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INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR  
FAIR ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

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## **Programs announced by the authorities ahead of the runoff election amount to abuse of administrative resources**

After publishing results of the first round of the October 28, 2018 presidential election, the government of Georgia and the local authorities started extensively making promises about different social and infrastructural projects. The Prime Minister of Georgia and other members of the government unveiled different projects that provide material benefits for specific social groups.

Promises about the new projects that were not known before the first round of the election leaves an impression that these initiatives are related to the outcome of the first round and their aim is to garner support of voters in the runoff in favor of the presidential candidate endorsed by the ruling party. It seems that the ruling party – the Georgian Dream, which has access to all types of administrative resources is attempting to increase chances of winning for the presidential candidate supported by the Georgian Dream, by using financial and executive administrative resources. Against this background, registration of Salome Zourabichvili as an independent candidate has become only formalistic and the line between the ruling party and Zourabichvili's electoral campaign is essentially non-existent.

After results of the first round of the presidential election were published, the following programs were announced:

### **1. Salaries of military servicepersons, military police officers and border security personnel will be increased**

During a briefing on November 8, Mamuka Bakhtadze [announced](#) about rank-based increase of salaries for 7526 military servicepersons in 2019-2020. Starting from 2019, salaries will also be increased by GEL 250 for border guards of MIA Border Police and personnel of coast guard vessels - a total of about 2,900 people. Starting from January 1, salaries will be increased for other units as well including employees of the Special Protection Service.

### **2. Salaries of school principals, teachers and administrative personnel will be increased:**

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

### **3. Teachers that improve their status will receive increased supplemental wage:**

Currently senior teachers receive GEL 320 supplemental wage while according to the next year's budget the amount of supplemental wage will be [increased](#) by GEL 150. Increase of supplemental wage is planned for 2020-2021 academic year as well.

### **4. Socially vulnerable youth under the age of 16 and families with children will receive five times more assistance:**

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

### **5. Socially vulnerable persons will keep their benefits if they find a job**

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

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

Mamuka Bakhtadze [announced](#) that since 2013, families of 1634 military servicepersons have been provided with apartments. To provide the remaining 728 military servicepersons with apartments, funds will be mobilized from the central and the defense budgets to start construction of residential buildings.

**7. Miners in Tkibuli will continue to receive their salaries as usual**

Following the explosion in Tkibuli on July 16 and the death of 5 workers, Mindeli Mine has suspended its operations until the investigation is over and forensic examination is performed. Back then the PM told miners that they would continue to receive their salaries as usual. According to miners, on [November 2](#), management of Saknakhshiri, the company that manages the mine, notified them that due to suspension of the production process they were unable to pay salaries. Miners protested to this.

The same day, the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Giorgi Kobulia announced that miners would continue to receive their salaries as usual until the forensic examination is completed.

**8. Nine residential buildings will be built for IDPs in Tskaltubo and Zugdidi**

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

**9. In Telavi, apartments that are owned by the Ministry of Economy will be transferred into the legal ownership of local population**

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

**10. Up to 350 people in Rustavi will become owners of apartments where they live**

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

**11. Gasification of the entire Samegrelo will be completed in two years**

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

In view of the harsh social conditions in Georgia, it is important to have social programs responsive to needs of different groups. However, these programs should be part of a single well thought-out social policy. Intensity of new initiatives during the period between the first and the second round of the election leaves an impression that these projects initiated by the government of Georgia and some local self-government entities instead of implementing public policy priorities aim to garner more votes and give the candidate endorsed by the ruling party an advantage over other candidates.

Abuse of administrative resources is strictly denounced by international legal norms. All international or regional instruments related to elections suggest that the ruling party should not use the State budget or other resources in order to gain advantage in the election.

Para. 5.4 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document requires States to keep a clear line of separation between the State and the party – in particular, a political party should not be portrayed as the State.

In light of the foregoing, **we urge the Georgian government and local self-governments to refrain from using budget resources in a manner that can be viewed as abuse of administrative resources for electoral purposes and to focus all of their efforts on long-term and sustainable development priorities of the State.**