

VIRUS OF URGENCY

Part #2

by
CIVIC IDEA



HANDS



FACE



SPACE



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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown of Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities, the peripeteias associated with the Nariman Narimanov monument, and the events surrounding David Gareja, have uncovered a deep and veiled problem of decades of inequality and racism in society. Although the state legislation of Georgia has been trying to develop a policy of equality for minorities for years, the construction of a multi-religious and multiethnic state and the real integration of the minority community still remains a problem. From the 1990s to the present, Georgia has not been able to overcome the narrative of ethno-religious nationalism that 'Being Georgian means being Christian' and the rest is 'a guest' and 'the other'. The discourse – 'Us' and 'Others', like other minorities, applies to the Azerbaijani community in Georgia, but in the conditions of the pandemic, it particularly affected them. The fact that the Azerbaijani community is considered a 'foreigner' by the public, along with belonging to a different ethnic group, is often facilitated by the lack of knowledge of the Georgian language and the adherence to Islam. In the eyes of the dominant ethnos, the Azerbaijani community was and is considered to be a stereotypically, backward and underdeveloped entity. According to Kamran Mammadli, one of the Azerbaijani activists, they were a tamed '[sheep-breeder' community](#). The low level of community integration, for many officials or politicians, is usually the fault of the Azerbaijani community and the line of accusation runs through ignorance of the state language. And the problem of language ignorance is presented as if the community itself does not want to learn the state language and integrate. The state views the minority community ex-

clusively through the prism of security policy. The basis of such an approach is the narrative established in the 90s of the last century, as if there was a threat of separatism in the Azerbaijani community, just like in the Armenian community. It is fair to say that the Azerbaijani community has never given any specific, tangible reason to any of the authorities, and it would be perfectly legitimate to measure their loyalty to the Georgian state in exactly the same way as any other ethnic group living in Georgia, including Georgians.

The Georgian Orthodox Church plays an important role in deepening ethnic-religious nationalism. The Church's designation of minority-populated areas as 'Christian territory' is indicated by the activity of local dioceses and clergy in Kvemo Kartli and the tendency to erect Christian crosses in Muslim villages.

Along with the xenophobic statements made against the Azerbaijani community during the pandemic, the continuation of the narrative of ethno-religious nationalism is the peripeteias associated with the Nariman Naromanov monument and the issue of David Gareji. Behind these issues, in addition with the cultural dimension, lies the issue of political representation, monoethnic and mono-religious domination. [The statements stirring up religious hatred by the bishops of Marneuli and Hujab over the dismantling of the Narimanov monument](#) has gone unanswered by the state, while, due to critical views, the State Security Service of Georgia has launched an investigation against the head of Supreme Religious Administration of Georgia's All Muslims - on completely vague grounds – accusing of sabotage. Neither the authorities had any reaction, even in the form of a political statement-response, to the provocative statements of the bishop of Marneuli and Hujab and the [manipulation by the Gareji issue](#). The issue of the Narimanov monument itself is simple at first glance. The requirements of

The Freedom Charter in force in the country should be equally applied to all cases, regardless of the nationality of the subject, we oppose to Filipp Makharadze and Sergo Ordzhonikidze monuments, streets, squares, etc. The approach to Narimanov, who is one of the main protagonists of the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, should be exactly the same, however, at the same time, the use of this seemingly simple legal issue to stirring up ethnic hatred is naturally illegal and does not serve the purpose of establishing a civilian nation in Georgia. The wise state and government would implement the requirements of the Freedom Charter amid parallel measures. For example, when the [Fari-Khanum](#) Memorial Competition has already been announced, the teachings of Mirza Fatali Akhundov in the textbooks have been approved, etc.,. In the state where the need for legitimacy of Stalin's statues is still under dispute, and where we have never heard statements from members of the high clerical hierarchy, it is hard to believe that any particular bishop would have to comply with the provisions of The Freedom Charter and the rule of law. In a polyethnic state any prohibitive action related to minority symbols (monuments, books, cultural and religious specimens, etc.), no matter how lawful it is, will always be the subject for an additional consideration if it fails the equality test and it is not offered in a consensus format.

