

# NO TO PHOBIA!

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND GEORGIAN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

## MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE MONITORING

Tendencies observed over the period from 17 to 23 March:

- Hate speech by media (Asaval-Dasavali, Sakinpormi) was used towards the activity of concrete persons (a literary work “Fox-Trot” by Zurab Karumidze; Ukraine’s Prime Minister Arsen Yatsenyuk) and by a respondent (Aristarkh Rabinovych) towards political leaders of Ukraine by referring to Jewish origin of their ancestors. A religious servant (Dean Basil Akhvlediani) used
- hate speech and language of violence in regards with the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia marked on 17 May;
- Armenophobic sentiments towards concrete individuals (Zurab Karumidze, a candidate for Georgia’s ambassador to the UK; the former president Mikheil Saakashvili) were expressed by respondents who speculated about the ethnic origin of these persons;

**Continued on p.2**

## # 5, 17-23 MARCH



## REACTION



On 26 March, the editorial board of the *Panorama* program of *Imedi* TV channel responded to a joint statement of MDF, GDI and TDI regarding a report broadcast

in it. In a written [comment](#) given to Internet portal [media.ge](#), the editorial board agreed to that part of the joint statement which stated that opinions of Georgian citizens of Armenian descent regarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway were excessively generalized. The editorial board expressed the readiness to exercise higher degree of caution when reporting topics related to ethnic minorities and to take into account all constructive remarks.

It is a welcoming fact that the editorial board of *Panorama* program took a constructive approach towards the remarks made in the joint statement. However, during the following program which was broadcast on 30 March, the editorial board did not provide the audience with the information about the remarks in the joint statement or about its reaction to the statement in due form. Professional standards, however, require that media inform society about such issues by due means and in due form.

**See statement on p. 10**

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[WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE](http://WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE)

[WWW.GDI.GE](http://WWW.GDI.GE)



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## MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE MONITORING

### Beginning from p. 1

- Anti-Turkish statements were made both by respondents (Merab Gogoberidze, Free Georgia; Elizbar Javelidze, People's Assembly; Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Patriots' Alliance; Valeri Gelbakhiani, a lawyer) and media (*Asaval-Dasavali*);
- Turkey was portrayed as a threat for Samtskhe-Javakheti region in the context of NATO enlargement based on a statement made by an Armenia's MP, Shirak Torosyan. This topic along with the situation in Samtskhe-Javakheti was covered in breach of article 6 of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters by *Imedi* TV channel in its program *Panorama*;
- Unjustified references to ethnic and sexual identities were made by media (*Kviris Qronika*, *Sakinpormi*, *Geworld.ge*) in relation to political leaders of Ukraine;
- Ethnic and sexual identities of current political leaders of Ukraine were used in the context of anti-Western discourse as "alien" forces and values imposed by Americans on Ukrainians;
- Protection of minority rights was interpreted as the fight of the West against the Orthodox

Christianity both by respondents (Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, union of human rights defenders; Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Patriots' Alliance) and media (*Obiektivi*);

- The EU integration process was covered in a negative light through spreading incorrect facts about Greece and demanding that the Association Agreement include provision restricting minority rights (Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Patriots' Alliance);
- Religious discrimination and incitement to hatred was related to Jehovah's Witnesses, also opinions expressed by Bishop of Georgia's Evangelical Baptist Church Malkhaz Songulashvili regarding the developments in Ukraine as well as his participation in dismantling the statue of Stalin in the city of Telavi (*Asaval-Dasavali*);
- Along with homophobic statements, incorrect assessments were made about the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia on 17 May 2014 and unjustified associations were made between this issue and events of the Maidan in Ukraine as well as the United National Movement (media union *Obiektivi*; *Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper); moreover, the former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili linked

the events of 17 May 2013 to the United National Movement;

- Gender discrimination was expressed by media (*Kviris Qronika* newspaper) as well as a respondent (Givi Sikharulidze, actor);
- Misinformation was spread by media that implanting electronic chips in people for the aim of controlling them will be mandatory in the EU countries (*Obiektivi*).

