



2017 Elections of Local Self-Government Bodies

Third Interim Report of the Pre-Election Observation

September 26 – October 16

October 19, 2017

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I. Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) has been conducting a long-term pre-election monitoring of the October 21, 2017 elections of municipal representative bodies - Sakrebulo and Mayors of local self-governing cities/self-governing communities - through 70 long-term observers since July 24. The monitoring is carried out with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The third interim report of the pre-election monitoring covers the reporting period of **September 26 – October 16, 2017**.

II. Key Findings

During the reporting period the election campaign entered a conclusive phase and became noticeably dynamic. ISFED observers monitored **379** public meetings held by electoral subjects during the period of September 26 – October 16.

As the Election Day approached, frequency of such violations that undermine free and level playing field for electoral subjects increased. During the reporting period ISFED found **23 cases of intimidation/harassment; 1 case of dismissal from work on alleged political grounds; 2 cases of violence; 3 cases of interference with pre-election campaign; 6 cases of misuse of administrative resources; 1 case of improper use of a building (facility); 6 cases of illegal participation in campaigning; 11 cases of destruction of campaign materials**. Of note are **6 infringement cases identified in activities of the electoral administration**.

As the campaign intensity grew, cases of alleged harassment/intimidation and threats on political grounds against opposition candidates and activists dramatically increased. In 6 districts, as a result of alleged harassment, individuals that were registered as electoral candidates withdrew their candidacies, while in 2 other cases candidates reported threats apparently aimed at forcing them into withdrawing their candidacies. In several cases documented in the report civil servants and teachers were demanded to work in favor of the ruling party. In other cases, mostly activists and supporters of opposition parties and independent candidates were harassed. Some acts of harassment/intimidation also demonstrate misuse of administrative resources. Of particular note are acts of harassment and intimidation in Dmanisi and Aspindza where current Gamgebelis have lost the ruling party's support and are competing against candidates nominated by the Georgian Dream.

ISFED found irregularities in several areas in the work of the election administration. Failure to take adequate actions in response to violations of the electoral legislation by the election administration is especially problematic. Ignoring violations of campaigning rules became a noticeable trend in the complaints process. Such position of the election administration indirectly promotes violation of the legislation and encourages spread of similar cases on a larger scale. Of note is wrongful use of Article 91¹ of the Election Code by DEC, which may establish a dangerous precedent of baseless restriction of election monitoring.

The campaign of spreading false information on social media through various Facebook pages using content sponsored by unidentified sources continues and it is becoming noticeably active as the Election Day approaches. Currently such campaigns are directed against almost all mayoral candidates in Tbilisi but the false information spread against an independent candidate Aleko Elisashvili is especially identifiable.

Use of modern communication technologies in the election process is accompanied by new challenges and relevant authorities are obligated to respond to these challenges in an adequate manner. Social media serves as an important platform for election campaigning, promoting candidates and enticing voters. The

CEC failed to adequately evaluate the increasing trend of use of social media by civil servants for illegal campaigning during work hours. The electoral administration should interpret applicable legislation in a progressive manner and make decisions that establish the practice that promotes compliance with requirements of the electoral legislation. Further, to respond to challenges related to spending of financial resources on use of social media for campaigning, the State Audit Office should design a corresponding methodology proactively and on the basis of applicable international experience.

A few acts of violence and disruption of electoral subjects' campaign meetings were still detected during the reporting period. An attempt by a Georgian Dream-appointed PEC member to disrupt a meeting of an opposition candidate in Khashuri is especially alarming, which also amounts to illegal participation in campaigning.

Of note is the trend of destruction of campaign materials of the ruling party's candidate in Ninotsminda District, which allegedly has to do with the fact that the party has nominated a woman as their mayoral candidate.

III. Recommendations

The electoral administration should:

- take strict actions in response to wrongful use of Article 91¹ of the Election Code by DEC's;
- clearly instruct electoral commission members that they are prohibited from participation in campaigning;
- take adequate legal actions in response to illegal campaigning by civil servants.

Local self-governments and public institutions should:

- prohibit campaigning in favor or against an electoral subject during an event funded from the budget;
- prevent dismissals of state employees on political grounds;
- refrain from using local self-government property – means of communication and vehicles - in favor of an electoral subject or for participation in campaigning.

The Ministry of Education and Science should:

- ensure fulfillment of the October 2 recommendation of the inter-agency commission and instruct heads of educational resource centers to refrain from campaigning during work hours, including through social networks;
- prevent holding of campaign meetings of electoral subjects in public schools.

The State Audit Office should:

- ensure development of effective methodology for preventing illegal donations as a result of spending on campaigns in social networks;

Electoral subjects/political parties should:

- stop mobilizing supporters for attending public meetings of competing parties/electoral subjects;
- during campaign meetings, TV appearances and public speeches refrain from forms of expression that are directed against an individual or a group of individuals, on the grounds of social and ethnic affiliation, race, sex, age, ethnic background, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, language, ideology, social class, occupation or any other grounds.

IV. Irregularities in the work of the Electoral Administration

ISFED found irregularities in the work of the electoral administration in several areas. Failure to take adequate actions in response to violations of the electoral legislation by the election administration is especially problematic. For instance, ignoring violations of campaigning through social media by public servants and officials during working hours became a noticeable trend in the complaints process.

