



2020 Parliamentary Elections
First Interim Report of Pre-Election Monitoring
(1 June - 4 July)

July 7, 2020

This report is made possible by the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the EU. The opinions expressed herein belong solely to the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID, the United States Government or the EU.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



ევროკავშირი
საქართველოსთვის
The European Union for Georgia

Contents

- I. Introduction..... 2**
- II. Key Findings..... 2**
- III. Recommendations..... 3**
- IV. Possible vote buying by majoritarian Members of the Parliament..... 4**
- V. Elements of using state resources..... 8**
- VI. Possible intimidation of ISFED observer..... 9**
- VII. Interference with Political Activities..... 9**
- VIII. Possible facts of political intimidation/harassment..... 10**
- IX. Monitoring Mission and Methodology..... 10**

I. Introduction

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy has been monitoring pre-election period of the October 31, 2020 Parliamentary Elections of Georgia since June 1. The monitoring is implemented with support of the United States Agency for International Development and the EU. The first interim report of the pre-election monitoring mostly covers the period from June 1 through July 4, 2020, as well as events that began prior to June 1 and continued during the monitoring period.

II. Key Findings

During the reporting period, the organization identified **19 cases of possible vote buying, including 16 by majoritarian members of the Georgian Parliament and 3 by the Movement for Future, 2 cases of possible use of state resources, 1 case of exerting pressure on ISFED observer, 2 cases of interference in political activities and one case of political pressure/intimidation.**

Amid the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 parliamentary elections are preceded by an extraordinary situation, giving rise to citizens' particular need for financial and social assistance from the State. Charity initiatives by local self-governments, private businesses or private individuals are especially valuable for socially vulnerable individuals, persons with disabilities, the elderly, children with special needs and individuals that have lost their sources of income, as well as for businesses that have lost all or some of their revenue due to the coronavirus. However, under the circumstances, it is important to draw a clear line between projects funded by the state and local self-government budgets and activities of political parties/candidates. Notably, ISFED has found that municipal bodies themselves did not engage in active political campaigning in the process of providing social aid. However, during and beyond the reporting period, the line between the State and the ruling party has been blurred, as majoritarian MPs are actively involved in provision of social assistance and are broadly advertising it.

ISFED has found that in March-June, on multiple occasions, individual majoritarian MPs handed groceries and/or medications to citizens during different social events, which contains elements of vote buying prohibited by art.25⁵ of the Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens. These majoritarian MPs are members of the ruling party and some of them have publicly declared their intent to participate in the upcoming parliamentary election.

Notably, some majoritarian MPs financed social assistance packages themselves, while others were involved in events funded by local self-governments or private businesses. Information about MPs providing medications, groceries or other products to citizens was intensively disseminated through their official Facebook pages and different media outlets.

Notably, in two cases - in Gori and Senaki non-profit (non-commercial) legal person Georgian Dream - Healthy future was involved in organization of an event where citizens were offered free medical/diagnostic services. The alleged vote buying by that organization was indicated by ISFED also [during monitoring of pre-election campaign](#) for the 2016 parliamentary elections.

Elements of vote buying were also found in activities of an opposition party, Lelo for Georgia and its affiliate Movement for Future, which awarded stipends to students and provided social assistance to citizens in Gori and Telavi.

Notably, in charity events organized in municipalities, representatives of political parties and mostly those of the ruling party's youth wing participated in provision/distribution of aid among citizens. Instances of participation of activists were found in Khobi, Oni, Isani, Sachkhere, Zestaponi, Borjomi, Signaghi,

Gori, Akhaltsikhe, Kareli, Marneuli, Mtskheta, Vani, Dusheti, Khashuri self-government units, however no open campaigning was detected.

The organization has found that a state-funded monthly newspaper Our Village contains elements of campaigning in favor of the ruling party and its leader, Bidzina Ivanishvili. It is possible that postponement of the teachers' mandatory examination to an unspecified date, until fall by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture possibly aims to gain support of the broader audience of teachers.

It is especially alarming that after the monitoring began, ISFED's observer received an implicitly intimidating phone-call suggesting that his business would suffer due to his activity.

Possible facts of interference in political activity were identified in Kutaisi. Strangers tried to disrupt a UNM event.

Possible facts of political intimidation were found in Khulo, where the brother of a person arrested on charges of hooliganism claims that the father of Ajara A/R Chairperson asked for his help during the election period and because he refused, his brother was arrested.

