



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**GEORGIAN  
YOUNG  
LAWYERS'  
ASSOCIATION**

# Free, Fair and Equal Electoral-Political 2022-2025 Cycle in Georgia

**NEWSLETTER №47**  
**August, 2023**

**Tbilisi, 2023**

**Supervisor:**

Nanuka Kruashvili

**Author:**

Nika Odikadze

This newsletter was made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this newsletter are the sole responsibility of “Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association” (GYLA) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# INTRODUCTION

Since August 2019, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) has been implementing the project "Free, Fair and Equal Election" throughout Georgia, covering the electoral political cycle from 2019 to 2022. One of the project's goals is to promote the improvement of the election environment through monitoring and evidence-based advocacy. To achieve this, the organization will monitor ongoing policy processes and develop recommendations that will be communicated to the public and presented to decision-makers. Currently, we are presenting Newsletter #47, which describes the events of August that have had an impact on the political environment.

## 1. THE CEC NAMED THE DATE OF THE INTERIM/EXTRAORDINARY ELECTIONS

On August 2, the Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC) officially designated October 1 as the scheduled date for the interim elections of the Georgian Parliament and the extraordinary elections of the Mayor of Gurjaani.<sup>1</sup> According to the spokesperson for the Central Election Commission (CEC), the forthcoming elections on October 1 hold significant importance. They will serve as a crucial occasion to assess the application of electronic technologies in the electoral process, in preparation for the nationwide elections scheduled for 2024.<sup>2</sup>

In the elections of October 1, voters will elect the majority deputy of the Gori-Kaspi region of the Parliament of Georgia and the Mayor of Gurjaani.<sup>3</sup> In the first case, the reason for calling the elections was the resignation of Giorgi Khojevanishvili, a member of the "Georgia" party, in February 2023,<sup>4</sup> and in the second case, the mayor of Gurjaani, Zurab Utiashvili, left his position in June of this year.<sup>5</sup>

As of August 2, the pre-election campaign period officially commenced, and the pertinent prohibitions mandated by the legislation were set into motion.<sup>6</sup>

At the briefing on August 14, the chairman of the ruling party, Irakli Kobakhidze, presented Giorgi Sosiashvili as the candidate of the ruling party in the majority district of Gori and Kaspi, and Giorgi Machavariani for the position of the mayor of Gurjaani.<sup>7</sup>

The opposition did not present any candidates in August.

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, should opposition parties decline to participate in the elections under these circumstances, they would once again demonstrate their political ineffectiveness.<sup>8</sup>

According to Roman Gotsiridze, a former member of the "United National Movement" party and an active member of the "Eurooptimists" parliamentary group, given the current circumstances with one year remaining before the major elections, and considering the opposition's constraints in terms of both strength and financial resources, there is a valid argument for abstaining from electoral participation. However, as per the deputy's statement, "The parties will make their own decision; some may choose to participate, while others may not".<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "Interim/extraordinary elections will be held on October 1", website of Central Election Commission of Georgia (CEC), August 2, 2023, available at: <https://cutt.ly/tw1ErAzR>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "Party "For Georgia" deputy leaves the parliament and the party", information portal "Civil.ge", February 6, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/524284>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>5</sup> "Gurjaani Mayor Resigned", information portal Radio Tavisupleba, June 9, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32452119.html>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>6</sup> Part 1 of Article 45 of the Election Code of Georgia.

<sup>7</sup> "Georgian Dream" nominated candidates in the midterm elections", information portal "Radio Tavisupleba", August 14, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32547029.html>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>8</sup> "Irakli Kobakhidze - if the opposition parties refuse to participate in the mid-term elections, they will once again admit their weakness, which the public is already informed about", official website of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, August 14, 2023, available at: <https://cutt.ly/Cw1Ex87a>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>9</sup> "Roman Gotsiridze - due to many reasons, now is not the time to spend resources on midterm elections, although the parties will

## 2. HEALTH CONDITION OF MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI

On August 10, a group of specialists/experts invited by the Public Defender to monitor the health condition of Mikheil Saakashvili, who was in custody, presented a health management assessment based on the documents provided by the “Vivamed” clinic.<sup>10</sup> According to the opinion of the expert group, overall, “a slow dynamic towards deterioration is maintained, which unfortunately makes perfect sense in the context of the present conclusions made by the group”.<sup>11</sup>

