



Media Coverage of Law on Religions organizations in Georgia

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On 5th of July, the Parliament of Georgia made amendments to the Civil Code. The new amendments envision the new rule for the registration of religious organizations. Namely, according to the new legislative amendments religious groups, which are recognized as religious organizations in the member states of the Council of Europe or have close historical ties with Georgia, gained the right to be registered as Legal entities of Public Law. The presented draft law and its enactment by the parliament caused various reaction in the public and naturally this topic was covered by Georgian media as well.

The presented research aims to explore whether media acted according to international and local standards while covering the topic. Specifically, the study aims to explore which norms were abused by media during the coverage of the topic about religious minorities.

The observation was conducted during the two weeks after the enactment of the law (5-20 July) and included following media sources: TV Companies – “Public Broadcaster”, “Rustavi 2”, “Caucasia”, “Maestro”;

Newspapers – “Rezonansi”, “Alia”, “Asaval-Dasavali”, “Versia”, “Akhali Taoba”, “Kviris Palitra”, “Kviris Qronika”; Radio Channels – “Ucnobi”, “Palitra”; Agencies: “Saqinform”, Magazine- “Liberali”

As far as the aim of the research is to discover the typology of abuses, it is qualitative and is based on international regulations and on local professional standards: namely, Code of Conduct of Broadcasters, the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics and on the guidelines elaborated by the Institute of Media Diversity (MDI)¹.

Regulations

The 9th chapter of the Broadcasters’ Code of Conduct (Diversity, Tolerance and Equality) establishes regulations for the broadcast media. According to the 31 paragraph of the Code: “The Broadcaster should refrain from publishing the materials which will kindle hatred or non-tolerance based on the race, language, sex, religious belonging, political views, ethnic, geographic or social origins.”

¹ <http://media-diversity.org/en/>

Paragraph 32 obliges the Broadcaster to put the precise, truth worthy and balanced information based on the principles of justice and impartiality about the diverse groups living in Georgia. According to this paragraph, the broadcaster has the obligation to respect the fundamental rights of belief and confession and to avoid insulting various groups on this basis.

Paragraph 33 defines the guiding principles for the broadcasters while broadcasting about the minorities:

1. Broadcaster should avoid to draw groundless parallels between the ethnic or religious belonging and some negative event, including associating the behavior of particular individual with the entire group;
2. Broadcaster should avoid to make the false statements about the minorities and social problems, should not support the formation of stereotypes, should not mention the individuals ethnic origin and religious confession needlessly;
3. Broadcaster should avoid insulting any group based on the religious, ethnic or any other origins, including the use of specific vocabulary or images. This request does not prohibit the broadcaster to support informed and not unilateral discussion around the issues of non-tolerance and discrimination, or broadcast the factual information or the views that objectively exist in the society;
4. If the source during the live broadcasting or during the news groundlessly names the ethnic origin, religious confession, sexual orientation, family status or property qualification, social belonging or any other origin as the causes of the problem or uses insulting vocabulary against any group, the program anchor should not join such a dialogue and should try to give the question to the source of the statement for providing the proof of the expressed views.

The 7th paragraph of the Charter on Journalistic Ethics is extended on the media sources which are the members of the charter (Including, the printing media). According to this paragraph: ``Journalist should be aware of the danger that is caused by the encouragement of discrimination by media; therefore he/she should do everything in order to avoid the discrimination of any person based on race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political and other views, national or social or any other origin``.

The principles elaborated by the international organization MDI provides significantly more detailed description of the guiding principles in this sphere. The criteria of our monitoring will be based on the above mentioned standards and the regulations of this institute as well. Namely:

- It is important that the materials prepared around the minorities include the views by the representatives of minorities themselves as an interview, in order that those about whom the materials are prepared, are represented as the ``Subjects`` of the journalistic materials rather than the ``Objects``. It is unacceptable to criticize the entire group without considering the position of the representatives of this group;

- Media should avoid to draw groundless parallels between the ethnic or religious belonging and some negative event, including associating the behavior of particular individual with the whole group;
- It is unacceptable to generalize the particular activity to the entire ethnic or religious group and describing them as one monolithic unity;
- Media should not assist in deepening already existent stereotypes in the society;
- Media should avoid spreading the xenophobic, discriminating statements against any group and if the respondent spreads the similar expressions, it should be necessarily noted that such statement might be insulting for particular group.
- Media should look at the issue in the context of diversity, not from the individual's perspective. If personal beliefs hinder the journalist in working on the material, it would be better if another journalist worked on this issue.

