



Public Movement
«Multinational Georgia»

Informational Bulletin

Striving for inclusiveness

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Informational bulletin was developed and published by the Public Movement Multinational Georgia (PMMG) within the frames of 2018 Presidential Elections pre-election, Election Day and post-election monitoring program.

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The content of the informational bulletin is under the sole responsibility of the PMMG and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia and National Endowment for Democracy (NED).



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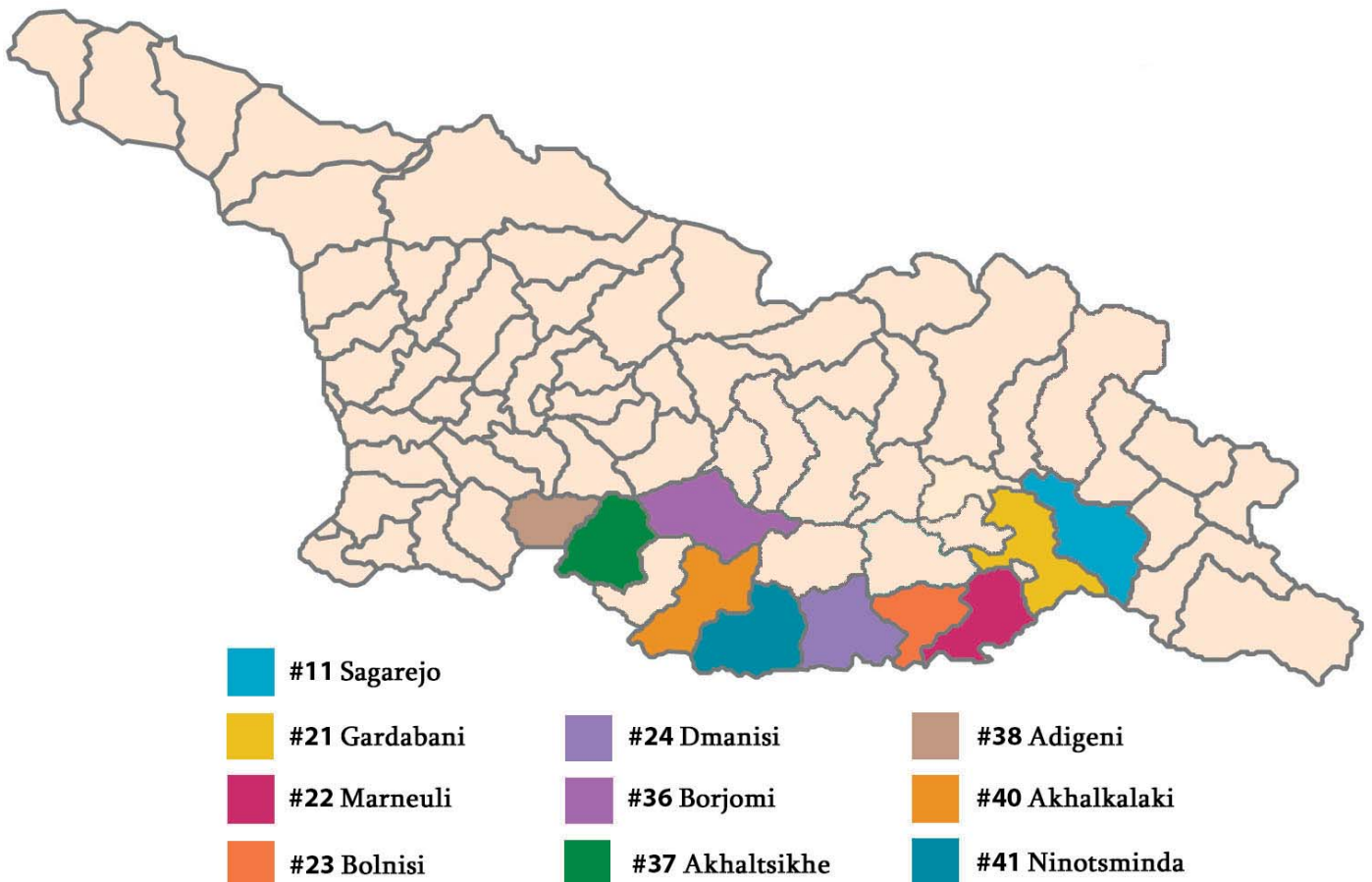
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1. 2018 Presidential Elections – PMMG monitoring program

The main findings obtained as a result of multi-year conduction of elections monitoring programs have clearly demonstrated the need for the imposition of civic oversight over the pre and post-election periods as well as Elections Day.

