

# UNDERSTANDING AND COMBATING FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM AND ULTRA-NATIONALISM IN GEORGIA

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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The below definitions of terms are not universal and have been developed for the purposes of this research.

## **FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGY**

An ideology that combines racism, xenophobia, misogyny, anti-Semitism and homophobia.

## **FAR-RIGHT GROUPS**

Groups that stir up antiliberal and anti-western sentiments. Their rhetoric is also expressly homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic and nationalistic.

## **EXTREMISM**

A set of ideas, an ideology, that does not recognise the principle of human equality, promotes hatred, violence and intolerance, threatens the democratic structure and the rule of law in the country.

## **RADICALISATION**

A process in which a person might go beyond legal bounds when disseminating his/her beliefs and promoting a certain ideology and become involved in a terrorist and/or extremist activity. This process demonstrates the willingness of a person to consent to and/or, if necessary, use violent methods for the sake of the objectives of the ideology supported by him/her.

## **ANTI-WESTERN DISCOURSE**

Expressing explicitly negative sentiments towards the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance and Western Countries and analysing them in a negative light.

## **ANTILIBERAL DISCOURSE**

Identifying and analysing the demonisation of liberalism and diminishing liberal values.

**KETEVAN MURGHULIA**

**THE IDEOLOGY OF  
FAR-RIGHT  
GROUPS  
IN GEORGIA**



# INTRODUCTION

Populism and far-right movements are not new to Georgia. However, far-right groups have been active in the country since 2012. The Democracy Research Institute (DRI) has been monitoring far-right groups and their leaders in Georgia since the beginning of 2019, in the light of the local context and problems, both in social and online media, as well as during rallies and demonstrations.

One of the main objectives of our observations was to analyse the root causes of far-right extremism. To this end, we conducted in-depth interviews with several supporters and followers of far-right groups.

There is a wide range of far-right groups represented in Georgia. Due to their amorphousness, it is difficult to distinguish between the main messages voiced by the leaders of these groups and their followers. Within the framework of the research, we studied the positions of activists of various far-right groups operating in Georgia and analysed similarities and differences between the groups, based on their narratives. The identification of the circumstances that caused our respondents to gather under the umbrella of far-right ideology is another subject of interest of the research.

The study aims at presenting the nationalist, far-right discourse, with the example of activists of non-mainstream groups, to illustrate the differences between the rhetoric of the mainstream far-right group, Georgian March and the rest of the nationalist movements. The fact that most of our respondents had the experience of cooperating with Georgian March provided us with some data for comparative analysis.

These were the major research questions posed during the interviews:



When and for what reasons did a particular activist join far-right groups and identify him/herself with this ideology in general?

How do ordinary far-right activists and supporters see their role in shaping up the agenda of the current political or civic processes?

Who are the victims of the aggressive reflection of far-right groups and why?

# 1. METHODOLOGY

The research framework and research questions are based on qualitative methodology. In the framework of the present study, in-depth interviews were conducted with respondents who were in leadership positions at various times or were followers of various far-right groups. The biographical-narrative interview method involves a non-structured discussion plan with the respondents and is based on unstructured narration.

The far-right groups represented in the Georgian reality consider certain historical and public personalities to be their distinct authority figures, on whose ideas, views and values they assume their agenda and action plan are based. The interviews were analysed through studying the context of the perceived reality and individual experiences of the respondents.

While the rhetoric and messages of the far-right groups in Georgia are similar, there are also differences in the personal attitudes of followers and leaders, and the experiences of civic activism. In the current study, the personal experience of ordinary members of the far-right group has been studied to highlight the conflicts and differences between various groups. Biographical-narrative interviews also expressly highlight the reasons that led these people to join particular groups.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHICAL-NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH FAR-RIGHT ACTIVISTS

The present analysis is based on the stories of twelve far-right activists. A few of them consider themselves as ethno-nationalists, some as conservatives. One of them was a member of the National Movement and called himself a patriotic activist.

The history of their activism is also diverse. Three respondents are members of the far-right group, Georgian Power;<sup>1</sup> one was a member of Kardhu<sup>2</sup> and three respondents represented themselves as members of National Unity of Georgia<sup>3</sup>. One of the respondents was actively involved in the Georgian National Liberation Movement. Two respondents said they were independent, nationalist activists of the far-right wing and engaged in civic activism without joining any group. Two respondents said in an interview that they did not consider themselves far-right activists and that their involvement in far-nationalist rallies years ago was solely due to the lack of information. These respondents said that, after studying at university and becoming clear about their political ideologies, they no longer want to be labelled far-nationalists and presently wish to distance themselves from their past.

We were guided by several factors when selecting respondents:

- 1) All respondents interviewed by us have **higher education**. Each of them has a bachelor's or master's degree (in history, archaeology, political science, etc.), which indicates their likely conscious choice and at least minimal knowledge of political ideologies or terms.<sup>4</sup>
- 2) Activity in social media. Our respondents actively and publicly express their positions and political interests on the social network Facebook. For the objectives of the study, it was important that respondents had a clear position and interest concerning far-right, nationalist activism.
- 3) All of our respondents are former or active followers of far-right groups or ideologies. Their experience and collaboration with various radical groups, including Georgian Power, National Unity of Georgia, and Kardhu, provide an opportunity to explore the root causes of far-right discourse in Georgia.

1 Georgian Power was founded on 31 July 2015 by Niko Prangishvili, Irakli Mikeladze, Irakli Modebadze and Nikoloz Burnadze. This group is an expressly conservative vision-based ultra-nationalist platform in Georgia. Facebook profile of the group could be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/GeoAltRight/>.

2 The group Kardhu was registered by Giorgi Janadze and Gera Svanadze in 2016 with the aim of stirring up nationalism and patriotism. The group is distinguished by xenophobic discourse. Facebook profile of the group could be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/კარდუ-217114512148619/>.

3 National Unity of Georgia was founded on 2 November 2016. Its leader is Giorgi Chelidze. The governing body of the movement is Darbazi (chamber). It has a commander, chancellor and library/chancellery. They replaced the swastika, a symbol of German Nazism, with the Borjgali and cross.

4 One of the respondents mentioned that he himself writes, translates and gets familiar with literature related to nationalism.

When talking about their activism and ideology, respondents use scientific terms and examples from different countries. They also consistently explain the key features of far-right discourse in Georgia.

Before joining the far-right groups, the respondents' life experiences were diverse and different, but in most cases, their activism began in the last 5 years with the activation of the far-right forces and their visibility.

It is noteworthy that most of the respondents speak on behalf of the collective unity ("we" instead of "I") and do not distinguish themselves from other members of the group. The civic activism of the majority of respondents is related to their participation in various anti-immigration and homophobic rallies. Several of them also took an active part in the so-called "counter-rally of Basiani" which was organised by Georgian March in May 2018 and was directed against the founders and visitors of the club Basiani.

One of the respondents happened to have significant and distinct experience in activism. He noted that his ideology "went a long way from liberalism to nationalism".

“ My first civic activities were in the field of liberalism. From the school-going age, I was involved in civic clubs, student forums and I have formed one of the organisations based on liberal values... In fact, my activity was liberal until I was 18-19 years old. However, I gradually realised that this ideology was questionable and unfair. After much deeper understanding, I developed into an antiliberal and began to participate in far-right activism. ”

During the interviews, it was revealed that civic activism of the members of the far-right group mainly supports anti-immigration policy and demonstration of homophobic and nationalist sentiments. However, they have other interests as well. For example, two respondents said that they supported the green policy idea and were actively involved in various clean-up rallies. According to one of the respondents, he is the co-founder of the green-left-movement Green Fist.<sup>5</sup> This issue may indicate, on the one hand, ideological hybridity and, on the other hand, it emphasises the importance of "green policy" in far-right activism. Respondents repeatedly noted that it is valuable for them to bring environmental activism into their daily lives and lead a healthy lifestyle. However, on the other hand, the Green Fist is an expressly left-wing movement that accurately reflects a fragmented political identity and may be used as a tool to attract additional supporters.

Some respondents refer to the "need to carry out educational activities to wake-up the nation" as the main reason for their activism and membership of far-right groups. In this regard, the positions of members of the National Unity of Georgia are noteworthy.

“ Our [National Unity, Georgian Power, Resistance Georgia] main goal was to carry out educational activities for young people to wake up the nation; to make national forces more active and involve young people in national civic activism. ”

In the course of the interview, those nationalist issues were outlined on which the res-

<sup>5</sup> The Facebook profile of the group can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/greenfist.ge/>.

pondents based their arguments. According to most of them, Davit Aghmashenebeli, Ilia Chavchavadze, Merab Kostava and Zviad Gamsakhurdia played a special role in defining and shaping up their ideology. This also suggests that far-right groups are offering their interpretation of the ideologies and values of national heroes and likely to try to attract support by idolising historical figures.

“ The recent history of Georgian nationalism is associated with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and this man is, of course, the only legitimate and dignified President of Georgia for me. ”

“ I will especially single out two people. Happy is the nation that can have such guides throughout its history as David Aghmashenebeli and Ilia Chavchavadze. I believe that the foundation of the national worldview of me and my comrades is defined by them. ”

As for the current authorities, the respondents believe that today Georgia does not have such important figures who are able to manage the country with dignity. That is why they say that they will cooperate only with those who oppose the existing unjust system and fight to protect national interests. In their opinion, there is no political force in modern Georgia that will uphold nationalist values. According to the respondents, political forces in Georgia are oriented towards foreign investors and co-operatives. It is done at the expense of violating national values. The establishment of a “liberal dictatorship” in Georgia is considered an unfair system. Far-right activists also have a negative attitude towards the government, negatively assess the liberal discourse pursued by Georgian Dream and oppose the open immigration policy of the authorities.

During the discussion about the homeland, traditions and national values, most of the respondents mentioned that homeland for them, first of all, is their land and race left by their ancestors.

“ For me, first of all, my own land, roots, race and blood are important. If love for your homeland and your people, respect for your ancestors and devotion to your traditions are fascism, let me be a fascist. ”

“ The love for your country begins with civic self-awareness. Preserving traditions means preserving what is left of one's ancestors, be it the land or the culture of the homeland. ”

While delving into the definitions of national traditions and patriotism, the majority of respondents highlighted that the homeland is primarily related to land as a core value. Therefore, it is possible to explain the anti-immigration rhetoric in the far-right discourse as the fear of losing it. It is important, however, that land, as the main driving force of the national value, does not figure in the anti-occupation rhetoric of far-right discourse. The respondents' anti-Russian sentiments are based not on the issue of land grabbing, but a two-century-old hostile historical experience. The anti-Soviet sentiments of the respondents are especially noticeable.

“ The Iranian is not a guest anymore. He buys land in Georgia and registers it. Iranian villages are being built near Tsitsamuri, which is unacceptable. The Georgian land is of paramount importance for me. ”

In addition, respondents expressed their fear that they would lose the advantage in their own country and that the remnants of their ancestors would be in danger. Ethnic hegemony is also an important component in this regard. Far-rightists believe that this is what determines the sense of stability of the country and society, and Georgia should be primarily for Georgians. Consequently, the immigrant, as a foreign element that violates the unity and hegemony of the nation, poses a threat to them. Respondents also criticised the government's immigration policy. According to them, the “uncontrolled migration” and the influx of “foreign tribes” are entirely the fault of the weak policies of the government and they are being held accountable.

“ I would like to outline two aspects I hold against migrants. The first is the existing policy and the second is the distrust of the created agenda. We have been protesting against the purchase of land by foreign investors in various ways and bypassing the policies. As for trust, there is no trust in the government that it will honestly fulfil the interests of the people and that it is not corrupt. ”

“ I have absolutely no desire to demonise migrants. I do not think that they have harmful goals concerning Georgia, but I consider cultural differences to be a significant problem. They are part of a civilisation different from ours and will never be able to assimilate. ”

To defend one's own ideas and ideals, the respondents think that it is also justified to express their protest in extreme forms. According to one of them, they are victims of injustice on the part of the law enforcement authorities during the rallies.

“ I am in favour of strong protests and I will not be able to act [only] within the legal boundaries. Where there is a need, there must be an aggressive protest. I personally took part in a rally organised by Georgian Power on 27 September 2016 against migrants, where police arrested 11 protesters. However, there was no violation of the law by protesters. ”

Speaking about nationalist sentiments, one of the respondents, a member of the National Unity of Georgia, highlighted the importance of symbolism in their movement. The symbolism of the group is the Borjgali on a crimson background, which is often perceived as a fascist symbol. The respondent explained:

“ The Swastika and the Borjgali are related symbols. It is a symbol of the eternity of the nation. Mankind will constantly change, people will change, but the nation, as a given, will be permanent. ”

The respondent does not consider himself a follower of fascism and also points out the shortcomings of the individual rule but tries to find some justification for the ethnic

cleansing committed by Hitler. According to him, the main value is the interests and prosperity of the nation.

“ Adolf Hitler's political face, assertiveness, oratorical talent, audience management skills, charisma and vision are also interesting, acceptable and role models for me, because I agree most with the concept of National Socialism as a deep and thorough idea. ”

For the activity of the members of the far-right group, the social network Facebook is an important platform for attracting followers and internal communication. Most of the respondents mentioned that they spread their opinions and ideas in society with the help of Facebook. Nevertheless, three respondents criticised the Facebook administration and accused it of bias.

“ Recently, Facebook censorship has become very strict. Our pages Far-Right and National Unity have been blocked several times. In addition, my personal page is systematically blocked due to political views. ”

### 3. REASONS FOR JOINING FAR-RIGHT GROUPS

The reasons for joining different groups of far-right activism are more or less similar. Their interest in extreme nationalism, on the one hand, is driven by a desire to acquire like-minded people, and, on the other hand, by a feeling of insecurity when facing the liberal and digital agenda. It is also noteworthy that most of the respondents were brought up in a conservative environment. In addition, several respondents linked the process of forming their own ideological identities to the protests against the political elite in their teenage years, which they said were caused by their disregard for liberal values. National motives also form an important element for far-right activists in terms of membership of various groups.

“ I have always thought that I could not fight alone. Therefore, I needed to join a group of like-minded people. I was trying to find a group with whom I could share my vision and ideology for the future. ”

“ When I started activism in the nationalist direction, I did not have much information about this ideology, but I felt the rise of national motives and I wanted to be active. I had a sense of protest and I saw national threats. ”

The story behind joining a far-right group of one of the respondents is different from the others. He is deeply aware of the group's socio-political context and, when talking about his own ideology, focuses not on individual approaches but large-scale actions such as the conduct of national meta-politics with members of his group.

“ Activists of National Unity and Georgian Power tried to generate a meta-politics under which we would spread our nationalist ideas among the population, and then it would be possible to pursue a successful election policy with someone with a national vision. ”

An important aspect of joining the far-right groups was the knowledge of nationalism and the desire to access education. Several respondents noted that in these groups they received information about nationalist values. Far-right groups are perceived by respondents as an information and educational platform in the process of shaping national values.

“ Nationalism cannot exist without defined and established knowledge, purpose and value, which is why a nationalist society must be educated, self-sufficient and moral. ”

One of the respondents is different from the rest in terms of the process of determining ultranationalist values. The respondent does not identify with any group but intends to create a platform for traditionalist and truly anti-systemic intellectuals with antiliberal allies.



The respondent also outlines the basic values on which ultranationalist groups should be based.

“ Every socio-political group carrying a nationalist ideology should directly express the will of its own nation and the ideological aspirations of the people. Priority should be given to the national interest and only then will everything else fall into place. ”

Our respondent intends to prove that the far-right space is still open to creating new groups and platforms. Historical experience and political identities are beginning to transform into a new hybrid environment. Consequently, far-right groups continue to operate with a new agenda.

## 4. RESPONDENTS' VISIONS AND COLLABORATIONS WITH FAR-RIGHT GROUPS

At the beginning of the interview, most of the respondents highlighted the differences that separate them from the activism of Georgian March. Moreover, they believe that the discrediting of far-right groups and nationalism is caused by the actions of Georgian March. The respondents also explained the reasons for distancing themselves from the members of this group. In their opinion, Georgian March in all its essence serves the interests of Georgia's enemy, Russia, and it has nothing to do with nationalism. The respondents also accused members of Georgian March of pseudo-patriotism.

“ These people are marginalising the perception of nationalism and it is completely incomprehensible why we are being identified together. Members of Georgian March do not live with a national consciousness. I do not recognise them as patriots either. ”

“ I do not remember any group in the Georgian reality that has completely destroyed Georgian ideals and ideas as Georgian March did. ”

The issue of Russia's occupation of Georgia as viewed by far-right activists turned out to be especially important. One respondent also noted that it was because of the country's occupation and pro-Russian foreign course that he stopped cooperating with Georgian March. He added that he had taken part in various rallies against the Russian occupation and, during the so-called Gavrilov's night, he and his comrades also protested against the visit of the Russian MP to Georgia. During the interview, he also recalled how his colleagues burned Russian passports. This kind of performance was directed against the Russian occupation forces.

“ Members of Georgian March are pro-Russian in their actions, and they will justify any Russian aggression against us. ”

“ Over time, I discovered that we could not agree on the direction of foreign policy. These people cannot or do not realise that Russia is occupying the country with its military forces and invading Georgia with troops. ”

In addition to the "pro-Russian" course, the respondents also accused Georgian March of double standards and noted that members of this group do not serve the idea of nationalism through their way of life or actions. In response to a statement, one respondent recalled an occasion about the sale of land to migrants and said that several members of Georgian March had protested against the sale of land to migrants and yet sold the land to foreigners for personal gain.

The respondents also explained the everyday routine of an ordinary nationalist and noted that the preservation of the relics left by Ilia Chavchavadze in the form of language, religion

and homeland needs a constant struggle. Consequently, for them, nationalism and patriotism are the concepts that have determined their activities or ideology. The anti-Russian rhetoric of one of the far-rightists was also noticeable in the negative comment made concerning communism.

“ Communism is an ideology that is categorically unacceptable to me. Accordingly, a communist is the only person with whom it is impossible for me to communicate and have a relationship. ”

It is also noteworthy that some of the respondents do not rule out joint civic activism with members of either left-wing groups or liberals. For them, the important issue is to protect what is left by the ancestors, and it is for the society to judge about the ways to achieve it.

