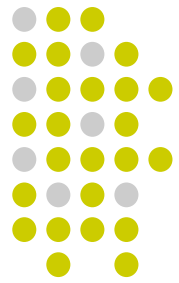




Newsletter #1



About the Project

The Media Development Foundation (MDF) implements a project Monitoring Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgian Media within the framework of program, Advancing National Integration in Georgia, carried out by the United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) and the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) with the financial assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project is aimed at encouraging professional coverage of minorities in Georgian media

through public discussions of problems identified during the monitoring.

Before releasing the final report and recommendations envisaged by the project, the MDF will send out weekly electronic bulletins of monitoring results to media outlets, civil society and other interested parties.

The project involves the monitoring of six newspapers (Asaval-Dasavali, Rezonansi, 24 Saati, Chronika, Alia, Kviris Palitra), evening news programs and talk shows of three national TV channels (Georgian

Public Broadcaster, or GPB, Imedi and Rustavi 2) and three local TV channels (Kavkasia, Maestro and Channel 9), as well as an evening talk show of Media Union Obiektivi.

The project also envisages monitoring of reaction of non-governmental organizations and other institutions to intolerance and hate speech in the public domain.

This bulletin reflects key findings of monitoring covering the time span from 15 to 22 April.

15-21 April, 2013



MONITORING

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Events of the Week

Conflict on religious ground in the Tsikhisdziri village

A conflict in the village Tsikhisdziri, Kobuleti district, in which Senaki police officer, on religious grounds, manhandled local residents and threatened them with weapons, was one of main news of the week. This incident was cov-

ered in a neutral way by both print and broadcast media.

However, all media outlets, save the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), reported a legal assessment of the crime based solely on an official qualification given by the investigation (premeditated injury to a per-

son), which did not envisage the responsibility for a crime committed on religious grounds. Only a report in GPB's news program, Moambe, on 15 April, covered a statement of Deputy Public Defender of Georgia that the Public

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Events of the Week

Continued from p. 2

Defender's Office will study the incident as a crime committed on religious grounds.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2013161

In Moambe report on 19 April, a representative of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, Natia Katsitadze, said that since the crime was committed on religious ground it was not sufficient to investigate it as a hooliganism and abuse of official power.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2016950

Although journalists are not required to be well versed in legislation, media outlets should have sought legal assessment of independent experts (as Moambe reporter, Sopho Okhanashvili,

did) because the religious motives behind the crime

were apparent whereas official investigation was launched on physical assault alone.

Even though TV company Imedi, in its report on 18 April, did not qualify the incident as a religious crime, it was the only TV channel which covered the incident in the context of religious intolerance and contained comments of representatives of religious minorities. Archbishop of Evangelical Baptist Union of Georgia Malkhaz Songulashvili evaluated the incident in light of similar incidents in Nigvziani and Tsintskaro whilst Nino Lomjaria, Executive Director of ISFED,

placed emphasis on future threats of encouraging similar incidents and in general, intolerance, emanating from traditional and social media.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2016917

It should be noted that by indicating religious denominations of victims of this crime media outlets did not violate professional standards as the crime was committed on religious grounds and therefore religious denominations were relevant to the topic covered.

President's visit to Akhalkalaki

On 17-18 April, TV companies highlighted different aspects of the president's visit to Akhalkalaki. Rustavi 2 news program, Kuri-eri, extensively covered that part of the visit in which the president, while being at the house of Minasyan family, talked about the Georgian language teaching program as a possibility for achieving success.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2026052

In contrast to Rusatvi 2, GPB's Moambe, on 17 April, covered only that part of the visit during which the president awarded a religious servant, Metropolitan Nikoloz and did

not report about those messages concerning the equality which the president made while visiting Minasyan family.