On 12 October 2017, the CEC rejected a complaint filed by ISFED in connection to election campaigning using Facebook by head of Kvareli Educational Resource Center during working hours. Such approach is in violation of requirements of the Election Code of Georgia, which clearly stipulates that civil servants are prohibited from participating in campaigning during work hours or while they are performing work-related duties.

Failure to take actions in response to the above fact suggests that the CEC tolerates participation in election campaigning by civil servants during work hours using social networks. Such decisions indirectly promote violation of the legislation and encourage spread of similar cases on a larger scale. For instance, similar to the head of Kvareli Educational Resource Center, Tornike Kakhniashvili, head of Zestaponi Educational Resource Center engages in campaigning during work hours.¹

The Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections issued a recommendation on 2 October 2017 urging civil servants to “refrain from using personal social media accounts for making political proclamations and campaigning/counter-campaigning during work hours or when they are performing work-related duties, and ensure maximum separation of their professional activities from electoral/political processes.”

The electoral administration overlooked the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Commission and the fact that civil servants engaged in campaigning during work hours. The CEC explained that use of official social media account by a budget agency constitutes an administrative offence and activity on personal Facebook page does not. The electoral administration failed to provide an accurate interpretation of different regulations that apply to use of official and personal social media accounts. Use of a public agency’s official social media page for campaigning in favor of a party constitutes misuse of administrative resources and is prohibited without exclusions. Campaigning by a civil servant in favor of a party using personal social media account amounts to a violation of campaigning rules and is prohibited within the scope of a regulation established by the Election Code – in particular, under para.4 “h” of Article 45 of the Election Code: a civil servant is prohibited from conducting and participating in election campaigning during normal business hours or when they perform work-related duties.

It is alarming that immediately after it finished consideration of ISFED’s complaint, the CEC put to vote a draft Order to reject the complaint. The draft had been prepared in advance, before the meeting began. This fact suggests that the fate of the complaint had been decided even before it was considered. Administrative proceedings and an oral hearing conducted in such manner is an attempt of only a formal observance of the law and arguments presented by a party bears no significance whatsoever for the administration.

Samtredia

On October 9, Natia Tsotadze, a reporter of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Free Zone, was at Bashi PEC no.27 of Samtredia District no.54. She recorded the situation at the polling station on a video

¹ See Chapter XI of the Report

camera and uploaded it on a video sharing website, YouTube.² The video shows that not a single member of the PEC was present at the polling station during normal business hours and election documentation including a logbook was left unattended. In connection to this fact, on October 13, Chair of Samtredia DEC prepared a protocol of administrative offence against Natia Tsotadze, imposing a fine of GEL 500 on her under Article 91¹ of the Election Code.

According to the DEC Chair's decision, the following amounted to a violation of the law: *“Natia Katsitadze, a camerawoman of a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Free Zone, without agreeing with the Chair of DEC no.27 first, entered a working room of the commission, inspected, recorded [on camera] and published on the Internet the registration logbook and entire premises of the polling station. She repeated the same action in presence of the chair and proceeded to videotape without notifying the managers, hence interfering with functions and activities of the PEC no.27 and disrupting the procedure for closing of the registration logbook.”*³

Of note is the fact that Samtredia DEC imposed a disciplinary sanction on the chair and the deputy chair of the PEC no.27 for leaving the polling station of Bashi no.27 unattended during normal business hours on October 9, and because the polling station premises, offices of commissioners and electoral documentation were videotaped in violation of the electoral legislation.

With her actions Natia Tsotadze did not violate the Election Code but instead, her actions disclosed the irregularities in the work of the PEC no.27 of Samtredia to public.

Khoni

It was reported that during work hours on October 3, all members of Ghvedi PEC no.22 were absent from the polling station. Later it was discovered the unified voter list posted on a wall at the polling station was possibly removed by an unknown individual. Khoni DEC reported the incident to the police and the Central Election Commission.

Ozurgeti

PEC no.22 located in a secondary school in the village of Mshvidobauri, was closed at 11:55 on October 12. The PEC chair opened the polling station only after the visit of ISFED long-term observer. According to PEC Chair Irma Kasrashvili, all commissioners are teachers and they lock the door during a break to prevent loss. However, during the ISFED LTO's visit to the polling station, it was not a break time and there was a lesson in progress.

Lanckkhuti

At 17:30 on October 11, while monitoring polling stations, ISFED representative found that the registration book of the commission at Lanckkhuti polling station no.35 had been taken home by the PEC Chair, a unified list of voters had not been posted at the polling station.

Chokhatauri

Pikria Mamardashvili, a member of the UNM campaign office provided ISFED long-term observer with photos that show posters of Irakli Kuchava, the Georgian Dream mayoral candidate in Chokhatauri, placed on the premises of the polling station no.20 (Tsipnari). The photo also shows Sergo Meparishvili, the PEC Chair, standing on a balcony of the building. The photos were taken by Mamardashvili.⁴

²See the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJKHsY7YPVA&feature=share>

³See the protocol of administrative offence, available at: <https://imgur.com/a/iRb0A>

⁴ See the photo: <https://imgur.com/a/cqVq5>

V. Intimidation/Harassment

Tetrtskaro

On October 9, majoritarian, proportional and mayoral candidates of the European Georgia in Tetrtskaro District applied to the DEC requesting invalidation of their registration as candidates. All of them said that they were leaving Georgia to study abroad. The fact that so many candidates of the same party withdrew their candidacies creates suspicions about harassment.