[Lasha Bakradze](#), the director of the Museum of Literature, in the interview with Pankisi Community Radio accurately describes the problem and dilemma that the Georgian state faces:

“ We have to explain who this man was. We should also explain to our Azerbaijani friends that we do not like Narimanov's monument not because we are against the erection of an Azerbaijani statue in Marneuli, not

at all, on the contrary, it is necessary to erect a monument to an Azerbaijani who has some merit in the Georgian-Azerbaijani friendship.

There is a third force that is trying to strain this relationship, so we must do everything to ensure that this relationship is not lost.'

Before we take a step, we need to think about it. Nariman Narimanov monument should not be erected in Marneuli, but in order to remove this monument, no violence and the language of ultimatums are needed. If you want, I will go, others will go, we will give a whole cycle of lectures on who Nariman Narimanov was, what values we should highlight, what we should pay attention to. There are people who know the history of Borzhalo much better than me, they know the history of Georgian Azerbaijanis, let's give them a chance to talk and ask them whose monument should be erected, who should be an example for the people, for the next generations. Because the next generations should not look up to people like Nariman Narimanov, they should take example from real heroes."

No less disturbing was the aggressive [narrative](#) that emerged during Covid-19 pandemic– 'They should go out and stand for David Garej.' Such chauvinistic expressions clearly show that a part of the Georgian society is watching non-dominant groups through the neighboring state. In itself – 'standing for David Garej' indicates distrust, lack of loyalty to the Georgian state and is a kind of call to the right behavior – they should stand by Georgia. The recent anti-Turkish statements of the political party - [the Alliance of Patriots](#) - that 'Turkey has interests in the seizure of Adjara and Abkhazia' are written in the discourse of inciting xenophobic and ethnic strife. The statements of the represen-

tatives of 'the Alliance of Patriots' clearly show that they aim to create an enemy image towards the people of Turkish nationality, which is completely related to the issue of Muslims living in Georgia. The 2020 pandemic also exposed the severe challenges facing the state's social policy towards ethnic minorities. During the quarantine, in a lock-down, the population of Marneuli and Bolnisi found themselves alone facing the social crisis and racist sentiments. In addition to information vacuum, the ethnic minority community in Kvemo Kartli has also experienced social exclusion. Markets in closed municipalities were shut down and internal transportation was stopped. Tens of thousands of families without daily income were left alone in the face of poverty. An expression of the acute social and humanitarian crisis in the municipalities was the fact that within 3 weeks after announcing the lock-down of Marneuli and Bolnisi (March 23) more than 100 families contacted the non-governmental organization [EMC](#) for assistance. Most of the adjustments were related to the humanitarian assistance from the state and the solution of severe social needs. The feeling of alienation and social exclusion between the center and the peripheries was echoed during the quarantine period, on April 14, 2020, the social protest in Marneuli - the so-called '[signal](#)' action. The locals protested against the difficult socio-economic conditions in the region and demanded help from the state for the socially vulnerable population. The people of the districts in lock-down could no longer sell their goods, while most of them had taken out loans from banks. Instead of solving social problems in isolated municipalities, the state used repressive policies. On April 17, 2020, the State Security Service summoned Sheikh [Mirtag Asadov](#) for questioning. The interrogation was related to the so-called 'signal' rally, in which the sheikh did not participate at all.

The pandemic revealed the unequal treatment of local self-government in terms of the distribution of humanitarian resources. State and local governments find it difficult to understand how much of a social gap there is between them and the population. Among the problems is the fact that the village commissioners are not in communication with the villagers, which leads to alienation and exclusion of the community. The pandemic revealed that the people of Bolnisi and Marneuli did not have the opportunity to reach their voice to the local authorities regarding their social hardship. The state and the majority of society do not have a sense of solidarity and social justice towards minorities. To be fair,

Aitaj Khalili: Seen from afar , 'Red Zone' painted with human stories':

"I can not help but think of a 79-year-old single woman who has health problems and has not been able to receive her own pension, nor has she received any humanitarian assistance in the last month."

"I can not help but feel sorry for the compatriot who, together with his family of eight, met the strict quarantine regime completely unprepared and now, as he claims, does not know where to hide."

