor of the country. Supporters of the candidate expelled him from the meeting hall.

Later it turned out that he had travelled from Tbilisi for the sole purpose of attending the meeting of Salome Zurabishvili in Kaspi. He introduced himself to ISFED LTO as Kakhaber Gogeskiri and said that he had no previous relationship with Kaspi Municipality.

## Adigeni

During an interview with ISFED LTO, representative of the UNM, Lali Bochikashvili reported that on October 19, during a meeting with voters in Abastumani village, activists of the *Georgian Dream* interfered with her work, verbally insulted her and then damaged her car.<sup>15</sup>

Criminal investigation has been launched in connection to the incident, under art.187 of the Criminal Code (deliberately damaging or destroying someone else's property).

## X. Damaging of campaign materials

At night on October 16, campaign materials of *Power is in Unity* presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze in Tbilisi and in other municipalities of Georgia<sup>16</sup> were vandalized in a similar manner by red paint and “KGB” was inscribed.<sup>17</sup>

Later CCTV footage was released on social media, showing several individuals damaging the campaign materials. A person named Shalva Kuchashvili, a self-proclaimed civil activist responded to the release of the footage and announced that he was the one who painted Vashadze's posters and he will continue to do so.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See the information reported by Samkhretis Karibche about the incident: <http://sknews.ge/index.php?newsid=19753>

<sup>16</sup> ISFED found such facts in all districts of Tbilisi and in the following 28 municipalities: Adigeni, Aspindza, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Bolnisi, Borjomi, Gardabani, Dmanisi, Zugdidi, Kaspi, Lanchkhuti, Marneuli, Martvili, Ozurgeti, Sachkhere, Senaki, Tkibuli, Poti, Kareli, Keda, Kobuleti, Kutaisi, Tsageri, Tsalenjikha, Tskaltubo, Kharagauli, Khashuri, Khobi.

<sup>17</sup> KGB – abbreviation for the State Security Committee of the Soviet Union

<sup>18</sup> See an article about Kuchashvili's statement: [http://www.for.ge/view.php?for\\_id=56539&blogger\\_id=22&cat=12](http://www.for.ge/view.php?for_id=56539&blogger_id=22&cat=12)

## Chokhatauri

ISFED LTO monitored areas designated for placing campaign materials in 13 villages of Chokhatauri Municipality. Salome Zurabishvili's posters in all thirteen villages are intact, while Grigol Vashadze's campaign materials were damaged in six villages. It was also found that Davit Bakradze's posters were damaged in two of the villages monitored. A teacher reported to ISFED LTO that in Ianeuli village, posters of Grigol Vashadze and Davit Bakradze were damaged by the *Georgian Dream* coordinator.

## Lagodekhi

Local leader of the *European Georgia*, Giorgi Enukidze announced on social media that near the territory of Lagodekhi Pass, banners of the *European Georgia* candidate were damaged. Enukidze is accusing the UNM, claiming that this is their usual M.O. The post was responded by the local UNM leader, who urged the accuser to behave in a correct manner. The incident was exhausted. In an interview with ISFED LTO, Enukidze stated that such facts are frequent and they are always inspired and executed by the UNM. Nevertheless, they are not going to report the incident to the electoral administration.

## Gurjaani

On October 4, it became known that Davit Bakradze's campaign materials placed along a motorway in Bakuristsikhe village of Gurjaani Municipality had been damaged. There are no witnesses and the perpetrator has not been identified.

## Marneuli

According to the chair of the *European Georgia* office in Marneuli, Ahmed Imamkuliev and the chair of the UNM office in Marneuli, Agil Mustapaev, campaign posters in different parts of the city have been torn off.

## Keda

Throughout the municipality, posters of opposition candidates – Davit Bakradze and Grigol Vashadze have been torn off. In an interview with ISFED coordinator, representatives of local campaign headquarters of Davit Bakradze and Grigol Vashadze stated that the posters are usually damaged at night and they are not aware of the identity of the perpetrator.

## Khulo

In Zemo Vashlovani village, campaign posters of the UNM presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze and in Daba Khulo campaign posters of the *European Georgia* candidate Davit Bakradze have been partially torn off and covered up by posters of the independent candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili. Head of the UNM organization in Khulo, Irakli Jorbenadze suspects that the material has been damaged by the *Georgian Dream* coordinator, but he has not indicated anyone in particular. Campaign materials of Vashadze have also been damaged in Daba Khulo.

## Mestia

In Mestia Municipality, campaign posters of Salome Zurabishvili and Grigol Vashadze have been torn off.

## Gldani

In Mukhiani, at Noneshvili Avenue, Davit Bakradze's posters on the fence of a private construction area have been damaged by red paint. According to the local organization of the *European Georgia*, this was done by members of the *Georgian Dream* youth wing, but they have no concrete proof.