III. Recommendations

To the authorities and political parties:

- Authorities, political parties/candidates and their representatives should not exert pressure on election observers and interfere with monitoring activities;
- Political parties should not engage with voters in a manner that contains elements of vote-buying and they should ensure integrity of their actions;
- Majoritarian MPs should refrain from participating in the events funded from the state and/or local budgets;
- Majoritarian MPs should remain anonymous when carrying out charitable activities and donate money to foundations that work in this direction;
- Political parties should refrain from mobilizing and having their supporters attend campaign events of their opponents. They should also prevent their supporters from interfering with meetings and campaign activities of other parties;
- Parties and candidates should make the information about meetings with constituents available to observer organizations and media, in order to facilitate election campaign monitoring.

To local self-government bodies:

- In the process of providing assistance from state and local budgets, local self-government bodies should observe the principle of integrity and refrain from suggesting that the ruling party is behind provision of aid.

To charity organizations and organizers of humanitarian initiatives

- Not to violate prohibitions prescribed by the Election Code of Georgia in the process of organizing charity initiatives and refrain from holding such events together with political parties

and their representatives; not to use charity events for campaigning in favor of a party and/or candidate.

IV. Possible vote buying by majoritarian Members of the Georgian Parliament

- **Pati Khalvashi - Majoritarian MP of Batumi**

On June 1, 6 and 15, majoritarian MP of Batumi Pati Khalvashi participated in provision of social assistance to constituents and within the project initiated by Ajara Government Chairperson, she distributed groceries among socially vulnerable families. A representative of Pati Khalvashi's bureau said in an interview with ISFED that the MP paid for 70 grocery baskets herself and on June 1, she distributed them among citizens on territories of Daba Chakvi, Gorgadzebi and Khali.

- **Mukhran Vakhtangadze - Majoritarian MP of Batumi**

On June 9, within a charity event majoritarian MP of Batumi Mukhran Vakhtangadze distributed grocery baskets among citizens together with athletes. In an interview with ISFED, representative of the MP's bureau said that the charity event was initiated by members of a rugby club. They had paid for the grocery baskets themselves and Mukhran Vakhtangadze was not financially involved in it. He participated in the process of distribution of grocery baskets as a former athlete.

- **Gocha Enukidze - Majoritarian MP of Ambrolauri, Oni, Tsageri, Lentekhi and Mestia**

Majoritarian MP Gocha Enukidze is systematically holding charity events on the territory of the majoritarian district. Within these events he provides different gifts to locals. Information about social projects is intensively disseminated through the MP's official Facebook page, as well as through official Facebook pages of local self-governments. Often the majoritarian MP is directly involved in charity events. In addition, employees of his bureau systematically participate in social projects planned and implemented by local self-governments, meet with constituents and provide them with different gifts and assistance.

- **Kakha Okriashvili - Majoritarian MP of Dmanisi and Tsalka**

Kakha Okriashvili paid for half a million laris worth of groceries himself, for helping 16 000 families that live on the territory of his majoritarian constituency. Locals received packages labeled "A package of groceries, together with you, Kakha Okriashvili, humanitarian assistance."

The MP's press-office also released a [statement](#) through media, saying that within a humanitarian initiative with a budget of half a million laris, Kakha Okriashvili used his own funds to purchase the following through an auction: a total of 32 000 liters of oil, 48 000 kg macaroni, 32 000 kg rice, 32 000 kg buckwheat and 32 000 kg sugar. According to the statement, baskets of essential products were meant to be equally distributed among 16 000 families and each family would receive 2 liters of oil, 3kg macaroni, and rice, buckwheat and sugar, 2kg each. ISFED has found that residents of the majoritarian district received these products accompanied with a message from Kakha Okriashvili.



Notably, Kakha Okriashvili has publicly announced his plans to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections, in the same district, as a majoritarian candidate.

- **Goderdzi Chankseliani - Majoritarian MP of Tetrtskaro**

Majoritarian MP of Tetrtskaro Goderdzi Chankseliani paid for over 900 grocery packages distributed among kindergarten pupils and teachers in April and May. The process of distribution of packages at educational institutions was attended by the MP together with the municipality mayor and deputy mayors. The event was [covered by](#) the public broadcaster's Channel 1. A public thank you of Tetrtskaro preschool can be found on Goderdzi Chankseliani's official Facebook page, according to which the MP paid for the event himself.

- **Genadi Margvelashvili - Majoritarian MP of Kutaisi**

In June, patients with certain needs were provided with medications that they use most often. Patients also received a card that included a list of medications, as well as an inscription **“P/u Georgian Dream and Kutaisi Majoritarian MP Genadi Margvelashvili wish you health!”**

- **Gogi Meshveliani - Majoritarian MP of Bolnisi**

Together with local authorities, majoritarian MP Gogi Meshveliani [was involved](#) in the process of distribution of aid among locals in two villages of Bolnisi Municipality isolated due to the pandemic - v.Mushevani and v.Geta. Information about his participation in provision of social aid was also published on the MP's official Facebook page.

