



Newsletter № 14

Overview of the Week

08.07 –14.07.2013

Over the period from 14 to 18 July, the following tendencies were revealed:

MONITORING

- The events of Samtatskaro were covered in the light of the local Muslim cleric leaving the village and the Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia holding a meeting with residents of Samtatskaro. Media outlets covered the meeting of the Patriarch more extensively than the Muslim cleric's exit from the village;
- Hate speech was used against the United National Movement (UNM) both on the part of journalists (newspapers Asaval-Dasavali; Alia) and respondents (former interior minister of Shevardnadze government, Kakha Targamadze; Lali Antia from Women for Peace NGO);
- Discriminative statements on religious ground were made by journalists (talk show Spektri on Kavkasia TV company; newspaper Asaval-Dasavali) whilst political insinuations on religious topics were made by politicians (Shalva Natelashvili of the Labor Part) and religious servants (Father Elizbar Diakonidze; Archbishop Jacob). Criticism of the prime minister because of his statements made about the rights of minorities intensified;
- Examples of positive coverage were the materials about a religious holiday of Muslims, Ramadan (news program of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, GPB; newspaper 24 Saati);

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Khoja has left Samtashkaro



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Overview of the Week

Continued from p. 1

- An independent presidential candidate Gela Saluashvili spread prejudices in regards with the rule of marking during elections whilst the coverage (by Maestro TV) of presentation about electronic ID cards in Europe, held by an Orthodox Christian group, did not provide adequate information to viewers;
- Social problems were linked with the topic of migration in a misleading manner by a respondent (Davit Chichinadze; a calling viewer of Obiektivi TV company). In one case, such a statement was followed by incorrect information spread by the presenter (talk show Spektri on Kavkasia TV); on another occasion, an openly discriminatory statement of a viewer in a call-in program towards ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Georgia was not reacted to by the presenter (Obiektivi TV) in accordance with the rule set out in the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters (Article 33.4);
- As compared to the previous periods, the topic on sexual minorities was covered less intensely, though it was topical in the light of the 17 May events and the assessments on this topic made by the NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Events of Samtatskaro in Media

GPB news program, 9 July

In an extensive report, the news program covered an incident in which Muslim khoja Suliko Khozrevanidze left the Samtatskaro village to undertake treatment because of a stress he experienced. The report included comments of the Muslim cleric and his wife as well as the village administrator, Gulo Nadirashvili, saying that there is no problem of conducting a Friday prayer in the village. The report also provided the assessment of a representative of Georgia's Democratic Initiative NGO, Giorgi Mshvenieradze, who said that the Muslim cleric came under pressure and that the government failed to adequately react to the incident in Samtatskaro. The report included a discriminatory statement of a local resident in which the superiority of Christianity over Islam was emphasized.

Guram Shanidze, resident of Samtatskaro: *“This is such a land that that must not be done here. This is the most suffered land and we want this land to be more Christian and our future generations to be Christian.”*

Based on the Muslim cleric's wife, the journalist denied the allegation reported in media that the Muslim cleric does not intend to return to the village. However, the journalist did not specify a media outlet which had spread that allegation and instead, generally referred to the regional media of Kakheti, which created the impression that the allegation was spread by all media outlets of Kakheti.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2090419

Rezonansi, 9 July

The newspaper also reported about the Muslim cleric having left the village.

http://rezonancedaily.com/index.php?id_rub=7&id_artc=16327

Rustavi 2, news program, 10 July

The news program broadcast the material featuring a meeting of Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II with local Muslims and Christians of Samtatskaro, which took place in the Patriarchate. The Patriarch talked about brotherly relations between Muslims and Christians and noted that there is no ground for conflict and that ongoing events are provoked. The comments used in the report are mainly focused on the assumption that the events have been provoked.