With this regard the particular attention deserves the electoral districts densely populated by ethnic minority voters traditionally characterized with the practice of abusing administrative resources during pre-election period, as well as electoral shortcomings and challenges on the Elections Day.

To this end, PMMG is implementing a pre-election, Elections Day and post-election monitoring program for 2018 Presidential Elections in the following electoral districts: # 21 Gardabani, # 22 Marneuli, # 23 Bolnisi, # 24 Dmanisi (Kvemo Kartli region), # 40 Akhalkalaki, # 37 Akhaltsikhe, # 41 Ninotsminda, # 38 Adigeni, # 36 Borjomi (Samtskhe-Javakheti region) and # 11 Sagarejo (Kakheti region).



The pre-election monitoring is being conducted by PMMG long term observers, who have previously attended the PMMG organized capacity building training program.

Moreover, on 30-31 July, two PMMG long term observers attended the CoE organized capacity building training program specially designed and implemented for the purpose of enhancement of capacities of local observer organizations' representatives in the areas of reporting as well as elections monitoring international standards.

PMMG long-term observers are monitoring the following priority aspects of the pre-election process:

- General political and electoral context;
- Level of awareness of ethnic minorities about the political programs of the Presidential candidates;
- Conduction of political campaign by the Presidential candidates;
- Practice of reflecting ethnic minority-related problems, needs, constraints and challenges in the political program documents of the Presidential candidates;
- Practice of respecting ethical standards (including using hate speech on ethnic or religious grounds) by the Presidential candidates in a course of conduction of the political campaigns;
- Practice of involving ethnic minority representatives in the activities implemented by the Presidential candidates;
- Setting up the electoral administration;
- Abuse of institutional administrative resources for election purposes;
- Abuse of regulatory administrative resources for election purposes;
- Abuse of enforcement administrative resources for election purposes;
- Abuse of financial administrative resources for election purposes.

In the course of conduction of pre-election monitoring programme PMMG long-term observers constantly monitor the evolving electoral practice and tendencies in the program target electoral districts with regard to all the above mentioned aspects.

Hereby it has to be noted that all the incidents as identified by the long-term observers are subject to further analysis and verification.

Incidents related to the abuse of administrative resources revealed and reported by the long-term observers in a course of the conduction of the monitoring program, are generally classified into two main categories: a) alleged abuse of administrative resources (alleged incidents) and b) abuse of administrative resources (incidents).

2. Pre-election period – practice, tendencies and challenges

Political campaign of the candidates running for 2018 Presidential Elections is just turning into the active phase.

In general, the pre-election process in program target electoral districts can be characterized as calm, free from any external pressure and fair, thus giving the opportunities to the Presidential Candidates to conduct the political campaign in a competitive environment and meet the voters and present the political views and initiatives.

Hereby it has to be noted that the incidents revealed by PMMG long term observers are having minor legal gravity as well as are characterized with small numbers.

Given facts and available evidence it can be concluded that within the frames of pre-election monitoring program PMMG long-term observers have revealed and reported three incidents of illegal placement of agitation materials (posters) as well as once incident of abuse of institutional administrative resource.

PMMG long-term observers revealed and reported three incidents of illegal placement of agitation materials (posters) in # 37 Akhaltsikhe, # 40 Akhalkalaki and # 21 Gardabani electoral districts as well as once incident of abuse of institutional administrative resource in # 41 Ninotsminda electoral district.