## **Akhaltzikhe**

On stands intended for placement of print campaign materials, posters of Salome Zurabishvili and Davit Bakradze have been damaged.

## **Kvareli**

In Shilda village of Kvareli Municipality, posters of Salome Zurabishvili have been massively damaged. They have been painted over or different inscriptions have been placed.

## **Akhmeta**

Campaign posters of Salome Zurabishvili have been damaged and destroyed on the territory of Akhmeta municipality.

# **XI. Violation of campaigning rules**

## **Dmanisi**

Deputy Mayor of Dmanisi Municipality, Badri Subari published on his Facebook page information about a campaign meeting of the presidential candidate endorsed by the ruling party, Salome Zurabishvili during working hours.

## **Marneuli**

On October 10, at the Culture House of Marneuli, Salome Zurabishvili met with population. The meeting was attended by Deputy Mayor of Marneuli Municipality Lasha Lobzhanidze.

## **Kareli**

On October 12, in Kareli, campaign meeting of the independent presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili was attended by unauthorized persons – representative of mayor in Akhalsopeli, Inga Tsotsolashvili and representative of mayor in Berdza-Atotsi community Mariam Gulisashvili.

## **Poti**

- During working hours, head of the service of architecture, spatial planning and administrative supervision of Poti Municipality City Hall Davit Jgerenaia published on his Facebook page a post supporting Salome Zurabishvili.
- On October 19, at 16:00, Salome Zurabishvil held a meeting with voters in the basketball court in Poti, which was attended by an unauthorized individual – head of the City Hall Audit Service Joni Gurgendidze.

## **Ozurgeti**

- On October 18, during working hours, lead specialist of Ozurgeti City Hall's procurement department Thea Kvirkvelia shared two times on her Facebook page photos supporting the presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili – first photo was about results of a public survey, another was a photo of the candidate that also showed her electoral number and slogan.

- A member of Ozurgeti DEC no.60, Mzia Tsereteli published on her Facebook page a campaign video of the UNM presidential candidate Grigol Vashadze.
- During working hours, head of the investments division of the department of economic development and property management in Ozurgeti Municipality, Khatuna Surguladze shared on social media a photo of a meeting of the Ozurgeti organization of p/u *Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia*.
- A member of Ozurgeti PEC no.5, Besik Kalandia shared on his personal Facebook page a photo of a public survey with photos of candidates captioned #SalomeforPresident. Besik Kalandadze is a DEC-appointed member of the commission.
- On October 22, during working hours, head of the social and healthcare department of Ozurgeti City Hall Tamar Dumbadze shared on social media two posts in support of the presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili. One post is a photo of a campaign poster of the candidate and her slogan; another is a photo album of campaign meeting of Ozurgeti organization of the *Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia*. ISFED found that Tamar Dumbadze was not on a leave on October 22.

### **Nadzaladevi**

During working hours, head of the department for development of apartment owners' association at Nadzaladevi Gamgeoba, Maia Badashvili published on her personal Facebook page information about a campaign meeting of the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili.

### **Akhalkalaki**

During working hours, Deputy Mayor of Akhalkalaki, Armen Marangozian published on his personal Facebook page information about campaign meeting of the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili.

### **Tetritskaro**

During working hours, head of the property management department of Tetritskaro Municipality, Lasha Kurdiani published on his personal Facebook page information about a campaign meeting of the presidential candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili.

### **Ninotsminda**

On October 2, 2018, during a campaign meeting with local ethnic Armenians in Ninotsminda, independent candidate Salome Zurabishvili made the following statement: “*until now, citizenship was granted only under the decision of the president. One president, whom my opponent represents, gave citizenship to a lot of Turks but not to you.*”<sup>19</sup>

The statement made by presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili violates requirements of the election law, since it poses a risk of instigating national strife, which runs against the principles of democratic and legal state, and also contains elements of illegal campaigning.

Based on para.3 of art.45 of the Election Code of Georgia, political parties, candidates for electoral subject, electoral subjects, and their supporters may present a program for future activity. The election program should not contain propaganda for war or violence, appeal for change or overthrow of the existing state and social order by violence, for violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, for national strife and enmity, or for religious or ethnic confrontation.

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<sup>19</sup> See the information at: <http://netgazeti.ge/news/308517/>

## **XII. Staff changes**

### **Poti**

On October 10, deputy mayor Irakli Topuria submitted a letter for resignation. On October 11, ISFED LTO contacted the city hall's administration to verify the report. The administration confirmed the fact of resignation and indicated his letter as the basis. The coordinator tried to contact Irakli Topuria but he could not be reached. It is still unknown why he resigned.

