

Caucasus ELECTIONSWATCH

A weekly review of elections related processes in the Caucasus Region

14 August 2012

Less than seven weeks before the Georgian elections: But where is ODIHR?

The crucial parliamentary elections in Georgia are less than seven weeks away. Campaigning ahead of the tense 1 October poll started in earnest two weeks ago when President Saakashvili named the date. In fact political activity had been going since last May and few doubt that this is going to be a crucial election which will define Georgia for many years to come.

Months ago both the Government and the main opposition forces asked ODIHR to deploy election monitors as soon as possible. A formal invitation was also extended by the Georgian Foreign Ministry in accordance with OSCE procedures. Seven weeks ahead of the poll however the Mission has not yet arrived.

There are however some signs of activity. The ODIHR website is advertising for positions for the local support staff of the International Mission. In all 85 positions are being advertised, with applications closing at midnight on 14 August and those recruited expected to start on 17 August. Positions range from Senior political analysts to drivers and translators.

Many think that this time line is not realistic and certainly not conducive to choosing the best people to support the work of the international mission. Since ODIHR has known for months that the election was going to be in October, and given that a decision to monitor has also been taken a long time ago the process could have started long ago.

The 17 August start date indicates that perhaps it will also be around this time that the Core team of the international mission will arrive. Many think that this is too late because a lot of things on-going in the Georgian political scene will directly impact directly the elections. Hopefully the Mission will still take them into account once its first interim report is published.

Close observers of the OSCE said that ODIHR is not necessarily to blame for these delays since the agency has to work within some rigid bureaucratic guidelines, and has recently been under attack from a number of quarters within the OSCE Permanent Council who are not pleased with how it is conducting election monitoring. Things are expected to get moving once ODIHR announces the name of the Head of the Mission probably in the next days. It is understood that the name of the person concerned has already been communicated to the Georgian Government. ■

Source: CEW editorial staff.



Local Support Team for the ODIHR Election Observation Mission to Georgia

Assistants to Core Team Members:

EOM/GEO Executive Assistant to the Head of Mission – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Head of Mission – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Senior Election Analyst Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Senior Legal Analyst Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Senior Political Analyst Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Senior Media Analyst Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Media Monitors – 5 positions,
EOM/GEO Senior LTO Coordinator Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Parliamentary Liaison Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO National Minorities Analyst Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Data Entry Clerks – 20 positions.

Administrative positions:

EOM/GEO Security Expert Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Senior Operations Expert Assistant – 2 positions,
EOM/GEO Junior Operations Expert Assistant – 2 positions,
EOM/GEO IT and Communications Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Procurement and Contracting Officer Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Finance/Administrative Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Front Office Assistant – 1 position,
EOM/GEO Driver with own car – 3 positions,
EOM/GEO Cleaner – 1 position,
EOM/GEO LTO Assistant-Interpreter – 14 positions,
EOM/GEO Driver with car for LTO team – 14 positions,

All assignments are temporarily contracted positions and their duration will be for approximately 6-8 weeks for most positions. Candidates for administrative staff positions should be available from 17 August 2012. Candidates for all other positions should be available from 27 August 2012. Candidates must be citizens of Georgia. More information is available on the ODIHR web site www.odihr.pl.

Caucasus Elections Watch is a specialised weekly publication focusing on elections related processes in the Caucasus, with news and analysis compiled by experts with long experience of the region.

Caucasus Elections Watch is also distributed electronically. For more in depth articles you may also visit our website www.electionswatch.org or join our facebook page.

Published by

LINKS Analysis,
7-10 Adam House,
Adam Street,
London WC2N 6AA

T +44 2075209308
F + 44 2075209309
E analysis@links-dar.org
W www.links-dar.org

LINKS was established in London in July 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, think tank, working on areas of conflict and conflict prevention, governance, global security and international relations. Over 15 years it has implemented a wide range of activities in support of its basic aims: the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the promotion of democracy in societies in transition, working most of the time through innovative, ground breaking projects. Around 500 events in more than 30 countries were organised.

Regional Partner

International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN)

Machabeli str. No 5;
P.O. Box 38 Tbilisi 0179
Georgia

T: (995 32) 923 920
F: (995 32) 939 178
W www.iccn.ge

Subscription:

Caucasus Election Watch is distributed free electronically.