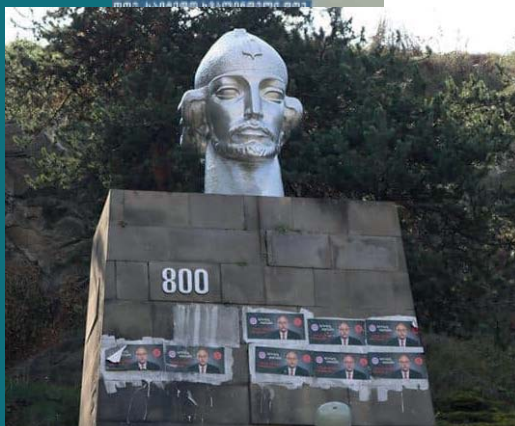
The incident of illegal placement of the posters belonging to the Presidential candidate of “United National Movement” was revealed in the territory of Akhaltsikhe railway station cargo placement section (21 September).

Herby it has to be noted that the space in where the posters were placed is not included in Akhaltsikhe municipality property list specially adopted and designated for the placement of agitation materials.



In # 21 Gardabani electoral district PMMG long-term observer has revealed the incident according to which the posters belonging to the Presidential candidate Giorgi Vashadze were placed over the posters of the Presidential candidate David Bakradze (21 September).

In # Akhalkalaki electoral district PMMG long term observer has revealed the incident according to which the poster belonging to the Presidential candidate of “United National Movement” was placed illegally on the monument of Shota Rustaveli located at the entrance of the town (10 October).



With this regard it has to be underlined that the space in where the poster was placed is not included in Akhalkalaki municipality property list specially adopted and designated for the placement of agitation materials.

The incident of abuse of institutional administrative

resource was reported by PMMG long-term observer in # 41 Ninotsminda electoral district according to which in his own office, the Mayor of the city was inviting the activists of the Georgian Dream local office and asking the offering of support to the political campaign of Salome Zurabishvili, which on its turn is the abuse of institutional administrative resource (21 September).

PMMG has addressed the Interagency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections with regard to the underlined four incidents for the purpose of delivery of the respective measures.

Interagency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections has discussed the incidents and elaborated and submitted the recommendations to the respective public structures.

In general, given the analysis of the pre-election environment evolved in ethnic minorities densely populated electoral districts it can be argued that the active political campaign is being conducted only by David Bakradze (Movement for Liberty – European Georgia), Grigol Vashadze (United Opposition) and Salome Zurabishvili (independent candidate) being supported by the ruling party.



Hereby it has to be reiterated that the Union “Strength is in Unity” formed by ten opposition political parties has nominated Grigol Vashadze as the Presidential candidate.

However, what needs to be noted is that four qualified subjects being the members of the Union have registered their own political parties’ Presidential candidates: Mikheil Antadze (State for the People Movement), Zviad Baghdavadze (Civic Platform – New Georgia), Zviad Mekhatishvili (Christian - Conservative Party of Georgia) and Zviad Iashvili (National -Democratic Party).

Taken this assertion into account it appears that the underlined political parties by nominating their own Presidential candidates have acquired the chances to obtain financing from the state budget as well as have own representatives at precinct as well as district elections commissions. Moreover, they can also enjoy free advertisement time. Even though the underlined maneuver of the political parties fully complies

with the law, it places the Presidential candidates in uneven conditions – as compared with other Presidential candidates, the Union “Strength is in Unity” will receive five times more financial disbursement from the budget by having four technical Presidential candidates as well as enjoy five times more free advertisement time.

During pre-election period, PMMG undertook monitoring of activities of the election administration aimed at facilitating inclusiveness of ethnic minority voters in electoral processes. The CEC has already implemented a number of activities to this end.

- The CEC prepared information video ads on elections in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages being disseminated through the regional media sources;
- Armenian and Azerbaijani speaking voters are able to receive elections related information in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages through the CEC hot line/ information centre.
- The CEC web-page offers information on services available on the Election Day and search engine of united voters’ list to Armenian and Azerbaijani speaking voters in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.
- On the Election Day Armenian and Azerbaijani speaking voters will find united voters’ list, ballots and guidelines on filling in the ballots at the precincts.
- Apart from this, the CEC disseminates information to ethnic minority voters, undertakes capacity building activities on elections related issues for Armenian and Azerbaijani speaking members of the Precinct Elections Commissions (PECs) and equips them with relevant training materials in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages.

