

NO TOPHOBIA!

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND GEORGIAN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE WEEK

The following tendencies were observed during the period from 7 to 13 April:

- Main topic of the week - *Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper linked an anti-discrimination draft law considered by parliament to only one social group – LGBT community, and covered it from the homophobic standpoint;
- Hate speech was used against LGBT persons (*Asaval-Dasavali* newspaper) and the former president of Georgia (stage director Robert Sturua); violence was encouraged by an MP (Zaza Papuashvili, Georgian Dream), a journalist (*Kviris Qronika* newspaper) and an incognito respondent;
- A reference to Chinese was made by a media outlet (talk show *Spektri*, Kavkasia TV) in the context of historical threats;
- Citizens of Georgia were segregated by ethnicity and religion as well as geographic belonging (non-Orthodox residents of Mtskheta) in a sermon of Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II;
- Maestro TV's report of the International Roma Day was an example of positive coverage; however, a report by Imedi TV, which also contained positive examples of

Continued on p. 6

8, 7-13 APRIL



MEMORANDUM WITH THE COUNCIL OF RELIGIONS

10 April 2014

On 10 April, the Media Development Foundation (MDF) and the Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI), on the one hand, and on the other, the Council of Religions under the Public Defender of Georgia signed a memorandum within the framework of a civil society campaign “No to Phobia!”

The memorandum envisages the cooperation of the parties in combating hate speech and discrimination on any ground; using existing legal or self-regulatory mechanisms as well as public forums to react to instances of hate speech and discrimination, often expressed by the political class or media itself, towards separate individuals or groups of individuals; establishing the culture of tolerance in society through conducting public awareness campaigns as well as voicing strong civil condemnation and public criticism of separate facts of hate and discrimination.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Anti-discrimination draft law	3
Hate speech	3
Encouragement of violence	4
Segregation on ethnic and religious grounds	4-5
International Roma Day	5
Deported Meskhetians	6
Anti-Western attitudes	6
Protest of Patriarchate's university against an alleged construction of minaret	7
Homophobia	8

WWW.MDFGEORGIA.GE

WWW.GDI.GE



unag
UN Association of Georgia



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The newsletter was made possible by the generous support of the American people rendered through the USA Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of the newsletter are the responsibility of Media Development Foundation (MDF) and Georgian Democracy Initiative do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID or the USA.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE WEEK

Continued from p. 1

Integration, strengthened certain negative stereotypes not only about this concrete ethnic group but also about other ethnic groups too. At the same time, a journalist breached an ethical norm by showing Roma children's faces against their will and describing their resistance to be filmed as aggression;

- A media outlet (news agency Pirweli) offered a material on deported Meskhetians based on a single source alone and did not provide a position of the Georgian government towards the process of repatriation of these people; moreover, the news agency used an improper term – “Meskhetian Turks;”
- Geworld.ge interpreted the acquisition of Russian passports by residents of Samtskhe-Javakheti region as a threat and linked it to anti-Western sentiments without any substantiation;
- The Georgian Public Broadcaster and Internet portal Netgazeti covered a protest of representatives of the Patriarchate's university against possible construction of minaret in the Shuakhevi district. Neither of these media outlets sought information from representatives of local self-government to find out whether there was a request or a corresponding application made for the construction of the religious building. Such information would have added clarity to the issue covered. Both reports contained Turkophobic statements, however, the report of the Georgian Public Broadcaster was more balanced as it offered comments of local Muslims too;

- Homophobic statements mostly came from journalists (Asaval-Dasavali, Alia, Kviris Qronika newspapers) and clerics (Davit Isakadze, Union of Orthodox Parents); attempts to associate rights of LGBT persons with an incest were made by a respondent (Gela Nikolaishvili, lawyer), and by a journalist in relation to 17 May opposition rally (Kviris Palitra newspaper);
- Gender stereotypes were used by Catholicos-Patriarch.

Examples of positive coverage:

- Netgazeti extensively covered expert opinions regarding the anti-discrimination draft law; also, developments regarding the case in the European court of Human Rights concerning an incident on 17 May 2012; and a negative feedback on a constitutional initiative of the Prime Minister concerning the issue of marriage;
- Host of talk show Teorema on Tabula TV (10 April) inquired whether the leader of Free Georgia Kakha Kukava changed his position towards LGBT and religious groups as well as towards European integration after he had engaged in an information campaign “My Choice Is Europe” conducted by the civil sector. The talk show also contained vox-pop which showed that the issue of same-sex marriage has never been on the agenda in Georgia.

