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# **Free, Fair and Equal Electoral-Political 2019-2022 Cycle in Georgia**

**NEWSLETTER №7  
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**Supervisor:**

Vakhtang Menabde

**Author:**

Mariam Latsabidze

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# INTRODUCTION

In August 2019, The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), with the support of USAID, launched the project “Free, Fair and Equal Electoral-Political 2019-2022 Cycle in Georgia”. It covers the territory of Tbilisi, Kakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Imereti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Guria and Adjara.

One of the primary goals of the project is to support improvement of the electoral environment through monitoring and evidence-based advocacy. To this end, GYLA will monitor ongoing political processes and develop recommendations that will be presented to the public and decision-makers.

# CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

After Georgia ended the state of emergency, the Parliament of Georgia resumed the process related to the constitutional amendments.

Due to the spread of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Steering Commission on Public Considerations of the Constitutional Amendments decided to hold TV discussions of the draft constitutional amendments on June 4 and 13, 2020.<sup>1</sup>

The process of introducing the amendments gained wide response from the international community. The Foreign Minister of Lithuania noted that the implementation of the March 8 agreement, signed between the opposition and the ruling party was of great importance.<sup>2</sup> The president of the European People's Party and former President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, responded to the process and called on the authorities to release Giorgi Rurua and fully implement the March 8 agreement.<sup>3</sup> Andrzej Halicki, MEP, wrote on his Twitter page that he had sent a letter to the Prosecutor General of Georgia regarding the detention of Giorgi Rurua.<sup>4</sup> The ambassadors facilitating the political dialogue issued a statement on June 19, calling on the parties to fully implement the March 8 agreement and support the constitutional changes to reform the electoral system.<sup>5</sup>

On June 21, 2020, the Parliament passed the constitutional amendments in the first reading by 136 votes to 5.<sup>6</sup> Members of the United National Movement faction did not participate in the voting, while the party “European Georgia” supported the changes in the first reading.<sup>7</sup> The facilitator ambassadors congratulated the Parliament of Georgia on the adoption of the constitutional amendments in the first reading and assessed it as “an important first step towards pluralism.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, they expressed their hope that the amendments will be widely supported among parties and urged them to enforce the March 8 agreement.<sup>9</sup> Marina Kaljurand and Sven Mikser, members

<sup>1</sup> The summary protocol of the Draft Constitutional Law of Georgia “On Amendments to the Constitutional Law of Georgia and Amending the Constitutional Law of Georgia” (№07-3/443; 11.03.2020), the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 19.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3814Ccl>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>2</sup> “Implementation of the March 8 Agreement is of great importance - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania”, News portal “on.ge”, 10.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/32mZbZU>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>3</sup> “We are concerned that Giorgi Rurua is still in prison - Donald Tusk”, News portal “on.ge”, 17.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OupSUc>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>4</sup> “I wrote to the Prosecutor General about the last political prisoner, he is still in custody, why? – The MEP on Rurua”, News portal “on.ge”, 17.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZuigaH>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>5</sup> “The Joint Statement of Political Dialogue Facilitators (June 19)”, the Official Website of the Embassy of the United States of America, 19.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2C36XwM>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>6</sup> “The Draft Constitutional Law concerning the Electoral System was adopted with the I reading”, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 21.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OEZQhg>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> US Embassy Statement on Electoral Reform (June 21), the official website of the US Embassy, 21.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/38GioqA>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

of the European Parliament, issued a joint statement regarding the adoption of the amendments in the first reading, in which they described the vote for the amendments as a “positive signal” and confirmation of a broad consensus-based approach.<sup>10</sup> They also urged all parties to build on this positive momentum in the implementation of the March 8 agreement, which, they said, would help depolarize the political environment in Georgia and ensure that the democratic will of its citizens are properly reflected in the next parliament.<sup>11</sup> The EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell also welcomed the amendments: “I counted 142 votes supporting the constitutional agreement after March 8, and I welcome the fact that Parliament passed the amendments in the first reading with 136 votes.”<sup>12</sup> Upon commenting on the amendments, US Congressman Adam Kinzinger noted, “It was a long way, yet it was worth it,” he wrote on his Twitter.<sup>13</sup>

