

# HATE SPEECH 2020



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**unag**  
UN Association of Georgia



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Editor:

TAMAR KINTSURASHVILI

Author:

TINA GOGOLADZE

Data Processing:

MARIAM TSUTSKIRIDZE

Media Monitoring:

TAMAR GAGNIASHVILI, SOPO GOGADZE, KHATIA LOMIDZE, SOPO CHKHAIDZE

Designed by:

BESIK DANELIA, IBDESIGN

Cover photo: KieferPix, Shutterstock

The report was prepared by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) within the framework of Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program in Georgia (PITA) implemented by the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG) through the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The views and opinions expressed in the publication are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the position of USAID and/or UNAG.

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# INTRODUCTION |

The following report, aimed at identifying various forms and sources of hate speech in media and public discourse, reflects the results of media monitoring conducted in a period between 1 January and 31 December 2020.

Apart from media outlets, the monitoring focused on other sources, namely, politicians, clergy, civil society organizations and individual members of the society.

The introductory part of the report presents the key findings and the methodology of the study; the first part provides unified quantitative data and qualitative data; the second part discusses hate speech by sources.

The report was prepared in partnership with the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG) and the USAID-funded program Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness in Georgia (PITA).

# I MONITORING METHODOLOGY

Both mainstream and tabloid media outlets were selected as monitoring subjects. The monitoring was conducted on 15 media outlets. Several TV programs, taken off the air because of changes to programming during the reporting period, were replaced by programs of a similar format. The subjects of the monitoring were:

- Daily Prime-Time News Bulletins and Weekly Analytical programs on 4 TV Channels: Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe; Akhali Kvira); Mtavari (Mtavari Sainpormacio Gamoshveba; Shabatis Mtavari, Post Factum); Imedi (Kronika; Imedis Kvira). Obieqtivi TV News (Namdvili Ambebi)
- Talk Shows on 5 TV Channels: Georgian Public Broadcaster (Kviris Interviu); Mtavari (Ghamis Mtavari); Imedi (Arena<sup>1</sup>, Ghia Eteri); Obieqtivi (Gamis Studia; Bakur Svanidzis “Dzaanpolitika”<sup>2</sup>); Kavkasia (Barrieri; Spektri)
- 6 Online Media Outlets: Saqinform, Netgazeti, Interpressnews, Georgia and World, PIA, Marshalpress.
- 4 Newspapers: Resonance, Kviris Palitra, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia.

<sup>1</sup> During April, the talk show “Arena” was replaced by “Ghia Eteri,” which became the subject of monitoring. Later on, the talk show Arena returned to the news network.

<sup>2</sup> Bakur Svanidze’s talk show “Dzaanpolitika” discussed current events in the format of political satire.

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## KEY FINDINGS |

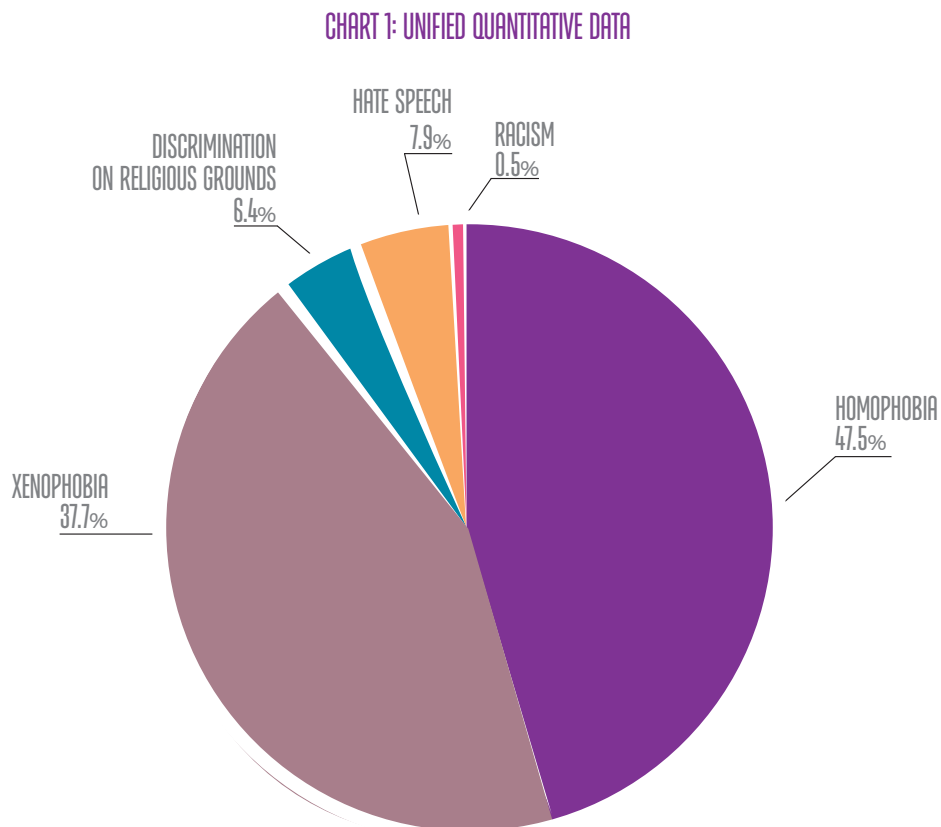
In 2020, the monitoring identified the following trends:

- Compared to 2019, comments containing discrimination on various grounds are significantly reduced in 2020 (2019 – 1918; 2020 – 1081). Statements with homophobic (47.5%) and xenophobic (37.7%) content were the most prevalent.
- Comments containing hate speech on various grounds (7.9%), as well as discrimination on religious grounds (6.4%) and racism (0.5%), were relatively few.
- The majority of homophobic messages contained anti-Western sentiments, suggesting that the West was imposing homosexuality, pedophilia, and a depraved lifestyle.
- Homophobic messages used the technique of false dilemma in the anti-Western discourse, when the West, on the one hand, was presented as neglecter of national culture, on the other hand, shown only as a defender of sexual identities.
- If in the previous year anti-migrant sentiments were dominant among xenophobic comments, in 2020, Turkophobic assessments were more prevalent, followed by Anti-migrant comments.
- Anti-Azerbaijani comments concerned the disputed monastery of Davit Gareji located on the Georgian-Azerbaijani border, conveying the idea that Azerbaijan was also an occupier, seizing Georgian territories. The case, used by the government in the pre-election period, has created fertile ground for radical and pro-Kremlin groups to discuss Azerbaijan alongside Russia in the context of threats and occupation.
- The old message “If Russia is an occupier, Turkey is an occupier too” was still relevant, trying to equate the historical occupation of Turkey with the current occupation of Russia and incite historical traumas.
- In retrospect to the Karabakh conflict and the existing conspiracies around the Treaty of Kars, the narrative that only Russia can deter Turkey in the region has resurfaced.

- In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there were attempts to recall the recent history and exacerbate historical traumas, largely in the context of the Bagramyan Battalion's involvement in the hostilities in Abkhazia.
- Anti-immigrant statements most often referred to the ban on the sale of land and other real estates to foreign nationals. In addition to comments against the Chinese people, migrants were linked to demographic threats and perceived as the primary sources of the pandemic.
- The majority of discrimination cases on the grounds of religion concern islamophobia, followed by the statements made against the Catholic Church.
- The increase in anti-Catholic comments compared to previous years can be explained by the announcement made by Pope Francis in 2020 about same-sex civil union. Catholics were portrayed as heretics and inquisitors, while the Russian Church, the patron of the sanctity of the family, was represented as the third Rome.
- The statement of anti-Semitic content made in 2020 belonged to a cleric.
- Part of the discriminatory comments was related to the coronavirus pandemic. Part of them had homophobic context and asserted that the pandemic was divine punishment for the LGBT community. Xenophobic statements equated the migration process and the migrants themselves with the threat of spreading the coronavirus. There were instances of statements demanding to ban Chinese citizens, as sources of the virus, from entering the country.
- Similar to the previous year, media was the primary source of hate speech, followed by politicians and society members. The cases of discriminatory content by representatives of various civil society organizations and clergy is relatively few.

# 1. UNIFIED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

Compared to 2019, comments containing discrimination on various grounds are significantly reduced in 2020 (2019 – 1918; 2020 – 1081). During the monitoring period (January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020), a total of 1,081 discriminatory comments were made, of which statements with homophobic (47.5%, 513) and xenophobic (37.7%, 408) content were the most prevalent. Comments containing hate speech on various grounds (7.9%, 85), as well as discrimination on religious grounds (6.4%, 69) and racism (0.5%, 6) were relatively few.