On 11 September the procedures for the selection of the members of the Precinct Election Commissions have been carried out at the District Election Commissions.

According to PMMG long-term observers the process of selection of the members of Precinct Election Commissions in program targeted electoral districts has been carried out in a calm environment with the full respect of the law. As a result, 6 members of the Precinct Election Commissions have been selected.

For 2018 Presidential Elections, 346 electoral precincts have been set up in 12 electoral districts compactly resided by ethnic minority voters:

- Georgian-Azerbaijani – 209 electoral precinct
- Georgian – Armenian – 113 electoral precinct
- Georgian – Armenian – Azerbaijani – 4 electoral precinct

It has to be noted that for the first time for 2018 Presidential Elections, the Central Election Commission has offered the opportunity to civil society observer organizations to appoint the observer by electronic form through on-line application. PMMG was the first service recipient to benefit from such an opportunity.

It is worth to underline that such an innovate practice of registering of observers has significantly simplified the entire observers’ accreditation process which was traditionally time consuming as well as requiring the mobilization of additional resources.

For the purpose of promotion of inclusive electoral environment PMMG continues the maintenance of intensive dialogue and thus engages with different stakeholders both in public, as well as civil society sectors format, who are interested in the conduct of competitive, fair and democratic elections in the country.

To this end, PMMG aims at providing comprehensive information to the stakeholders on the specific electoral needs and challenges, which ethnic minority voters may face during 2018 Presidential Elections on the one hand, and on the other, implementing meaningful advocacy campaigns on existing challenges to ensure timely, adequate and sustained response.

With this regard the PMMG maintains effective functional communication with the election administration.

On 14 September, the Memorandum on Cooperation was signed by the Central Election Commission, Interagency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections, local observer organizations and political parties. Irma Basilashvili, PMMG representative has attended the ceremony and signed the Memorandum on behalf of the organization.

On 1 October, the third Code of Conduct (ethnic) was signed by the Central Elections Commission and local observer organizations. The document stipulates the consent over the compliance with professional as well as ethical norms for 2018 Presidential Elections.



Moreover, representatives of PMMG permanently attend the special meeting sessions organized at the Central Elections Commission within the frames of the Technical Working Group (TWG). Participation in such a format enables the organization to widely share and disseminate its electoral findings as well as discuss PMMG elections monitoring program planned activities.

As has been mentioned above PMMG is actively engaged with the Interagency Task Force for Free and Fair Elections and takes part in its proceedings. All four incidents as identified by the PMMG have been discussed by the Interagency Task Force and the respective

3. Engagement for developing an inclusive electoral environment – PMMG programme activities



recommendations have been developed and submitted to the appropriate public structures.

In September, PMMG elections monitoring program representative attended the meeting organized with the representatives of the monitoring mission of the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The sides discussed the overall election environment in the country, as well as existing conditions and elections related challenges in the electoral districts densely populated with ethnic minorities.

PMMG representative shared the information with the NDI monitoring mission with regard to the pre-election environment evolved in minority regions as well as early findings of the monitoring program. The sides also discussed the main features of the PMMG monitoring programme, namely the scope of the programme, methodological specificities and other related issues.

PMMG continues cooperation with the NDI monitoring mission and to this end promotes wider sharing its electoral findings to the mission members as well as invites mission representatives to attend PMMG organized elections related meetings and events.

On 19 September, the meeting was held with the delegation of the CoE. Representatives of four local observer organizations were present on the meeting including Irma Basilashvili, representing PMMG. The meeting was entirely dedicated to the discussion of pre-election environment as well as respective electoral challenges.



On 26 September, the acting Ambassador of the USA in Georgia and the head of USAID mission hosted the working meeting with local observer organizations. Arnold Stepanian, Chairman of the PMMG attended the meeting. The meeting has enabled the parties to discuss elections related issues as well as future plans.