On June 23, 2020, the Parliament supported the amendments to the Constitution in the second reading - by 115 votes to 3.<sup>14</sup> MPs from the United National Movement and European Georgia did not take part in the voting.<sup>15</sup> The main opposition parties declared that the release of Giorgi Rurua and full implementation of the March 8 agreement would serve as a prerequisite for voting for the changes.<sup>16</sup> The EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell welcomed the amendments and expressed concerns about narrow margin as it collected 115 supporters.<sup>17</sup> The diplomat said that he expected 142 votes in favor of the changes and hoped that they would accumulate the desired number of votes in the third ballot.<sup>18</sup> While responding to the process, Dr. Michael Carpenter, one of the foreign policy advisers to US Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, said that George Rurua should be released and his party be allowed to run in the election without any hindrances.<sup>19</sup> U.S. Ambassador Ms. Kelly Degnan said it was important to have the full support for the constitutional changes.<sup>20</sup> “It will be a great success if the changes are fully supported by the Parliament. This will be an expression of commitment to the democratic process in Georgia and create a better environment for elections,” she said.<sup>21</sup>

On June 29, 2020, the Parliament of Georgia approved the constitutional amendments by 117 votes in the third and final reading.<sup>22</sup> The MPs from the United National Movement and European Georgia did not take part in the third voting,<sup>23</sup> naming again the demand for the full implementation of the March 8 agreement and the release of Giorgi Rurua as the reason.<sup>24</sup>

The US, EU and German embassies in Georgia issued a joint statement on the same day congratulating the Georgian Parliament on the approval of the constitutional amendments on the electoral law and regretting that some parties

<sup>10</sup> A Joint Statement by MEPs Marina Kaljurand and Sven Mikser on the first reading of the constitutional amendments on the new electoral system, Brussels, 22.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZquKQB>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> “I counted 142 votes that supported the changes after the March 8 agreement - Hartzell”, News portal “on.ge”, 22.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3j0YNWQ>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>13</sup> “International Reactions as Electoral Reform Bill Clears First Hurdle”, News portal “civil.ge”, 22.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fTygsQ>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>14</sup> “The Parliament Approved Draft Constitutional Changes with II Reading”, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 23.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fQwVmy>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>15</sup> “Parliament adopted the constitutional amendments in the second reading”, News portal “civil.ge”, 23.06.2020., available at: <https://bit.ly/2WGrS0b>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> “I hope the spirit of the March 8 agreement will be restored and the changes will earn 142 votes at the third hearing - Hartzell”, News portal “on.ge”, 23.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZoAiem>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> “Carpenter: Rurua should be released, he and his party should not be hampered in the elections”, News portal “on.ge”, 23.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2DGybKB>, updated: 13.07.2020

<sup>20</sup> “The key for the United States is the changes to be adopted with the full support of Parliament - Degnan”, News portal “on.ge”, 25.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3iV77rn>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Parliament Endorsing Draft Constitutional Changes by 117 Votes with III Reading”, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2WH0Gi2>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>23</sup> “Georgian Parliament Passes Constitutional Changes on Electoral Reform”, News portal “civil.ge”, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/30x6zPR>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

did not take part in the vote.<sup>25</sup> They reiterated the crucial significance of the comprehensive implementation of the commitments undertaken as per the March 8 agreement.<sup>26</sup> Other international partners have also responded to the amendments. Adam Kinzinger, US Congressman and Chairman of the US-Georgia Friendship Group in Congress, congratulated the Georgian Parliament on the adoption of the draft constitutional amendments, thanked the US embassy in Georgia and called on the parties to fully implement the March 8 agreement (the memorandum was accompanied by a joint statement on the avoidance of politicization of justice in Georgia).<sup>27</sup> Josep Borrell, EU High Representative, responded to the adoption of the new electoral system and described it as a key moment for greater pluralism.<sup>28</sup> A joint statement was issued by Ms. Marina Kaljurand, Co-Chair of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee, and Sven Mikser, Co-Rapporteur on Georgia.<sup>29</sup> They called the approval of the changes a historic step, which is an important stage for the democratic development of the country.<sup>30</sup> Responding to the confirmation of the constitutional changes, Jim Risch, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote on his Twitter that he was satisfied, yet was looking forward to the full implementation of the March 8 agreement.<sup>31</sup> According to him, this will increase the confidence of Georgian people in their own government and contribute to the increase in participation in democratic processes.<sup>32</sup> MEP Viola von Cramon noted that the changes were part of a historic agreement and it was unfortunate that the opposition parties had missed the opportunity by refusing to vote.<sup>33</sup>

Concerning the actions of the opposition, German Ambassador in Georgia Hubert Knirsch declared that Giorgi Rurua, whom some opposition parties referred to as a “political prisoner” and without whose release refused to participate in the voting for the constitutional amendments, was not mentioned in the March 8 agreement.<sup>34</sup> Some representatives of the opposition criticized this statement. Giga Bokeria, the leader of European Georgia, noted: “I sympathize with him and I do not know how many times he must get involved in such a controversy.”<sup>35</sup> According to the leader of the Labor Party, Shalva Natelashvili, the ambassador is “funded by Ivanishvili.”<sup>36</sup> The Delegation of the European Union to Georgia in agreement with the EU Heads of Mission issued the statement over recent controversial remarks made against Hubert Knirsch and considered it as an “attack” and called on all parties to uphold the human dignity of everybody.<sup>37</sup>