### **Khulo**

On October 17, it was reported that Khulo Mayor Gocha Meladze had resigned. Initially, reports about the resignation were not confirmed.

Gocha Meladze had a leave of absence from October 11 to October 31 but he came back to work early on October 18, dismissed his only deputy Lasha Bolkvadze and appointed former chief of Khulo Police Vakhtang Beridze as the deputy mayor. Vakhtang Beridze had left the police a day before, on October 17, based on his letter of resignation. Following these changes, Gocha Meladze submitted a letter of resignation and officially resigned from the office of the mayor. As a result, Vakhtang Beridze became the acting mayor.

Gocha Meladze also resigned from his position as the head of the local *Georgian Dream* office, which essentially serves as the campaign office of the presidential candidate Salome Zurbishvili.

There are several different reports about resignation of the mayor: talks about Gocha Meladze's resignation first started in August, immediately after Tornike Rizhvadze was appointed as the chair of Ajara Government. According to one of the reports, Gocha Melashvili was from Giorgi Kvirikashvili's team. It has also been reported that there was an internal political confrontations and bad attitude with the city hall's employees.

According to unofficial reports, staff changes during the pre-election period had been warranted by the situation in the municipality – Ghorjomi Community, which is the largest community in the municipality bringing together 16 villages, was not going to support the ruling party because no one from this community worked in a leading position at the city hall. There are other versions about why the mayor resigned, including that the resignation had been caused by publishing of information by the UNM about problems that exist in the self-government.

On October 19, Chair of Ajara Government Tornike Rizhvadze nominated Vakhtang Beridze for the position of acting mayor of Khulo, while Anzor Bolkvadze, majoritarian MP from Keda-Shuakhevi-Khulo was named as the head of the *Georgian Dream's* local office.

## **XIII. Electoral administration**

ISFED has filed 32 applications/complaints with the electoral administration over illegal campaigning, misuse of administrative resources and violation of campaigning rules, including 15 complaints filed during the period from October 1 through October 24. About several of these complaints, the administration has already made its decisions. As of now, on the basis of complaints of the organization, Ninotsminda and Tkibuli DEC's have prepared two reports of administrative offence in connection to use of means of communication for campaigning purposes.

With regard to illegal campaigning by social media, almost all district electoral administrations have made similar decisions not to impose administrative penalty on offenders. Statements of individuals that have violated law, blaming their family members for violating the campaign rules, are accepted by commission chairs as credible evidence.

## Krtsanisi

First sessions of PECs within the DEC of Krtsanisi no.4 were held on September 27. During these meetings, where PEC members were electing heads of the commission, a fact related to recordings of telephone conversations released by media on August 27, 2018, concerning different individuals stating in advance which positions they would hold in precinct electoral commissions, became known.

At the first sessions on September 27, the very same persons that stated in the recordings which positions they would hold in concrete PECs were elected as leaders at PEC no.4 and PEC no.16.

Nino Lipartia was elected as Chair of PEC no.4, and Gulnara Jaiani was elected as her deputy. In the recordings mentioned above Gulnara Jaiani was talking about such exact distribution of leadership positions. As to PEC no.16, Shorena Dzidziguri was elected as deputy chair. She knew about this in advance, because in the August 27 recording, she confirms that she will serve as deputy chair of PEC no.16.

## XIV. Suspicious donations

On October 8, the State Audit Office published information about donations received by electoral subjects from September 12 to October 2.

According to this information, from September 12 to October 2, tens of thousands of Lari were donated to the candidate endorsed by the *Georgian Dream*, Salome Zurabishvili by different business subjects, medical personnel and leadership of Chachava and Ghudushauri clinics.

On October 8, Rustavi 2 reported that bank accounts of some of the doctors of Chachava Clinic were used for making transfers and that they had not willingly made those donations.<sup>20</sup>

One of the persons who donated to Salome Zurabishvili's campaign, head of the gynecological department of Chachava Clinic, Nikoloz Kintraia posted on his personal Facebook page a status update saying that he is not going to vote for Salome Zurabishvili. In this case, it is suspicious that he donated 20,000 Lari to a candidate that he is not going to vote for in the election.

Notably, the status update posted on Kintraia's personal Facebook page was deleted in a few hours.

Regarding donations made by doctors, the SAO financial monitoring department has applied to court with a request to access information about income and bank transactions of persons who made the donations, in order to study legitimacy of these donations.

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<sup>20</sup> Rustavi 2 report about donations made by doctors of Chachava Clinic, available at: <http://rustavi2.ge/ka/news/115609>

## **XV. Monitoring mission and methodology**

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

Main areas of monitoring of the pre-election period 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;
- Formation of voter lists, 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.

The pre-election monitoring of ISFED is made possible by the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).