



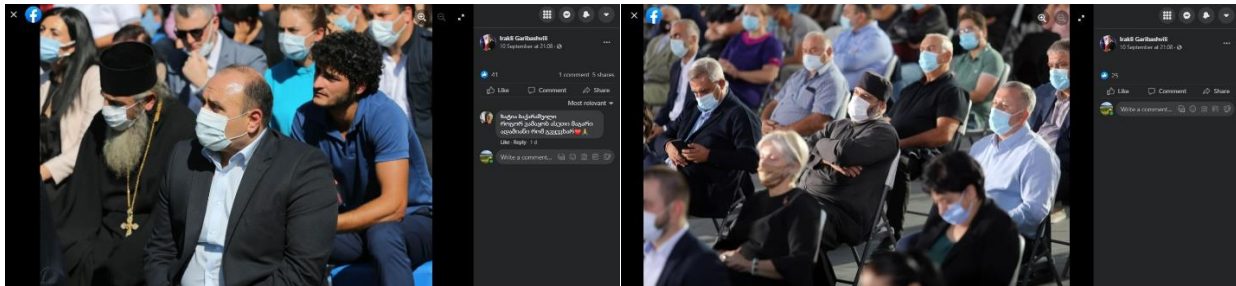
DRI: Election entities use clergy and religious themes in pre-election campaign

The Democracy Research Institute continues to monitor the pre-election campaigns of political parties. The observation of the official pages of election entities on social networks showed that political entities manipulate the support of the clergy in order to gain the support of voters in the run-up to the elections. The ruling party is particularly active. According to the information posted on the Prime Minister's official Facebook page, Irakli Gharibashvili, together with the political officials of the party, continues to visit the churches and monasteries of Georgia. Clergymen take part in all presentations of the Georgian Dream mayoral candidates, which is proved by the photos posted on the official Facebook page of the Prime Minister as well.

Badri Japaridze, one of the leaders of the Lelo for Georgia and the Tbilisi City Council Chairman candidate, and Giorgi Gakharia's party For Georgia, also focus on religious issues. Their pre-election events are also attended by the clergymen.

Georgian Dream ruling party

- **On September 10**, Irakli Gharibashvili nominated mayoral candidates in Mtskheta-Mtianeti. Along with the Georgian Dream political officials, the presentation was attended by clergymen. The relevant information was spread by the official website of Irakli Gharibashvili.¹

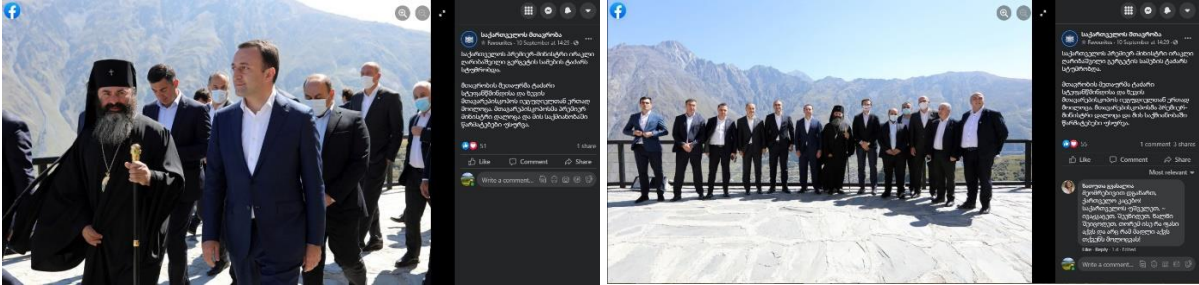


The clergy attending the presentation of candidates by Irakli Gharibashvili in Mtskheta-Mtianeti

- **On September 10**, the Prime Minister visited the Gergeti Trinity Church together with Stepantsminda and Khevi Archbishop Jegudiel. According to the Georgian Government, the Prime Minister was accompanied by Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava, Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Irakli Karseladze, MPs Dimitri Khundadze, Aluda Ghudushauri and Levan Mgaloblishvili, Head of the Government's Regional