To subscribe please send empty email with the word subscribe in the subject to subscriptions@links-dar.org. To unsubscribe please send an empty email with the word unsubscribe in the subject to subscriptions@links-dar.org

Printed copies of the report are available against payment.

Price for 1 copy, including p+p:

UK £5, Other EU €7,
Other countries €10 €

6 months (26 issues) 10% discount Bulk order :
50 copies and more 10% discount.

Gyumri

The date of registration of the candidates for the local self-governmental elections in Armenia expired at 6.00 p.m. on Friday 10 August.



Gyumri's incumbent Mayor Vardan Ghukasyan will not be one of the candidates, the chairman of No. 34 electoral commission Edward

Baghramyan told Armenian News-NEWS.am, adding however that five candidates have been registered. They are Prosperous Armenia Party MP Samvel Balasanyan, ARF Dashnaksutyun member Hovsep Simonyan and three non-party members, Andranik Avetisyan, Rafael Asatryan and Spartak Petrosyan.

According to media reports the incumbent Mayor Vardan Ghukasyan was offended by the fact that his party – the ruling Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) - stopped him from being nominated. He has resigned from the Committee of the RPA regional section, and has even asked to leave the party. ■

Source: News.am

Tbilisi

The United national Movement, the government party of Georgia has stated its position on pre election opinion polls. In a statement on its website it says that "Georgian Dream and Bidzina Ivanishvili once again refused to disclose the full information about their poll, which was fully funded by Bidzina Ivanishvili and his party. Yesterday, Penn Schoen Berland held a press-conference where they refused to answer questions about transparency in research methodology and funding sources. During the presentation the representatives of the organisation did not disclose questions asked and their sequence. They did not suggest the fact that the survey was fully funded by Bidzina Ivanishvili. The above mentioned is controversial to what Mitchel Kates, who works with Penn Schoen Berland, said that they are working for Bidzina Ivanishvili and his party."

The statement adds that "There have been several polls in Georgia, carried out by credible and respected organizations as the National Democratic Institute of the United States (NDI) and the International Republican Institute of the United States (IRI). The methodology and the financial sources of their survey are publicly available. According to this survey the United National Movement enjoys superior public approval as opposed to the Georgian Dream coalition, at least by 2 times."

The UNM statement concludes that "According to internationally recognized standards on polling, transparency in research methodology and funding sources are main components of public opinion research. Therefore, the confidence of the poll is low. Voters will conclude themselves about this party and Research Company, which refuses to operate in a transparent way, refuses to disclose their funding source, and refuses to operate under Professional Standards." ■

Source UNM

Tbilisi

The Central Elections Commission (CEC) of Georgia has held a number of sessions over the last days in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections. On August 7, 2012 the CEC drew by lot the numbers to be assigned to parties and representatives of parties contesting the 1 October Parliamentary Elections. According to election legislation three parties that had been successful in the 2008 Parliamentary Elections informed the CEC about their decision to participate in the Parliamentary Elections 2012 with the same assigned numbers as during the above mentioned elections in 2008. They were the United National Movement - 6; Conservative Party of Georgia - 7; and Christian-Democratic Movement - 8. (See also story on page 8).

At the same session, the CEC registered the following local observer organizations: International Foundation - Women's Political Resource Centre, Georgian Professional Educational and Qualification Staff Trade Union of Workers and Students, The League of Voters, The International Organization of Defence of Truth and Right of Oppressed and Prisoners, and Social Maintenance. The commission refused to register "Movement - Save the Life" as a local observer organization.

At a meeting held on 9 August, the Georgian CEC registered the International Republican Institute (IRI) as an international observer organization for the Elections.

At the session held on 11 August, the Commission further accredited the following eight local NGOs for the Elections of the Parliament of Georgia 2012: "International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy" (ISFED), "Transparency International - Georgia", "Movement - Save the Life", "Free Choice", "Georgian Democratic Principles and Human Rights Defence Union", "Georgian Young Lawyers' Association", "Eurasian Institute Of Conflict Analysis and Management" and "Union for Fighting against Economic Crime, Corruption and Smuggling".

