



TI GEORGIA ANNOUNCES PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF MONITORING OF MISUSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES DURING PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 5, 2007

Tbilisi, Georgia – On November 8, 2007, President Mikheil Saakashvili announced early presidential elections to relieve the tension after the dispersal of the November 7th protests. The international community, Georgian politicians, and domestic civil society groups praised this decision and at the same time underscored the importance of the conduct during the elections. Whether or not these elections are free and fair will be based upon an assessment of the pre-election period, Election Day administration, and result summarization.

TI Georgia, a local non-partisan organization, is conducting a monitoring of the use of administrative resources during the pre-election period beginning on November 8th. Though not always illegal, misusing administrative resources provides an unfair advantage to incumbent candidates, reducing the likelihood of fair and free elections. TI Georgia is monitoring five types of hard and soft resources: coercive, regulatory, institutional, financial, and media. The monitoring includes: (a) conducting interviews with political and civil society leaders involved in the presidential election; (b) analyzing the allocation of state funds during the pre-election period based on official documentation; (c) analyzing political advertising and coverage of political candidates through the selected media outlets; (d) analyzing election legislation and the decisions of the Central Election Commission; and (e) observing the pre-election activities of the ruling party. The monitoring focuses upon the ruling party and its candidate, as because it has access to administrative resources during this pre-election period.

To date, TI Georgia has gathered information on the following misuse of administrative resources:

- Since the announcement of early elections, the ruling party has introduced a number of social initiatives, including increased pensions, increased salaries for teachers, and one-time vouchers for socially vulnerable groups. These new initiatives were not foreseen in either 2007 budget or 2008 draft budget.
- In addition to the listed social welfare initiatives, the government has announced a number of legislative initiatives that directly contradict earlier stances, e.g. abolishing cash registers, giving amnesty for property disputes, releasing prisoners convicted of petty crimes, and transferring state owned property to IDPs. The last order Saakashvili instructed newly appointed Minister of Refugees and Accommodation Koba Subeliani to implement after he had already resigned from his position as president. The government has given no justification for these policy changes.
- In June 2006, the Parliament of Georgia amended Article 73 on election campaigns allowing the heads of state executive agencies to take part in election campaigns. Other public officials are allowed to campaign, but not while fulfilling their official duties. Nevertheless, in a number of regions public officials are campaigning without making any clear distinction between campaign activities and fulfilling official duties.
- Intimidation has been a significant problem in the regions. Citizens have reported that public officials are announcing that voting will not be confidential and that there will be cameras placed inside voting booths. Citizens have also said that ruling party officials are collecting copies of IDs without offering any explanation for their use. Opposition parties have reported difficulties in opening regional headquarters and public servants that support opposition parties have been threatened with dismissal if they publicly support the opposition.

“This is an incomplete list of the problems observed during the period from November 8 to December 4. TI Georgia will continue its monitoring activities and provide regular updates about the continued misuse of administrative resources during the pre-election campaign,” said TI Georgia’s executive director Tamuna Karosanidze.

After the elections TI Georgia will produce a final report documenting its findings and providing recommendations for preventing future misuse of administrative resources.

Transparency International Georgia (TI Georgia) is a national chapter of Transparency International, the global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption. Our mission is to serve as the primary source of information on corruption reform in Georgia, assist the Georgian Government and the broader public in facilitating reform in sectors where corruption exists, and build and strengthen institutions. To fulfill this mission, TI Georgia: establishes programmatic activities that target structural corruption in specific sectors; promotes access of local populations to information on existing problems and changes initiated to address these problems; encourages input on reform from local and international experts; assists the Government in drafting policy; and produces analysis and public policy recommendations on current activities and on future reform.

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*TI Georgia's pre-election period monitoring activities are funded by
European Union and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*