### Examples of positive coverage:

- A photo exhibition featuring life of Dukhobors was covered in the prime time news program by the Georgian Public Broadcaster alone;
- It is worth noting that the Novruz Bayrami and Kloche Sare holidays were covered by broadcasters (*GPB*, *Rustavi 2*, *Maestro*, *Kavkasia*) in their prime time news programs in the context of the president and the prime minister of Georgia congratulating on these occasions and public officials attending festive events in Gardabani and Marneuli. At the same time, only *Rustavi 2* and *Kavkasia* provided comments of ethnic Azerbaijanis in their reports on Novruz Bayrami.

## HATE SPEECH

### ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist:** “I cannot really tell how the light and pragmatic-American conscience of Karumidze will be hit by Georgian, namely, Svan hoof, but one thing I do know is that appointing this nonentity as ambassador of Georgia will really mean spitting into the soul of the entire Georgia!

“A creature that assigns such qualities to and offends Svans - these genuine Georgians who are distinguished guardians of Georgian soul, must not be appointed as an ambassador; he may only be good for being appointed as a honorary chairman of a pervert supporter of Saakashvili’s regime Anjela Mazmaniani or the LGBT community!”

### PRIMETIME, 17-23 MARCH

**BASIL AKHVLEDIANI, a Dean:** “If they [participants of action against homophobia and transphobia] take to a square to condemn our god, go and offend them; if they fail to understand, beat them and your right hand will be blessed. This is what our greatest Father John Chrysostom teaches us.”

### SAKINPORMI, 17 MARCH

“‘Yatsenyuk and Turchinov must be killed for that. They must be knocked with a hammer on their heads,’ the director of Lev Gumilev center, Pavel Zarifulin, posted on social networks and provided a link of material with a title of detective type - Yatsenyuk Took Out Scythian Gold to America.”

[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18186:2014-03-17-13-59-09&catid=101:ucxoeti&Itemid=385#ixzz2wF5Y4zWi](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18186:2014-03-17-13-59-09&catid=101:ucxoeti&Itemid=385#ixzz2wF5Y4zWi)

### SAKINPORMI, 17 MARCH

**ARISTARKH RABINOVICH:** “Today, we are witnessing a more appalling event than Nazism and fascism. Wanton ugliness – these are Jews who support and justify Nazis... Even more, some finance the camps for training insurgents and Nazi parties. They are Rabbis who call Nazis the fighters for liberty.”

The respondent discusses here the Jewish origin of grandparents of concrete political leaders of Ukraine.

[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18177:2014-03-17-10-41-09&catid=102:samartali&Itemid=473#ixzz2wF3iMlIH](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18177:2014-03-17-10-41-09&catid=102:samartali&Itemid=473#ixzz2wF3iMlIH)



### BASIL AKHVLEDIANI, a

**Dean:** “If they [participants of action against homophobia and transphobia] take to a square to condemn our god, go and offend them; if they fail to understand, beat them and your right hand will be blessed. This is what our greatest Father John Chrysostom teaches us.”

## ARMENOPHOBIA, UNJUSTIFIED REFERENCE TO ETHNIC ORIGIN

### OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 19 MARCH

**TV VIEWER [phoning in]:** “Keep in mind that Zurab Karumidze is Armenian by ethnic origin. Armenian on father’s, mother’s side... Nothing must come as a surprise from a person who has been hiding and packaging his origin to date. Unfortunately, we have bad Georgians as well as bad Armenians.”

<http://www.obieqtivi.net/tv1.php?id=16215>

### ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**ALEQSANDRE ABDALADZE, Armenologist:** “We must not

forget these Araratians and Bebutovs as they represent the betrayal of and hostility to Georgian people! Had we known that well we would not have put the reins of government in the hands of Mikheil Ter Saakiant!... just like Araratians, Mikheil Ter Saakiant is a bitter enemy of Georgia!... We should not have elected this Ter Saakiant because he was an Armenian with modified surname! One should not expect anything good from a person who hides his origin and surname! It was such people that served as spies to our occupiers Persians, Ottomans, Russians and Americans!”

### KVIRIS QRONIKA, 17-23 MARCH

In an article in which a journalist and a confidential respondent discuss a polish etymology of the surname of MP Gia Volski, the respondent, without any justification, links this issue to Armenians with modified surname, thereby stereotyping Georgian citizens of Armenian origin as people modifying their surnames and hiding their ethnic descent.