“ While for me, as a representative of a far-right group, some liberal organisers and speakers during the Gavrilov's night were personally and ideologically unacceptable, I still stood by them. In this case, the main thing was national self-awareness and unity. ”

“ I believe that Georgians do not have the right to separate from each other. We cannot be separated from each other. At one time, I was involved in the activism of left-wing groups and supported their green movement. I will do the same at other times when it comes to the interests of the country and particularly important issues. ”

The respondents believe that there is a need for a change in the far right. In their opinion, Georgian March has best demonstrated a vicious aspect of nationalist

discourse in Georgia, which is, primarily, considered to be a stereotypical perception of patriotism. Talking about changes, the respondents think that it is time for nationalism to move from street activism to everyday life and be reflected in the lifestyle of ordinary far-right activists, which includes refusing drugs and casinos.

According to one of the respondents, he left the far-right group because of the ideological disagreement with the leader of the National Unity of Georgia group, which was against the modernisation of the organisation. According to him, “without change and rebranding, the far-right wing is doomed to fail.” Another respondent underlined the need for a change and modernisation, emphasising the harmful habit of manipulating with religious issues in the far-right discourse, noting that it is much more important to talk about the de-occupation of the country than to manipulate with spiritual values.

The essence of cooperation with diverse types of groups is expressly nationalistic for the respondents. They believe that the discussion around national values will constantly be between people with different ideologies. In this process, it is important to protect the historical heritage and spiritual and cultural values of the country, the enemies of which are liberal values and globalisation. The respondents point out that the radical and extremist actions by far-right groups are only a response to the hostility of the ideological enemies (liberal media, non-governmental organisations, etc.) to nationalism and national values.

## 5. ANTILIBERAL MESSAGES IN GEORGIAN FAR-RIGHT GROUPS

In the interviews, the respondents showed expressly antiliberal sentiments. For them, liberalism is equated with hostility to culture, public mentality and nationalism. In addition, they discuss the transformation of this ideology and emphasise that liberalism has lost all its meaning and value.

“ Liberalism is harmful and nothing more than ethnic, cultural and suicide committed by the state. No matter how we turn around, the original form of liberalism has died, and this violent form has reached us, which is fundamentally at odds with itself, and has become an anti-pluralistic machine that restricts people's freedom of expression and persecutes opinions contrary to it. ”

“ Liberalism today is a symbol of the captivity of one's pseudo-values. Beyond its apparent tolerance, we must always look for the historical roots of colonialism. The nation must decide for itself what policy to choose. ”

According to one of the respondents, he has published a paper<sup>6</sup> on liberalism, in which he reviews the unacceptable postulates of liberalism and maintains that “the liberal-capitalist class, as a political, academic, cultural, civil or public conglomerate, is the country's unspoken enemy.” During the interview, the respondent stated that liberals are the enemy of free-thinking. The main goal of far-right activism is to fight liberalism.

The views of the respondents regarding the media are also important. They believe that the editorial policies of Radio Liberty, TV Pirveli, Main Channel and Rustavi 2 support liberal values. In the interviews, the far-right activists said that since these media outlets are discrediting their ideology and views, they are actively fighting against them.

The respondents' attitudes towards the non-governmental sector are also imbued with distrust. It is noticeable in their opposition to liberal activism. The majority of respondents involved in our study openly demonstrated an expressly negative attitude towards the values of liberal ideology, such as pluralism and the protection of the rights of sexual minorities. This is where homophobic attitudes come into play. Respondents refer to sexual minorities as perverts and accuse the organisations protecting their rights with propaganda of filth. George Soros's personality is viewed particularly negatively, and he is considered the main sponsor of the liberal non-governmental sector.

“ Western non-governmental organisations' false studies are unacceptable for me and I like the fight of the Patriots Alliance against them. Here, the non-governmental sector serves to spread various filth with the help of the Soros Foundation to degrade our country. ”

<sup>6</sup> The paper indicated by the respondent is available at iBooks.

“ Especially in this regard, I would like to single out the sexual minorities, the non-governmental organisations that are funded by Soros, who surround themselves with this depraved lifestyle. I don't want to legalise their depraved lifestyle. I don't understand, and the same-sex marriage is unacceptable for me. ”

The antiliberal discourse also emphasises the vision of one of the respondents, who distinguishes between liberalism and democracy. He believes that liberalism is the enemy of any nation. Unlike liberalism, for him, democracy is the foundation of a fully justified human order. In his view, a self-sufficient and dignified nation must determine its future. The guarantee of the nation's identity must be an authority that will be like Iliia Chavchavadze or Davit Aghmashenebeli.

“ The government must obey the will of the people. We are a national force in the majority, and we do not want to legalise LGBT marriage. It is a democracy that respects the choice of the majority. Liberalism is trying to impose its doctrines on us. ”

Women's rights activists are also unacceptable to some of the respondents.

“ Modern feminists also need mental help, because most of them are not sincere and what they do is only caused by a mental illness or a desire to own property. I don't want to single out specific individuals, though there are many whom I find ridiculous. ”

Some respondents also openly oppose multiculturalism and present it as a major enemy of nationalism. In addition, respondents highlight the economic challenges that, in their view, are caused in the world by multiculturalism as spawned by liberalism.

“ Today, liberalism endeavours to impose multiculturalism on us. What is this if not a desecration of the national values? Multiculturalism has posed the greatest threat to Europe by the influx of immigration. This has put a number of countries in economic collapse. ”

## 6. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS AND KEY POINTS

After summarising and analysing the results of the interviews, several aspects can be identified that are particularly important in the process of highlighting nationalist effects in the far-right discourse. First of all, it concerns the authority figures of the respondents, whose activities and nationalist spirit determined their political and civic identity. However, a kind of fragmentation of their identity is also revealed here. Far-right activists are constantly re-evaluating their ethno-nationalist visions, both individually and institutionally. In the process of constant definition of ideology, the hybridity of political ideology also becomes noticeable. Historical experience and systems are losing relevance to far-right groups, and, amid the breakdown of political systems, new far-right groups are soon adapting to the existing environment and using different ideologies as tools of political struggle to gain more support. Nationalist values are instrumental in this fight.

The respondents explain their decision to join different groups of far-right activism by a desire to associate with like-minded people, on the one hand and, on the other hand, by a sense of insecurity when facing the liberal and digital agenda. The past experience of the respondents is also a significant factor. Their majority were brought up in a conservative environment, which ultimately led to their membership of far-right groups. The respondents also refer to the protests they developed against the liberal elite in their teenage years that helped shaping up their political identity. National motives also form an important element for far-right activists in terms of membership of various groups.

The respondents argue about transferring the power and the authority of political decision making to the nation being the core value. At the same time, however, they emphasise that the far-right nationalists are in the majority and therefore, we can conclude that the transfer of power to the nation is primarily about strengthening their positions. Although far-right activists have expressed readiness to cooperate with representatives of different ideologies, if necessary, it is doubtful whether cooperation is possible against the background of their negative attitude towards diversity.

The interviews also highlighted the agenda of structured action by the far-right groups. They have clearly expressed narratives based on the nationalist spirit, which are widely disseminated with the help of Facebook. In addition, they are constantly able to appeal to pressing national issues. It should also be noted that internet-based discussion is not limited to pressing issues or critical events. It is important for them to disseminate information about their political and social views on an ongoing basis.

The study aimed to study the main views and goals of the mainstream groups of the far-right, different from Georgian March. During the interviews, two different directions of far-right discourse in Georgia were identified. If Georgian March appeals to topical political issues, far-right groups such as Georgian Power, National Unity of Georgia and Kardhu

continue to spread their narratives and are clearly defined by a well-defined action structure and plan. These groups also come into conflict with the mainstream far-right with their approach to the anti-Russian agenda. They have anti-Soviet sentiments and see modern Russia as Georgia's enemy. It is important to note that the respondents named their anti-Russian views as the reason for their confrontation with Georgian March.

In general, the action rhetoric of the far-right activists involved in the study is power-based. They are actively trying to attract followers. In addition, proponents of the far-right ideology intend to pursue a broader nationalist policy that differs from other groups.

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6 The paper indicated by the respondent is available at iBooks.

**GIORGI TSIKARISHVILI**

**MONITORING OF ASSEMBLIES  
AND DEMONSTRATIONS  
OF FAR-RIGHT  
EXTREMIST GROUPS**



# INTRODUCTION

Populism and far-right movements are not new to Georgia. However, far-right extremist groups have been active in the country since 2012. Rallies of mobilised violent groups, which physically and verbally abused the protesters in response to a peaceful rally dedicated to the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on 17 May 2013, are especially noteworthy. That day, the state had failed in protecting peaceful protesters and punishing the violators. After that, the rallies and demonstrations by the far-right radical groups became significantly more frequent. The rallies were marked by growing violence, the threat of violence and the tolerant attitude of law-enforcers towards these radical groups.

Given the local context and problems, the Democracy Research Institute began the research of far-right radical groups, their demonstrations and rallies and their narratives published in social media.

The following report includes the results of the research of rallies and demonstrations of far-right groups from May 2019 to 1 March 2020. Throughout this period, observers of DRI monitored 14 demonstrations of far-right groups (including counter-rallies). The report analyses the trends identified during the monitoring and outlines the main findings. The purpose of the report is the prevention of crimes of violence by informing the society, to hinder the recruitment of new members by groups of far-right ideology and inform the society about the dangers posed by their empowerment.

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7 The Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms, p. 354, available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/geo/saparlamento-angarishebi>.

# 1. METHODOLOGY

Observers of DRI monitored all the rallies organised by far-right groups in Tbilisi throughout the reporting period. We were getting information about planned rallies/counter-rallies from public sources or social media, which represents the most widely used platform for spreading information and mobilising supporters by far-right groups and their leaders.

From the very beginning of the monitoring of the freedom of peaceful assemblies, based on the guidelines of democratic institutes and human right office of OSCE (OSCE/ODIHR), we developed a special form for monitoring demonstrations that helped us to systemise important facts and violations occurred on rallies/counter-rallies.

Taking into account the goals and objectives of the project, we used the following methodology in the analytical process:

- The situation analysis method, which in the framework of the following research implies the monitoring of assemblies and demonstrations of far-right radical groups, identification of key trends and analysis based on specific and important events;
- Comparative analysis, which in the framework of the following research, implies the determination of the compatibility of the legislative norms and demonstrations organised by far-right formations;
- Statistical analysis – a qualitative reflection of the information and reports of observers requested from public structures, the so-called descriptive statistics.

Within the framework of monitoring of assemblies, we focused on:

- If the far-right group leaders or the participants of the rally used hate speech;
- To what extent did the police ensure public order during public assemblies and demonstrations;
- Whether there were any cases of disobedience to the instructions of the police;
- If there have been any calls for violence against specific individuals or groups;
- To what extent the relevant local self-government bodies were informed by the organisers in advance about the form, goal, place, route of the movement, start and end time of the assembly/manifestation.

Within the framework of the monitoring, we analysed the compliance of assemblies and demonstrations of far-right groups with Georgian legislation and the international standards established by the European Convention on Human Rights.

For the report, we requested public information and statistical data on hate crimes from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, the Prosecutor's Office, courts, the State Security Service and the Government of Georgia.

## 2. THE REVIEW OF THE EXISTING SITUATION

The spectrum of far-right groups and movements is diverse in Georgia. The existing groups unite and imply different types of informal groups and formal unions, including political parties. In addition, there are dozens of informal groups in social media. Some of them are registered as non-governmental organisations. Although these groups are more or less different from each other, in general, they are intolerant of the LGBT community and share antiliberal and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

In recent years, the number of far-right groups and their supporters in the Georgian online space has increased significantly.<sup>8</sup> Various groups express this, among other forms, in organizing aggressive and violent street demonstrations. Informal unions like Georgian March, Georgian Idea and Georgian Power are mobilising supporters through social media to use them for rallies involving aggressive, anti-immigrant, homophobic and anti-western messages.<sup>9</sup> Strengthening of the far-right groups has resulted in the repeated criticism of the government that it is ineffective against these problems and that it does not have an effective and systematic policy for the prevention of radicalisation.

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8 S. Minesashvili, Social Basis for a Far-Right Populism in Georgia, 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/2KHOXJt>.

9 Anatomy of Georgian Neo-Nazism, available at <https://www.transparency.ge/ge/blog/kartuli-neonacizmis-anatomia>.

## 3. HATE CRIME AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATORY LEGAL FRAMEWORK

On 2 May 2014, the Parliament of Georgia, notwithstanding the resistance of the Patriarchate and far-right groups, passed the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. Adoption of an appropriate anti-discrimination law was a commitment imposed by the action plan of visa liberalisation with the European Union.<sup>10</sup>

Since 2010, a number of changes were made to the Georgian legislation to eliminate discrimination in administrative, civic, and criminal law, which, despite the shortcomings, deserves a positive assessment. In addition, the Human Rights Protection Department was created under the Ministry of Internal affairs of Georgia to ensure timely response to discrimination on the grounds of intolerance and ensure the effectiveness of ongoing investigations.

### 3.1. HATE CRIME IN THE CRIMINAL CODE OF GEORGIA

As a result of the amendments to the Criminal Code on 27 March 2012, the law recognised that a crime committed on the grounds of intolerance constitutes an aggravating circumstance.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, committing a hate crime aggravates the liability of a person with reference to Article 53<sup>1</sup>. It should be noted that Georgian legislation does not use the words hate and bias to denote the motive of bias. It uses the word expressing a comparatively weaker emotion, viz., intolerance. Also, there are special norms in the Criminal Code that apply to various crimes based on intolerance.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of legal writing, the Criminal Code of Georgia offers a model based on an indicator of bias, which in addition to a victim belonging to a specific group, requires additional evidence that the accused committed a crime on the grounds of intolerance.<sup>13</sup> It is also possible for the bias motive to be accompanied by additional motives such as self-interest.

The Criminal Code also punishes the violation of freedom of speech<sup>14</sup>, obstruction of the observance of religious rules,<sup>15</sup> illegal obstruction of organising assemblies, demonstrations or the right to participate in them.<sup>16</sup>

10 Action Plan on Visa Liberalisation, Block 4. The unofficial Georgian translation of the Action Plan is available at [http://migration.commission.ge/files/savizo-liberalizaciis-samoqmedo-gegma\\_qartulad.pdf](http://migration.commission.ge/files/savizo-liberalizaciis-samoqmedo-gegma_qartulad.pdf)

11 The Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 53<sup>1</sup>.

12 For instance, the Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 109(2)(d), and Article 1261.

13 A similar legislative structure can be seen in the Serbian Criminal Code, Article 54a of which states that “committing a crime on the grounds of race, religion, nationality or ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation and intolerance of gender identity is considered by the court to be an aggravating circumstance, if it is not other crime’s qualifying element provided by the law.”

14 The Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 153.

15 The Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 155.

16 The Criminal Code of Georgia, Article 161.

Although the deliberate violation of the abovementioned rights is prohibited by the Criminal Code, these articles fall into the category of less serious crimes, the preparation of which is not punishable, except in certain situations. Accordingly, it is impossible to punish an organiser for public exhortation to violate the rights of an individual or a group of persons. Our monitoring showed that the leaders of far-right groups mobilise supporters and openly exhort to restrict the rights of whom they consider as undesirable groups of people (including using violent methods). However, after their supporters commit acts of violence, the group leaders usually distance themselves from the violence and avoid taking responsibility.

## 3.2. ANTI-DISCRIMINATIVE CIVIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE NORMATIVE ACTS

Georgian legislation prohibits discrimination. The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination obliges all institutions to harmonise their activities, legal acts and internal regulations in compliance with the law and effectively respond to any incidents of potential discrimination.<sup>17</sup> According to the special report of the Public Defender of Georgia, the year 2019 was important in terms of improving the anti-discrimination legislation. In particular, according to the amendments to the Organic Law of Georgia on the Public Defender, private legal entities, similar to public entities, became subjects to legal regulations. In addition, according to the recommendation of the Public Defender, the term of appeal to the court regarding discrimination cases has been increased from 3 months to one year.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the Law of Georgia on Broadcasting prohibits the broadcasting of discriminatory content. In particular, the law prohibits broadcasting programmes that in any way pose the apparent and direct threat of inciting racial, ethnic, religious or other hatred in any form and the threat of encouraging discrimination or violence toward any group. Furthermore, broadcasting programmes that aim to offend, discriminate or outline ethnicity, religion, opinion, gender, sexual orientation, or any other feature or status is prohibited.<sup>19</sup>

However, the ban on the production and reproduction of works containing discrimination and hate speech does not apply to print and online media. The Law of Georgia on the Press and Other Mass Media, which regulates press and other mass media, adopted in 1991, does not meet modern requirements and can no longer ensure the establishment of a secure, democratic and equal society under the freedom of speech and thought. Accordingly, unlike TV and radio broadcasters that are prohibited from spreading material containing discrimination and hate speech, a certain segment of the print media, on the one hand, enjoys the freedom of speech and, on the other hand, spreads material

17 The Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, Article 4.

18 The Public Defender's Special Report on the Fight Against Discrimination, Its Prevention, and the Situation of Equality, 2019, available at <http://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020030416283364211.pdf>.

19 The law of Georgia on Broadcasting, Article 56.

containing hate speech against minorities and immigrants by calling for intolerance, restriction of rights and establishment of an authoritarian body in the state.<sup>20</sup>

Besides, the regulation of hate speech in online media remains a particular problem. Leaders of far-right groups are often the main and desirable respondents of online media. Consequently, the online platform is a favourable environment for disseminating their xenophobic, homophobic and antiliberal messages.<sup>21</sup>

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted in the report<sup>22</sup> on Georgia that the expression of hate speech remains a challenge in the country. According to the report, online homo/transphobic hate speech has increased in the country.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, the commission recommended the country to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention, which deals with the criminalisation of racist and xenophobic actions using computers.<sup>24</sup> In connection with the use of racist and homo/transphobic hate speech, the commission's recommendation was also to establish an effective system for monitoring racist content and homo/transphobic hate speech.<sup>25</sup>

When speaking about online media, it should be noted that the Georgian government and its affiliates have repeatedly been accused of funding far-right radical groups and leaders with public funds or giving them other privileges<sup>26</sup> which encourages groups of far-right radical ideology and their leaders.