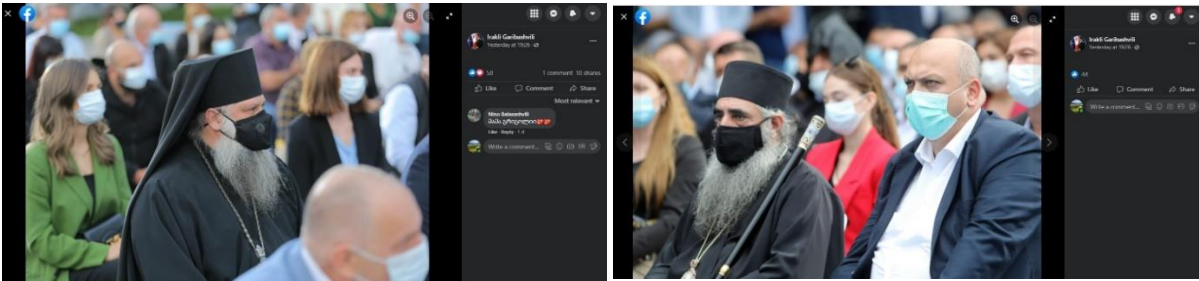
¹ Irakli Gharibashvili's official Facebook page, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=411621800322607&set=pcb.411624166989037>, posted on 10.09.2021

Liaison Department Leri Barnabishvili and State Representative in Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region Davit Nozadze.²



Visit of the Prime Minister of Georgia to the Gergeti Trinity Church

- **On September 11**, Irakli Gharibashvili continued the nomination of mayoral candidates in Samtskhe-Javakheti.³ The presentations in **Borjomi, Adigeni and Akhaltsikhe** were attended by the clergymen, both priests and monks.⁴



The clergy attending nomination of mayoral candidates by Gharibashvili in Samtskhe-Javakheti

- **On September 12**, Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili nominated Aspindza, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda mayoral candidates in Vardzia. In his speech, he spoke about future plans and stressed that the rehabilitation of Vardzia was fully funded by the Cartu Foundation and Bidzina Ivanishvili, and that this was a process that "still continues."⁵

² Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianGovernment/posts/2087557514715475>, posted on 10.09.2021

³ Irakli Gharibashvili's official Facebook page, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GaribashviliOfficial/posts/412256830259104>, posted on 11.09.2021

⁴ Sknews.ge, available at: https://sknews.ge/ka/news/33724?fbclid=IwAR1j9ALOb7WLy8NbW-TSmIqmbH_GDMdnqxZvdJHuKg-kz6k8BJ8kOdjjdSA, posted on 11.09.2021

⁵ Irakli Gharibashvili's official Facebook page, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/GaribashviliOfficial/posts/412838510200936>, posted on 12.09.2021



Clergy attending nomination of mayoral candidates by Irakli Gharibashvili in Vardzia

- On September 11, the Prime Minister, together with Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava, observed the rehabilitation process of the Mother of God Cathedral in [Atskuri](#). According to the information published on the Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, the project is being implemented by the Cartu Foundation. The representatives of the Georgian Dream were hosted in Atskuri by Metropolitan Theodore of Akhaltsikhe and Tao-Klarjeti,⁶ who thanked the Prime Minister for initiating the rehabilitation of the cathedral and gifted him a St. George icon. On the same day, Irakli Gharibashvili, together with Metropolitan Theodore visited [Akhaltsikhe University](#). The Prime Minister, together with Parliament Speaker Kakha Kuchava, Minister of Education and Science Mikheil Chkhenkeli and the majoritarian MP of Akhaltsikhe, Adigeni, Borjomi and Aspindza, Anton Obolashvili, met with the academic staff and students.⁷



Irakli Gharibashvili in Atskuri

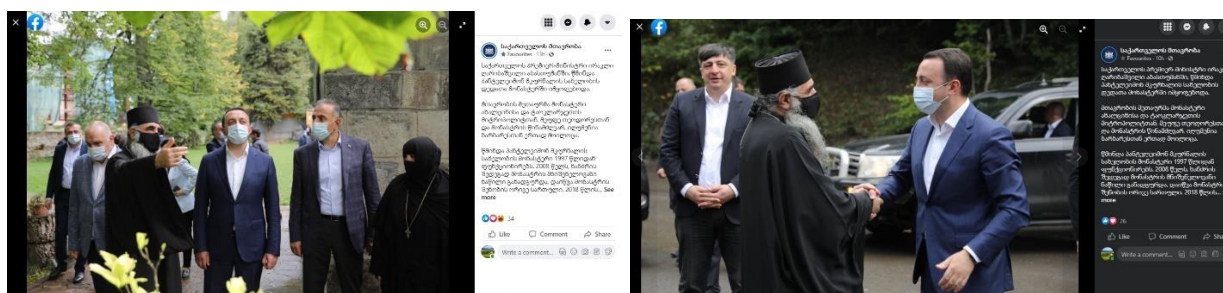
⁶ Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianGovernment/videos/221260036568704>, posted on 11.09.2021.

⁷ Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianGovernment/posts/2088531301284763>, posted on 11.09.2021. (Ibid. video link <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianGovernment/videos/392126609033810>)



Irakli Gharibashvili at Akhatsikhe University

- **On September 12**, the Prime Minister, together with Metropolitan Theodore, visited St. Panteleimon the Healer Monastery in **Abastumani**. According to the information published by the Government of Georgia, the reconstruction of the monastery began on the initiative and with financial support of Bidzina Ivanishvili in August 2018.⁸



Irakli Gharibashvili in Abastumani

Election entity "Gakharia - For Georgia"

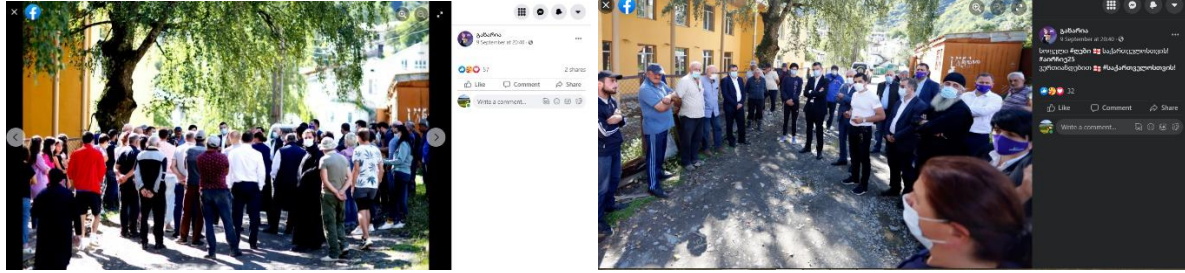
Like Georgian Dream, Giorgi Gakharia's party For Georgia has been manipulating the support of the clergy in order to gain the support of voters.

- **On September 1**, the party leader nominated the party's majoritarian candidates and members of the proportional list in the yard of the Metekhi Virgin Mary Church.⁹
- **On September 9**, Giorgi Gakharia met with voters in the village of Ghebi. The meeting was also attended by clergymen.¹⁰

⁸ Facebook page of the Government of Georgia, <https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianGovernment/videos/376299503990800>, posted on 12.09.2021

⁹ Gakharia (Facebook-page), <https://www.facebook.com/GakhariaGiorgi/videos/534583597650556>, posted on 01.09.2021

¹⁰ Gakharia (Facebook-page), <https://www.facebook.com/GakhariaGiorgi/posts/384838783099548>, posted on 09.09.2021



Giorgi Gakharia, Ghebi

- **On September 9**, Giorgi Gakharia nominated mayoral candidates in Oni and Ambrolauri. Clergymen also attended the presentation.¹¹ (See Appendix # 9)



Giorgi Gakharia, Oni

Badri Japaridze - "Lelo for Georgia"

On September 2, Badri Japaridze, one of the leaders of Lelo for Georgia and Tbilisi City Council Chairman candidate, released a video intended for the pre-election campaign, which begins with the words from the Old Testament and the photos of Mtskheta and the Jvari Monastery.¹²

"Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Irma Inashvili - Alliance of Georgian Patriots"

On September 7, a video was posted on social media, in which Father Ilia Esarattia says he will support the Alliance of Patriots. Excerpt from the video - "We will stand by them, we are by their side. On July 5, Davit and Irma were here! On Rustaveli Avenue. God bless them both."¹³

¹¹ Gakharia (Facebook-page), <https://www.facebook.com/GakhariaGiorgi/posts/384770133106413> , posted on 09.09.2021

¹² Badri Japaridze (Facebook-page), <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=531278908139224> , posted on 02.09.2021

¹³ Irakli Jankarashvili (Facebook-page) <https://www.facebook.com/100057263684749/videos/526109101895832> , posted on 07.09.2021