**UNIDENTIFIED RESPONDENT:** “If Ter is added, there are good Armenian surnames too, but they hide them.”

## ANTI-TURKISH ATTITUDES

KVIRIS QRONKA, 17-23 MARCH

**MERAB GOGOBERIDZE, Free Georgia:**

“... when Dumbadze supported the construction of a mosque, I took a maquette of the mosque to his three-story house and told him ‘why should a mosque be built in the center of Batumi, let you give your house to Turks’...”

**ELIZBAR JAVELIDZE, People’s Assembly:**

“If Russia disintegrates... quite a serious threat will come from Turkey. I have said once and repeat it now that Turkey has not yet got used to the idea that it lost Adjara. There are forces who demand the return of Adjara. Bad processes are under way in Adjara. Tens of thousands of Turks were granted Georgian citizenship during Sakashvili’s rule.”

**GELA ZADELASHVILI, journalist:** “...it came to no one’s head to ask Pamuk why he is dreaming about the demise of our compatriots?! But they do not dare to ask him because he is the Noble Prize winner... I do not know how others feel, but I do not give a damn to what (prize winner) is a person who

intends to destroy Georgians!”

OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 21 MARCH

**DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI, Patriots’**

**Alliance:** “Georgian pheasants no longer exist, the country have been destroyed. A third rate Turkish goods are imported and billions [of lari] flow out of Georgia... We pay money and they bring in rubbish... And we say that it is our strategic partner. It is a strategic vampire rather than a strategic partner, which takes out money earned through labor of Georgian people...”

“Turkey already took 30% of our territory and even a century has not passed since then... and we already call it a friend, not an occupier. We no longer remember anything and are going to give it Batumi as a gift.”

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2290232](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2290232)  
[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2290948](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2290948)

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**VALERI GELBAKHIANI, lawyer:** “I can no longer recognize Batumi; one cannot understand whether it is a Georgian or a Turkish city, Batumi citizens themselves feel humiliated.”

## ANTI-TURKISH SENTIMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THREAT

The print media (*Rezonansi, Alia*), news agencies (*InterPressNews, Sakinpormi*), TV channels (*Kavkasia, Imedi*) extensively covered a statement made by Armenia’s MP Shirak Torotsyan who speculated that Georgia’s NATO integration will be followed by stationing Turkish troops in Georgia and in such event, threatened with revolt in Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

**SHIRAK TOROSYAN, Armenia’s MP:** “Ethnic Armenians will not tolerate stationing of Turkish troops in a territory where they live regardless of which country that territory falls within.”

While *Alia* (19 March), *InterressNews* (18 March) and *Sakinpormi* (17 March) covered the position of the Armenian MP alone, *Rezonansi* (19 March) newspaper provided comments of Georgian citizens of Armenian origin too and underlined that such statements are unfounded.

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## ANTI-TURKISH SENTIMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THREAT

Beginning from p. 4

A news program of *Kavkasia* TV (19 March) covered the statement of the Armenian MP in the context of Georgia-Russia relations. The report included comments of representatives of Georgian government who said that such threats were unfounded; also a comment of an expert who spoke about a probability of religious conflict.

**ZAAL KASRELASHVILI, Confederation of Caucasian people:** “Today, it is more convenient to raise a new topic and incite a so-called religious conflict in Georgia.”  
[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2288241](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2288241)

## UNJUSTIFIED REFERENCE TO ETHNIC AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Unjustified references to ethnic and sexual identities were made by *Kviris Palitra* newspaper (“Shocking truth about the past of the leaders of Maidan” – “In the Sodomite whirlpool”, 17-23 March), Internet portals *Geworld.ge* (“New leaders of Ukraine – gays and robbers”, 20 March) and *Sakinpormi* (Aristarkh Abramovych: “Jews supporting Nazism is extreme ugliness,” 17 March) with regard to of Ukrainian leaders.

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=5742>  
[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18177:2014-03-17-10-41-09&catid=102:samartali&Itemid=473#ixzz2wF3jMljH](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18177:2014-03-17-10-41-09&catid=102:samartali&Itemid=473#ixzz2wF3jMljH)

## ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

GEWORLD.GE, 19 MARCH

**DAVIT MKHEIDZE, journalist:** “Arsen Yatsenyuk (main ideologist of Maidan), Aleksandr Turchinov (the Baptists speaker of parliament), Aleksandr Muzichko a.k.a. “Sashko Belyi” and Dmitri Yaroshin (terrorists), Arsen Avakov and Aleksandr Kirsh (both homosexuals), Yulia Tymoshenko (mother of corruption in Ukraine), Vitali Klitschko (partner of a crime boss), Oleg Tyagnibok (staunchest fascist) – this is the real face of American democracy and an incomplete list of slaves of the White House, through which the USA managed to stage a coup in the fascist-Baptist-queer state.