<http://1tv.ge/video/17735> (20:40 – 20:41)

Nor did Maestro covered the president's statement regarding the integration of ethnic minorities in its news program, Akhali Ambebi; it, instead, focused on the president's comment about the opposition rally scheduled for 19 April.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2013146

Discrimination on Ethnic Grounds, Minorities as a “Threat”

Alia, 19 April

The interview with Temur Shashiashvili, entitled “Bidzina Ivanishvili Halted a Great Process” dealt with politics but used discriminative language towards minorities. Temur Shashiashvili:

“Take a look, 80 percent of people in the Georgian government are those who have changed surnames. I am not against Armenians, they are our brothers, but will Armenians allow their country to be run by people with changed surnames?”

The respondent identifies “people who changed surnames” with Armenians and refers to them in a negative context. The journalist Gela Zedelashvili, instead of observing a professional standard, agrees with the respondent and says:

“I wish the problem of those with changed surnames were the only one.”

The respondent speaks about a threat of assimilation of the Georgian nation, coming from various countries:

“... Now they are coming from India, Pakistan, Syria, Iran and the assimilation of the Georgian nation is under way.”

Asaval-Dasavali, 15-21 April

Asaval-Dasavali publishes a quote of poet Jansug Charkviani who refers to Armenians discriminatively in the context of rally planned by the opposition party on 19 April:

Jansug Charkviani: *“Unfortunately, I am sitting in despair, so far I have always blessed Georgia. Are you Georgian? – Do not come on the 19th! Are you Armenian? – Fine, then, come.”*

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/2013/965/files/1-41pm5.pdf>

Rustavi 2, 18 April

Rustavi 2 news program on 18 April, carried comments of the political opposition about Jansug Charkviani’s poem. In a response comment, Jansug Charkviani divided citizens of Georgia into Georgians, on the one hand, and on the other, Armenians and Akhalkalaki residents:

“I will not like if genuine Georgians will go there and rally. Who else will go there too? Armenians will definitely go there - from Akhalkalaki.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2026056

Maestro, 19 April

When Nino Shervashidze, a guest to Maestro TV channel’s a talk show Kviris Argumentebi, on 19 April, raised the issue of Jansug Charkviani’s Armenophobic poem, the host of the talk show, Tea Sichinava, declared that the talk show was dedicated to the opposition rally and not creative works of the poet and changed the topic of discussion on the premises that Jansug Charkviani was not among guests of the talks show. Thus she has avoided to discuss a problem of xenophobia in political discourse.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2015160

GPB, 19 April

In contrast to Maestro’s Kviris Argumentebi, the GPB’s talk show Aktsentebi, which was also dedicated to the opposition rally held on 19 April, extensively discussed Jansug Charkviani’s Armenophobic poem and statement. A problem of xenophobia was discussed by both the host of the talk show, Eka Kvesitadze, and invited



JANSUG

CHARKVIANI:

“Are you Georgian? – Do not come on the 19th! Are you Armenian? – Fine, then, come.”

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Discrimination on Ethnic Grounds, Minorities as a “Threat”

guests (Yuri Mechitov, Natia Megrelishvili). At the same time, however, when one of the guests, Natia Megrelishvili, started speaking about the threat of Armenian separatism and mentioned Vahagn Chakhalyan as a leader of that separatism, the host of the talk show mistakenly announced that Vahagn Chakhalyan died. However, minutes later she corrected the mistake, based on the information provided by the producer. Information about the death of Vahagn Chakhalyan was released by news agencies but the information proved to be wrong. The host of the talk show should not have repeated unverified information.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2015031

Asaval-Dasavali, 15-21 April

Aleko Shalamberidze, Free Georgia

“Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan plan to seize Georgia’s territories. Why should one care about the prohibition of condoms when Georgians in Georgia are being left without land?!”

Asaval-Dasavali, 15-21 April

An interview of anonymous worker with Jaba Khubua is about the participation of Chinese in the construction of Olympic village in the Tbilisi sea territory. Worker:

“I was told personally – this is China and there is no place for Georgians here. I took off my helmet and hit that Chinese in the face. That’s why I was fired from the job.”