Following the constitutional changes:<sup>38</sup>

#### 1. The Parliament elected in 2020 shall be composed of **120 MPs elected through the proportional**

<sup>25</sup> “Joint Statement of Political Dialogue Facilitators on Adoption of Electoral System Changes (June 29)”, the official website of the Embassy of the United States of America, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Bz2Zw2>, Updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “I again call on the parties to fully implement the March 8 agreement - Kinzinger”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/30b0Wa6>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>28</sup> “This is a key moment for more political pluralism - Borrell on constitutional changes”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/38iUdyo>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>29</sup> “We welcome the adoption of changes, hopefully, the positive momentum will be maintained during the voting on electoral reform - MEPs”, News portal “on.ge”, 30.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Wau3sP>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “I look forward to the full implementation of the March 8 agreement - Senator Risch”, News portal “on.ge”, 01.07.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Zq3Mc4>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> “It is unfortunate that all opposition parties did not vote for the changes, this is a missed opportunity - MEP”, News portal “on.ge”, 01.07.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OmGH3v>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>34</sup> “Rurua is not mentioned in the agreement - Ambassador of Germany”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 26.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ing6B4>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>35</sup> “I sympathize with him, how many times should he get involved in such a trouble - Bokeria on the German ambassador”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 26.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/322QaoG>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>36</sup> “German Ambassador is funded by Ivanishvili’s regime - Natelashvili”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 27.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gJHDei>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>37</sup> “We condemn the attacks on the German Ambassador” - EU Delegation to Georgia “, News portal” Netgazeti “, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gkJZAa>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>38</sup> The Constitutional Law of Georgia “On Amendments to the Constitution of Georgia” concerning the Amendments to the Constitutional Law of Georgia, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, available at: <https://bit.ly/2OlvdUw>, updated: 13.07.2020

### **representation and 30 under the majority rule;**

2. In the proportional part, the **election threshold shall be 1%**. The threshold for electoral blocs shall be determined by multiplying one percent and the number of parties within such blocs;
3. Unallocated votes, if any, shall be distributed successively to the parties and electoral blocs with the largest balance;
4. The draft law envisages setting a limit for the total number of mandates received by a political party or electoral bloc under the proportional and majoritarian system, which shall be calculated with the total of the percentage of actual votes received by political parties and electoral blocs through the proportionate system and one-fourth of this percentage. **This limitation will prevent the formation of a single party parliamentary majority** if the winning party or electoral bloc receives **less than 40%** of the votes in the proportional system;
5. A party supported by the signatures of at least 5,000 voters shall have the right to participate in the 2020 elections. Furthermore, political parties that meet the rules provided by the law shall be released from the requirement to submit 5,000 signatures;
6. **30 single-member majoritarian districts shall be established** in accordance with the administrative boundaries in force at the time of adoption of this law;
7. In case of holding pre-term parliamentary elections in the period between 2020 and 2024, the first such elections shall be held in accordance with the rules determined for 2020.

GYLA welcomes the amendments introduced to the electoral law. Regardless of the fact that the new constitutional provisions establish the boundaries between majoritarian constituencies in violation of international standards and the terms of the agreement,<sup>39</sup> the decision should yet be considered a significant step forward on the way to a fair electoral system.

## **REFORM OF THE ELECTION LEGISLATION**

Following the adoption of the constitutional amendments, the Parliament started working on the election reform. The necessity for the reform was highlighted by the facilitators of the political dialogue: “We call on all parties to engage in the development and implementation of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Reform Recommendations,” says the statement of June 29.<sup>40</sup> Marina Kaljurand, Co-Chair of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee, and Sven Mikser, Co-Rapporteur on Georgia, also responded to the reform of the election law. They expressed their hopes that all political parties would fully support OSCE/ODIHR recommendations in the election legislation.<sup>41</sup> “We urge all major political parties to participate in the voting in keeping with the spirit of the March 8 agreement and contribute to the depolarization of the political environment in Georgia,” says the statement made by the members of the European Parliament.<sup>42</sup>

On June 30, 2020, the Legal Affairs Committee reviewed the election bill in the first reading in an expedited manner.<sup>43</sup>

The draft bill envisages significant changes concerning the following: a new model of financing political parties, specification of the rules for the formation of the election administration, media campaign and airtime, restriction of involvement of persons employed in budgetary organizations in an election campaign, additional regulations

<sup>39</sup> Newsletter №6, p. 2-3, Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association website, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Cl2uWq>, updated: 09.07.2020.