Typology of Violations

- ***Minorities as a object, not a subject of a media material***

In most of the media materials prepared in the process of monitoring religious minorities' are presented as objects, not subjects, since their thoughts are almost not attended by the media. In this regard exceptions were: Public Broadcaster's talk show "The Accents" (July 10, 2011), where the representative of the Evangelist-Baptist Church Rusudan Gotsiridze, the Catholic Church Jiuzeppe Pazotto and head of the Muslim community of Georgia Vagif Akperov were invited. According to anchor they had invited the Patriarchate's representatives as well, but they had rejected the invitation at the last moment. The same respondents visited Rustavi 2 program "Shua Dghes" (July 11) in order to discuss the law on religion. As to the Public Broadcaster's talk show "European Choice" (July 20), though Rusudan Gotsiridze from Evangelist-Baptist Church was invited, yet not as a main guest, which is a sort of discrimination, since the talk show's format gives more opportunity to the main guest to express and argue his/her case. The law On Religious Organizations concerns the form of registration of religious minorities and therefore primary beneficiary of the law should be among the main guests, especially since besides the representatives of public defender's office (Beka Mindiashvili) and academic circle (Sergo Ratiani), the main guests of the talk show were chief lawyer of the Patriarchate Zaqaria Kutsnashvili and a representative of a Patriarchate affiliated fund Tea Gogotishvili.

As to other materials reviewed in the process of monitoring, the standard is ignored in most cases. Specifically:

On July 6 to speak about the law on religion in the talk show "Direct Conversations with Eka Beridze" (Maestro) only representative of the Patriarchate Meupe [Bishop] Zenon was invited.

The anchor did not explain to the audience why no representative of other religious community had been presented.

On July 6, in the program “Dialogues with Tamar Chikovani”: (Radio “Utsnobi”) only politician participated in the discussion on this issue (Tea Tsulukiani, Khatuna Ochiari), but the questions of the journalist were based only on the Patriarchate’s position and stance of the beneficiaries of the law - religious minorities was not discussed at all. For example:

Tamar Chikovani: “The Patriarchate’s request was for law’s adoption to be postponed for at least several days...”

You know, the Patriarchate is making statements quite rarely, first was the Patriarch’s statement...

In relation to all possible threats, the Patriarchate is placing responsibility on the government...

When according to all opinion polls the Patriarch has such a high level of trust, why his statement was not considered enough and heeded...

The is the Church’s topic and the Patriarchate has fears...”

Radio „Utsnobi“, “Dialogues with Tamar Chikovani”, July 6.

The same attitude is present in an interview with Pikria Chikhradze (July 13) published in the newspaper “Versia” – “As a result of registering many sects, a trade with soul could flourish in Georgia”! In the program “Spektri” (July 6 and 7) on “Kavkasia” TV, anchored by David Akubardia.

Position of religious denominations is ignored in the article by Sopho Bukia “Advantageous Peace” (Journal “Liberali”, July 18), where the author bases her argument only on the incognito source from the Patriarchy.

The views of religious minorities on the legal changes were not represented by the newspapers “Asaval-Dasavali” (“70 Baiburts”, Jaba Khubua, July 11-17), “Akhali Taoba” (“How the Holy Synod will respond to the Nationals”, Tea Markhvaidze, July 11), “Alia” (“The hidden details of the conflict between the Patriarchate and the government”, Gela Zedelashvili, July 7-11), “Kviris palitra” (“The issue is most important, the attitude – lightweight”, Davit Shalikashvili, July 6), “Rezonansi” (“The enemies of their own country and religion”, Eliso Chaphidze and “Expecting the President’s veto”, Rusiko Machaidze, July 7). Only the Patriarchate’s position was represented in these articles.

- ***Journalists as a side. Calls for the protest demonstrations***

The bias of the publications on this topic is additionally highlighted by the fact that the journalists view themselves as defenders of the patriarchate and, according to their interpretation, “the Georgian interests”, and therefore cannot be the neutral arbiters, who would present differing views without bias not from the individual perspective, but from the one of diversity. From this point of view, in the case of the broadcasters, the 32nd Article of the

Broadcasters Code of Conduct is violated, which provides for the principle of fairness and non-bias during the coverage of the issues of diversity.

Examples:

“Because of this one-sided recognition we shall have less opportunities to protect our rights.”