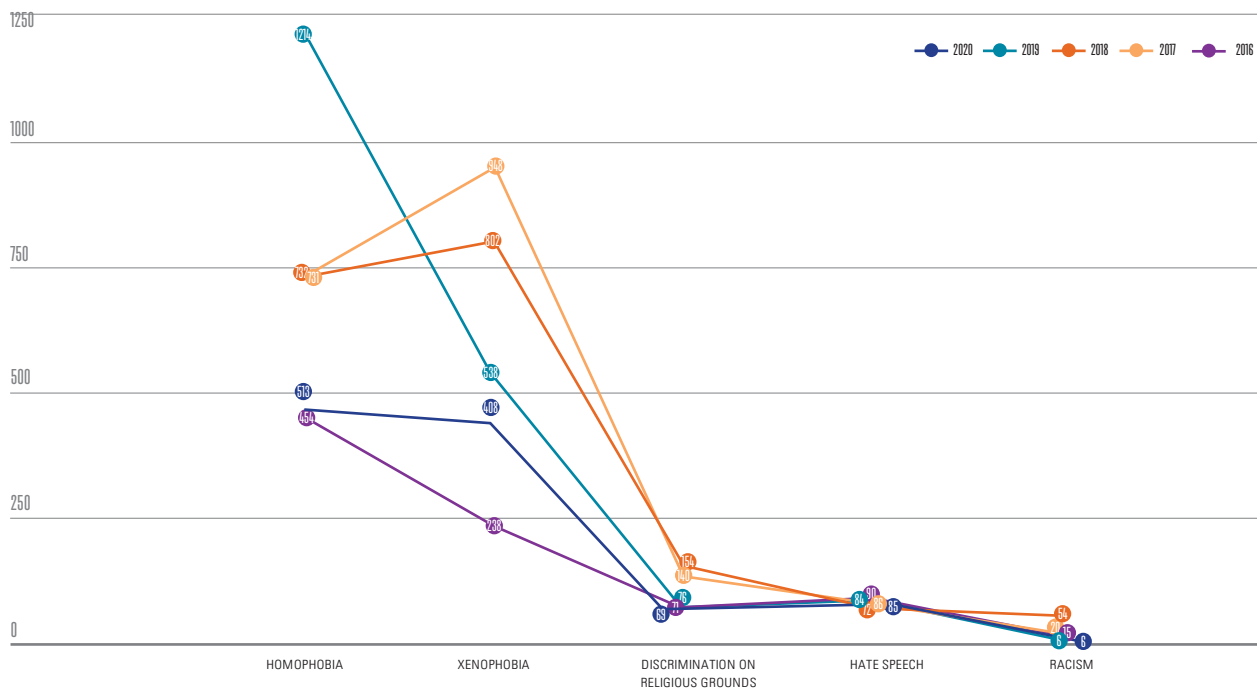


	HOMOPHOBIA	XENOPHOBIA	DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS	HATE SPEECH	RACISM
Media	297	161	141	11	4
Politicians	88	136	10	25	2
Organizations	33	37	2	7	
Clerics	28	3	9	3	
Society	67	71	7	39	

Compared to 2019, homophobic (2019 – 1214; 2020 – 513), as well as xenophobic (2019 – 538; 2020 – 408) comments have been decreased; While the cases of religious (2019 – 76; 2020 – 69) and various forms of hate speech (2019 – 84; 2020 – 85) are slightly different and almost equal to that of the previous year.

	HOMOPHOBIA	XENOPHOBIA	DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS	HATE SPEECH	RACISM
2020	513	408	69	85	6
2019	1214	538	76	84	6
2018	732	802	154	72	54
2017	731	948	140	86	20
2016	454	238	71	90	15

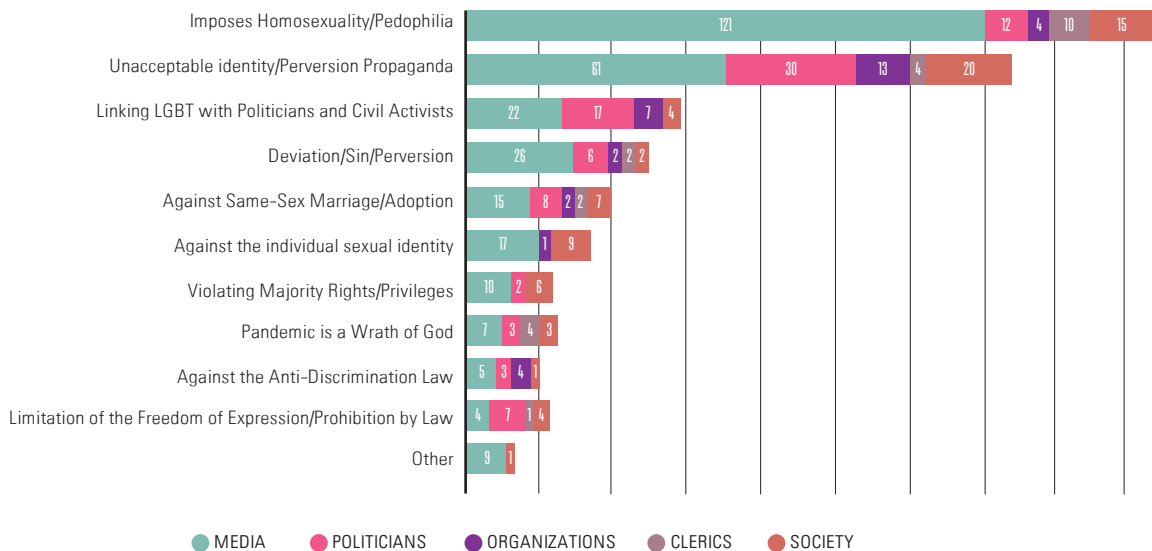
CHART 2. TYPOLOGY OF HATE SPEECH IN 2016-2020



### 1.1 HOMOPHOBIA

Like the previous year, homophobic messages dominated in 2020, with the largest share of anti-Western sentiments, suggesting that the West was imposing homosexuality, pedophilia, and a depraved lifestyle (162). These messages conveyed the idea that LGBT identity is incompatible with Georgian values, while the activities of the LGBT community propagates a perverse lifestyle (128). As in previous years, there were attempts to link individual members of political parties and civil rights activists to the LGBT community to discredit them (50). Part of the statements labelled homosexuality as perversion and sin (38), while same-sex marriage and their right to adopt a child was considered unacceptable (34). In addition to portraying the individual sexual orientation in a negative light (27), statements were also made about the violation of the rights of the majority by the LGBT community (18) and the need for the restriction of their freedom of expression by law (16). In 17 cases, the Covid-19 global pandemic was portrayed as God’s wrath for the sins of the LGBTQ community, while 13 statements were made against anti-discrimination law.

CHART 3. HOMOPHOBIC MESSAGES



Individual examples:

Homophobic messages used the technique of false dilemma in the anti-Western discourse, when the West, on the one hand, was presented as neglecter of national culture, on the other hand, shown only as a defender of sexual identities:

“Their [Western] attitude is determined not by, for example, what kind of culture the country and the nation has, but **the main thing is whether this country and this nation protect, for example, sexual mi-**

norities. Is that a value? Or maybe, the value is the history of my country...” (Nino Ratishvili, journalist at Obieqtivi).<sup>3</sup>

Various actors voiced different messages regarding homophobia:

- **The opposition is trying to impose foreign values through gay revolutions:** “For their entire lives, they [Saakashvili and Bokeria] wanted to become Americans. They could not become Americans, but they are no longer Georgians... That is why sometimes they are gay revolutionaries. What is there to talk about when a man is a gay revolutionary?” (David Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia).<sup>4</sup>
- **The cause of natural disasters is gay pride:** “It rained for three days on Mount Athos, and a landslide destroyed the only road to the temples! ... These miserable people are now devastated since they have legalized gay marriage and hold gay parades every year in every big city!” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).<sup>5</sup>
- **Thanks to the Church, Georgia is a space protected from gay pride:** “For the LGBT community, the freedom of expression means perversion: “Georgia is the only country where neither a gay parade nor a gay pride was held, they were not allowed to fulfil their dirty, depraved goals in here. Obviously, this is first of all thanks to the Georgian Church and the Catholicos-Patriarch, Ilia II” (Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March).<sup>6</sup>
- **The EU Demands us to legalize same-sex marriage:** “I ask the government - does this mean that the EU will definitely require Georgia to legalize same-sex marriage? The European Commissioner has financially threatened those states that let the LGBT community run wild.” (Giorgi Razmadze, cleric).<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2 XENOPHOBIA

If in the previous year anti-migrant sentiments were dominant among xenophobic comments, in 2020, Turkophobic assessments were more prevalent (173). Anti-migrant statements were followed by comments against migrants (133), and Armenophobic (54) and anti-Azerbaijani (42) comments. The latter concerned the disputed monastery of Davit Gareji<sup>8</sup> located on the Georgian-Azerbaijani border, conveying the idea that Azerbaijan was also an occupier, occupying Georgian-owned territories (27). In five cases, anti-Azerbaijani statements were made in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic against ethnic Azerbaijani citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 1 June, [https://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=3938492](https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3938492)

<sup>4</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 6 March, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3909936>

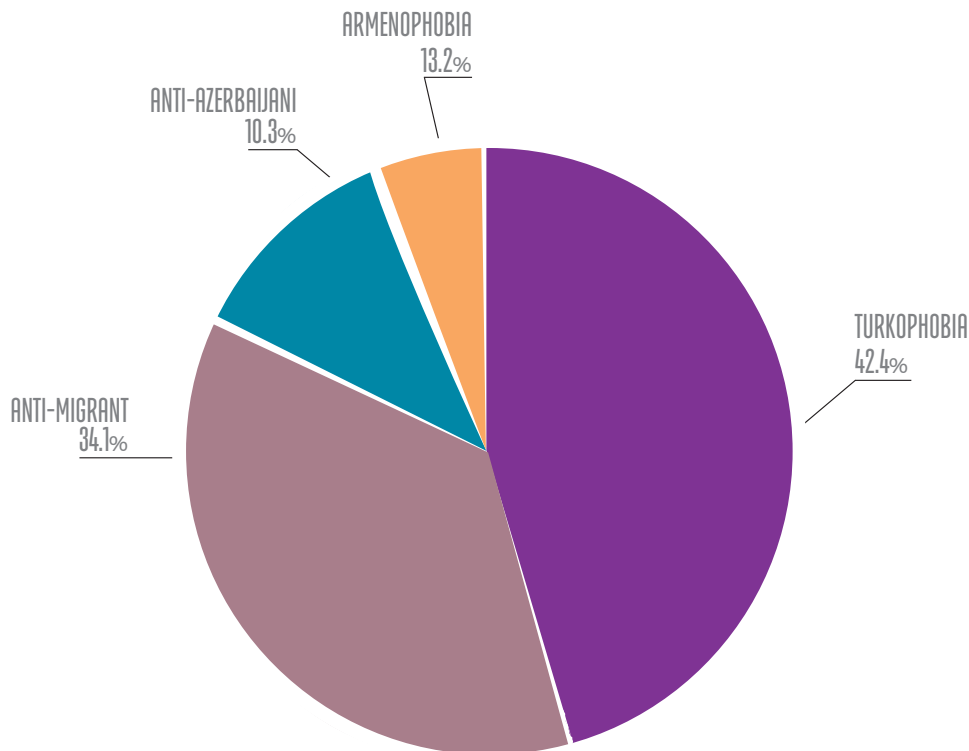
<sup>5</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-26 April

<sup>6</sup> Alia, 8-14 June

<sup>7</sup> Georgia and World, 17 November, <https://bit.ly/3nUxK4b>

<sup>8</sup> The Davit Gareji monastery complex is located on the disputed section of the Georgian-Azerbaijani border, the demarcation of which has not yet been completed and often becomes a source of confrontations.