- **Savalan Mirzoev - Majoritarian MP of Gardabani**

On May 21, majoritarian MP of Gardabani, Savalan Mirzoev [published information](#) saying that with his personal funds and help from his friends, he purchased over 1500 baskets for the socially vulnerable, indigent individuals that are not officially registered as socially vulnerable, persons with disabilities and pensioners. According to him, most products, over 800 baskets were distributed among citizens. According to the MP, in consideration of the special regime imposed in Marneuli due to coronavirus, he also provided assistance to the municipality.

- **Giorgi Totladze - Majoritarian MP of Kareli**

On May 15, [with help of a businessman](#), majoritarian MP of Kareli, Giorgi Totladze provided groceries to 9 families of persons displaced from Abkhazia and 20 socially vulnerable families living in highland settlements.

- **Koba Lursmanashvili - Majoritarian MP of Kharagauli and Baghdati**

On May 15, majoritarian MP of Kharagauli and Baghdati Koba Lursmanashvili, together with employees of his bureau and with financial support of Talego Ltd, distributed groceries among socially vulnerable families and elderly people who live alone. Information about distribution of products is also [published](#) on the MP's official Facebook page.

- **Temur Khubuluri - Majoritarian MP of Gori**

On June 9, Gori Majoritarian MP Temur Khubuluri and organization Georgian Dream - Healthy Future [organized](#) free medical examinations for military veterans and their families at Viva Medi Clinic. The event was covered by media outlet Trialeti.

- **Giorgi Volski - Majoritarian MP of Chughureti**

On July 10, from 10:00am, free medical services were offered at the Family Medical Center Mkurnali, organized by the State Veterans Affairs Service and non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Georgian Dream - Healthy Future, and supported by the Vice-Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, Giorgi Volski and Senaki Municipality Mayor.

The information was [published](#) by Senaki Municipality City Hall on July 2, stating that socially vulnerable families living in the municipality, individuals displaced from the occupied territories of Georgia, military veterans and their families will receive free prophylactic medical examinations.

Movement for Future and political party Lelo

Gori

ISFED has found that non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity Movement for Future has been organizing social campaign events in different municipalities and helping socially vulnerable citizens. The organization is affiliated with party Lelo - in particular, in its public activities the organization is using visual sign of Lelo Georgia - yellow. During social initiative events they mention the name of the party leader, Mamuka Khazaradze. In addition, one of the founders of the organization is a member of Lelo for Georgia, Teona Dolenjashvili. For instance, on May 15, Movement for Future organized distribution of groceries among all families that live in v.Ergneti (152 families). The following representatives of political party Lelo were visiting Ergneti for distribution of aid, together with the Movement for Future founder Teona Dolenjshvili: member of the political council Kakha Kozhoridze, chairperson of Gori regional office Papuna Koberidze and member of Gori regional office Soso Vakhtangishvili. They made a statement at the scene of the activity and thanked Mamuka Khazaradze for assistance.

Telavi

On June 17, representatives of Lelo for Georgia youth wing provided material [assistance](#) to a family living in v.Ruispiri of Telavi District. They provided family with groceries and medications. Participants of the event wore yellow clothes, which is used as a symbol by Lelo for Georgia, and displayed Lelo for Georgia's logos.

Stipends awarded to 12 students from Gali

On May 3, media [reported](#) that the Movement for Future awarded stipends to 12 students from Gali. The information was also [published](#) on the official Facebook page of the movement, by sharing a link of Interpressnews.com and indicating that the project is financially supported by Mamuka Khazaradze. The Movement for Future has already helped dozens of families.

V. Elements of using state resources

დავითაშვილი:

„სოფლის მეურნეობა არის ეკონომიკური საქმიანობის ნაწილი, თუმცა სპეციფიკური. ფერმერული საქმიანობა თავის თავში მოიცავს მნიშვნელოვან რისკებს, რაც დიდწილად უკავშირდება ბუნებრივ მოვლენებს, კლიმატს. შესაბამისად, სპეციფიკურია სახელმწიფოს პოლიტიკა სოფლის მეურნეობის მიმართ და ფერმერების დახმარების პაკეტიც განსხვავდება, კომპლექსურია და მოიცავს საკრედიტო ინსტრუმენტებს, საგრანტო დახმარებას, მოიცავს პირადაპირ დახმარებას აგრადიზების სახით, რომელიც ერთ-ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი ნარმოების ინსტრუმენტია, ასევე მნიშვნელოვანია ტექნიკური დახმარების და ცოდნის კომპონენტი.