"Everyone dies this hungry" - this answer was given to this person by the state representative, and this answer is an illustration of how a citizen is treated in our country, what is the value of his dignity for them. "

source: <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/karantinis-dghiorebi-aitaj-khalili>

many voices of solidarity and support were heard during the same period, especially on social networks, although practically all of these campaigns are backed by representatives of civil activists and non-governmental organizations or some opposition political parties. For example, there were cases when members of the Georgian March even accused the political union

'Lelo' of 'excessive' solidarity, but despite the efforts of socially active people, solidarity for the locked and isolated Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities did not spread massively. On the one hand, the Constitution and legislation of Georgia speak of the principle of equality before the law, and on the other hand, in practice, the state finds it difficult to take responsibility for the severe consequences of historically entrenched socio-economic exclusion and implement policies to ensure the formation of a civil nation.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Working on the following study began with a desk research. In the study we will not discuss all the aspects of minority issues in details due to various limitations, including: time factor, resources, and research design. The study analyzed the racist manifestations toward the Azerbaijani community, and the state response policy during Bolnisi and Marneuli lockdown. In addition, we tried to investigate and focus on the systemic causes and factors that lead to xenophobic and chauvinistic statements towards the community. The cause of xenophobic attitudes is dominated by the narrative- **'us' and 'others'**.

- Signs of cultural alienation, erasure of local Azerbaijani culture and dominance of Georgian culture and language;
- Stereotypical attitudes towards the perception of ethnic minorities as a threat;
- Challenges and consequences of informing minorities. The state and media.
- Religious domination and tendencies to exclude non-Orthodox and issues of social exclusion.

As part of the desk research we analyzed written materials: reports, surveys, evaluations, announcements, newscasts, TV interviews, and comments on the social media. The desk research enabled us to obtain the information needed for the research topic. After the desk research we used so called expert judgment technique. We recorded a total of 12 online interviews with the members of the local Azerbaijani community, journalists and human rights activists.

- Two research methods have been used to answer the questions posed in the study:
- By analyzing primary sources, we tried to explore the experiences of members of the local Azerbaijani community who are witnesses and victims of the dominant gaze and ethnic discrimination almost daily. While working on the study, online interviews were conducted with them.
- Within the primary sources, we also analyzed statements containing fascist and chauvinistic content, which had been spread on social networks and other media outlets;
- By analyzing secondary sources (evaluations, comments, surveys, reports, statements, TV interviews) we tried to represent the causes and factors of racialization. Also, we tried to represent state policy in terms of responding to such facts and protecting minorities.

The purpose of the following study is not to personally criticize the authors of chauvinistic and xenophobic statements or to criticize state officials, but to identify problems, address the underlying causes, and provide recommendations to relevant government agencies and members of the public to improve their performance.

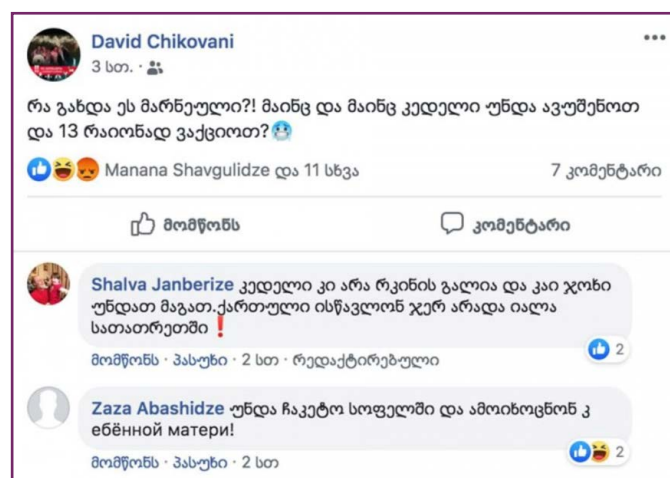
At the end of March, one of the ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Marneuli, who, as it turned out later, did not follow state recommendations during several days, has tested positive for COVID-19. This circumstance created a sense of danger of the mass spreading of the virus. As a result, the entire Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities were declared quarantine zones due to one woman infected from an unidentified source. At the early stage of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a lack of information from the state's side for the population of Marneuli and Bolnisi regions as well as for the area settled by other ethnic minorities. The information campaign on COVID-19 in minority languages started very late, following the increase in cases in Bolnisi and Marneuli. The state preventively could not provide relevant information to the population of Marneuli and Bolnisi regarding the severity of the virus and the threats. There was also a delay in proactively informing the population about the epidemiological situation and the safety regulations. According to the residents of Marneuli, they did not have the exact information about the epidemiological situation in Marneuli, about the threats faced by the population, or what the mandatory public interaction protocol included.