CHART 4. TYPOLOGY OF XENOPHOBIA

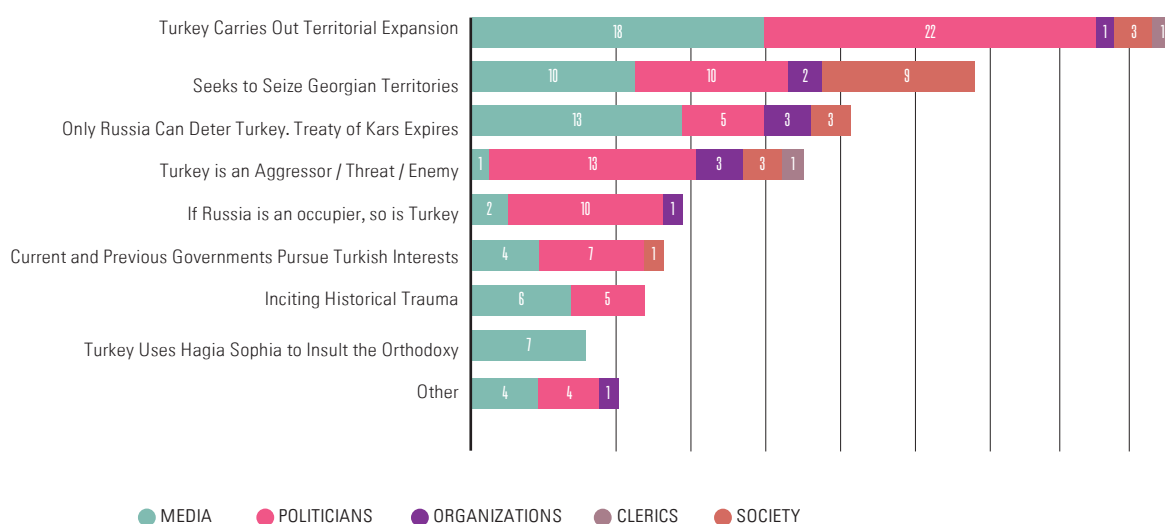


**TURKOPHOBIA.** Most of the Turkophobic messages (45) sought to form the opinion that Turkey carries out the territorial expansion of Georgia, wanting to seize the country's territories (31); That Turkey is a hostile state that poses a threat to Georgia (21), while only Russia can deter Turkey in the region and protect Georgia from the "Turkish threat" (24). Part of these recent statements (9) also included conspiracies regarding the expiration of the Treaty of Kars<sup>9</sup>, arguing that the treaty expires in 2021, and Russia would no longer be the guarantor of Georgia's territorial integrity after this deadline, resulting in re-occupation of Adjara by Turkey. The old message "If Russia is an occupier, Turkey is an occupier too" was still relevant, trying to equate the historical occupation of Turkey with the current occupation of Russia and incite historical trauma (13). Historical traumas (11) were stirred up in relation to other topics as well. In addition statements were made that both the previous and the current governments are pursuing the interests of Turkey (12). In contrast to previous years, part of the Turkophobic statements was related to the Hagia Sophia cathedral, motivated by the change in the status of the Hagia Sophia Museum and its declaration as a mosque, which was considered an insult to Orthodoxy and represented a bargaining issue with Turkey from the West.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Treaty of Kars was signed in Kars on October 13, 1921, between Turkey, on the one side, and the Soviet Republics in the South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. According to the given Treaty, Turkey handed over a large part of Adjara and the city of Gyumri to the Soviet Union and received Kars, Artvin, and Ardahan in exchange. <https://bit.ly/3FX1VOg>

<sup>10</sup> On July 10, the Supreme Administrative Court of Turkey heard the case of Hagia Sophia and reversed a decision of 1934 to transform Hagia Sophia into a museum. The cathedral was later granted the status of a mosque.

CHART 5. TURKOPHOBIC MESSAGES



Individual Examples:

- **If Russia is an occupier, Turkey is also an occupier as well:** “Today, Russia has occupied 12.6 thousand square kilometers of Georgian land in the form of Abkhazia, Tskhinvali and Ksani valleys, while Turkey – 24.8 thousand square kilometers, or twice as much! ... It is the bitter truth that if not Russia, Turkey would have seized and occupied an even larger percentage of Georgian lands.” (Dito Chubinidze, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).<sup>11</sup>
- **Turkey plans to claim Adjara through a referendum:** “... Enviably, they are naturally multiplying and soon, so that they will not need to use any military force and or hold a referendum, **they will trap us and most likely form a political party and have a majority in the Adjarian Supreme Council!!!!**” (Giorgi Lomia, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia).<sup>12</sup>
- **The Treaty of Kars gives Turkey grounds to seize the territories of Adjara:** “... There is no NATO member closer to Georgia than Turkey. **It borders Adjara, which, according to the Treaty of Kars, may soon belong to Turkey.**” (Arno Khidirbegishvili, Editor-in-Chief of Saqinform).<sup>13</sup>
- **NATO = Turkish Expansion:** “**In case of NATO being in Georgia, it will be a Turkish NATO!** ... As said by Davitoglu himself, “Batumi was part of our empire, we will not fight for it, but it will be ours.” (Guram Nikolaishvili, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia).<sup>14</sup>
- **Only Russia can deter Turkey/Protect us from the Treaty of Kars:** “... From a military point of view, **no one will allow it [Turkey] in Georgia, neither here nor in Azerbaijan.** If that happens, **Russia**

<sup>11</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 28 September – 4 October

<sup>12</sup> Alia, 21-27 September

<sup>13</sup> Saqinform, 17 August, <https://bit.ly/3mHI6DJ>

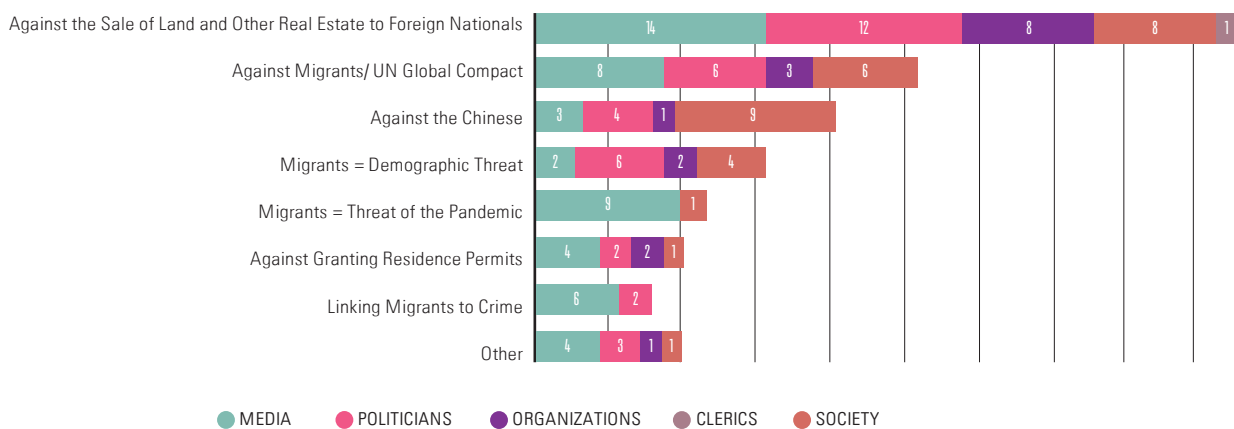
<sup>14</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 10 September, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3965544>



will start a war with Turkey the next day.” (David Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots).<sup>15</sup> “In the current situation, of course, strengthened Russia, even in this form, in the context of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, is certainly less dangerous than strengthened Turkey entering the region in full force.” (Nana Devdariani, Alliance of Patriots).<sup>16</sup> “Do not forget that next year the Treaty of Kars expires and the only one who can protect us from the imminent Turkish aggression is Russia!”<sup>17</sup> (Vladimir Khomeriki, Fund for the Unity of Russian and Georgian People).

**ANTI-MIGRANT SENTIMENTS.** Anti-immigrant statements most often referred to the ban on the sale of land and other real estates to foreign nationals (43), followed by general statements against the admission of migrants and the UN Global Compact<sup>18</sup> for Migration (23). In addition to comments against the Chinese people (17), migrants were linked to demographic threats (14) and were perceived as the primary sources of the pandemic (10). As in previous years, migrants were also linked to various criminal activities (8), and some of the statements were against granting residence permits to foreign nationals (9).