Events of Samtatskaro in Media

Ilia II, Catholicos Patriarch: *“We must not create that artificially; must not listen to provocateurs.”*

Gulo Nadirashvili, Samtatskaro village governor: *“Someone wanted to incite conflict in our village.”*

A Samtatskaro resident, Simon Tsintsadze, declares that they collected signatures for conducting prayers in a house. He also says that Mufti of Tsalka manipulated with these signatures to construct a mosque. The report, however, did not include a comment of Mufti of Tsalka, a person who was accused in the local resident’s comment.

It is worth noting that the Muslim cleric, Suliko Khozrevanidze, who came under pressure because of Friday prayer, did not attend the meeting. Neither Rustavi 2 nor any other media outlet paid attention to this essential fact.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091981

Maestro, 10 July

A report in the news program also focuses on an allegation that the conflict has been provoked.

Ilia II, Catholicos Patriarch: *“Some want to incite a disagreement”.*

Simon Tsintsadze, Samtatskaro resident: *“We have lived very well until now. Some forces used Tsalka Muslims and Muslim believers, which gave rise to this conflict.”*

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091185

GPB, 10 July

A report in the news program focused on the Patriarch’s words that he will not allow oppression of his spiritual children – both Christians and Muslims. A journalist noted

that at the meeting it was discussed the interests of external forces. It is important that in contrast to other TV channels, the GPB news program provided a full background of the conflict which arose in relations to the operation of a prayer house: facts of thwarting traditional prayers several times and the fact that as a result of experienced psychological stress, the local Muslim cleric left the village to undertake treatment.

It is noteworthy that an allegation about provoking the conflict was not elaborated and was only mentioned by the journalist.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091141

Channel 9, 10 July

The news program mentioned that the conflict was artificial and provoked by external forces in the text of a journalist and did not elaborate on it. The report also noted that the conflict arose because of impeding traditional Friday prayers.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091983

Rustavi 2 news program, 13 July

A report covered a protest voiced by a British Imam Taj Hargey against events having unfolded in Samtatskaro. Imam is quoted as saying that “Jesus would not have done that.” The report notes that he intends to voice his protest in London, in front of the Georgian Embassy whilst the Archbishop of Evangelist-Baptist Church and the Imam plan to conduct a joint prayer.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2092912

GPB, talk show Dialogi, 8 July

A representative of Georgia’s Democratic Initiative NGO, Giorgi Mshvenieradze, assessed the activity of the police in Samtatskaro.

<http://1tv.ge/video/18882>

Hate Speech

Asaval-Dasavali newspaper, 8 – 14 July

Giorgi Gigauri, journalist: *“Mr. Bidzina [Ivanishvili], had it not been for a high political culture of Georgians, the henchmen of [Mikheil] Saakashvili’s party would have been hanged on trees upside down all over the country, with their flesh peeled off and salt sprinkled on wounds!”*

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/asdas/2013/977/977.pdf>

Alia newspaper, 12-15 July

Nino Samkharadze, journalist: *“Chiora, you’d better shut up and stop making provocative statements or else you will get your zombie face smashed.”*

Kviris Palitra newspaper, 8-14 July

Kakha Targamandze, former Interior Minister of Shevardnadze government: *“They [UNM] shall not only be arrested but also executed by firing squad. Misha must be punished by impalement.”*

<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/politic/15171-qasethi-qbanbanerkaq-qarthvelebis-arasodes-mesmodaq.html>

Asaval-Dasavali newspaper, 8 – 14 July

Lali Antia, Women for Peace: *“Saakashvili deserves to be raped in those secret places where his henchmen raped males tied to a table!”*

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/asdas/2013/977/977.pdf>

Religion

Kavkasia TV, talk show Spektri, 8 July

The presenter Davit Akubardia names criteria for testing judges’ trustworthiness, such as their level of religiosity and their attitudes towards Jehovah’s witnesses, thereby establishing a stereotype that judges must necessarily be a congregation of Orthodox Christian Church and have established attitudes towards religious minorities.