Taking into consideration the reality and only after discovering the problems, the government began to spread statements in minority languages, which led to a particularly aggressive reaction from the one part of society. Spreading chauvinistic declarations over the social networks took on a rather a large-scale character; and what is more disturbing, this has not always shown an organized disposition. The large-scale spontaneity shows that this is not a problem that started with the pandemic, and it is strongly rooted in Georgia. But

the context caused by COVID-19 has just been used by radical and fascist forces for the reinforcement of their positioning and their reminding.

"Pandemic and Marneuli/Bolnisi lockdown made the two invisible issues clear for our society. First, the existing deep and invisible lines of inequality and racism within the country; second, the trivial nature of the connection between the center and peripheries, majority and minority, elite and oppressed" - we read a blog-post by Bolnisi activist Elmadin Mammadli.

We can unequivocally say, the discontent towards the particular citizen went beyond the pandemic context and overgrew the racist and xenophobic rhetoric towards ethnic Azerbaijanis. The problem increased in Bolnisi after an incident in Mushevani village when the local citizens did not allow the doctors to take the patients infected with coronavirus to the clinic. There was even a page created in the social media with the title, "Meet the Fascist"; where the screens of aggressive and humiliating comments were uploaded. The aggressive attitude and comments from the citizens were full of disgust and in many cases, showed the signs of a criminal offense. The statuses with racist feelings have increased.



Some of the xenophobes came up with the idea of constructing a wall near Marneuli, which could have been later de-

clared a "District 13". "Gun them down, burn those ignorant, filthy people, burn Marneuli, they will get into barbwires and they will learn their lesson, these Tatars, they have to leave Georgia, get everyone to the jail". "They do not need the wall, but the metal cages and the sticks" – these were the comments written on Facebook about ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Mushevani village. Moreover, aggressive people were hampering doctors from taking the patients infected with coronavirus to the hospitals. The director of the National Centre of Manuscripts, Zaza Abashidze reacted to these comments soon, writing that "the village should be locked and everyone should be killed". There was another comment by Zaza Abashidze towards Marneuli people; he called them potential spreaders of the virus, killers, referring with swearing words and repeating that they should be locked up.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia stated, although the National Centre of Manuscripts is affiliated with their institution, they are not going to make a public apology at this stage. We have to notice, that Zaza Abashidze leads the National Center of Manuscripts under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, which is financed from the state budget, through taxes paid by citizens. Up to this date, Zaza Abashidze remains in his official position.

The municipalities were announced as "Red Zones" and the isolated population had to fight at the same time the Coronavirus, the fear of economic hardship, and ethnonationalism.

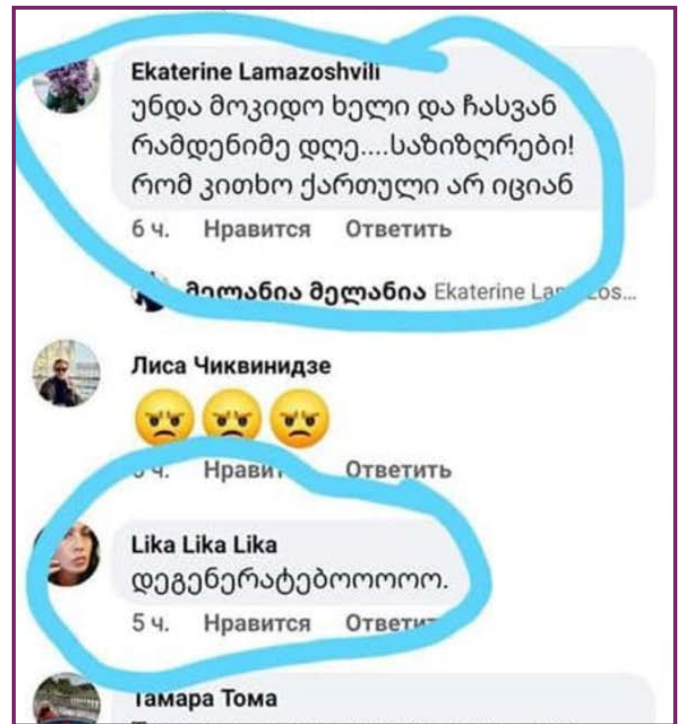
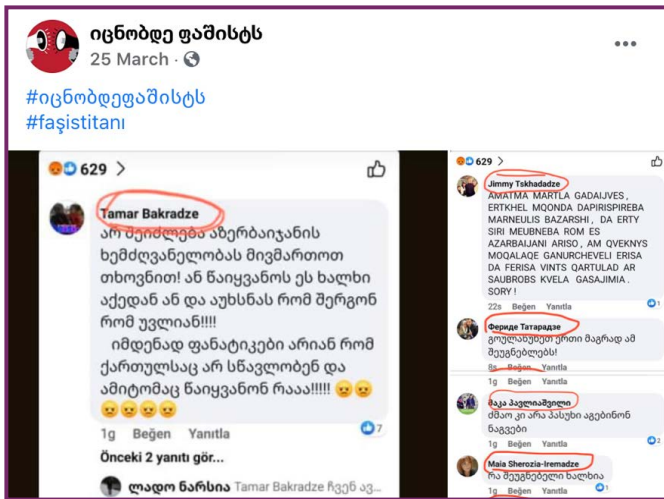
Regarding the confrontation between the Mushevani population and doctors, it was very unpleasant to hear the Director of the National Center for Disease Control, Amiran Gamkrelidze declaring, that according to the information he got, ["the local Mullahs and Muftis played a "bad role" in Quarantine Zones"](#). Later, Mr. Gam-