CHART 6. ANTI-MIGRANT MESSAGES



Individual Examples:

- **Europe is a victim of its own tolerance:** “And why does our government not follow the example of the American president [Trump] and looks up to someone like Merkel, who **bombarded Germany with migrants and is shouting today that Islam is an integral part of the German culture!**” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist)<sup>19</sup> “Increasingly more French, Belgian, German, Dutch people already real-

<sup>15</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia Kvelas Gasagonad, 24 November, <https://bit.ly/3iNFTUY>

<sup>16</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia Kvelas Gasagonad, 17 November <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3986735>

<sup>17</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-19 July

<sup>18</sup> On December 19, the UN General Assembly approved the Global Compact on Safe, Coherent and Regulated Migration. The compact was supported by 152 countries, including Georgia. The document aims to enhance cooperation between the states on migration issues. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/12/1028941>

<sup>19</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 27 April – 3 May

ize that millions of migrants are foreign and hostile to European culture, and European humanism is more like a mental disability.” (Giorgi Gachechiladze, author at Georgia and the World).<sup>20</sup>

- **Linking migrants to crime:** “If not the Coronavirus pandemic, we would have never known how many Iranian prisoners we had in Georgia! So, it turns out that “Asaval-Dasavali” did not exaggerate anything about the “modern Qizilbash” invasion in Georgia! Many foreigners operate pedophile brothels in the middle of the capital and poison our youth by selling drugs!” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).<sup>21</sup>
- **Migrants = demographic threat:** “How can we withstand this expansion of Pakistanis, a billion and a half Indians, in a short period of time we will be wiped out like the old Europeans, the Iberians did. Iberians were wiped out by the Indo-Europeans, who fled from India and Iran.” (Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party);<sup>22</sup> “Given our demographic situation and the small size of the nation, we are facing a catastrophe with the influx of so many Iranians. If this continues, the ethnic-cultural balance in Georgia will change, and the Georgian people will become the minority sooner than projected by the UN.” (Zviad Tomaradze, Nation and State).<sup>23</sup>
- **Occupation by foreign tribes is more dangerous than the Russian occupation:** “After the events in Iran, thousands of people from this country and other countries enter Georgia, and only 15-20 per cent returns home! This is a targeted policy, which envisages expelling Georgians from their homeland by all means and settling foreigners here. In fact, this is the occupation of Georgia by foreigners, which will have a more devastating effect than the Russian occupation.” (Sandro Bre-gadze, Georgian March).<sup>24</sup>
- **Lands / real estate are increasingly owned by foreigners:** “It turns out that agricultural lands are now in the hands of Persians, Turks, Arabs and other foreigners, and Georgians have to rent land from them. Do you understand how troublesome this is?! ”(David Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia);<sup>25</sup> “It is alarming that today, 134 thousand units of real estate in Georgia are owned by Iranian citizens, and most of these units are located in the capital.” (Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Primakov Georgian-Russian Community Center).<sup>26</sup>
- **Migrants should not get residence permits:** “On the one hand, we have to restrict the flow of Chinese or Arab and any other migrants in the country, and stop granting residence permits to them.” (Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia).<sup>27</sup>
- **The Chinese = threat:** “The Chinese have invaded us like a horde of Mongols!”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Georgia and World, 29 July, <https://bit.ly/3IS3rmY>

<sup>21</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 29 June – 5 July

<sup>22</sup> Mtavari, Ghamis Mtavari, 3 March, <https://bit.ly/3DnFu3w>

<sup>23</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 24 February – 1 March

<sup>24</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 27 January – 2 February

<sup>25</sup> Obieqtivi, Namdvili Ambebi, 20 August, <https://bit.ly/2X12Tbm>

<sup>26</sup> Georgia and World, 15 January, <https://bit.ly/380lJPQ>

<sup>27</sup> Georgian Public Broadcaster, Moambe, 20 October, <https://bit.ly/3mHZDuk>

<sup>28</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 8-14 June.

**ARMENOPHOBIC AND ANTI-AZERBAIJANI MESSAGES.** The statements against the ethnic Armenian and Azerbaijani Georgian citizens had different grounds. If Armenophobia mainly concerned the representation of the Armenian identity in a negative light in the context of certain politicians and public figures, the increase of xenophobic messages against Azerbaijanis has been catalyzed due to the reemergence of the backlash around the Davit Gareji Monastery located in the disputed part of the Georgian-Azerbaijani border since 2019. The tensions were further escalated by the legal process initiated before the 2020 parliamentary elections, when two public officials were arrested for violating Georgia's territorial integrity.<sup>29</sup> The case, known as The Cartographers Case, has created fertile ground for radical and pro-Kremlin groups to discuss Azerbaijan alongside Russia in the context of threats and occupation. The government used this topic in the pre-election campaign, fostering the idea that the government's opponents were selling the churches and the homeland while the government was neutralizing these threats.<sup>30</sup>

TYPOLGY	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Armenophobia	26	58	29	41	54
Anti-Azerbaijani		27	9	65	42

In 2020, Armenophobic comments (54) mostly portrayed Armenian identity in a negative context in relation to certain individuals (33), followed by allegations that Armenians were acting against the interests of Georgia (13). Two statements were made against Georgia's acceptance of Armenian refugees after the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, one could observe the attempts to recall the recent history and exacerbate the historical traumas, mainly in the context of the Bagramyan Battalion's<sup>31</sup> involvement in the hostilities in Abkhazia.

Individual examples:

- **Armenians in Abkhazia act against Georgia's interests: "Just as Georgians were expelled by Bagramyans,** Russian soldiers or North Caucasian volunteers from Abkhazia in September-October 1993, Armenians are now being expelled from Karabakh and its neighbouring regions the same way today." (Dito Chubinidze, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).<sup>32</sup> In the war in Abkhazia, the Bagramyan Battalion was the most merciless! Armenia still does not support the return of refugees to Abkhazia at the UN! Today is the day of Sokhumi's fall, and today, Azerbaijan started hostilities against

<sup>31</sup> Bagramyan Battalion was a unit established in 1992-93 during the War in Abkhazia. Mainly composed of ethnic Armenians residing in Gagra, Gudauta and Tkvarcheli, the battalion fought along with the separatists. The unit was named after the Soviet Armenian Marshal Ivan Bagramyan.

<sup>32</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 16-22 November

Armenia! There are victims and destruction... The ways of the Lord are unknown, and we, the children of the earth, call them coincidences... **God is just! That's right!**<sup>43</sup>

- **Georgia should not accept Armenian IDPs:** “Georgia should not receive any IDPs from Karabakh! This can in no way be an anti-Armenian stance! This is the only pro-Georgian position of millions of nationalistic-minded Georgians! It is enough to accommodate the enemies multiplied by false hospitality! “(Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).”<sup>34</sup>
- **Receiving Armenian IDPs will make us lose Abkhazia:** “If Armenian refugees are to be resettled on the territory of Georgia, we will lose occupied Abkhazia for good.” (Giorgi Baramia, former chairman of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia).<sup>35</sup>
- **Armenians try to demonstrate their superiority:** “...I am waiting for the conclusion of Armenian scientists. I wonder which genetic group our neighbours belong to. I am sure that their “DNA” is superior to that of Georgians and directly destroys the coronavirus and does not even need a vaccine or medicine.”(Giorgi Gabunia, host at Mtavari Arkhi).<sup>36</sup>

When it comes to the anti-Azerbaijani comments (42), as already mentioned, most of them were related to the issue of Davit-Gareji and supported the view that Azerbaijan was an occupier (26). Part of xenophobic statements (5) was directed at the Georgian ethnic minorities, in particular Azerbaijanis, and concerned the violation of COVID-19 regulations and the spread of the pandemic.

Individual examples:

- **The previous government sold Gareji to SOCAR/Descendants of Shah Abbas:** “Davit Gareja, a monastery often referred as Jerusalem, the land watered with the blood of Georgian fathers where 6,000 monks were tortured by Shah Abbas, was sold to his direct descendants.” (Levan Chachua, Georgian Idea);<sup>37</sup> “During Saakashvili’s rule, under a secret agreement, SOCAR paid a large amount of money to misappropriate David Gareji.” (Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March).<sup>38</sup>
- **Azerbaijan is an occupier:** “**Today Davit Gareji is occupied**, yes, it is occupied, because, in the monastery complex of Davit Gareji a Georgian, a citizen of Georgia is not allowed to enter, cannot even make a single step .... Georgians can no longer enter in one of their sacred places, there is no more worship there, and foreign occupants stand there with machine guns in their hands and do not allow Georgians to go to their shrines. Is this or not an occupation? ”(Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March);<sup>39</sup> “... **it does not matter which neighbouring country it is**. If there is a land-related dispute

<sup>33</sup> Alia, 28 September – 4 October

<sup>34</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 16-22 November

<sup>35</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 23-29 November

<sup>36</sup> Mtavari Arkhi, Post Factum, 5 April, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3920516>

<sup>37</sup> Georgia and World, 9 June, <https://bit.ly/3hkaUgK>

<sup>38</sup> Marshalpress 18 August, <https://mpn.ge/archives/16696>

<sup>39</sup> Marshalpress, 3 June, <https://bit.ly/308VtnC>

– demand an answer and demand from any tribune, ask help from the countries you call your partners and friends, make a noise and do not let it have even a single inch.” (Beso Barbakadze, Georgia and World Journalist).<sup>40</sup>

- If Russia is an occupier, Azerbaijan is an occupier too: “If Russia is an occupier, why is Azerbaijan not considered an occupier? they want to seize Davit Gareji; they took Hereti, reduced the number of Georgians in Hereti from 30 thousand to 7 thousand, defiled our temples, promised to restore the palace of King Erekle II but never kept their promise, and no one says a word about it.” (Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, Union of Human Rights Defenders).<sup>41</sup> “As for Davit Gareji, whose occupation is the same as the total conquest of Samachablo and Abkhazia by Russia. The descendants of the Qizilbash, who have been trying to occupy Kartli-Kakheti for hundreds of years, managed to occupy one of our most precious temples with an incomprehensible agreement signed in 2007...” (Irakli Kakabadze, publicist).<sup>42</sup>

In addition, in selected cases, both ethnic Azerbaijanis and ethnic Armenians were presented as the roots of demographic problems:

**Ethnic minorities = demographic threat to Georgia:** “We are a nation reduced to two and a half million, and even the UN tells us that in just 20-30 years there will be nothing left from us. Look at what is happening in our neighbourhood – the populations of Armenia and Azerbaijan are constantly growing.<sup>43</sup> I am not saying anything about the fact that the number of ethnic minorities is increasing drastically here as well. “(Vazha Otarashvili, Patriots Alliance of Georgia).<sup>44</sup>

### 1.3 DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGION GROUNDS

The majority of discrimination cases on the grounds of religion concern islamophobia (29), followed by the statements made against the Catholic Church (26). The increase in anti-Catholic comments compared to previous years can be explained by the announcement made by Pope Francis in 2020 about same-sex civil union.<sup>45</sup> Statements made against Jehovah’s Witnesses (8), on the one hand, described their form of preaching aggressively and, on the other hand, blamed Jehovah’s Witnesses to be the source of the spread of the coronavirus. There were instances of discriminatory statements about the Evangelical Baptist Church (2) and various other denominations (2), and one statement of anti-Semitic content belonged to a cleric.