According to the statement of the Public Defender, the group of doctors of the Public Defender has no special comments regarding the management of the patient in the clinic. According to the group’s assessment: “Symptomatic treatment continues, which is a pragmatic approach from their side”.<sup>12</sup>

## 3. SOFO JAPARIDZE IS LAUNCHING A CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF MIKHEIL SAAKASHVILI

According to the information spread by the media on August 21, Sofo Japaridze, a member of the “United National Movement” party, started a new campaign, within the framework of which she announced to visit the regions and meet with the people on behalf of the former president Mikheil Saakashvili.<sup>13</sup> According to Japaridze, she intends to engage in discussions with the population regarding problematic issues and subsequently relay their documented viewpoints to Mikheil Saakashvili.<sup>14</sup> In response to the journalist’s inquiry, Sofo Japaridze stated that this endeavor can be characterized as the commencement of the pre-election campaign, and it will involve the active participation of Mikheil Saakashvili.<sup>15</sup>

According to “Georgian Dream” deputy Mikheil Sarjveladze, Saakashvili’s involvement in the pre-election campaign is not reasonable and he will have to report to the legislation of our country.<sup>16</sup> According to Sarjveladze: “A foreign national is not entitled to engage in political activities within Georgia. Saakashvili’s decision to renounce his Georgian citizenship and relocate to another country was a personal choice on his part”.<sup>17</sup>

Guram Macharashvili, a deputy of the parliamentary majority, further emphasized the prohibition of foreign citizens’ participation in elections according to Georgian legislation. He stated: “(Saakashvili) may issue statements, but (he) will not be permitted to engage in any campaign, as such actions are strictly forbidden and subject to penalties”.<sup>18</sup>

---

make their own decision”, official website of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, August 14, 2023, available at: <https://cutt.ly/qwIEmd8l>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>10</sup> “The Consilium of the Ombudsman publishes another conclusion on the situation of Mikheil Saakashvili”, information portal “Civil.ge”, August 10, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/555425>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “Mikheil Saakashvili is ready to listen to you all”, YouTube channel of TV Pirveli, August 21, 2023, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbd3KOp9WpQ>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Mikheil Sarjveladze - Mikheil Saakashvili should not, as a rule, conduct an election campaign in Georgian politics, there is simply no place left for him, it may be his desire and we will see his efforts”, the official website of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, August 21, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/dDN12>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> “Guram Macharashvili - the chairman of the party is Khabeishvili, and Saakashvili has now appointed another representative, it seems that he is jealous of Khabeishvili”, the official website of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, August 21, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/ctCQS>, updated: 20.09.2023.

## 4. THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL SPOKE ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF EU EXPANSION

On August 28 and 29, the Bled Strategic Forum was held in Slovenia.<sup>19</sup> Speaking at the forum, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, spoke about the need for EU enlargement and noted that by 2030, the EU and the aspirant countries should be ready for enlargement.<sup>20</sup> According to him, the European Union needs to expand for its strengthening and security.<sup>21</sup> According to Charles Michel, “Ukraine and Moldova were granted candidate status in June of last year, and the same status awaits Georgia when “they” complete the necessary steps”.<sup>22</sup> According to Michel, the process of enlargement is anticipated to be difficult, potentially entailing challenges and, at times, even discomfort, for both the aspiring member states and the European Union.<sup>23</sup>

According to President Michel, the window of opportunity is open and Europe needs to act.<sup>24</sup> He announced that the European leaders will deliberate on the matter of enlargement during the forthcoming meeting of the European Council. During this meeting, positions regarding the commencement of negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova will also be determined.<sup>25</sup> The issues of Herzegovina and Georgia will also return to the agenda.<sup>26</sup>

According to Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the “Georgian Dream” party, Charles Michel’s statement on the European Union’s expansion bears both positive and negative aspects. In his assessment, when considering the Balkan countries, which attained candidate status 12 to 18 years ago, “this does not give grounds for great optimism”. Kobakhidze further asserted that the government will exert maximum effort to attain candidate status, and confidently stated, “If any country is poised for EU membership by 2030, it will be Georgia”.<sup>27</sup>