kelidze explained, that his main message addressed the enhanced dialogue with this ethnic group in a language they could understand and that it is better to involve not only civilians but their religious leaders in these processes.

We should mention that [the Statement of Amiran Gamkrelidze had a discriminative and xenophobic character; he connected the conflict between the Mushevani population and the doctors with Muslim Mullahs, encouraging discrimination and xenophobia towards religious and ethnic minorities in an already strained atmosphere](#). Moreover, the officials, and especially at the concrete moment, the most popular public persons and their wrong messages included the rising risk of ethnic antagonism, at the time when the Azerbaijan community is facing a very acute systemic problem.

As we have already said; hate speech was widely used in social media. There were various xenophobic videos and comments where we often find the messages like: "we should exile Tatars to the Tatar lands". There were stereotypical and discriminative expressions in social media that Azerbaijanis are filthy, uneducated, they have to leave Georgia. Thus, one of the most disgusting, humiliating and insulting narratives is to call the Azerbaijani community "Tatars".

These are only a small part of the comments about Azerbaijanis aired on social media. Moreover, people put the responsibility regarding the spread of the virus not on the concrete person, but the entire Azerbaijan community. When the first coronavirus case was discovered in Marneuli, there was not only followed by community insults but also aggressive ethnocentric and ethnoreligious manifestations leading to racialization. In fact, the irresponsibility of some people was generalized to the whole Azerbaijan community.



Some representatives of the dominant ethnic group considered the spread of the virus as a cultural and social specific lifestyle of the Azerbaijani community. We can find several explanations for this approach. On the one hand, we can outline the marginalization of ethnic Azerbaijani citizens living in Georgia, and on the other hand, we can tell that this concrete reality became a kind of a detonator to release all the emotions - accumulated and locked over the years. More generally, it probably comes from the fear that exists in one part of the ethnic Georgians and is connected to the demographic activity of the Azerbaijani community.

The xenophobic comments directed towards racialization caused the fair protest in the ethnic minorities. The xenophobic declarations had a negative influence on the whole Azerbaijani community and especially on the youth. Among them dominated the frustration and the feeling, that they are not part of Georgia and are "others", who have to leave the country.



The severity of the trauma caused by xenophobic statements towards the Azerbaijani community is well described in [the assessment of racist expressions](#) by one of the Azerbaijani teachers: "Not a single holy place was left. No desecrated place was left. How can our hearts endure this? Summer will come. Tomatoes will ripen again, the generations will also ripen, and they will accept each other without any difference. Coronavirus will pass away, but the wounds received from almost two-thirds of hatred is hard to forget."

The analyses of xenophobic statements reveal that the dominant community has got absolute alienation from the minority communities. Neither the big part of the society nor the state can see the structural and systemic unfairness that is revealed with the hatred of minority communities.

