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## ISFED releases first interim report on pre-election social media

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

The International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), presented on September 14 its first interim social media monitoring report amid the upcoming local elections. The local watchdog analyzed 1,126 public posts during August 2-22 and revealed that twenty social media accounts work against the ruling Georgian Dream party, while twenty-five pages operate against the opposition.

ISFED says that the pages campaigning against the government mainly target Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze, PM Irakli Garibashvili, ruling party founder Bidzina Ivanishvili, ruling party head Irakli Kobakhidze and Culture Minister Tea Tsulukiani, who was subjected to sexist remarks, while anti-opposition pages mostly campaign against the head of the United National Movement (UNM) opposition party Nika Melia, his father Anzor Melia, who is running in the upcoming municipal elections, and ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili.

ISFED revealed that female members of the opposition parties were targeted with sexist attacks.

According to the report, during the monitoring period, the highest number of political ads (892) was posted by Georgian Dream, followed by Third Force – Strategy Agmashenebeli with 155 posts, and the UNM with 93.

The watchdog reports that twelve fake media pages were releasing anti-western messages following the ruling team's decision to quit the April 19 agreement in July. The report identified several pages aimed at discredit critical media outlets.



► The local watchdog identified several pages aimed at discrediting critical media outlets and non-governmental organizations.

ISFED says that they have identified two Facebook pages discrediting their (ISFED) activities.

ISFED also observed anonymous pages and found that 23 pages supported Georgian Dream, while 25 were active in favor of opposition parties, of which 13 pages were mostly engaged with pro-UNM activities and 4 support ex-Prime

Minister Giorgi Gakharia. The watchdog stated that the majority of the official pages of the local self-government bodies did not publish party-related articles, but actively shared information about Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili's visits to the municipalities during the campaign. The report said that as some of the mayoral and municipal council (Sakrebulo)

candidates are incumbent officials, they were put in an advantageous position compared to other candidates as they received coverage on the relevant local municipality pages. ISFED further identified 52 civil servants from 29 municipalities who published 118 election posts between August 2 and August 22, most of which were in favor of the ruling party.

EXCHANGE RATES: US DOLLAR - 3.1141 | EURO - 3.6759 | GBP - 4.3189 | 100 RUSSIAN RUBLE - 4.2689 | SWISS FRANC - 3.3761 |

# Russian occupation forces ban education in Georgian in Gali district

BY KHATIA BZHALAVA

Per the decision of the de facto Abkhaz Education Ministry, students living in Russian-occupied Gali District, which is mostly inhabited by ethnic Georgians, have to receive secondary education in Russian. Teaching in the Russian language was introduced in stages and only 11th graders had been allowed in recent years to study in Georgian in 10 schools of Gali. However, according to the Education Ministry's decision, now the students of all grades will study in Russian, and Georgian will be taught as a foreign language.

The Georgian State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality is concerned over the occupation regime's decision and stated that this problem would be discussed at the upcoming Geneva International Discussions on October 12-13.

According to the statement published by the state ministry, despite the appeals from the



► Replacing education in the Georgian language with Russian in occupied regions started in 2015.

Georgian authorities and the international community, the fundamental rights of the people living in the occupied regions, especially in Gali and Akhgori districts, including the right to education in their native language, continue to be grossly violated.

“Such unlawful acts demonstrate the ethnic discrimina-

tion and Russification policy of the Russian occupation regime, aimed to the destruction of the Georgian trace and the full assimilation of the population,” reads the statement of the ministry. The Georgian authorities promise to spare no effort and use all the levers to ensure the access of education in the native language in the occupied regions

and protect other fundamental rights.

Regarding the gross violation of children's rights, the Georgian side is actively communicating with international partners, including co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions and the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia.

Occupation forces started banning education in the Georgian language in 2015. Primarily,

Georgian language and literature were taught as a foreign language in the primary classes, and hours dedicated to it was reduced. Secondary students were receiving education in the Georgian language due to the shortage of Russian-speaking staff and the lack of funding, however, Georgian history and geography classes were forbidden and were replaced with the history and geography of Abkhazia.



► According to the Georgian State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, the violation of the right to receive education in the native language by the occupation force will be discussed at the upcoming Geneva International Discussions.

# In 8 months, Georgia received a record amount of remittances - \$1.5 billion

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office (Geostat) released preliminary data, according to which in August 2021, compared to July, the subsistence level in Georgia increased.

In July 2021, the subsistence level for able-bodied was €218.3, while in August, this figure increased by €2.8, bringing the total to €221.1. This, in turn, indicates the rising cost of living in the country. For comparison, the annual index increased by €38.8, which is a record high growth rate. Compared to March, the subsistence level of the average consumer increased by €2.4 in August and amounted to €195.8.

The increase in the subsistence level is associated with high inflation, as August saw the highest inflation in the country for the last 10 years - 12.8%.



► Remittances increased from Georgians living abroad.

Starting this year, according to the new statistical work program, the production of this indicator will no longer be carried out by Geostat. As noted in Geostat, this indicator is not used in any planning and decision-making process.

The National Statistics Office sets a subsistence level based on

the minimum food basket. The minimum food basket contains the amount of food that is physiologically necessary for the normal life and work capacity of a man of working age. The subsistence food basket consists of 40 products - bread, cereals, meat, dairy products, vegetables, and confectionery.

Geostat also published the average wage statistics in the country as of the second quarter of 2021. According to the agency, it is €1,328, which is €177.9 more than the previous year. The average income tax paid by one employee is €265.6 per month.

According to Geostat, the highest average salary in the country is still in the financial sector and the lowest in professional, scientific, and technical activities.

In the second quarter of 2021, the average salary of women was set at €1,077.8 and that of men at €1,560.

Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Nati Turnava responded that the remuneration of employees in several sectors has improved due to the recovery of the economy, which 'is very important and in principle inevitable when the economy is healthy.'

Besides that, the volume of remittances in the country in August 2021 amounted to \$204.9 million, which is 11.2% or \$20.7 million more than the same fig-



► In January-June, 21,839 children were born in Georgia and 25,821 people died.

ure in August 2020. In January-August 2021, a record large amount of remittances, \$ 1.5 billion, was transferred to Georgia - according to the National Bank, remittances are 30% higher than the previous year.

According to the National Bank, 94.4% of remittances to Georgia come from the 20 largest partner countries. Russia is the leader in terms of remittances, followed by Italy, the United States, Greece, and Israel.

According to the latest estimates of the World Bank, based on 2019 data, remittances account for 13% of Georgia's GDP, which is the 21st position in the world and the highest rate. The rate of higher dependence on remittances is only in the poorest developing and poorer post-Soviet countries than in Georgia.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 16

Day ☀️ Mainly sunny  
High: 31°C  
Night 🌥️ Partly cloudy  
Low: 19°C

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 17

Day ☁️ Rain  
High: 23°C  
Night 🌧️ Light rain  
Low: 16°C

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