In the evening of October 9, Ramaz Shavishvili, former mayoral candidate of the European Dream became sick and was taken to a hospital in an ambulance. In an interview with ISFED his wife did not confirm the fact of harassment and stated that because all majoritarian candidates decided not to participate in the elections, there was no point for her husband to compete, so he withdrew his candidacy.

Aspindza

On October 7, civil servants of Aspindza Municipality and other employees of the self-government were summoned to the Georgian Dream campaign office in Aspindza. Some stated that during the meeting they were ordered to “work” in favor of Rostom Magrakvelidze, the ruling party candidate. This fact was reported by Samkhretis Karibche.

Attendee of the meeting, Zura Shavidze, Gamgebeli Representative in Iveria Community, states that the employees were first summoned to Gamgeoba offices for a meeting with the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, but later they were told that the meeting would be held at the Georgian Dream campaign office.

Eventually, it was the head of the regional department of the Georgian Dream, Dimitri Samkharadze who met the local self-government employees. The Georgian Dream mayoral candidate, Rostom Magrakvelidze and other members of the party were also present at the campaign office. According to Shavidze, it was demanded that they leave cellphones outside before the meeting began. They had to undergo screening with a special equipment to ensure that no one entered the meeting with a recording device.

According to the Gamgebeli Representative, Samkharadze announced he had learned that employees of the self-government were pressured by Tsabadze into supporting his candidacy. He also added that Tsabadze is not a candidate of the Georgian Dream and they should support only Rostom Magrakvelidze, the ruling party candidate. Shavidze also said that Samkharadze threatened civil servants and urged them to circle number 41 only on the ballot and to “work” only for this number.

Of note is the fact that before the meeting began, Tristan Muradashvili, Head of Aspindza Educational Resource Center was outside the Georgian Dream campaign office. In an interview with ISFED observer he said that he was summoned to the campaign office but after he learned that it was a party meeting, he left the premises and did not attend the meeting.

Gamgebeli and independent candidate Levan Tsabadze said that he himself had summoned Gamgebeli representatives and heads of departments for a meeting with the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, but eventually they were taken to the campaign office.

Aspindza

- Of note is the fact that on October 11, Aleksandre Papashvili, First Deputy Gamgebeli, submitted a letter of resignation. Aspindza Gamgebeli Tsabadze said that he refuses to approve the letter because Papashvili has been forced into resigning. According to him, several other employees of the

municipality may also submit letters of resignation, because they are intimidated by the State Security Service.

- The October 12, 18:00 meeting of an independent mayoral candidate in Aspindza, Levan Tsabadze, with population in the village of Ota had to be cancelled. A member of Levan Tsabadze's campaign office, Zurab Narimanidze, who is also a representative of Gamgebeli in Orgora village, announced that the Georgian Dream activists intimidated and harassed local population and when the candidate went to meet constituents, no one was there to meet him.

In an interview with ISFED observer, Levan Tsabadze stated that locals had been warned not to attend his meeting. He said that people were talking to him from windows and apologizing for the cancelled meeting.

Ozurgeti

On October 11, in the school of Mshvidobari village, during a break between the second and the third lessons, Lela Sikharulidze, elementary class teacher at Mshvidobari school was approached by Gocha Sharashenidze, a representative of Gamgebeli in Bakhvi community. He asked Sikharulidze to follow him outside. As Sikharulidze exited the teacher's lounge, Sharashenidze asked her who she was voting for in the elections. After Sikharulidze responded that she was voting for an independent candidate Konstantine Sharashenidze, Gocha Sharashenidze threatened that she would have problems with her job.

According to Lela Sikharulidze, threats made by Gamgebeli Representative have to do with the fact that on October 10, she attended a meeting with Konstantine Sharashenidze outside the school.

Tbilisi

On October 4, Studio Monitor made results of journalistic investigation public. The investigation found that principals of three kindergartens in Tbilisi were possibly collecting lists of the Georgian Dream supporters and submitting these lists to kindergarten no.95.

According to Studio Monitor, kindergarten principals are instructed by Tbilisi Kindergarten Agency to collect signatures of 100-200 supporters in favor of Georgian Dream mayoral candidate Kakhi Kaladze and submit them at the Union of Kindergartens.⁵

According to materials of the journalistic investigation, posing as representatives of the Kindergarten Agency, journalists contacted kindergarten principals and asked them about the list of supporters that they had been instructed to submit. Principals confirmed that they submitted the verified lists to the place where they had been told to submit. However, later when contacted by the journalists without disguising their identity, all of the principals categorically rejected everything they had said during the earlier calls.

Kutaisi

According to the ISFED observer, it has been reported that drivers of public transportation in Kutaisi are forced to place the Georgian Dream campaign posters on their vehicles (in private ownership). Many public transport vehicles display symbols of the ruling party in Kutaisi.

An employee of the transportation department at Kutaisi City Hall, Davit Kbilashvili told ISFED observer that regulation of the issue is outside the scope of their competencies. According to him, the transportation department oversees compliance with safety norms for installment of advertising or

⁵ See the information reported by Studio Monitor: <https://www.facebook.com/monitorstudio/videos/1582146188514746/>

campaign materials, and it is unaware of any agreement between the party and drivers of Kutaisi public transportation.