The CEC also registered international observer organization - "National Democratic Institute for International Affairs". Association "Transparency International Latvia" was refused to be accredited as an international observer organization.

At the same session, the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia elected members of the special group, created for implementing the functions of the Precinct Election Commissions (two PECs), in order to enable the participation in the proportional Parliamentary Elections 2012 of Georgian citizens serving at peacekeeping battalions of the Georgian Armed Forces in Afghanistan and other Georgian military units serving abroad. ■

Source: Georgian CEC

US congratulates Armenia as the second most active civil society in the Former Soviet Union.



U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John Heffern, released a video blog last week congratulating Armenian civil society on their effective and non-violent activity; noting that Armenian civil society is getting “stronger and ... more effective every day.”

According to a recent USAID assessment, the ambassador informed us that Armenia has the second strongest civil society among the republics of the former Soviet Union.

Noting the “vital” role civil society plays in a healthy democracy, Heffern pointed to the increased activity of civil society groups in Armenia in promoting positive change. Highlighting some of civil society’s more recent successes, he congratulated activists and citizens for their use of non-violent means, such as public service campaigns using social media and demanding accountability.

He emphasised the successful work of environmental groups, specifically their role in protecting the Trchkan waterfall and Mastots park. Heffern also congratulated civil society groups in their overwhelming response to the Hasnagar Restaurant incident, demanding accountability for the brutal beating and subsequent death of a military doctor.

Despite these recent successes, Heffern cautioned that there is still more to be done in Armenia. He urged the authorities to foster an environment favourable to civic action by getting rid of the barriers to self-sufficiency for civil society currently in place. The ambassador suggested NGOs should be allowed to charge fees for their services on a non-profit basis, which will enable them to sustain their activities.

Ambassador Heffern concluded his video blog by applauding “those courageous Armenians who are working hard to bring about positive change here,” and reiterating the eagerness of the United States “to partner with them to make Armenia a stronger, more prosperous and more democratic country.”

The Ambassador’s video is available to watch on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVmm2dw-qDQ>. ■

Report prepared by Karina Gould for CEW.

As campaign heats up Georgian NGOs focus on Election Code violations.

Georgian NGOs are insisting that with campaigning officially underway, political parties, and particularly the governing party, need to be extra scrupulous not to abuse their positions and their access to administrative resources.

According to the Election Code in Georgia, any individual who holds a position in either central or local government is prohibited from using that position for campaign purposes. This includes engaging other civil servants while on duty in campaign activities, according to *Democracy and Freedom Watch*.

Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, Davit Bakradze, despite his repeated assurances that his party will conduct itself to the letter of the law and be an example for others to follow, has himself come under fire this past week for potentially abusing his position for campaign purposes.

According to a report from Democracy and Freedom Watch, Bakradze has been taking advantage of the resources at his disposal as Speaker of the Georgian Parliament. He has been accused of bringing parliamentary employees to the regions in Georgia to present candidates for the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party.

Nina Khatiskatsi, who works on elections-related issues, told Democracy and Freedom Watch, that civil society, political parties and the CEC have in fact signed a Memorandum of Understanding on what abuse of administrative resources means as it is not clearly outlined in the Election Code.

"It is the following: if a person fulfills an official duty during working or non-working hours, it is prohibited for this person to participate in an election campaign."

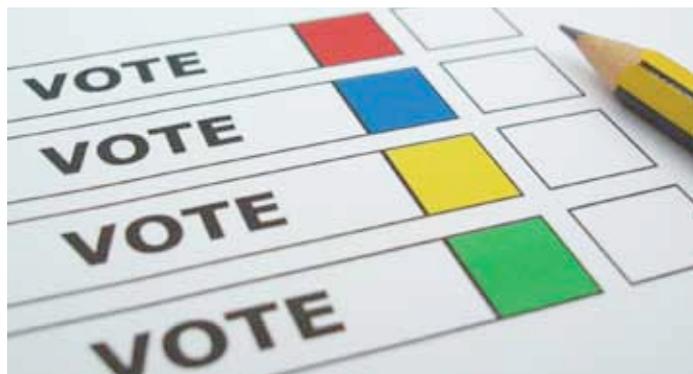
Public employees are therefore only allowed to engage in campaign activities whilst off-duty. The penalty for this violation is 2000 lari, or almost USD 1200.

