



New TI Georgia report on pre-election environment notes anti-competitive trends

For immediate release

Tbilisi, September 12, 2012. Transparency International Georgia has identified several worrying trends in the pre-election environment in Georgia, documented in a new report released today. The period under review is October 2011 to August 2012:

- **Intimidation of opposition activists.** TI Georgia has identified 12 cases of alleged intimidation of opposition activists by groups affiliated with the ruling United National Movement party. These allegations range from actual instances of harassment to opposition supporters being given “friendly” advice to stop their campaign activities.
- **Physical reprisals against opposition supports.** We have identified 5 cases of physical beatings against opposition activists during the period we investigated.
- **Detention and arrest on political grounds.** We have identified 11 cases of opposition supporters and their relatives being arrested and detained by the police.
- **The use of legal resources for political and electoral purposes:** while the ruling party has passed some positive amendments, a significant portion of these amendments were initiated to serve the governments’ own interests. In particular the recently incorporated election code regulations on the new Law on Political Union of Citizens (regulating parties and party financing).
- **Disproportional sanctions imposed on opposition parties for violations of the law.** While all major parties have been responsible for breaches of party financing rules, opposition parties are significantly more likely to be sanctioned and those sanctions have been disproportionately large, with the aim of paralysing the oppositions’ campaign activities.
- **Obstructing party activities.** We have identified many instances of the police and unidentified individuals using both verbal threats and physical intimidation to prevent opposition parties holding campaign meetings or related activities. The most commonly identified problems were those encountered by the opposition coalition Georgian Dream, particularly during the months of June and July 2012. In the majority of these cases, local government officials tried to prevent the coalition meetings by using a combination of actual physical force and verbal provocation. These actions have often resulted in physical confrontation between both sides.



- **Pressure on businesses.** We identified 5 instances of opposition party members and supporters' businesses and commercial interests being subject to significant political pressure by the ruling party.
- **The use of country's public resources for political and electoral purpose,** such as the use of civil servants and vehicles for the ruling party's political purposes in the pre-election period. Violations found by TI Georgia include illegal party instructions to public servants and actions intended to breach voter secrecy during the election and public advertisements.
- **Voter bribing.** During the reporting period, we identified several cases of obvious vote-buying by both the ruling and opposition parties.

Transparent and Accountable Finance in Georgia is an ongoing project conducted by TI Georgia. We will publish a further two reports in the pre-election period.

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