MAIN TOPIC OF THE WEEK – ANTI-DISCRIMINATION DRAFT LAW

The main topic of the week – the consideration of anti-discrimination draft law by parliament was covered in a balanced way by broadcast media whereas Asaval-Dasavali newspaper and its respondents associated this legislative initiative with only one group, discussing it from a homophobic standpoint.



ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April

GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: “In short, after the adoption of this draft law queers will become a norm just like people of different sex, nationality and skin color?!”

GURAM PALAVANDISHVILI, philologist: “But why do they force us to acknowledge queers as a norm? Why should we view a queer as equal to, for example, a woman, an Egyptian or a Muslim?! Why then we do not declare pedophilia, drug abuse or necrophilia as a norm?!... In other words, they will have a legal right to openly propagate their mode of life, to demand the right to assembly, so on and so forth!...”

“Putting ‘sexual orientation’ on a same list means that the European Union demands from us that homosexuality be recognized as a norm.”

HATE SPEECH

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April



GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: “Dear readers, when I openly and straightforwardly write that pederasts are ill and need medical treatment, some advocates – who are equally ill and need treatment themselves – start

kicking up the fuss that Asaval-Dasavali and Giorgi Gigauri use hate speech and encourage hate, evil and conflict in the country!”

KVIRIS PALITRA, 7-13 April

ROBERT STURUA, stage director: “I wonder what kind of people are those who defend our beloved Saaka? – This person who is a murderer, ignorant, pervert, rogue, stupid, impudent, thief, sorehead, hypocrite... If you cut his body you can see nothing else but worms of ambitions in his festering body!”

ENCOURAGEMENT OF VIOLENCE

KVIRIS PALITRA, 7-13 April

ZAZA PAPUASHVILI, Georgian Dream MP: “Slapping Nugzar Tsiklauri should not cause such uproar...

“Parliament is not a place for skirmish but outside it one can engage in fistfight with these people...

“If a conflict erupts, believe me, everything will end up in battering them.”



KVIRIS QRONIKA, 7-13 April

Incognito respondent: “We will ambush Kakha Kaladze somewhere and tie him up and then hold him to account whilst throw Molotov cocktails at those new minibuses and burn them down – Is it that they want to eat and do not care that they will make our families left in streets?!”

KHATUNA ELBAKIDZE, journalist:

“People on Facebook congratulated one another about Tsiklauri been beaten up and were elated that Tsiklauri, after all, received what he deserved. Poor Nugzar Tsiklauri! How could a person become so much hated that his beating causes mass elation?”

CHINESE AS THE THREAT

KAVKASIA TV, TALK SHOW SPEKTRI, 9 April

DAVIT AKUBARDIA, host: “We existed during Mongols, existed during Shah Abbas and thousands of other invaders and will always exist... even if Chinese come to our doors, we will still exist.”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2304862

SEGREGATION ON ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUNDS

GEORGIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER, NEWS PROGRAM MOAMBE, 13 April

CATHALICOS-PATRIARCH ILIA II: “We quite often hear that the rights of minorities must be protected – those of small people, having small religion, being in minority; but we must ponder on who will protect Georgian people. God will protect and shield Georgian people.”

<http://1tv.ge/news-view/67307>

PIRVELI, 8 April

CATHALICOS-PATRIARCH ILIA II: “It is unacceptable for residents of Mtskheta to be non-believers, not baptized and not married in church; it is unacceptable to live in a saint city and not pray before going to bed and in the morning. All this is necessary for happiness.”

http://www.pia.ge/show_news.php?id=10306&lang=geo

Continued on p. 5

INJUSTIFIED REFERENCE TO ETHNIC IDENTITY

PRIMETIME, 7 April

The newspaper published comments of representatives of society about non-Georgian origin of actor Duta Skhirtladze:

“As it transpired Skhirtladze is his mother’s maiden name whereas his real surname is Valitski and how dare he speaks about being Georgian, even more so, about losing Georgian origin?!”

http://ptpress.ge/index.php?year=2014&magazine_id=377&topic_id=8930#.U0mNV_mSxp4

SAKINPORMI, 7 April

ARNO KHIDIRBEGISHVILI, editor-in-chief: “But if we believe the principle that a person belongs to that nationality the language of which is the one which he/she was raised with, speaks the best and reasons with, then Misha Saakian is not half Armenian and half Georgian whilst Yulka Grigian is not half Armenian and half Jew.

http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18420:2014-04-07-09-29-30&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#ixzz2yI9sIMCD

INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY

MAESTRO TV, NEWS PROGRAM, 9 April

It was a positive development that Maestro TV covered a conference held in relation to the International Roma Day with the participation of Roma living in various regions of Georgia, and focused on the challenges to their civil integration.