Maestro, Direct Conversations with Eka Beridze, July 6

“I am ashamed to say, what was the number of us who came to protest (the protest demonstration is meant).

Newspaper “Alia” Gela Zedelashvili, 7-11 July.

Besides, some journalists and media agencies call on society to protest against legislative amendments and to protect the mother church which is in contradiction with the principle of impartiality and objectivity when making the news:

“There should not be only the statements now, but the whole Georgia shall be out in the streets”.

Newspaper “Alia” Gela Zedelashvili, 7-11 July.

The leader of Democratic Movement Nino Burjanadze is trying to mobilize the society relying on the statement of the internet publication of the newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali”:

Nino Burjanadze: “at the end of our conversation, I would like to respond to the express-online publication of newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali” and repeat the main phrase of the publication: “Yes, each and everyone has to come out in the streets, each and everyone has to come out to protect the dignity of Patriarch and the mother church!”

Newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali”, interview with Nino Burjanadze.

- **Minorities, as single, monolithic group, associated with the interests of neighboring country**

Beside that the media ignores the considerations of the religious minorities – the beneficiaries of the law, the media itself is a party having particular interest. The different religious groups are depicted as single, monolithic group and this group is identified mainly with the “Armenian interest” which is the stereotypical approach. The identification of Georgian citizens of different religious beliefs with the interests of neighboring country, especially with the detriment to Georgia’s interests, constitutes the discrimination against this group. This kind of approach is discerned in the answers of respondents as well as in position of the journalists when they are formulating the questions or when they are expressing their opinions.

The headline of Eliso Chapidze’s editorial column – “The Enemies of their own State and the Religion” (7 July) constitutes the discriminative approach where the legislative initiative of the

Parliament is declared as the hostility towards the country and one dominant religion, which can be regarded as the development of the hatred.

Examples:

"The interest of the Armenian Church is clear, but what is interest of the Georgian State?"

TV "Maestro" "Direct Talk with Eka Beridze" 6 July.

"Georgia has a Government which placed the Gregorian Religion above the Orthodox Christianity, the Armenian Church above the Georgian Church and the Armenian Patriarch above the Georgian Patriarch..."

Dear friends here are those 70 Baiburts[Van Baiburt is advisor of the President of Georgia, self-declared Armenian] who voted for the destruction of Georgia and the Georgian Church!"

Newspaper "Alaval-Dasavali", "70 Baiburts", Jaba Khubua, 11-17 July.

"Because of that the society and the Georgian Church are very upset, however, they are happy in the Echmiadzin"

Newspaper "Akhali Taoba", "What will be the response of the Holy Synod to the National Movement Party", Tea Markhvaidze, 11 July

"Why Saakashvili compromised before that Garegin? It has to be regarded that the Russians are behind the Armenians"

TV "Kavkasia", Program – "Spectri", David Akubardia, 7 July

"It has become evident that the Georgians once again have jumped at the Armenian bait (In this case I consider our Government as the Armenian side)"

Newspaper "Alia", "Lobby of the confrontation of the Patriarchy and the Government", Gela Zedelashvili, 7-11 July

"The tension between the Georgians and the Armenians in the Caucasus is in the interests of the "Mother Russia"

TV "Kavkasia", Program – "Spectri", David Akubardia, 6 July

“Why the Parliament adopts the decisions favorable to the Armenians, What the Georgian People will not withstand, what is the plan of the Government?”

Newspaper “Akhali Taoba”, “Playing with the Church will return to the Government badly”, Tea Markhvadze, 7 July.

“After adopting this dark law ignoring the interest of Georgia, there is a big confusion at the Patriarchy...”

Now the question is when the Patriarch Garegin II achieved the historic aim of his Nation and when the Armenian Church was granted a special status in Georgia by the force of Parliament?”

Newspaper “Kviris Qronika”, “A Big Scandal at the Patriarchy of Georgia”, Dito Chubinidze, 4-10 July.

- **The Identification of the legislative Amendments with the threats**

Apart from identifying the topic with the interest of foreign state, the media associates the legislative amendments with the foreign threats and with the inter religious confrontation. Moreover, journalist – Eliso Chapidze in her editorial note (The Enemies of their own State and the Religion, 7 July) names the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region as a separated region:

“This is a fact that we have been placed in a very unprofitable situation from political point of view and the threats are ahead of us....