“On the one hand, there is immoral, perverted West which openly tries to impose its new ‘values’ on the world, in short, to Sodomize the entire world, and on the other hand, there is Orthodox Christian Russia; let me remind readers that Russia is the only state in the world which legally banned the propaganda of homosexuality for 100 year, i.e. until at least 2112, gay prides will not be held in the territory of Russia!”

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=5729>

OBIJEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 18 MARCH

**NIKOLOZ MZHAVANADZE, union of human rights defenders:** “That policy is mainly pursued which Europeans want; that’s why the emphasis, today, is placed on gender equality, LGBT community... Money is spent on LGBT community... There does not exist a problem of violating the rights of sexual minorities.”

**MAGDA KOTRIKADZE, presenter:** “This is artificially created in order to receive funding, as it is the case with ethnic minorities...”

**NIKOLOZ MZHAVANADZE:** “Therefore the foreign money works against the country; to portray us as savages, as if some groups do not have rights here – they are spanked, beaten. Large amounts of money also flow in to discredit the Church.”

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2286973](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2286973)

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## ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

Beginning from the p. 5

**OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 21 MARCH**

**DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI, Patriots' Alliance:**

“Let’s write [into the Association Agreement] that we do not ask for same-sex marriage in Georgia, that our mode of life will be preserved, that we will not be required that Armenian and Azerbaijani languages be granted status of regional languages... that we are not demanded that Meskhetian Turks are repatriated except those people who are ethnic Georgians, because every Georgian has the right to live in Georgia...”

“Europe actually destroyed Greece, erased its economy, trampled upon its culture, morals, orthodox Christianity... They [Europe] even demand that women be allowed to the Mount Athos, et cetera... Greece with its territory and buildings now actually belongs to Europe.”

**BONDO MDZINARISHVILI, presenter:**

“In other words, this is the fight for Orthodox Christianity.”

**DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI:** “Of course and seeing that, pro-Russian sentiments have been on the rise there because Russia is the Orthodox Christian country too...”

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2290993](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2290993)

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2290219](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2290219)

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2290248](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2290248)

**GEWORLD.GE 20 MARCH**

**ELIZBAR JAVELIDZE, people’s Assembly:**

“In that document which Panjikidze signed, rights of sexual minorities are set out in 17 articles and they explicitly require that this must be protected. Now the question arises: are gay prides, same sex marriage our historical choice?! Or is it the offense of religion and church, which is an ordinary phenomenon in Europe?!”

**ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH**

**GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist:** “No one excludes that Europe and America slice up Ukraine just like they did in case of Georgia with the war of August 2008!”

**GEWORLD.GE 20 MARCH**

**TAMAR OVASHVILI, Union of unemployed for employment:**

“Such non-governmental organizations invented by the US intelligence service are a very effective tool for Orange of Velvet revolutions... Leaders of these organizations propagate perversity and immorality through press and TV channels too and mask it with discussions about democratic values and freedom. These organizations which speak about the protection of religious or sexual minorities, artificially create problems and then receive money for that.”

<http://geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=5739>



**DAVIT TARKHAN-MOURAVI,**

**Patriots’ Alliance:**

“Let’s write [into the Association Agreement] that we do not ask for same-sex marriage in Georgia... that we will not be required that Armenian and Azerbaijani languages be granted status of regional languages”...

## RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION AND INCITEMENT TO HATRED

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**JABA KHUBUA, journalist:** “If we think that the translation of Bible and The Knight in the Panters’ Skin is dangerous for the Georgian state, the publication of Jehovah’s Witness’s magazine in Mengrelian language is, naturally, twice as dangerous for the Georgian state!”

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist:** “Taking into account what Saakashvili did with ‘liberated-from-Aslan-Abashidze’ Adjara, one can easily guess what was a bitter enemy of Georgian Orthodox Church [Malkhaz] Songulashvili doing there and why a muezzin’s prayer from a minaret in Qatar sounded like a lullaby (or to be more precise, a Halloween song) to him!...

