CONFLICT REPORTING

IN AZERBAIJANI- AND ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA AND OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

MDF

Internews

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INTRODUCTION

The following report reflects the results of media content monitoring to analyze conflict coverage by Azerbaijani- and Armenian-language regional platforms. In addition, the report incorporates conflict-related qualitative data acquired from specific Russian- and Georgian-language Facebook accounts.

The study aims to identify the degree of media's adherence to professional standards of conflict reporting and the potential spread of disinformation and hate speech.

The study applies a mixed methodology, namely, Internews' conflict coverage assessment methodology, adapted for the use in the context of Georgia, and Facebook analytical tool, CrowdTangle, for social media monitoring.

The report reflects the interim results of monitoring conducted between May 1 and June 15, 2021.

The introductory section covers the research methodology and key findings; the first part provides general quantitative data; the second part is the assessment of reporting quality and professionalism; the third part assesses conflict-sensitive reporting; the fourth part is about crossing "the red lines" in conflict reporting; the fifth part reviews a specific case of manipulation; and the sixth and final part outlines conflict-related messages shared by Russian- and Georgian-language Facebook platforms. In addition, the annex provides the profiles of media outlets sampled for monitoring.

MONITORING METHODOLOGY

The research aims to study the coverage of recent regional conflicts, peace initiatives, and developments related to ongoing territorial disputes between countries, as well as the instances of severe interethnic and interreligious confrontation between various groups in the country, by Azerbaijani- and Armenian-language regional media outlets in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions. The monitoring also entails identifying messages, disinformation, and hate speech disseminated on the aforementioned topics. Apart from Azerbaijani- and Armenian-language outlets, Facebook accounts of Russian-language news outlets and specific Georgian-language Facebook accounts targeting particular ethnic groups were analyzed qualitatively in order to fully understand the regional context.

The monitoring was carried out with a mixed methodology incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Quantitative data were collected during the content monitoring of Azerbaijani- and Armenian-language regional media outlets, while selected Russian-language news outlets and Georgian-language Facebook accounts were analyzed qualitatively to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the context.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

The topics monitored include:

- Conflicts and related peace initiatives;
- Territorial disputes between countries;
- Border demarcation issues between countries;
- Internal interethnic conflicts; and
- Historical conflicts and other contentious issues leading to confrontation between various ethnic, religious, and national groups in the current context.

The media coverage of the above-mentioned topics applies direct and indirect coverage variable:

DIRECT COVERAGE — media content (article, news item, TV and radio report) covers the topic of interest to this study in full;

INDIRECT COVERAGE – media content mentions the topic of interest to this study indirectly instead covering another topic.

The monitoring relies in part on Internews's conflict reporting assessment methodology, which has been applied to analyze the coverage of violent conflicts around the world. Three indicators of the methodology have been applied in this study:

1. **QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM** (Accuracy, objectivity/impartiality, balance/fairness, relevance, language, clarity, background/context)
2. **CONFLICT SENSITIVITY**
3. **CROSSING RED LINES** (Use of violent imagery, hate speech, and offensive/denigrating language in reporting)

QUALITATIVE DATA

- Message Typology of messages
- Hate Speech Typology and Targets
- Fake News Typology

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS (SAMPLING)

Azerbaijani and Armenian language media outlets were selected as monitoring subjects based on the specifics of the region and the results of previous studies. A total of 25 news outlets have been monitored; Quantitative data are being collected on 20 outlets (10 Azerbaijani- and 10 Armenian-language outlets); Two Russian-language and two Georgian-language Facebook pages have been subjected to qualitative analysis.

TABLE 1. AZERBAIJANI AND ARMENIAN LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS

	AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS			ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS
1	24News.ge		1	Aliq Media; http:/aliq.ge/
2	Gündəlik – Gürcüstan; https://www.facebook.com/gundelikgurcustan/		2	Парвана Тв; http://parvana.ge/
3	Aktual.ge; https://www.aktual.ge/		3	Radio NOR; https://nor.ge/
4	Radio Marneuli 96.9 FM; http://marneulifm.ge/		4	TV9News.AM; https://tv9news.ge/am/
5	Marneuli TV; http://www.marneulitv.ge/		5	JavakhkNews.ge; http://www.jnews.ge/
6	Yeni Yol; http://yeniyol.ge/		6	Atv 12 television https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCr0QsJx-P6uccU6jXpD9-seA

	AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS		ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS
7	Borchalitv; http://borchalitv.wordpress.com/	7	News from Javahk-akhaltskha; http://akhaltskha.net/
8	Xeber.ge; http://xeber.ge/	8	Akhalkalaki News; https://www.facebook.com/akhalkalakinews
9	Radio Bolneli http://bolneli.ge/	9	Javakhk Media http://javakhkmedia.com/
10	Radio Ivrisi http://ivrisi.org.ge/	10	Samkhretis Karibche https://sknews.ge/am

The following factors prompted the selection of these additional Russian and Georgian-language news outlets for the qualitative analysis: Russian state-run Sputnik and a regional outlet, Jeiran Media Press Club often cover topics related to conflicts; Georgian-language news outlet Kavkaz Plus, and The Caucasian Telegraph,[1] a Facebook page, shared Armenophobic materials when hostilities resumed in Nagorno-Karabakh and attempted to exacerbate the conflict.

TABLE 2. RUSSIAN AND GEORGIAN LANGUAGE PLATFORMS

	RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS		GEORGIAN-LANGUAGE PLATFORMS
1	Sputnik Georgia	1	The Caucasian Telegraph
2	Press Club Jeiran Media	2	Kavkaz Plus

The content monitoring of Facebook pages of the selected media outlets was carried out in Crowd-Tangle, a Facebook analytical tool.

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[1]   Myth Detector, 1 December 2020. Caucasian Telegraph publishes Armenophobic disinformation and conspiracy theories. https://mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/caucasian-telegraph-armenopobiuri-khasiatis-dezinpormatsias-da-konspiratsiebs-akveqnebs

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KEY FINDINGS

The following are the findings of the media content monitoring conducted between May 1 and June 15:

AZERBAIJANI- AND ARMENIAN- LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA

- Out of 11,843 published posts, 176 were related to conflicts (86 in Armenian-language media; 90 in Azerbaijani-language media). Direct coverage of conflicts was observed in 120 stories, while indirect coverage occurred in 56 materials.
- The frequency of both direct (42) and indirect (37) coverage of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the highest in Armenian-language regional media. By contrast, the frequency of coverage of the same topic in Azerbaijani-language regional media, both directly (20) and indirectly (13), was relatively low.
- Azerbaijani-language regional media dedicated significantly higher attention to the internal interethnic conflict that broke out in Dmanisi, Kvemo Kartli region (51).
- The frequency of conflict coverage on Facebook pages by Armenian- and Azerbaijani- language regional news outlets varied, which may be attributed to the scarcity of resources available to regional media outlets.
- Armenian-language media covered the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict more frequently (79 publications in Armenian-language media versus 33 publications in Azerbaijani-language media), while the use of sources representing both sides of the conflict was rare both in Armenian- and Azerbaijani-language media.
- The most problematic aspect of coverage was balance, reflected in the low overall score of the balance indicator (0.20); Armenian-language media outlets scored higher (0.25) than Azerbaijani-language media outlets (0.14).
- Second to "balance" by measure of deviation from the professional standard is the content indicator (0.41). Armenian-language news outlets scored above average (0.51), whereas Azerbaijani-language outlets scored below the average value (0.33).
- The overall language indicator was scored below average (44), as were the accuracy (0.46) and background/context indicators (0.46). However, Azerbaijani-language media scored above average in all three indicators and higher than Armenian-language media.

- Media outlets performed relatively better when assessed for objectivity/impartiality (0.58) and relevance (0.60), having scored above the average value and closest to the professional standard in clarity of coverage (0.87).

- Azerbaijani- and Armenian- language media outlets often published content produced by other media outlets. Of the 50 items identified as produced by other media, only 18 included references to original sources.

- Armenian-language regional media outlets relied more frequently on Armenian media sources . As for Georgian media sources, Armenian-language regional media mainly used content from credible Georgian national media platforms, with few exceptions (e.g. Taonews.ge and Newsgeorgia.ge). In some cases, Armenian-language media relied on Russian propagandist media outlets (e.g. Tass. ru, Armeniasputnik.am, Infoteka24.ru).

- Azerbaijani-language regional media mainly relied on critical Georgian national TV channels (e.g. Mtavari Arkhi and TV Pirveli) and less frequently on Azerbaijani and Turkish media outlets (e.g. TRT HABER).

- The overall score for the conflict-sensitive coverage indicator was lower than the average value (0.43), while the score for the crossing of red lines indicator (0.78) conforms to the higher standard of reporting.

- There was an instance of a regional Armenian-language media outlet sharing unverified information originating in the Armenian media about the deployment of a Turkish military base in Georgia (Javakheti) on its Facebook page and manipulatively linking the information to the interests of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem against Armenia.

- Based on Russian sources, an Armenian-language regional media outlet shared an expert opinion that alleged that special services of Georgia's neighbors, Turkish and Azerbaijan, were behind an attempt to foment a feud between Georgians and Armenians ("Turkish and Azerbaijani special services behind attempts to set Georgians' against Armenians.")

FACEBOOK PAGES OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE MEDIA

- Messages shared by Jeiran Media Press Club (mainly in the form of expert opinions and frequently with expert quotations as headlines) emphasized the special role of Russia in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, on the one hand, and Turkey's biased attitudes and the problematic nature of Turkey's increased influence in the region, on the other hand.

- While Jeiran Media posted all materials both on its website and Facebook page, Sputnik applied a different approach by more frequently sharing stories about internal politics, social affairs, and entertainment in Georgia on Facebook rather than stories about regional conflicts or foreign policy priorities of the Kremlin.

- Materials published by Russian-language Sputnik website, which, on the one hand, criticized the West over conflicts and military affairs ("Military-political games of the Western countries pose a

potential threat")[2] and, on the other hand, promoted the role of Russia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict[3], were not shared via Facebook.

GEORGIAN LANGUAGE FACEBOOK PAGES

■ The Caucasian Telegraph, which had previously frequently published materials against Armenians, including the Armenian diaspora,[4] covered the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict[5] as well as the conflicts in Georgia[6] in a relatively neutral manner during the period covered by the monitoring study. As regards to Kavkaz Plus, it maintained a clear-cut Armenophobic stance, portraying Armenians as separatists.

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[2]   Sputnik, 18 May 2021. "Is there a link between military drills in Azerbaijan and a border dispute with Armenia?" https://sputnik-georgia.ru/columnists/20210518/251752377/Svyazany-li-ucheniya-v-Azerbaydzhane-i-pogranichnyy-spor-s-Armeniey.html

[3]   Sputnik, 16 May 2021. "Border conflict in Syuniksk region: Time for Collective Security Treaty Organization to interfere?" https://sputnik-georgia.ru/columnists/20210516/251740120/Pogranichnyy-konflikt-v-Syunikskoy-oblasti-vremya-vmeshatsya-ODKB.html 5 May, "Conflict on Armenia-Azerbaijani border: Russian peacekeepers join the negotiations" https://sputnik-georgia.ru/caucasus/20210515/251736045/Konflikt-na-granitse-Armenii-i-Azerbaydzhana-k-peregovoram-podklyuchilis-mirotvortsy-Rossii.html

[4]   The Caucasian Telegraph, 6 November, 2020. "Armenian diaspora has become a global threat, France will be the first to cave in"… https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=838081653614992

[5]   The Caucasian Telegraph, 15 May, 2021. "Nikol Pashinyan asks President of Russia for military assistance." https://www.facebook.com/100907098457590/posts/243347764213522

[6]   The Caucasian Telegraph, 10 June, 2021. "US senator Rob Portman about the occupation of Samachablo" https://www.facebook.com/100907098457590/posts/260020092546289

1. GENERAL QUANTITATIVE DATA

NUMBER OF FACEBOOK POSTS. During the period covered by the report (May 1 through June 15), the Facebook pages of Azerbaijani- and Armenian-language regional media outlets published a total of 11,843 posts (5,382 were published by Armenian-language platforms; 6,459 were published by Azerbaijani-language platforms).

As shown on Figure 1, during the period covered by the report, Radio Nor led among Armenian-language regional media outlets by number of posts published on Facebook, followed by Parvana TV and Jnews.

FIGURE 1. FACEBOOK ACTIVITY OF ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS, MAY 1 – JUNE 15
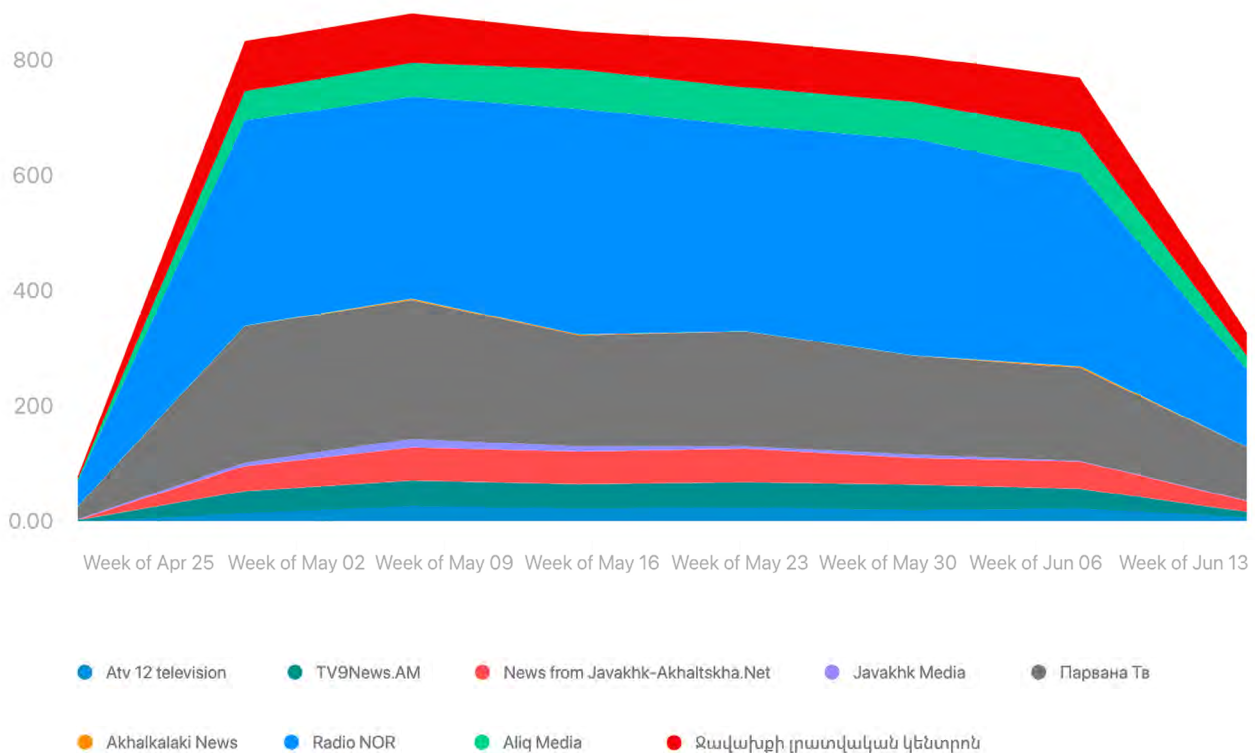
Source: CrowdTangle

ALL POSTS > COMBINED TOTAL POSTS > 05/01/21 - 06/15/21

	TOTAL POSTS	AVG. WEEKLY POSTS
	5.4K	**75**

NAME	TOTAL	%	
Atv 12 televisio...	141	2.62%	
TV9News.AM	257	4.77%	
News from Javakh...	325	6.04%	
Javakhk Media	43	0.80%	
Парвана Тв	1.3K	24.50%	
Akhalkalaki News	6	0.11%	
Radio NOR	2.3K	43.60%	
Aliq Media	403	7.49%	
Ջավախքի լրատվակա...	542	10.07%	
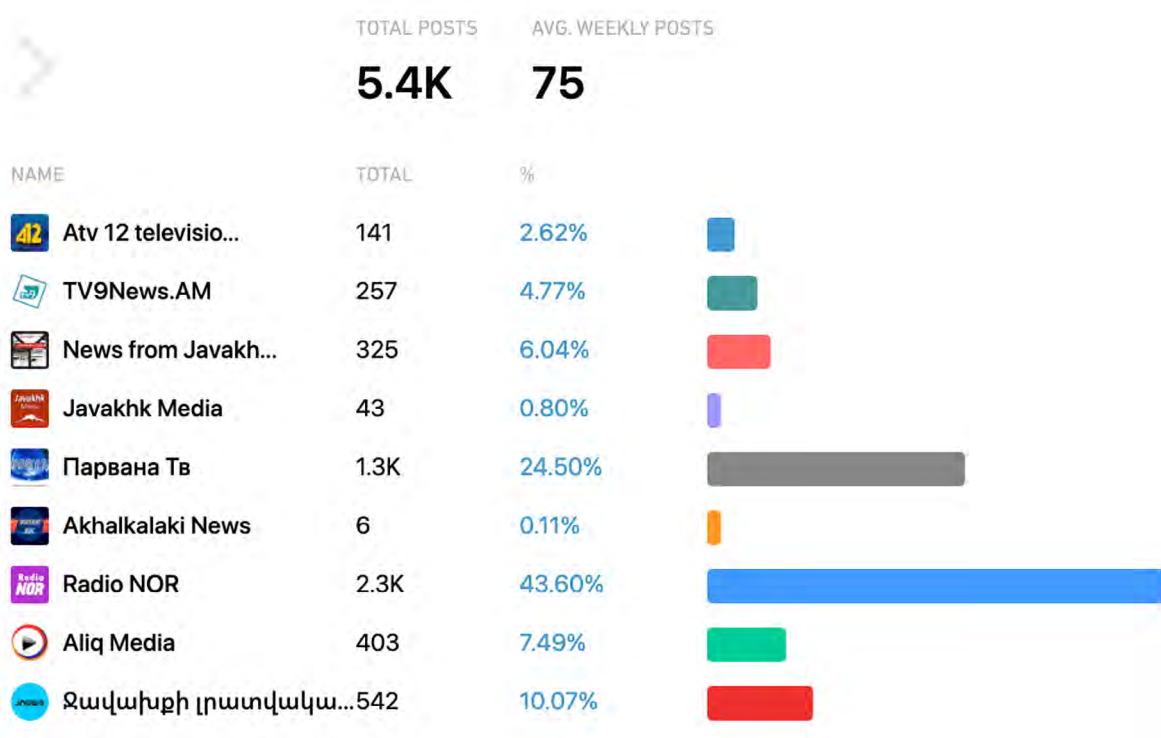
Radio Marneuli published the highest number of posts among Azerbaijani-language regional media outlets, followed by 24News.ge, Aktual.ge, and Xeber.ge.

FIGURE 2. FACEBOOK ACTIVITY OF AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS, MAY 1- JUNE 15

Week of Apr 25 Week of May 02 Week of May 09 Week of May 16 Week of May 23 Week of May 30 Week of Jun 06 Week of Jun 13

● Aktual.ge ● Marneuli TV ● Radio Marneuli 96.9 FM/ რადიო მარნეული 96.9 FM ● 24News.ge

● Borchalitv ● Xeber.ge ● Yeni Yol ● Gündəlik - Gürcüstan

Source: CrowdTangle

		TOTAL POSTS	AVG. WEEKLY POSTS
		5.2K	**60**

NAME		TOTAL	%	
	Radio Ivrisi	0	0.00%	
	რადიო ბოლნელი 10...	0	0.00%	
	Aktual.ge	993	18.95%	
	Marneuli TV	258	4.92%	
	Radio Marneuli 9...	1.7K	32.56%	
	რადიო AGFM მარნე...	0	0.00%	
	24News.ge	1.1K	21.21%	
	Borchalitv	6	0.11%	
	Xeber.ge	1.0K	19.51%	
	Yeni Yol	26	0.50%	
	Gündəlik - Gürcü...	117	2.23%	

TOPICS. Of the 11,843 total posts published during the reporting period, 176 were dedicated to conflicts (86 in Armenian-language media; 90 in Azerbaijani-language media). Direct coverage of conflicts was observed in 120 materials, and indirect coverage in 56 materials.

As shown on Figure 3, the frequency of both direct (42) and indirect coverage (37) of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was the highest in Armenian-language regional media, whereas the frequency of coverage of the same topic in Azerbaijani-language regional media was relatively low both in the form of direct (20) and indirect (13) reporting. Azerbaijani-language regional media dedicated significantly greater attention to the internal, ethnic-based conflict[7] that broke out in Dmanisi, Kvemo Kartli region (51).
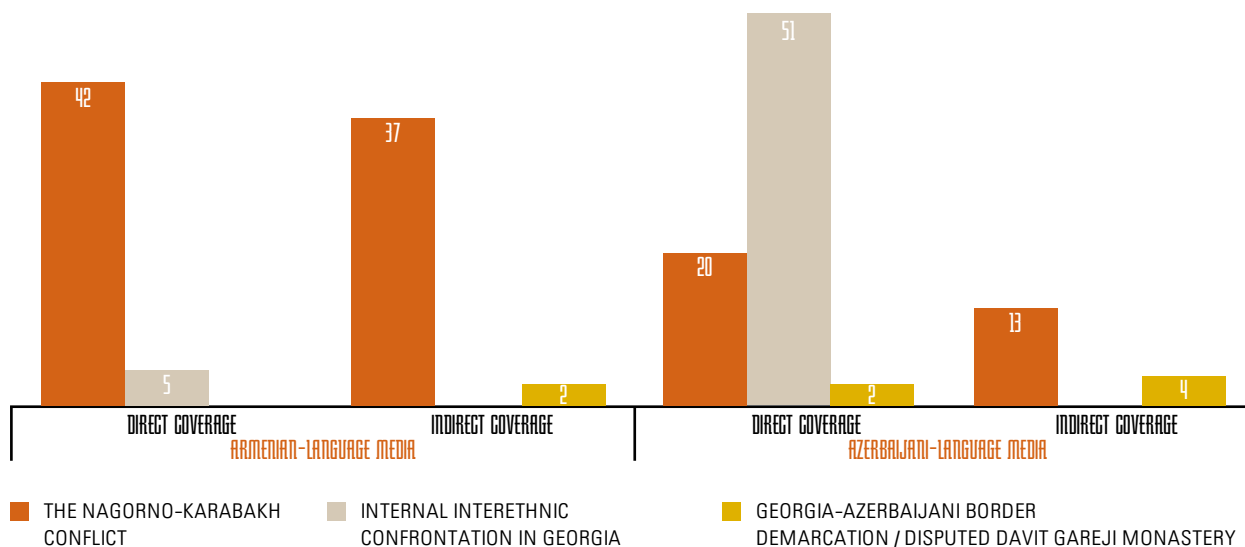
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[7]   On May 17, 2021, a conflict that began on banal grounds at a local shop between ethnic Georgian and Azerbaijani citizens of Georgia in Dmanisi escalated into physical violence, mass disturbances, and a confrontation. Police forces were deployed to Dmanisi. On May 18, with the involvement of representatives of central and local authorities as well as the clergy, the conflicting parties met at Dmanisi city hall and agreed to end the confrontation.

FIGURE 3. DIRECT AND INDIRECT COVERAGE OF CONFLICTS IN ARMENIAN- AND AZERBAIJANI- LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS, MAY 1 -JUNE 15.

■ THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT
■ INTERNAL INTERETHNIC CONFRONTATION IN GEORGIA
■ GEORGIA-AZERBAIJANI BORDER DEMARCATION / DISPUTED DAVIT GAREJI MONASTERY

Materials dedicated to conflicts covered a range of issues and various aspects of conflicts. Armenian-language media outlets most frequently reported on detainees, prisoners of war, killed and the wounded (64) in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, followed by stories about various conflict settlement formats (59) and about disputed territories within the conflict zones (32). As Figure 4 shows, Azerbaijani-language media reported on the above issues significantly more rarely, instead extensively covering the internal interethnic confrontation in Dmanisi (51). The topic of the Davit Gareji Monastery, situated on the disputed section of the Georgian-Azerbaijani border, was twice indirectly covered by Armenian-language media, while Azerbaijani-language media reported on the issue twice directly and four times indirectly. The Abkhazian conflict was covered once indirectly on the Facebook page of an Armenian media outlet, which relied on a Russian media source.
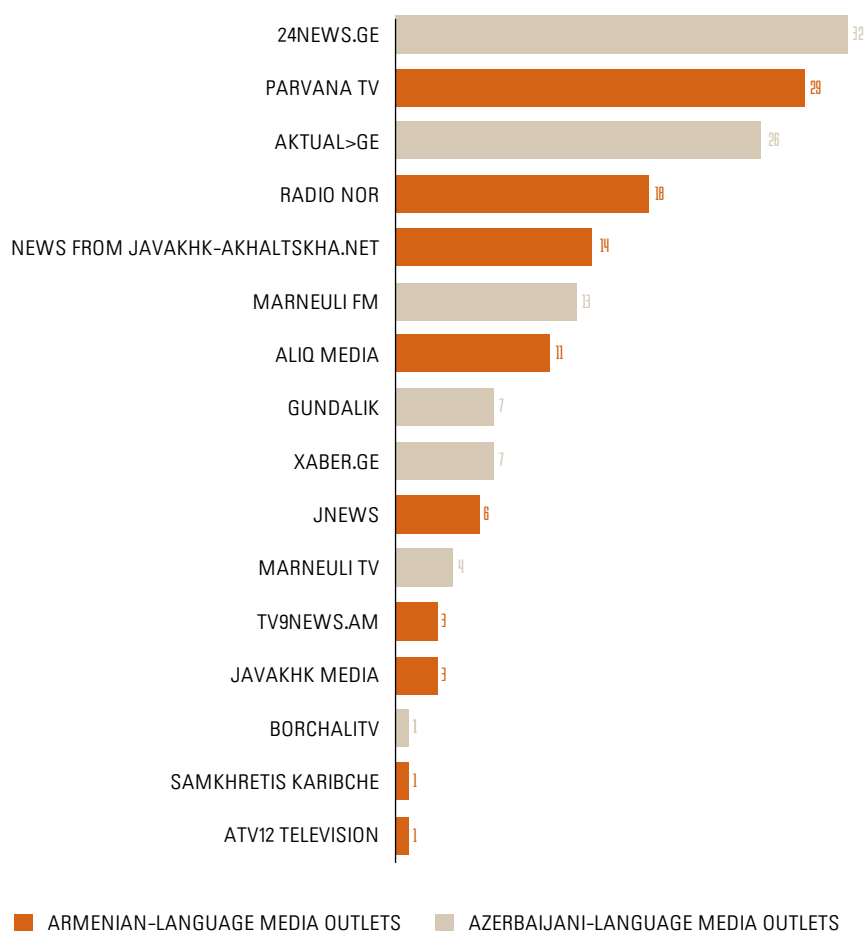
FIGURE 4. VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CONFLICT REPORTING IN ARMENIAN- AND AZERBAIJANI- LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS, MAY 1- JUNE 15

■ ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS / TOPICS
■ AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS / TOPICS
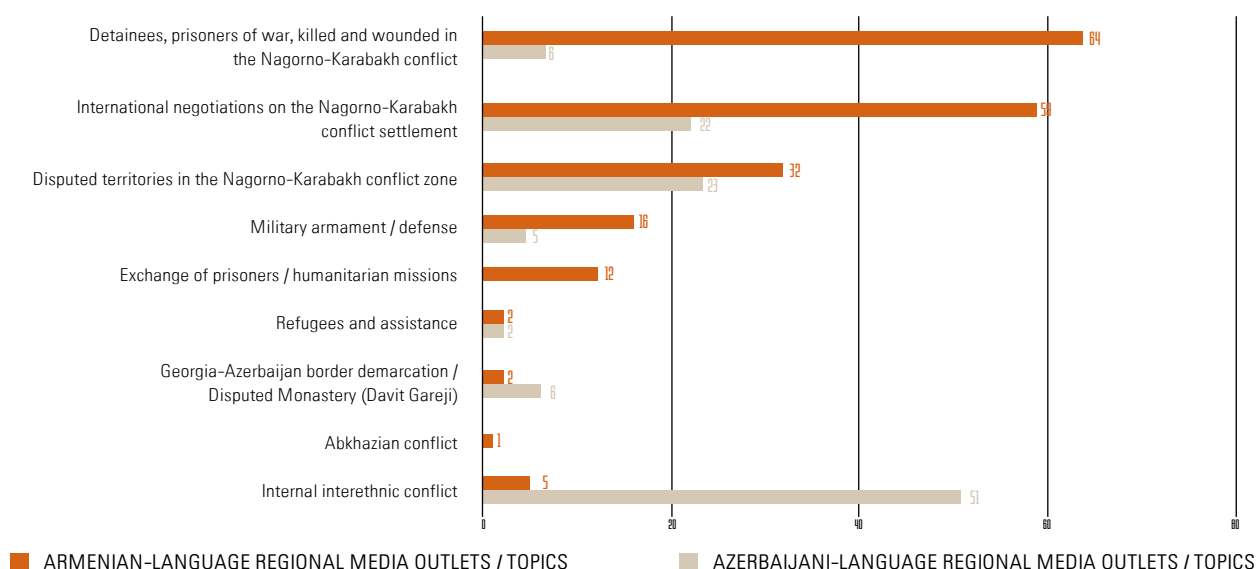
NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS BY MEDIA OUTLETS. During the period covered by the monitoring report (May 1 – June 15), 7 out of 10 monitored Azerbaijani-language regional media outlets covered conflicts, whereas the remaining 3 outlets (Yeni Yol; Radio Bolneli; and Radio Ivrisi) covered neither territorial conflicts between countries nor internal ethnic confrontations. As for the monitored Armenian-language regional media, nine out of 10 outlets covered topics of interest to this study, whereas one (Akhalkalaki News) did not cover these topics.

The frequency of conflict reporting on Facebook pages of Armenian- and Azerbaijani- language regional media outlets varied, which may be attributed to regional media outlets' lack of resources. As the figure below shows, 24News.ge (32) led among Azerbaijani-language media outlets by frequency of reporting about conflicts, followed by Aktual.ge (26) and Marneuli Radio (13),. Other media outlets produced fewer stories on the topic. Among the Armenian-language media, Parvana TV (29) covered conflicts most frequently, followed by Radio NOR (18), News from Javakhk-Akhaltskha.Net (14) and Aliq Media (11). Other monitored Armenian-language media outlets produced less than 10 items on the topic of conflicts.

FIGURE 5. NUMBER OF ITEMS BY NEWS OUTLETS

Outlet	Value
24NEWS.GE	32
PARVANA TV	29
AKTUAL>GE	26
RADIO NOR	18
NEWS FROM JAVAKHK-AKHALTSKHA.NET	14
MARNEULI FM	13
ALIQ MEDIA	11
GUNDALIK	7
XABER.GE	7
JNEWS	6
MARNEULI TV	4
TV9NEWS.AM	3
JAVAKHK MEDIA	3
BORCHALITV	1
SAMKHRETIS KARIBCHE	1
ATV12 TELEVISION	1

■ ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS   ■ AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS

2. QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

ASSESSING QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM. The Internews methodology assesses the quality and professionalism of conflict coverage based on the following indicators: accuracy, objectivity/impartiality, balance/fairness, relevance, language, background/context, and clarity.

OVERALL DATA. According to the results of the content monitoring conducted between May 1 and June 15, the most problematic was the overall score of the balance indicator (0.20).[8] Armenian-language media outlets scored higher (0.25) than Azerbaijani-language media outlets (0.14).

Second to the balance by measure of deviation from the standard is the content indicator (0.41). In this category, Armenian-language media outlets scored above average (0.51), whereas Azerbaijani-language outlets scored below the average value (0.33).

The overall score for the language indicator was below the average value (0.44), as were the accuracy (0.46) and background/context (0.46) indicators. In all three categories, however, Azerbaijani-language media scored above average and higher than Armenian-language media. The language indicator for Azerbaijani-language media was 0.51, whereas Armenian-language media received the score of 0.36 in the same category; The accuracy indicator for Azerbaijani-language media stood at 0.65 versus 0.32 for Armenian-language media; The background/context indicator for Azerbaijani-language media was assessed at 0.56 versus 0.36 for Armenian-language media.

Media outlets performed relatively better in the objectivity/impartiality (0.58) and relevance (0.60) categories, scoring above average. Media outlets scored closest to the standard in clarity of coverage (0.87). As per the table below, Armenian-language media outlets scored better than Azerbaijani-language media in all three indicators.

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[8]   0 = breach of standard (low score), 1 = adherence to standard (high score)

TABLE 3. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

Scores: 0 = breach of standard (low score), 1 = adherence to standard (high score)

QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM OF REPORTING	OVERALL SCORE	AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS	ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS
Accuracy	0.46	0.65	0.32
Objectivity / impartiality	0.58	0.48	0.68
Relevance	0.60	0.54	0.65
Content	0.41	0.33	0.51
Balance	0.20	0.14	0.25
Language	0.44	0.51	0.36
Background / context	0.46	0.56	0.36
Clarity	0.87	0.80	0.94

AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS. Among Azerbaijani-language news outlets, **accuracy** was most frequently disregarded by Gundalik.ge (0.14), and most strictly observed by Radio Marneuli (0.85). Xaber.ge earned the lowest score (0.29) for the **objectivity** indicator, whereas Marneuli TV (0.67) and 24News.ge (0.65) earned the best scores. As per the table below, Borchalitv — an outlet which produced only one piece on the topic of interest to the monitoring — scored zero for several indicators, including **relevance**. Xaber.ge scored the highest (0.71) in the **relevance** indicator. Scores of all news outlets in the **content** and **balance** indicator are below average. Borchalitv got the highest score (1) for the **language** indicator, whereas Gundalik.ge (0.29) and Xaber.ge (0.29) scored the lowest. Marneuli TV (1) earned the best for the **background/context** indicator, whereas Borchalitv and Gundalik.ge received the worst scores. Marneuli TV earned the best score for **clarity** of coverage (1), with 24News.ge lagging slightly behind (0.91).

TABLE 4. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM OF AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS

Scores: 0 = breach of standard (low score), 1 = adherence to standard (high score)

	NUMBER OF NEWS ITEMS	ACCURACY	OBJECTIVITY	RELEVANCE	CONTENT	BALANCE	LANGUAGE	BACKGROUND / CONTEXT	CLARITY
24News.ge	32	0.63	0.65	0.65	0.31	0.10	0.44	0.55	0.91
Aktual.ge	26	0.69	0.49	0.42	0.37	0.17	0.62	0.59	0.77
Marneuli FM	13	0.85	0.56	0.44	0.38	0.31	0.54	0.67	0.77
Gundalik	7	0.14	0.48	0.14	0.29	0.05	0.29	0.00	0.43
Xaber.ge	7	0.57	0.29	0.71	0.14	0.14	0.29	0.71	0.86
Marneuli TV	4	0.70	0.67	0.67	0.50	0.17	0.83	1	1
Borchalitv	1	0.50	0.33	0	0	0	1	0	0

ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS. Among Armenian-language media outlets, Javakhk Media received the lowest score of zero for accuracy, whereas several news outlets (TV9News.AM, Samkhretis Karibche, Atv 12, JNEWS, Aliq Media) fared almost equally well above average (0.67-0.64) for the same in-

dicator. JNEWS received the best score (0.78) for the objectivity indicator, closely followed by Radio NOR (0.76), while Javakhk Media received the worst score (0.50). Samkhretis Karibche received the highest score (1) for the relevance indicator, followed by Aliq Media (0.89). Parvana TV scored above average (0.55) on the content indicator, while remaining outlets scored below average. TV9News. AM (0.67) was the best in terms of balance of coverage, whereas Javakhk Media (0) and News from Javakhk-Akhaltskha.Net (0.10) failed to meet the standard. Samkhretis Karibche (1) and Atv 12 (1) received the highest scores for the language indicator, despite each having published only one item. By the background/context indicator, Samkhretis Karibche (1) led again, followed by Aliq Media (0.78), whereas Javakhk Media and ATV 12 received scores of zero. All media outlets except Javakhk Media (0.50) scored high in the clarity indicator.

TABLE 5. ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM OF ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE REGIONAL NEWS OUTLETS

Scores: 0 = breach of standard (low score), 1 = adherence to standard (high score)

	NUMBER OF NEWS ITEMS	ACCURACY	OBJECTIVITY	RELEVANCE	CONTENT	BALANCE	LANGUAGE	BACKGROUND / CONTEXT	CLARITY
24News.ge	32	0.63	0.65	0.65	0.31	0.1	0.44	0.55	0.91
Parvana TV	29	0.14	0.62	0.64	0.55	0.18	0.34	0.34	0.93
Radio NOR	18	0.22	0.76	0.65	0.50	0.28	0.50	0.41	0.90
News from Javakhk-Akhaltskha. Net	14	0.14	0.67	0.60	0.50	0.10	0.43	0.21	0.93
Aliq Media	11	0.64	0.67	0.89	0.5	0.33	0	0.78	1
JNEWS	6	0.66	0.78	0.61	0.5	0.39	0.17	0.17	1
TV9News.AM	3	0.67	0.67	0.44	0.33	0.67	0	0.11	1
Javakhk Media	2	0	0.50	0.50	0.50	0	0	0	0.50
Samkhretis Karibche	1	0.67	0.67	1	0.50	0.33	1	1	1
Atv 12	1	0.67	0.67	0.33	0.50	0.33	1	0	1

2.1. ACCURACY

The indicator of accuracy is evaluated based on credibility of sources, number of sources, reporting of unverified information, and omission of important sources.

Assessment: 0 = lowest score, 1 = highest score.

Score: 0.46

Of the 176 materials published in Azerbaijani- and Armenian- language regional media, various measures of deviation from the accuracy standard were observed in 95 materials in one or more of the above indicators:

■ The most widespread deviation from the standard was the omission of important sources (89.4%). When reporting on conflicts, news outlets were one-sided, relied on a single source, mostly, on Armenian or Azerbaijani government entities;

- 15.7% of inaccurate materials mentioned general, non-specific (e.g. "according to available information," "according to the population") or anonymous sources;
- In some cases (12.6%), the lack of competence and credibility of sources was a problem;
- Some materials contained no sources at all (8.4%);
- In terms of accuracy, the biggest problem was the absence of sources representing one or more parties to the conflict. This problem was observed in most materials (72%), while attempts of journalists to obtain statements from unrepresented parties were present only in 5.7% of stories. Opposing sides were represented only in 12.5% of the materials.

Armenian-language media outlets fared worse (0.32) than Azerbaijani-language media outlets (0.65) for the accuracy indicator primarily due to the omission of important sources. Sourcing was a problem in 58 out of 85 stories produced by Armenian-language media outlets whereas the omission of sources occurred in 31 out of 90 materials produced by the Azerbaijani-language media. This may be attributed, in part, to more frequent reporting on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by Armenian-language media outlets (79 stories about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in Armenian-language versus 33 stories on the same subject in Azerbaijani-language media) as well as to the practice in both Azerbaijani- or Armenian-language media of rarely giving voice to both parties to the conflict.

It must be noted, however, that Armenian-language media scored better in the remaining sub-indicators of accuracy compared to Azerbaijani-language media, with the latter often deviating from the standard by using non-credible sources (38.7%), not handling debatable information appropriately (35.4%), and reporting unverified information (6.5%).

OTHER MEDIA SOURCES. Given the specifics of regional media, Azerbaijani- and Armenian- language outlets monitored by the study often published stories produced by other media outlets. Of 50 items identified as such, only 18 referenced the original media sources. It is worth noting that the monitored news outlets copied materials from other media either partially or in full.

As per the table below, Armenian-language regional media outlets carried mostly materials authored by Armenian media outlets. As for Georgian media, Armenian-language regional media mainly published content of credible Georgian national platforms, with few exceptions (i.e. Taonews.ge and Newsgeorgia.ge). In some cases, Armenian-language media used stories from Russian propagandist media outlets (Tass.ru, Armeniasputnik.am, Infoteka24.ru).

Azerbaijani-language regional media mainly used content by critical Georgian national TV channels (Mtavari Arkhi and TV Pirveli) and, less frequently, content produced by Azerbaijani and Turkish (TRT HABER) media outlets.

TABLE 6. SOURCES OF REGIONAL MEDIA

AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA			ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE REGIONAL MEDIA		
GEORGIAN NATIONAL MEDIA	AZERBAIJANI MEDIA	TURKISH MEDIA	RUSSIAN MEDIA	GEORGIAN NATIONAL MEDIA	ARMENIAN MEDIA
Mtavari Arkhi	AZTV	TRT HABER	tass.ru	1tv.ge	armenpress.am
TV Pirveli	report.az		armeniasputnik.am	jam-news.net/	hetq.am
	oxu24.com		infoteka24.ru	interpressnews.ge	tert.am
				netgazeti.ge	armnews
				taonews.ge	shantnews.am
				newsgeorgia.ge	civilnet.am shantnews.am Yerevan Times news.am hayeli.am

2.2. OBJECTIVITY / IMPARTIALITY

The indicator of objectivity is assessed based on representation of various points of view, the presence of opposing viewpoints, attribution of opinions to sources, and the absence of attitudes or personal viewpoints of reporters or news outlets in materials.

Assessment: 0 = partial, non-objective coverage; 1 = impartial, objective coverage.

Score: 0.58

Most frequently (85.7%), media outlets complied with the standard of objective and impartial reporting by attributing opinions to sources, followed by reporters' and media outlets' observance of neutrality towards the developments covered in stories (76%). Conversely, various points of view and opposing perspectives were present in the lowest share (11.4%) of stories.

Opposing perspectives were present in the materials of Armenian-language media (17.6%) more often than in Azerbaijani-language media content (5.5%). Likewise, neutrality towards the events in the coverage was observed more often by Armenian-language media (89.4%) than Azerbaijani-language media (63.3%).

2.3. RELEVANCE

The indicator of relevance assesses the relevance of a news item to target audiences.

Evaluation: 0 = irrelevant; 1 = relevant

Score: 0.60

Although the majority of topics covered in media were of relevance to their target audiences, these media outlets often failed to spell out the potential implications of events to the public.

2.4. CONTENT

The indicator of content assesses whether a news item covers official perspectives as well as the perspectives of those affected by the developments.

Evaluation: 0 = low standard of coverage; 1 = high standard of coverage.

Score: 0.41

The overall score for the content indicator is below the average value (0.41). When reporting, media outlets were mainly focused on presenting government and official perspectives (68%) and rarely those of individuals affected by the developments (14.8%). This could be attributed, in part, to the scarcity of resources available to the regional media.

Armenian-language media presented official perspectives when reporting on the incidents at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, namely, the confrontation between Azerbaijani border guards and local herdsmen[9] over pastures as well as while reporting on the capture of Armenian servicemen[10] and their release and return to the homeland. Azerbaijani-language media largely presented the perspectives of those impacted by the developments while reporting on the confrontation in Dmanisi.[11]

2.5. BALANCE

The indicator of balance assesses whether different points of view are duly represented in a story and whether the perspective of any of the sides has been omitted.

Evaluation: 0 = not balanced, 1 = balanced.

Score: 0.20

The worst overall score was assigned for the balance indicator (0.20). The materials rarely presented opposing viewpoints, especially in reporting about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Opposing perspectives were presented with the sole purpose of refuting the statements made by parties to the conflict. The study identified but few instances of journalists attempting to obtain statements from or providing the perspectives of opposing sides.

The biggest problem in terms of balance is the omission of the perspectives belonging to one or more conflict sides (72%). As for presenting opposing viewpoints, this practice was observed only in 12.5% of stories. In stories with perspectives of one or more sides missing, a reporter's attempt to obtain a statement from a respondent with an opposing view was present in but few cases (5.7%).

The share of stories in which journalists attempt to obtain statements from persons with opposing views is almost identical in Armenian- and Azerbaijani-language media, however the share of omissions of opposing viewpoints is higher (78. 8%) in Armenian-language media compared to the Azerbaijani language media (65.5%).

2.6. LANGUAGE

The indicator of language assesses whether offensive, inflammatory language, hate speech, xenophobic, or loaded words are used.

Evaluation: 0 = language is problematic, 1 = language is not problematic.

Score: 0.44

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[9]   6 June, JNEWS, "Azerbaijanis fire shots at herdsman in Kuti village" https://bit.ly/3iuS7lY
[10]   9 June, Radio Nor, "Armenian serviceman captured and then released at Azerbaijani-Armenian border" https://nor.ge/?p=177732
[11]   17 May, Aktual.ge, "Heartbreaking words of female worker at Dmanisi market — this is not the first attack carried out against Azerbaijanis" https://aktual.ge/Read/11338

Use of inflammatory language and hate speech by journalists was identified in 20% of the materials.

Among the loaded words, the word "liberated" was most frequently used by journalists of Armenian-language media in reference to Armenian servicemen, while Azerbaijani-language media used the word in the context of territories "liberated" by Azerbaijan.[12] Other loaded words such as "victim," "hero," "martyr," "enemy," "occupier," "terrorist," and "extremist" were used more sparingly.

TABLE 7. TERMINOLOGY

AZERBAIJANI-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS	ARMENIAN-LANGUAGE MEDIA OUTLETS
Liberated — 8	Liberated — 17
Martyr — 6	Victim — 7
Occupier — 5	Hero — 4
Enemy — 3	Occupier — 4
Hero — 2	Martyr — 4
Terrorist — 1	Terrorist — 2
	Extremist — 1

2.7. BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

The background / context indicator assesses whether a material provides sufficient background and historical information for audiences to fully understand the story and whether there are unanswered questions.

Evaluation: 0 = background information not provided, 1 = background information is provided.

Score: 0.46

Armenian- and Azerbaijani- language regional media outlets did not provide sufficient background information for the audiences to fully understand the context of ongoing developments. There were unanswered questions in 84 materials.

2.8. CLARITY

The indicator of clarity assesses whether information is provided in a clear and easily comprehensible manner.

Evaluation: 0 = unclear, 1 = clear.

Score: 0.87

The overall score for the clarity indicator is high (0.87), which means that stories are clear and easily comprehensible. Armenian-language media is closer to the standard of clarity (0.94) than Azerbaijani-language media (0.80).

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[12]   24news https://bit.ly/3ijMS8s

3. CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

The conflict sensitivity indicator assesses whether a journalist avoids the use of offensive, inflammatory, and violent imagery or audio; whether a journalist applies a neutral tone, avoids the use of offensive language or hate speech, and maintains impartiality towards parties to the conflict.

Evaluation: 0 = not conflict-sensitive, 1 = conflict-sensitive.

Score: 0.43.

The overall score assigned for this indicator is below average (0.43). Media outlets largely (92%) refrained from using inflammatory and violent imagery, as well as offensive and denigrating language (80.5%), while the tone of reporting was largely neutral (73.7%). In 54.2% of the materials, media outlets refrained from supporting any one of the conflict sides, but impartiality was breached in 76 stories. The level of conflict sensitivity was acceptable in 43.4% of stories.

There was an insignificant difference between Armenian- and Azerbaijani-language media outlets in terms of journalists' and news outlets' support for the conflict sides. Azerbaijani-language media were biased towards one of the parties to the conflict in 32.2% of materials, while Armenian-language regional media were supportive of one of conflict sides in 40% of the stories.

4. CROSSING RED LINES

> **The Crossing red lines indicator** evaluates whether the news item contains violent imagery or audio, hate speech, denigration of an individual or a group, pro-terrorist group coverage, or bias against women.
>
> **Evaluation:** 0 = red line issues present, 1 = red line issues absent.
>
> **Score:** 0.78.

In terms of the red lines, Azerbaijani and Armenian language media outlets largely adhere to the standard (0.78). During the reporting period, there were 16 identified instances of the use of violent imagery and 26 instances of the use of emotive words and inflammatory language. The instances of hate speech were rare.

Violent imagery was more frequently used by Azerbaijani-language media (14.4% of coverage) than by Armenian-language media (5.8%).

4.1 EXAMPLES OF VIOLENT, INFLAMMATORY LANGUAGE

On June 3, Armenian-language news outlet Javakh Media[13] posted an article by Yerevan Times[14] on its Facebook page. The article describes a confrontation between Bishop Giorgi of the Marneuli and Khujabi diocese and ethnic Azerbaijanis over agricultural land in the village Kesalo, Marneuli municipality. The material also uses Taonews's video in which the editor of the news outlet, Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, refers to Azerbaijanis as extremists and accuses them of oppressing Georgians:

> **Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, Taonews:** **"A glaring example of the oppression of Georgians is that Bishop Giorgi of the Marneuli and Khujabi Diocese was not allowed to cultivate the lands that belong to the church. One of the representatives of Azerbaijani extremists, who prevented Bishop Giorgi from cultivating the lands, even told him that these lands belonged to Azerbaijanis since time immemorial and Georgians had no business there."**

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[13]   Javakh Media, 3 June, https://bit.ly/3jfDwJV
[14]   Yerevan Times, 31 May, Վրաստանի Գարդաբանի շրջանում ապրող ադրբեջանցիները արգելել են տեղի վրացի եպիսկոպոսին մշակել տաճարի հողերը հայտարարելով «այս հողերը ադրբեջանական են» . (տեսանյութ)
https://bit.ly/37eg5Lw

Armenian-language news outlet Nor FM published the article "Azerbaijanis took the domes off the Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Church in Shusha,"[15] which quoted the head of the information and public relations department at the Artsakh Ministry of Internal Affairs as saying:

Hunan Tadosyan, the head of the information and public relations department of the Artsakh Ministry of Internal Affairs: "Your tragedy is in your brains, your tragedy is in the obedience to Turkey and powerlessness in the face of Turkey. You cannot understand pain in our souls."

Covering the confrontation in Dmanisi, without any accompanying editorial commentary, Azerbaijani-language news outlet 24news.ge[16] published the opinion of a politician, Albaba Asgarov, about the resettlement of Svans to the region and their incompatibility with locals (ethnic Azerbaijanis) in terms of mentality:

Albaba Asgarov, politician: "Svans were resettled to the region in the early 1980s and although more than 30 years have passed since then, they have failed to accept the mentality and traditions of inhabitants of this region. For many years, Svans had been provoking Azerbaijanis and no efforts were undertaken to prevent that. However, we are humans too. We shunned confrontation, but the developments of the previous day were the last straw."

4.2 VIOLENT IMAGERY

On May 20, Parvana TV posted the statement and a video by the Armenian Defense Ministry[17] to demonstrate that Armenian servicemen were beaten and humiliated by Azerbaijani servicemen. The video was released on Facebook with a warning marker about graphic images.

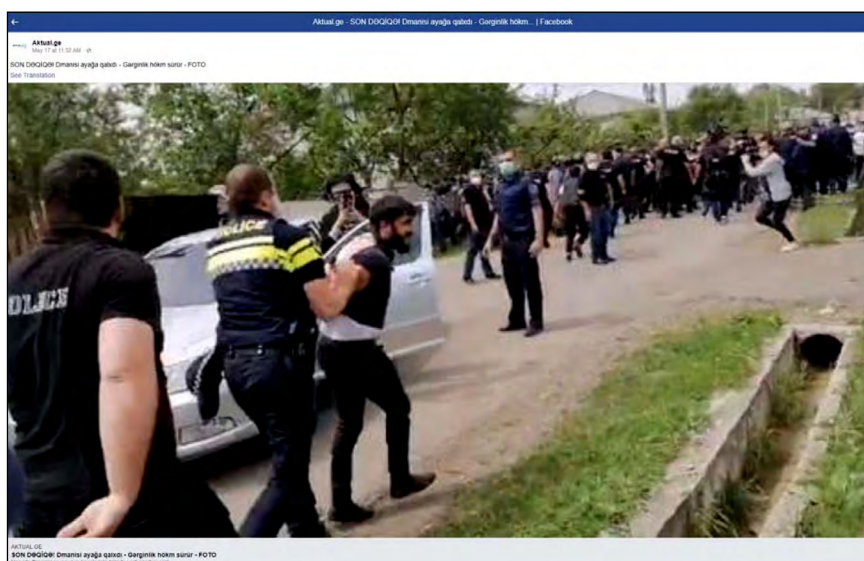[15] Nor FM, 3 May, Ադրբեջանցիները հանել են Շուշիի Ղազանչեցոց եկեղեցու գմբեթները, https://bit.ly/3IrVeg6

[16] 24news.ge, 19 May, "Əlibala Əsgərov: "Gürcüstan hakimiyyəti Dmanisidə problemi kökündən həll etmədi", https://bit.ly/3fpJiYk

[17] Parvana TV, 20 May https://m.facebook.com/160489504517632/posts/912243392675569

On May 27, Armenian-language news outlet Parvana TV released photos[18] featuring Armenian servicemen captured by Azerbaijanis and lying face down on the ground. According to the TV company, the photos were circulated by Azerbaijani media outlets.

The Azerbaijani-language news outlets largely used violent imagery when covering the confrontation in Dmanisi. A 30-minute-long video[19] posted by Aktual.ge on May 17 shows footage of ethnic Azerbaijanis damaging private property.

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[18] Parvana TV, 27 May https://www.facebook.com/televidenia/posts/916345998931975
[19] Aqtual.ge, 17 May. https://m.facebook.com/2072581949675052/posts/2922565768009995

5. MANIPULATION USING THE ISSUE OF TURKISH BASE DEPLOYMENT IN SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI

On May 7, the Facebook page of Javakhk Media shared information from the Armenian online publication Hayeli.am with the headline "Turkish military base in Javakheti, Georgian Slap to Ankara and Baku." In the article, which is about Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's visit to Azerbaijan, the reporter notes that the issue of deployment of a Turkish military base on the territory of Georgia, namely, in Javakheti, may be discussed during the upcoming visit of the Turkish President to Georgia.

Without specifying the source, the article asserts that the rumors about the construction of a Turkish base in Georgia have been actively discussed in the Armenian media recently. There is also talk that Turkey is

preparing to construct an airbase in Javakheti, which will shorten the route to reach Azerbaijani military bases. The journalist also notes that similar rumors, based on Russian sources, spread in 2020, before and during the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The article does not cite any official sources; moreover, the journalist notes that the information is neither confirmed nor denied by official sources. The journalist concludes the article with the following quote based on unconfirmed information:

> "Finally, we need to find out, officially, whether Georgia can create such an unpleasant 'surprise' for the Armenians, again in favor of the interests of the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem."

Conspiracies about the planned deployment of a Turkish base in Georgia, namely in Samtskhe-Javakheti, have been disseminated by various anti-Western actors and Kremlin-linked Georgian media for years, linking the process to Georgia's NATO integration. The fact that Turkey is a member of NATO has been used manipulatively to convey the idea that Georgia's membership in NATO would automatically result in the deployment of Turkish troops in the country. Moreover, the deployment of a Turkish army in Samtskhe Javakheti, where the Soviet army was based, would re-escalate historical traumas and result in a confrontation between the Turks and ethnic Armenians residing in Georgia.[20]

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[20] Anti-Western Propaganda, 2018, (2019).http://mdfgeorgia.ge/eng/view-library/119/

6. MESSAGES ON RUSSIAN- AND GEORGIAN- LANGUAGE FACEBOOK PLATFORMS

Russian-language media outlets (Sputnik / Sputnik-Georgia, and Jeiran Media Press Club / pressunity. org), discussed only in the qualitative part of the report, applied different approaches to publishing materials on Facebook.

6.1. SPUTNIK-GEORGIA.RU

While Jeiran Media, a regional news and analytical portal, posted all its webpage materials on Facebook page, Sputnik took a different approach, namely, shared on Facebook articles related to internal politics, social affairs and entertainment in Georgia rather than stories about regional conflicts or foreign political priorities of the Kremlin. Consequently, of the monitored topics, the only topic that made it to Sputnik's Facebook page was the internal interethnic confrontation that broke out in Dmanisi, reported in a somewhat neutral way. With regards to regional topics, Sputik on Facebook carried articles only about Georgia's mediation effort aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia[21] and about the Davit Gareji monastery located on a disputed section of the border between Azerbaijan and Georgia border, discussed during Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gribashvili's visit to Baku.[22]

Russian-language Sputnik materials, which, on the one hand, criticized the West in relation to conflicts ("Military-political games of Western countries pose a potential threat")[23] and, on the other hand, promoted the role of Russia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,[24] were not published on Sputnik's Facebook page.

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[21] Sputnik, 13 May 2021. "Tbilisi prepared to offer a venue for negotiations between Baku and Yerevan"
https://www.facebook.com/479574228862020/posts/1968338159985612
12 May 2021. "Georgia assists in releasing 15 citizens of Armenia, detained by the Azerbaijani side"
https://www.facebook.com/479574228862020/posts/1995459327273495

[22] Sputnik, 5 May 2021. "What did Garibashvili and Aliyev discuss in Baku?"
https://sputnik-georgia.ru/politics/20210505/251653007/O-chem-govorili-Garibashvili-i-Aliev-v-Baku.html "Ambassador: Georgian Prime Minister's visit to Baku to give a new impetus to relations of two countries"
https://sputnik-georgia.ru/politics/20210505/251646660/Vizit-premera-Gruzii-v-Baku-stanet-novym-impulsom-v-otnosheniyakh-dvukh-stran---posol.html

[23] Sputnik, 18 May 2021. "Is there a link between military drills in Azerbaijan and a border dispute with Armenia?"
https://sputnik-georgia.ru/columnists/20210518/251752377/Svyazany-li-ucheniya-v-Azerbaydzhane-i-pogranichnyy-spor-s-Armeniey.html

[24] Sputnik, 16 May 2021. "Border conflict in Syuniksk region: Time for Collective Security Treaty Organization to interfere?"
https://sputnik-georgia.ru/columnists/20210516/251740120/Pogranichnyy-konflikt-v-Syunikskoy-oblasti-vremya-vmeshatsya-ODKB.html
5 May, "Conflict on Armenia-Azerbaijani border: Russian peacekeepers join the negotiations" https://sputnik-georgia.ru/caucasus/20210515/251736045/Konflikt-na-granitse-Armenii-i-Azerbaydzhana-k-peregovoram-podklyuchilis-mirotvortsy-Rossii.html
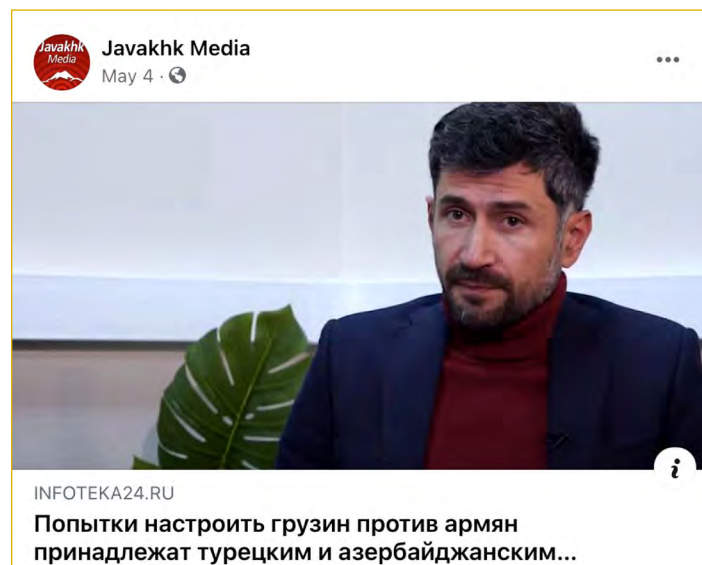
6.2. PRESSUNITY.ORG.

Messages of Jeiran Media Press Club, which were mainly presented in the form of expert opinions, and, frequently, shared with expert quotations in headlines, emphasized Russia's special role in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and focused on Turkey's biased approach and the problematic nature of Turkey's increased influence in the region:

RUSSIA	TURKEY
Only Russia can settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict[25]	Turkey is a biased party while Russia is neutral[29]
Russia remains the key player in the region[26]	Regaining control over Shusha strengthens Turkey's position in the Caucasus[30]
Russia-Azerbaijani relations gain new momentum in the liberated lands[27]	Deployment of Turkish armed forces on the territory of Azerbaijan is not in Baku's interests[31]
The settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict ensures the opening of new transport and economic corridors[28]	

In addition to the materials published on Facebook pages of Russian-language media outlets, Russian-language online publication Infoteka24.ru published an article on regional conflicts and disputed territories entitled "Turkish and Azerbaijani special services behind attempts to set Georgians against Armenians." ("Попытки настроить грузин против армян принадлежат турецким и азербайджанским спецслужбам") The article was shared on the Javakhk Media Facebook page on May 4. The material, which entirely relied on an interview with Shota Apkhaidze,[32] the director of the Caucasus Center for Islamic Studies, a pro-Kremlin organization, contained messages regarding both the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Georgia, namely:

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25 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 14 May, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/1608182412791087/posts/2983810655228249
26 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 18 June, 2021. https://bit.ly/3xxkfZL
27 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 27 May, 2021. https://bit.ly/2VuBzlh
28 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 11 June, 2021. https://bit.ly/3jFhkJq
29 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 14 May, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/1608182412791087/posts/2983810655228249
30 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 18 June, 2021. https://bit.ly/3xxkfZL
31 Press-Club Jeiran Media, 25 May, 2021 https://bit.ly/2VueT4F
32 http://mythdetector.ge/en/node/2214

Armenia–Azerbaijan (Karabakh Conflict)

- "Reclaiming" territories through militarization is a mistake for Azerbaijan;
- Azerbaijan emerged victorious in the Karabakh conflict and demonstrated its power;
- The main regional powers are Russia, Turkey and Iran;
- Russian peacekeepers saved the remaining population in Nagorno Karabakh.

Georgia

- Turkish and Azerbaijani special services behind attempts to set Georgians against Armenians;
- No Armenian from either Armenia or Karabakh has been recruited in the Bagramyan Battalion[33] and battled against Georgians.
- Turkish and Azerbaijani special services create websites aiming to deliberately instigate ethnic conflicts by using the topic of the Bagramyan Battalion.
- During Saakashvili's rule, the Azerbaijanis bribed the Georgian Border Commission, which led to the appropriation of the Davit Gareji Monastery by Azerbaijan.

6.3. CAUCASUS PLUS AND THE CAUCASIAN TELEGRAPH

The Facebook pages of the Georgian-language Kavkaz Plus and The Caucasian Telegraph were selected for the monitoring because of their Armenophobic editorial policy.

The Caucasian Telegraph, which had previously frequently published materials aimed against Armenians, including the Armenian diaspora,[34] covered the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict[35] as well as the conflicts in Georgia[36] in a relatively neutral way during the reporting period. As regards to Kavkaz Plus, it maintained a clear-cut Armenophobic stance during the reporting period as well, portraying Armenians as separatists:

- "Armenian provocateurs" are behind current ethnic conflicts and destabilizations in Georgia;[37]
- The campaign against Namakhvani Hydro Power Plant is coordinated by the Armenian lobby in the Kremlin;[38]
- Followers of the Armenian political party Sasna Tsrer were engaged in the genocide against the Georgian population in Abkhazia; with the aim of seizing new territories, they intend to transform the South Caucasus into a theater of war;[39]

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[33] 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.

[34] The Caucasian Telegraph, 6 November, 2020. "Armenian diaspora has become a global threat, France will be the first to cave in"… https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=838081653614992

[35] The Caucasian Telegraph, 15 May, 2021. "Nikol Pashinyan asks President of Russia for military assistance." https://www.facebook.com/100907098457590/posts/243347764213522

[36] The Caucasian Telegraph, 10 June, 2021. "US senator Rob Portman about the occupation of Samachablo" https://www.facebook.com/100907098457590/posts/260020092546289

[37] Kavkaz Plus, 25 May 2021. "Who provoke conflicts in Georgia and why?" https://bit.ly/3fJv9WC

[38] Kavkaz Plus, 27 May 2021. "Ruben Tatulyan exercises control on Abkhazia and Enguri HPP energy sector against the backdrop of protest against Namakhvani HPP" https://bit.ly/34N7WMT

[39] Kavkaz Plus, 8 May 2021. "Terrorist Jirayr Sepilyan: 'there will be no corridor'." https://bit.ly/3c2uVaP

- Forces comprising the Armenian lobby are prepared to start a new war in the South Caucasus;[40]
- The return of Kocharyan to power, who supported separatism in Samtskhe-Javakheti, will lead to disintegration of Georgia and the "construction of corridors" all the way to Russia's borders as well as towards the Black Sea.[41]

At the same time, the emphasis was placed on Russia's role in the region, whereas France was portrayed as an unreliable partner in settling conflicts.

- Russophobic Armenian nationalists do not understand that if Russia leaves the South Caucasus, the neo-Nazi Armenian statehood will merely become liquidated.[42]
- France is not a reliable partner. The essence of its foreign policy is "support in organizing terrorist acts, subversive activities, and coups."[43]
- The Zangezur corridor means the start of a new epoch and the end of old geopolitical "games."[44]

[40] Kavkaz Plus, 31 May 2021. "Are Russian military ready to die for Artsakh?" https://bit.ly/3cqNDJo
[41] Kavkaz Plus, 15 June 2021. "Kocharyan's revenge is deadly for Georgia." https://ge.kavkazplus.com/news.php?id=38404#.YRI_ L9Mza3I
[42] Kavkaz Plus, 12 May 2021. "Has Russia simply leave the South Caucasus, the neo-Nazi Armenian statehood will merely become liquidated." https://bit.ly/3uAxF5A
[43] Kavkaz Plus, 1 June 2021. "Pashinyan in France, Garibashvili in Turkey. Whose ally is more reliable?" https://bit.ly/3w3m1Sz
[44] Kavkaz Plus, 4 June 2021. 'When the issue of the Zangezur corridor emerged?" https://bit.ly/3izQILf

7. MEDIA PROFILES

Aktual.ge

The information portal Aktual.ge has been operating since April 21, 2020. Its founder is "Actual Media,"[45] which is registered in Marneuli. The outlet's content is available in Georgian, Azerbaijani, Turkish, and English.

Aktual.ge's Facebook page,[46] founded on August 15, 2019 under the name Gürcüstanda Biz, was renamed Aktual.ge on June 25, 2020. The Facebook page is managed by 4 administrators from Georgia and 1 from Azerbaijan. The page has 19,362 subscribers and 8,998 likes, while the YouTube[47] channel has 70 subscribers.

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[45] https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFJI53u5CERIBs3zIEmXJLILx4Nhn0kGzkSKsYno]5oIB
[46] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/aktualge
[47] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCovBEv8QnpmccF98h6s3Qdg
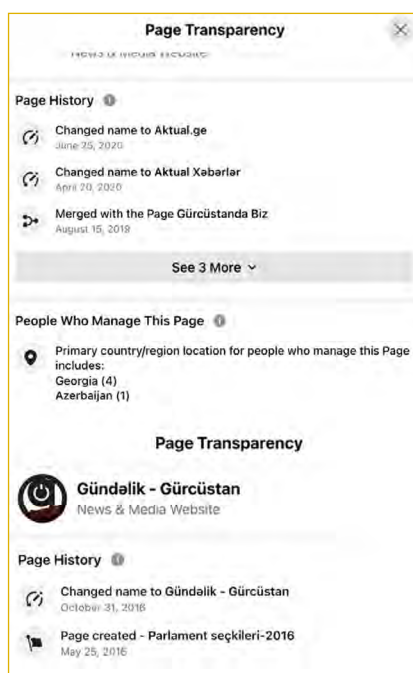
Borchalitv

The domain of Borchalitv[48] was registered in 2000 in the US state of California. The website of the TV company does not indicate any information about the organization.

The Facebook page of the TV company was created in 2016. The page has 12,892 subscriptions and 9,235 likes.[49]

Gündəlik – Gürcüstan

The website Gundelik.ge is currently not accessible, although there is a functioning Gündəlik – Gürcüstan Facebook page,[50] which was registered in 2016. The page was initially titled "Parliamentary Elections – 2016", but on October 31, 2016, it was renamed to Gündəlik – Gürcüstan. The page is only available in Azerbaijani.

Page Transparency

Gündəlik - Gürcüstan
News & Media Website

Page History ⓘ

Changed name to Gündəlik - Gürcüstan
October 31, 2016

Page created - Parlament seçkileri-2016
May 25, 2016

The e-mail address of Elmeddin Memmedov is indicated in the registration data of the site.

The Facebook page has 24,644 subscriptions and 16,552 likes.[51]

Marneuli TV

Marneuli TV (**Marneulitv.ge**) was established in 2006 as a limited liability company[52]. The television channel broadcasts in Georgian and Azerbaijani in the Kvemo Kartli region. The channel also broadcasts through Global TV, Magti, Silk, and other TV operators.

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[48] http://borchalitv.wordpress.com
[49] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/borchalitv
[50] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/gundelikgurcustan/
[51] Accessed 29 August, 2021.
[52] https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFC4QniTeGOsuL28nqD06U7hhpOK[wZrIHaCPjIdLcuFJ

The Facebook page[53] of Marneuli TV, created in 2013, has 30,989 subscribers and 17,754 likes, while the YouTube channel[54] has 1,020 subscribers.

24news.ge

News portal 24news.ge was founded in September 2018[55] by Georgian Leader Media[56] in Marneuli. The outlet's content is available in four languages (Azerbaijani, Georgian, Russian, and English). The portal also has an internet TV channel.

The outlet's Facebook page,[57] which was registered under the name of Borçalıtv in 2014, was re-named Borçalı-24NEWS in 2018 and 24News.ge in December of the same year. The page has 44,271 subscribers and 18,940 likes, while the YouTube[58] channel, which broadcasts in Azerbaijani, has 13,200 subscribers.

Page Transparency

Page History ⓘ

- Changed name to 24News.ge
  December 21, 2018
- Changed name to Bo24News.Ge
  December 19, 2018
- Changed name to Borç24News.Ge
  December 18, 2018
- Changed name to Borçal24News.ge
  November 15, 2018
- Changed name to Borçalı-24News.ge
  November 13, 2018
- Changed name to Borçalı-24NEWS
  November 12, 2018
- Changed name to Borçalı-NEWS
  April 18, 2016
- Page created - Borçalıtv
  November 26, 2014

Radio Bolneli

The "Bolneli" Broadcasting Company was founded in 1997. From that time until July 2010, the radio broadcast under the name of "TV-Radio Company XII Channel," and the name of the broadcasting company has been "Bolneli" since 2010.

53   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/MARNEULITV/
54   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQBG29vHcRIA97zIcJb1Llg/featured
55   https://24news.ge/about
56   https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFAn01a40tuqeLZzWs7EzxdGSdGl5vJg6mTflXqg1fluu
57   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/24newsgeofficial/
58   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyCWRCdLmr8JITLhHifk50w

In 2015, the company obtained a radio broadcasting license in the FM-107.3 range (**Bolneli.ge**). At various times, the radio has implemented projects with the support of organizations such as Internews, OSCE, Open Society Georgia, and the Georgian Public Broadcaster.

The Facebook page of the radio station was created on February 28th, 2020. It has 105 subscribers and 103 likes.[59]

Radio Ivrisi

Azerbaijani radio "Ivrisi" is part of the Media Holding "Spectri" and operates on the domain[60] of the same organization. "Radio Ivrisi" was established in 2016 within the framework of a project by the Journalists' Association "Metsenati" with the financial support of the Open Society – Georgia Foundation.

The Facebook page of the radio was created on April 2, 2017 under the name of Ivrisi FM, and soon changed its name to Radio Ivrisi. The page has 1,201 followers and 1032 likes.[61]

Radio Marneuli 96.9 FM

Radio "Marneuli" (Marneulifm.ge) is the first community broadcaster in the Kvemo Kartli region and was founded by BBC World Service Trust, Studio Re, and the "Journalists' Union – Voice of the People.[62]" While the radio station was established in 2006, the channel only received a broadcasting license in 2015.

The website of Radio Marneuli offers information in Georgian, Azerbaijani, and Armenian.

Marneuli Radio's Facebook page,[63] registered in 2015, has 31,370 followers and 15,149 likes, while its YouTube channel[64] has 2,890 subscribers.

Xeber.ge

Xeber.ge is an Azerbaijani-language online information portal. Information about the portal is mentioned neither on the website nor on Facebook. The web domain was registered in Georgia in April 2020, and the Facebook page was created on May 2, 2020.[65] The page currently has only 566 followers and 522 likes.

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[59] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%98%E1%83%9D-%E1
%83%91%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9A%E1%83%9C%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-1073-FM-Radio-Bolneli-1073-FM-1-
03997651209394

[60] http://radio.speqtri.ge/

[61] Accessed 29 August, 2021   https://www.facebook.com/IVRISI

[62] https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFAtJoAMh]iuToqg7n9uBL58gi8R[PdLt5UzIYieMa[RU

[63] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/marneulifm

[64] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChWSDYsfb6isIJxGwyJ1pDg

[65] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/xeber.ge

Yeni Yol

Yeniyol.ge is an Azerbaijani-language newspaper that covers public affairs and is published online. According to the information provided on the website, the newspaper has been operating since 2015. The founder of the newspaper's website is the Georgian Youth Aid and Awareness Organization.

The Facebook page of Yeni Yol was registered on October 30th, 2018. The page has 508 followers and 589 likes.[66]

7.2 ARMENIAN LANGUAGE MEDIA PROFILES

Akhalkalaki News

The Facebook page Akhalkalaki News[67] was created on March 31, 2020. The page shares news by other local media outlets as well as the statements of Samvel Petrosyan, a former member of the Georgian Parliament and a member of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia. During the 2020 Parliamentary Elections, the site actively shared content related to the Alliance of Patriots.

The page has 3,746 subscriptions and 2,464 likes.[68]

Akhaltskha.net

Samtskhe-Javakheti news portal **Akhaltskha.net** has been operating since 2016. The outlet was founded by the Samtskhe-Javakheti Media Analytical Center.[69]

The website is available in Armenian, Georgian, Russian, and English.

The Facebook page "News from Javakhk-Akhaltskha.Net"[70] was created on July 21, 2011 and has 3,787 followers and 3,694 likes. The page is managed by 4 administrators from Georgia and 1 from Armenia.
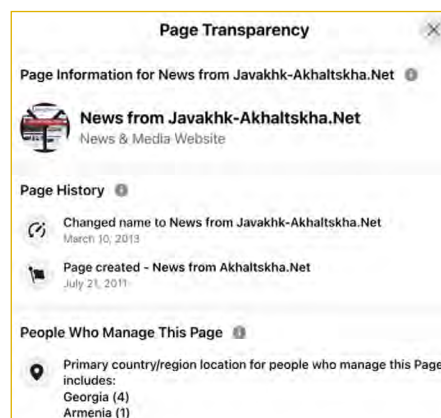
66   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/Yeni-Yol-331048807450400
67   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/akhalkalakinews
68   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/akhalkalakinews
69   https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFPB1qyKw]vnSWBnRgk5fNyMDk1H[ArvO68o9EzdiXh0W
70   https://www.facebook.com/javakhk.akhaltskha.net

Aliq Media

The domain of Aliq Media (Aliq.ge) was registered on June 5, 2015. The partners of the outlet are the European Union for Georgia, Tbilisi Human Rights House, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and Equal Rights & Independent Media (ERIM).

The Facebook page[71] of the outlet was created on May 4, 2016 and has 4 administrators from Armenia, 3 from Georgia, and 1 from the United States. The page has 1,827 followers and 1,760 likes, while the YouTube channel[72] has 1,180 subscribers.

ATV 12
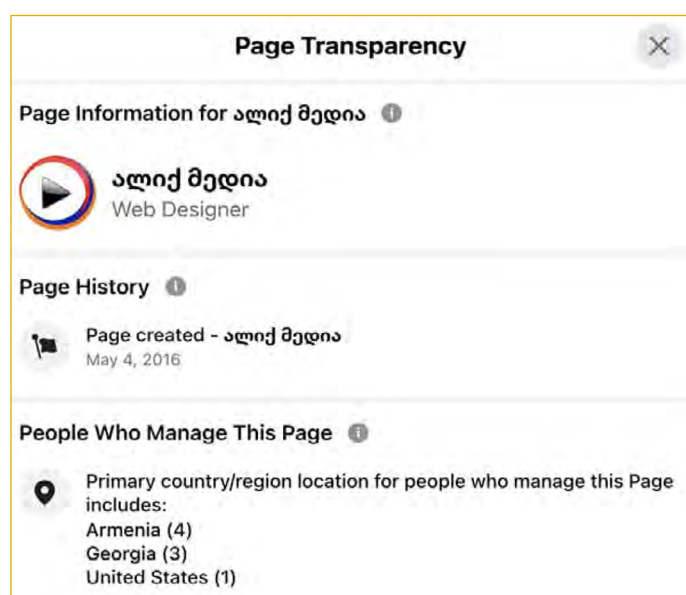
ATV 12 TV (https://bit.ly/3ztlVnL) was founded in Akhalkalaki in 2001. According to information posted on the YouTube channel, the television channel has existed for more than 15 years. ATV-12 covers local news in Akhalkalaki, as well as national and international news in Armenian.

The Facebook page[73] of ATV-12 was created on August 16, 2020. The page has 3,676 followers and 2,925 likes. The YouTube channel was registered on July 25, 2016.[74]

Javakhk Media

Javakhkmedia.com is an information portal, the domain of which was registered on October 7, 2013. The website contains neither contact information nor information about the media outlet's owner

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[71]   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/aliQmedia
[72]   Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuFebSGQcHJhf9SB7oum1ZA
[73]   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/atv12akhalkalaki
[74]   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/c/ATV12Akhalkalaki/channels

and the editorial board. Eduard Ayvazyan, the editor-in-chief of Akhaltskha.net, indicates on his Facebook[75] page that he is also the editor of the online edition of Javakhk Media. The content of these two media outlets is identical.

The website is available in the following four languages: Armenian, Georgian, Russian and English.

The Facebook page,[76] which has 3,299 followers and 3,198 likes, states that the page is a unified informational resource about Javakheti. The publication's Facebook account was created in 2011 and was called Javakhk – History Archive. The page has been operating under the name of Javakhk Media since December 19, 2013 and it is managed by 3 administrators from Armenia and 1 from Georgia.
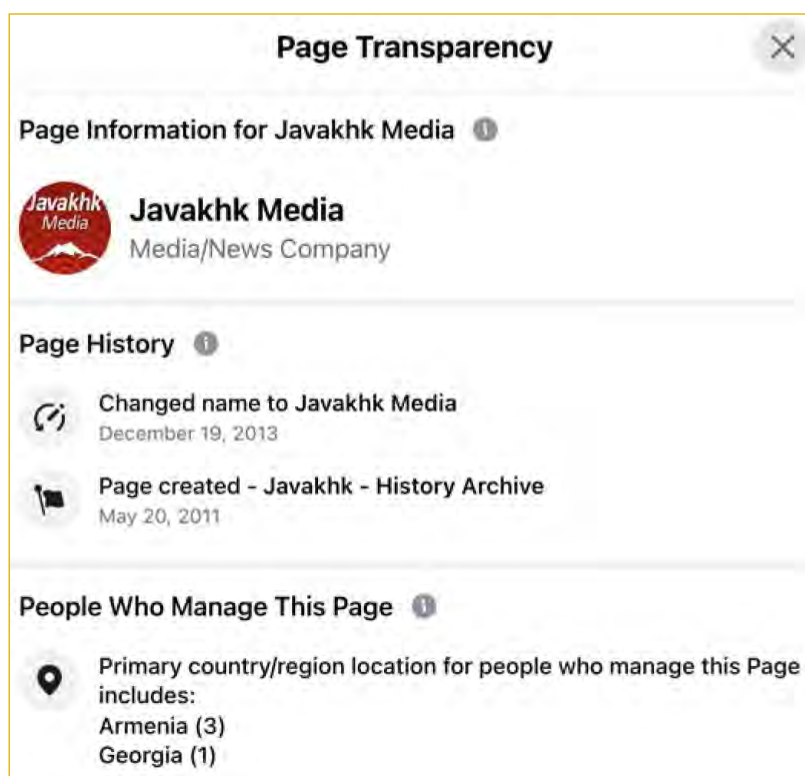
Jnews.ge

The Javakheti Information Center (Jnews.ge) was established in October 2014 with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) within the framework of the project "Government Control and Civic Involvement in Javakheti." The media outlet was founded by the "Open Borders"[77] organization in Akhalkalaki. The publication is mainly supported by Western foundations.

Jnews.ge is available in Armenian, Georgian, and Russian languages.

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[75] https://www.facebook.com/eduard.ayvazyan
[76] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/Javakhk.Media
[77] https://bs.napr.gov.ge/GetBlob?pid=400&bid=boVIyOwIsX3qmYsntmLmFIUA3BcfPZWI64ZtQQ7XyEhnRx]jhVpNu4ISOBXiyTKG

The Facebook page[78] of the Javakheti Information Center was registered in November, 2014, and is managed by 6 administrators from Georgia and 2 from Russia. The Facebook page has 11,864 followers and 7,106 likes, while the YouTube channel[79] has 5,180 subscribers.
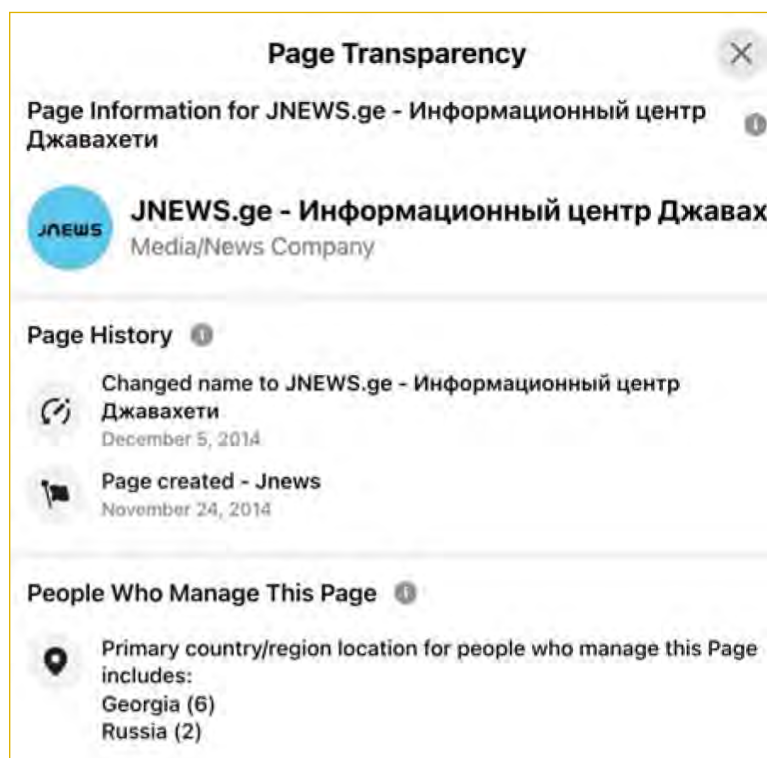
Parvana TV

TV-Radio Company "Parvana" (Parvana.ge) was founded by Konstantin Vardanyan in Ninotsminda on January 12, 2001.[80] The programs of the channel are available in Armenian.

According to a report by Transparency International Georgia,[81] after Georgian Dream came to power, Konstantin Vardanyan was elected as the Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council. From spring 2013 to March 2020, Vardanyan was both the director of Parvana and the deputy chairman of the Ninotsminda City Council. On March 9, 2021, Vardanyan resigned as the head of television channel, and his wife, Albina Vardanyan, was appointed as the director of the company.

The Facebook page[82] of Parvana TV was created on August 5, 2017. The page has 28,347 followers and 18,839 likes, while the YouTube channel[83] has 10,900 subscribers.

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[78] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/JavakhetiNews
[79] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXDkGjkwx6CoxN2BFL1nW8g
[80] https://transparency.ge/en/blog/tv-station-deputy-chairperson-municipal-council-ninotsminda-wins-tenders-without-competition
[81] https://transparency.ge/ge/blog/ninocmindis-sakrebulos-tavmjdomaris-moadgilis-televizia-ninocmindis-municipalitetshi-tenderebs
[82] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/televidenia
[83] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtsgnN2vBISECmnIngsTNtw

Radio Nor

The internet portal of the community radio outlet "Nor" (**Nor.ge**) was registered in Georgia on September 5, 2012. The radio broadcasts on FM 100.1 in the Ninotsminda municipality of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. According to the information posted on the radio's website, in December 2014, Ninotsminda Community Radio became the first licensed community broadcaster not only in Samtskhe-Javakheti, but in Georgia overall. The information on the website is available in two languages: Armenian and Russian. The donors of the radio station are the Open Society Foundation Georgia and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Radio Nor's content is available in Armenian and Russian.

The Radio Nor Facebook page[84] was created on September 10, 2012, and is managed by 13 administrators from Georgia and 1 from Armenia. The page has 17,428 followers and 8,709 likes, while the YouTube channel[85] has 10,500 subscribers.
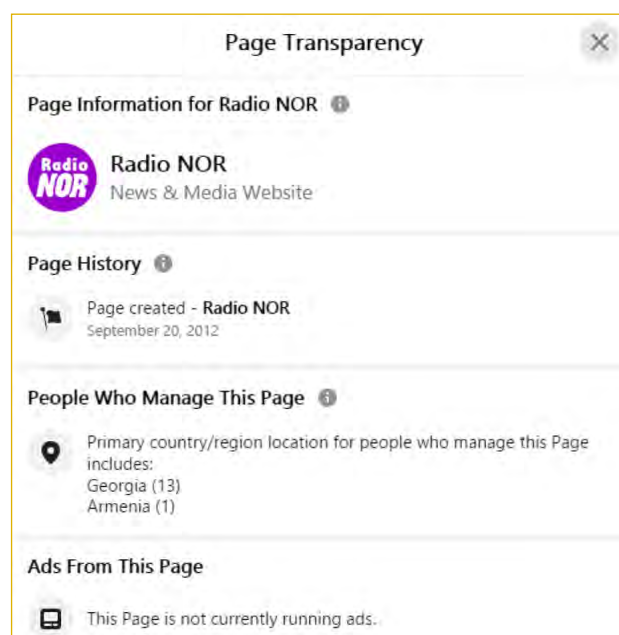
Sknews.ge

The Samtskhe-Javakheti information portal Sknews.ge was created on the basis of the "Samkhretis Karibche" (South Gate) newspaper. From 2004-2017, the newspaper was distributed in Georgian and Armenian. The online version of the publication has been operating since 2010, and the radio station since 2016. The Open Society Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, and Deutsche Welle Academy (DW Akademie) are donors supporting the media outlet.

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[84]   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/radiotvnor
[85]   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.youtube.com/c/radionorGeorgia

Sknews.ge is available in Georgian and Armenian languages, and the Armenian-language Facebook page of the publication (Հարավային Դարպաս) was created on January 9, 2020. Sknews.ge created a profile instead of a Facebook page, which has 4,981 friends.[86]

TV9news.ge

Channel 9 (TV9news.ge), which bears a legal name Imperia Ltd.,[87] has been broadcasting since 1998. The channel broadcasts through the 6th digital broadcasting in the Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, and Aspindza municipalities.

The website of Channel 9 is available in Georgian and Armenian languages.

The channel's Facebook page[88] has 34,434 followers and 25,940 likes, while the YouTube channel[89] has 12,100 subscribers.

7.3 RUSSIAN MEDIA PROFILES

Press Club Jeiran Media

The webpage of Jeiran Media Press Club Press Club (Pressunity.org) indicates that it has been operating since 2016. The "about us" section of the website stresses that despite the ongoing controversies in the South Caucasus region, the website tries to be objective and to devote its platform to any expert or a journalists irrespective of his or her opinion about the current events. In addition to news in Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia in the respective languages.

No other information, including about the publisher and editor, is available on the website. The IP address[90] of Jeiran Media was registered in St. Petersburg on August 12, 2020; The identity of the owner of the registration is hidden.

The Facebook page[91] of Jeiran Media Press Club was created in May, 2015, under the name "Press Club Commonwealth," and changed its name to the current name in January, 2021. The Facebook page is managed by three administrators: one from Azerbaijan, one from Armenia, and one from Russia. The page has 6,263 followers and 5,847 likes.[92]
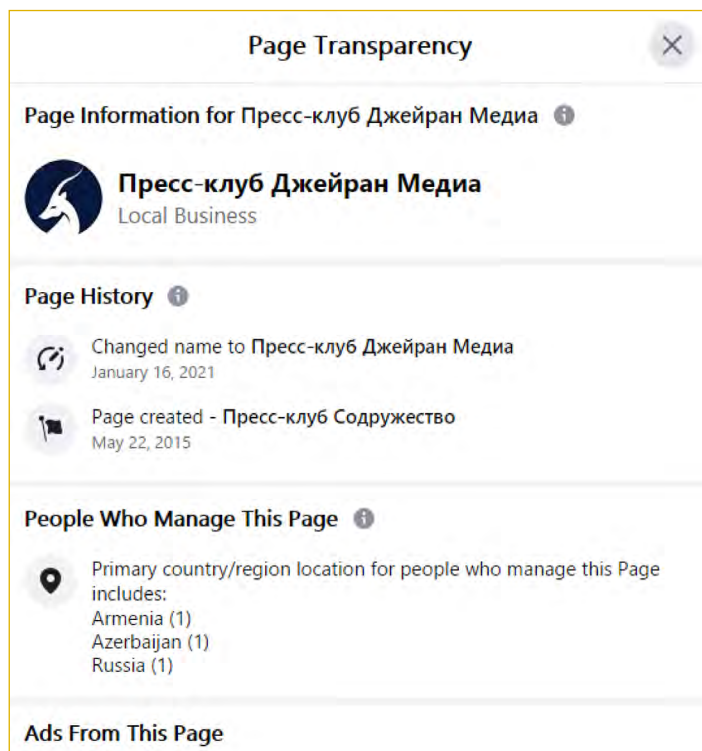
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[86] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100061579884817
[87] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IOF-erQITipr0fv1V3AjH1hm9eSUSyS2/view
[88] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.facebook.com/tv9news.ge
[89] Accessed 29 August, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCiIYSWvrayKsAS2GPdyiFmQ
[90] https://whois.domaintools.com/pressunity.org
[91] https://www.facebook.com/pressunity
[92] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/pressunity

SPUTNIK-GEORGIA

Sputnik-Georgia Ltd was officially registered in the Public Registry of Georgia on January 23, 2015. Sputnik is housed at the former Ria Novosti office. Sputnik is an international multimedia project created by the presidential decree on December 9, 2013. Sputnik, owned by the Russian government, replaced RIA Novosti and Voice of Russia in the international arena.

Anton (Tato) Laskhishvili owns 100% of Sputnik-Georgia Ltd and has also been the head of Svobodnaya Gruzia newspaper since 1991.

The Facebook page of the Russian-language Sputnik-Georgia was created on May 7, 2017, and has 5 administrators located in Russia and 4 administrators in Georgia. The page has 64,842 followers and 57,104 likes.[93]

7.4 GEORGIAN MEDIA PROFILES

Kavkaz Plus

The website (En.kavkazplus.com) of the "Kavkaz Plus" online edition does not provide information about the editorial board, while the articles are published anonymously, without indicating the au-

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93   Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/SputnikGeorgiaRu/

thors' surnames. By checking the web page domains, one learns that the website kavkazplus.com was registered in 2015. The site's IP address is currently registered in California, under the official name "Kavkazplus.com — новости Грузии."

The online publication Kavkaz Plus often publishes anti-Armenian, xenophobic, and discriminatory materials in Georgian, Russian, and English. The edition often writes about crimes committed by Armenians in Abkhazia and the rise of Armenian separatism in Javakheti.[94]

The Facebook page of Kavkaz Plus was created on May 6, 2016. The page has 1,170 followers and 1,140 likes.

The Caucasian Telegraph

The Georgian-language Facebook page "The Caucasian Telegraph" was created on October 2, 2020. In addition to daily news, the page often publishes videos aimed against Armenians, especially the Armenian Diaspora. "Caucasian Telegraph" published videos with the headlines "Hysterical Preaching of Armenian Diaspora Revanchism," "Sick plans of the Armenian Diaspora in Russia: new territorial claims against Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan," and "The Armenian Diaspora has become a global threat … France will fall first.," etc.

The page has 5,229 followers and 3,196 likes.[95]

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[94] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%99%E1%83%90
%E1%83%96-%E1%83%9E%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98%E1%83%A3%E1%83%A1%E1%83%98-1675642542697030
[95] Accessed 29 August, 2021 https://www.facebook.com/TheCaucasianTelegraph