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2304231

IMEDI TV, PANORAMA PROGRAM, 13 April

A report of Panorama program contained positive examples of integration, inter alia, depicting everyday life of Roma of various denominations; however, in certain cases, it also strengthened negative stereotypes about this concrete ethnic group.

In particular, the report began with footage depicting Roma beginning in streets, clearly showing faces of children; this may prove to harm further re-socialization of these children.

A journalist strengthened a stereotype that Roma, Kurds and other ethnic minorities earn leaving by begging in streets:

MARIKA BAKURADZE, journalist: “Roma who take to streets to earn living divide the territory of their activity with Kurds. Sololaki and Didube are their territories whilst the remaining territory belong to Kurds and other ethnic minorities.”

Moreover, the journalist explains the behavior of children, covering video camera lenses with their hands as they did not want to be filmed by an aggressive nature of these children; this is the breach of ethical standard.

MARIKA BAKURADZE, journalist: “These minorities are distinguished for their aggressive nature which is not characteristic for Roma.”

A comment of a school director in the report strengthens a stereotype towards Roma children.

Continued on p. 6

Continued from p. 5

NARGIZ JINCHARADZE, director of No 5 school in Kobuleti: “They do not inherit a tradition of obtaining education from family. Their parents do not have sufficient education either to assist their children.”

DEPORTED MESKHETIANS

The news agency, Pirveli, published a material headlined “Georgia Said No to the Return of ‘Meskhetian Turks’” (8 April), which is based on an interview of heads of Vatani organization, Dzavid Aliyev and Fuad Pepinov, to Rosiiskaia Gazeta.

The news agency applies a wrong term “Meskhetian Turks” towards those people whom the Soviet regime deported from the Georgian territory in the 1940s. Ethnic identity of person is a realm of self-identification and media should better apply neutral terms towards these people such as “Meskhetians” or “Deported Meskhetians.”

Moreover, the news agency did not provide the Georgian government’s position on the process of repatriation of these people and relied on only a single source.

http://www.pia.ge/show_news.php?id=10494&lang=geo

ANTI WESTERN ATTITUDES

KVIRIS PALITRA, 7-13 April

LEVAN VASADZE, businessman: “Is our country independent or is it an insignificant republic which is still run by ambassadors and non-governmental organizations financed by the West? Firstly, the West has no right to interfere in processes of the sovereign country and if the West is just and democratic, why could it not understand our truth? If it is unjust and undemocratic, why then Georgia is striving towards the West? The West needs Georgia in this region very much, perhaps to no lesser degree than Georgia needs the West.”

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 APRIL

GURAM PALAVANDISHVILI, philologist: “...if we want to build a state which is based on true, Georgian, national values and which respects Christian values, we must speak up against legalizing homosexuality as a norm!... Otherwise, we will soon find ourselves in a similar situation with Europe and America where sexual minorities dictate the agenda!”

GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: “And if without establishing homosexuality as a norm, the EU will deny us the integration?”

GURAM PALAVANDISHVILI, philologist: “Then, we must say no to such EU which disregards thousand-year-old Georgia traditions and belief!”

ANZOR ABRALAVA, Solidaroba: “Do these organizations [EU, NATO] need us as expendables?”

ELGUJA KHODELI, Earth Is Our Home: “Unfortunately, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali have already been lost for Georgia whereas the remaining 80% of the territory is occupied by the United States.”