“Yet another fact which shows full well who Malkhaz Songulashvili is: on 31 December 2013, upon the decision of Telavi municipality manned with pervert liberals from the Republican party and with the participation of one of the founders of Tabula magazine, the Foundation for Civic Education, the statue of Stalin, which was restored by citizens, was dismantled in Telavi!”



**GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist:**

“Taking into account what Saakashvili did with ‘liberated-from-Aslan-Abashidze’ Adjara, one can easily guess what was a bitter enemy of Georgian Orthodox Church [Malkhaz] Songulashvili doing there and why a muezzin’s prayer from a minaret in Qatar sounded like a lullaby (or to be more precise, a Halloween song) to him!”

## DISCRIMINATION ON THE GROUND OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

KAVKASIA, SPEKTRI, 17 MAY



**VAKHTANG RCHEULISHVILI, former MP:** “Do you like their perverts, homosexuality, that immorality? Who will like that?! Am I mad to like that? “

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2286290](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2286290)

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 17-23 MARCH

**GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist:** “Everyone must know that so many whores and perverts seen on TVs and them propagating immorality is a well funded and thought out propaganda campaign!”

OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 18 MARCH

**NIKOLOZ MZHAVANADZE, union of human rights defenders:** “Patriarch also said that actually this LGBT community uses one and the same media; brainwashing is underway ...”

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2286972](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2286972)

## SPECULATION ON 17 MAY TOPIC

### PIRVELI, 17 MARCH

**BASIL AKHVLEDIANI, Dean:** “We do not expect events similar to 17 May; we expect worse – I can promise you that, because we live in the Orthodox country and our faith considers it a sin, a deadly sin. If 17 May 2013 was not a lesson for a segment of society, then they must expect way tougher results this year. Archbishops will probably decide how to react to such people taking to streets again.”

[http://pia.ge/show\\_news.php?id=7792](http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=7792)



### PRIMETIME, 17 MARCH



**DAVIT ISAKADZE, Dean:** “It is probably better to hold a plebiscite which will define the attitude towards the same-sex marriage and LGBT propaganda and give it a form of a law in order to put everything to right. LGBT society has a possibility to live freely if they hold their gatherings in a remote place. The government must ensure that...”

### OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 18 MARCH

**NINO RATISHVILI, presenter:** “17 May is approaching; we saw what happened on the square, we saw there representatives of the United National Movement, we saw angry Mikheil Saakashvili.”

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2288204](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2288204)

### PIRVELI, 19 MARCH

**LADO SADGHOBELASHVILI, the union homeland, language, faith:** “17 May is approaching and I call on the government not to allow an LGBT event planned on that day because a gay pride on Rustaveli Avenue irritates 99 percent of Georgians. It is the obligation of the government to protect the rights of those 99 percent and not the remaining one percent. More importantly, broadcasters must not propagate all that. Of course, well-financed organizations defending gays and lesbians will take to streets on that day. There will be provocation as well; someone may get a hit to head, but we must not be surprised because this happens in all developed countries. Therefore, I warn LGBT defenders – let them say no to grants and come to their senses, or else they risk receiving a storm very soon!”

[http://pia.ge/show\\_news.php?id=8019&lang=geo](http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=8019&lang=geo)

### BIDZINA IVANISHVILI'S STATEMENT ON THE EVENTS OF 17 MAY 2013

A statement of the founder of the non-governmental organization Citizen, Bidzina Ivanishvili, that LGBT representatives have always been beaten during actions whilst the scale of 17 May 2013 action was supported by the United National Movement was covered by Tabula TV (20 March), Internet portal Netgazeti (19 March) and news agency Pirveli (19 March). The host of Tabula TV talk show Teorema called this assessment the lie whilst Netgazeti noted that Ivanishvili did not specify the ground based on which he alleged the involvement of the United National Movement in this process. Netgazeti also published a letter of non-governmental organization Identoba to Bidzina Ivanishvili, in which the NGO evaluated the statement of the former prime minister as misinformation.