Davit Akubardia, the presenter: *“The office of Kublashvili [Supreme Court] should permit the GPB to introduce judges of every district to the society: what kind of relationship they have with their wives and children, how many times they visit their mothers, whether they attend church or not, what is their attitude towards Jehovah’s witnesses. This will help recover the trust [towards judges].”*

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091039

Asaval-Dasavali newspaper, 8 – 14 July

Journalist Giorgi Gigauri derogatorily refers to Jehovah’s witnesses as a sect of torturers whilst evaluates the arrest of a cleric Basil Mkalavishvili for his violence against religious minorities and burning religious literature as an action against the Church undertaken by Saakashvili.

Giorgi Gigauri, journalist: *“Saakashvili was spiritually impoverishing us when for the aim of defending Jehovah’s witnesses, he caused the special forces to storm the Gldani church and his henchmen to befoul the holy altar!... whilst actually handing over Adjara and Batumi to Turks!”*

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/asdas/2013/977/977.pdf>

Alia, 11 July

Deacon of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Elizbar Diakonidze, criticizes the prime minister because of his reply to a journalist’s question about the religious extremist during his press conference.

Religion

Father Elizbar Diakonidze: *“One stupid girl asked Bidzina [Ivanishvili] ... when the religious extremism will come to the end in Georgia...”*

“We have already punished two clerics and will punish more if they commit offences again [Bidzina Ivanishvili’s answer]... The person who built the Trinity yesterday must not answer like that but must say: ‘you are wrong, child, there was no religious extremist and will not be in future’.”

Imedi, talk show Gia Eteri, 12 July

Presidential candidate and the leader of the Labor Party Shalva Natelashvili tries to portray the Republican Party and Bidzina Ivanishvili as fighters against the Church. He refers to his rival in the presidential election, Giorgi Margvelashvili, in this context.

Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party: *“Actually, Ivanishvili is the leader of the Republican rather than of the Georgian Dream. He is the man of that understanding, that philosophy which they [Republican Party] did for years – the fight against Church, encouragement of various sects, directly allowing sexual minorities to show off in the Rustaveli avenue. This is the ideology of Republicans, Margvelashvili and Ivanishvili.”*

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2092258

Maestro, 14 July

Targets of verbal attacks in a Sunday sermon of Archbishop Jacob are politicians, local NGOs and international organizations. A journalist notes that religious servants assess the events of Samtaskaro as an effort of politicians to incite conflict between Georgians and they call on human rights watchdogs to contemplate on that.

Archbishop Jacob: *“That family which has been used for illustrating a conflict between Muslims and Christians has left the village...”*

“I remember what kind of surveys one of international organizations published during the rule of the previous government. This time around, there were also several questions about the clergy. That on 17 May the clergy came to the streets is your shame, not the shame of the clergy. There were not only clergymen but 100,000 people there and thus, you offend the entire nation. If you conduct a poll, do you not know that you will not be able to get even one percent?!... You are lucky that we, Orthodox Christians, are tolerant. You would never dare to do that in case of other religions. You are our flesh and blood and that’s why we forgive you hoping that you would indeed think over it. And I ask you very much to start doing good and make a single concrete benefit for the country and you may like it then and change to become like people.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2093840



Davit Akubardia, the presenter: *“The office of Kublashvili [Supreme Court] should permit the GPB to introduce judges of every district to the society: what kind of relationship they have with their wives and children, how many times they visit their mothers, whether they attend church or not, what is their attitude towards Jehovah’s witnesses. This will help recover the trust [towards judges].”*

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Religion

Imedi news program, 14 July

The news program covered a relatively moderate fragment of Jacob's sermon in which he focuses on peaceful coexistence.

<http://imedi.ge/index.php?pg=nws&id=9150>

Alia, 11 July

The newspaper published an interview with a representative of the Institute of Equality, Paata Vardosanidze, in which he talks about his organization's initiative – a suggestion that Catholicos Patriarch Ilia II heads a commission on justice and conciliation.