<sup>40</sup> “Joint Statement of Political Dialogue Facilitators on Adoption of Electoral System Changes (June 29)”, the official website of the Embassy of the United States of America, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Bz2Zw2>, Updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>41</sup> “We welcome the adoption of amendments, hopefully, the positive momentum will be maintained during the voting on electoral reform - MEPs”, News portal “on.ge”, 30.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Wau3sP>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “The Legal Affairs Committee has started discussing the amendments to the election legislation”, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 30.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2CWnELa>, updated: 02.07.2020.



prohibiting the use of administrative resources, gender quotas, etc.<sup>44</sup>

GYLA submitted its written conclusion on the draft amendments to the election legislation to the Parliament.<sup>45</sup> The organization welcomed the steps taken to eliminate the existing gaps and positively assessed the open format for the elaboration of the draft law that lasted throughout the year.

The organization hereby believes that there are still issues that are crucial to be taken into consideration in order to conduct fair elections:

**Controlling the will of the voter.** GYLA believes that the mechanisms provided in the draft bill were not sufficient to tackle the existing challenges, and required additional regulations. More specifically: (1) to increase the limitation distance for the placement of campaign materials to 100 m; (2) to prohibit the presence of any unauthorized person within the same range (except for the time the voter needs to reach the polling station).

**Declaring the day before elections as the “pre-election silence”.** GYLA deemed it reasonable to declare the day before elections as a “day of silence”. The electoral silence implies a ban on campaigning for a certain period to allow citizens to reflect and make decisions by themselves. During this time, it shall be prohibited to convince voters to vote in favor of any candidate/political party.

**Composing the election administration.** The existing rule was retained under the proposed changes, serving the goal of strengthening the positions of the ruling party in the election administration. GYLA considered it reasonable to switch to the fully “professional” model of staffing of the election administration from the next elections.

**Gender quotas.** GYLA welcomed the introduction of gender quotas (25% was proposed); however, according to the organization, it was important to increase gender representation on the party list to 50% in order to achieve long-lasting and sustainable positive change.

GYLA’s recommendations also concerned the following issues: appealing against the refusal to draw up a protocol on a violation of the law, election dispute settlement rules, and the rules for inclusion of a voter in the mobile ballot box list.<sup>46</sup>

## ONE YEAR SINCE THE JUNE 20 PROTEST RALLY

On June 20, 2020, a year after the dispersal of the June 20-21 protest rally, the Shame Movement held an assembly in front of the Parliament building.<sup>47</sup>

GYLA believes that the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia has not yet provided a systematic analysis of the events within the framework of the investigation, regardless of fact that a year has passed since the events.<sup>48</sup> None of the law enforcers have been punished so far and only three police officers are being prosecuted.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The Organic Law of Georgia №07-3/476/9 “On Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia”, the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, available at: <https://bit.ly/3dXuxbC>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>45</sup> The conclusion of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association on the Draft Law on Amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia “Election Code of Georgia”, the official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, available at: <https://bit.ly/3eWHX9o>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> “We remember June 20!” - a protest rally is underway on Rustaveli”, News portal “Netgazeti”, 20.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2ZtxHyK>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>48</sup> “The events of June 20-21 are uninvestigated”, the official website of the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association, 19.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fMGUZP>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

On June 18, 2020, three individuals affected by the developments of June 20-21 filed a lawsuit with Tbilisi City Court.<sup>50</sup> They demand compensation for material and/or moral damages from the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the damage inflicted on their health.<sup>51</sup> GYLA will represent their interests in the court.

## ELECTORAL REGULATIONS RELATING TO COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of the new Coronavirus during the election, the government plans to develop the necessary safety regulations during elections.

On June 22 and 29, 2020, high officials held a meeting in the Parliament to discuss possible rules for holding elections within the conditions of the pandemic. The meeting was attended by the Speaker of the Parliament, members of Parliament, representatives of the Georgian government, the CEC, NGOs and the diplomatic corps accredited in Georgia.<sup>52</sup>

The working group developed specific regulations for the 2020 elections. According to the amendments, the CEC is authorized to decide on the following issues:

- Participation in elections of voters placed in inpatient facilities or quarantine areas and those infected with the new Coronavirus;
- Creating alternative groups in circumstances if a member of an election commission is unable to perform his/her duties due to health conditions;
- Enforcing sanitary-hygienic requirements in the polling stations in accordance with the current legislation and the recommendations of the relevant agencies;
- Ensuring the participation in elections of Georgian citizens living abroad;
- Other issues that, along with the conduct of the election in accordance with the law, ensure the prevention of any possible spread of the new Coronavirus.