<sup>40</sup> Georgia and World, 27 February, <https://bit.ly/3esEKh6>

<sup>41</sup> Alia, 1-7 June

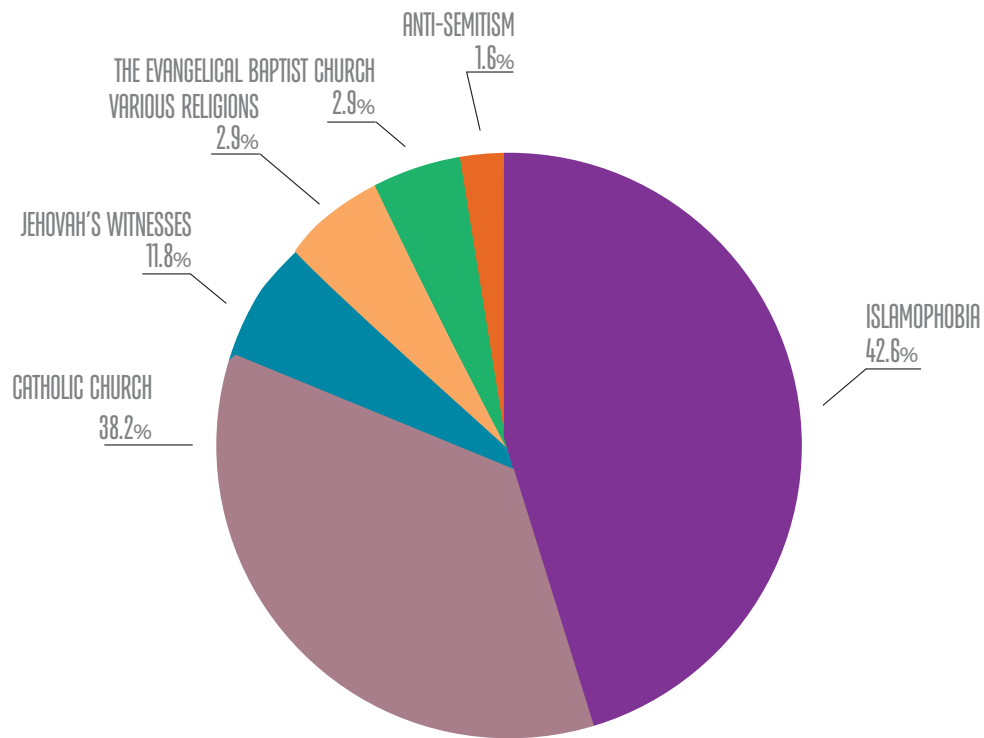
<sup>42</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 12-18 October

<sup>43</sup> Georgia and World, 11 March

<sup>44</sup> Georgia and World, 11 March, <https://bit.ly/339wmOV>

<sup>45</sup> In October 2020, Pope Phanacis stated that homosexual couples have the right to civil marriage and that this right should be ensured by state bodies. <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30905645.html>

CHART 7. DISCRIMINATION ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS



Individual Examples:

#### ISLAMOPHOBIA

- **Islam is incompatible with the Western civilization:** “The vast majority of experts are convinced that the ‘Western civilization and the ‘Islamic civilization’ are based on so diametrically opposed values that they can never be reconciled” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasaval journalist).<sup>46</sup>
- **Under religious disguise, Turkey is trying to increase its influence in Adjara:** “This problem is acute in Adjara. One group of the population demands another mosque to be built in Batumi; they have been fighting for it for years, but there are already six mosques in Batumi... This is no longer about religion but about expanding the spheres of influence.” (Davit Tedoradze, member of the Supreme Council of Adjara, Georgian Dream);<sup>47</sup> “Turkey is now being propagated under the guise of religion. Now, what does a Muslim kindergarten mean? Explain it to me!... In fact, these kindergartens have nothing to do with Islam... If you go to those schools, there are centres, Qur’an centres, as if they teach Qur’an there but there is only Turkish propaganda going on, nothing more...” (David Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-26 April

<sup>47</sup> Kviris Palitra, 25-31 May, <https://bit.ly/2ZG53MJ>

<sup>48</sup> Obieqtivi, Ghamis Studia Kvelas Gasagonad, 21 July, <https://bit.ly/3lwg4uf>

- **Linking Islam to terrorism:** “Today, the fact that Christianity exists, and the Christian society and the Christian world has not been consumed by Islam, this terrorism and this filth, is the merit of Georgian heroes” (Svimon Maskharashvili, historian).<sup>49</sup>

#### AGAINST CATHOLICS

- **Catholics are heretics and inquisitors:** “This is exactly why [the statement by the Pope on the Legalization of the so-called civil union between the members of sexual minorities] it is necessary to emphasize that Catholics are not Christians. They do not represent the Christian church; they are heretics who carry out a specific task. By the way, there are pictures on the Internet of how the Pope kisses the hands of the Rothschilds and Rockefellers, and we all know who the Rothschilds and Rockefellers are.” (Giorgi Razmadze, cleric);<sup>50</sup> “The fruit of Latin papism is the following: the Crusades, the Inquisition, the indulgences and the pseudo-Christianity that we see today all over Europe. This is how this belief killed Christianity among the people... Latin papists and most of the population, is safe to say, are becoming Muslims because they find mysticism there... (David Kvlividze, clergyman).<sup>51</sup>
- **The Catholic Church, burdened by the past, has no moral right to support same-sex marriage:** “Tens of thousands of Protestants have been burned alive at the so-called Holy Inquisition on absurd charges of heresy and witchcraft, and the head of this church has been shamelessly supporting same-sex marriage.” (Davit Mkheidze, Georgia and World Journalist).<sup>52</sup>
- **Only the Russian Church, the third Rome, can protect Orthodoxy and the family:** “Contrary to the Pope’s statements, Russia has made a constitutional norm that marriage is only possible between a man and a woman. The Pope’s blasphemous statements brought at least one good thing – today, we can boldly and unequivocally congratulate Orthodox Moscow on its de jure third Rome “blessing.” (Davit Mkheidze, Georgia and World Journalist).<sup>53</sup>

#### AGAINST JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

- **Jehovah’s Witnesses are Aggressive and Mentally Retarded:** “Misharast [Saakashvili’s supporters] Jehovah’s witnesses, unlike natural witnesses, are particularly aggressive and are of a limited intelligence” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali journalist).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Kavkasia, Spectrum, 12 August, <https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3958407>

<sup>50</sup> Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3nYOTtn>

<sup>51</sup> <https://bit.ly/3D530lp>

<sup>52</sup> Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3Fyos4t>

<sup>53</sup> Georgia and World, 27 October, <https://bit.ly/3Fyos4t>

<sup>54</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 14–20 December

## AGAINST THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

- **The Evangelical Baptist Church is a heretical sect:** “The Evangelical Baptist Church prayed to the LGBT community on May 17 and covered the altar with the LGBT flag!.. That is why the Orthodox Church in Georgia is the Mother Church and the Baptist-Evangelical Church – a heretical sect! No to Sodomy!” (Giorgi Gigauri, Asaval-Dasavali Journalist)<sup>55</sup>

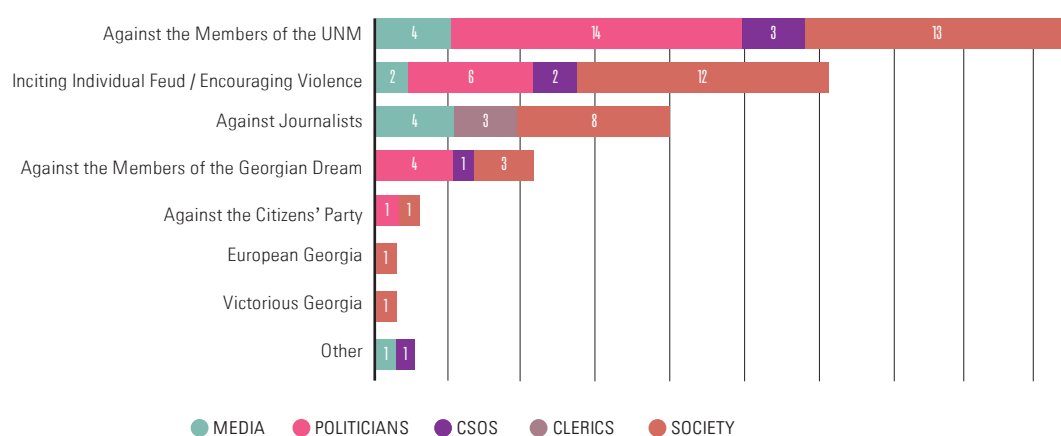
## ANTI-SEMITISM

- **The Jews are the group of unbelievers persecuting Christians:** “They tortured so many Christians, destroyed so many Christian shrines multiple times... – if they pay for all this, then we will pay for the construction of the synagogue... This is the battle of the unbelievers against the church. However, they received nothing more than kindness from the church.” (Ioane Gamrekeli, Bishop).<sup>56</sup>

## 1.4 HATE SPEECH ON VARIOUS GROUNDS

Out of the hate speech statements made for various grounds (87), the largest share (34) was directed against the opposition party the United National Movement, followed by statements inciting individual resentment and inciting violence (22). The number of hate speech statements made against critical media, namely, Mtavari Arkhi, TV formula and TV Pirveli journalists has increased as well (15). Eight hate speech statements were made against the incumbent Georgian Dream party, three of which concerned the party’s supporters. Hate speech was also used in the comments about the Citizens’ Party (2), European Georgia (1) and For Victorious Georgia (1).