...And if, hypothetically, the President Saakashvili uses his veto power against the law adopted by the puppet majority ruled by himself, this will worsen the situation more and it is not excluded that one more bomb put by Russia will explode in the Samtskhe-Javakheti Autonomous Region.”

Newspaper “Rezonansi”, “The Enemies of their own State and the Religion”, 7 July.

“The tension between the Georgians and the Armenians in the Caucasus is in the interests of the “Mother Russia”

TV “Kavkasia”, Program – “Spectri”, David Akubardia, 6 July

“According to Patriarchy responsibility relating to all possible threats rest with the Government. You say that there is no threat, but if there is no threat how the government takes the responsibility? For example, a lot of people come out in the streets today and something very bad happens, large upheaval will start on religious ground, which has not happened before,

Khatuna what will be your responsibility in particular? (Addressing member of Parliament – Khatuna Ochiauri)”

Radio Station “Ucnobi”, “A Dialog with Tamar Chikovani”, 6 July

A journalist from newspaper “Alia” – Nino Samkharadze relates the adoption of the law to the threat of losing of the Samtskhe-Javakheti:

“Is it the case that after adoption of that law the threat of losing the Samtskhe-Javakheti will be very realistic?”

Newspaper “Alia”, Nino Samkharadze, 7-11 July,

A journalist from the news agency “Saqinformi” – Baia Amashukeli goes even further and in an interview with the representative of the non-governmental organization “Article 42 of the Constitution” – Manana Kobakhidze talks about the threat coming from the American democracy:

Baia Amashukeli: *“The American democracy, which is admitted as a symbol of freedom, with the notion of “Liberal Freedom” which is declared by the international donor organizations, has mainly caused the persecution and the arrest of the Orthodox Christianity and the followers of the Orthodox Christianity in Georgia.*

So, one, little, aggressive group, preaching the non-Christian immorality, exercises the violence on the mentality and ideology of the rest of society. And, if someone resists she/he might get arrested...”

News agency “Saqimformi”, 6 July

A journalist from the newspaper “Alia” – Nino Samkharadze relates the adoption of the law to the American threat. According to her, this step was taken for the prevention, to keep the Saakashvili’s regime into the power:

“For a long period of time the Americans are being concerned that the Patriarch and the Church have the highest rating in Georgia. As far as I know, there have been held a lots of consultations as to what kind of methodology shall be used to destroy this strong institution and to disband the large number of believers.... because single word of Patriarch is enough to topple over Saakashvili’s regime. Maybe one of the preventive measures was that to legally equalize religious groups?”

Newspaper “Alia”, Nino Samkharadze, 7-11 July

A journalist – Jaba Khubua thinks that this law is directed against the Georgian Church and Orthodox Christianity:

“Yes, I talk about those 70 members of Parliament who ignored the call from Patriarch of Georgia and rapidly adopted the law which is directed toward the dissolution of the Georgian Church and toward the weakening of Orthodox Christianity in Georgia”.

Newspaper “Asaval-Dasavali”, “70 Baiburts”, Jaba Khubua, 11-17 July

- **Discriminative, xenophobic expressions, stirring up the hatred, stereotypes**

When are talking about the discriminative, xenophobic expressions and stirring up the hatred, we have to distinguish between the statements of respondents, on the one hand, which is not the scope of this research, and the statements and expressions made by the media.

A question of journalist of the newspaper “Versia” – Nino Komakhidze to the respondent (Pikria Chikhradze) sets single standards to different religious groups and identifies those religious groups with the extremists and the Satanists:

“Will any group, extremists or satanists that has managed to register in a CoE member state automatically receive status in our country? Can no one control it? Not to mention the number of religions with status we have reached.”

Newspaper “Versia”, “Registration number of sects might give rise to soul trade”! 13 July.

Media uses offensive statements not only towards initiators of the draft law and the authority, but also towards minorities. The initiators of the draft law and, generally, the representatives of the authority are labeled as: “aggressive group preaching non-Christian immorality” by Baia Amashukeli, “Sakinpormi” journalist; “70 betrayers” by Gela Zedelashvili, journalist of newspaper “Alia”; “70 Baiburts”, Armenian fifth column in Georgia, and the advisor to the President, ethnic Armenian Baiburt as “the Emissary of Armenian Dashnak policy in Georgia” for his interview, in which Mr Baiburt blames incompetent opposition for creation agitate around the new draft law, by Jaba Khubua, journalist of “Asaval-Dasavali”:

“So, according to “Dashnak Baiburt”, Georgian Patriarchy and the Catholicos-Patriarch are “incompetent opposition...”