Based on the abovementioned, it is expedient to regulate the inadmissibility of the government's support, including funding, to any organisation or its affiliates that promotes racism. In addition, the legislation should provide the possibility of closing down organisations promoting racism and racial discrimination, as recommended by Articles 16 and 17 of the N7 general policy of the ECRI.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.3. FAR-RIGHT EXTREMIST GROUPS AND GEORGIA'S STRATEGY ON THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

By Resolution #53 of 23 January 2019, the Government of Georgia approved the National Strategy of Georgia on the Fight Against Terrorism and its 2019-2021 Action Plan. These documents are the first attempt in Georgia in the direction of defining a common vision against terrorism and extremism and should be positively assessed. The strategy recog-

20 See the edition of the newspaper Asaval-Dasavali of 1 July 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/2xnwS0k>; edition of 17 June 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/2Wd1o5D>; also, edition no. 03 (474) of 2019 of the newspaper Georgia and World, available at <http://geworld.ge/NEW/PDF/geworld-03-2019.pdf>.

21 Democracy Research Institute "Understanding and Combating Far-right Extremism and Ultra-Nationalism in Georgia", social media monitoring results (September – November) p. 9, available at <http://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/179>.

22 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Report on Georgia, (adopted on 8 December of 2015, p. 9, available at <http://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/179>.

23 Ibid. p. 21.

24 Ibid. p. 10.

25 Ibid. p. 18.

26 For instance, according to the information disseminated by the media, a plot in the city of Mtskheta was given at a symbolic price (1 Georgian Lari) to a far-right leader and the founder of a homophobic online media group Alt-Info.

27 ECRI, General Policy Recommendation no. 7 on National Legislation to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, paras. 16-17, available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-7-revised-on-national-legislatio/16808b5aae>.

nises that groups of extremist and radical ideologies operate in Georgia. The document assigns special importance to the involvement of civic society, non-governmental organisations, and the third sector in the fight against terrorism and extremism. However, in the current situation, the civic sector's involvement in projects against radicalisation and extremism is minimal. The National Strategy of Georgia on the Fight Against Terrorism does not indicate a specific vision or way of cooperating with the mentioned groups or organisations. This can be described in the 2019-2021 Action Plan, which is not made public.

Restriction of public access to the Action Plan cannot be justified by the need to protect the state's interests. Making the Action Plan classified also contradicts the Law of Georgia on State Secrets, according to which the public access to information can be restricted only when it is necessary for the state or society's security or for the protection of the interests of legal proceedings. However, at this stage, the authorised governmental structures do not express their readiness to disclose the document (or its part).<sup>28</sup>

According to international practice, in the member states of the European Union, the action plan of the fight against extremism and radicalism (or a normative act of the same content) is made public to improve public engagement.<sup>29</sup> Not using this resource in Georgia leads to the empowerment of far-right unions and those adhering to radical ideologies.

### 3.4. THE NEED TO CLARIFY STATISTICAL DATA

In 2016-2017, the Georgian Prosecutor's Office charged 44 people for hate crimes (intolerance); in 2018, the number increased to 151, while in 2019 it increased to 183. According to the statistical data, the most common is the crime committed on account of gender/sex and sexual orientation.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, hate crimes registered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 2018, have almost doubled compared to previous years.<sup>31</sup>

There are inconsistencies between the statistics produced by these bodies. Processing of statistical data in the Information Analysis Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is

28 Letter no. 20190918/09 of Democracy Research Institute, dated 18 September 2019; Letter no. GOV 9 19 00038570 of the Head of the Division of Administrative Case Proceedings of the Government of Georgia, dated 1 October 2019; Letter no. GOV 0 19 000 22893 of Aleksandre Darakhvelidze, the Deputy Head of the Administration of the Government of Georgia, dated 5 June 2019. Presently, the Democracy Research Institute is suing the Government of Georgia, requesting full or partial disclosure of this document.

29 For example, see the Action Plan of Norway against radicalisation and violent extremism: <https://www.counterextremism.org/resources/details/id/679/action-plan-against-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism>; Action Plan of Denmark on prevention of extremism and radicalisation; <http://uim.dk/publikationer/preventing-and-countering-extremism-and-radicalisation>; Action Plan of Switzerland on prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism: <https://www.news.admin.ch/news/message/attachments/50703.pdf>; National Action Plan of France on prevention of radicalisation: [https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Prevention\\_radicalisation/06/0/PNPR\\_2018-02-23-cjpr-radicalisation\\_905060.pdf](https://cache.media.eduscol.education.fr/file/Prevention_radicalisation/06/0/PNPR_2018-02-23-cjpr-radicalisation_905060.pdf), etc.

30 Letter no. 13/15450 of Irakli Chilingarashvili, the head of the Legal Support Department of the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, dated 17 March 2020.

31 Crimes Statistics of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, see: <https://info.police.ge/page?id=115>; Furthermore, it should be noted that the Ministry of Internal Affairs started working on the improvement of collecting data on hate crimes only in September 2018.

carried out under the articles of the Criminal Code of Georgia and not the circumstances (including the motive)<sup>32</sup> of the criminal offence. In addition, in the statistics, the number of hate crimes is not completely reflected. The data qualified under the motive or bias is, in some cases, linked to other articles that may not even be relevant to the bias.<sup>33</sup> The Supreme Court does not keep records of hate crimes; however, it provides a separate database for the cases in which Article 53<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Code of Georgia is used as an aggravating circumstance.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, it is true that hate crimes had increased according to 2019 data, which, according to the position of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, is linked to the increase of hate crimes. However, it is unclear what criteria were used to arrive at this conclusion. Accordingly, it is necessary to establish a unified methodology of statistics within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor's Office and the courts, which will allow us to make additional conclusions.

## 4. RESULTS OF THE MONITORING

During the project, monitors of the Democracy Research Institute observed 14 rallies/counter-rallies by far-right radical groups. All of the assemblies were held on anti-immigrant, homophobic and ethno-nationalist themes. The monitoring revealed that the members of the groups usually participated in the rallies wearing similar clothing, identifiable signs, and had a certain structure and an action plan. Accordingly, there is a unified and coordinated activity of certain groups with the organisation and the exhortation of individuals.

The main demands of the participants of the meetings were as follows: the repeal of the Law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, the prohibition of the so-called “the propaganda of depravity” by law, suspension of the activities of the Public Defender and non-governmental organisations and the settlement of the territorial dispute over the David-Gareji complex between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

A special mobilisation of the supporters of the far-right groups took place in the form of counter-rallies against the LGBT community and their human rights defenders, the main goal of which was to not let Tbilisi Pride to hold the first LGBT pride event in Georgia. There was also a great mobilisation against the premiere of the Georgian-Swedish gay-themed film *And Then We Danced* at Amirani Cinema. Far-right groups and their leaders were able to mobilise a massive assembly of their supporters to break up the premiere. Compared to this rally, the rally demanding a settlement of the dispute between Georgia and Azerbaijan over the territory of David-Gareji and the rally in Batumi against the growing Turkish influences were relatively small.

Guram Palavandishvili, the Chairman of the Children's Rights Society, businessman Levan Vasadze and Sandro Bregadze, the leader of far nationalist group Georgian March and the chairman of the Primakov Foundation's Georgian-Russian Community Centre, are the usual planners of these assemblies through social media and other forms of media.

32 Letter no. MIA 9 19 01599910 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

33 Letter no. MIA 9 19 01599910 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

34 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, report on Georgia (adopted on 8 December 2015), p 23.

35 The 2019 analysis of the Human Rights Division of the General Prosecutor's Office of Georgia, available at <http://pog.gov.ge/news/adamianis-uflebaTa-dacvis-sammarTvelom-siZulviliT-motivirebul-danashaulebze-angarishi-moamzada>.



At almost every meeting that we observed, the speakers were aggressive and used hate speech.

One of the main trends in these assemblies and demonstrations was the participation of clerics, who in their speeches called the West a supporter of the propaganda of depravity, and the activities of non-governmental organisations are termed as the genocide of Georgia. On the rally of 8 July 2019, these clerics called on supporters to physically disrupt the anti-occupation protestors and take them out of the area in front of the parliament (although radical groups initially gathered for a completely different reason). In one case, an observer from the Democracy Research Institute observed a clergyman's phone conversation with one of the members of his parish about mobilising participants from the regions.

As a result of the monitoring of the assemblies, it was revealed that one of the important factors strengthening the radicalisation could be the inconsistent statements of the Georgian Patriarchate and the participation of some Orthodox clergymen in the assemblies of far-right groups. In some cases, the Georgian Patriarchate not only failed to distance itself but also confirmed the narrative of far-right extremist groups with its statements. For example, on 6 November 2019, before the premiere of the film *And Then We Danced*, the Patriarchate issued the following statement saying: "Certain evil forces are acting against the national identity of the country; they want to change the consciousness of the people."<sup>36</sup>

Although law enforcement officials regulated most of the meetings, their emphatically tolerant attitude toward the participants in rallies organised by far-right groups was evident.

The subject of our special interest was the police's regulation of counter-rallies organised by the far-right groups. According to the OSCE / ODIHR and Human Rights Office guidelines, the state has a positive obligation to take reasonable and necessary measures, based on the principles of legality, expediency and non-discrimination, to give participants the possibility to hold peaceful assemblies without the fear of physical violence.<sup>37</sup> A positive obligation means protecting the participants of a peaceful assembly from a group of individuals who try to disrupt or hinder the assembly.<sup>38</sup> Even though, in the context of our observations, officials were taking certain measures before every assembly to protect participants, no appropriate response was given to public statements of the leaders of violent groups, who called on their supporters to restrict the rights of undesirable people.<sup>39</sup>

Under Georgian legislation, the propaganda of violence, violent calls or threats during assemblies or demonstrations is prohibited.<sup>40</sup> If there is a real danger that the protest will escalate into violence, law enforcers gain legitimate grounds to use proportionate measures to prevent such actions. However, on one occasion, instead of preventing the violent actions and taking measures provided by the law against the violators of the law, during a confrontation between the peaceful demonstrators and the violent groups, the law enforcers tried to divert the victims away from the scene of the incident.<sup>41</sup> Such an approach creates a sense of impunity in violent groups and encourages further violence in the future.

36 The statement of the Patriarchate of Georgia, 6 November 2019, available at <https://patriarchate.ge/news/2560>.

37 OSCE/ODIHR, Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2010, p. 19.

38 Ibid. p. 36.

39 The statement of Levan Vasadze, available at <https://bit.ly/2StuEnz>.

40 The law of Georgia on Assemblies and Demonstrations, Article 11.

## 4.1. THE RALLY OF 17 MAY 2019

On 17 May 2019, in parallel with the Holy Family Day planned by the Georgian Patriarchate, a rally of far-right groups was held at the Government Chancellery in Tbilisi, led by Guram Palavandishvili, the Chairmen of the Children's Rights Society. The rally lasted for one hour. The speakers talked about the dangers that, in their view, liberals and members of the LGBT community pose to the country. The organisers of the rally also stated that the creation of special groups was being planned, the members of which would be prepared for an informational and political struggle. The meeting also called for the restriction of freedom of speech and assembly of the LGBTQ community and the defenders of their rights.

## 4.2. RALLIES HELD AGAINST TBILISI PRIDE AND THE MARCH OF DIGNITY

In the first half of 2019, far-right groups held five rallies demanding the state not to allow the public assembly announced by Tbilisi Pride. The far-right organisers of the rally threatened to use force and public unrest against the peaceful demonstrators.<sup>42</sup>

From the rallies held by far-right groups against Tbilisi Pride, the following is the most noteworthy:

- On 14 June 2019, following the statement of the Georgian Patriarchate, a counter-rally with almost 300 supporters of far-right groups was held in response to the rally held by the organisers of Tbilisi Pride;<sup>43</sup>
- On 14 June 2019, in the rally organised by Levan Vasadze, he stated that he would create a group that would restrict the assemblies of the LGBT community and that he would even forcefully oppose the police if necessary; and
- The counter-rally of 8 July 2019, when far-right groups announced their full mobilisation to forcefully prevent the March of Dignity announced by representatives of the LGBT community and their supporters.

The rallies against the LGBT community and the Tbilisi Pride team were marked with acts of violence and hate speech. Between 500 to 2,000 supporters, mostly men, participated in these the rallies. During the counter-rally of 14 June, far-right groups threw balls and bottles at the participants of the rally and verbally and physically abused journalists of Liberali, Netgazeti and TV Pirveli. Nata Peradze, the Deputy Public Defender of Georgia, and an activist became the target of threats and aggression. Some of the participants of the counter-rally threatened to physically destroy her.<sup>44</sup>

41 Giorgi Tabagari was taken away from the territory of Chancellery, according to police, he was "distanced" from the scene of disorder, available at <https://bit.ly/3aZjQDW>.

42 In case of holding Tbilisi Pride, Levan Vasadze threatens the government with massive unrest, available at <https://bit.ly/2yY44vT>; also, Sandro Bregadze: "If I have to sacrifice myself, I swear on the sacred shrine, I won't let the gay parade happen", available at <http://tbl.ge/3u25>.

43 Protest rallies of 14 June, available at <https://bit.ly/3b0vlem>.

44 The Statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, available at <https://police.ge/ge/shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-gantskhadeba/12810>.

The organisers of the Tbilisi Pride were negotiating in vain with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure the security of their assembly. On 31 May 2019, the Ministry of Internal Affairs made a statement that, keeping in mind the risks associated with the security of people involved in the process, it was impossible to hold the rally in the places and formats as planned by the organisers of the Tbilisi Pride.<sup>45</sup>

The refusal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to take security measures for holding the rally by Tbilisi Pride made it vulnerable towards violent groups and encouraged future illegal actions. Even though the positive obligation of the state to ensure peaceful assembly should not become a disproportionate or impossible obligation, as evidenced in the regulation of other rallies, it became clear that the state has the resources to ensure the protection of the rally participants using proportionate means.

When there is a danger of a violent counterdemonstration, states are given wide discretion.<sup>46</sup> However, at the same time, if the possible threat of violence becomes a frequent excuse for restricting an assembly, the society will not have the opportunity to hear different opinions on issues that contradict mainstream opinions.

In the following case, the refusal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure the security of the participants of a March of Dignity at the chosen places empowered violent messages against the LGBT community. For example, far-right leader Levan Vasadze stated that he was creating a group armed with clubs, the members of which would tie the hands of LGBT participants of the rally with belts and forcefully make them leave the place. He further stated the group members would confront the police with clubs if necessary. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia is investigating this statement under Article 223 of the Criminal Code of Georgia.<sup>47</sup> Despite the available evidence in the case, a final decision has not been adopted to this day.

## THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MARCH OF DIGNITY AND THE EVENTS OF 8 JULY 2019

The development of events culminated on 8 July 2019, when the team of Tbilisi Pride announced a so-called March of Dignity.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, the far-right groups (Georgian March, Georgian Idea and others) and their leaders<sup>49</sup> announced a full mobilisation against it. At this point, two Facebook pages were prominently active – Anti-Paradox and Nu Gamoliberaldebi, lazrovne (think, do not become a liberal), which were spreading narratives of expressly aggressive and homophobic content.<sup>50</sup> On the Facebook page - World Family Congress - the video translations of Levan Vasadze, containing homophobic and hate speech, were shared 9 times. In the videos, he condemned the holding of Tbilisi Pride and called on his supporters to prevent the event by resorting to force, if necessary.<sup>51</sup>

45 The statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 31 May 2019, available at <https://bit.ly/35wdg6T>.

46 *Fáber v. Hungary*, application no. 40721/08, judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of 24 July 2012, para 42.

47 Letter no. MIA 6 19 03327358 of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, dated 11 December 2019.

48 The March of Dignity will be held on 8 July, available at <https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/555066-tbilisi-praidis-inpormaciit-girsebis-marshi-8-ivliss-gaimarteba/>.

49 Guram Palavandishvili, Levan Vasadze, Sandro Bregadze and Dimitri Lortkipanidze.

50 DRI results of social media monitoring of 2019 (May-August), p. 11, available at <http://www.democracyresearch.org/files/4DRI%20-%204%20vis%20angarishi.pdf>.

51 *Ibid.* p. 12.

Numerous Orthodox clergymen have been publicly involved in the process, who also called on people to patrol streets from 6 am to foil any attempt to hold the event by the LGBT community.

During the rally, it became clear that one of the goals of the organisers was to hinder the gathering of anti-occupation protesters, who were gathering in front of the parliament throughout the whole week. Called upon by far-right organisers, their supporters occupied the area.

The participants of the rally stood out for their aggression, homophobia and hate speech. The demonstrators threw bottles and verbally abused Mikheil Mshvildadze, the organiser of the anti-occupation rally. The situation on Rustaveli Avenue became especially tense at 7 pm when supporters of anti-occupation arrived at the area of parliament. To separate the participants of two parallel demonstrations, representatives of the law enforcement agencies were mobilised the spot.

Under Georgian legislation, the propaganda of violence, calls for violence and threats during assemblies or demonstrations are prohibited. If the threat of violence is real, law enforcers gain legitimate grounds for taking preventive measures against violent acts.

In the following case, the inadequate response of law enforcement officials is noteworthy. Although the actions of the participants of the counter-rally were violent, the police limited themselves to taking the perpetrators away from the area.

### 4.3. DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST AZERBAIJAN AND TURKEY

The rallies about territorial problems associated with the David-Gareji monastery complex and the growing influence of Turkey had distinctly different themes.

On 23 July 2019, a rally organised by Guram Palavandishvili, the leader of one of the far-right extremist groups, was held in front of the Chancellery of the Government of Georgia. The participants demanded the settlement of the territorial problems concerning the issue of David-Gareji and the involvement of one of their members in the ongoing negotiations with Azerbaijan.

On 12 August 2019, in the city of Batumi, a rally was held by the members of the following organisations – Green Future for Georgia, Alternative for Georgia and Alt-Info - to celebrate Didgoroba. Certain neighbouring country's claims on Batumi against the background of Georgia's economic weakening and the growth of Turkey's demographic and economic influence on Ajara were cited as the main reasons for holding the assembly.<sup>53</sup>

The rallies were marked by anti-Turkish, anti-immigrant and anti-Azerbaijan messages. At the same time, there were almost no protests by the far-right groups against Russia's occupation of Georgian territory.

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53 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxS11wcWe8Y>.