So far Bakradze's actions and use of public staff for campaign purposes has remained unchecked.

Though the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) based at the National Security Council of Georgia has remained tight-lipped when it comes to Bakradze, they have spoken out with regard to advertisements run by public agencies in Georgia.

A watchdog group based in Tbilisi, called upon IATF and the State Audit Service on August 3 to look into the advertisements, which they say fail to meet criteria established for public service announcements and instead represent political advertisement and promotion for the ruling UNM party.

Transparency International Georgia (TI-Georgia) said in a statement that, "a majority of [the advertisements], according to their [tone], represent political ads which are intended as endorsements in favour of the ruling party. We believe that this case is an example of [using] administrative



resources for electoral purposes and an unlawful donation made by the State on behalf of one political [party]."

IATF in response has issued a recommendation to the public broadcasting company to discontinue the state agency ads for the duration of the campaign so as to avoid their perception as election ads. The ads, "which depict projects implemented by the government," notes the Agency, and even though they do not mention a particular political party or an assigned ballot number, "might be perceived as election ads" by the public.

TI-Georgia is also closely monitoring government spending.

In a new report, titled "Transparent and Accountable Political Finance in Georgia", TI-Georgia highlights its concern that the government might be using state resources to influence the election results.

According to the report, the government spends heavily on social programs and short-term employment opportunities (particularly for students) in election years; a trend that remains heavily in place in 2012.

As the Georgian budget is not clearly defined, and a large portion remains in both the reserve funds of the parliament and the president (about 50 million lari each), TI-Georgia is concerned that the ruling party is using these funds to pay for populist programs in an election year.

TI-Georgia is also concerned that the government is exceeding the legal spending limit on the presidential and parliamentary reserve funds in anticipation of influencing the autumn parliamentary elections in their favour. As the budgets do not provide detailed spending it is impossible to know exactly how these funds are being spent.

The adherence to the trend in Georgia of increased spending on populist programmes during an election year, rings alarm bells for this government watchdog as to where exactly this new funding is coming from and whether it is being spent appropriately. To dissipate concerns the government should provide a detailed account of its budget demonstrating where and how monies are spent in an election year. ■

Report prepared by Karina Gould for CEW with additional reporting from Civil.ge and Democracy and Freedom Watch

ISFED releases Third Interim Report on pre-election environment in Georgia – political polarisation and harassment amongst top concerns.

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) of Georgia has released its third interim report on the pre-election monitoring period for the 2012 Parliamentary Elections.

ISFED, which is supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), has been conducting monitoring activities throughout Georgia since April 1 2012.

With 73 long-term observers (LTOs) stationed across the country, ISFED is recording elections related violations including, but not limited to “harassment/threats, assault, vote buying, use of administrative resources,” as well as the public meetings held by political parties and the promises made to voters during these meetings.

The recent report covers incidents observed over the period from June 4 – July 2, 2012.

As political parties stepped up their public activities in June, knowing the election campaign would soon begin, so too did reports of violations and intimidation increase during the same period.

Concerns were raised by ISFED over the “growing political polarisation” in the country. Furthermore, the report highlighted “a dearth of civil discourse among political leaders” – of particular concern was the growing presence of hate speech in campaign rhetoric.

The report identifies:

- 7 cases of dismissal from work on alleged political motive;
- 17 cases of threats and harassment, against businesses, private citizens and party members;
- 4 cases of physical assault;
- 7 cases of abuse of administrative resources; and
- 5 cases of vote buying.

With regards to the incidents of alleged political motivation for dismissal from work, the majority of the cases are a result of the employee having association with the opposition Georgian Dream coalition. The remaining cases are speculated to be related to open criticism of the ruling government or association with opposition sympathising media, in particular Channel 9 and Maestro TV.