- before saying something, kick your mind or blessings of Armenian Patriarch and spiritual leader Garegin II will not help you to escape from the anger of the Georgian people!

Newspaper “Asaval Dasavali”, “70 Baiburts”, Jaba Khubua 11-17 July, 2011.

Journalist of “Kviris Qronika” Dito Chubinidze called the parliament of Georgia “Toilet” for adoption the law “allowing the Armenian-Gregorian, Baptist, Catholic, and Muslim religions equal status to the Orthodox Church of Georgia ...” Besides the fact that there are number of factual inaccuracies here, as the legislative changes has not affected the status of the Orthodox Church of Georgia guaranteed by the Constitutional Agreement, at the same time

discriminatory approach towards acting confessions in Georgia is shaping, as if their equation with the dominant confession undermined the interest of Georgia:

“After the adoption of that dark law, which contradicts the interests of Georgia, a big mass was held by the Patriarchate of Georgia...”

Newspaper “Kviris Qronika”, The Big Scandal in the Patriarchate of Georgia, Dito Chubinidze, 4-10 July 2011.

The journalist of the newspaper "Alia" Natia Samkharadze expresses her interest as how it should be possible in an Orthodox country to make the rights of other confessions equal, thus she expresses her discriminatory attitude towards non-dominant confessions, which cannot claim for equal rights.

“I wonder if there exists the precedent for such an Orthodox country, where all religions have equal rights.”

The newspaper "Alia", Nino Samkharadze, 7-11 July.

Statement by Gela Zedelashvili, journalist by “Alia“, that: “when Garegin II visited Tbilisi, lots of people became concerned: he wouldn’t have come to Georgia without intention to take away something from us” could be regarded as a stereotype, according to him Armenians will take away something from us.

The Part of article, when he speaks, that Georgian are feeble people and any stupid person can force us to do anything he wishes – represents an attempt to escalate hatred.

“By the way, we, Georgians have strong instincts, when Garegin II visited Tbilisi, lots of people became concerned: he wouldn’t have come to Georgia without intention to take away something from us. Also, it was a bad sign when Gigi Uglulava[Mayor of Tbilisi], during the opening of Armenian center, said: Tbilisi was built by Armenians. Yes, we, Georgians have strong instincts, but at the same time we are feeble and lazy, any stupid person can force us to do anything he wishes.”

*Newspaper “Alia,” The path of confrontation between the Patriarchate and the Government
Author: Gela Zedelashvili, 7-11 July 2011.*

The article in “Alia” can be considered as stirring up the hate speech as the headline of the article is the quote of the respondent Elizbar Javelidze: *“In a short period of time Bloodshed will start between the Georgians and the Armenians, the fierce fighting will start to destroy physically each other.”* This word belongs to the respondent but making these words as the headline thus is the expression of the editorial policy. Beside, the journalist Nino Samkharadze violated the standard by not indicating how should be perceived such statements by minorities.

Generally, xenophobic and homophobic statements replicate more in print editions. Journalist Dito Chubinidze of Newspaper “Kviris Palitra” divides people according to their surnames that is

discriminatory to those citizens who's right to select the surnames as well as self-identification. The same passage (It's time for Armenians to make money) contains the stereotypes and is the attempt to stir up the hate between Armenians and Georgians.

"Dear Georgians, do you know what time is now for?"

It is "good time" and time to make money for the surname-changed Armenians... Now let's ask when Garegin II achieved the historical goal of his nation to get the special status to the Armenian Church in Georgia with the help of Parliament of Georgia? He has achieved this when the Executive as well as Legislative branches in Georgia are ruled by the surname-changed Armenians!"

Newspaper "Kviris Qronika," The Big Scandal in the Patriarchate of Georgia, Author: Dito Chubinidze 4-10 July 2011 .

Articles in Media about the origins of the president is the part of the discourse of the legislative amendments and contains the negative connotations:

"We can think that Saakashvili supports Armenians because of his origin, if he is real Armenian?"
Newspaper "Alia", Nino Samkharadze, 7-11 July

Newspaper "Kviris Palitra" Journalist Davit Shalikashvili underscored that it is awkward to compare the contributions of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Georgian history to other confessions; he thus expressed the discriminatory attitude to the Georgian citizen who belongs to other religious minorities:

"We consider that it is useless to assert or explain the role of Georgian Orthodox Church in formation and reinforcement of Georgian culture, ideology, as well as in development of Georgian State organization. From this point of view, it would have been awkward to talk about merits and importance of any other religious groups. Neither does Georgian nation have motherland in any other place than Mtskheta, Tbilisi and Bichvinta.