Talking with ISFED observer, lawyer of the Georgian Dream campaign office in Kutaisi, Gocha Avaliani rejected allegations about intimidation and announced that all private owners have placed the Georgian Dream campaign posters voluntarily and the process is an ordinary matter of agreement.

Batumi

The UNM reported that many PEC members in Batumi that have been selected by the DEC are resigning. In their letters of resignation, PEC members cite personal, family problems or health issues as the reason for leaving. According to the UNM, the authorities demanded not to seal table lists until summary protocols were prepared after the Polling Day was over. The UNM said that commissioners who protested this demand were intimidated into writing letters of resignation.

Borjomi

Aleksi Papidze, the UNM majoritarian candidate in Dviri Community applied to DEC no.36 and requested withdrawal of his candidacy. The UNM campaign office in Borjomi alleges intimidation and accuses the ruling political force in harassing the candidate, but they did not provide names of any particular institution or individual. According to the UNM, Papidze had a real chance of winning and therefore, it is peculiar that he withdrew his candidacy.

In an interview with ISFED observer, Aleksi Papidze did not confirm the report about intimidation and said that he will not be in Borjomi on the Election Day.

Khulo

On October 9, Anzor Shainidze, the UNM majoritarian candidate in Pushrukauli Community withdrew his candidacy. ISFED long-term observer could not get a hold of Shainidze to verify the report. According to the information provided by Irakli Jorbenadze, head of the UNM office in Khulo, Shainidze was pressured by the Georgian Dream representatives. Jorbenadze stated that Anzor Bolkvadze, Majoritarian MP of Khulo, offered a job to Anzor Shainidze after elections in exchange for withdrawal. Shainidze refuses to contact media or observers after withdrawing his candidacy.

Telavi

At around 2:00pm on October 8, an inebriated individual Nugzar Gigauri entered the European Georgia offices yelling: “*this is your Europe, you are debauching the country, stop the campaign or I will kill you all.*” Nodar Ezhishvili, majoritarian candidate of the European Georgia tried to find out what was going on; at that moment Gigauri left the premises and got into his car. Nodar Ezhishvili was trying to calm him down but Gigauri took out a weapon that resembled a black pistol and threatened Ezhishvili. After a small argument Gigauri quickly left the premises. The party reported the incident to the law enforcement authorities. The police soon apprehended Gigauri but the weapon seized from him turned out to be a toy. A criminal case has been instituted in connection to the incident and it is currently under investigation by the Ministry of Interior.

Dmanisi

- It was reported that on October 27, population of Irganchai village, Dmanisi Municipality, was forced to swear on Quran and bread to vote for the Georgian Dream. ISFED observer visited the village to verify the report. At the village gathering place with about 15 individuals, locals confirmed the report

about intimidation, stating that Emzar Petriashvili, who currently serves as a lawyer of the Georgian Dream in Dmanisi, was the initiator of the swearing. Representative of the Development Movement Temur Nergadze reported the fact to the inter-agency commission on October 2. Investigation of the fact is ongoing.

- On October 4, Member of Dmanisi DEC Lana Moseshvili, who had been appointed by the Christian-Democratic Party to the commission, submitted a letter of resignation. ISFED observer tried to contact Lana Moseshvili several times but unsuccessfully. Later the UNM representative, Levan Moseshvili informed the observer that Lana Moseshvili was threatened and told that unless she resigned from the commission, his father who works at RMG Gold would be fired from work.

Akhmeta

Ramaz Pitkshelauri, majoritarian candidate of the Christian-Democratic Georgia in Zemo Khodasheni, refused to compete in the elections on the day before the last day of the deadline for removal of candidacy from registration. According to Irakli Jirauli, chairman of the party, he refused to participate in the elections because “his family interests” were threatened.

Shuakhevi

On October 1, under the initiative of Nodar Kartsivadze, Chair of Shuakhevi Municipality Sakrebulo, trustees of Chvani Community were summoned to Sakrebulo. Video of Ajara TV⁶ shows that the meeting was held at the office of Sakrebulo Chair and it was attended by Deputy Sakrebulo Chair Guram Zoidze, Head of the Infrastructural Department Ednar Shrashidze, trustees of Chvani Community and several candidates for Sakrebulo membership. According to Demur Msakhuradze, a member of the Republican Party, the meeting was held for election purposes between candidates for Sakrebulo membership and community trustees. According to Msakhuradze, during the meeting the trustees were instructed to work with local population in favor of the Georgian Dream. According to Msakhuradze, his wife, who is a trustee of Purto, was intentionally left out of the meeting. Organizers of the meeting stated that it was not a political meeting and it aimed to discuss infrastructural issues in Chvani Community. They also stated that Demur Msakhuradze of the opposition party gave wrong interpretation to the meeting.

Tskaltubo

- On October 6, Giorgi Kuchava, a majoritarian candidate of the European Dream for Sakulia village, Tskaltubo received anonymous phone call from an unknown individual who demanded that he withdraw his candidacy the following day. In an interview with ISFED, Giorgi Kuchava stated that he is not going to withdraw his candidacy despite the threat. He also said that he filed a police report and an investigation has been launched.
- On October 2, Kakha Gorduladze, the European Georgia majoritarian candidate for Tskaltubo, received a phone call from a private number (700-700-700). A stranger threatened him and said that if he does not go back to Russia soon, the mother of his children [they are currently not married] Nato Nemsitsveradze would be dismissed from work. Nemsitsveradze works as a middle school teacher in Bardnala village, Tsageri District. In an interview with ISFED observer, Kakha Gorduladze said that the threats are connected to his political activities.