## 4.4. RALLIES ORGANIZED BY HOMOPHOBIC GROUPS AT AMIRANI CINEMA

### FAR-RIGHT GROUPS PROTEST THE PREMIERE OF THE MOVIE “AND THEN WE DANCED”

On 8 November 2019, the homophobic rally near Amirani Cinema aimed to forcefully disrupt the premiere of the Georgian-Swedish film *And Then We Danced*, which immediately made the legitimacy of such a rally doubtful.

In response to the violent statements, the Ministry of Internal Affairs stated, in November 2019, that it would ensure both the protection of public safety and law and order, as well as the freedom of expression of every person who would be acting within the framework of the law.<sup>54</sup>

According to the European Court of Human Rights, the right to peaceful assembly under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of assembly and association) does not include assemblies, organisers or participants that harbour intentions to commit violence.<sup>55</sup> An assembly is peaceful if its organisers have peaceful purposes and the assembly is not violent.<sup>56</sup>

In this case, organisers and participants of an assembly stated in advance that they would disrupt the screening of the film forcefully. When they repeatedly tried to break into the cinema theatre during the rally, used pyrotechnics and physically confronted civic activists,<sup>57</sup> the rally went beyond the framework of the peaceful assembly and became violent. Consequently, the mild statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure the freedom of expression of violent groups, from the very beginning, exceeded the standards established by the legislation of Georgia and the practice of the European Court of Human Rights.

In the afternoon, far-right groups and their supporters, with the organisation of Guram Palavandishvili, businessman Levan Vasadze, the leader of Georgian March Sandro Bregadze and the chairman of the Primakov Foundation’s Georgian-Russian Community Centre, gathered in the Vera Park and moved to the area in front of Amirani Cinema.

Clergymen were active in the rally, who called on the police not to protect the supporters of the propaganda of depravity. To break into the cinema, the demonstrators threw various objects and fireworks and tried to break through the police cordon. The participants of the violent rally were not complying with the police’s instructions. One law enforcer was injured by fireworks thrown by the protestors.

54 8 November 2019, statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, available at <https://police.ge/ge/shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-gantskhadeba/13117>.

55 *Navalny v. Russia*, applications nos. 29580/12 et al, judgement of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights of 15 November 2018, para. 98.

56 OSCE/ODIHR, *Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly*, 2010, p. 15.

57 Vasadze on *And Then We Danced*: We will move aside the policemen, will get into the operator’s office, turn off the film, available at <https://bit.ly/2VWXTBI>, also, violent groups are trying to get in Amirani Cinema by force, <http://www.tabula.ge/ge/story/158938-dzaladobrivi-jgufebi-kinoamiranshi-shechras-dzalit-cdiloben>.

The protestors physically and verbally abused one of the leaders of the Republican Party, Davit Berdzenishvili; civic activist Ana Subeliani was physically injured by a sharp object which was thrown by the demonstrators. The journalists of the TV companies Formula and Mtavari were also the targets of their aggression.

The rally of 8 November 2019, near Amirani Cinema, was marked with an unprecedented mobilisation of far-right radical groups and their supporters. At the same time, although the initial statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on ensuring the freedom of expressions for the participants of the rally with intentions to commit violence was inconsistent with the legislation, the law enforcement authorities were able to take adequate and proportionate measures in response. The police have launched an investigation into four incidents that occurred at the rally and they have arrested 24 people under Articles 173 (Non-compliance with a lawful demand of a law enforcement officer) and 166 (disorderly conduct) of the Code of Administrative Offenses.<sup>58</sup>

In parallel to the screening of the film, the homophobic rallies continued on 9-10 November 2019. However, in this case, the protests took place mostly peacefully, without any excesses and hindrance to transport.

#### FAR-RIGHT GROUPS AGAINST THE PREMIERE OF THE MOVIE COMETS

On 2 December 2019, far-right extremist groups gathered near Amirani Cinema. The event was organised by Guram Palavandishvili, the Chairman of the Children's Rights Society, and Davit Lortkipanidze, representing a non-governmental organisation Zneoba (morality). The homophobic rally aimed to disrupt the premiere of LGBT themed film Comets and picket the cinema hall. Nevertheless, the rally was mostly peaceful and the law was not violated.

Similarly, several rallies by far-right groups were held on 3-4 December peacefully. The demonstrators were protesting the screening of the films Comets, God Exists and Her Name is Pertunya. According to them, the screening of the films was a part of Masonic aggressive propaganda, which is used by the West against the national identity of Georgia.

## 4.5. DEMONSTRATIONS REGARDING COUNCIL OF EUROPE WEEK

During the Council of Europe Week, a small number of rallies were held near the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education, European School and Open Society Foundation buildings. They were organised by Guram Palavandishvili, the leader of one of the far-right groups, against the campaign – I Choose Freedom – that was held on 21-22 November 2019 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. These rallies were peaceful. The demonstrators protested various events planned in schools and different public institutions, which according to their assessment were the propaganda of the LGBT community.

<sup>58</sup> 9 November 2019 statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs <https://police.ge/ge/shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-gantskhadeba/13120>.

## 5. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE OBSERVATION AND THE MAIN TRENDS

The monitoring revealed that far-right groups are actively recruiting supporters through social networks and public gatherings.

One of the factors strengthening the radicalisation is the inconsistent statements made by the Georgian Patriarchate and the participation of a particular segment of the Orthodox clergy in the meetings of the far-right extremist groups. However, one of the main reasons for the far-right extremist groups' activity is the lack of state-run preventive programmes against radicalisation and the inaction of law enforcement agencies.

On 8 November 2019, as a result of the adequate measures taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, far-right groups could not disrupt the screening of the film *And Then We Danced*, the number of future offences was reduced at their assemblies. Nevertheless, the Democracy Research Institute believes that the unprecedented mobilisation of far-right groups on 8 November 2019 was the result of the state's misguided policy. During the project, observers repeatedly noted the police force's indifference to various offences committed by the supporters of homophobic groups. The statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 2019, that it was impossible to ensure the safety of LGBT people and their human rights defenders is especially noteworthy.<sup>59</sup> It is also noteworthy that the state has delayed an investigation of the leaders of far-right extremist groups, which let these individuals mobilise a large number of supporters and commit new illegal acts.

The monitoring results also revealed that:

- ✓ Law enforcement agencies fail to properly assess the threat posed by the strengthening of such groups to prevent the recruitment of new members by an extremist organisation and prevent radicalisation;
- ✓ Leaders of far-right extremist groups, when contacting media, try not to go beyond the limits of the peaceful freedom of expression;
- ✓ The rallies are mainly attended by groups with a unified structure and action plan, the members of which wear similar clothes and have recognisable signs. Accordingly, there is a unified and coordinated activity of separate groups, having organisers and leaders; and
- ✓ All the leaders of far-right organisations, and also the vast majority of the participants of assemblies/demonstrations, are male

59 Statement by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, available at <https://police.ge/ge/shinagan-saqmeta-saministros-gantskhadeba/12775?print=1>.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA

- To prevent the spread of hate speech on the internet and social media, ratify the Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention, which deals with the criminalisation of racist and xenophobic actions using computers.
- Revise the Law of Georgia on the Press and Other Mass Media to bring it in line with modern requirements.
- Draw up legislation to regulate the interruption of state funding the closing down of any organisation that promotes racism.
- Preparation of hate crime should become punishable.

## TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

- To involve the whole of society in the fight against extremism and radicalisation, the 2019-2021 Action Plan of the National Strategy of Georgia on Fight against Terrorism, approved by the Decree N53 of the Government of Georgia of January 23, 2019, should be fully or partially declassified.
- Do not provide state funding or other support to organisations, or people associated with them, that support the radical ideology.

## TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

- Refuse a tolerant attitude towards the violent groups and ensure the investigation of hate crimes within a short time so that the Prosecution can start the prosecution.
- Investigate the violations that occurred during the assemblies and demonstrations of extremist groups to bring the relevant persons to criminal responsibility.
- Develop a unified methodology of hate crime statistics between the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor's Office and the courts.



**KETEVAN MURGHULIA**

**THE RESULTS  
OF SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
MONITORING**



# INTRODUCTION

This study presents the results of social media monitoring conducted by the Democracy Research Institute (DRI). It analyses the far-right discourse in social and online media from 1 May 2019 to 31 March 2020. An important task of the study was to determine the extent of the use of hate speech by far-right groups and determine their approach to foreign policy. Within the framework of the current monitoring of the media, the typical messages of far-right rhetoric in Georgia were identified and the groups that are most often the target of the aggression of far-right groups and their leaders were studied. The analysis of the online narrative is based on the data obtained from Facebook pages (status updates, photos and videos). It consists of quantitative and qualitative findings.

As a basic observation, it can be said that far-right groups in Georgia are using social and online media as a platform to create an antiliberal agenda. In doing so, they create an alternative information domain different from their own, mainstream media. The former is mainly characterised by expressly homophobic, xenophobic, anti-Western, Islamophobic, misogynistic and nationalist sentiments. Georgian far-right discourse is characterised by its focus on national values and traditions, as well as actively appealing to its audience using global far-right messages. In addition, there is expressly populist and propagandistic content.

Online communication of far-right groups in Georgia serves the purpose of instilling irrational fears in their supporters, on the one hand and attracting new supporters, on the other hand. In addition, social media is actively trying to radicalise its supporters and influence political and civic events.

The definition of far-right discourse in media monitoring is as follows: it is an ideology that combines homophobia, xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and misogyny.<sup>60</sup>

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60 Macridis, Roy C., Contemporary Political Ideologies: Movements and Regimes, 4th ed. Glenview, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1989, p. 231.

# 1. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research method used a content analysis method, based on which we studied the information broadcast about far-right groups and their activities. The main focus was on how media outlets replicate far-right rhetoric and what elements of social media platforms are involved in producing far-right discourse.

The present study aimed to study the spread of hate speech and the main elements around which the far-right discourse is formed in Georgia. Due to the research problem, discourse analysis was selected as the research design.

It was through the analysis of the discourse that it became possible to determine the main target of the aggressive rhetoric and the background of social and political events, against which the far-right rhetoric is developed in Georgia. Content analysis was used to study Facebook status updates of far-right groups and their leaders and to determine the area of action. The qualitative part of the research conveys and reflects the main messages of far-right groups, political discourse and a certain type of civic activities.

The Democracy Research Institute has studied those far-right Facebook and online pages that have disseminated anti-Western, antiliberal, homophobic, xenophobic and ultranationalist messages. During the study, new propaganda Facebook pages were being constantly created and the old ones removed. Accordingly, the report lists the media outlets that were active during the period of monitoring the media and distinguished in terms of the distribution of far-right narratives.

Democracy Research Institute studied the status updates posted on the Facebook pages of 12 far-right leaders and 15 far-right groups, in total, 20,235 posts. In addition, we have analysed 2,317 articles published on 9 websites. As a part of the ongoing media monitoring, Facebook posts were studied in terms of their quantity (approval, support and frequency of information sharing) and content. The alleged links between the far-right Facebook pages have also been revealed.

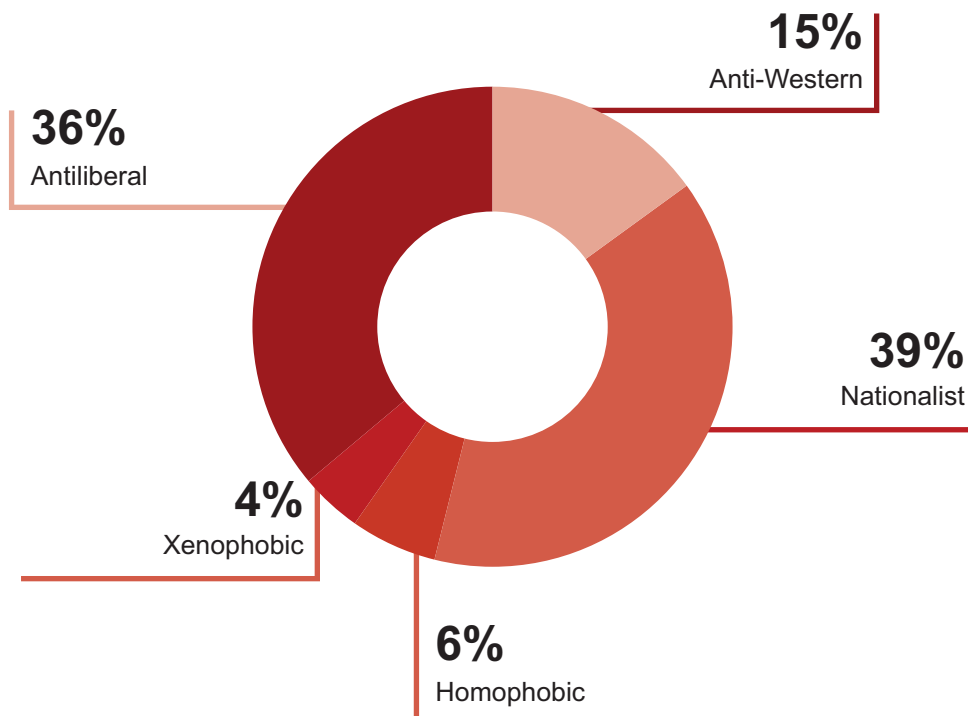
The studied far-right narratives, according to the content characteristics may be classified into five main groups: xenophobic, homophobic, antiliberal, anti-Western and nationalist discourse.

## QUANTITATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERACTION ON POSTS

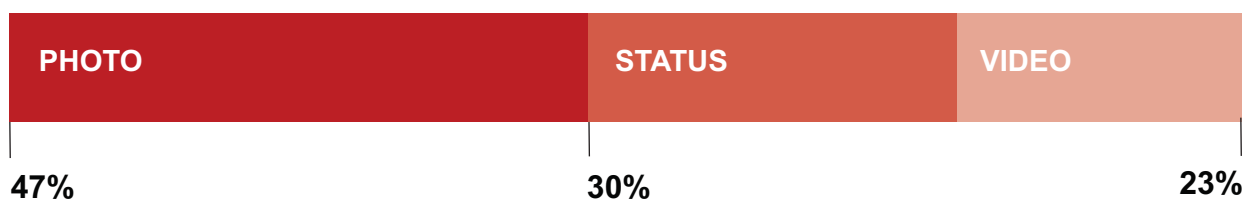
Statistics

NARRATIVE	NUMBER OF STATUSES	NUMBER OF SHARES	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	OTHER TYPES OF REACTIONS	INTERACTION IN TOTAL
Xenophobic	345	11 127	15 345	1 070	27 687
Homophobic	475	15 230	17 120	1 245	34 070
Anti-Western	1 150	28 122	19 340	2 350	50 962
Nationalist	3 100	30 125	20 125	3 456	56 806
Antiliberal	2 865	29 628	19 450	4 320	56 263

## PERCENTAGE CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERACTION ON POSTS



## TYPES OF POSTS



Nearly half (47%) of the posts on the studied pages were submitted as photo material, and the video content covered 23%. The percentage of information provided in the form of statuses was 30%. In addition, the accompanying texts to these photos and videos contained cynical content. The photographic material was most often published on the following pages: Silent Georgia, Rezeni and Georgian Page. Facebook pages of the World Family Congress and the Society for the Protection of Children's Rights were actively streaming videos in real time.

The cross-referencing of the studied posts revealed that the posts with nationalist and antiliberal content had the highest rating. The nationalist discourse is especially a characteristic of the Facebook pages – Turkey is an Occupier, Silent Georgia and Kardhu. Antiliberal sentiments are stirred up by pages such as the Antiliberal League, Alt-Club and Liberalizmi? Shen Meispe.

THE FOLLOWING WERE SELECTED AS THE SURVEY OBJECTS DURING THE MONITORING:

**1. NINE WEB-PAGES:**

<b>TVM.GE</b>	<a href="https://tvm.ge/">https://tvm.ge/</a>
<b>GEORGIA AND WORLD</b>	<a href="http://geworld.ge/ge/">http://geworld.ge/ge/</a>
<b>POLITICANO</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Politicano">https://www.facebook.com/Politicano</a>
	<a href="#">Georgia/</a>
<b>ALT-INFO</b>	<a href="https://alt-info.com/">https://alt-info.com/</a>
<b>KAVKAZPLUS.GE</b>	<a href="http://ge.kavkazplus.com/news.php?id=25025#">http://ge.kavkazplus.com/news.php?id=25025#</a>
<b>SAQINFORM</b>	<a href="http://saqinform.ge/">http://saqinform.ge/</a>
<b>ZNEOBA</b>	<a href="https://zneoba.ge">https://zneoba.ge</a>
<b>NEWS FRONT GEORGIA</b>	<a href="https://ge.news-front.info/">https://ge.news-front.info/</a>
<b>SPUTNIK SAQARTVELO</b>	<a href="https://sputnik-georgia.com">https://sputnik-georgia.com</a>

## 2. FIFTEEN FAR-RIGHT GROUPS' FACEBOOK PAGES:

<b>ALT-CLUB</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/eg21lz">http://tiny.cc/eg21lz</a>
<b>KARDHU</b>	<a href="https://tinyurl.com/y45xpde8">https://tinyurl.com/y45xpde8</a>
<b>ANTILIBERAL LEAGUE</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/mo21lz">http://tiny.cc/mo21lz</a>
<b>GEORGIAN PAGE</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/QartuliGverdi/">https://www.facebook.com/QartuliGverdi/</a>
<b>GEORGIAN IDEA</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/456135808490178/">https://www.facebook.com/groups/456135808490178/</a>
<b>ANTI-PARADOX</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/antiparadox/">https://www.facebook.com/antiparadox/</a>
<b>REZONI</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/rezoni/">https://www.facebook.com/rezoni/</a>
<b>SILENT GEORGIA</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/z811lz">http://tiny.cc/z811lz</a>
<b>LIBERALIZMI? SHEN MEISPE</b> <sup>61</sup>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/DaunDeLiberalizmi/">https://www.facebook.com/DaunDeLiberalizmi/</a>
<b>SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/r311lz">http://tiny.cc/r311lz</a>
<b>WORLD FAMILY CONGRESS</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/st21lz">http://tiny.cc/st21lz</a>
<b>TURKEY IS AN OCCUPIER</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/StopTurkishOccupation/">https://www.facebook.com/StopTurkishOccupation/</a>
<b>GEORGIAN MARCH</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/QartuliMarshiGeorgianMarch/">https://www.facebook.com/QartuliMarshiGeorgianMarch/</a>
<b>GEO-PEPE</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/geopepe01/">https://www.facebook.com/geopepe01/</a>
<b>ZNEOBA</b>	<a href="http://tiny.cc/yd21lz">http://tiny.cc/yd21lz</a>

61 The Facebook page has been blocked by Facebook administration.

3. THE STUDY ALSO MONITORED THE PERSONAL FACEBOOK PAGES OF FAR-RIGHT LEADERS (HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS LEADERS).