**BIDZINA IVANISHVILI, Citizen:** "These people have always been beaten... It was a large scale event because members of the United National Movement assisted them, incited them too much, but the state managed to ensure that those people were not beaten and actually, this was for the first time... I remember I was holding a cabinet meeting and I made several calls to Irakli [Garibashvili] and to Father Iakob too, trying to regulate these processes."

<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/29351/>

<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/opinion/29388/>

[http://pia.ge/show\\_news.php?id=7997&lang=geo](http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=7997&lang=geo)

### PREJUDICES

#### OBIKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO, 17 MARCH

**NINO RATISHVILI, presenter:** "If memory serves me will, from 2014 – 2015 it will be compulsory, not voluntary, for EU countries to implant chips in people, starting from newborns to any citizen... There are people in the West who do that voluntarily so far..."

[http://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=2288171](http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2288171)

### GENDER DISCRIMINATION

#### KVIRIS QRONIKA, 17-23 MARCH

**TAMAR OKRUASHVILI, journalist:** "... he has an old mother, two sons, 'devoted-as-a-dog' wife and 'devoted-as-a-wife' dog."



Continued on p.10

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Beginning from p. 9

### REPORTIORI, 18 MARCH

**GIVI SIKHARULIDZE, actor:** “My response to gender equality is the following – let every woman work as drivers of tractors, combine harvesters, let them plow and spend day and night working like donkeys. Men do that to sustain families; if women want gender equality let them work like men and let them not strive to become ministers, parliamentarians, et cetera... Can one call the gender equality when a wife beats her husband eight times and a husband’s name is Tina while the wife’s name is Zhora?!... But there is no love today – no one loves anyone. That is not love but profanation. Turn on TVs and you will hear nothing else but talks about prostitution! Majority of women living in my neighborhood are whores. Only one woman is a decent person. Prostitution was a shame before whereas now decency is the shame – that is to what lows we fell.”

<http://www.reportiori.ge/?menuid=3&id=20306>

### JOINT STATEMENT ON IMEDI TV COMPANY’S REPORT CONCERNING SITUATION IN SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION



We express our concern over a report about Georgia’s Samtskhe-Javakheti Region, which was aired on *Panorama* program of *Imedi* TV company on 23 March. We believe that the report violated a number of provisions of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, inter alia, by misleading the audience and artificially dramatizing the situation.

We do hope that the report does not express intentional editorial policy of the TV company and call on the management of *Imedi* TV to react to the violations by the presenter of the program and the author of the report of following provisions of the Code of Conduct:

According to Article 33(1) of the Code, “Broadcasters should avoid drawing unjustified parallels between ethnic or religious origin and negative events, including associating activities of specific individuals with the entire group.”

The presenter of the program, Soso Katsitadze, violated the mentioned provision by drawing an unjustified parallel between the annexation of Crimea and a statement of the member of Armenian parliament, Shirak Torosyan, about a

Continued on p.11

## JOINT STATEMENT ON IMEDI TV COMPANY'S REPORT CONCERNING SITUATION IN SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION

revolt in Javakheti, and associating it (without identifying either a source or origin of this statement) with the position of ethnic Armenians living in Georgia.

**SOSO KATSITADZE, presenter:**

“What are the attitudes in Javakheti after the annexation of Crimea? The member of Armenian parliament Shirak Torosian threatens with the revolt in the event of Georgia's NATO membership. Indeed, Georgian citizens of ethnic descent do not have uniform attitude towards the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. Here the reason is NATO and Turkey too.”

An attempt to manipulate with the public opinion can be observed on the part of both the presenter and the author of report, journalist Guram Rogava, since: (1) the respondents selected for the report are only those individuals who share similar opinions; (2) these opinions are generalized through associating them with the entire group of Gdescent; and (3) these opinions are covered as triggering anti-Turkish and anti-NATO sentiments.

**GURAM ROGAVA, journalist:**

“However, citizens of Armenian ethnicity living in Georgia are against this strategically important project [Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway]. For them the problem is Turkey.”

The reporter attributes this attitude to the entire ethnic group (Georgian citizens of Armenian descent) relying on the comment of a single respondent - Mels Torosian, the editor of the Akhali Satave newspaper, who, for his part, speaks about potential threats based on rumors, not facts:

**MELS TOROSIAN, the editor of the Akhali Satave newspaper:**

“The key aim of the railway is the unification of Turkish people. That caused huge discontent because those firms which are constructing this railway have already spread reports that the Georgian government will entrust the security of the railway to Azerbaijanis. You are better aware of the relationship between Azerbaijan and Armenia than I. The railway means not only the rails but stretches of land running along them – a kilometer on one side and a kilometer on another side; that means that Azerbaijanis will control the entire Javakheti.”

