

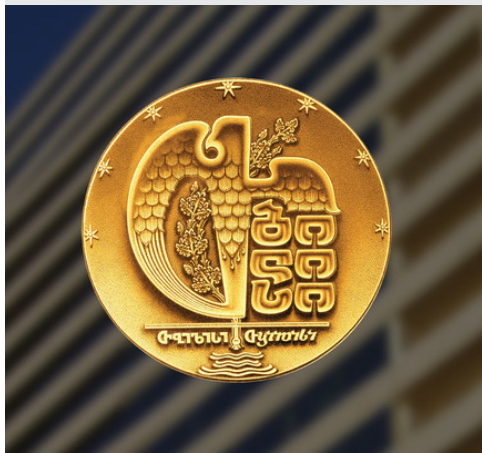
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Bribery, pressure and church interference: ISFED pre-election monitoring report



Monitoring is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) has published the II Interim Report on the Pre-Election Monitoring of the 2020 Parliamentary Elections. The survey was conducted from July 5th to August 2nd, 2020.

Interference in the pre-election campaign of the Church; Dismissal on political grounds; Voter bribery; Use of Administrative Resources - such cases were addressed in the report.

Report reads that 8 cases of alleged voter bribery were revealed during the pre-election period. Including alleged brib-

ery of voters in Tsageri, Ambrolauri and Oni on behalf of the incumbent majoritarian MP Gocha Enukidze, who was officially nominated as a majoritarian candidate of the Georgian Dream in the respective constituency. Signs of alleged voter bribery were also revealed in the efforts of opposition par-

ties - Lelo for Georgia and the United National Movement, which carried out social assistance rallies, namely: Lelo for Georgia helped the nursing home in the village of Gldani, and the head of the Khelvachauri municipal organization of United National Movement handed over food products to 2 families.

According to ISFED five cases of dismissal on political grounds were identified in 5 municipalities during the pre-election period. It should be noted that in some municipalities, the dismissal of the mayor's representatives in the administrative units were observed, which is probably related to the goal of conducting the pre-election campaign more effectively and involving the mayor's representatives in this process. Fair election observers detected similar cases in Zugdidi, Martvili, Tkibuli, Chiatura, and Tbilisi municipalities.

Besides that, 2 cases of political discrimination were allegedly identified during the pre-election period. Cases were revealed in Khelvachauri and Khashuri. One of the families in Khashuri links the refusal of assistance from the municipality to political discrimination because the family is not a supporter of the ruling party. Also in Khelvachauri, the mayor's representative in the village of Erge refused to provide social assistance to an elderly citizen during a pandemic and addressed them to the United National Movement for help, as the family is considered a supporter of that party.

Study also found out that high-ranking clerics have been involved in the



8 cases of alleged voter bribery were revealed during the pre-election period.

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On floods in the regions, increased crime and elections



By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

Natural disasters caused by bad weather in the regions of Georgia, increased crime in the country and the upcoming parliamentary elections were the three main topics that the Georgian media has been actively discussing in recent days.

As a result of the overflow of mountain rivers, the mountainous part of Racha, one of the corners of western Georgia, found itself in a particularly difficult situation. The floodwaters swept away sections of the road, bridges, villages were cut off and people were evacuated by helicopters. The developments in Mountain Racha are also interesting in that the government has issued a permit to build a cascade of hydropower plants on the Rio River in the region. The local population opposes the start of construction, which will be followed by flooding of a large area. What happened to them will be another argument against the construction of hydropower plants.

The public is concerned about increased crime. According to official statistics, up to 23,000 crimes have been committed in the last five months, of which only 7,000 have been solved. Of particular interest are the two criminal cases that led to the deaths of 19-year-old Giorgi Shakarashvili and 23-year-old Tamar Bachaliashvili. Independent journalists are trying to find out about these cases. Many distrust the investigation and believe that it is "protecting from the perpetrators."

The opposition sees the reason for the increase in crime and especially the lack of investigation of high-profile cases in the government. According to them, the police became an instrument of political tasks, the police were demoralized - because of the 'social contract' concluded by the government with the criminal. "The criminal world is intertwined with the state structures, it is most clearly expressed during the elections, when criminal authorities, in fact, campaign and help the

Georgian Dream to stay in power," said Levan Bezhashvili, one of the leaders of the United National Movement.

Such accusations by the opposition are especially important in the run-up to the elections, when they say the government will continue to mobilize the criminal world to influence voters. The opposition in general suspects that the government will try to rig the elections and considers the support of Western friends as one of the ways to prevent this.

It was with their help that the electoral system was changed and the number of government representatives in the Parliament was reduced to 30.

Our country's strategic partners also insist on holding the upcoming parliamentary elections in accordance with democratic standards. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke to Georgian Prime Minis-

ter Giorgi Gakharia on July 27th. This conversation was followed by different comments from the Georgian government and the opposition. According to officials, the conversation was a demonstration of the US's support for Georgia and that there were no problems with its strategic partner, while opposition officials said Pompeo's goal was to warn the Georgian authorities about the upcoming elections. The need for free and fair elections in Georgia was stressed.

The same statement was made by US Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan. As he told reporters, "now it is important that the election law is enforced in practice during the elections, so that voters can go to the polls freely, without intimidation or other obstacles, and have confidence in the results that will be determined."