Much of the harassment has also been directed at opposition sympathisers and activists, or those related to Georgian Dream supporters. The incidents often involved threats that citizens should not attend opposition rallies as they would find themselves in difficulties, in some cases insinuating physical violence, in others termination of employment.

Nani Gogelia, of Ganakhleba in Chokhaturi, for example, told ISFED that on June 17, Otar Dolidze, a village official of Ganakhleba, threatened that she would be “in trouble” if her children attended a meeting organised by the Georgian Dream.

In Zugdidi region, Gurgen Sartania of the Georgian Dream coalition told an ISFED LTO that Juli Kaldani, a UNM supporter in the village of Odishi, and teachers at the Odishi kindergarden were warning parents and villagers to steer clear of an opposition rally as the list of participants would be handed over to the police.

Georgian Dream supporters engaged in voters’ list verification exercises in camps for the internally displaced in Gori told ISFED that they experienced hostile receptions, were often followed by 5-6 individuals and in many cases unable to peacefully carry out their work.

The verbal threats have also been accompanied by reports of physical assault against opposition members. The ISFED report mentions four cases where opposition supporters were beaten in the regions in Georgia: Givi Paatashvili on June 25, Artiom Ovsepiyan on June 13, and the violent incidents incited by groups in the villages of Dirbi and Mereti on June 26.

ISFED has also been following and recording incidents of vote buying by political parties and their members. Georgian Dream representatives Giorgi Ambroladze, Misha Meskhi and Mikheil Amashukeli were arrested on June 6 for distributing fliers in Kutaisi instructing residents of the region that they would receive home appliances up to a value of 1000 lari if they wrote down which ones they wanted on the flier.

In addition to its monitoring activities of pre-election violations, the report also lists the number of public meetings the major political movements held over the period as well as their party platforms.



ISFED LTOs registered 57 United National Movement (UNM) meetings between June 4 and July 1. ISFED expressed its concern that the majority of the UNM meetings were closed to the public with strictly adhered to attendance lists during this period - emphasising that with the election campaign so close, political parties should aim to be transparent and open to elections monitoring activities in order to avoid speculation of elections related violations.

The majority of the UNM meetings were held in Imereti and Kakheti regions (19 and 14 respectively). The main issues discussed, at the meetings attended by ISFED LTOs, were the UNM’s promise to address social problems, energy issues, unemployment, health insurance, and rural development.

The Georgian Dream coalition held almost twice as many meetings as the UNM (105) with the majority taking place in the regions of Imereti (57) and Guria (26). The principal opposition force promised to focus on the development of agriculture and infrastructure, increase salaries for teachers, provide universal health insurance, and create jobs.

The New Rights and Christian Democratic Movement (CDM) parties held fewer meetings, 34 and 11 respectively. New Rights focused heavily on its commitment to improving rural conditions and universal health insurance whereas the CDM spent most of its time in Tbilisi concentrating on the creation of employment opportunities for Georgia’s youth and improving water supply for consumption. ■

Report prepared for CEV by Karina Gould.

While Georgians receive new channels thanks to new elections regulations, confusion remains for political advertisement regulations amongst broadcasters.

As the election campaign was officially announced last week and the date for the October polls set, the implementation of the must carry/must offer media initiative also came into effect.

Under the legislation which passed in June, all media providers must provide all media channels across Georgia from the day the election is announced until election day, a total of 60 days, thus ensuring that Georgians throughout the country have access to pro-government and pro-opposition media outlets.

Usually, only pro-government channels are broadcast in all regions of Georgia. Now, most residents across the country will have access to what are considered opposition supporting channels, specifically Maestro TV, Channel 9 and Kavkazia.

One resident of Batumi, Tamar, spoke of the recent change to Democracy and Freedom Watch and how interesting it is to watch news reports from different perspectives. "Of course we like the new package, but it [is] so unusual watching Rustavi 2 and Channel 9 at the same time as they report completely opposite information. I'd like to have these new channels permanently, so does our neighbourhood here."

In general, the transition has been smooth, however, technical difficulties have arisen in Western Georgia and in the storm-affected Kakheti region where power supplies and telecommunications equipment have been severely damaged.