Unfortunately, the voice of Georgian nation, the prime speaker of which is Georgian Church, could not reach the Georgian Parliament".

Newspaper "Kviris Palitra, Author: David Shalikashvili 7 July, 2011.

Newspaper "Rezonansi" journalist Rusiko Machaidze observes the problem that the possibility of registration allows the Armenians to demand the property. Beside the fact that the issue of registration of the religious confessions does not regulate the issue of property of religious buildings, we have a clear discriminatory approach according to which the different religious groups of Georgian citizens must not have the claim of property as this issue is observed as the problem according to the law:

"With respect to raising by the Armenian side the issue of transferring the churches which are on the territory of Georgia, Mr. Tsiklauri says that Armenian and Georgian church architecture is

so different that for the scientists it is very easy to distinguish one from another. He said that if a particular church is Armenian he doesn't see any problem that people pray there.

According to experts it is not a problem that people pray where they want to pray but the problem is what it will in reality entail.

According to the lawyers one of the consequences will be the transfer of the property to those churches.

Yesterday, the news was spread that the Armenian Church is requesting the transfer the property from the state".

Newspaper "Rezonansi" journalist. In anticipation of the Veto of the President Author: Rusiko Machaidze 7 July, 2011

Stereotype approach is observed also in the editorial note of Eliso Chapidze, in which the journalist establishes the idea that the president must be the orthodox Christian and must live religiously and must not ignore the patriarch opinion in the period of "Petre-Pavle" fasting.

"The fact is that Misha's seventy nodding and irresponsible MPs have hurriedly adopted this law, even after the Patriarch had requested time for a rigorous analysis during the "Petre-Pavle" fast. For Saakashvili, this is a time for beer, Sting, and hugging".

Newspaper "Rezonansi", Eliso Chapidze Editorial entitled "Enemies of their own country and religion" 7 July 2011

- **Groundless parallels between religious and ethnic identity and negative issues**

"Saqinformi" agency Journalist Baia Amashukeli evaluates the detention of the radicals during incidents that happened by the Ilia State University and in the TV-company "Caucasia"² as a fight against Orthodox-Christianity and connects these criminal cases with the rule of registration of religious organizations:

"There are no members of any other confession but Orthodoxies in Georgia that are put into irons because of their faith..."

It appears that non-Christian, preacher of immorality, one small aggressive group violates on the rest of Georgian society's conscious and ideology. In the case of resistance one could be even arrested".

Agency "Saqinformi", July 6

² <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22278>

Journalist Tea Markhvaidze along with negative evaluation of the law, makes groundless parallels with European Gay Competition, what aggravates the stereotypes on minorities existing in the society. She links adoption of the law to some unidentified Armenian source, that the Alaverdi Monastery is an Armenian monument:

"I want to remember one story not connected with the church. Some time ago, there was a European competition of Gays. Gay of Georgian origin residing in Russia, took part in the competition under the name of Russia. He won in one nomination. Russia showed consideration for us and named him as a Russian. Tbilisi was furious with respect to this fact. Our parliament nearly made a protest statement.

However, no one protested information in one of the Armenian publications according to which our beautiful and gorgeous monastery "Alaverdi" was mentioned as an Armenian sightseeing".

*The newspaper "Akhali Taoba" "How will the Holy Synod respond to the National Movement",
July 11*

TV Company "Maestro" makes news reporting (*Who created Georgian alphabet Georgian King or Armenian public figure?* July 6) concerning with Mesrop Mashtots, who is named as the author of Georgian and Armenian scripts in the Armenian sources. The reporting was made in contexts of the new law on religion.

Journalist Eliso Chafidze connects the possibility of registration of religious organizations with the losing Georgian territories, social distress and tax on electricity and garbage:

"Two years have passed since the August war, when Saakashvili gave Russians more parts of Georgia's blooded earth. Hollywood does need some Blockbuster scenario from Koba Nakofia., does not it? In short, the threats are many; the "Nationals" transforming into "Palikoans" (name of MP, Pavle Kulblashvili) will spend their summer holidays in luxurious cottages and resorts. Meanwhile 30% of the population live under the poverty line, with rising costs of living, including unified electricity bills and tax increases, or modern Tatar-Mongolian fixing contributions to put in the Gigi Ugulava's pre-election campaign money-box. And I automatically think, till then... till, my son Zurab, till then will get "Nationals" puffed up?