**THE FOLLOWING 12 PAGES WERE SELECTED AS RESEARCH OBJECTS:**

**GURAM PALAVANDISHVILI**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100045584140398>

**ALEKSANDRE PALAVANDISHVILI**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100051116913835>

**KONSTANTINE MORGOSHIA**

<https://www.facebook.com/konstantine.morgoshia>

**LEVAN CHACHUA**

<https://www.facebook.com/Chachua.Levan>

**GULBAAT RTSKHILADZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/gulbaat.rcxiladze.001>

**BEKA VARDOSANIDZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/beqa.vardosanidze.1>

**ZVIAD TOMARADZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/ztomaradze>

**DAVIT LORTKIPANIDZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/onisime.lortkipanidze>

**NIKOLOZ MZHAVANADZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/nikoloz.mzhavanadze>

**SANDRO BREGADZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/sandro.breg>

**LEVAN VASADZE** <sup>62</sup>

[https://www.facebook.com/wcf10/?epa=SEARCH\\_BOX](https://www.facebook.com/wcf10/?epa=SEARCH_BOX)

**DIMITRI LORTKIPANIDZE**

<https://www.facebook.com/dimitri.lortkipanidze>

62 Levan Vasadze does not have a personal page on Facebook. However, his messages can be examined on the Facebook page of the World Family Congress, where Levan Vasadze's video statements are actively shared.

## 2. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE IN ONLINE MEDIA

Right-wing leaders are often respondents of online media in Georgia. Accordingly, the online platform is actively used to attract supporters and send key messages. The observed media providers disseminated misinformation and propaganda against the liberal West. Discrediting articles containing hate speech are frequently posted as well. In Georgia, far-right groups actively use online media to disseminate and promote deliberately pro-Russian narratives.

The surveyed websites clearly demonised Georgia's strategic partners, the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance and the United States. The current anti-Western course was based on pseudo-nationalist sentiments. In this case, a powerful tool was to present liberalism as a combination of values incompatible with Orthodox and national matters. Stimulating negative attitudes towards Georgia's strategic partners and undermining Western values are part of the Kremlin's propaganda.

The main goals of the ongoing rhetoric on the online platform by far-right forces are, on the one hand, to diminish the trust of Georgian citizens in democratic, Western institutions and, on the other hand, to present Russia's side as a guarantor of the country's economic development and security. Far-right leaders actively use pro-Russian media to discredit European integration. Euro-Atlantic cooperation is always presented as a threat and liberal values are showed to be incompatible with the Georgian identity. Their weapon is to fabricate conspiracy theories and myths to establish Euroscepticism in the society.

Far-right rhetoric on the online platform can be divided into two main groups: openly pro-Russian media (Saqinform, Georgia and World, Sputnik Georgia, and News Front Georgia) and expressly anti-Western media (Politcano, Alt-info, and Zneoba). The rhetoric of current websites is identical to each other and often relies on antiliberal messages. The anti-Western discourse even covers topics such as human rights, identities and values. It is in this context that Orthodox Russia is presented as Georgia's main ally and, on the other hand, the West is shown as depraved. The EU is equated with uncontrolled immigration, crime, terrorism and LGBT propaganda. Behind the far-right rhetoric, Russian-language media providers are the main source of online platforms, which in turn are characterised by the circulation of hate speech.

The present study reviews the editorial policies of online media platforms with distinct pro-Russian and anti-Western rhetoric based on open sources; their indirect or direct links with far-right groups and leaders are also reviewed.



## 2.1. PRO-RUSSIAN DISCOURSE IN ONLINE MEDIA

The main platforms spreading Russian misinformation and Kremlin Propaganda in Georgia are the media outlets Georgia and World, Saqinform, Sputnik-Georgia, News Front Georgia, Kavkaz Plus and TVM News. The media monitoring demonstrated the trend of spreading various myths originating from Russian-language news agencies to discredit the West. The transformation and dissemination of satirical information into real stories are the kind of propaganda that is actively used by pro-Russian media to spread anti-Western rhetoric. Based on this method, they try to create an image of the enemy from Europe in Georgia and present the West as the main cause of all the depravity.<sup>63</sup>

The proliferation of misinformation and myths by pro-Russian media providers has become particularly widespread about such issues as Lugar Research Centre in Georgia and the coronavirus (COVID-19). Richard Lugar Centre for Public Health Research acquired special importance in the fight against the coronavirus in Georgia. At the same time, pro-Russian media providers, which had been discrediting the laboratory and linking it to the Pentagon's bio-bacteriological activities in Georgia for years, became even more active.<sup>64</sup> Saqinform published its article on this issue on October 11, the original source of which was the Russian-language Internet magazine Military-Political Analytics.<sup>65</sup> Russian traces are also evident in the conspiracy content of the article. Elements of demonisation of the United States are also noticeable in the smear campaign. Another pro-Russian media outlet, Sputnik, published an interview with Alan Margiev, the Head of the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Service, in August, citing Richard Lugar Public Health Research Centre as the reason for the emergence of the Black Death and brown marmorated stink bug in South Ossetia. This interview is based on falsehoods and misinformation.<sup>66</sup>

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has again intensified pro-Russian misinformation against Lugar Research Centre. News Front Georgia published an article on March 12<sup>67</sup> with the title "Natsis (members of the National Movement) with One Brain Cell and 'Lugar Laboratory'", where the positive role of the diagnostic centre in the fight against the virus is questioned. It is emphasised that any laboratory would be able to diagnose. An article was published on the website on 21 March 2020,<sup>68</sup> with the title "China is Helping Us, not Lugar Laboratory!" - where it is stated that the entire hype around Lugar laboratory serves only the interests of George Soros' propaganda forces from the United States and that China is helping Georgia in the fight against the coronavirus.

63 Myth Detector, "How did the Russian Satire become a disinformation of Saqinform?" 19 February 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/PtRedIF>.

64 Saqinform, "Pentagon's Bio-Bacteriological Activities - Threat to Peace and Security in Eurasia, 11 October 2019", available at <https://cutt.ly/TtRiWaL>.

65 "Military-Political Analytics", "Pentagon Bio-Bacteriological Activities – Threat to Peace and Security in Eurasia", September 28, 2019, available at <http://bit.do/ffJHz>.

66 Myth Detector, "They Again Accuse Lugar's Laboratory against Diseases in Occupied Territories", 12 August 2019, available at <https://cutt.ly/rtRaUw>.

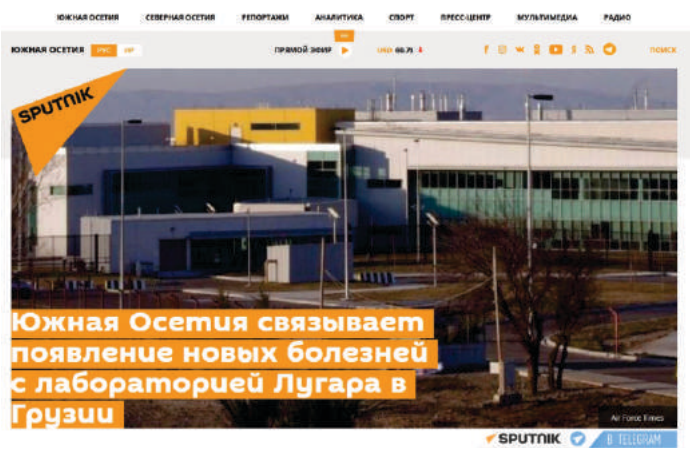
67 News Front Georgia, "Natsis with One Brain Cell and Lugar Laboratory", 12 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/wtRoulZ>.

68 News Front Georgia, "China is helping us, not Lugar Laboratory!", 21 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/btRpNes>.



website  
SCREENSHOT

Биобактериологическая деятельность Пентагона – угроза миру и безопасности в Евразии



The spread of COVID-19 in Georgia is accompanied by a pro-Russian information campaign based on manipulations. It should be noted that the spread of existing misinformation serves the purpose of discrediting the West<sup>69</sup> and demonising European institutions.<sup>70</sup> The openly pro-Russian news agencies News Front Georgia and Georgia and World publish actively articles about the virus, which, on the one hand, show Europe as weak and, on the other hand, highlight the need for getting closer to Russia;<sup>71</sup> the preventive measures taken by the government are criticised as well. The declaration of a state of emergency is perceived as a fight of liberal forces against Orthodoxy.<sup>72</sup> Numerous articles have criticised the measures of social distancing and all those who obey these rules are referred to as enemies of the country and the church.



website  
SCREENSHOT

საქართველოს სასიცოცხლო არტერია რუსეთზე გადის

მარტი 25, 2020 3184



ჩინეთის საგარეო საქმეთა სამინისტრო: აშშ-ს წამოსცდა, რომ Covid-19 მათთან გაჩნდა

მარტი 18, 2020 6021



69 Georgia and World, “The Foreign Ministry of China: USA admitted that Covid-19 originated in the US”, 18 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/ZtRdOBG>.  
 70 News Front Georgia, “Georgia is better than France, that’s it, what is the level in the European Union”, 20 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/gtRdNh7>.  
 71 Georgia and World, “Georgian Vital Artery Passes through Russia”, 25 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/2tRfWQF>  
 72 News Front Georgia, “The supermarket is safe and the temple – dangerous?”, 20 March 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/ytRfLH>.

Web pages Georgia and World, Saqinform and Sputnik Georgia have similar editorial policies, which are distinctly antiliberal and pro-Russian. The domains of Georgia and World, as well as Saqinform, are registered on Taras Gagnidze's name.<sup>73</sup> This fact explains the identical editorial policies of these websites.

During the media monitoring process, various misinformation was repeatedly published on the mentioned websites, which contained anti-Western messages. A clear example of this is the misinformation campaign launched by Saqinform against Matthew Bryza, a former senior State Department official.<sup>74</sup> The editor of the website is Arno Khidirbegishvili,<sup>75</sup> who is distinguished by his publication of articles with anti-Western and pro-Russian content,<sup>76</sup> constantly highlighting the need for getting **closer to Russia** and in parallel demonising the **North Atlantic Alliance**. Saqinform repeatedly shared statements made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov<sup>77</sup> about Georgia. The main focus was on Russia's good neighbourly relations and the resumption of air travel. In the current discourse, there was a negative attitude towards Georgia's NATO membership.

The website of Georgia and World is also characterised by pro-Russian rhetoric. In addition, frequent respondents to these online media are the far-right leaders Dimitri Lortkipanidze, Gulbaat Rtskhiladze, Nikoloz Mzhavanadze and Zviad Tomaradze. Their homophobic and xenophobic messages are spread on the website of Georgia and World. These Far-right leaders have often discredited the West. They tried to portray liberalism as legitimising child prostitution and LGBT propaganda.

Sputnik is an important information platform for Russian propaganda in Georgia and around the world. It was established on 9 December 2013 by an order of the President of Russia. According to the report of Damoukidebloba.com, the Anti-Fascist Coalition of Multinational Georgia, the National Congress of the Slavic Peoples of Georgia and others held a press conference at the Sputnik's office. These organisations are closely linked to Russia. Moreover, on 12 December 2016, the Anti-Fascist Coalition of Multinational Georgia signed an agreement on cooperation with the Russian Public Patriotic Movement Immortal Legion of Russia.<sup>79</sup>

The pro-Russian course of Sputnik's editorial team became especially active in Georgia in September and October. The main focus was on Russia's good neighbourly relations and the resumption of air travel.<sup>80</sup> Sputnik has a separate editorial block in Georgia where it actively publishes various news from Russia's political, social and artistic spheres.

73 T. Kintsurashvili, *Anti-Western Propaganda 2018*, pp. 51-52, available at <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/library/119/file/AntiWest-2018-GEO.pdf>.

74 On 16 October, Saqinform published an article about Matthew Bryza, a former high-ranking official of the US State Department, which talks about the final loss of territories by Georgia. "Matthew Bryza: Russia will never leave," reads the title of the article. These words of Matthew Bryza were removed from an interview with the Ukrainian TV channel "Espresso" on 8 October. Alt-Info and Saqinform distort the facts and use a quote from the context.

75 Media Profiles, Saqinform, source: <http://mediameter.ge/ge/media-profiles/sakinpormi>, 30 November 2019.

76 Saqinform, "Arno Khidirbegishvili: Georgia and the United States have no common values", 2 February 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/GtRhJ8o>.

77 Saqinform, "Lavrov is in favour of restoring air traffic with Georgia", 27 September 2019, is available at <https://cutt.ly/KtRkRII>.

78 Georgia and World, "Educational Programmes for Elementary Schools to Come Out in the Near Future to Boost and Introduce Certain Liberal Standards to Children from an Early Age," 30 October 2019, available at <https://cutt.ly/AtRkrIL>.

79 Sputnik Georgia, "Immortal Legion Enters Georgia", 12 December 2016, available at <https://cutt.ly/jtRH2wj>.

80 Sputnik Georgia, "Moscow hopes to restore direct air travel with Georgia", 27 September 2019, accessible at <https://tinyurl.com/y5hr9g9z>.



website  
SCREENSHOT



Kavkaz Plus web-page was also identified as a research object of our media monitoring. The online publication regularly publishes Armenophobic, xenophobic and discriminatory materials in Georgian, Russian and English. In many cases, their editorial policy is based on manipulation and misinformation. The identity of the owner of the domain is unclear. The publication tries to present Armenia as the main threat to Georgia's territorial integrity and constantly appeals to the Samtskhe-Javakheti issue.<sup>81</sup> Their Armenophobic rhetoric was particularly exacerbated in July when religious manipulation shifted to the forefront. An article was published on the background of a fake photo on the Kavkaz Plus page on 4 July,<sup>82</sup> where they talk about the capture of the Georgian Church by the Armenians. The first source of this misinformation was the Russian site infoteka24.ru. The majority of articles cite Russian- propaganda publishers Sputnik, regnum.ru, aif.ru, etc. as the main source of their information.



website  
SCREENSHOT



81 Kavkaz Plus, Armenian Interest in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Bavra Ninotsminda Road as Rock Tunnel and Lachin Corridor for Javakheti Separatists, 25 October 2019, available at <http://bit.do/ffP98>.  
82 Kavkaz Plus, "Armenians Turned Conquered Georgian Church into a Hayloft: sacrilege on the shores of Lake Paravani", 4 July 2019, available at <https://cutt.ly/ztRLArc>.

During the media monitoring period, a new pro-Russian page called News Front Georgia emerged. These pages are full of manipulative articles, distinctly aimed at stirring anti-Western sentiments. In January, News Front Georgia published disinformation,<sup>83</sup> concerning the arrest of the United Kingdom Ambassador to Iran, Robert Macaire at a protest rally. Pro-Russian and Kremlin media outlets wrongly claimed that that Ambassador Macaire led the protests. According to BBC, the ambassador attended the public memorial service for those killed in the plane crash and he was arrested when returning to the embassy. According to the Iranian embassy in the United Kingdom, the arrest of the ambassador was a misunderstanding. Misinformation about the arrest of the British ambassador to Iran has been spread by Kremlin media providers such as Russia Today, Ria Novosti and gazeta.ru.

News Front Georgia's editorial policy also focused on the information campaign against George Soros and Non-Governmental Organisations. An article<sup>84</sup> on the murder of Georgian citizen Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Berlin was published on News Front Georgia's website in December. The Kremlin media provider claimed that the search for Russian traces in the case was a “provocation of Soros” and not an official position of the German government. The material published by News Front Georgia is a **lie** as the German Federal Prosecutor's Office pointed out directly Russia's involvement in the case of Khangoshvili's murder. Furthermore, two Russian diplomats were expelled from the country.

## 2.2. ANTI-WESTERN DISCOURSE IN ONLINE MEDIA

The Alt-Info team is characterised by negative attitudes towards the liberal West.

Their main editorial tools are lies<sup>85</sup> and manipulations<sup>86</sup>. Alt-Info editorial team shares far-right, conservative views and often relies for its rhetoric on the US President Donald Trump;<sup>87</sup> the leader of the French right-wing National Unity Party, Marine Le Pen;<sup>88</sup> and the former Italian Foreign Minister, Matteo Salvini.<sup>89</sup> Their anti-Western rhetoric is directed against globalism, the European Union and liberalism.

Alt-Info is the most frequently shared source of information on far-right Facebook pages. This website is very popular on Facebook pages such as Anti Paradox, Geo Pepe and Alt Club. Alt-Info has been actively pursuing anti-immigration discourse and based on dubio-

83 News Front Georgia, “Iranians have taught the British ambassador a lesson,” 12 January 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/wtRZBwM>.

84 News Front Georgia, “Soros Organisations attempt at initiation of a new scandal between Georgia and Russia”, 8 December 2019, available at <https://cutt.ly/itRXT2g>.

85 Alt-Info Media Group, Fact Check, available at <http://bit.do/fnrNw>.

86 “Russia's threat of false information disappears from material due to Alt-Info censorship”, Myth Detector, 9 January 2019, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y5n2jdng>.

87 “Donald Trump: God, Family and Homeland are the most important”, Alt-Info, 17 February 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/CtEtydl>.

88 “Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini call for referendums on immigration”, Alt-Info, 22 September 2019, available at <https://tinyurl.com/yxw8rygh>.