GYLA welcomes the process and considers it necessary to introduce safety regulations. The organization continues to develop proposals for improving the legislation.

## VIOLENCE PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS

In June, two cases were reported in Georgia that contained signs of politically motivated violence.

- **Attack on United National Movement office in Gori**

The UNM office in Gori was attacked,<sup>53</sup> windows smashed, computers and other equipment destroyed. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, one person was detained for the incident, and the investigation is underway under Article 187, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Code that envisages the damage or destruction of another person's property.<sup>54</sup> A photo of the person charged with the attack on the Gori office was disseminated through the social media.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> "Victims of the June 20-21 events demand compensation from the Ministry of Internal Affairs", 18.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gxcN91>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "The second working meeting in the Parliament dedicated to the provision of the safe elections against the pandemic", the official website of the Parliament of Georgia, 29.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3jjgYHD>, updated: 02.07.2020.

<sup>53</sup> "UNM office raided in Gori", News portal "Netgazeti", 26.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3io70nN>, updated: 02.07.2020

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> "A photo of the accused in the raid on the UNM office spreads on the social network", News portal "Shida Kartli Information Center", 27.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2CYqgYF>, updated: 02.07.2020.



GYLA's monitoring team spoke to eyewitnesses. People who could see the attacker's clothes said that he was wearing a "Georgian Dream" T-shirt.

- **Mobilization of wrestlers in Adjara**

On June 21, 2020, Formula TV reported about government's attempt to mobilize former athletes as informally organized groups.<sup>56</sup> According to media reports, Adjara high-ranking officials held meetings at the main police division in March 2020, where the father of Tornike Rizhvadze, Chair of the Government of Adjara, and Konstantine Ananiashvili, Chief of Police, offered money to the wrestlers in exchange for the support during elections.<sup>57</sup> Firuz Tsulukidze, a brother of Revaz Tsulukidze, claims that Davit Rizhvadze, the father of the Adjara government chairman, together with Kote Ananiashvili, the head of the Adjara Police Department, secretly met with him and several other sportsmen and requested for their pre-election assistance.<sup>58</sup> In return for their contribution, the high-ranking officials gave them specific promises including financial support, transfer of a land plot at a symbolic price, and construction permits.<sup>59</sup>

On May 7, 2020, two participants in the meeting - Revaz Tsulukidze and Eldar Antadze - were arrested on hooliganism charges.<sup>60</sup> The Prosecutor's Office accused them of a fist fight that occurred in April. Four individuals were charged in connection to this fact, but only Revaz Tsulukidze and Eldar Antadze were remanded in pre-trial detention.<sup>61</sup> The families and relatives of the defendants linked the arrests to political processes and declared that the government punished them for refusing to provide assistance in the pre-election period.<sup>62</sup>

The spouses of the accused produced the receipts,<sup>63</sup> proving that they had received a social allowance in March 2020.<sup>64</sup> However, Revaz Tsulukidze's family is not socially vulnerable. Apparently, the funds were deposited to the accounts of the athletes' wives to mislead the police. The evidence for this fact is a money transfer document retrieved from the state treasury. According to Revaz Tsulukidze, it was an advance incentive to interest them.<sup>65</sup>

The prosecutor's office launched an investigation into the incident, during which Firuz Tsulukidze was summoned for an interview.<sup>66</sup>

**GYLA deems it important to conduct a comprehensive, thorough and impartial investigation into the facts. Furthermore, due to the high public interest, the public shall be informed about the investigation proceeding.**

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<sup>56</sup> "The father and son mob muscles," News portal Formula TV, 21.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YUkWhs>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "The father and son mob muscles," News portal Formula TV, 21.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YUkWhs>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>60</sup> "You will see emotions from now on" - Tsulukidze and Antadze remanded in custody", News portal "Batumelebi Netgazeti ", 23.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gkdL8d>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> An extract from a Credo Bank account: Account holder: Nari Putkaradze, identification number: 61001074207, the extract period: 2020-03-20 - 2020-04-20, social allowance: 2000 GEL.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "The father and son mob muscles," News portal Formula TV, 21.06.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2YUkWhs>, updated: 13.07.2020.

<sup>66</sup> "I was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office" - an athlete, who talked about the creation of "Mob muscles", News portal "Batumelebi Netgazeti ", 01.07.2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2AnVFCY>, updated: 13.07.2020.