GPB news program, 11 July

A report in the news program describes a dispute between Azerbaijani and Salafists concerning a construction of a building in Ponichala. The report provides the position of organizers of the protest that they are against building a Wahhabi mosque; also the comment of the Tbilisi Mayor's office that the local self government has issued a permit on the construction of a residential house and that it does not fall within the competence of the municipality to control what this building will be used for by an owner; as well as the explanation of one of co-owners of the building that it is a residential house that is being constructed, not a mosque. The report also contains a comment of the Muslim cleric, Imzit Suleimanov, who portray Wahhabites as a threat to the country and at the same time, asserts that it is not planned to roof the building with a dome.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091952

GPB news program, 12 July

A report covers the efforts of an eparchy of the so-called South Ossetia to become independent of the Georgian Patriarchate, a move which is not supported by Russia.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2092941

Religious Holidays

The start of the Muslim's fast, Ramadan, was covered by the GPB (on 10 July) and the newspaper 24 Saati (on 9 July). Materials prepared on the religious holiday of Muslims are examples of positive coverage.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091146

<http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/news/2013-07-09/39274>

Prejudices

Imedi news program, 12 July

Mikheil-Gela Saluashvili, a presidential candidate: *“A military coup named the Rose Revolution was the result of introduction of marking in the elections. This very marking is anti-Christian decision which according to the Bible, is a sign made on a thumb of a right hand. The marking is exactly the same.”*

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2092904

Maestro news program, 15 July

A report covers the position of only an Orthodox Christian group demanding an alternative to the electronic ID cards. Even though the journalist reports about a presentation held by the organization, the respondent's reference to the Western experience is misleading, providing copies of IDs of private persons as a documentary material (which is not a proof of anything) and video interviews of private persons; based on these material it is impossible to make an expert conclusion as to what regulations operate in this or that country. In such a case, a journalist should exercise a critical approach towards the source or should seek relevant material, or ask comment from a representative of the EU embassy or from a qualified expert in order to avoid misleading of TV audience. It is also important to note what is the basis of different attitudes towards ID cards in the EU – a prejudice, as it is the case with the Orthodox Christian group, or concerns about the protection of personal data.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2093837

Discrimination on Ethnic Ground

Kviris Palitra, 8 – 14 July

Kakha Targamadze, former Interior Minister of Shevardnadze government: *Do you know why I beat up Givi Targamadze? He is of Armenian descent, his real surname is Osipov and when I learned that he changed his name, it made me angry.*

<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/politic/15171-qasethi-qbanbanerkaq-qarthvelebis-arasodes-mesmodaq.html>

Kavkasia TV, talk show Spektri, 8 July

A demographic problem in this talk show is linked with the topic of emigration by a respondent, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the presenter dramatizes this topic by linking it, without any substantiation, with the construction of Chinatown in Tbilisi. The information about building a Chinatown itself is wide of the mark because the construction in progress at the Tbilisi Sea is a Chinese investment and does not envisage the construction of Chinatown as the presenter of the talk show has been maintaining in a number of his programs (see Bulletin #7).

Davit Chichinadze: *“A demographic problem is very acute in the country. If people do not have flats how can we talk about demographics? That means that this country will become a country of emigrants.”*

Davit Akubardia, the presenter: *“Yeah, and moreover a Chinatown is being built....”*

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2091295

Obiektivi TV, 11 July

In a phone-in program, a viewer speaks about the problem of emigration and refers to Azerbaijanis and Armenians as guests, which is a discrimination against ethnic Azerbaijani and Armenian citizens of Georgia. It is problematic that the presenter of the program, Soso Zaalishbvili, shares this view and agrees with the viewer that the situation in this regard is grave.

A viewer: *“Up to one and a half million Georgian youth is in emigration. Up to two and a half million Georgians are left here without various ethnicities and do you know who those ethnicities are? We, Georgians, are a hospitable nation: Armenians, Azerbaijanis and et cetera. We have become fewer and among those who remained are elderly, people elder than you and this is not a strength any longer.”*

Soso Zaalishbvili, presenter: *“Yes, the situation is very grave; we all know that, we are just thinking how to pull out of this situation.”*

The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters obliges a broadcaster to avoid inaccurate and misleading statements regarding minorities and their social problems and to not promote stereotypes (Article 33.2) whereas “Any unjustified referral to ethnic origin, religious faith, sexual orientation, family status, social standing or any other factor as to a cause of the problem, or the use of offensive terminology by a source in live broadcast or news programme should not go unchallenged and presenters should ask authors of offensive statements to substantiate their views” (Article 33.4). Referring to citizens of Georgia as guests of Georgia because of their ethnicity is not only discriminatory but also offending to the named ethnic groups.

