

NO TOPHOBIA!

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND GEORGIAN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE WEEK

The following tendencies were observed during the week of July 21-August 3.

- The hate speech, as well as, the incitement to violence was exercised against *National Movement* commonly by the following respondents (Elizbar Javelidze, *Peoples Council*, Rezo Amashukeli, poet);
- Russophobic statement was made (by Dima Oboladze, sports commentator of Rustavi 2 TV) in regards to the Malaysian plane that was shot down on the territory of Ukraine;
- Xenophobic attitudes were dominant in the Vox-pop made by the newspaper *Rezonansi* on the topic of stricter visa regime;
- Newspaper *Asaval-Dasavali* and respondent (Alexandre Abdaladze, historian) incited Armenophobia ;
- Homophobic statements were made mainly regarding apology by the opera singer Tamar Iveri for her hate speech in the past and while discussing the Kasantip festival in Anaklia in the light of homosexuality and as an action against the Orthodoxy;
- Anti-Western sentiments were mostly expressed in relation to the Association Agreement by naming unjustified threats related to the agreement, also naming the Kasantip festival as an event imposed from the West.

21, 21 July -3 August



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Response

29 July 2014

Xenophobic Context and Importance to Inform Public About the Official Investigation

We would like to respond to speculative coverage of the high-profile murder case of Mariam Kochaladze through media, which periodically emerges outlets in xenophobic context over the last year in a different media outlets.

On July 22, 2013 the dead body of Mariam Kochaladze was found in Batumi. According to the preliminary investigation, the suspect of the crime was a foreigner, in particular, a citizen of Iran. On the ground of suspect's identity, the family members and friends of victim appealed to religious motive, in its turn some media outlets spread the remarks made on emotional ground based solely on one source without verification. Due to the high public

interest toward the resonant murder, covering the incident in the Islamophobic context reinforces such negative attitudes.

On July 24, 2014 Internet portals *Ambebi.ge* republished article by the magazine-*Sarke*, which base on only one source - the victim's godfather, develops the opinion that the murder was committed on religious grounds (ritual of sacrifice) and it was linked with the girl's decision to abandon the Turkish school and alleged threats from the university's administration.

First of all, it should be noted that to avoid misleading of the audience the media should verify the information at least with two independent sources, especially when it comes to controversial factual circumstances and sensitive issues.

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HATE SPEECH

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27

ELIZBAR JAVELIDZE, People's Assembly:

"There is a need for disinfection in this country, it should be cleared from the *Nats* and the *Liberast* germs!"

INCITEMENT FOR VIOLENCE

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27



REZO AMASHUKELI, poet: "I am addressing the Svans – directly speaking I don't believe in your bravery anymore, even considering the fact that I have several Svan brothers. Why do you ever allow this assassin Baramidze to say a word?! He has murdered half of Svaneti and he dug out the bones of your ancestors!"

XENOPHOBIA

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27

DIMA OBOLADZE, Rustavi 2 TV sports

commentator: “They are just pigs [Russians], as if it was only a mistake, I mentioned this earlier that this country... I can hardly believe that even rugby player are the good guys there. Given the situation, all of them can become like that. I don’t want to hear a single Russian word in our programs, this is the country of pigs.”

KVIRIS QRONIKA, July 21-27

GIORGI BURJANADZE, Anticorruption

Union: “I can understand those Tbilisian families with little daughter at home, they are afraid to let her go in the streets, since “Plekhanov” street is densely populated by Turks. I have given up my right to take a walk in the street with my kids...”

For whatever reason the Muslims favor the Plekhanov street, Iranians, Indians and Arabs tend to come here...

Let me remind you that about a month ago we analyzed the materials about this in the House of Composers, the next day juvenile was raped. Do you

remember that Iraqi, he sneaked out from right here.”

REZONANSI, July 24

NIKA KOKHODZE, respondent:

“Foreigners are dominant in our country these days... Aghmashenebeli Avenue has turned into a community of Turks. Soon, there may not be space for us anymore.”

NIKA RAMISHVILI, Respondent: “... We are drained away by the Chinese, Turks and Iranians.”

LALI GIGAURI, citizen: “We are concerned about the issue of mixed marriages.