The interview portraying Chinese as a threat ends with the journalist’s comment. Jaba Khubua:

“What can be better than a healthy way of living, Mr. Bidzina, but I do not think that a compact settlement of 126,000 Chinese

in Tbilisi poses any lesser threat to Georgian demography than tobacco and alcohol consumption.”

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/2013/965/files/1-41pm5.pdf>

Obiektivi

Gamis Studia, 21 April

Bondo Mdzinarishvili, anchor:

“As if we did not have our white beggars, now black, sorry, Afro-American beggars have appeared in the city. It is a shame indeed, why should they arrive in Georgia, who brought them here and how dare they live here and moreover, beg in streets.”

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11675>

Channel 9

Main Question, 19 April

Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia:

“Should only Georgian citizens be owners of Georgia’s land, forests and meadows? Or should hundreds of thousands of hectares of land be taken over by Pakistani, Indian or Arab farmers?”

... What is happening today is directed against the country – whenever you enter the house of justice, you see more Pakistanis and Indians with Georgian passports standing in the queue than Georgians.”

The host of the talk show Eka Beridze did not ask the respondent what kind of threat the investment in agriculture by foreigners could pose to the country. She only remarked: “Mr. Kakha you will definitely be accused of xenophobia.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2016830

Newsletter №1



KAKHA KUKAVA:

“What is happening today is directed against the country – whenever you enter the house of justice, you see more Pakistanis and Indians with Georgian passports standing in the queue than Georgians.”

Anti-Westerns Sentiments, Hate Speech, Unsubstantiated

Asaval-Dasavali's 15-21 April issue publishes an article by Giorgi Gigauri, "For money they will do anything." In this article the author refers to the information of the Interior Ministry about a crime in which a 45-year mother forcefully engaged her 11-year daughter in pornography, and portrays it as a mode of Western life:

"Indeed, such a thing has already become an ordinary event in the United States because the transformation of people into cattle there, i.e. degeneration, has reached the peak."

The above statement as well as the following passage of the author, namely, *"this is precisely a clear result of transforming people into cattle, in other words, a targeted propaganda of degeneration,"* can be considered as hate speech.

The author of the article supports his opinion with an American TV program "Threat factor" aired by Rustavi 2 TV and words of Oscar-winning actor Jeremy Irons: *"same-sex marriage could open the door for a father to marry his son."*

Another example of anti-Western attitude is a quote by the Georgian Dream MP Gogi Topadze published in Asaval-Dasavali:

"The recommendations of the European Union should be considered, but it is also a fact that the EU is very much first willing to see two males coming out of a wedding house together and only after that to admit us as a member. No way, because it is possible to become an EU member without encouraging homosexuality and lesbianism!"

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/2013/965/files/1-41pm5.pdf>

Obiektivi
Gamis Studia, 21 April

A listener's phone call:

"Why should we, Georgians, go (to Europe) if it demands that we strip off or become homosexual?"

Bondo Mdzinarishvili, anchor:

"Europe is not only about stripping off or becoming homosexual, let us not portray these states like that."

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11675>



**GOGI
TOPADZE:**

"...It is also a fact that the EU is very much first willing to see two males coming out of a wedding house together and only after that to admit us as a member".

Disregard of Religious Minorities

Kviris Palitra, 15 April

In an interview to journalist Eka Lomidze, Justice Minister Tea Tsulukiani declared that she "has an expectation for candid consultations with Synod" regarding ID cards. The journalist does not make an attempt to find out what Synod has to do with state institutions in a secular state and if this is necessary, why the minister is not interested to learn opinions of representatives of other confessions about ID cards.