⁶ <http://ajaratv.ge/news/ge/20835/respublikuri-partiis.html.html>

Khashuri

- Ia Kurdadze, a member of the Georgian Dream office in Khashuri, contacted ISFED observer to report several phone calls that she received from the State Security Service employees, who gave her “benevolent advice” and told her to leave the campaign office of Ramaz Nozadze, an independent candidate. Ia Kurdadze is a member of the campaign office of Ramaz Nozadze, an independent candidate for the office of Khashuri Mayor. She made the decision to support Nozadze after the Georgian Dream nominated Giorgi Guraspashvili as a mayoral candidate in Khashuri.
- Lia Gogoladze, an employee of Khashuri Central Library, reported that civil servants are receiving phone calls from the Georgian Dream campaign office “advising” them to vote in favor of the ruling party candidate or they will lose their jobs.

Lanckhuti

- Besik Tabidze, the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in Nigvziani Community, verbally insulted and threatened Patman (Meri) Surmanidze, a coordinator of the European Georgia who lives in Gujana District of the same village, while she was putting up posters of the European Georgia mayoral candidate Amiran Gigineishvili, and told her that after his victory neither Surmanidze nor other residents of Gujana would ever be able to apply to him with requests. *“He kept calling me Chachan Adjarian while he shook his finger at me and made threats. He’s done this before. He thinks he already is a winner. What can we do, who can we turn to about the fact that he is intimidating us like this?”* – Patman Surmanidze told ISFED observer who visited the village to verify the report. The majoritarian candidate himself denied the report and said that the coordinator of the European Georgia was “insane”.
- Mayoral candidate of the Alliance of Patriots reported that Valeri Doborjginidze, majoritarian candidate in Jurkveti Community, was harassed by his cousin Davit Doborjginidze, the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in Jurkveti Community. As a result, the majoritarian candidate of the Alliance of Patriots withdrew his candidacy after submitting a letter of withdrawal on September 26. ISFED observer contacted Valeri Doborjginidze to verify the report. He said that he made the decision in his cousin’s favor and no one pressured him into it. Similar fact was found in the village of Atsana. Davit Mikashavidze, majoritarian candidate of the Alliance of Patriots in Atsana, submitted a letter of resignation and withdrew his candidacy. The party suspects that the decisions of their candidates have to do with Emzar Tedoradze, majoritarian candidate of the Georgian Dream in the same community.

Chokhatauri

- On October 1, Ioseb Berishvili, an independent majoritarian candidate in the community of Bukistsikhe-Ianeuli, withdrew his candidacy. It was reported that he was pressured by the Georgian Dream and was offered a job in exchange for withdrawing his candidacy. However, ISFED observer, who contacted the independent candidate to verify the information, reported that Ioseb Berishvili did not confirm that he was pressured or offered a job.
- Irakli Kuchava, the Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate in Chokhatauri, had a meeting with teachers at 2:00pm on October 14, in the Culture House of Chokhatauri. It was reported that all principals were instructed to have at least 10 teachers attend the meeting from each school, otherwise they would lose their jobs. Several teachers confirmed with ISFED long-term observer that principals instructed them to attend the meeting with Kuchava.

VI. Dismissals from Work on Alleged Political Grounds

Dedoplistskaro

Avto Karkhelaury, the UNM majoritarian candidate in the village of Kvemo Kedi, Dedoplistskaro District had a job as a shift-working nurse in Dedoplistskaro Branch of the United Regional Healthcare for many years. On September 27, Karkhelaury reported to ISFED that Nugzar Bolkvadze, head of the United Regional Healthcare forced him into writing a letter of resignation. Karkhelaury claims that on September 10, he resigned as a result of the pressure. ISFED observer could not reach Nugzar Bolkvadze, while Chief Doctor of Dedoplistskaro Hospital, Khatuna Agladze stated that she did not dismiss anyone from work as she was on a leave during the period in question.

VII. Acts of Violence

Bolnisi

On October 3, two unknown individuals approached and verbally insulted Shakhali Maksomov, a driver of the European Georgia's campaign car, while he was pumping gas at a gas station in the city of Bolnisi. They were calling Maksomov and especially the party by abusive names. The driver started the car to leave the conflict situation but one of the men removed the campaign flag from the car and smashed its window.

Kobuleti

Merab Bladadze, a candidate of the Alliance of Patriots for the office of Kobuleti Mayor, accuses the Georgian Dream of vandalism. According to Merab Bladadze, at 5:00am on October 11, unknown individuals smashed windows of a store owned by his coordinator, Nukri Tamazashvili.

He also reported that nothing was stolen from the store. He rules out an attempt of theft and believes that the incident is connected to political activities. The Georgian Dream has not yet commented. The Ministry of Interior has instituted investigation under Article 187 of the Criminal Code (damaging or destroying an object). Media reported about the incident. Sulkhan Gorcheladze, head of the Georgian Dream campaign office, denied the allegations in an interview with ISFED LTO.