SAKINFORMI, 7 April

ARNO KHIDIRBEGISHVILI, editor-in-chief: “We must admit that ‘sweet couple’ is talented - in their hatred towards Russia they outstripped all ‘founding fathers’ throughout the history of the USA, while contemporary Russophobes of the McCain type, when looking at their best trainees, pee either from joy or from involuntary urination which they developed after being prisoners in Vietnam...”

http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18420:2014-04-07-09-29-30&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#ixzz2yI9KhK1g

UNSUBSTANTIATED REFERENCE TO THREATS

GEWORLD.GE, 10 April

KOTE KERESLIDZE: “They [residents of Samtskhe-Javakheti region] are against any union but the Russian Federation... Such a lack of attention from the government, who portray themselves as Dalai Lamas and preach us from TV screens about almost degenerated European values, encourages these people towards separatism and it means that we will soon get yet another hotspot in the face of Samtskhe-Javakheti.”

<http://www.geworld.ge/ViewGE.php?G=10010>

PROTEST OF PATRIARCHATE'S UNIVERSITY AGAINST AN ALLEGED CONSTRUCTION OF MINARET

Internet portal Netgazeti (10 April) and the news program of the Georgian Public Broadcaster (11 April) covered a protest of students and teachers of Tbel Abuseridze university of the Patriarchate and Orthodox congregation about alleged construction of a minaret next to mufti administration building in the Shuakhevi district, which, according to both media outlets, was not confirmed by the Muslims' mufti administration itself. Neither of the media outlets approached representatives of local self-government to double check the information and to find out whether there was a request or relevant application for the construction of the religious building. That would have added clarity to the issue.

In both materials, participants in the protest associated this construction with the neighboring state, Turkey, and make Turkophobic statements.

MOAMBE

ARCHBISHOP OF SKHALTA EPARCHY: “This is Georgia and here Georgian people rule, not Turkish people.”

<http://1tv.ge/news-view/67198>

NETGAZETI

MARINA KONTSELIDZE, a resident of Keda: “No one wants Turkish schools and kindergartens to open here; nor do anyone wants a mosque and a minaret to be erected near the school.”

FATHER SPIRIDON: “They think this territory is theirs; every village has a mosque and there is no shortage of that, but they pursue absolutely different interests. We demand that illegality, infidelity be prohibited and their wantonness be stopped! We will not allow Turks to erect a minaret... This is the Great Turkish Invasion.

“In Batumi they possess districts and streets; now they infiltrate upper Adjara and want to settle here with their families and demand that kindergartens and schools are opened.”

<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/30257/.htm>

The report of the Georgian Public Broadcaster was more balanced and alongside a comment from mufti administration, contained comments of local Muslims who declare that they are Georgians and pray in their small-size praying house.

SPECULATIONS ON RELIGIOUS TOPICS

Speculations on religious topics by newspapers Kviris Qeonika and Asaval-Dasavali as well as news agency Pirweli were related to the arrest of defrocked priest Basil Mkalavishvili by the government in 2004, for assaulting Jehovah's Witnesses and Baptists.

The media outlets directly blame the former president Mikheil Saakashvili and the then MP Giga Bokeria for the arrest of the religious servant, calling them as "Devil's disciples" (Kviris Qeonika), "Georgian Mankurts," "sect of Saakashvili" (Asaval-Dasavali); whilst both media outlets and the cleric himself described the death of a son of Gogi Tatukhashvili who led the operation of arrest as the divine retribution.

KVIRIS QRONIKA, 7-14 April

DAVIT METREVELI, journalist: "God is just and gives its due to everyone both for virtue and for sin; today Giga Boketi and politicians supporting that special operation are being summoned to courts whilst direct executors of it are being punished in various forms. It's a pity that four participants in this special operation are no longer alive whereas two are confined to wheelchairs. Giga Bokeria is an enemy of Georgian church and personally, Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia. It was exactly he who led a special operation 'Two Patriarchs' which was planned in the United States and aimed at triggering conflict inside the Georgian church, dividing members of synod and at the end of the day, creating a rift in the Church."

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April



FATHER BASIL MKALAVISHVILI: "I warn anyone of those who participated in a barbaric attack against our church 10 years ago, repent immediately or else your offspring will be punished!... Soon after attacking the church, divine retribution came upon Tatukhashvili. He almost went blind and developed other serious diseases."

HOMOPHOBIA

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April

TEMUR KEVKHISHVILI, singer: "Unfortunately, during the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili, very many homosexuals were appointed to very serious positions; this tendency continues today too! Let me say straightforwardly – one must not allow these pervert people to come close! Subversive act is being undertaken against the Georgian nation, our origin, our culture and our art."