Though the must-carry/must-offer legislation is only applicable during the election campaign, activists are lobbying the government to make it permanent. At a meeting with broadcasters, cable TV providers and the National communications commission, they argued that "it is wrong" to limit this principle to the election period as Georgians should have access to diverse media at all times.

Though it appears that the must-carry/must-offer legislation is being implemented at a relatively smooth pace, there is considerable confusion surrounding other aspects of media obligations during the election period. Particularly, broadcasters are unsure of their obligations to provide free airspace for political party campaign advertisements.

Last week small broadcasters complained that the legislation surrounding paid and unpaid advertisements for political parties has been misinterpreted and applied unfairly. According to article 51 of the Election Code, a 'common broadcaster' (which is a TV channel which airs the news), "and a broadcaster which airs commercials, are obliged to freely and without discrimination allocate 90 seconds in every three hour [bloc] for each qualified election subject."



Small broadcasters have complained that allocating 90 seconds for each election subject every three hours could hurt them financially at a moment when they are already struggling.

At a meeting with the Georgian National Communications Committee (GNCC), the small broadcasters said they were initially told that they would have to provide free airspace if they also provide paid political advertisements. Though representatives of the broadcasters maintained that during the past three elections they rarely received requests for paid spots. Nor, they argued, were they obligated to provide free airtime previously.

Marina Kupatadze, director of Borjomi TV told civil.ge that there are 16 subjects which qualify for free airspace "and allocating 90 seconds for each of them in every three hours is a very big amount in total." She wondered who would pay for advertisement when the broadcasters were forced to provide free time.

The CEC for its part has held its ground and maintained that the rules have been interpreted correctly. The CEC also published a list of those parties which qualify for the free airspace from commercial broadcasters, they include: the Labour Party, the United National Movement, the Conservative Party, the Christian Democrats, the Republican Party and Industry Will Save Georgia. In order to qualify, parties must have obtained, either independently or as the principal party in a bloc, at least 4% of the popular vote, in the previous two elections (2008 and 2010). ■

Sources: report prepared by Karina Gould with Georgian Media Reports.

Over 3.6 million Georgians on Voters' List, voting status for Georgians living abroad in limbo.

The Georgia Central Election Commission (CEC) has released the preliminary version of the voters' list for the parliamentary elections set to take place on October 1, 2012.

The total, 3,621,256, is the highest recorded figure since the fall of communism. Until now, the highest number of voters registered in Georgia was recorded in May 1991 as 3,594,810 voters, for the first Presidential elections following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Since then the voters' list has swayed steadily between 3.1 and 3.14 million through the 1990s, climbing its way back up to 3,544,770 for the May 2010 municipal government elections.

The voters' list in Georgia has been a source of controversy and the CEC has undertaken important measures to ensure accuracy and transparency in the compilation of the list in recent years. The process, which still involves using data from the Ministry of Justice is now verified by the Voters' List Verification Commission (VLVC) – an inter-agency and multi-partisan body that is tasked with monitoring and verifying the Voters' list. The VLVC published its initial findings last week after conducting a door-to-door verification campaign. According to the VLVC there are 3 483 142 voters in Georgia - about 140,000 less than the figure provided by the CEC.

The list will be available for public scrutiny until the end of the month and the final version will be made public on September 15. The total presented by the CEC includes deregistered voters as well as Georgians living abroad. Deregistered voters are those individuals who were incorrectly registered at a particular address and subsequently "deregistered" from that location. The number of deregistered voters, initially totaling 77,232 according to the report released on August 6, was, upon review, increased to 188,995 according to a report from civil.ge.

The number of Georgians living abroad is unknown. According to the CEC the number is around 300,000, about 10% of the population. Other estimates place this number as high as 1 million. Until recently, Georgians living abroad could register to vote with their local consular office. However, recent changes to the requirements to register to vote have thrown a veil of uncertainty over the process for those Georgians whose status abroad is irregular.

The government is requiring all voters living abroad to provide a legal residency permit and foreign address in order to register to vote. This move has led some political commentators and elections monitors to observe that this might act as a deterrent for those Georgians residing illegally in a foreign country as they are unlikely to want to draw attention to their precarious position.

