



Election Update

(April 30-May 8)

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (hereafter ISFED) continues monitoring of the pre-election campaign for the Parliamentary Elections May 21, 2008. In the third edition of electronic bulletin “Election Update” ISFED presents the monitoring findings as of May 8, 2008.

Election Administration

In the pre-election period ISFED has been monitoring the activities of election administration, on central, district and precinct level.

Monitoring results of the Central Election Commission

At the date prescribed by the legislation, no later than 21 days prior to the elections¹, on April 30, the voters voting through the special lists registered themselves. However as the process of checking is still underway the number of voters voting through the special lists is not yet known.

The Central Election Commission allocated 3 days to every political party and electoral block participating in the elections for fixing shortcomings in the party lists and documentations of representatives. In the period prescribed by the legislation, no later than 20 days prior to the elections, ² on May 1, all subject participating in the elections presented to CEC the amended party/candidates lists.

In the monitoring period the Central Election Commission registered and granted observers' status to seven domestic organizations- **Union “Journalists’ Protection International Center”**; **Union “Women’s Political Resource Center”**; **“ Democratic Principles and Human Rights Protection Union”**; **Union “Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights”**; **“ Union “ Civil Cultures International Center”**; local non-governmental organization **“ People’s Friendship International League’s Special Representation Office in the Caucasus”**; **Association of Fight Against Corruption and Consumers’ Right Protection in Imereti Region “ Sachino”**, and to five international organizations- **Office of European Union’s Special Representative for the**

¹ Election Code of Georgia, Article 98, Sub-article 3;

² Election Code of Georgia, Article 37, Sub-article 2;

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Caucasus”; International Human Right Protection Society”- IGFM; “ Czech State Election Committee”; “ Embassy of Italy to Georgia”; “ Embassy of Lithuania to Georgia”; “ Embassy of Czech Republic to Georgia”; As for May 8, the Central Election Commission registered 30 domestic and 11 international observation organizations.

On May 1, the Central Election Commission approved the demonstration protocols of voting results (proportional and majoritarian) for District and Precinct Election Commissions.

No later than 20 days prior to elections, on May 1³ the Central Election Commission elected 6 members of all of Election Precincts established abroad. The same day Central Election Commission received the voters’ list residing abroad. Currently, the process of analyzing the above-mentioned lists and fixing the existing shortcoming is underway.

In accordance to the timetable of election activities, no later than 17 days prior to the elections, ⁴ on May 4, the first sessions of Precinct Election Commissions abroad took place.

On May 5, Central Election Commission at its session, extended the period for entering changes to the voters’ list by 3 days and set the last date as May 8. ISFED welcomed the Central Election Commission’ decision and, as by extending the period, more voters will be able to check oneself in the voters’ list, which will positively contribute to the process of improving the voters’ lists.

On May 6, the Central Election Commission published the brochure for public officials, which includes the rules on use of administrative resources, and official positions during the pre-election agitation. ISFED welcomes the Central Election Commission’s initiative. Also ISFED welcomes the translation of election documentation into ethnic minorities’ languages (Russian, Ossetian, Armenian, and Azeri) as carried out by the Central Election Commission.

Monitoring Results of the District and Precinct Election Commissions

In the monitoring period, the members of the District and Precinct Election Commissions received trainings on methods and principles, election procedures, voters’ lists, Election Day procedures, protocols and complaints deliberation.

³ Election Code, Article 37, Sub-Article 2;

⁴ Election Code, Article 37, Sub-Article 4;



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As of the publication date of this report, trainings have not been organized for the members of District Election Commissions in # **79 Batumi**, # **81 Kobuleti** and # **70 Poti**. For members of District Election Commissions # **37 Akaltsikhe**, # **12 Gurjaani** and # **26 Tetrtskharo**, trainings are still underway. Trainings are still ongoing for the members of Precinct Election Commissions in District Election Commissions # **15 Lagodekhi**, # **32 Gori**, # **35 Khashuri**, # **37 Akaltsikhe**, # **38 Adigeni**, and # **38 Liakhvi**. It has to be mentioned that not every member of District and Precinct Election Commissions have attended the trainings.

In the monitoring period, sessions have not been conducted at the District Election Commissions # **6 Samgori**, # **10 Gldani**, # **30 Kaspi**, # **33 Kareli** and # **85 Liakhvi**.

At Election District # **13 Signagi**, some members of Precinct Election Commissions still hold a paid position in the public sphere (Head of Library and Museum Department, Chief Doctor of Hospital). According the Election Legislation of Georgia, members of commissions cannot hold other paid positions, except of teaching.⁵

Pre-Election Campaign

In the reporting period, findings showed that in terms of meeting with voters, the most active parties are Unified National Movement, Unified Opposition, Republican Party and Christian-Democratic Party. In # **1 Mtatsminda**, # **2 Vake**, # **8 Didube**, # **9 Nadzaladevi**, # **21 Gardabani**, # **25 Tsalka**, # **26 Tetrtskaro**, # **33 Kareli** no political parties' activity has been observed with voters.