The Newspaper "Rezonansi" "Enemies of own country and religion", July 7

Journalist of "Liberali" Sofio Bukia and newspaper "Akhali Taoba" journalist Tea Markhvaidze links adoption of the law with the absence of the Patriarch at the parade May 26, and consider this action as a revenge of the government against Patriarchate:

"The first time the Patriarch openly showed his dissatisfaction with state policy was on 26 May 2011. For the first time since Saakashvili came into power, the Patriarch of Georgia did not stand with the President of Georgia during the military parade marking Georgian Independence Day.

It seems that the empty chair designated for the Patriarch of Georgia was noticed by the Government. It is impossible that the authorities did not know what would happen when they

adopted a new law on religious issues without consulting with the Patriarchate. They had to know that it would lead to a serious confrontation.

The confrontation between the Government and the Church had nothing to do with religious matters; it is a fight for influence.

Magazine "Liberali", "Advantageous Armistice," July 18

"His holiness did not attend the 26 May parade. He did not attend because the blood of Georgians was shed earlier that day on the place where members of the ruling party would later put on a show.

Though, reportedly, the reason for the adoption of the law was not only May 26th. The main reason must have been Garegin II".

The newspaper "Akhali Taoba", "How will the Holy Synod respond to 'Nationals' (members of National Movement)?" July 11

Journalist of the radio "palitra" Nino Tsilosani evaluates the government's actions as "a try to depreciate the Orthodox Church" and while expecting the president's veto on the bill asks a question:

"Whether the President of Georgia is going to leave the Georgian Orthodox Church as a diminished institution will become evident within 10 days. The Parliament will submit the adopted law to the President and will await his answer. The answer will either be his veto or his signature".

Radio "Palitra", Nino Tsilosani July 7.

Major Findings

The following typology and complex problems of violations has been revealed in the Georgian media during the process of monitoring concerning with the law on religion organizations adopted by the parliament.

- In the mentioned materials minorities are considered as the objects of the journalistic material rather than subjects. Except for some few exceptions, be it a TV or a radio plot, as well as a printing and online publications journalists have not have indicated the opinions of the representatives of religious confessions and they just rely on the position of the Patriarchate.
- The principle of the fairness and impartiality is violated, as journalists evaluate the topic from their individual perspective rather than from the perspective of diversity. Those journalists who identify themselves with the defenders of certain interests cannot be neutral, as they represent a side in such cases.

- Considering minorities as one monolithic group, without indicating interview with a representative of a minority is also a violation. The only source that journalists address regarding this topic is the Patriarchate. This also violates the principle of balancing sources.
- The law that is adopted for the citizens of Georgia of different confessions, media considers as a step aimed at favouring the interest of the other countries, mainly of Armenia and speaks about the Armenian interest in damage of the Georgian one (For example, “the interest of Armenian church is clear, but what is the interest of Georgian state?”). Thus, Media fosters aggravation of the stereotypes that exist in the society and because of different ethnic and religious origins identifies citizens of his/her own country with the neighboring states rather than with Georgia’s statehood.
- Herewith, minorities are represented as secondary citizens, who cannot have a claim on equality, as well as claim on real estate, despite the belonging this or that religious building.
- Media draws groundless parallels between the adoption of the law and the topics that have nothing to do with the rule of registration of the religious organizations, be it social distress, and lost of the territories or the threat of separatism. By correlating rights of minorities with internal and external threats, Media fosters stirring up hatred.
- In certain cases journalists themselves are the authors of discriminative, Armenophobic and hatred kindling expressions. In some cases Media presents positions of respondents so that journalists do not point to the interviewee how minorities could perceive their evaluations. It is noteworthy that the vast portion of Armenophobia goes for printing Media and the most of stereotypes are associated with Armenians.
- Superficial comprehension of the topic appears to be a problem. Media does not have information on the rule of registration of the religious organizations, as well as on the similar international practice and generally on the functioning of the democratic institutions in the secular state. The reason, alongside with the lack of professionalism may be that Media is less interested in diversity issues and these topics are brought up when they become a part of the political discourse. In such cases media repeats those sentiments that are voiced by the radically minded groups of the society.