The Imedi TV did not undertake measures to ensure due accuracy and avoid misleading the audience. The report did not provide the position of the Georgian government concerning allegation articulated by the respondent that the government intends to entrust the security of the railway to Azerbaijanis. By failing to seek comment from the government, the media outlet proved to be spreading rumors and artificially encouraging tensions. Even more, it is absolutely unacceptable for the journalist to generalize the theory proposed by the respondent and cover it in the context of threats and ethnic conflicts.

**GURAM ROGAVA, journalist:**

“The aim is the unification of Azerbaijan and Turkey and to force Armenians living in Georgia to emigrate.”

Imedi TV company violated Article 13(2) of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters (Broadcasters shall provide reliable and accurate information, shall not report any untrue or misleading information); shall not report any untrue or misleading information); Article 14(4) (As a rule, broadcasters should not rely on a single source but seek to obtain information from other sources); Article 16 (4) (Broadcasters should separate fact from

**Continued on p.12**

## JOINT STATEMENT ON IMEDI TV COMPANY'S REPORT CONCERNING SITUATION IN SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI REGION

Beginning from p. 11

opinion. One-sided interpretation of opinions should be avoided); Article 18(1, 2) (1. To ensure a fair and impartial coverage of political events, broadcasters should bear in mind that impartiality does not mean providing equal time to every opinion but ensuring an adequate coverage of significant opinions. 2. The programme or report will be considered biased if it lacks comprehensive information on important facts, is based on minor facts, misleads the audience intentionally or unintentionally, or conveys biased views of a person in a hidden form.)

Covering the rights issue – the status of regional language – as something triggering separatism is absolutely unacceptable, especially when according to the comments provided in the report, the majority of respondents (Vahagn Chakhalyan, Artak Gagrielyan, Davit Rstakyan) view the portrayal of this issue in such a light as a provocation and express their desire to live in Georgia as in territorially integrated and unified state.

The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters also provides the norms designed to avoid the manipulation with the public opinion. A public opinion poll cited in the report, which was conducted by a local newspaper, suggests that 70 percent of the local population favors the European integration whilst 30 percent is against. However, the report fails to provide necessary information about the public opinion poll such as: the number

Even more, the report provides an alternative poll (vox pop) conducted by the journalist himself, in which anti-American and anti-European attitudes are presented against pro-Russian attitudes. Article 17(3) of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters requires: “When reporting interactive poll results, broadcasters should make it clear that such surveys are not representative of the population as a whole, reliable or accurate as they only represent the views of self-selected audience.” This norm was ignored by the Imedi TV company.

We believe that the Imedi TV company must exercise a higher degree of caution in covering such sensitive topics that concern various ethnic groups and relations between them and must follow Article 32(1) of the Code of Conduct for Broadcasters, which requires that “Broadcasters shall report accurate, reliable, balanced, proportional information on all cultural, religious, ethnic and social groups living in Georgia, with due regard to the principles of fairness and impartiality.”

We express the hope that Imedi TV company will adequately react to the report aired on Panorama program and by doing so, will first and foremost display its accountability and respect towards society.

**Media Development Fund, MDF**

**Georgian Democracy Initiative, GDI**

**Tolerance and Diversity Institute, TDI**

## DIVERSITY SCHOOL

On 22 March the first training for students was held in the Diversity School. Welcome speeches were given by Giga Zedania, rector of the Ilia University, Florian Gubler, Deputy Ambassador of Switzerland in Georgia and Chairperson of the Media Development Foundation Board Tamar Kintsurashvili.



Non-Georgian-speaking students enrolled in Ilia State University and Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University by quota system, as well as the students of David Aghmashenebeli University of Georgia are the first participants of the Civil Journalism Course.

The program includes thematic lectures and discussions. On 22 March representative of the Tolerance Center at the Public Defender's Office Beka Mindiashvili met the students in this format. He delivered the lecture on the institutional framework of the Tolerance Center and the tolerance theories followed by discussion.

**MDF  
GDI**

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