<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/mmanager.html?view=edition&id=205>

Anti-Turkish Expressions

An interview with Elizbar Javelidze published in 15-21 April issue of Asaval-Dasavali fans anti-Turkish sentiments and presents unjustified compilation and contextualization of facts:

“27,000 Turks were given Georgian citizenship and now they plan to build a mosque in Batumi. No one can blame me of hating Turkey but that does not mean at all turning a blind eye to Turkish expansion and applauding the fact that Adjara’s is becoming Turkish... A great monument to the dominance of Ottoman Empire in Georgia has been erected in Akhaltsikhe and now they mull over the color of the dome of the mosque with busy expression, meanwhile our great friend Turkey carried out “reconstruction” of Iskhani with bulldozers; what can this be called?! “

Obiektivi

Gamis Studia, 15 April

To a listener’s question whether it is possible for locals to build a mosque themselves, the guest of the program, head of Obiektivi, Irma Inashvili, responds that this is already old topic and more than 200 mosques were already built in Adjara. Based on a survey conducted by a political union Alliance of Georgian Patriots and informational support of Obiektivi, which is nearing its completion, Irma Inashvili speaks about threats related to the construction of a mosque:

“First and foremost, they (local Muslims) realize that threat which the construction of a new mosque, or to be more precise, erecting a symbol of might of Turkey in the center of Batumi can cause. And they, the Muslims with common sense, are against that.”

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11581>

Obiektivi

Gamis Studia, 17 April

In a program, concerning the Georgia-Russia war, a presenter Bondo Mdzinarishvili, adds to a viewer’s attitude towards Turkey as occupant:

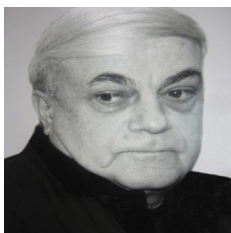
“Then the interest of Turkey towards Georgian territories was also great because they think even today that they have lost Adjara’s territory temporarily and that Adjara must be reintegrated with Turkey. That’s why such topics which we now often discuss must be treated with extreme caution.”

The anchor considers their editorial position in line with stance of “Resistance Movement” and political organization “Alliance of Georgian Patriots”:

“...Constantly makes statements on threats Adjara faces and Adjara’s population is best of all aware of that threat, as well as Batumi residents where very many Turks have appeared after Sakashvili said ‘Aslan [Aslan Abashidze, former Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Ajaria] has fled, Batumi is free’. It is precisely after Aslan fled that Turks came there and we may soon face yet another threat.”

“The Davit Aghmashenebeli Avenue houses very many bars, restaurants, hotels, etcetera, belonging to Turks and this is not incidental.”

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11610>



ELIZBAR

JAVELIDZE:

“...that does not mean at all turning a blind eye to Turkish expansion and applauding the fact that Adjara’s is becoming Turkish.”

Deported Meskhetians

In an interview with the leader of Javakheti organization in Russia, Aghas Arabyan, the repatriation of deported Meskhetians to Samtskhe-Javakheti is considered as a potential threat of ethnic conflicts:

Aghas Arabyan: "Georgia is not obliged to take responsibility for the fate of offspring of Meskhetians deported by the Soviet regime.... Moreover, this is an attempt to encourage Islamic expansion which equally contradicts the interests of local Armenians and the entire Georgian nation and Christian world."

The topic of deported Meskhetians was also discussed in GPB's talk show, Aktsentebi. A guest of the talk show, Natia Megrelishvili, portrayed this issue as a threat. When talking about resettlement of Abkhaz to Abkhazia from Syria and Turkey, she said:

"This is a similar topic to that, when the issue of Meskhetian Turks, was imposed on us [against our will]."

The host of the talk show, Eka Kvesitadze, adequately reacted to this statement:

"The return of Meskhetian Turks is a very sensitive issue. They are Georgian Muslims who have a full right to return here."

Although Eka Kvesitadze correctly noted that the repatriation of deported people is the reinstatement of justice, one should note here that people who were deported from Meskheta during the Soviet times can return to their homeland not because they are Georgians but also because they were forcefully deported and in this case, their ethnicity or religion is not a decisive factor.

It must be noted that the term "Meskhetian Turks" is incorrect and it is better to establish the term "deported Meskhetians."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2015031



NATIA

MEGRELISHVILI:

"This is a similar topic to that, when the issue of Meskhetian Turks, was imposed on us [against our will]."