VIII. Interference with Election Campaigning

Telavi

According to Giorgi Botkoveli, the UNM mayoral candidate in Telavi, at around 4:00pm on October 16, he was meeting population at Napareuli Street. One of the locals expressed criticism of the government because of a poorly paved asphalt. Botkoveli wanted to learn more details and asked a reporter from Tamagzavri TV (Telavi), who was at the meeting, to videotape the poorly performed road surfacing works. One of the individuals present at the meeting, who had personally participated in pavement of asphalt, became irritated by this fact. He insulted Giorgi Botkoveli verbally and then physically. The conflict lasted about 10 minutes.

Giorgi Botkoveli did not want to discuss any details of the incident with ISFED observer and refused to provide names of individuals who insulted him verbally and physically.

Akhalkalaki

On October 5, Enzel Mkoyan, Majoritarian MP from the Georgian Dream, held a meeting with population of Khulgumo village. He presented mayoral candidate Yuri Unanian and made a speech. The MP said that the water system had been improved, the village had been connected to the gas distribution network and roads were partially rehabilitated. The meeting was attended by activists and supporters of Samvel Petrosyan, mayoral candidate of the Alliance of Patriots. One of them confronted Enzel Mkoyan and said that nothing was improved in the village since Mkoyan's election as Member of Parliament. A verbal confrontation ensued between supporters of the Georgian Dream and Samvel Petrosyan, which eventually grew into a physical confrontation.

In an interview with ISFED, Gaioz Lomsadze, Head of the Georgian Dream's local office stated that Petrosyan's supporters are trying to disrupt meetings with public and are intentionally staging provocations.

Chokhatauri

On October 12, Koba Kalandadze, majoritarian candidate of the Georgian Dream, interfered with activities of Irakli Giorgadze, coordinator of the UNM in Khidistavi, while he was putting up posters of the UNM's mayoral candidate in the center of Khidistavi Community. Kalandadze was not allowing Giorgadze to put up the posters. Placement of posters was made possible after the UNM campaign office intervened.

IX. Misuse of Administrative Resources

Ozurgeti

- In Tskhemliskhidi village, cardboard boxes of a substance for getting rid of Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs meant for distribution among the village population have been placed in the Georgian Dream campaign office. In an interview with ISFED, Gamgebeli Representative Davit Chanukvadze said that he used the office for storing the insecticide because the boxes were delivered during rain and they did not have enough room for storing them in the administrative building. He also said that the substance is distributed from the office of Specialist Marina Tutberidze in the administrative building. Of note is the fact that in the two-story administrative building of Tskhemliskhidi located nearby only five rooms are occupied, rest of the rooms are vacant.
- When ISFED checked the office of Marina Tutberidze, LTO found that she had a small flag of the Georgian Dream on her desk. Of note is the fact that a lot of people visit the assistant of Gamgebeli on a daily basis to receive the substance for getting rid of Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs. The substance is meant to be distributed among 860 families in the community.
- A minibus with a license plate number BXB-175 is servicing a public school in Tskhemliskhidi village. There are campaign posters of Beglar Sioridze, mayoral candidate of the Georgian Dream, installed on the bus. The driver, who chose to remain anonymous, stated that the bus that usually

services the school is out of order and the first time he used the said minibus to drive schoolchildren was on October 9. However, ISFED long-term observer has photos proving that the same minibus was servicing the school on October 6. School Principal Lali Sichinava is on a leave. She is a majoritarian candidate of the Georgian Dream. Deputy Principal Makvala Kechuashvili refused to talk to the ISFED LTO.

Tbilisi

On October 16, 23rd station of Tbilisi Metro named University was opened by Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kviriaashvili. At a large-scale opening ceremony of the new subway station, the Prime Minister was accompanied by Kakha Kaladze, candidate of the Georgian Dream for the office of Tbilisi Mayor.

This fact contains signs of misuse of administrative resources, because Kaladze's presence at the event made it seem like the ceremony was part of the election campaign, which blurred the line between the activities of the party and the state, in violation of requirements of the OSCE Copenhagen Document.

Kobuleti

On October 3, Mirian Katamadze, the Georgian Dream candidate for the office of Kobuleti Mayor, was visiting the territories affected by landslide. He was accompanied by managerial-level employees of Gamgeoba, including Deputy Gamgebeli Malkhaz Romanadze, Head of the Infrastructural Department of Gamgeoba Zaza Kaikatsishvili. According to them, they wanted to personally inspect the relief works and they did not see any crime in it because they are not involved in an election campaign. According to the candidate, visiting the territories affected by landslide had nothing to do with the campaign.

Chkhorotsku

On the campaign Facebook page "Georgian Dream – for Chkhorotsku's Better Future" of Davit Gogua, who is a majoritarian candidate in Chkhorotsku, photos of the candidate's meeting with teachers of public schools in Lesichina village were posted.⁷ It should be noted that Davit Gogua is current Gamgebeli of Chkhorotsku.

Principals of these schools are Givi Lashkhia, Rusudan Lashkhia and Manana Sichinava. In an interview with ISFED they stated that Current Gamgebeli of Chkhorotsku and Deputy Chair of Sakrebulo met with teachers of public schools no.1, no.2 and no.3 in Lesichina village of Chkhorotsku Municipality during working process on October 2. Gamgebeli entered teachers' lounges, said hello to teachers and asked how they were doing. During the meeting they spoke about the schools, as received funding from the local budget for rehabilitation works in July. At the end of the meeting they took commemorative photos.