როცა ვსაუბრობთ სოფლის მეურნეობაზე, არ შეიძლება, არ აღინიშნოს, რომ ჩვენი ხელისუფლების პირობებში სოფლის მეურნეობის პოლიტიკის შესახებ

ამის შემდეგ ჩვენი პოლიტიკა თანმიმდევრულია და ორიენტირებულია კერძო მეურნეობების განვითარებაზე პირველად „ქართული ოცნების“ ხელისუფლების პირობებში განისაზღვრა სოფლის მეურნეობის კერძო სექტორის დახმარების სრულყოფილი პაკეტი, რომელიც გულისხმობდა ღირებულებათა ვაჭვის ყველა რგოლის დახმარებას და ამას თანმიმდევრულად გახორციელებდით წლების განმავლობაში.

ამ თანმიმდევრულობის შედეგად, ჩვენ მარშალ უპრეცედენტოდ მაღალი, დაახლოებით, 1 მლრდ დოლარის აგროსასურსათო პროდუქციის ექსპორტი განვახორციელებთ. ჩვენ შევამცირეთ ასევე დეფიციტი, რომელიც გვექონდა აგროსასურსათო პროდუქტების ვაჭრობაში; დაახლოებით 900 მლნ დოლარის უაწყობითი ბალანსი გვექონდა 2012-2013 წლებში და ჩვენ ეს ბალანსი დაახლოებით 300 მლნ დოლარამდე დავიყვანეთ იმ პერიოდში, როდესაც საქართველოში წლიდან-წლამდე იზრდებოდა ტურისტული ნაკადი.“

2013 წელს, სოფლის მეურნეობა გამოცხადდა პრიორიტეტული მიმართულებად. ჩვენი ქვეყნის ეკონომიკამ უპრეცედენტოდ დიდი დახმარება მიიღო ბატონი ბიძინა ივანიშვილისგან. მან დაახლოებით 200 მლნ ლარამდე დახარჯა სოფლის მეურნეობის განვითარებისთვის. ეს იყო, პრაქტიკულად, გარდამტეხი მომენტი სოფლის მეურნეობაში. ჩვენი მოსახლეობის სოფლის მეურნეობისკენ და სოფლისკენ მიბრუნება სწორედ ამ სტიმულმა გამოიწვია.



I

Our Village monthly newspaper

Monthly newspaper of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture - [Our Village](#) is regularly distributed in villages throughout Georgia, including in territorial units where the newspaper is distributed by mayoral representatives. The newspaper informs population about novelties and different programs available in the field of agriculture. In May, the state-funded newspaper N3(53) contained elements of campaigning in favor of the Georgian Dream. In particular, it contained information about party policy, its accomplishments and charity work of its chairperson, Bidzina Ivanishvili. It is confirmed that it was distributed in Lagodekhi, Abasha and Sachkhere.

¹ “In 2013, agriculture was announced as a priority area. Georgia’s economy received unprecedented assistance from Mr. Bidzina Ivanishvili. He spent nearly 200 mln laris for development of agriculture. This was essentially a turning point in the field of agriculture and served as an impetus for turning our population toward agriculture and toward the village.

Since then our policy has been consistently focused on development of agriculture. A comprehensive package of assistance for private sector in the field of agriculture was created for the first time under the Georgian Dream’s government, entailing assistance for the entire value chain and we have been consistently implementing it for years.”

“Levan Davitashvili: “The universal project that we have been implementing since 2013 is the project of agricultural credit. It is one of the most important promises made by the Georgian Dream - cheap loans in the field of agriculture.”

Postponement of examinations for practicing teachers

On June 25, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports [announced](#) that examinations for practicing teachers have been postponed and instead of summer they will be held in fall, while school administrations will extend employment contracts through the end of 2020-2021 academic year for practicing teachers that will not be able to improve their status in fall 2020. Currently there are [14 000 practicing teachers](#) in the education system.

In 2020, special teachers became part of the scheme for professional development and career advancement for the first time and they were given the status of a practicing teacher. Notably, starting from 2020, teachers with the status of a practicing teacher should have been at schools in exceptional cases and their employment contracts should not have been extended. They should have been given an opportunity to improve their status during examinations organized in summer 2020, but the examination has been postponed for fall and the new date is currently unknown.