May each person returns to their own country, otherwise our people are leaving the country and Chinese, Indians and god knows who are coming instead.”

NATIA KILADZE, citizen: “Varketili is overloaded by Indians... I could never imagine having so many dark-skinned neighbors before... They managed to settle their lives well enough to have Georgians as their servants.”

ARMENOPHOBIA

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 28 – August 3

A journalist criticizes in his article the evaluation of a movie director Otar Ioseliani, where he states that: “Tbilisi has always been an Armenian city and was constructed by the Armenians” (“ I was surrounded by Armenians when I was growing up, Tbilisian Armenians are the constructors, craftsman, masters and charitable people. They have constructed an amazing city, it is incredible! then came the commoners, villagers and peasants and unfortunately the Armenians left.”)

DITO CHUBINIDZE, journalist: “Mr. Otar, the point you brought up was exactly the reason why the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party - Aghasi Khanjian was shot by Lavrenti Beria in his own office!”

You can be calm about it Mr. Otar, neither Beria nor Stalin is alive today. There is not even a single Georgian in this stagnated country, who will run after you with an axe, or someone who shoots you, because you “Armenized” Tbilisi - the city that was cherished by the king David the Builder!”

GEWORLD.GE, July 23

Title of an article: “Armenians are trying to turn Tbilisi into an Armenian city”

ALEXANDER ABDALADZE, historian: “Armenian church and Armenian people in general have always been very ungrateful to Georgians. Armenian Church managed to harass the part of local population and even managed to turn them into Armenians.

Armenian Church has always been a key player in escalating the tension between Georgians and Armenian ... for this reason it is important for them to weaken the Georgian Church. This is why they are requesting to confirm the existence of 650 Armenian churches in Tbilisi. It has to be noted that Armenians have been trying to transform Tbilisi into an Armenian city since 19th century, and they have partly achieved it... It is a widely spread opinion that the Armenians are the most dangerous enemies for the Georgians.”

<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6072>



DITO CHUBINIDZE, journalist:

“You can be calm about it Mr. Otar, neither Beria nor Stalin is alive today. There is not even a single Georgian in this stagnated country, who will run after you with an axe, or someone who shoots you, because you “Armenized” Tbilisi - the city that was cherished by the king David the Builder!”

RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

OBIKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, July 26

TV Viewer [Phone call in the studio]: “We Christians are unlike Barbarians, unlike fanatic Muslims or Ku Klux Klan members; we will not hold an inquisition against them, but they will receive their own inquisition. By the way I am against it.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2384335

HOMOPHOBIA

ALIA, July 25

SHALVA NATELASHVILI, Labor Party: “I am not sure what are the real intentions of Vasadze, the fact is that, when he appeared against the homosexuals and all that immorality, he chose the wrong square for it. Why does not he protests against the homosexuals, when he is having fun in the bars of Amsterdam?”

OBIKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, July 31

JONDI BAGHATURIA, Burdjanadze – United

Opposition: “According to this law [Anti-discrimination] homosexuals were given the right to work at the kindergartens and at schools as teachers. This is unacceptable. I was requesting to assign restrictions on it. They are allowed to work in penitential, military institutions and in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. What is the obligation of a shepherd, not to throw the sheep in the mouth of a wolf, is not it right?”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386421

GEWORLD.GE, July 23

MERAB SHATIRISHVILI, Georgian Reality,

Board of the Parishioners: “I am saying it openly for them to hear it, whoever is heading this evil and sinful clan.[LGBT] there is a limit to the patience of a society, it may explode one day...”

If she [Tamar Iveri] is really intending to hold a concert for the protection of the right of sexual minority, I would address her through this newspaper, that in this case she should change her second name – Iveri. While the rights of so called minorities are not yet legalized, before it has become official it is mandatory for us to fight... Once they have created the base for it, they might as well legalize the same-sex marriages, organize the parades and you will not be able to say a word against it” <http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6071>

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27

JABA KHUBUA, journalist: “Tamar Iveri expressed the thoughts and concerns of 90% of Georgian society... that, it is unacceptable to take for granted this propaganda of sin and perverted sexual tendencies...”