89 “Matteo Salvini still dominates the polls, with only a third of voters supporting Italy's ruling coalition,” Alt-Info reported on 25 November 2019, available at <https://cutt.ly/DtEtzMF>.

us research, has highlighted the economic damage caused by migrants to various European countries.<sup>90</sup> In addition, they are constantly spreading information about the crimes committed by migrants.<sup>91</sup> All this serves to create an image of the enemy and stir up xenophobic attitudes in Georgia.



website  
**SCREENSHOT**



#migrants

ნორვეგიაში დანაშაულის სტატისტიკაში იმიგრანტები ფართოდ არიან წარმოდგენილი



#migrants

შვედეთში ახლად ჩასული ყოველი 16 მიგრანტიდან მხოლოდ ერთს აქვს ისეთი სამსახური, რომელიც სახელმწიფო ბიუჯეტიდან არ ფინანსდება

Web page Zneoba tries to present the West as a supporter of LGBT propaganda, anti-Christian morals and all sort of filth. It is especially known to manipulate the issue of children and raise religious issues in the antiliberal discourse. Davit Lortkipanidze, a representative of the Youth Centre Zneoba, together with Guram Palavandishvili, the Chairman of the Society for the Protection of Children's Rights, held a number of rallies in November, December and March. Their main messages were directed against the LGBT community, feminists and liberals.

On 30 January, the Youth Centre Zneoba responded to the adoption of the Code of the Rights of the Child by the Parliament of Georgia. They claimed that the code destroys family values and corrupts children morally. In addition, a campaign against abortion was launched on their Facebook page in January. Zneoba demanded the government to ban abortion. Abortion is considered by them to be infanticide. Manipulating children and discrediting liberalism in this regard distinguishes the Zneoba team from the homophobic and antiliberal discourse of other online websites.

Anti-Western messages are also noticeable within the editorial team of Politicano. As a general observation, the Politicano's team likens liberalism to the United States and globalisation. Consequently, both elements are demonised. In addition, there is an attempt to romanticise the Soviet Union. The information materials published by them

90 "Only one in every 16 newcomers to Sweden has a job that is not funded by the state budget," Alt-Info reported on 4 February 2020, available at <https://cutt.ly/HtErKu1>.

91 Alt-Info Media Group, 24 February 2020, "Immigrants are widely represented in crime statistics in Norway", available at: <https://cutt.ly/jtErhCJ>.



often emphasise the ideal life of Soviet citizens<sup>92</sup> and a healthy environment. They diminish liberal values. Negative sentiments towards the North Atlantic Alliance are also evident.<sup>93</sup>



website  
**SCREENSHOT**



**Politico** · პოლიტიკანო

September 4 at 7:48 PM

ეს საკამათო არ უნდა იყოს, რადგანაც საქართველომ ყველაზე მტკივნეულად გამოსცადა ეს ჰუმანიტარული კატასტროფა თავის თავზე. 30 წლის განმავლობაში, ნეოლიბერალური ექსპერიმენტების შედეგად საქართველო იქცა ზანანის რესპუბლიკად და თანამედროვე დასავლურ კოლონიად. ● გაჩანაგებული ეკონომიკა, გაუარესებული ცხოვრების დონე, კატასტროფულად შემცირებული მოსახლეობა, ღირსებადაკარგული ხალხი - აი რა მივიღეთ, თან ამ ყველაფრის ფონზე ერთი მუჭა ბიზნეს ელიტები, რომლებიც უსამართლოდ გამდიდრდნენ და განუსაზღვრელი ძალაუფლება ჩაიგდეს ხელში, დღეს თავისუფლებაზე ლადადებენ.

92 "Soviet Citizens", Politico, 1 October 2019, available at <http://bit.do/ffPVo>.

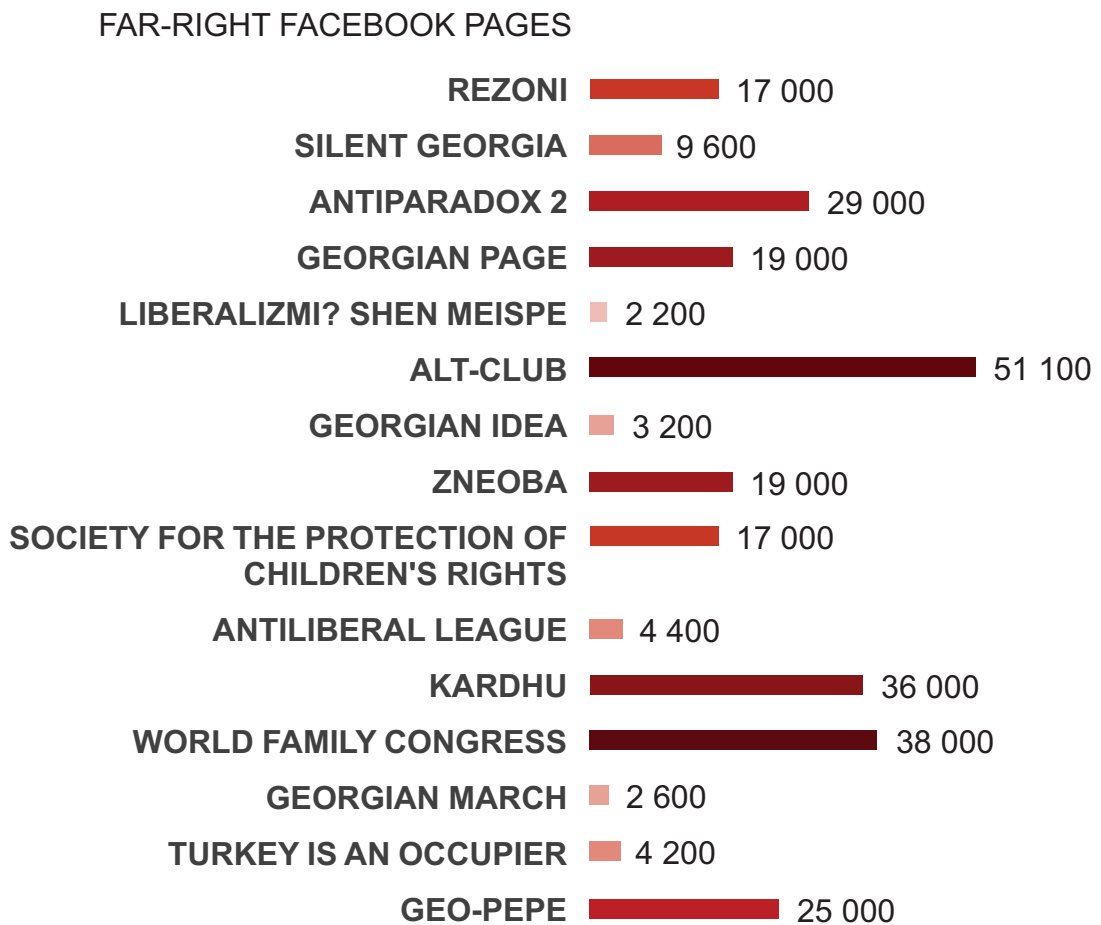
93 "After such a long time, the NATO Secretary General has the audacity to make such cynical statements", Politico, 17 September 2019, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y2bd7mc2>.

### 3. FACEBOOK DISCOURSE OF FAR-RIGHT GROUPS AND THEIR LEADERS

For far-right groups, Facebook has become an environment conducive to the introduction of Euroscepticism and antiliberal sentiments in the society. Dissemination of Kremlin conspiracy theories and myths against Europe and America is also noteworthy. In addition, far-right groups in Georgia are actively engaged in anti-Western propaganda. In this regard, the discrediting of NATO and the European Union is obvious, where the West is presented as the main reason for depravity in and degeneration of Georgia.

#### THE NUMBER OF LIKES ON THE FAR-RIGHT PAGES:

Statistics



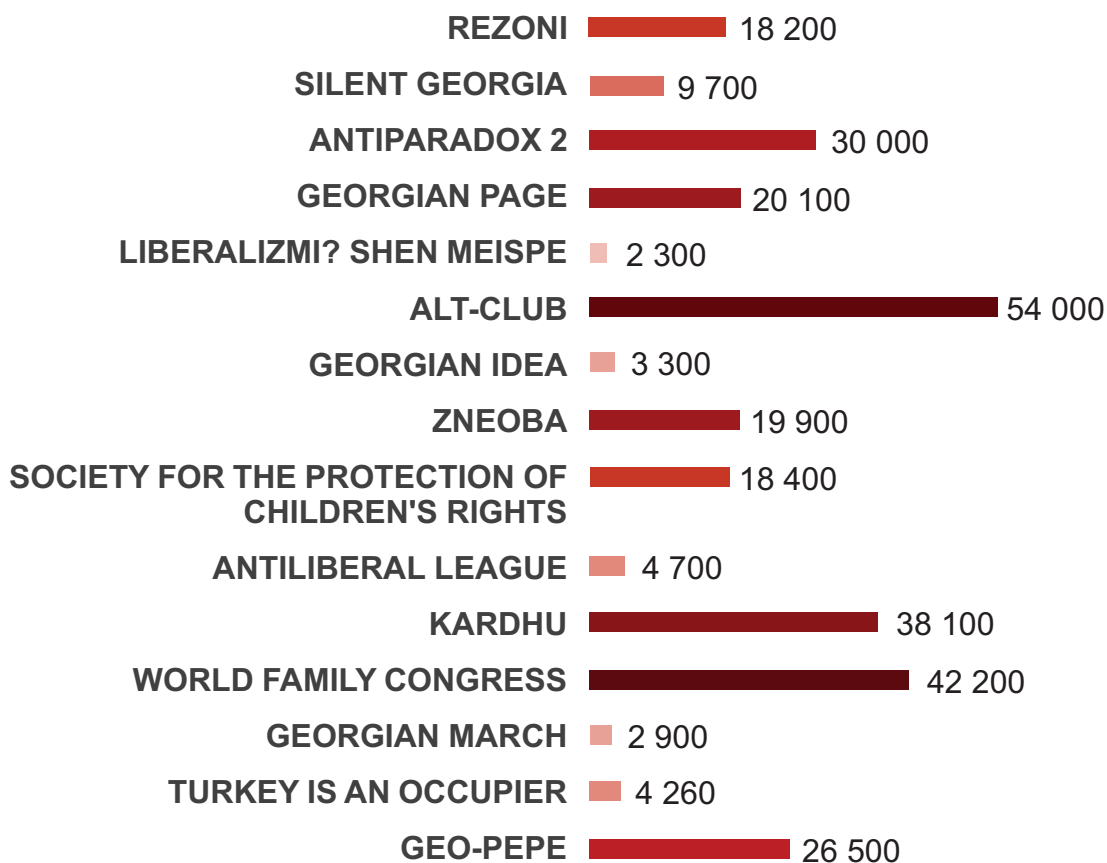


There are many pages of far-right ideology on Facebook. Far-right groups are actively using the social network to attract followers and spread key messages. It should also be noted that different far-right groups and their leaders produce different discourses. Their attitudes towards Russia and the West should be separated. More specifically, in Georgia, on the one hand, some far-right groups and leaders are constantly appealing to nationalist narratives and thus explaining their antiliberal attitudes and, on the other hand, there are far-right groups and leaders whose xenophobic and homophobic attitudes are the exact reflections of the Russian propaganda. Accordingly, within the framework of media monitoring, different far-right groups and leaders were separated from the discourse and the historical perspective was studied.

## THE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS OF THE FAR-RIGHT PAGES:

Statistics

### FAR-RIGHT FACEBOOK PAGES



Within the framework of the current study, small annotations were developed based on the analysis of the online narrative of the major far-right groups, which were characterised by high activity on the social network Facebook. A common feature of each group is the emphasis on national and patriotic values and the production of homophobic and xenophobic rhetoric against sexual or ethnic minorities. However, the groups studied in the research are characterised only by their characteristic ideology, foreign policy and action rhetoric.

It is also noteworthy that the formal registration of most of the far-right groups in Georgia coincides with the change of government in Georgia in 2012. However, the trend of forming current groups was observed much earlier. Following the example of Georgia, the process of activating radical groups can be linked to modern changes in the country. This is in line with the 2003 Rose Revolution when the United National Movement came to power in the name of introducing pro-Western models into the local context.<sup>94</sup>

## THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF FAR-RIGHT GROUPS IN GEORGIA

### Georgian Idea

Social Political Movement – Georgian Idea, formed in 2014, has a Facebook page with the same name. The leader of the movement is Levan Chachua, who was released on 13 January 2013 as a political prisoner. Chachua was also a member of the Orthodox Parents' Union. Religion is also a powerful tool in his far-right discourse. In this case, the repetition of nationalist narratives is connected with Orthodox Christianity. Social Political Movement's leaders and members actively manage demonstrations or rallies and have expressly xenophobic and homophobic rhetoric.<sup>95</sup>

**Main Goals:** Restoring good neighbourly relations through direct negotiations with Russia, restoring the monarchy and demanding neutrality.

**Main Strategy:** Attempts to portray conservative groups as the only alternative third force. In addition, there is an appeal to Christian values and the close connection of religion with the history of Georgia. Orthodoxy is presented by the members of the Georgian Idea group as the basis of national-state ideology, while liberalism is presented as the main problem of Georgian tradition and culture.<sup>96</sup>

### Georgian March

This radical, far-right group in Georgia was founded in April 2017. Its members and leaders have homophobic, xenophobic and racist rhetoric. "Georgia for Georgians" – this is the slogan of the events organised by the Georgian March in Georgia, the whole rhetoric of which is based on the protection of nationalist values.<sup>97</sup> Ideologically, Georgian March is similar to the European Far-Right forces. Its rhetoric is also based on an expressly xenophobic, radical anti-immigration policy.

94 Zedania, G., (2011), *History and Theory of Modernity*, Tbilisi, Iliia State University.

95 Myth Detector, Georgian Idea, available at <https://www.mythdetector.ge/ka/profile/kartuli-idea>.

96 Georgian Idea, 30 January, "National-State Ideology", available at <http://bit.do/fuysS>.

97 Imedi News, "March - Who are they and what do the rally organisers want?" 8 July 2017, <https://imedinews.ge/ge/theme/12/marshi--vin-arian-da-ra-undat-aqtsiis-organizatorebs>.

**Goals and Objectives:** The idea of creating an ethnically homogeneous state (Georgia for Georgians) whose foundation will be expressly nationalist and Orthodox motives; refers to Russia as one of the country's main strategic partners by appealing to monotheism.

**Main Strategy:** Organising xenophobic and homophobic rallies, anti-immigration and pseudo-nationalist rhetoric.

### Kardhu

Another far-right group registered in 2016 to promote nationalism and patriotism – Kardhu. Its founders are Giorgi Janadze and Gera Svanadze. Protecting the Georgian language and strengthening national forces are the main goals of the group. The group maintains xenophobic discourse. Their posts are often anti-Turkish.

**Goals and Objectives:** Building a nation with a nationalist foundation based on national forces and values. The members of the group also actively call on the public to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Awakening of the patriotic spirit in the population is their main goal.

**Main Strategy:** Kardhu's action strategy has an expressly anti-immigrant content. In the production of nationalist rhetoric, it actively uses the multimedia material of other far-right Facebook pages.

### Georgian Power

Georgian Power was founded on 31 July 2015 by Niko Prangishvili, Irakli Mikeladze, Irakli Modebadze and Nikoloz Burnadze. This group is an ultranationalist platform in Georgia based on distinctly conservative visions. Unlike other far-right groups, they have an expressly anti-Russian direction. Liberal values are also unacceptable to them and they are distinguished for organising xenophobic rallies. Members of Georgian Power always wore masks and black clothes at the rallies.<sup>98</sup> This group is actively separated from Georgian March and is trying to distance itself from pro-Russian rhetoric. They organised a march from Rustaveli Avenue to the Embassy of Germany in March. The protest rally was accompanied by patrol police officers; the motive for the protest was to raise the issue of the admission of refugees from Syria and Iraq due to the Syrian civil war.

**Goals and Objectives:** Spreading nationalist messages. Their main slogan is "Georgia for Georgians". They are distinguished by anti-Turkish sentiments. At the same time, they condemn fascism and expressly distance themselves from this ideology.

**Main Strategy:** Organise action-demonstrations with xenophobic content. Use the online platform to disseminate nationalist messages.

98 March of Neo-Nazis in Tbilisi – with the Symbolism of "White Nationalism", Voice of America, 2016, available at <https://cutt.ly/ztr82bs>

### 3.1. NATIONALIST SENTIMENTS IN THE FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE

Within the framework of the research, two nationalist characteristics of far-right discourse were revealed: 1) ethnocentric - ultranationalist elements are noticeable. True citizenship is defined in ethnocentric terms; 2) Extremist-fundamentalist - in this case, nationalism is united with issues such as antiliberalism and anti-pluralism. Ethno-nationalism is the ultimate right-wing discourse.

It is also important to put Christian values first. In this regard, the following Facebook pages are especially active: Turkey Is an Occupier, Silent Georgia and Kardhu. The influence of historical authorities is also noticeable in the far-right discourse. Often the nationalist background is followed by anti-Turkish sentiments and Turkey is presented as the historical enemy of Georgia, whose main goal is to occupy Ajara.



website  
**SCREENSHOT**



Facebook pages Society for the Protection of Children's Rights and Georgian Idea try to appeal to the ideas of saving national and Christian values while spreading homophobic and xenophobic rhetoric. The motive for the protection of Georgian traditions and Orthodoxy often follows the rhetoric of far-right leaders such as Guram Palavandishvili, the Chairman of the Society for the Protection of Children's Rights, and Davit Lortkipanidze, leader of the Youth Centre Zneoba.

Nationalist narratives are actively replicated on the Facebook page of the public political movement Georgian Idea. Attempts by them to portray conservative groups as an alternative third force for the country were noticeable. In addition, there was an appeal to Christian values and the close connection of religion with the history of Georgia.<sup>99</sup> Orthodoxy is represented by Gega Khvedelidze, a member of the Georgian Idea group, as a basis for national-state ideology.<sup>100</sup>

99 Georgian Idea, 30 December 2019, "On the Constitutional Monarchy", available at <http://bit.do/foUoB>.

100 Georgian Idea, 30 December 2019, "Orthodoxy as the Basis of National-State Ideology", available at <http://bit.do/foUuh>.

## 3.2. ANTILIBERAL SENTIMENTS IN THE FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE

The far-right groups under observation are openly opposed to liberalism. Often their aggression is directed against groups or organisations that are carriers of liberal values. The discourse on the Facebook pages of Alt-Club, Liberalizmi? Shen Meispe, Zneoba and Geo Pepe is often antiliberal. Their main source of information is the website <https://alt-info.com>. For these pages, liberalism is equated with hostility to Orthodox values and Georgian traditions. In addition, these pages are distinguished by homophobic and xenophobic messaging.