Opposition groups called for the beleaguered PM to resign, saying that sanctions would not be imposed on Western parties for violating democratic standards. 15% of the US aid to Georgia has already been officially frozen, and the condition for its receipt will be the steps towards democracy in Georgia.

But even if the democratic standards of the elections are met, the opposition will need to make great efforts to win. First, the opposition political spectrum that is presented to the voters is becoming very wide. The 1% threshold in 2020 parliamentary elections gives many small and new parties a chance to get into the Parliament. It also increases the temptation of major political forces to include satellite parties in Parliament. 68 parties that do not have representation in the Parliament have already applied to the election administration with a request to register as an election subject. Such a plethora of parties will clearly confuse the electorate.

Secondly, the more or less well-known opposition parties, which are gathered in the coalition 'Strength is in Unity' can no longer reach an agreement on joint candidates in other cities and regions of Georgia. This, of course, benefits the Georgian Dream. Talk about the final configuration of the opposition will be possible in a few days, when the legal deadlines for registration expire.

(Translated by Mariam Mchedlidze)



Bribery, pressure and church interference: ISFED pre-election monitoring report

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election campaign, particularly in Marneuli. On July 26 Marneuli and Hujabi Bishop George Jamdelian, said on Sunday service that he would prevent the traitor of national and

human interests - Georgian Dream majoritarian candidate, Zaur Dargali from entering the Parliament. In the form of an appeal to the parish, he added that those who stand by Dargali will be held accountable and all of them will have to answer for

the souls of their ancestors. Marneuli and Hujab bishop is the high hierarchy of the church and his words are perceived by the population as the position of the church.

Bishop said that Dargali 'reincarnated Nariman Narimanov, the bloody Soviet cult, the ruiner of our independence and statehood, as well as territorial integrity'. It is noteworthy that the rally demanding the monument to be taken down was held on July 16, where the Bishop delivered a speech. The meeting was also attended

by the Primakov Georgian-Russian Community Center of the Russian Foreign Ministry (headed by Dimitri Lortkipanidze) and the leader of the Georgian Idea Party, Levan Chachua. The party Georgian Idea has applied for registration with the CEC for the 2020 parliamentary elections and is currently in the process of registration. "According to media reports, the anti-Western party Georgian March was also present at the rally, but the party leaders deny the information," stated the organization's study.

Weather

Wednesday, August 5

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 29°C

Night Clear

Low: 19°C

Thursday, August 6

Day Clear

High: 30°C

Night Clear

Low: 19°C

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Signs of possible corruption in City Hall tenders



“How Tbilisi City Hall arranged the 30-million tender to a specific firm?”

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Tbilisi City Hall has arranged a tender for the purchase of minibuses, the cost of which is ₾30 million, to one specific company, GT Group. This became known from the investigation prepared by the investigative journalist Giorgi Mgeladze for Radio Liberty.

Tbilisi City Hall initially announced a tender for 300 mini-

buses in April, but later canceled it due to a pandemic and re-announced it on July 15. According to the investigation, in both cases, Tbilisi City Hall adjusted the terms of the tender to one specific company.

At the first announcement of the tender, the conditions were designed in such a way that the requirements were met only by Ford minibuses, the dealer of which is GT Group in Georgia.

Due to the conditions, the participation of other companies in the tender was practically excluded.

When announcing the tender for the second time, Tbilisi City Hall removed certain conditions, but added 10 years of experience in official dealerships in Georgia, which was also satisfied only by GT Group.

At this time, one of the companies wishing to participate in the tender has appealed the terms to the Disputes Board and is awaiting a decision. The founder and director of the com-

pany GT Group donated 160,000 to Georgian Dream and Salome Zurabishvili in 2016-2018.

It is noteworthy that the City Hall is actively cooperating with this company, the City Hall purchased garbage bins worth ₾ 2.8 million from this company, which were located on the newly rehabilitated Chavchavadze Avenue.

In the last 5 years, the company has signed tenders worth ₾ 5 million with the Tbilisi City Hall, including the introduction of ISUZU green buses by the same company.



The journalistic investigation describes how Tbilisi City Hall arranged a \$ 30 million tender to a specific company and how potential suppliers justify the City Hall's discriminatory approach.

CLASSIFIED

Newly renovated building for sale or rent in the heart of Tbilisi

It is a fully equipped boutique hotel, which also can be transferred into a representation office

- Location – in the heart of Tbilisi, Next to the Ministry of Defense
- Newly reconstructed and newly renovated with high standards
- Exclusive design of both interior and exterior
- 26 rooms, fully equipped with high standard furniture and equipment
- Common spaces (two terraces, one large area for lunches, one conference room)
- Fully equipped restaurant with the EU standard equipment
- The EU quality of ventilation and air conditioning (each room has a source of fresh air)
- High standard of electricity and fire safety in all rooms
- Autonomous supply of water (reservoir) and electricity (generator)

Total area: 1500 m²

Suggested rent: 9000 USD (excl VAT) - Substantially lower to market price, due to the pandemic

Suggested selling price: USD 2.5 million, including all equipment and furniture
Please contact: +995 599554355 or +995 591110100 (We speak Georgian, English and Russian)

E-mail: ymaisuradze@gmail.com

