



GYLA conducted presentation of the first pre-election period monitoring report

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) conducted presentation of the first pre-election period monitoring report. GYLA conducted observation of the pre-election processes in Tbilisi and in eight regions: Adjara, Guria, Imereti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Samegrelo.

The report covers the period from April 1 to April 30; however, it also includes the facts, which took place before April 1, but which, in our opinion, are important for the comprehensive reflection of the pre-election environment.

Within the reporting period, GYLA observers revealed 3 cases of violating campaigning rules by the public servants, 1 case of the administrative resource use, 1 case of voter bribery, 7 cases of allegedly election process-related criminal prosecutions, 18 cases of imposing administrative sanctions, 1 case of physical violence and 9 facts of allegedly politically motivated dismissals. On April 10, 2014, attempts of disrupting the pre-election meetings of the political union – “United National Movement” were made, which in some cases took violent nature. Within the mentioned period, especial attention was paid to the events in the Kvareli Municipality, where the Municipality Sakrebulo (City Council) confronted the Gamgebeli (the elected Governor).

The research revealed the following issues:

A number of the positive amendments were introduced to the 2014 electoral legislation, such as, the direct election of the Mayors and Gamgebelis, increase of the number of the local self-governing cities up to 12, establishing 50% threshold for electing Mayors and Gamgebelis, and other. Despite these amendments, a number of vital changes that would have significantly improved the electoral environment, were not enacted: the electoral system for electing a Sakrebulo did not change, biometric lists were not established, the rule of composing electoral commissions was not revised, and other. The initiative groups were not given a possibility to nominate Gamgebeli/Mayoral candidates, which worsened the existing norm. Other important amendments were not enacted as well.

The Inter-Agency Commission issued important recommendations in the reporting period. However, the practical implementation of the Commission’s recommendations remains to be an issue. It is also to be considered, that the Commission for the local self-government elections was supposed to be created prior to March 24; however, the Commission was created with the delay, on April 3.

The electoral administration was prepared for the beginning of the pre-election period. GYLA positively evaluates the call of the Central Election Commission (CEC) chairperson towards the District Election Commission (DEC) to demonstrate maximum responsibility and professionalism in selecting the Precinct Election Commission (PEC) members. According to the information available to the GYLA observers, in those DEC, where GYLA observers conducted monitoring, the composition of the PEC was conducted in compliance with the requirements of the law.

Prior to the 2014 local self-government elections, the consultation commission composed of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was created under the auspices of the State Audit Office, which should be positively evaluated.

Within the reporting period, a number of local budgets have significantly increased. In addition, as the elections have been approaching, the initiation of various projects became more frequent, the beginning of which coincided with the pre-election period. It is notable, that the initiatives mostly have social nature and are designated for a wide population. Despite the fact that in this case the law was not violated, the logical questions arise in relation to the election-motivated budget spending.

Within the context of the local self-government elections, the Prime Minister of Georgia announced moratorium on conducting legislative procedures against persons, involved in the electoral campaign; this, according to his statement, would give all the parties a possibility to conduct a comprehensive campaign.

The Prime Minister called upon the law-enforcement bodies towards maximum refraining (within the pre-election period) from legal limitation of rights and from detention of those persons, who actively participate in the electoral campaign. Announcement of the moratorium by the Prime-Minister represented the demonstration of the political will of the Government, for the persons involved in the electoral processes to be able to conduct a comprehensive campaign.

The quality of the media freedom has improved in Georgia. Despite this, the public broadcaster remains not having a functioning Board of Trustees. The CEC Resolution, which establishes limitations to media on making recordings in the vote-casting building maintains an acute issue prior to the elections.