Apparently their rights who propagate the sin Apparently their rights who propagate the sin of Sodom

and Gomorrah are of the supreme importance, even more important than the church, family, rights of the majority. it is even more significant than the right of expression, freedom and arts! Apparently, for today’s world the homosexuality is of the highest priority, but not the true art!”

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27

GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: “Defilement of our country with something that is called Konchita, is shameful. It is as disgraceful, as holding a gay-parade on the central street of the capital! Yes, it doesn’t really matter what depraves the international musical contest, that is so important for your country. It can either be Konchita or the march of pederasts on the main street of your capital?!..

The main motivation for granting the victory of the Eurovision contest to this creature of unidentified sexual origin, was to announce the start of an “New LGBT era” throughout Eurasia!”

OBIKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, July 31

BONDO MDZINARASHVILI, Anchor:

“The Mayor of Berlin was homosexual... the same in the case of the Mayor of Paris. I apologize for this inappropriate correlation, but how do you imagine electing a homosexual as a mayor in Georgia, where electing a mayor originally not from Tbilisi was met with so much resistance?”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386426

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, July 28 – August 3

GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: “So in Moldova we have the same reality as in Georgia, gays and lesbians are normal and they are not anyhow in conflict with legislation! Anyhow, all this is being done for one purpose, to alleviate the problem of the children adopted by same-sex families, while figuring out which one is a “mother” or “father” between the two lesbians or pederasts!

Therefore, people should not just request from the current government not abolish the notions of “mother” and “father”, but they should demand identification of the father’s name in the passports, as it used to be before!”

Continued on p.5

NEWS OF THE WEEK – KAZANTIP FESTIVAL

OBIKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, July 31

JONDI BAGHATURIA, *Burjanadze – United Opposition*: “They failed to not organize the gay parade. But here are the gays, heterosexuals, debauchers and the drag users too. This is the celebration of debauchery... this is the celebration of defilement. Why necessarily Georgia should be regarded as the place of sin.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386423

REPORTIORI, July 31

JONDI BAGHATURIA, *Burjanadze – United Opposition*: “This festival is an ideological propaganda for debauchery, celebration of sin, encouragement of immorality, homosexuality and drags.”

<http://reportiori.ge/?menuid=3&id=34715>

INTERPRESNEWS, July 25

LEVAN VASADZE, *Businessman*: “I consider Kazantip as a sectarian organization, those kind of events are driven by some kind of powers, I don’t want to start discussing the mysticism, but it definitely powers our police too.”

<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/291382-levan-vasadze-qkazantipisq-chatareba-mikheil-saakashvilis-ocneba-iyo.html?ar=A>

ALIA, July 30

GIORGI RAZMADZE, *deacon*: “Crimea was the place where these aliens used to organize those orgies, this place is lost forever. Do they want to lose Anaklia now?”

PRIME TIME, July 28

SPIRIDON ABULADZE, *archbishop*: “They are extremely depraved people, they are ready for any kind of sin. They showed us the videos of what was happening in Crimea with homosexual episodes. They showed us how man with the man, and also the women together and drugs, is this a commercial...”

http://ptpress.ge/index.php?year=2014&magazine_id=393&topic_id=9453#.U99TAfmSy30

INTERPRESNEWS, July 2

“As Archimandrite Anthimoz has evaluated it, whatever happened on May 17 and what is taking place now in Kasantip is an ideology imposed to Georgia”.

<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/292357-sasuliero-pirebis-organizebith-anakliashi-qkazantipisq-satsinaaghmdego-aqcia-gaimartheba.html?ar=A>

ALIA, July 31

MICHEIL ANDGULADZE, *Solidarity*: “In most countries, it is mainly impeded by Orthodoxy. Our traditions are directly linked to religious ideology. It is a purposeful battle from all sides and this Festival is part of this battle.”

KVIRIS QRONIKA, July 21-27

GIORGIO JIQIASHVILI, *Journalist*: “Priest Davit Qvlividze made a very important announcement last week, he spoke about Apocalypse and the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, that can be justified with an example of Crimea.

Obviously the back-giver “Liberasts” did not even take this announcement in serious...

Georgia will be a meeting point of lesbians, homosexuals, witches and people with several inclinations from all around the world.”