According to Levan Khabeishvili, Chairman of the “United National Movement”, Charles Michel’s statement serves as a definitive affirmation that the people of Georgia will attain the status of a candidate for the European Union, “the only obstacles lie with Bidzina Ivanishvili and the Russian party”.<sup>28</sup>

Giorgi Vashadze, the leader of “Strategy Aghmashenebeli”, characterized President Michel’s statement as unprecedented. He emphasized that Georgia has the potential to attain full membership, but to achieve this, specific tasks must be accomplished, including a change in government and the implementation of all necessary reforms.<sup>29</sup>

## 5. THE GOVERNMENT’S REFUSAL ON THE PRESIDENT’S VISITS

On August 30, the administration of the President of Georgia released information regarding the planned visit of Salome Zourabichvili to the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>30</sup> In accordance with the press release, President Salome Zourabichvili initiated a series of meetings with European leaders, commencing with her visit to the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The primary objective of these meetings was

<sup>19</sup> “Michel: We must be ready, on both sides, for the expansion of 2030,” Information portal Radio Tavisupleba, August 28, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32568088.html>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> „Michel: We must be ready for expansion in 2030”, information portal “civil.ge”, 28 August 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/556931>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>27</sup> “Georgian Dream” reactions to EU enlargement plan announced by Michel”, information portal “Civil.ge”, August 29, 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/557046>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>28</sup> “Opposition reacts to EU enlargement plan announced by Charles Michel”, information portal “Civil.ge”, 29 August 2023, available at: <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/556972>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “President of Georgia Begins Meetings with European Leaders to Support Georgia’s EU Candidate Status,” Official Website of the President of Georgia, August 30, 2023, available at: [https://president.ge/index.php?m=209&news\\_id=1952&lng=geo](https://president.ge/index.php?m=209&news_id=1952&lng=geo), updated: 20.09.2023.

to garner substantial support for Georgia's bid to attain the status of a candidate country for EU membership.<sup>31</sup> On the same day, the information released by the President's administration was followed by a statement from the Government administration, according to which the President made a proposal to the Government of Georgia on July 12, which was officially rejected in writing on August 3 by the Government's decree.<sup>32</sup> According to the announcement from the government administration, the President also received a decline for other planned visits scheduled from August 22 to December 20.<sup>33</sup> The government's statement explained that: "According to Article 52, Clause 1, Sub-Clause "A" of the Constitution of Georgia, the President of Georgia exercises representative powers in foreign relations only with the consent of the Government of Georgia, since in accordance with Article 54, Clause 1 of the Constitution, the implementation of the country's foreign policy is the authority of the Government of Georgia".<sup>34</sup>

Despite the government's refusal, on August 31, the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, met with the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier.<sup>35</sup> The President responded to the visit through the social network and noted that Germany's support will be crucial for the integration of Georgia into the European Union.<sup>36</sup>

The representatives of the parliamentary majority accused the president of violating the constitution. According to Irakli Kobakhidze, chairman of the Georgian Dream, the Constitution of Georgia states that the president is authorized to carry out representative relations in foreign policy and engage in international negotiations only with the approval of the government.<sup>37</sup> According to Kobakhidze, despite the fact that the president has taken an oath on this constitution, she is grossly violating it, which cannot remain without a response from the ruling party.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> "Government Administration Statement", Official Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, August 30, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/blCD4>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>33</sup> 22-24 August in Ukraine, 16 September in the Swiss Confederation, 2-3 October in the Republic of Poland, 4-6 October in the Kingdom of Belgium, 31 October to 2 November in the Kingdom of Denmark and 1-2 December in the United Arab Emirates, 27-29 September in the Republic of Bulgaria, 10- December 12 in the Czech Republic and December 18-20 in the State of Israel.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> "The President of Georgia met with the President of Germany", information portal "Radio Tavisupleba", August 31, 2023, available at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32572641.html>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>36</sup> The official Twitter page of Salome Zourabichvili, as of September 1, 2023, is available at: [https://twitter.com/Zourabichvili\\_S/status/1697513856824684695/photo/1](https://twitter.com/Zourabichvili_S/status/1697513856824684695/photo/1), updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>37</sup> Information portal "Interpressnews", August 31, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/ckGHV>, updated: 20.09.2023.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.