On 12 October, Arnold Stepanian, Chairman of PMMG has taken part in the meeting organized with the new State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe, George Kent. Within the frames of the meeting, PMMG chairman briefly discussed the political and electoral environments developed in minority regions as well as summarized the main electoral findings of the organization's elections monitoring program.



On 15 October, PMMG hosted the representatives of OSCE long term elections monitoring mission. The parties have discussed the evolving political and electoral tendencies in ethnic minorities' densely populated electoral districts as well as persisting challenges with this regard. PMMG representatives share the organization's elections monitoring program preliminary findings as well as its activities' plan with the guests. The parties agreed on continuing the cooperation as well as sharing electoral information.

4. Informed voter – meaningful choice

PMMG continues its action for the purpose of promotion of informed engagement of ethnic minority voters in an electoral process as well as development of inclusive electoral environment for them.

To this end PMMG has launched the series of awareness raising meetings between the Presidential candidates and the local representatives of civil society and media as well as opinion leaders invited from Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions.

On October 7th the meetings were organized with the Presidential candidates David Bakradze (Movement for Liberty – European Georgia) and Shalva Natelashvili (Georgian Labor Party) in the hotel “Museum” within the frames of awareness raising program.



The ultimate objective of the meetings was to enhance the perception of the attending audience about the political vision as well as program priorities of the Presidential candidates in order to assist in their eventual dissemination among the local communities in the program targeted regions and hence promote the informed engagement of minority voters in an entire electoral process.



Presidential candidates briefly conveyed the main political messages to the audience as well as elaborated on the concrete and feasible mechanisms and instruments to be utilized with regard to the adequate promotion of civic, political and economic integration of ethnic minorities in case of assumption of the Presidential authority.



The considerable attention has been devoted to the deliberation over the respective response measures to meet and mitigate the local communities’ immediate needs and interests. With this regard the meeting participants from Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions were given the opportunity to pose the questions to the Presidential candidates with regard to the persisting economic, civic and many other problem, needs, constraints and challenges faced by the local communities in minority regions and obtain the respective answers and comments from the side of the Presidential candidates on the available means for their mitigation.

At the end of the meetings the participants

expressed the hope as well as the will that the discussed challenging issues as well as concerns will be adequately reflected in and translated into the concrete state policies and President initiated programs.

The second round of the meetings will be held with Salome Zurabishvili (independent candidate) and David Usupashvili (free democrats).

The awareness raising meetings are being organized with the financial support provided by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

Moreover, on 6-7 October, within the frames of ethnic minority voters' educational program, the PMMG has organized elections' related debates at the media organization "Aliq Media".

The program is specially designed to enhance the degree of electoral awareness of ethnic Armenian voters residing in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities with regard to the essence of the Presidential Elections as well as the importance of wider qualitative and quantitative engagement in an electoral process as the cornerstone for societal advancement.

The debates hosted the ethnic Armenian students of 1+4 educational program functional for ethnic minorities, prominent and successful representatives of Armenian community in Georgia as well as the representatives of civil society and media from Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities.

In total, three TV debates were conducted within the frames of the program. Recordings of all three debates will be soon disseminated through the local TV companies in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda municipalities.

The voters' educational program is being implemented by the PMMG with the financial support provided by the Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training Center.



5. Preparation for Elections Day

Within the frames of 2018 Presidential Elections monitoring program, PMMG has commenced the conduction of short term observers (STOs) capacity building training program.

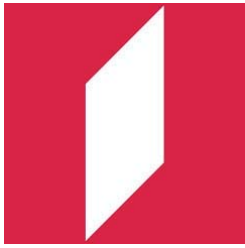
Series of the training sessions will be realized within the frames of the program being specially designed and adapted to the STOs special monitoring needs and challenges. Therefore, the program will be focused on mentoring the participants over the following thematic issues: electoral rules and procedures, duties and responsibilities of the parties having the authority to be present at the electoral precinct, reporting methods and technical particularities, monitoring program logistics related issues, complaints development and submission methodology etc.

STOs capacity building training program is being conducted by PMMG trained teams of qualified trainers.

Upon the completion of the program the trained STOs will be directly engaged into PMMG Elections Day monitoring activities.



Thanks for Media Coverage



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