RUSTAVI 2, KURIERI, July 26

BEQA SKHILADZE, *participant of a demonstration*: “This is the meeting point for the same-sex couples, we will not allow this to happen on a Georgian soil...”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2384177

ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

SAVAL-DASAVALI, July 21-27

DIMITRI LORTKIPANIDZE, *Nino Burjanadze – United opposition*: “What our government enthusiastically signed [Association Agreement] in reality is a state crime!
Yes, this is a devastation of Georgian villages and the economy in European style!”

OBIEQTIVI, Night Studio, July 31

JONDI BAGHATURIA, *Burjanadze – United Opposition*: “And you joyfully run somewhere, where they can impose the gay parades, Kasantips and many other misfortunes. You are not even protecting your own market.

...And in the process of this rearrangement, why should we be swallowed by any of those? Either a red Russia or gay Europe? Or may be EU that is mainly focusing on gays...

Georgia is building close ties exactly with that part of Europe that is exclusively focuses on the importance of gays.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386411

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386413

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2386416

PRIME TIME, July 28 – August 3

LEVAN VASADZE, *Businessman*: “I have nothing to do with the Europe that allows same-sex marriage; neither does my wife, my children or my friends. But if they come and say that these are our standards and you have to accept them if you want with us, my answer will be - I am sorry, I had a different opinion about Europe. We will enter Europe either with honor, or will not enter it at all. Believe me nobody will protect a dishonored country without any principles, they will just turn it into their footman.”

[http://ptpress.ge/index.php?](http://ptpress.ge/index.php?year=2014&magazine_id=393&topic_id=9453#.U99TAfmSy30)

[year=2014&magazine_id=393&topic_id=9453#.U99TAfmSy30](http://ptpress.ge/index.php?year=2014&magazine_id=393&topic_id=9453#.U99TAfmSy30)

ALIA, July 30

GIORGI RAZMADZE, *priest*: “What does European Union request from Georgia? Do we have to pay with immorality on the way to Europe? is this what we are dreaming of? If this is right, who on earth needs a partner like this?...

I would like to remind the public about Sodom and Gomorrah, similar events as Kasantip used to be organized there, fornication between mother and the sun, men to men, sister to brother and so on. Today this land is burning.”

ALIA, July 30

JANA ASANIDZE, *journalist*: “Father, [addressing to George Razmadze] we hear a lot about Association Agreement, and adoption of several “nontraditional” laws after signing the agreement, since it is already an obligation. Organizing the “Kazantip” festival is also regarded as the output of this agreement, despite the fact that public addressed the Prime Minister to cancel it.”

GEWORLD.GE, July 25

IZA TAMAZASHVILI, *Orientalist*: “Europe is free from moral standards; Anti-Discrimination Law is the product of their efforts...

Because of non patriot politicians and considering the interests of foreign countries we have to sacrifice with our territorial integrity, with the interests of an intellectual society and also with the blood-stock guys who are sent to Afghanistan and Iraq to treat the interests of the foreigners.

I see that even our Prime Minister was influenced by some of those people; nevertheless, I feel that genetically he has a Georgian soul and is eager to benefit Georgia with his work.”

<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6080&lang=ge>

GEWORLD.GE, 23 July

MERAB SHATIRISHVILI, *Georgian Reality, Board of the Parishioners*: “I would like to pose a question to the Ambassador of US – Mr. Norland, I know he is overly protective to those sectarians [Jehovah witnesses]: Mr. Ambassador, I am aware those sectarians are legalized in Georgia and nobody interferes in their activities, but my question is: why do they translate their religious literature in different dialects? [Megrelian, Svan] and why do they incite separatism with this?
There are about twenty to forty thousand Jehovah followers in our country. Mr. Ambassador once their number turns million, maybe we should not even hold elections?! We may even not need to have an army?! Don't you want to have Georgian armed forces fighting for you under the umbrella of NATO in Afghanistan and Africa?!”