Antiliberal rhetoric is also evident on the Facebook pages of far-right leaders and activists. In this regard, the following are especially active: the founder of the news agency Alt-Info – Konstantine Morgoshia – and civil activist Beka Vardosanidze. Their far-right discourse includes the support of conservative far-right world leaders such as the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán and the President of the United States of America, Donald Trump. The politics of the nationalist governments of Poland, Italy, Austria and Hungary is considered to be the greatest achievement of the conservative forces and regarded as a positive event.

These far-right groups use the term “liberast” to refer to liberals in general. The term is also found in the video addresses of the far-right leader Levan Vasadze, which is actively published on the Facebook page of The World Family Congress. Sexist and anti-feminist messages have also surfaced in the antiliberal discourse of the far-right Facebook pages. Women's rights activists have been victims of cynicism and discrediting. The online narrative of the far-right groups depicts two types of women; one is a liberal, human rights activist who is equated with depravity and ugliness, while the other category is the traditional, conservative type of a woman. The Facebook page Geo Pepe published a photo description on 19 October 2019, which assesses the characteristics of a liberal girl and a traditional girl from the far-right point of view.

The far-right rhetoric was marked by express anti-feminist and sexist messages in October. Iliia Jishkariani – a City Hall member – was accused by Tamta Todadze – an employee of Georgian Dream – of sexual harassment and attempted rape. She was later given a victim's status by investigative authorities. In response, a campaign to discredit Tamta Todadze was launched in social media, in which the far-right Facebook pages Anti-Paradox, Kardhu, Geo Pepe and Georgian Page were actively involved. These pages spread several messages with different content, the main purpose of which was to protect the City Hall member and consequently, to discredit Tamta Todadze.

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101 International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), 20 November 2019- “Divisive Narratives on Facebook During the 2018 Elections”, available at <http://bit.do/fpL8j>.



website  
SCREENSHOT

**"პროგრესული" ლიბერალი**

ცხოვრებაზე გამოხატებული არასრულფასოვნების კომპლექსის გადაფარვას თმების მძღნერის ფერად შეღებვით ცდილობს

არასრულფასოვნების კომპლექსის გადაფარვას თმების მძღნერის ფერად შეღებვით ცდილობს

ფურუ ფემინისტია

მუდმივი იმედგაცრუების და წარუმატებელი პირადი ცხოვრების შედეგად 49 კატასთან და 17 მაწანწალა მალთან ერთად ცხოვრობს

გულის სიღრმეში შურს ტრადიციული გოგონასი

საკარაულოთ ფესტივალზე ნარკოტიკული/ალკოჰოლური ინტოქსიკაციით გარდაიცვლება

თუ ფესტივალზე გადარჩება, იგივე მიზეზით, მოგვიანებით სახლში გარდაიცვლება. ხოლო გარდაცვალებიდან მე-3 დღეს მის 49 კატას და 17 მაწანწალა მალს მომივდებათ და მას შეჰამენ...

სექსუალურ ფანტაზიებში "ტოქსიკურ" მასკულიზმზე ოცნებობს

არასოდეს არ ეყოლება საკუთარი ოჯახი

ვენერიული დაავადებების მთელი ბუკეტის პატრონია

ცუდად გამოიყურება, აწუხებს ჭარბი წონა

სექსუალურად დაუცმაყოფილებულია, რადგან ფემიდურ-ქალაჩუნა, ლიბერალ გეი-პიჭუნა წრეში ტრიალებს

**ტრადიციული გოგონა**

ცხოვრების თითოეული მომენტით ტკბება, ძალიან ბედნიერია

არ ეშინია მომავლის

წესიერი, მშორმული ოჯახიდანაა

არ აწუხებს ფემინისტური კაცთმომბლუე კომპლექსები, პირიქით მოუთმენლად ელოდა ყოველ საღამოს, რათა საკუთარ დაღლილ ქმარს გემრიელი საჭმელები დაახვედროს

ჩვეულებრივ, კლასიკურ ტანსაცმელს ატარებს, არ უყვარს ჭრელი მაკიაჟი

ყოველ კვირას, ოჯახთან ერთად ეკლესიაში დადის

საკუთარ ქმართან ერთად იცხოვრებს უდარდელად 100 წელს, და ორივე ერთ დღეში გარდაიცვლება

მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ 5 ბიჭის და 1 გოგონას დედაა, მაინც მშვენივრად გამოიყურება

მარტო ერთი მამაკაცი უყვარს, რომლისგანაც ნ ბავშვი ჰყავს

"მაჩიზმს" დადებით მოვლენად თვლის, საკუთარ ხუთივე ვაჟკაცს იგივეს უწერგავს

ძალიან ჰყვიანი და ერუდირებულია თუმცა თვლის რომ შვილების გაზრდა ბევრად უფრო მნიშვნელოვანია, ვიდრე ფემინისტების მიერ თავს მოხვეული "კარიერისტობა".

ეყოლება ბევრი შვილიშვილი და შვილითაშვილი

Observed pages: Zneoba and Society for the Protection of Children's Rights are actively campaigning against abortion. In this case, the struggle against liberalism entails religious content, according to which abortion is considered a terrible religious sin. Posts with religious motifs were posted on Facebook on 20-21 December 2019, wherein we read the call to ban abortion in Georgia by law.



website  
SCREENSHOT

აბორტი არ აზათილებს შენს ორსულობას - შენ საკუთარი შვილის მკვლეელი დედა ხდები!

აბორტი ბავშვების მკვლელობაა!

ეს არის 12 კვირის ბავშვი. საქართველოს კანონმდებლობით, ნებისმიერ დედას, რომელსაც სურს საკუთარი შვილის მოვლა, შეუძლია გააკეთოს ეს დაორსულებიდან 12 კვირის განმავლობაში.

აი, სწორედ ასეთ ჩვილს დაანაწევრებენ და ნაწილ-ნაწილ გამოიტანენ დედის საშოდან, მისთვის ყველაზე მშობლიური და დაცული ადგილიდან.

102 Facebook page Zneoba, 21 December 2019, available at <http://bit.do/foWhw>  
 103 Facebook page Zneoba, 21 December 2019, available at <http://bit.do/foWrg>




### 3.3. HOMOPHOBIC AND XENOPHOBIC ATTITUDES IN FAR-RIGHT DISCOURSE

Repetition of homophobic and transphobic narratives is a characteristic element of Georgian far-right rhetoric. The repetition of hate speech against sexual orientation becomes most noticeable in the context of May 17, a day on which the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is celebrated, on the one hand, and the Day of Family Purity and Parents is celebrated on the other hand. Far-right groups openly protest LGBT issues.

Noteworthy is the fact that homophobic and transphobic rhetoric is associated with antiliberal and anti-Western discourse. According to them, the propaganda of the LGBT community means normalising homosexuality through the Soros Foundation, which in their view undermines Georgian national values. The current discourse has been further exacerbated since the so-called "March of Honour" was announced by the LGBT community. Accordingly, in June, the groups under observation began actively campaigning against the LGBT community. The following Facebook pages were especially active: Kardhu, Geo Pepe and Georgian Page.

The deliberate discrediting of the LGBT community, which had begun since 20 June, with the so-called Gavrilov's Night rallies, continued in the last week of June in 2019. The far-right groups have been actively and purposefully campaigning against the LGBT community and were accusing them of organising the ongoing rallies. Tbilisi Pride and the protest rallies, started after the so-called Gavrilov's Night, were discredited on the Facebook pages of the leaders of the far-right groups. Levan Vasadze, Konstantine Morgoshia, Dimitri Lortkipanidze and Levan Chachua actively called on their followers to stop all attempts to organise Tbilisi Pride and the members of the National Movement and the LGBT community activists were labelled as the organisers of the so-called Gavrilov's Night.

 website  
**SCREENSHOT**



**18-25 ივნისის დაგეგმილ**  
**"გეი-აღლუმს" ვერ ჩაატარებენ!**

**ამას ერთი არ დაუშვებს!!!**

**რატომ!?!.... რატომ?!.... რატომ!?!....**

1. რატომ წაართვით ბავშვებს ცისარტყელა?
2. რატომ შეურაცხყოფ ჩემთვის სანუკვარს?
3. რატომ გინდა, რომ მეც შენსავით ავად ვიყო?
4. რატომ მილანძღავ ტრადიციებს?
5. რატომ მიფრიალებ ცხვირწინ ბინძურ საცვლებს?
6. რატომ მიყიდე სული სატანას?
7. რატომ გეზიზღება ყველა ჯანმრთელი?

ყოველივე ამის შემდეგ ჰომოფობი მე ვარ თუ შენ?

The aggression of the far-right groups is often directed against migrants. The main direction of the far-right rhetoric is expressly anti-immigrant and xenophobic. In this regard, the tension with Azerbaijan in May over Davit Gareji complex is to be mentioned. It significantly strengthened the xenophobic narratives in the far-right discourse. The far-right groups have published various maps and inaccurate information about the capture of the territory by Azerbaijani people. The xenophobic discourse was followed by threatening and insulting words against the Azerbaijani people. In addition, representatives of the far-right under our monitoring used to call on the people to mobilise and take action to protect Davit Gareji, falsely claiming that it was sold by the Georgian government to Azerbaijan. The Facebook page Kardhu shared the calls for demonstrations in the Davit Gareji area. The main slogan of the rallies was, “David Gareji is our Jerusalem”.



website  
**SCREENSHOT**



აზერბაიჯანული ფეისბუქ გვერდების მიერ გავრცელებული რუკა

The production of anti-immigration discourse is often based on the generalisation of criminal acts committed by foreigners in individual cases. In this way, the far-right forces endeavour to stir up xenophobic attitudes in Georgia. Facebook pages Kardhu and Geo Pepe are especially active in this regard. In far-right rhetoric, the issue of land protection as the most important value is noticeable. The page Kardhu responded and shared several times an interview of the leader of the organisation “Nation and State”, Zviad Tomaradze “On the mass influx of Asian migrants.” It should be noted that Zviad Tomaradze is the author of a legislative initiative to ban issuing residence permits to foreigners in Georgia, as well as to ban the activities of non-governmental organisations funded by foreign countries.



website  
**SCREENSHOT**



ინტერნეტში გავრცელდა დეზინფორმაცია, რომ იანვრიდან, ახალი კანონის ძალით, სასოფლო-სამეურნეო მიწა უცხოელებზე კვლავ იყიდება!  
“მინდა განვაცხადო, რომ ქართველი ხალხის დიდი ბრძოლის შედეგად კონსტიტუციაში ჩაიწერა, რომ უცხო ქვეყნის მოქალაქე ვერ იქნება სასოფლო-სამეურნეო მიწის მესაკუთრე! კონსტიტუცია ქვეყნის უმაღლესი კანონია! შესაბამისად გავრცელებული ინფორმაცია არის მცდარი!”  
ზვიად ტომარაძე





## 4. BASIC FINDINGS OF THE MEDIA MONITORING

- The online media providers that were monitored may have the following objectives: 1) to provoke anti-Western sentiments in the population of Georgia and, consequently, discredit Western institutions; 2) to support the Kremlin's policies and disseminate pro-Russian messages; and 3) to introduce irrational fears and hatred in the society by spreading false information and conspiracy theories;
- There are network connections between different far-right groups operating in Georgia, and these pages are closely interrelated in the process of developing an action plan or strategy;
- In the rhetoric of the far-right groups, there is an attempt to demonise the United States and spread antiliberal messages;
- The current far-right discourse in social and online media was characterised, on the one hand, by ethno-nationalism and on the other hand, by distinctly pro-Russian messages;
- Far-right groups in online media often use fake surveys and unverified information;
- Anti-immigration campaigns and xenophobic attitudes were noticeable in Georgian far-right discourse.
- The demonisation of local NGOs and international organisations is noticeable; George Soros is even seen as the main legitimiser of depravity;
- The most frequent targets of aggression by far-right groups are feminists, migrants, the LGBT community, Muslims and liberals;
- There is a noticeable tendency of far-right groups mobilising their supporters for protests using social media. It is also noteworthy that information is widely spread and rallies are planned and organised through Facebook; and
- There is a noticeable trend in online media to invite respondents such as politicians and leaders who create the far-right agenda in Georgia.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government agencies need to develop an effective action plan against misinformation and hate speech, which is being carried out by the far-right groups through social media and media in general;
- In terms of informing the public, it is important to conduct an online and media campaign against the extremist far-right discourse that is based on misinformation or unverified facts; and
- Various research organisations should become more active and conduct media monitoring to study the characteristics of the far-right discourse to continuously provide the population with information on the root causes on which extremist groups thrive.

**NATIA KATSITADZE**

**EXAMPLES OF  
WESTERN  
EUROPEAN  
COUNTRIES**

# INTRODUCTION

The following part of the report discusses the examples of Western European state programmes against far-right groups' violent radicalisation, and its prevention and suppression.

Despite certain similarities, far-right extremism and its underlying causes are different in each society. Accordingly, each state establishes policies and methods to fight and prevent far-right extremist groups' violent acts by taking into account the local context.<sup>104</sup>

The following report discusses the examples of Germany and Norway, their policies and programmes.

In Western Europe, Germany has one of the longest histories of fighting far-right movements and extremist groups. Correspondingly, the programmes developed by Germany's federal and local governments are diverse and multi-sectoral. Besides, since 2000, Germany has implemented so-called Drop-Out/Exit programmes, which even today are rare for many European states.<sup>105</sup> In Germany, such programmes are offered by several federal state agencies and local governments not only to the members of far-right movements or extremist groups but also to their family members.<sup>106</sup>

In Norway, unlike Germany, the far-right extremism is not large-scale. Moreover, it is believed, that the followers of this ideology do not have solid unions and the largest neo-Nazi organisation in Norway consists of only approximately 30-40 members.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, the two largest terrorist acts in Scandinavia occurred in Norway in 2011. After this, the strategies and programmes of the Government of Norway have changed. The example of Norway is also interesting since it has the largest far-right extremism research centre.<sup>108</sup>

104 Violent Radicalisation and Far-Right Extremism in Europe, report, Hedayah/SETA, January 2018, p. 14, available at [https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/3\\_Medienkompetenz/Gegennarrative/violent\\_radicalisation\\_\\_\\_far-right\\_extremism\\_p\\_80-122.pdf](https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/3_Medienkompetenz/Gegennarrative/violent_radicalisation___far-right_extremism_p_80-122.pdf) (accessed on 20.04.2020).

105 The government funded-NGO, EXIT-Deutschland, was founded in 2000 to facilitate the de-radicalisation process of right-wing extremists. Since its inception, the programme has helped approximately 500 individuals escape from right-wing ideology, with a 3 percent rate of recidivism. Germany: Extremism & Counter-Extremism, 2020, p. 19, available at [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country\\_pdf/DE-04302020.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country_pdf/DE-04302020.pdf) (accessed 20.04.2020). See also Vidhya Ramalingam, Old Threat, New Approach: Tackling the Far Right Across Europe, Guide For Policy Makers, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, pp. 19-20, and 35, available at [https://www.isdglobal.org/ISD\\_New\\_Approach\\_Far\\_Right\\_Report.pdf](https://www.isdglobal.org/ISD_New_Approach_Far_Right_Report.pdf) (accessed on 10.04.2020).

106 Official webpage of the Federal Agency of the Protection of the Constitution of Germany (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz or BfV) available at <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/dropout-programme-for-right-wing-extremists> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

107 Tore Bjorgo, Right-wing extremism in Norway – Changes and Challenges, University of Oslo, February 2019, available at <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-right-wing-extremism-norwaychanges.html> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

108 Centre for Research on Extremism (C-REX), available at <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/about/> (accessed on 20.04.2020). See also, Katherine Moore, Does Norway have a far-right problem? September 2019, available at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/does-norway-have-a-far-right-problem-> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

# 1. GERMANY

## GENERAL REVIEW

The German federal government has been implementing programmes to prevent extremism since 1990; however, their scale and directions have significantly increased since 2001<sup>109</sup>. Despite the measures taken throughout the years, violence committed by right-wing extremists in Germany is high. For example, the Federal Government of Germany wrote in the report of 2016 that from 2014 to 2015 violent acts committed by right-wing extremists have increased by 42%, and 1,408 violent offences were committed with this motive, while during the same year, 21,933 criminal acts were committed with the motives of far-right ideology.<sup>110</sup> These numbers significantly decreased (by 34%) in 2017-2018 years.<sup>111</sup> It is believed that the decrease in far-right extremism is linked to the stricter penalties imposed by the German Courts.<sup>112</sup>

In this regard, the 2016 strategy of the Federal Government and the report of the same year describes in detail the programmes implemented by the German federal and local governments. According to the strategy, the regional and local governments' programmes play a special role in the fight against extremism. These include police events, the criminal justice system, education, social service and working with the youth. Besides, the role of the Federal Government is important as well, which cooperates with approximately 700 civic society organisations concerning the prevention of extremism and support for democracy and diversity. In this respect, the experience of Germany is unique in Europe.<sup>113</sup> Germany even has a detailed and scheduled action plan with an appropriate budget.<sup>114</sup>

The strategy of Germany to fight and prevent extremism is interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral, with several major responsible agencies at the federal level. In particular, the Federal Office for the Protection of Constitution is responsible for taking legal and deterrent measures; the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth funds preventive activities, while the Federal Agency for Civic Education conducts activities aimed at strengthening democracy and fighting against extremism.<sup>115</sup>

109 Germany's Federal Government Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy, 2016, pp 5 and 7, available at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/115448/cc142d640b37b7dd76e48b8fd9178cc5/strategie-der-bundesregierung-zur-extremismuspraevention-und-demokratiefoerderung-englisch-data.pdf> (accessed on 10.04.2020).

110 Ibid, p. 9.

111 Brief summary 2018 Report on the Protection of the Constitution, Facts and Trends, the Federal Agency of the Protection of the Constitution of Germany, p. 11, available at <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/embed/annual-report-2018-summary.pdf> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

112 Germany: Extremism and Counter-Extremism, p. 5, available at [https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country\\_pdf/DE-04302020.pdf](https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country_pdf/DE-04302020.pdf) (accessed on 20.04.2020). See also: Daniel Koehler, Violence and Terrorism from the Far-Right, policy document, ICCT, February 2019, available at <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Koehler-Violence-and-Terrorism-from-the-Far-Right-February-2019.pdf> (20.04.2020).