<http://obieqtivi.net/tv1.php?id=12811>

GDI report on human rights and freedoms, first half of 2013.



A report by the Georgian Democratic Initiative was released in which a separate chapter is dedicated to the topic of religious intolerance while the 17 May events are discussed in the light of violating the right to assemblies and manifestations.

<http://gdi.ge/?p=374>



Kakha Targamadze, former Interior Minister of Shevardnadze government: *“Do you know why I beat up Givi Targamadze? He is of Armenian descent, his real surname is Osipov and when I learned that he changed his name, it made me angry.”*



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www.facebook.com/pages/მედიის-განვითარების-ფონდი-MDF-Media-Development-Foundation/275686875901735

Sexual Minorities

Kviris Palitra, 8 – 14 July

Zaza papuashvili, MP from Georgian Dream: “Was it only 17 May that made you indignant? When one knows what such a rally will cause among the society, is it not an organizer of it an offender?... One cannot ban homosexuality, prostitution or murders. These are vices of humanity... Let anyone do whatever they want at home but I do not like when one dares to walk in front of Kashveti Church and to impose his/her whim or disease as a norm... If they declare fight to us we will also be allowed to step into the battle field.” <http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/politic/15171-qasethi-qbanbanerkaq-qarthvelebis-arasodes-mesmodaq.html>

Maestro TV, 9 July

During a consideration of the conclusion prepared by the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration regarding the 17 May events, a representative of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association demanded the evaluation of homophobic statements of MPs. This demand proved unacceptable for the deputy chair of this committee, Gedevan Popkhadze, on collegiality considerations.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2090482

Alia, 10 July

The newspaper published a comment of the head of National-Religious Institute, Zviad Tomaradze, concerning a hearing of the conclusion prepared by the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration regarding the 17 May events. Tomaradze assesses the 17 May events as a provocation and notes that the Georgian society and NGOs defending the Church were presented at the committee hearing on a larger scale.

Imedi TV news program, 9 July

The news program limited itself to airing a short sound bite about the parliamentary hearing of 17 May events.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2090462

Asaval-Dasavali, 8 – 14 July

Levan Anjaparidze, film director: “They are not interested in national top-

ics; their priority is movies about homosexuals... I am sure there are many LGBT representatives in the cinema center, whom they cannot hide.”

Anti-Western attitudes

Alia, 11 July

Father Elizbar Diakonidze: “What does this Rasmussen want? What do we want in that organization where homosexuals are respected more? This new government has time for that because it does not care for my country....”

Asaval-Dasavali, 8-14 July

Piruz Kintsurashvili: “We, ordinary people, do not care which homosexual says what in Europe or America!”

Obiektivi TV, talk show Gamis Studia, 14 July

The presenter of the talk show misinterprets an assessment by NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, of 17 May events, but the state minister for reintegration, Paata Zakareishvili, provides an adequate explanation.

Valeri Kvaratskhelia, presenter:

“He [NATO secretary general] told us that we must tackle the LGBT problem. What is that, is it a gay-club or?”

Paata Zakareishvili, minister for reintegration: “It is not about gay-clubs. It is about the fulfillment of norms established by the constitution. Any person, no matter who he/she is, must have the right to assemblies and manifestations. When we fight against 17 May, we do that not because to protect gay rights but to protect any citizen's right who wants to hold a rally and manifestation.”

Gia Areshidze, presenter: “... How did the government act? The government managed to isolate the minority. The violence did not take place, nothing happened. The uproar is about the fact that nothing happened.”

<http://obieqtivi.net/tv1.php?id=12854>