The government says that the decision has been made due to the pandemic, however the Ministry has not postponed examination for obtaining the status of a teacher. These examinations will be held in summer, from July 22 through July 30. In 2020, 12 000 individuals that wish to obtain the status of a teacher will participate in the examination process.

VI. Possible intimidation of ISFED observer

Senaki

ISFED has been monitoring pre-election processes through local representatives since June 1. Monitoring by ISFED observers also entails requesting public information from local self-government bodies and other public institutions. After the organization observers started requesting public information and meeting election stakeholders, on June 13, ISFED's observer received a call on his cellphone from a blocked number. The anonymous individual told ISFED's observer that he was calling "from above" and warned him that if he made any "excess movements", his business would have problems.

VII. Interference with Political Activities

Kutaisi

UNM representative in Kutaisi, Giga Shushania reported to ISFED that on June 26, Grigol Vashadze was meeting locals in Sul Khan-Saba settlement when 2 individuals under the influence of alcohol arrived and tried to disrupt the meeting by shouting. ISFED's representative spoke with locals, who added that children threw waste at Grigol Vashadze. According to Shushania, deputy head of non-commercial (non-profit) legal entity Special Services, Nika Dvali arrived with accompanying persons and said that this was his district and he was not going to allow anyone to hold a meeting there. In an interview with ISFED's representative, Nika Dvali denied the accusations.

Gori

On June 26, at around 09:30 am, the UNM office in Shida Kartli was raided. According to witnesses, a male stranger was throwing rocks at the office windows from the street; he smashed the windows and equipment. According to the head of the office, this is the fourth time the office has been attacked since the Georgian Dream came into power. The ruling party denies any connection with raiding of the UNM office.

The police arrested one individual. Investigation has found that the defendant threw rocks at windows of the UNM office in Gori, at 1 Garsevanishvili Street and damaged a computer monitor. The investigation has been launched under para.1 of Article 187 of the Criminal Code of Georgia - damaging or destroying someone else's property, which is subject to deprivation of liberty from 1 to 3 years.

VIII. Possible facts of political intimidation/harassment

Khulo

On May 7, employees of Ajara Police Department arrested 2 individuals - Eldar Antadze and Rezo Tsulukidze on charges of hooliganism. Their family members and friends are holding permanent protest rallies in Batumi, claiming that they have been unfairly arrested.

During a protest on June 15, brother of Rezo Tsulukidze - wrestler Piruz Tsulukidze said that before the arrest, father of Ajara A/R Government Chairperson Tornike Rizhvadze, Davit Rizhvadze gathered athletes and had a conspiratorial meeting with them at the police department, in presence of Ajara chief of police. At the meeting he asked athletes for their help for the 2020 parliamentary election. In exchange, he promised to provide financial benefits and support their business activities. According to him, the authorities need physically healthy and strong athletes to mobilize and intimidate population on Election Day, in order for voters to support the Georgian Dream. According to Piruz Tsulukidze, because he refused to help him with elections, Rizhvadze retaliated by arresting his brother. The information was confirmed by Rezo Tsulukidze's brother, wrestler Piruz Tsulukidze in an interview with ISFED's observer.

Later Piruz Tsulukidze published bank account statements from March 19 and March 24, according to which wives of arrested Rezo Tsulukidze and Eldar Antadze received 2,000 laris each, in order to prove the informal agreement between Davit Rizhvadze and athletes. According to [Netgazeti - Batumelebi](#) newspaper, Ajara Government published letters of March 16 in which the wives of the two arrested persons requested social assistance. Both letters have been prepared the same day and the requested amount is 2000 laris each.

IX. Monitoring Mission and Methodology

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) is monitoring parliamentary elections in all electoral districts of Georgia, through 68 long-term observers.

Main areas of the pre-election monitoring include:

- Activities of the election administration;

- Public meetings and political activities of electoral subjects;
- Cases of harassment/intimidation or alleged politically motivated dismissals;
- Possible instances of vote buying;
- Use of administrative resources;
- Social media monitoring.

Sources of information in the process of the monitoring include public information requested from administrative agencies, as well as information provided by electoral subjects, media, NGOs and individual citizens and discovered by social media monitoring. ISFED verifies each report by interviewing witnesses and all sides of the incident.

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

ISFED maps all reports of pre-election incidents and possible violations on the interactive incident map available at the Georgian Elections Portal: <http://www.electionsportal.ge/eng/>.

Anyone can report a possible violation to the Elections Portal by sending a text to a toll-free number 90039 or by going to http://www.electionsportal.ge/eng/new_incident.

The pre-election monitoring of ISFED is made possible by the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU).