

NO

TO PHOBIA!

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION AND GEORGIAN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE WEEK

The following tendencies have been noted in the period of 8-14 September:

- The main topic of the week – an instance of religious intolerance in Kobuleti – was reported in violation of standards by Rustavi 2 TV show P.S. and Kavkasia TV news program Today;
- Statements from the local officials regarding this incidents were discriminative and represented an attempt to see the issue from the perspective of the majority;
- A politician (Temur Shashiashvili, Burjanadze – United Opposition) expressed xenophobic sentiment;
- Media (Kavkasia TV, Asaval-Dasavali newspaper) made unfounded statements on identity (ethnic and sexual);

continued on p. 2

25, 8-14 SEPTEMBER



STATEMENT OF THE “NO TO PHOBIA!” CIVIL PLATFORM NGOs ON A REPORT BY THE P.S. OF RUSTAVI 2

SEPTEMBER 16, 2014

We would like to respond to the report aired on September 14 by the program P.S. of Rustavi 2 TV about the vandal act occurred in Kobuleti on September 10, when a group of locals slaughtered a pig at the entrance of the Muslim boarding school and nailed the pig's head to the school's door.

We believe that the plot of the report was unbalanced as instead of considering incident of religious intolerance in light of legal violation of rights, the first part of the report offered a speculative interpretation of the fact, linking the social problem with the minority issue without ground. Most alarming is the fact that this interpretation was made at the expense of underage person, thus violating the rights of child.

continued on p. 10

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The main topic – Kobuleti incident	2-4
Xenophobia	5
Unfounded claims regarding identity	5-6
The issue of religious buildings	6
Anti-Western sentiments	6-7
Anti-discrimination law	7
Homophobia	8
Gender issues	8

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MAIN OBSERVATIONS OF THE WEEK

Beginning from the p. 1

- A statement by Batumi majoritarian MP (Murman Dumbadze) on the construction of a mosque in Batumi views the issue as an interest of Turkey;
- Anti-Western sentiments were mostly connected to events in Ukraine, depicting the U.S. as the main instigator of the unrest;
- Homophobic statements came from both politicians (Jondi Baghaturia, Burjanadze-United Opposition; Mamuka Giorgadze, People's Council; Elizbar Javelidze, People's Council) and media (Kavkasia TV, Asaval-Dasavali newspaper);
- The source of gender stereotypes were mostly media outlets ("Asaval-Dasavali newspaper, Pirveli news agency).

THE MAIN TOPIC — KOBULETI INCIDENT

MEDIA COVERAGE

The instance of religious intolerance that occurred on 10 September in Kobuleti, when some Orthodox Christians attached a pig's head to a Muslim madrassa, was negatively reported by Rustavi 2 TV show P.S. on 14 September and Kavkasia TV on 10 September. Regarding the reporting by Rustavi 2, the NGOs that are members of the civic platform *No to Phobias!* made a statement on 16 September (see p. 1-10).



The Kavkasia TV news program on 10 September was unbalanced and did not express the Muslims' position at all: from the reported comments, 2 were discriminatory statements by Orthodox Christians, while 1 was a controversial position from the local official who spoke not about legal aspects of the instance of religious intolerance, but about the issue of the lack of license by the madrassa.

10 September news program of the Public Broadcaster represented the most of the different positions regarding the incident, with NGO representatives highlighting the legal aspects of the incident. Also, 11 September news program Chronika on Imedi TV, which presented the comments by the members of Religious Organizations Council at the Ombudsman's office.

continued on p. 3

THE MAIN TOPIC — KOBULETI INCIDENT

Beginning from the p. 2

COMMENTS BY THE OFFICIALS FROM THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The statements by the governor of Kobuleti municipality and his deputy regarded not the fact of religious intolerance, but the interests of the majority:

SULKHAN EVGENIDZE, governor of Kobuleti municipality: "At first this people were deceived, because when this house was acquired by some person, he said that Georgian families would live here, and then they said that here would be a boarding school."

<http://1tv.ge/news-view/75986>

KAVKASIA TODAY, 10 SEPTEMBER

SULKHAN EVGENIDZE, governor of Kobuleti municipality: "As you are aware, a boarding school needs a license, which they don't have. In fact, it is going to be opened illegally. They are going to open the boarding school on 15th, which will be for children above the 7th grade, the children will study, do this is illegal, first of all. They had to have a license."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408446

MAESTRO, 9-O'CLOCK NEWS, 10 SEPTEMBER

IRAKLI TSETSKHLADZE, deputy governor of Kobuleti municipality: „According to the Constitution, the people who plan to open a school here have such right, but for me as for deputy governor of the municipality, the public opinion is also very important, it is most important for me, as for a represen-

tative of a state agency, to avoid religious confrontation here.“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408384

OTHER RESPONDENTS

IMEDI, CHRONIKA, 11 SEPTEMBER

DAVID SHARASHENIDZE, the Patriarchate: "Of course, we see a provocation in the incident of 10 September, but we also see it in the construction of an Islamic boarding school, with clear religious agenda, against the will of the population's absolute majority and without the agreement from the authorities.“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2409105

RUSTAVI 2, POST SCRIPTUM, 14 SEPTEMBER

TAMAZ BAKURIDZE, human rights activist: „DO you know who is financing this boarding school? Is Turkey financing it? The question is - why? There are more than 56 boarding schools in Adjara, so this is a mine purposely laid by a foreign country. No one knows when it is going to blow up the way we had seen...“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2410486

PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MOAMBE, 12 SEPTEMBER

TAMAZ GOGIBERIDZE, NGO "Our Kobuleti": "The Turkish policy has reached its goals. It managed to take over 3 people from Kobuleti. In fact, a Christian town has been insulted, all the 400 families."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2411194



IRAKLI TSETSKHLADZE, deputy governor of Kobuleti municipality: „By Constitution the people who plan to open a school here have such right, but for me as for deputy head of administration, the people's opinion is also very important...“

continued on p. 4

THE MAIN TOPIC — KOBULETI INCIDENT

Beginning from the p. 3

KAVKASIA, TODAY, 10 SEPTEMBER

TAMAZ GOGIBERIDZE, NGO “Our Kobuleti”: "This is Turkey’s insidious policy. We have nothing against our Georgian Muslim brothers. There are two education centers in Kobuleti, they can send children there if they have to. Historically Christians lived in this place. Clearly, this will be followed by an advance of a Muslim tradition and law, which is totally unacceptable for us, our rights, this concerns human rights."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408446

RUSTAVI 2, POST SCRIPTUM, 14 SEPTEMBER

TAMAZ GOGIBERIDZE, NGO “Our Kobuleti”: "So we are dealing with a Turkish citizen, a Turk – Mustapha Buiok. Ideological battle is worse than atomic bomb. When they get a stronghold here, Adjara will be theirs in 50 years."

MAESTRO, 9-O’CLOCK NEWS, 10 SEPTEMBER

ZHUZHUNA KALADZE, a resident of Kobuleti: „If they reach their goal, we the people will gather money and buy so many pigs that their screams will be all over the street.“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408384

KAVKASIA TODAY, 10 SEPTEMBER

ZHUZHUNA KALADZE, a resident of Kobuleti: "We killed a pig, so that they cannot come... The Muslims “love” pigs so much, so we invite them for the meals from this pig. We invite them, let them come, and we will serve it to them with pleasure."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408446

RUSTAVI 2, POST SCRIPTUM, 14 SEPTEMBER

ZHUZHUNA KALADZE, a resident of Kobuleti: „When a child prays in a Muslim way here, what will my child hear?! What will he learn? Those children, when they go out will be in contact with us Christians. They will lose their attachment to Georgia. Let them go and pray somewhere wherever they want...“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2410486

MAESTRO, 9-O’CLOCK NEWS, 10 SEPTEMBER

A RESIDENT OF KOBULETI: „Here our fathers and grandfathers have a 100 years families, and he came yesterday, and we should just give in?"

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408384

CHRONIKA, IMEDI, 12 SEPTEMBER

AN ADIGENI MUNICIPALITY RESIDENT: „If Georgian Muslims want to open a madrassa, this must be said by a Georgian Muslim, not a Turk.“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2409382

XENOPHOBIA

ALIA, 9 SEPTEMBER

TEMUR SHASHIASHVILI, Burjanadze

– **United Opposition:** „...When you are in the Georgian Parliament and have some self-respect, should you be washing feet of a Turk businessman here? You see what is going on in Adjara? In Turkey they say that Aghmashenebeli Avenue is theirs...

Several medical institutions are turned into business by Armenians and Azeris. They bought clinics and turned the Georgians' health into a business... The manager is a

Turk, and Georgian doctors work there. In which country is there anything like this? Which Georgian is in such a luxury in another country?..

When an foreigners opens a shop there [in Armenia], they don't enter it, so that a foreigner does not get established there...

They opened Georgia in a way that makes living here difficult for Georgians.“



TEMUR SHASHIASHVILI, Burjanadze – United Opposition: „...When you

are in the Georgian Parliament and have some self-respect, should you be washing feet of a Turk businessman here? You see what is going on in Adjara?”

UNFOUNDED STATEMENT ABOUT THREATS

GEWORLD.GE, 10 SEPTEMBER

DAVID MKHEIDZE, journalist: "Destabilization that starts in Tbilisi will spread all over Georgia, our neighbors will use it, some of them will take Javakheti, others – a large part of Kvemo Kartli, still others – Adjara and Batumi, the Abkhazs (meaning Russia – Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. The reduced Georgia will not have territorial claims against anyone, we will be made happy by the NATO membership, and may even “marry” the EU.

<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6142>

UNFOUNDED CLAIMS REGARDING IDENTITY

KAVKASIA TODAY, 9 SEPTEMBER

While reporting on a criminal incident – arrest of a drug dealer – a journalist made unfounded identification of the individual's ethnic background, which is a violation of standards.

CORRESPONDENT: "As witnesses say, the law enforcers arrested ethnic Azeri Pashaev at his own apartment..."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408445

continued on p. 6

UNFOUNDED CLAIMS REGARDING IDENTITY

Beginning from the p. 5

ASAVAL-DASAVALIA, 8-14 SEPTEMBER

A journalist makes unfounded hints on the person's sexual orientation, calling him a "hen" and by female's name "Anzhela".

GIORGI GIGAURI, journalist: "This Saakashvili's "Mkudro" – Gia Tsinadze – is no different from Misha's "Anzhela" (the ex-brigadier of the prison's hens "Anzhela" Mazmaniani)!"

THE ISSUE OF RELIGIOUS BUILDING

RUSTAVI 2, POST SCRIPTUM, 14 SEPTEMBER

MURMAN DUMBADZE , MP: „A representative of a huge neighboring country, the head of religious issues department, has come, and is openly making statements, that Azizie mosque must be necessarily built in Batumi. I was few years ago and still remain categorically against religious building being built from abroad. This period of history regarding middle years of the 19th century, and there really was Azizie mosque in Batumi, is unacceptable for Georgians, and particularly for that part of Georgians – the Adjarians, and we remember it negatively, so It's not meddle in this issue. The state must be very firm. The Georgians want to build a mosque?! Let us build it ourselves: with our resources, our money, our mind.“

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2410474

ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

GEWORLD.GE, 10 SEPTEMBER

GIGI GACHECHILADZE, journalist:

„They are pushing us towards Maidan. The Maidan, the authors of which scenario are in the CIA, State Department, and President's administration in general; of President Obama, who by common opinion is the worst President in the US history.“

<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6141>

GEWORLD.GE, 10 SEPTEMBER

DAVID MKHEIDZE, journalist:

"The main screenwriter and sponsor of the Ukrainian events – the US, let their proxy Ukrainian President Poroshenko agree to Putin's peace plan not for humanitarian reasons, but just because Ukraine lost its army..."



MURMAN DUM-

BADZE , MP: “I was few years ago and still remain categorically against religious building being built from abroad”...

continued on p. 7

ANTI-WESTERN SENTIMENTS

Beginning from the p. 6

...”democracy” established by Americans in Iraq created Islamic State, whose representatives already sent the Americans the cut heads of their journalists, and now threaten to attack the Caucasus.

So, maybe at least now the heads heated by the NATO “new league” and “golden cards” will cool down? In the case of the Islamists’ aggression from Iraq it will be Russia who saves us, just because it will have to defend its own territory in the North Caucasus.“

<http://www.geworld.ge/View.php?ArtId=6142>

ASAVAL-DASAVALIA,
8-14 SEPTEMBER

JABA KHUBUA, journalist: "Yes, war in Ukraine suits both Russia and the West! SO much blood will be shed and so much money around, that both Russia and the West will be satisfied, only Ukraine will lose!"

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW

Speaking about the anti-discrimination law a representative of the ruling party connected this issue to the society’s tolerant attitude towards director Sergo Parajanov, who was put to jail by the Soviet regime for homosexuality.

ASAVAL-DASAVALIA,
8-14 SEPTEMBER

SOSO JACHVLIANI,
Georgian Dream: "When Sergo Parajanov was freed

from jail, no film studio in USSR accepted him. So our famous and a very good man Rezo Chkehidze took Parajanov, brought him here and told him to make his movie here! Parajanovs would be allowed to do it only if he had a co-director, and you know who Georgians gave him as a co-director? Dodo Abashidze! By this I want to say that we never were against anyone and we have passed all this.

DITO CHUBINIDZE,

journalist: "So why did we have to adopt this law [anti-discrimination]?"

SOSO JACHVLIANI,

Georgian Dream: "So, since it was not needed, my hand also pressed “no”!"

HOMOPHOBIA

ALIA, 10 SEPTEMBER

JONDI BAGATURIA, Burjanadze-United

Opposition: „How can a government argue with its own people on holding gay parades, on issues of perversion moral corruption ?.. First bring order to the country and then talk to me about gay parades.“

KAVKASIA, SPEKTR, 9 SEPTEMBER

DAVID AKUBARDIA, anchor: "We know Hoover was a homosexual, and has some personal relationship or sympathy with Eisenhower, so because of pathological twists this man made a card index of people like him."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2408476

OBIEKTIVI, NIGHT STUDIO,
14 SEPTEMBER

MAMUKA GIORGADZE, People's Party:

"Even in the document [Ruis-Urbnisi religious council of early 12th century] it is written the same attitude towards the sin such as sodomy."

http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=2411549

ASAVAL-DASAVALIA, 8-14 SEPTEMBER

DITO CHUBINIDZE, journalist: "Eduard Shevardnadze came from Mamati, and his evil and perverted pupils, who, by even the most pessimistic count, raped 26 thousand Georgian men, are sodomites!"

SAQINFORM, 9 SEPTEMBER

"The president of Georgian pederasts and lesbians Irakli Vacharadze"...

<http://bit.ly/Z4UXSc>

ALIA, 12-15 SEPTEMBER

ELIZBAR JAVELIDZE, People's Assembly:

„...They put all the perversion in front of our noses. Like LGBT parades.“



DAVID AKUBARDIA,

anchor: "We know Hoover was a homosexual... so because of pathological twists this man made a card index of people like him."

GENDER ISSUES

ASAVAL-DASAVALIA, 8-14 SEPTEMBER

JABA KHUBUA, journalist: "Saakashvili, as they say, has f**ked a lot of wives of notable persons, including those who present themselves today as a strong guys!"

PIRVELI, 13 SEPTEMBER

HEADLINE: „The types of fiery men – the strong sex under the sign of fire“.

http://pia.ge/show_internet_daijest_news.php?id=8307&lang=geo

PIRVELI, 14 SEPTEMBER

„As the scientists have found, the representatives of the weak sex need really little to be happy.“

http://pia.ge/show_yellow_pia_news.php?id=23103&lang=geo

THE STATEMENT ON RECENT FACT OF ISLAMOPHOBIA

On 10 September 10 NGOs released a joint statement concerning the revealed fact of intolerance in Kobuleti. The statement underlines following issues:

Instances of harassment of Muslims became systemic during last period and is a result of ineffective state policy towards offenses motivated by hatred.

Behavior of local government representatives and civil servants is also meter of concern since their policies towards minorities are often discriminative, manifested in severe violation of minority rights and loyal attitude towards the majority.

It should be noted that the recommendation of European Commission depicted in the European Neighborhood Policy Country Progress report of 2013 calls on Georgian Government to apply "zero tolerance" towards the instances of hate crimes committed on the ground of religious intolerance and Islamophobia.

We call on law enforcement agencies to take necessary measures to investigate factual circumstances of the incident and in case of revealing crime, to respond effectively and timely. We also call on Government of Georgia to take decisive measures to stop discrimination of citizens on the grounds of religious intolerance.

Full statement is available at: <http://tdigeorgia.wordpress.com/2014/09/>

THE STATEMENT ON THE POSITION OF MANANA KOBAKHIDZE ENHANCING VIOLENCE AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

On 15 September 13 NGOs published the statement regarding comments made by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Manana Kobakhidze in the social network. Specifically:

MANANA KOBAKHIDZE: „When total strangers make grave insults, and pseudo-men, but really no-men, publish immoral and dirty posts, swear at a woman, then if a husband or a brother or a son really shoots their head off, nobody should tell us that criminal situation is worsened, people really don't have an obligation to be patient with insults and swearing, and a politician is a person too!"

According to the NGOs' statement:

“Justification of “shooting head off” as a response to a verbal insult is an attempt to support violence and criminal acts against people with different opinions. This statement reaffirms existing gender stereotypes that aggressive and violent behavior is an expression of honor and “being a man”, and is a culturally acceptable. Such statements are especially dangerous in a patriarchal society with often so called “honor crimes”.

Besides, the statement of Manana Kobakhidze represents woman as an incomplete creature, who cannot defend her honor herself and is dependent on behavior of her male family members. Such approach is especially disturbing when coming from the chairperson of the Gender Equality Council, and endangers the state policy on the gender issues, which should be directed against the sexist, patriarchal and violent values and norms of behavior, entrenched in our society.

At the same time, while the society expresses interest and legitimate concern regarding murders and other violent crimes that have occurred in the country, and asks the government to take legal and effective measures, such thoughtless comments on the issue of worsening criminal situation by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament are totally unacceptable, indicating non-recognition of the existing problem, as well as an attempt to devalue its significance.

The full text of the statement is available at: <http://on.fb.me/1pBIE84>

STATEMENT OF THE “NO TO PHOBIA!” CIVIL PLATFORM NGOs ON A REPORT BY THE P.S. OF RUSTAVI 2

Beginning from the p. 1

The 8th grade pupil is identified in the report and journalist presents decision of guardians of a child (grandfather and grandmother) to be enrolled in Muslim school by social poverty (Journalist: "Studying at the Muslim boarding school is free of charge... daily meal provided three times... the family is socially vulnerable, this was a reason to enroll child in the school) and not by their conscious choice pointed out by the child's grandmother during the comment ("Our Muslim religion is taught in the school").

The report violated Article 47 (11) of Code of Conduct for Broadcaster: "Broadcasters should not broadcast such programmes or include material in programmes that may harm minors' socialization".

TV channel also violated Article 33 (2) of the Code of Conduct which states that " Broadcasters should avoid inaccurate and misleading statements regarding minorities and their social problems, should not promote stereotypes ".

The comments presented in the report create an impression that the occurred incident is a harmless act rather than expression of Islamophobia, which is further aggravated by the discriminatory

assessments of the representative of non-governmental organization who justified the fact of insult of religious feelings of Muslim citizens of Georgia with the interests of foreign country. The report clearly shows that above mentioned respondent makes the controversial and confusing contextu

alization of the issue and after expressing the general tolerant phrases develops obviously xenophobic rhetoric. Journalist offers this controversies to the audience without any critical consideration.

As this is not the only case, when program P.S. covered issues related to Muslim's freedom of belief in the discriminatory context, which was partially shared by the decision of self-regulatory body of the Rustavi2 TV on May 29, we call on P.S. editorial board:

- Show more care while reporting on religious minorities;
- Even in case parents or guardians give consent to interview a child, while covering minor-related issues carefully consider the damage that can be inflicted to the underage

person after airing report.

- Hold consultations with non-governmental and professional organizations on qualified coverage of religion-related topics.

Media Development Foundation, MDF

Georgian Democracy Initiative, GDI

Tolerance and Diversity Institute, TDI

Identoba
Constitution Article 42

Georgian Reforms Association, GRASS

Georgian Young Lawyers Association, GYLA

European Centre for Minority Issues, ECMI

Union "Safari"

Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center, EMC