⁷See the photo: <https://imgur.com/a/SjZ2U>

X. Improper Use of Buildings (Facilities)

Ozurgeti

On October 4, at the Sports Palace, the Georgian Dream candidate for the office of Ozurgeti Mayor held a meeting with population together with MPs Archil Talakvadze and Nino Gogvadze.

A contract between the Sports Palace and Nugzar Khutsishvili, manager of the election campaign fund is dated October 3. According to the contract, the renter was supposed to use the Sports Palace hall from 16:00 to 20:00. The meeting started after 6:00pm, while preparatory works had been ongoing since 10am, which hindered the work of the PEC no.2 located inside the building.

A member of the PEC from the United Democratic Movement said that at the time of her arrival at the PEC (11am), they were removing the unified voter list from the external glass wall of the building, the signboard of the PEC had also been removed, while in the hall where the meeting was held, they were putting up the Georgian Dream banners, flags and other campaign materials, so voters entering the polling station could clearly see the campaign materials of the Georgian Dream.

Representatives of the opposition candidate confirmed in an interview with ISFED LTO that members of the Georgian Dream campaign office have been present in the building that houses the PEC since morning, getting the building ready for the event. Unified voter lists removed from the PEC had already been posted on a different wall by the afternoon and the numbering was wrong.

In an interview with ISFED LTO, Deputy Chair of the PEC, Zaza Chkhartishvili stated that the voter lists were relocated because it was raining and the wrong numbering was not a problem for anyone.

XI. Illegal Participation in Campaigning

Zestaponi

Tornike Kakhniashvili, Head of Zestaponi Educational Resource Center, openly engages in campaigning during work hours using his own Facebook page, in favor of Kakhaber Makhatadze, the Georgian Dream candidate for the office of Zestaponi Mayor.⁸

Batumi

On September 29, a video was released through social media showing Marina Zhghenti, a member of Batumi PEC no.1, giving the UNM campaign booklet to a voter together with a voter card. Marina Zhghenti is the UNM-appointed member of the precinct commission. The voter asked the PEC member whether she has the right to distribute campaign materials. The PEC member responded that she received the campaign material at the campaign office.

The same day, the UNM representatives held a briefing and condemned actions of the PEC member. Number one on the UNM's election list, Mirdat Kamadadze announced that Marina Zhghenti was suspended and she would no longer be a PEC member from UNM. On October 2, a protocol of administrative offence was prepared against her by the decision of Batumi DEC chair. The protocol was referred to Batumi City Court for consideration.

⁸ See the photo material: <https://imgur.com/a/Lp4px>

Khashuri

On October 4, Ilia Kapanadze, independent candidate for the office of Khashuri Mayor, was meeting residents of Tskhinvali Street and campaigning. A member of the PEC no.49 from the Georgian Dream, Ramaz Lomidze arrived at the meeting and tried to disrupt it. He was telling Kapanadze that he was not going to win the elections.

Marneuli

Principal of Aghmamaghlo School also serves as the Georgian Dream's majoritarian candidate in Kesalo. As of October 5, he was working as the school principal and he had not yet submitted a leave request.

Kareli

- At 10:24am on September 21, during work hours, Deputy Gangebali of Kareli Municipality, Meri Arkhoshashvili shared on her personal Facebook page a page of Zaza Guliashvili, the Georgian Dream candidate for the office of Kareli Mayor.
- On October 7, chair of Leteti PEC, Tamaz Valishvili, who was appointed by the DEC, shared from the candidate's campaign page on Facebook a post about nomination of Zaza Guliashvili as the Georgian Dream candidate for the office of Kareli Mayor. Of note is the fact that similar to Valishvili, Bebnisi PEC Chair Marekh Talakhadze is also sharing campaign posts on Facebook. Talakhadze is also a DEC-appointed member of the commission. She shared posts of the Georgian Dream's mayoral candidate on her own Facebook page six times.

XII. Damaging of Campaign Materials

Akhalkalaki

Posters of different candidates have been damaged in various forms in Ninotsminda. However, campaign materials of the Georgian Dream candidate have been damaged in especially large quantities. According to ISFED observer, this is due to the fact that the mayoral candidate is a woman.

Akhaltzikhe

Posters of the European Georgia on Iadze Street in Akhaltzikhe have been massively destroyed.

Aspindza

Members of the campaign office of Levan Tsabadze, who is an independent mayoral candidate in Aspindza, reported that late at night on October 11 they heard a noise; when they got outside, they saw that Tsabadze's banner was on the ground. According to the campaign office, they could not identify any specific individuals.

Gurjaani

- On October 12, near Tbilisi-Telavi Motorway in Chumlaki village, activists of the European Georgia found that campaign materials of their party had been massively destroyed. On October 13, posters of the European Georgia were covered up by the Georgian Dream campaign posters in the same village.

The incident was witnessed by Archil Khutsoshvili, an activists of the European Georgia, who identified two out of four perpetrators as Velita Chaketadze and Shorena Mazanishvili. According to Khutsoshvili, these individuals told him that they had been instructed from their managers to tear down the posters and it they did not care where he would complain about this because no one would hold them accountable.