In the monitoring period, several cases of voters' intimidation and bribery were observed: on April 29, the Unified National Movement's majoritarian Candidate in Election District # **45 Tsageri**, Valeri Giorgobiani met with the Heads of various public organizations. The meeting took place at the Gangeoba's session hall, where the majoritarian candidate demanded that those participating in the meeting support the National Movement;⁶ otherwise they would lose their jobs. This conversation was secretly recorded by one of the citizens, and disseminated by the United Opposition through televisions. The National Movement majoritarian candidate withdrew his candidacy to avoid a negative impact on his party's image (according to his words), though demanded that the law-enforcement bodies to review the tape and verify the authenticity of the secret recordings. ISFED welcomes the

⁵ Election Code, Article 18, Article 5, 5¹, 6:

⁶ According to Giorgobiani's statement the National Movement should have received 80 % of voters in the District.



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fact that the majoritarian candidate would not participate in the Parliamentary Elections and calls on the law-enforcement bodies to conduct a proper investigation into the situation.

On April 30, in Election District # **84 Khulo**, the activists of Unified National Movement collected signatures from voters, who are supporters of the National Movement. Also activists were demanding that the population support the National Movement at the Parliamentary Elections, or otherwise their relatives would lose their jobs. In one instance an individual was warned that if he joined the opposition party, than his family member would lose their job in public sphere. Similar fact was observed in Election District # **55 Khoni**.

In the monitoring period, in Election District # **30 Kaspi**, the persons who identified themselves as representatives of National Movement were collecting citizens' Identification Numbers, and were also conducting a survey on which the political subject population supports.

In Election District # **12 Gurjaani**, the activists of Unified National Movement were writing down citizens' Identification Numbers in special forms and made voters sign the forms. Those voters who refused to sign, were than threatened and told they would be removed from the voters' list.

In Election District # **17 Telavi**, the majoritarian candidate of National Movement Gia Arsenishvili, together with the representatives of local government, participated in donating municipal busses to the villages. Though the electoral legislation is very liberal in this area, ISFED believes that it can create non-equal conditions for other electoral subjects participating in the elections, which do not have opportunities to participate in such events.

In Election District # **44 Ambrolauri**, village Chorjo, the school students received balls and sporting clothing donated in the name of National Movement's majoritarian candidate Gocha Enuqidze. The event was led by the Sakrebulo member and the representative of National Movement.

A case of voters' intimidation was observed in Election District # **49 Terjola**, where according to the Head of Election Headquarters of Republican Party, the representatives of local self-governance, namely, Lasha Zedashidze, the officer of the Financial Police in Imereti, former Gamgebeli, inquired about every person related to the Republic Party. Also, the supporters of the Republican Party were warned not to support the above-mentioned party, or their family members would lose their jobs.

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On May 1, Election District # **32 Gori**, the members of National Movement (Gigi Tsereteli, Koba Subeliani, and David Bakradze) met with voters, including school teachers. It has to be mentioned that because of this meeting, schools classes were cancelled, which resulted in teachers' and parents' dissatisfaction. Teachers had the problems in Election District # **44 Ambrolauri**, where they were strictly warned to refrain from cooperation with opposition political parties.

In Election District # **55 Khoni**, the persons who identified themselves as representatives of Unified National Movement forced small-size entrepreneurs (owners of shops, gambling houses, fuel stations, and LTDs) to work at the Precinct Election Commission, and threatened them losing their business.

In Election District # **85 Liakhvi**, according to majoritarian candidate from the New Rights Goga Okropiridze, he was hindered from conducting pre-election campaign. During his visit to villages in Didi Liakhvi, his car was followed by Deputy Head of Sakrebulo of Kurta Municipality and other officials of the Sakrebulo and they forbid him from conducting a pre-election campaign. According to the candidate, he was also followed by the Chief of Police and police officers.

The United Opposition also experienced problems conducting meetings with voters in the village Bostana and Velevi in Election District # **44 Ambrolauri**. In the first case, after worsening weather, the United Opposition was not able to meet with voters at the school, because the Head of Resource Center refused to allocate the school building. Herewith, ISFED notes, that during the monitoring period, none of the political parties held meeting with local citizens in abovementioned village. In the second case, citizens were strictly warned by the village Rtsmunebuli to not meet with the representatives of the United Opposition.

In the monitoring period, the majoritarian candidate from the electoral block "United Opposition (National Council, New Rights)" in Election District # **85 Liakhvi** had the problems concerning the renting of office space.

In the monitoring period, namely on May 4, the representatives of youth organizations of various opposition political parties organized a demonstration in front of the house of the Head of Central Election Commission Levan Tarkhnishvili. The demonstration was followed by clashes between Tarkhnishvili's neighbors and the participants. As a result several young people received injuries.



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Despite the fact that the acting legislation of Georgia guarantees the freedom of expression of speech and thought, and the living place of a concrete person is not considered as a forbidden place for organizing demonstration, ISFED considers that organizing such demonstrations in front of a living place is not appropriate. ISFED considers that it is important to draw a clear line between professional activities and personal life.

In addition, ISFED calls on the law-enforcement bodies to investigate the above-mentioned fact and take the appropriate measures.

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy continues monitoring of the pre-election period and inform the public periodically about the monitoring findings.

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