Some analysts, such as Kakhi Kakhishvili, chair of the Research Centre for Elections and Political Technologies, have accused the Georgian government of attempting to restrict the vote of possible opposition supporters.

"People illegally living abroad are opposition supporters, because they got in this situation exactly because of the social policy of the government and they didn't have any other way to survive. After Ivanishvili's appearance our Diaspora became active abroad, when they saw that many people registered for elections and their number was daily increasing, they (the government) made such a decision and now this way it will be impossible for these people to participate in the elections," said Kakhishvili.

Georgians living in Athens held a protest in front of the Georgian embassy last week denouncing this new requirement. According to messenger.com.ge, one of the Athens' rally participants has offered his address as a way for irregular Georgian migrants in Greece to safely register without compromising their status. Emigrants for a Democratic Georgia, a non-profit organisation, has also begun to compile a database to help irregular migrants connect with people who can help irregular Georgian migrants obtain a legal residency document. ■

Prepared for CEW by Karina Gould with files from the Georgian media.



The Chairman of the Georgian CEC, Zurab Kharatishvili, drawing lots to assign number of parties on the ballot papers for the forthcoming elections. CEC interpretation of the legislation on this issue is however drawing controversy (see back page for story).

Numbers Game:

Will the Georgian CEC allow Georgian Dream to use Number 7?

The opposition Georgian Dream Coalition in Georgia has warned that the Central Elections Commission may stop it using the No7 slot on the ballot papers during the forthcoming elections. In a statement to Embassies and International organisations on 11 August the Coalition said that it had information that the CEC would give a restrictive interpretation to the elections legislation to prevent it taking the slot.



Under the current provisions parties that successfully contested the previous parliamentary elections can hold the same number on the ballot paper that they had in the previous election. In its session on 7 August the CEC informed that three parties that had been successful in the 2008 Parliamentary Elections had informed the CEC of their decision to participate in the Parliamentary Elections 2012 with the same assigned numbers as during the above mentioned elections in 2008. They were the United National Movement - 6; Conservative Party of Georgia - 7; and Christian-Democratic Movement - 8.

Coalitions or Blocs can choose from the numbers of one of their constituent parts who had successfully participated in previous

elections. In the case of the Georgian Dream coalition which is made up of six parties already registered for the October election, they chose Number 7, which was the number held by one of the Coalition parties, the Conservatives.

It seems however that the CEC is saying that for this to happen all the members of the coalition must have contested the previous parliamentary elections, which is not the case with the Georgian Dream.

However, in its statement Georgian Dream says that this is a different interpretation of the regulations than was the case in previous elections. It cited examples from the 2010 Local Elections when at least two political blocs, "National Council" and "Giorgi Targamadze, Inga Grigolia, Christian Democratic Union" were allowed to use the number of one of the constituent parts despite the fact that they included others parties or groups who had not contested the previous elections.

The Georgian Dream Coalition said that such a decision of the CEC will constitute a political decision against it.

This number game is important, particularly in areas of high illiteracy where voters are helped to ensure that they vote for the party of their choice by remembering the number of the party. ■

Source: CEW editorial staff.

Governing Party names candidates for majoritarian seats in Tbilisi

The United National Movement, the Government Party in Georgia, has named its candidates for the Majoritarian seats for the Capital City Tbilisi, in the forthcoming elections. They were announced by the Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, David Bakradze, and the Mayor of Tbilisi, Gigi Ugulava on 13 August.

In Vake district the majoritarian MP candidate from "National Movement" will be Giorgi Karbelashvili; in Mtatsminda district – Archil Gegenava; in Krtsanisi district – Davit Sakvarelidze; in Gldani district – Nikoloz Khachirishvili; in Nadzaladevi district – Merab Samadashvili; in Chugureti district – Andro Alavidze; in Isani district – Giorgi Vashadze; in Samgori district – Mikheil Machavariani; in Saburtalo district – Andria Urushadze; in Didube district – Giorgi Chachanidze. ■



Mikheil Machavariani, the Secretary General of UNM who will contest Samgori District addressing a recent press conference at Party Headquarters



Davit Sakvarelidze, until recently First Deputy Prosecutor General will contest Ktsanisi