In Georgian Dream campaign office, Archil Khandamashvili, a mayoral candidate of the Georgian Dream in Gurjaani, and coordinator of meetings of the campaign office Kote Beridzishvili categorically denied the report and said that they never gave such instructions to activists. They also said that they will investigate the incident and will hold the perpetrators accountable.

- In the village of Shashia, Gurjaani Municipality, near Telavi-Tbilisi Motorway, campaign posters of the European Georgia's mayoral candidate Goga Petrusashvili, placed on outdoor post lights are covered up by campaign posters of Archil Khandamashvili, the Georgian Dream's mayoral candidate.

Khobi

In the village of Kariata, Khobi campaign posters of the European Georgia were torn down. The incident does not have any witnesses but there are photos of the damaged posters.

Chokhatauri

- Posters of Lia Chigogidze, mayoral candidate of the European Georgia in Chokhatauri Municipality, have been massively torn down on the territory of Daba Chokhatauri.
- Posters of the mayoral candidate of the Alliance of Patriots in Chokhatauri Municipality have been torn down in the following villages: Goraberezhouli, Shua Amaghleba, Bukistskihe and Zemosurebi.

Batumi

- At some streets of Batumi, especially Aghmashenebeli Street, campaign materials of the European Georgia have been torn down and covered by the Georgian Dream campaign materials.
- On October 10, the Labor Party mayoral candidate for Batumi, Jemal Kikava demonstratively covered the poster of the ruling party mayoral candidate, Lasha Komakhidze with his own poster on a display stand on Chavchavadze Street. Similarly, some of Kikava's posters displayed on buildings in Batumi have been posted over those of Lasha Komakhidze. According to Kikava, he did it to illustrate that stands and campaign areas designated by the self-government are not enough for all electoral subjects.

Zugdidi

During the night of October 2, unidentified individuals took down election posters and a banner from the office of the European Georgia. In an interview with ISFED observer, a candidate of the European Georgia for the office of Zugdidi Mayor, Lela Kiburia stated that the party property was damaged by individuals who came out of the Georgian Dream offices, and they were probably the ones that tore the main banner on the office balcony to pieces. Investigation has been launched under Article 187 of the Criminal Code in connection to the incident (damaging of someone else's object).⁹

⁹See the article: <http://www.livepress.ge/ka/akhali-ambebi/article/20807-eyropulisagarthveloszugdidisofishitsukhelbanerichamokhies.html>

XIII. Protest Rallies in Tbilisi

On October 2, Leaders and supporters of the United National Movement staged a rally outside Tbilisi City Hall. They said that they were protesting the decision that Sakrebulo made on September 29 based on which the status of a land with an area of 1946m² was changed in favor of Bidzina Ivanishvili's company to allow construction on it.

Later Nika Melia and members of Sakrebulo tried to enter the City Hall but they were stopped by the police. Zaal Udumashvili, the UNM candidate for the office of Tbilisi Mayor said that the main goal of the party was to interfere with enforcement of Sakrebulo's decision, which is why the rally participants tried blocking Shartava Street outside the City Hall but the law enforcement authorities stopped them.

Levan Khabeishvili, the UNM majoritarian candidate announced at the rally that he was forced inside the City Hall and beaten by security guards. In response, Tbilisi City Hall released a video that does not corroborate Khabeishvili's allegation. However, the footage of him before he was taken inside the building shows that he was beaten by several individuals who were standing between the police cordons.

The police detained 6 participants of the rally for disorderly conduct and police disobedience.

A meeting of Tbilisi Sakrebulo in connection to the same issue was scheduled for October 7. Members of Parliament from the UNM and the European Georgia wanted to attend the meeting but they were [prevented from entering the Sakrebulo building](#).

Party leaders, MPs and supporters assembled outside Sakrebulo offices demanded access to the Sakrebulo meeting but the police cordon stopped them. The police did not let a single interested individual attend the meeting.

Further, 12 participants of the rally were detained for disorderly conduct and police disobedience, including 3 majoritarian candidates from the UNM party.

The day after both rallies, court ordered release of all detained individuals.

XIV. Public Meetings and Pre-Election Promises of Electoral Subjects

ISFED long-term observers are monitoring election campaigns of political parties in all electoral districts. ISFED records only those meetings which observers attended personally.

ISFED observers attended **379** public meetings of electoral subjects that took place during the period of September 26 – October 16, 2017.

Below is a numerical breakdown of meetings with public by different political parties:

1. Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia - 244;
2. United National Movement - 51;
3. Movement for Freedom – European Georgia – 40;
4. Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia – 26;
5. United Democratic Movement (Burjanadze)– 9;
6. Shalva Natelashvili – Georgian Labor Party – 6;
7. Development Movement - Usupashvili – 3

XV. About the Monitoring Mission

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

Monitoring of the pre-election period covers the following important areas:

- Election administration activities;
- Public meetings of electoral subjects and their political activities;
- Promises made by electoral subjects to voters;
- Cases of harassment/threats or alleged politically motivated dismissals;
- 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 bodies, 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.

In addition to monitoring, ISFED reports violations during meetings of the Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections to ensure that further actions are taken in a timely manner.

ISFED periodically informs public about pre-election incidents and trends through statements and reports.

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/>.

Any citizen can report a possible violation to the Elections Portal by sending a text to a toll-free number **90039** or by submitting information at http://www.electionsportal.ge/eng/new_incident.

ISFED conducts the pre-election observation through the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).