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6071>

ALIA, August 1

LEVAN CHACHUA, *released as a political prisoner*: “In Europe the society already discusses the possibility to categorize pedophilia and incest as one of the sexual orientation. They have even created a term – ‘Incestophobia’

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ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

SAKINFORM, July 30

ARNO KHIDIRBEGISHVILI, chief editor of *Sakinformi*: “ From now on, for those Georgians who still have the capacity to think, John Bass and Shah Abbas are the same. US Ambassador to Georgia resembles the Shah of Iran very much with this moustache. He could easily stop the bloodshed [unauthorized protests dispersed in May 26, 2011] but he did not do that.”

http://sakinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19851:2014-07-30-07-17-15&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#ixzz39W975Xvq

SAKINFORMI, JULY 31

ARNO KHIDIRBEGISHVILI, chief editor of *Sakinformi*: “Georgia is as bankrupt and poor as other countries there: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, Greece (All of them are the member states of NATO and EU!), but proud Georgia anyway is eager to integrate politically and economically in Europe... once Georgia has a free trade agreement with the other member states, Georgia will have to produce and consume only those products that is adequate to the European standards. This will be devastating for cattle-breeding business, small and medium business and for the agriculture, which is in a critical state anyways.”

http://sakinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19884:2014-07-31-09-11-08&catid=101:ucxoeti&Itemid=385#ixzz39nTzyZIG

GEWORLD.GE, July 30

NANA DEVDARIANI, former public defender: “United States is so spoiled to be left unpunished for its did, that they even do not bother to provide “evidences”. They could allow themselves to announce anything they wished, being on the chair of a world hegemony.”

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6085>

GEWORLD.GE, July 30

HAMLET CHIPASHVILI, Political Scientist: “Current Ukrainian government is the group of evil, Pedophiles and Neo-fascist...”

America created a permanent hot spot [In Ukraine] and thus made serious problem for Russia. That’s why tale was fabricated that Malaysian plane was shot down by separatists”.

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6089>

SAKINFORMI, JULY 29

“ As per some of the experts, Kiev together with US are planning a destabilization in Georgia”

http://sakinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19848:2014-28-&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#ixzz39W0vBpOK

OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, July 21

TV Viewer [Phone call in the studio]: “Apart from an American dictator now we also have an European dictator. Some of our representatives will have to run between two dictators from US to Brussels. It is impossible that Georgia could benefit there.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2381971

Beginning from p. 2

The above mentioned article is based on emotional statements of victims' relative and there is no indication that journalist took reasonable actions to verify the accuracy of the reported facts. The media outlets did not rechecked the information with official investigation about the motives of the murder.

We believe that spreading unspecified assumptions about the motive of the murder is aggravated by emphasizing the religious themes, as drawing unjustified parallels between particular negative event and religious origin, associating specific incident with the entire group could incite hatred and reinforce negative stereotypes related to Islam, often expressed in a form of anti-Turkish sentiments in Georgian media.

We call on editorial of internet-portal *Ambebi.ge* and magazine *Sarke*:

To correct information through a proportional means and forms in order to avoid misleading the audience and not to incite hatred and intolerance on the grounds of religious or ethnic origin.

Taking into account the fact that since making the initial statement about the preliminary information of the crime by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, no updated report has been provided to inform the society about the ongoing investigation, at the same time interest toward this high-profile murder case is still high, so we call on the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Chief Prosecutor's Office:

To provide information for public and media about the results of the investigation and the motives of the murder, as lack of information could create a fertile ground for a variety of assumptions, which ultimately incite religious and ethnic intolerance.

Media Development Foundation, MDF

Georgian Muslims' Union

Malkhaz Songulashvili, Bishop of Georgia's Evangelical Baptist Church

Institute of Tolerance and Diversity, TDI

The Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center, EMC

Sapari Union

Identoba

Article 42

Open Society Geor-

gia Foundation, OSGF

Georgian Democracy Initiative, GDI

P.S. Signing organizations welcome the fact that in response to the statement disseminated on July 29, editorial of internet portal *Ambebi.ge* removed the publication by the magazine *Sarke* about Mariam Kochaladze's murder case from the web-page. We think that the decision in response to a joint statement of non-governmental and religious organizations shows responsible and accountable approach of the editorial and hope that other media outlets and first of all magazine *Sarke* as a source of original story will follow *Ambebi.ge*'s positive example.