Hate Speech

Kviris Kronika, 15 April

An interview by journalist Gia Beridze with a political expert Ramaz Sakvarelidze concerns President Saakashvili's bicycle incident in Turkey in which, according to rumors, Saakashvili collided with a truck. It involves hate speech:

"A large segment of our society was basically angry at the truck's driver that he did not do his job well..."

Asaval-Dasavali, 15-21 April

In his column, "Well done, Margevlashvili", which concerns the distribution of free textbooks, Giorgi Gigauri calls Saakashvili and his

teams "vampires hating Georgians," "herd of Mankurts," who "deprived our children of Iakob Gogebashvili's Mother Tongue."

<http://www.asavali.ge/archive/2013/965/files/1-41pm5.pdf>

Obiektivi

Gamis Studia, 15 April

A telephone call: "We will make them dig earth with their noses."

Bondo Mdzinarishvili, anchor: "They can do that job perfectly well."

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11643>

Homophobia, Sexual Minorities

An issue of sexual minorities is basically used with a negative connotation mixed with religious non-traditional groups and as an accusation against political opponents:

Asaval-Dasavali, 15-21 April

Giorgi Gabedava, former political prisoner:

"Ms Tamar Kordzaia conducts surveys on a same-sex marriage. For me, as for a Georgian person, it is unacceptable to have a person in parliament who will raise such issues in the parliament."

Kviris Kronika, 15 April

Gela Zedelashvili's article "How stupid we are":

"A large segment of people supports me saying we must jointly fight against an aggressive campaign of gays and lesbians, otherwise we do not know what kind of persons our children will become... In short, Georgian gays, lesbians and their supporters declare that LGBT is a political fight for equality. Well... This is something new... According to them, homosexuality is not a perverted life but a political fight. I have always wondered why there were so many gays in various governments."

Kviris Palitra, 15 April

Speaking in an interview about sexual minorities, Justice Minister Tea Tsulukiani is stigmatizing them. She hints that the supreme right of a child is to have heterosexual parents:

"When it comes to the adoption of a child by such couples, the law must give preference to the supreme interest of a child."

<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/mmanager.html?view=edition&id=205>

Kviris Kronika, 15 April

Khatuna Elbakidze's article, "In short, the threat exists and it is quite real", concerns the UNM rally on 19 April and this article refers to minorities in a negative context:

"They can gather maximum 10,000 people ... Their gay supporters will caress one another, perhaps, poet Zaza Burchuladze will read a poem or two and that's it."

"The UNM allowed Jehovah's witnesses and other godless sects to mushroom and strengthen and in such a way that these Jehovah's witnesses overstep any limits..."

"Support of 19 April rally means that you support the UNM and the policy of their American partners – the legalization of rights of gays, lesbians, transsexuals and other similar cursed people."

Obiektivi, 20 April

Ghamis Studia talk show discussed a statement of National Security Council Chairman Giga Bokeria, in which he branded the head of Obiektivi, Irma Inashvili, as fascist. The host of the talk show, Nino Jgarkava, talking with the guest of the program, Soso Manjavidze from Patriots' Alliance, referred to Bokeria as a ravager of churches, and read a statement made by Inashvili in response to Bokeria's statement:

"We have not demised the homeland, nation and language as you did... Nor are we as happy as you are about marriage between women or about marriage between men"

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11673>



Sexism, Gender Issues

Obiektivi

Gamis Studio, 15 April

In a program about the UNM rally on 19 April, a listener used a sexist expression which was left unnoticed by the presenter Bondo Mdzinarishvili. Namely:

“Women that were there, you know why they were appointed, don’t you?”

<http://obiektivi.net/tv1.php?id=11643>

Kviris Palitra, 15 April

An interview with Tea Tsulukiani contains gender stereotypes. To a journalist’s question as to what the minister meant when she called an opposition MP, Chiora Taktakishvili, “a weak woman,” the respondent replied:

“When a woman engages in politics, the environment is so ruthless that she must be twice as serious as a male politician... Both the society and the fellow party members will find it more difficult to forgive mistakes of women politicians than men politicians.