CHART 8. HATE SPEECH ON VARIOUS GROUNDS



<sup>55</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 25-31 May

<sup>56</sup> Netgazeti, 28 December, <https://netgazeti.ge/news/509194/>



## PROMOTING VIOLENCE

“Guys, hold hands and tie up them [journalists]. Will they not obey? Make them obey you! You have my blessing. Show them what kind of athletes Anaga has raised and how much power we have. Do not hit them, tie them up! It’s not a big deal, not just 3–4 people, you can even handle 20 people. That’s what they deserve and we should hand them over to the police.” (Ilia Karkadze, archpriest).<sup>57</sup>

You remember the story of “Charlie Hebdo,” when they invaded the others and beat them brutally. We, the Orthodox Christians are not going to do so because we are not like them and we show mercy to our cursers [televisions], who now started talking about criticism. They are not critics, they are the enemies of the church. Soon it will be too much and we will take action.” (Iakob Iakobashvili, Metropolitan of Bodbe Diocese).<sup>58</sup>

## INCITING INDIVIDUAL FEUD, HATE SPEECH

“You [Savalan Mirzoev] are playing with me ... **do not play with me, you f\*ggot. I repeat... I will kill you if you don’t tell the people that I am an honest man.**” (Rashad Musaev, Lelo).<sup>59</sup>

“I respect my dog more than Khabeishvili – let him walk and bark on television, we should just ignore him from now on.” (Beka Davituliani, Georgian Dream).<sup>60</sup>

“This ugly woman[Tea Tsulukiani in The Hague] is dreaming for Georgia to be found guilty and is cutting deals for it.” (Mikheil Saakashvili, UNM, Georgia’s third president).<sup>61</sup>

Out of 6 racist comments, 2 belong to politicians, while the remaining 4 to the representatives of the media.

## 1.5. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE PANDEMIC

In specific cases, discriminatory comments discussed above were motivated by the coronavirus pandemic. The monitoring process revealed a total of 38 such comments. Most of the discriminatory

<sup>57</sup> Mtavari Arkhi, Mtavari, 18 April, <https://bit.ly/3xxx7kh>

<sup>58</sup> Mtavari Arkhio, Mtavari on Saturday, 12 September, <https://bit.ly/3CXSU5G>

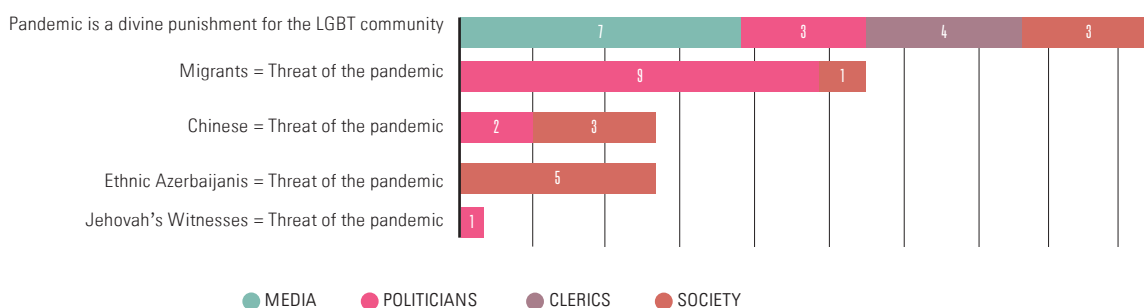
<sup>59</sup> Imedi, Chronika, 10 October. <https://www.imesi.ge/ge/video/63095/muqara-qartuli-otsnebis-deputatis-mimart#!?type=l&page=1>

<sup>60</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 27 January – 2 February

<sup>61</sup> Agency Pirveli, 20 August, <https://bit.ly/3l8Rq0z>

statements were homophobic (17) and sought to convey the idea that the pandemic was divine punishment for the LGBT community. Xenophobic statements aimed to link the migration process and the migrants themselves to the threat of the spread of the Covid-19 (10), with similar comments being made about Georgian ethnic Azerbaijanis (5). Discriminatory claims were voiced against the Chinese, who were accused of spreading the pandemic and demanding an entry ban for them (5). In one case, religious identity, namely Jehovah’s Witnesses, was linked to the spread of the virus.

CHART 9. MESSAGES RELATED TO THE PANDEMIC



Individual Examples:

### 1. HOMOPHOBIA AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- **Coronavirus is God’s punishment for homosexual sins, depraved lifestyles, and the legalization of gay marriage in the West:**

“Yes, consider Coronavirus the day of reckoning of the global Sodom and Gomorrah, similar to that the Lord has arranged for the city immersed in filth! ... I will not even say anything about the sins of the legislators of gay marriage in Italy, France, Spain or others. Let’s take care of our own... “(Giorgi Gigauri, journalist).<sup>62</sup>

“Yes, the coronavirus pandemic is divine retribution, and those who do not acknowledge it are irreligious and infidel! If humanity does not return to the correct path and abstain from murder, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah and many other sins that prevail in the world and in Georgia today, then the worst is ahead and God will give us an even greater punishment!” (Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 23-29 March

<sup>63</sup> Asaval-Dasavali 4-10 May

“When you hold a parade of LGBT people in a country blessed by God, ... when you propagate the sin of homosexuality, everyone knows that this is the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. The pandemic is the punishment of God bestowed upon the world.”(Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots).<sup>64</sup>

“Every sickness we have ever heard of is the result of human sin... It’s most of the times God’s punishment for living an immoral life. In the modern world, homosexuals, bohemians and atheists have multiplied. ”(Jeremiah Lomidze, Cleric).<sup>65</sup>

“Some people have lost all boundaries – geographical, sexual, moral ... Maybe that’s why God has brought us the pandemic in the form of a test?!” (Maia Nikoleishvili, forensic medical expert).<sup>66</sup>

## 2. XENOPHOBIA AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- **Chinese = The Threat of the Pandemic:** “Regarding the coronavirus epidemic ... if Ivanishvili retained even the slightest bit of conscience or common sense, he should do it immediately. No Chinese citizen should set foot on the Georgian ground” (Mikheil Saakashvili, third President of Georgia)<sup>67</sup>.
- **Georgia has to impose sanctions to China for Spreading the Covid-19:** “It is really cynical that psychiatric hospitals are being built in Georgia by the Chinese, who, in fact, have stopped life on earth! Can’t the world, including Georgia, impose sanctions on China until they actually stop eating bats, dogs, cats, orangutans, chimpanzees, pangolins and other Red List of Threatened Species and then infecting the whole world? It’s just that the world has become very small, and these – the Chinese – are already posing a great and real threat to the rest of the world in terms of maintaining the livelihood”<sup>68</sup> (Zaza Shengelia, „Bravo Records“).
- **Azerbaijanis living in Kvemo Kartli should be “locked up and killed”<sup>69</sup> and put on trial for disobeying pandemic rules:** „One should lock them in the village and kill them all [ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Kvemo Kartli]! .. Do they not obey the state laws?! Do they become potential virus sources and

<sup>64</sup> Obeqtivi, Ghamis Studia, 22 March [https://www.myvideo.ge/?video\\_id=3915294](https://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=3915294)

<sup>65</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 16 – 22 March

<sup>66</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 23 –29 March

<sup>67</sup> Imedi, Imedis Kvira, 2 February; <https://bit.ly/3HZ4pgL>

<sup>68</sup> Asaval-Dasavali, 13-26 April

<sup>69</sup> “No to Phobia” on Zaza Abashidze’s Statement containing ethnic hate, May 20, 2020 <http://tdi.ge/ge/news/781-ara-pobias-zaza-abashizis-etnikuri-sizulvilis-shemcvel-gancxadebaze>

killers? Then they should be locked up in that space! Be it the Azeri, Georgian, or Russian! (Zaza Abashidze, Director of the National Center for Manuscripts)<sup>70</sup>

“Look at these savages!!! Everyone should be judged, everyone!!! The village should be blocked from all sides!!!. The fact that they were not punished for damaging police cars, I mean ethnic minorities, made them wild, it’s all their fault !! And more, the Georgian language should be looked after!! When issuing a Georgian passport, a Georgian language test should be conducted!!! Why do I need elected MPs elected by these people? Considering that 15-20% of the population is a minority!!” (Mancho Giorgobiani, civil activist, journalist).<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- **The main sources of the pandemic are sectarian Jehovah’s witnesses:** “The main source of the coronavirus in Zugdidi is the sect of “Jehovah’s Witnesses“ – do you see how they hide this information? Can you imagine what their reaction would be if the disease spread from the church? 90% of the Georgian TV broadcasters are the enemies of the Georgian state. We have to boycott these spawns of Satan!” (Sandro Bregadze, Georgian March).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Mtavari Arkhi, Mtavari, 4 May <https://bit.ly/3lb8ghg>