113 Germany's Federal Government Strategy to Prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy, 2016, above footnote 109, p 6.

114 Vidhya Ramalingam, "Old Threat, New Approach: Tackling the Far Right Across Europe", Guide For Policy Makers, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, p. 31, available at [https://www.isdglobal.org/ISD\\_New\\_Approach\\_Far\\_Right\\_Report.pdf](https://www.isdglobal.org/ISD_New_Approach_Far_Right_Report.pdf) (accessed on 10.04.2020). See also Violent Radicalisation and Far-Right Extremism in Europe, above footnote 104, p. 15.

115 Vidhya Ramalingam, "Old Threat, New Approach: Tackling the Far Right Across Europe", above footnote 114, p. 15.

## PROGRAMMES OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Along with the various programmes<sup>116</sup> implemented by the Federal Agency for Civic Education and several other organisations, two major programmes of the federal government on the prevention of violent extremism and promotion of democracy are of particular importance, viz., Living Democracy! Active against Right-wing Extremism, Violence and Hate (in force since 2015) and Cohesion through Participation (valid since 2010). Both the programmes have multiple components and include activities, both at central and local levels, with the involvement of various governmental and non-governmental actors.<sup>117</sup> They aim to cover the following areas: political education, democratic values and the teaching of intellectual relations; civic engagement and participation; consultations, monitoring and intervention; media and internet; research and international cooperation.<sup>118</sup>

The development of the federal programme – Living Democracy! – the implementation of which began in 2015 based on prior research and the assessment of already implemented programmes. The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is responsible for its funding and implementation. In 2016, the programme budget was 50 million Euros.<sup>119</sup> The programme is multi-sectoral and implemented by the involvement of non-governmental organisations in line with governmental agencies. Particular attention is paid to the involvement of schools, youth centres and social services.<sup>120</sup>

One of the components of this programme is Partnership for Democracy, which works at the municipal level. As of 2016, this component was implemented throughout the country in 233 locations with the involvement of municipalities. However, usually, specific activities are carried out by the local non-governmental organisations, often with the involvement of volunteers. For clarity, it should be noted that, as of 2016, about 11,000 participants were involved in such activities, most of them on a voluntary basis. The goal of the Partnership for Democracy is the growth of youth engagement, raising awareness on the principles of democracy, diversity, the organisation of discussions and youth forums, etc. The target of such activities are places inhabited by migrants and refugees; The issue of migrants is also addressed since migrants are often victims of extremist groups.<sup>121</sup>

The second major component of the federal programme Living Democracy! is the creation of Federal State Democracy Centres. Democracy centres, just like other components of the programmes, are working against far-right extremism, as well as Islamophobia,

116 XENOS – Integration and Diversity (2008-2014), XENOS – Special Programme on Labour Market Support for Individuals with Leave to Stay and Refugees with Access to the Labour Market (2008-2015), XENOS – special programme Exit to Entry (2009-2014), Promote Tolerance (2001-2014), Strengthening Democracy Initiative (2011-2014), German Federal Government Report on the Work and Effectiveness of the Federal Government Programmes to Prevent Extremism, 2016, p. 5, available at <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/130220/78e5ce069aba4bb2982d23892c933c00/extremismusbericht-englisch-data.pdf> (accessed on 10.04.2020).

117 Along with far-right extremism, the federal programmes are directed against extremist Islam, racism and other violent ideologies. See the German Federal Government Report, 2016, above footnote 116, pp. 24-25.

118 See Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, p. 8.

119 Ibid. p. 11.

120 See Germany's Federal Government Report, above footnote 116, p. 25. See also Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, p. 12.

121 Ibid. pp. 27-28.

racism, and other violent ideologies and groups. They aim to coordinate and develop a network throughout Germany to fight and prevent extremism. The centres work to raise awareness, provide consultations and service to interested persons, including through mobile offices, and carry out the so-called exit and distancing programmes. The so-called exit programme aims to help those members of extremist groups that want to move away from such groups while distancing programmes are designed mostly for those adults, youth and their family members, who even though are not members of any of the far-right extremist groups but have close contact to such groups or persons. It is especially important that mobile offices conduct research and assessment together with consultations. In particular, they assess far-right radical attitudes and study the existing situation. Besides, they offer appropriate, short- and long-term services to interested persons. Examples of an individual, short term service is the provision of specific information to an interested person, solution of an educational problem, redirection to other appropriate agencies, etc. Distancing and exit programmes are usually implemented by various centres and the consultations are provided for family members and teachers as well. A relatively new practice is the provision of services to the victims of extremist groups.<sup>122</sup>

One more component of the federal programme – Living Democracy! – intends to strengthen non-governmental organisations that operate throughout the country. In particular, according to the 2016 strategy, 28 non-governmental organisations received state funding for the development of their professionalism and organisational form, to work on extremism prevention programmes, provide consultations to victims and people wanting to exit extremist groups. These organisations are divided into two groups, namely, one group, the so-called umbrella organisations, provide specialised services through their network, and the other is oriented towards educational and consulting services. The goal of this component is the structural and vocational development of these 28 organisations so that they can fully implement the services and projects envisaged in the program.<sup>123</sup>

Much attention is paid to educational projects for youth. Within the frameworks of the projects described above, the federal government allocates budget for teaching issues such as political radicalisation, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, migration, elimination of discrimination, rights of the LGBT community, etc.; there is an experience of providing individual and group teaching courses for both the members of minorities and majorities.<sup>124</sup>

A Federal programme called Cohesion through Participation is being implemented by the Federal Ministry of Interior since 2010. Associations and clubs created by active and involved volunteers represent the main strength of the following program, especially in less developed regions. Initially, the programme aimed at eastern Germany. However, since 2016, it has expanded to other parts of Germany as well and the annual budget

122 Ibid. pp. 28-30. Furthermore, there are no so-called exit programmes in many European countries, unlike Germany, where they are already long implemented. Besides, such a programme has been carried out by the Federal Ministry of Interior of Germany itself, see Vidhya Ramalingam, “Old Threat, New Approach: Tackling the Far Right Across Europe”, above footnote 114, pp. 19-20 and 35.

123 See the German Federal Government Report, 2016, above footnote 116, pp. 30-31.

124 Ibid. pp. 31-34.

increased from 6 million to 12 million Euros. The main goal of the programme is to unite more youth into local associations and clubs, including sport clubs, and strengthen civic engagement. Significant efforts were made to develop democratic structures of clubs and associations and legal procedures for the settlement of internal disputes. Through such clubs and associations, democratic values and the principles of equality are being taught.<sup>125</sup>

The programmes of the Federal Government of Germany, aimed at the prevention of far-right, Salafist and other extremist ideologies, are also aimed at the media, especially social media and the internet. The areas that the German government is trying to cover through this programmes are the following: • developing and strengthening media competence amongst children and young people; protecting children and young people from media content that poses a danger to young people; strengthening the action competence of specialist educational staff and multipliers; making internet users aware of extremist propaganda strategies and supporting counter-narratives on the internet and the social media raising media awareness in children and youth, the protection of children and youth from media.<sup>126</sup>

For several years now, the Federal Government of Germany has been trying through media specialists to raise awareness among young people about the role of digital media and dangers it may pose. The purpose of such programmes is to enable youth to identify and protect themselves from harmful media products. The special website <http://www.jugendschutz.net/>, supported by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, constantly analyses the online sources used by far-right and Islamic extremist groups, and, in case such webpages poses a threat to the youth, various measures are taken against them.<sup>127</sup> This website also collaborates with relevant platforms in other countries. With the cooperation of the agencies of the Federal Government of Germany, it is possible to list certain media sources. In addition, the German government expects that internet platforms would not promote the spread of racist and other violent information. Dissemination of information with criminal content on the internet space will lead to criminal proceedings, and such information will be deleted or/and blocked.<sup>128</sup>

Both the federal and local governments of Germany disseminate information about various extremist movements, groups, and their members<sup>129</sup> in the online space to create a narrative against Salafist and far-right ideologies. Besides, the federal government constantly monitors and studies the habits of children and youth in the media space to implement information dissemination services that will attract the attention of this segment of society.<sup>130</sup>

125 Ibid, pp. 35-38. See also Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, pp. 12-13.

126 See Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, p. 22.

127 Right-wing extremist activities on the Internet, Official website of the Federal Agency of the Protection of the Constitution of Germany (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz or BfV), available at <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/figures-and-facts-right-wing-extremism/right-wing-extremist-activities-on-the-internet-2015> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

128 See Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, p. 22. Germany actively worked with large providers of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Google, in order to reach an agreement that German law will take precedence, including blocking and deleting information with radical content. See Violent Radicalisation and Far-Right Extremism in Europe, report, Hedayah/SETA, January 2018, P. 14, available at [https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/3\\_Medienkompetenz/Gegennarrative/violent\\_radicalisation\\_\\_\\_far-right\\_extremism\\_p\\_80-122.pdf](https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/3_Medienkompetenz/Gegennarrative/violent_radicalisation___far-right_extremism_p_80-122.pdf) (accessed on 20.04.2020).

129 See Official website of the Federal Agency of the Protection of the Constitution of Germany (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz or BfV), available at <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/what-is-right-wing-extremism> (accessed on 20.04.2020). See also the publications on far-right extremism, <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/public-relations/publications> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

130 See Germany's Federal Government Strategy, above footnote 109, p. 23.



## 2. NORWAY

### GENERAL REVIEW

Today, there are two main groups of violent extremists in Norway, who to some extent affect each other; one is inspired by the ideology of Al-Qaeda and the others are far-right extremists who are against Islam.<sup>131</sup> According to the assessment of the Norwegian Government, far-right extremists opposing Islam and immigration represent less radical youth. At this stage, they do not have close unions, a solid organisational structure and leaders. However, this does not mean that certain factors, including violent acts of Islamic extremists, cannot lead to their further strengthening and coalescence of the supporters of far-right ideology.<sup>132</sup> In addition, according to the statement of the Norwegian Police Security Service, far-right extremists' supporters have increased in Norway since 2018.<sup>133</sup>

The largest and most brutal acts of terrorism in Norway, and generally in Scandinavian countries, took place in July 2011, when Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people and wounded 300 more. This and several other acts of violence committed in Norway by people of far-right ideology are attributed to the so-called lone wolves, since, according to the government of Norway and also researchers, there are no solid unions of such groups in Norway.<sup>134</sup>

In December 2010, Norway adopted a plan for the first time called – Collective Security – shared responsibility, the Action Plan on the prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, which was replaced in 2014.<sup>135</sup> In 2014, the Government of Norway developed an action plan against radicalisation and violent extremism.<sup>136</sup> The plan is a living document and updated when needed. At the same time, the government annually publishes a report on the implementation of the plan.

### PROGRAMME PRIORITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY

The 2014 Action Plan has several priority directions. These directions are knowledge and expertise, cooperation and coordination, the prevention of extremist groups and supporting integration, the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment through internet and international cooperation. The action plan is multi-sectoral and several agencies are

131 The Action plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism of Norway, December 2014, p. 10, available at [https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/6d84d5d6c6df47b38f5e2b989347fc49/action-plan-against-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism\\_2014.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/6d84d5d6c6df47b38f5e2b989347fc49/action-plan-against-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism_2014.pdf) (accessed on 20.04.2020).

132 Idem.

133 Norway: Extremism & Counter-Extremism, available at <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/norway> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

134 Idem. The Nordic Resistance Movement (Den nordiske motstandsbevegelsen, or NRM) is considered as an exception. It is a neo-Nazi organisation founded in 1997. It is also active in Sweden and Finland and stands out with open violent acts against Muslim immigrants, sexual minorities and political opponents. However, it should be noted that this group has around 30-40 supporters. See Tore Bjorgo, Right-wing extremism in Norway – changes and challenges, the University of Oslo, February 2019, available at <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-right-wing-extremism-norwaychanges.html> (accessed on 20.04.2020). See also, Violent Radicalisation and Far-Right Extremism in Europe, above footnote 1, pp. 41 and 69.

135 The Action plan of the Government of Norway, 2014, above footnote 131, p. 13. The Government of Norway set up a website, where action plans, reports and research against radicalisation and violent extremism of the government are published, available at <https://www.regjeringen.no> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

136 See above footnote 131.

responsible for its implementation: the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The priority direction according to the action plan is **knowledge and the research**. As the name implies, its purpose is to deepen the knowledge of radicalisation and violent extremism in various actors and conduct research on these issues.

There are a number of institutes and programmes in Norway that study radicalisation and violent extremism. However, the goal of this direction is the systematisation of the research on radicalisation and violent extremism and to widely disseminate information about them. The government's action plan thoroughly outlines in what directions the research should be conducted. In particular, Norway takes the leading role in participating in international and regional research to set better strategies to prevent and fight against radicalisation and violent extremism.<sup>137</sup> According to the 2018 report of the Government of Norway, this part of the action plan is considered to have been fulfilled, since, thanks to the funding, conducting research has been strengthened, which is linked to the creation of the research centre (C-REX – Centre for Extremism Research) and the support to this centre will continue in the future as well.<sup>138</sup> Other directions of the research are the identification of the best preventive measures at the local self-government level, exchanging information between municipalities and the identification of motivating factors for Islamic extremists and foreign fighters.<sup>139</sup>

Several directions are marked out in the action plan to increase knowledge, competence and the empowerment of health workers on the issues of violent extremism, which may concern domestic violence, mental health and behavioural problems. Other directions are dialogues with youth on radicalisation, violent extremism and other related issues; preparation of guidelines for workers, such as police, child welfare services, schools, immigration agency, health services, employment administration, etc., that may be the first to come into contact with cases of radicalisation and violent extremism; the creation of relevant programmes, including digital, for students and schoolchildren that will provide them with the information on radicalisation and violent extremism; annual conference on the issues of the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism, the aim of which is the creation of national and regional networks and sharing the experience, etc.<sup>140</sup>

The second direction of the action plan is coordination and cooperation. The focus is made on coordination and cooperation between different government sectors and the respon-

137 Ibid. also, p. 25. See also, the 2018 report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of Action Plan, para. 29 and 30, available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme/id2607640/> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

138 The 2018 report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of Action Plan, above footnote 137; see also the official website of the Centre for Research on Extremism, available at <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

139 The 2018 report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of Action Plan, above footnote 137, para. 2.

140 The Action Plan of the Government of Norway, 2014, above footnote 131, pp. 17-19. For the events conducted for promoting dialogues with youth, see also, the 2015 report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of the Action Plan, para. 5, available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/status-for-oppfolging-av-handlingsplan-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme2/id2440822/> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

sible body at the national level is the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. Besides, special emphasis is placed on the cooperation between the police and the local crime prevention centres.<sup>141</sup>

The next direction of the action plan is the prevention of **the growth of extremist groups and the support of reintegration**. On the other hand, the state tries to stop recruitment of people by extremist groups, tries to help those who want to leave such groups and associations. Norway attaches great importance to volunteer work in this direction and announces grant programmes for such organisations. The sub-programme of this direction is the promotion and support of the dialogue between religions and the penitentiary system. At first, an inter-religious group was created in Oslo prison, which would cover other parts of the country as well. The goal of creating this group is to prevent radicalisation in prisons. Another programme concerns activity at the municipal level. In particular, appropriate guiding materials will be provided to the municipalities, so that they can develop individualised mentoring schemes and programmes and help people under the risk of radicalisation or people who want to leave extremist associations or groups.<sup>142</sup> In addition, there are mentoring schemes designed for inmates.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs is obliged to develop guideline programmes for parents and guardians, where family members of youth at the risk of radicalisation, or participants of extremist groups, will be able to exchange, receive information, and discuss challenges and solutions.<sup>144</sup>

The next direction of the action plan is to **fight radicalisation and recruitment through the internet**, which is considered by the Government of Norway as one of the most important sources for spreading violent extremism. To accomplish this task, the action plan entails taking several measures, including enhancing police activity and visibility on the internet. In particular, the police should be participating in discussions, express views openly and be visible on such internet pages, which are linked to, or encourage, radicalisation and extremism. There is an operating police website indicating how to warn police about violent extremism and radicalisation on the internet.<sup>145</sup> This programme has been positively evaluated.<sup>146</sup> Separate activities are envisaged against discrimination, harassment and hate speech on the internet, including the involvement of public organisations. The special programme operates for the implementation of the Council of Europe project No Hate Speech. In addition, the Norwegian education system is working to create and implement a special module, which will help children and youth on how to get rid of or report unwanted information that is spread on the internet. A special website has been created for children of different age groups.<sup>147</sup> Relevant information sources are

141 The Action Plan of the Government of Norway, above footnote 131, p. 20.

142 The guidelines on mentorship for municipalities were published in 2017. They describe each step of the programme in detail, available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/sub/radikalisering/veileder-til-mentorordning-mot-radikalisering-og-voldelig-ekstremisme/id2573369/?expand=factbox2573373> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

143 The implementation of the programme should start in 2016. See the 2018 report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of Action Plan, above footnote 137, para. 18.

144 The Action Plan of the Government of Norway, above footnote 131, pp. 21-22.

145 See the relevant police webpage <https://www.politiet.no/tjenester/tips-politiet> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

146 See Tore Bjørge, Right-wing extremism in Norway-changes and challenges, University of Oslo, February 2019, available at <https://phys.org/news/2019-02-right-wing-extremism-norwaychanges.html> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

147 See <https://www.dubestemmer.no/> (accessed on 20.04.2020).

created not only for teachers and students but also for school owners and managers.<sup>148</sup> The Norwegian Media Authority's Safer Internet Centre works against the spread of hate and radicalisation on the internet, the goal of which is to provide children and youth with information and raise awareness about reliable sources on the internet. In 2014, the conference YOUNG & DIGITAL was held on the topic – What should be done to prevent hate speech and radicalisation on the Internet?<sup>149</sup> It is important to note that, regarding these issues, the media agency actively cooperates with the Criminal Investigation Service and the organisation office of Save the Children Norway.

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148 The Report of the Government of Norway on the implementation of Action Plan, above footnote 137, para. 27.

149 Ibid. para. 28.

150 The Action plan against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism of the Government of Norway, above footnote 131, pp. 23-24.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

- To elaborate a national strategy and relevant action plan on the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism in parallel to the National Strategy on Fight against Terrorism in Georgia;
- To ensure the involvement of relevant experts and representatives of civil society; and
- To ensure that the action plan is publicly available.