In reality, in the coalition and in the government, I work in the environment of men and I understand that the mistake of a woman costs dearer than that of a man.”

<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/mmanager.html?view=edition&id=205>



IRMA

INASHVILI:

“We have not demised the homeland, nation and language as you did... Nor are we as happy as you are about marriage between women or about marriage between men”.

Property Disputes

Ecomigrants and Greeks from Tsalka

The Rezonansi newspaper, on 15 April, published an article, “We were warned they are retuning and they need their houses,” concerning problems of ecomigrants resettled in Tsalka. Basing on rumors, the author of the article, Tamta Virsaladze, wrote about a threat faced by ecomigrants. Relying on the head of the village and one ecomigrant, the journalist recounts that because of economic crisis in Greece, Greeks who left Tsalka years ago now intend to return to Georgia and if that happens, those ecomigrants, who had moved into the houses of Greeks, will be left without shelter. A self-government representative of Tsalka denies the information saying that Greeks arrive in Tsalka for Easter to visit graves of their relatives. The article is not balanced, missing positions of Greek owners of houses, the Ministry of Refugees and Resettlement which bought some of those houses for ecomigrants and which is responsible for ensuring shelters for ecomigrants. The article also lacks any proven fact of evicting ecomigrants on that ground. The lead of the article provides rumors as a proven fact and the journalist did not undertake any due measure to double check those rumors. The article was focused on the problem of housing of ecomigrants and did not discuss the issue of property ownership of Greeks.



Al. Chavchavadze №54,
Entrance 5, Floor 4.
Tbilisi, Georgia 0179

Tel/Fax: (+99532) 2 22 00 16

E-mail: info@mdfgeorgia.ge
mdfgeo@gmail.com

WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE

Statements with the demand about timely and adequate investigation of Tsikhisdziri incident were made by the Public Defender of Georgia, Evangelical Baptist Union of Georgia, Muslims Administration, Batumi and Lazeti Eparchy, Georgian Young Lawyer's Association and Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC). In its statement, EMC viewed this incident as a continuation of those anti-Muslim attitudes which had been observed among separate groups of society. According to the organization: "Frequent conflicts with religious groups make it clear that this incident is not an incidental wrongdoing."

Property Disputes

Residents of the Ditsi village and Indians

The title of an article, "Indians are taking over the scorched Ditsi," published in Kviris Palitra of 15 April, is already loaded with negative connotation. The article contains the stereotypes: "Which Indians? Those who are black and bearded" as well as hate speech: "Even if they fight to death we will not allow them to use that land" (a resident of the Ditsi village). The article also draws an unjustified parallel with the armed conflict which also fans hatred:

"They sold everything whatever had been saved from Ossetians to Indians but I did not leave the village during the war with Ossetians and I will also not leave this land now. Our blood was spilt to maintain these lands!" (Guram Dughadze, a resident of the Ditsi village).

http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/m_m_a_n_a_g_e_r_.h_t_m_l?view=edition&id=205

Indians and residents of the Artsevi village

A conflict between locals and a foreign investor in the Kvemo Artsevi village was reported in news program of Maestro TV on 19 April. The report was one sided, covered from the perspective of locals alone. It contained four comments of which two were made by local residents, one by local governor and the remaining one by a machine operator hired by the investor to perform works. A position of the Indian investor was not represented at all in the report. The journalists did not even note whether she undertake any attempt to contact the investor and why his position was not represented in the report. Nor had the journalist

double checked the factual data with official agencies (Public Register) to find out what size of land was allocated for local residents as pastures, what size of land was privatized and how sufficient was the remaining size of land for locals. Even a representative of Gori municipality, Giorgi Khidasheli, spoke by assumptions: "It is leased but I have a feeling that it is sold." The problem was reported through emotional assessments of the journalist which added to aggressive sentiments of locals. Report also contained unjustified parallels:

"Our families will die of hunger if the Russian market is not opened. If they enter with tanks we will not allow them in." (Leri Eliauri)

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2025355