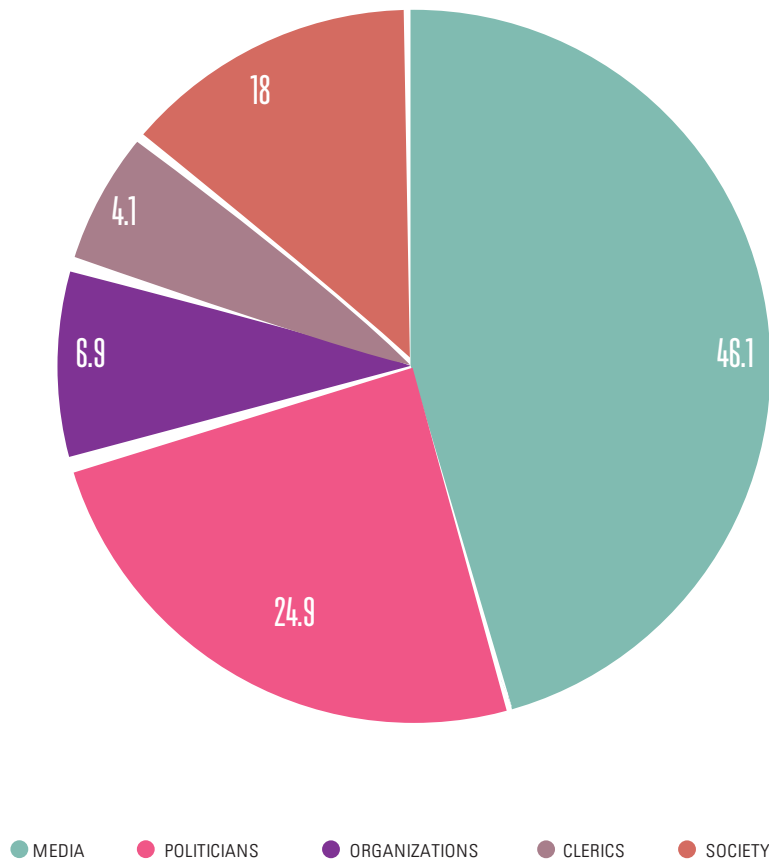
<sup>71</sup> Marshalpress, 2 May, <https://bit.ly/3HXVrAA>

<sup>72</sup> Saqinform, 2 April <https://bit.ly/3CT1F0b>

## 2. HATE SPEECH BY TYPOLOGY AND SOURCES |

**UNITED QUANTITATIVE DATA.** Similar to the previous year, media (514) was the main source of hate speech, followed by politicians (261) and society members (184). The cases of discriminatory content by representatives of various public organizations (79) and clergy (43) is relatively few.

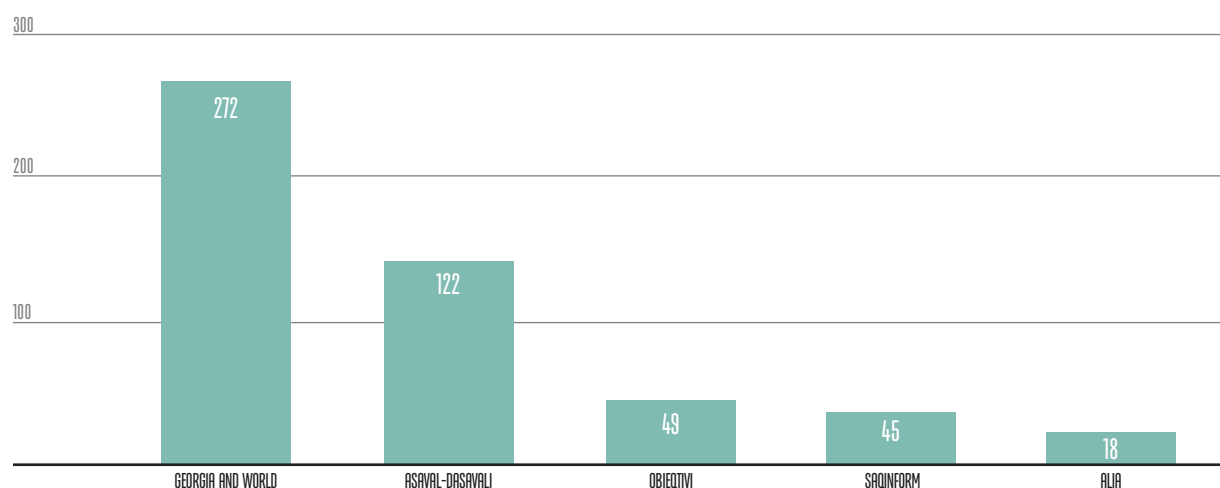
CHART 10. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH



## 2.1 MEDIA

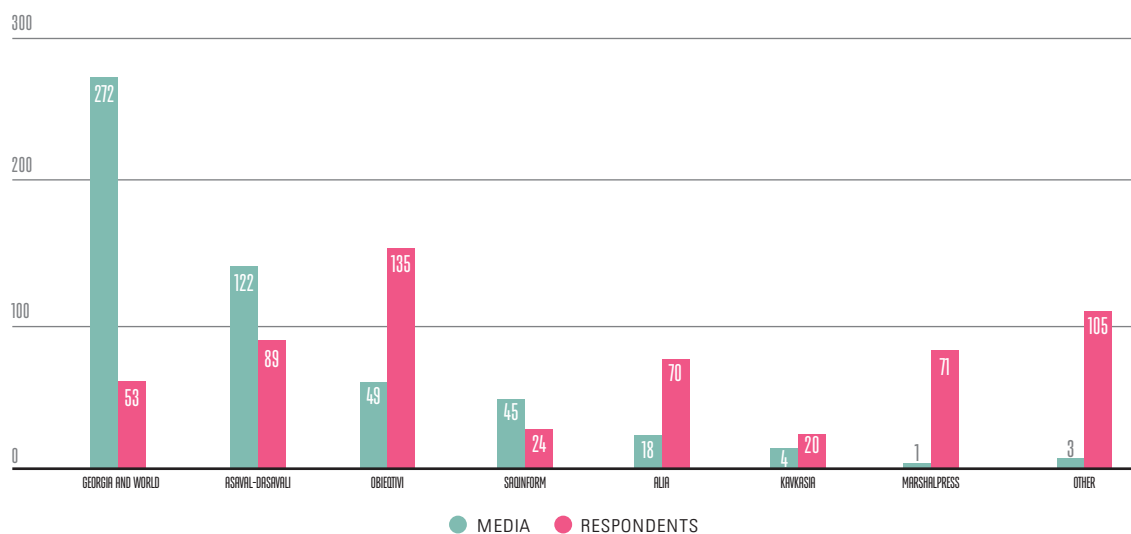
Hate speech is most often reproduced by journalists of the pro-Kremlin outlet “Georgia and the World” (272), followed by the ethno-nationalist newspaper Asaval-Dasavali (122). The editorial comments of “TV Obieqtivi” (49), the channel of the pro-Kremlin party “Alliance of Patriots of Georgia,” and the informational agency “Saknform” (45) were almost equal in number. “Alia” journalists became sources of discrimination in 18 cases.

CHART 11. HATE SPEECH SOURCES BY MEDIA



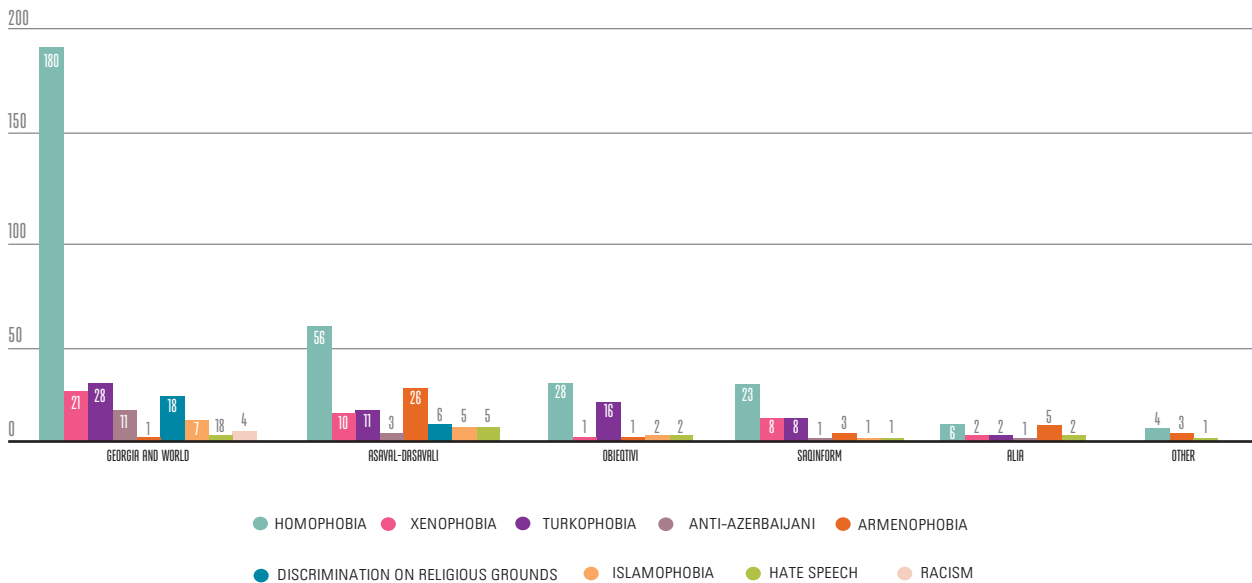
Most of the respondents who made comments containing hate speech were featured on TV Obieqtivi in 2020 (135). This number was also high in the case of Asaval-Dasavali (89), Marshalpress (71) and Alia (70).

CHART 12. HATE SPEECH BY MEDIA AND THEIR RESPONDENTS



Most of the discriminatory statements made by the media representatives were of homophobic (297) content, followed by various statements of xenophobic content (161), religious discrimination (41) and hate speech (11). The least number of statements made by media representatives were racist (4).

CHART 13. HATE SPEECH TYPOLOGY BY MEDIA OUTLETS



Most of the discriminatory statements were made by Georgia and the World (272), followed by the ethno-nationalist Asaval-Dasavali (122), Saqinform (45) and Obieqtivi (49).

Out of the xenophobic statements made by the media (161), the largest number (65) had a Turkophobic content, 42 comments were made against migrants, 38 against Armenians, and 16 against Azerbaijanis.