JABA KHUBUA, journalist: "Both of you are gurus of the leader of prison queers, Anjela Mazmanian!"

ALIA, 10 April

TAMAR OKRUASHVILI, journalist: "People opposed participants in LGBT rally because they propagated perversion. Are these people perverted?"

KOTE KUNABEISHVILI, poet: "No, no; these are poor people and there are people who merely make money by using them because Europe's norms envisage that minorities also have the right to freedom of expression."

TAMAR OKRUASHVILI, journalist:

“Let them express quietly and calmly, in a close circle; why should they do that publicly on the Rustaveli avenue and moreover, with elements of propaganda?”

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April

KETEVAN KHAMITSASHVILI, journalist: “Yes, these people saw that one call of the leader of Church is enough to raise the entire Georgia to its feet and prevent a perverted action from being held on 17 May. It is perhaps because of this that LGBT activists decided not to hold the event, but, as the saying goes, devil never sleeps.”

PIRWELI, 13 April

DAVIT ISAKADZE, Union of Orthodox Parents: “The aim of our assembly here is to conduct a service of supplication. As we have heard, movie theatre Rustaveli is going to screen an appalling Georgian film about homosexuals, which will become a sort of sermon, a face of perversion. We demand from the government that it prevent preaching of perversion in our country.”

http://pia.ge/show_news.php?id=11122&lang=geo

INTERPRESSNEWS, 13 April

A petition of clerics to the parliament speaker: “Please, ban the preaching of homosexuality and any perversion in Georgia, such as LGBT prides and public marches. Also, please, ban screening of a Georgian film about Georgian homosexuals. All this aims at perverting and degrading our children, youth and the entire nation. We ask members of parliament to legalize the ban on LGBT propaganda in streets, public spaces, higher educational institutions and schools.”

<http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/277848-sasuliero-pirebi-damrevli-filmis-qchven-gizhebi-varthq-dagegmil-chvenebas-aprotestbs.html?ar=A>

TABULA TV, TALK SHOW TEOREMA, 10 April

KAKHA KUKAVA, leader of Free Georgia, candidate for a position of Tbilisi mayor: “You may think Ms. Tamar that the propaganda of homosexuality is banned in Russia alone and only Putin prohibited it and it is encouraged throughout the world - this is not true, of course...”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2307577

UNSUBSTANTIATED ASSOCIATION OF THE RIGHTS OF SEXUAL MINORITIES WITH INCEST**TABILA TV, TALK SHOW TEOREMA, 10 April**

GELA NIKOLAISHVILI, lawyer: “Mr. Beka has said that it is not a business of anyone whether a marriage is between a same sex couple or opposite sex couple. Fine, it is not anyone’s business, but let us go further – should a state allow a marriage between a father and child? Is it that anyone’s business if this is the desire of two persons? Should it allow families with, for example, three husbands and four wives at once?”

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2307580

UNJUSTIFIED ASSOCIATION OF 17 MAY WITH THE OPPOSITION RALLY**KVIRIS PALITRA, 7-13 April**

UKTA BITSADZE, journalist: “Let me remind of last year’s 17 May. It is possible that this year’s 17 May proves graver, especially considering that the former government is threatening with rallies.”

DISCRIMINATION OF CHILDREN LACKING CARE, WHO WERE BORN BY SURROGATE MOTHERS

ASAVAL-DASAVALI, 7-13 April

JABA, doctor: “We all remember that so-called abandoned children, those lacking parental care, remain loyal to the system – members of a punitive regiment, Putin and the like. Now imagine that a person has not parents at all – he/she is born through artificial insemination and raised by artificial system... Please, trust my words and start preparing right away to prevent such vice practice from being established in our country...

“Infertility, cancer, hypogonadism, arthritis... Anything unnatural adversely affects reproductive function of people and this is exactly the aim of the system – to disable people to reproduce in a way as established by god.”

GENDER STEREOTYPES

NETGAZETI, 13 April

PATRIARCH ILIA II: “A husband must feel that he is the head of family.”

<http://www.netgazeti.ge/GE/105/News/30328/>

STATE MINISTER AT DIVERSITY SCHOOL

On 12 April, students of the Diversity School met with State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Paata Zakareishvili at *Diversity School*.

The meeting was held in the form of discussion and focused on issues of civic integration and situation in occupied territories as well.



