



NGOs on Salome Zurabishvili's Xenophobic Statement

Non-governmental organizations respond and condemn the xenophobic statement of Salome Zurabishvili, a presidential candidate supported by Georgian Dream.

On October 2, during the pre-election meeting with local ethnic Armenian citizens in Ninotsminda (Samtskhe-Javakheti region), Zurabishvili stated: *“[redacted] now, citizenship was granted only by the decision of a president. One of the presidents [Mikheil Saakashvili], whose representative is my opponent, granted citizenship to a lot of Turkish people, but did not give a citizenship to you”.*

It should be noted, that state officials, also election candidates and leaders of various political parties often use hate speech and disseminate intentional xenophobic statements, however, the statement of the ruling party- supported the presidential candidate, proves to be extremely alarming, undermining state interests.

The statement also contains the signs of illegal canvassing. According to the Electoral Code of Georgia, the candidates have the right to present a program for their further activity, however the election program shall not contain propaganda for war or violence, appeal for change or overthrow of the existing state and social order by violence, for violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, **for national strife and enmity, or for religious or ethnic confrontation.**

We consider, that the above-mentioned statement of the presidential candidate incites hatred, contradicts the principles of liberal democracy and equality, invokes the historic conflict in the modern Georgian political reality and employs all of it against political opponents.

To be noted, this is not the first xenophobic and racist statement disseminated by Salome Zurabishvili. On January 31, 2013, Zurabishvili posted on her Facebook page: *“[redacted] people never die. Several members of a family use one ID card or passport, who can see any difference? You may think that ten persons have entered [the country], but in reality, 100 persons have crossed the border. A According to her another statement: [redacted] and Agmashenebeli streets should not be turned into the streets of hookahs.”*

We consider that in order to ensure healthy pre-election environment, campaigns should be based on the protection of human rights, equality, and principle of integrity.

The signatories condemn the statement of the Presidential Candidate and consider, that it violates the legislation.

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We also call on:

- **Salome Zurabishvili, all political parties and election candidates** to comply with the law and to refrain from making xenophobic, racist and discriminatory statements.

- **The Election Administration of Georgia** to study factual circumstances given in the statement and to take relevant measures in accordance with Georgian legislation.

Signatory Organizations:

Tolerance and Diversity Institute - TDI

Georgian Young Lawyer's Associations - GYLA

Media Development Foundation - MDF

Georgia's Reforms Associates - GRASS

Article 42 of the Constitution

Georgian Democracy Initiative - GDI

Sapari

Institute for Democracy and Safe Development -IDSD

Equality Movement

Partnership for Human Rights - PHR

Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism - CSEM

Media Club

Baltic to Black Sea Alliance-Georgia - BBSA Georgia

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Human Rights Center

Open Society Georgia Foundation