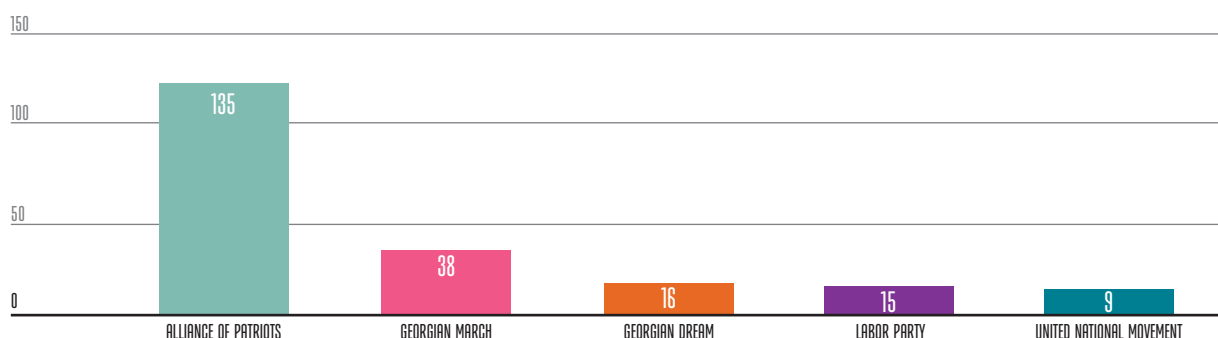
When it comes to discrimination on religious grounds in the media, the number of statements made against Islam (16) and the Catholic Church (16) was equal, followed by discriminatory statements against Jehovah’s Witnesses (4), various other denominations (3) and the Evangelical Baptist Church (2). Most of these statements (16) belong to the journalists of Georgia and World.

## 2.2 POLITICIANS

When it comes to politicians, hate speech was most often used by the members of the Patriots Alliance of Georgia (135), followed by the members of the Georgian March (38). Members of the ruling Georgian Dream party made a total of 16 discriminatory comments, while members of the opposition National Movement made nine discriminatory comments in total. 15 statements belonged to the rep-

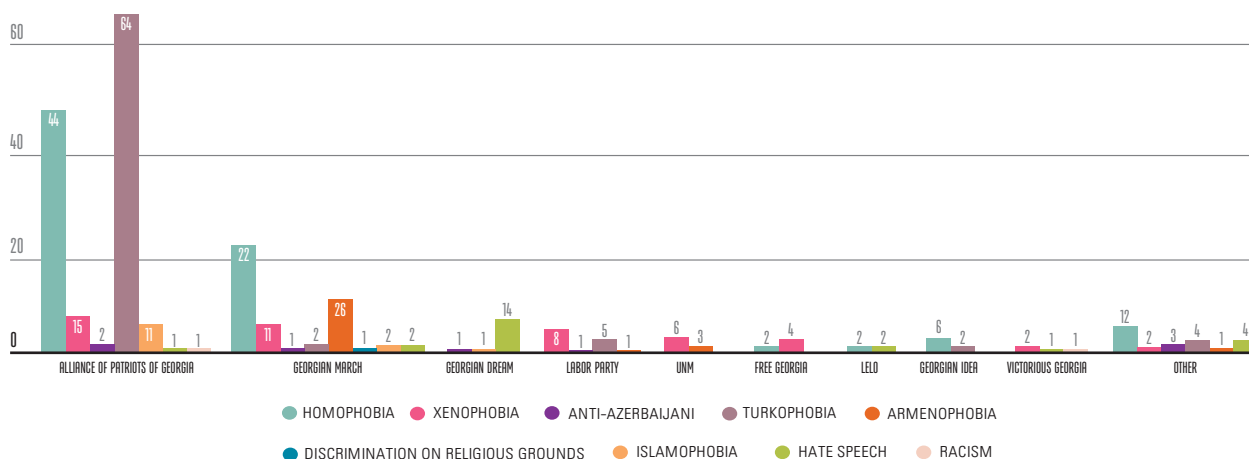
representatives of the Labor Party. Notably, the number of discriminatory comments made by the members of “Free Georgia” (6) and “Lelo” (4) was relatively small.

CHART 14. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH BY PARTIES



Most of the statements made by politicians were xenophobic (148), combining Turkophobic (76), anti-migrant (48), anti-Azerbaijani (21) and Armenophobic (3) comments. representatives of various parties. Homophobia (61), hate speech (25), religious discrimination (10) and racism (2) was also present in the statements of the political party representatives.

CHART 15. TYPES OF HATE SPEECH BY PARTIES



The largest share of xenophobic statements (81) belonged to the members of the Alliance of Patriots. The party, like in previous years, still took the lead in circulating Turkophobic (64) sentiments. Most of the Islamophobic statements also belong to members of the Alliance of Patriots.

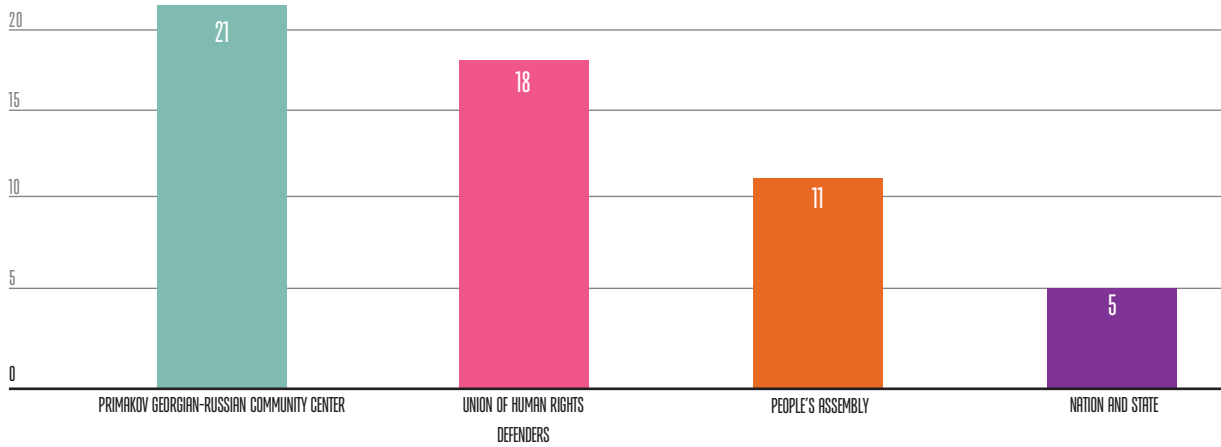
### 2.3 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The research identified four civil society organizations that used hate speech most frequently. Among CSOs, the most number (21) of discriminatory comments were made by the Primakov Georgian-Rus-



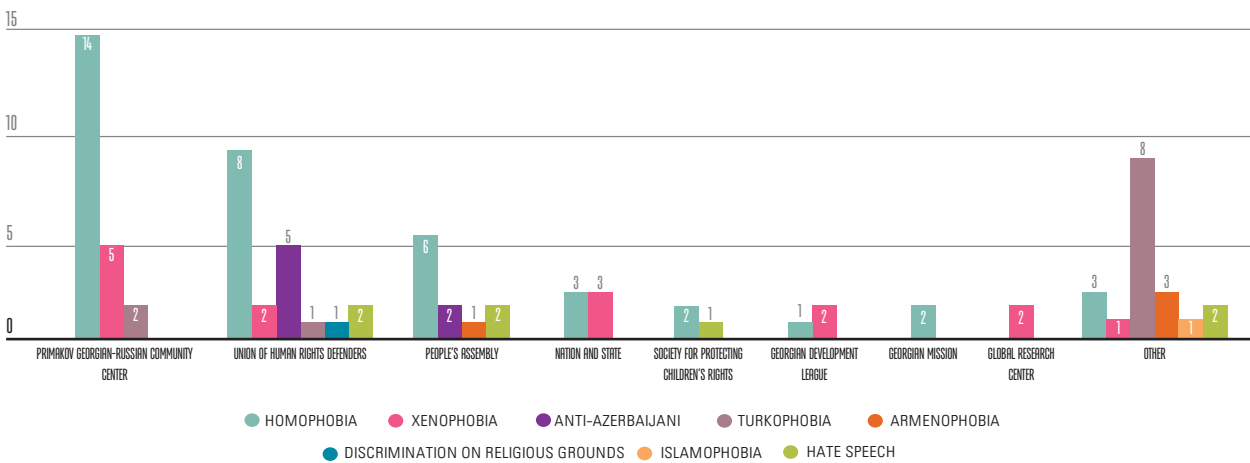
sian Community Center, followed by the Union of Human Rights Defenders (18), the People’s Assembly (11), and the Nation and State (5).

CHART 16. SOURCES OF HATE SPEECH BY CSOS



The aforementioned organizations predominantly disseminated xenophobic messages, most of them having anti-migrant (17) and Turkophobic (11) content. The number of anti-Azerbaijani (5) and Armenophobic (4) statements was almost equal. CSO representatives were the source of homophobic comments in 22 cases, they used hate speech in 7 cases, and discrimination on the grounds of religion was observed in 2 cases.

CHART 17. TYPES OF HATE SPEECH BY CSOS



## 2.4 CLERICS

Giorgi Razmadze, the head of the Ketevan Tsamebuli Church in Avchala, was distinguished by making various statements of discriminatory content. Most of his statements, like those of other clergymen, were homophobic.

Giorgi Razmadze	21
Metropolitan Daniel	4
Ilia Karkadze	4
Davit Kvlividze	2
Basil Mkalavishvili	2

## 2.5 SOCIETY

Xenophobic comments made by the members of the public (72) combine anti-migrant (31), Turkophobic (19), anti-Azerbaijani (19) and Armenophobic (9) assessments, followed by homophobic statements (57) and hate speech (39).