One of the activists of Azerbaijani community organizations "Salam" [Kamran Mammadli](#) stated, that they attended the universities, they had friends who were the members of the dominant ethnic group and the youth did not feel any kind of disgust there; they were not aware of the attitude of the large part of society.

The hated cycle became so painful and hard to carry, especially, because of the

Coronavirus, in the conditions of already intensified fear and the lockdown zone circumstances, that young Azerbaijanis launched a [Facebook challenge](#) in the Georgian language. They asked for support from everyone to refrain from expressing a disgusting and xenophobic attitude. In this supporting campaign, the activists declared that [they are against racism, xenophobia and they choose equality for every citizen](#). Hopeful was the fact that from the beginning, the members of the Azerbaijani community shared statements of solidarity in Georgian, and then these posts were taken over by ethnic Georgians, who also began to express solidarity and support.

The reasonable protest of the Azerbaijani community was also supported by the civil sector. The latter expressed great solidarity in the fight against the xenophobic and disgusting treatment and attack on the Azerbaijani minorities. Non-governmental organizations and civil society activists condemned the racialization statements and called on the state to react adequately and legally; to pursue a policy of equality.

[The Public Defender of Georgia](#) also condemned the racist attacks towards the Azerbaijani community, with the following assessment: "Discussion of the problem in an ethnic context unequivocally contradicts the supreme principle of protection of human dignity, reinforces existing stigmas against ethnic minorities, fosters the disintegration process and encourages their social exclusion".

The state representatives, as in other xenophobic and homophobic statements, failed to respond appropriately and promptly to racist statements against the Azerbaijani community. In many cases, they did not have the relevant legal reactions on the criminal declarations comprising ethnic hatred and violence declarations. This wave of chauvinism has not become a special communication object for the officials. The Prime minister and the President of Georgia did not air any notice at all.

Even during the events in Marneuli, the government did not realize that, at such times, it was crucial to activate all strategic communication tools to solve systemic problems related to the integration of minorities and for the real inclusion of minorities in the united Georgian state. The state could not analyze, that exactly during a crisis like that, it has to show a firm and unequivocal position on the state policy of a united civil nation. Even the civil activists from the Azerbaijani community claimed, "[We have hired the government to fight such harmful manifestations](#)". They know that they have hired the Government, just like the residents of Telavi, or Tbilisi, or Batumi did. Exactly such an approach should have been shown by Tbilisi during the crisis days.

It is fair to say that [Marneuli Mayor](#), [Chairman of Georgian Parliament](#), and [State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia](#) responded to the xenophobic manifestations towards the Azerbaijani community.

In his statement, Marneuli Mayor mainly justified himself by saying, "we are all traditional people and we have the same rituals as a wedding, funeral and so on. These traditions have become ingrained in us, so considering everything, in Marneuli, as in other municipalities of Georgia, it is hard for the citizens to immediately obey the emergency regime imposed due to the spread of the virus." The Chairman of the Parliament and the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality told us, that everyone is equal and it is wrong to discriminate against someone on ethnic grounds. Their statements were positive, however, the problem that is clearly seen in these statements is the lack of a strategic narrative and, consequently, a unified state policy on strategic communication.

The state finds it difficult to understand that when a public official becomes a motivator and instigator of hatred, it poses a challenge to the state. Meanwhile, the

state is obliged to show the solidarity towards the oppressed group and to present clear messages against the wave of racialization, to have an adequate response to such xenophobic manifestations permeated not in the context of anxiety and concern, but by a unified, orderly state policy.

THE REASONS OF XENOPHOBIC AND RACIST MANIFESTATION

Instead of the principles of equality and inclusion, state policy towards ethnic minorities is largely based on problematic narratives such as security, linguistic-cultural dominance, and social exclusion. The state fails to properly understand the deep and pervasive inequality that exists towards non-dominant groups due to historical neglect and the dominant gaze.

The wave of racist manifestations during the COVID-19 outbreak hides structural problems, and inequality remains a principal challenge for Georgia. Fortunately, in recent years, civil awakening and activism have emerged in the Azerbaijani community and that is very important in terms of civil-political rights, involvement in public activities, and understanding of identity. Azerbaijani community becomes more active and critical, considering and speaking about the community problems, distancing, and the necessity of efficient inclusion politics. Unfortunately, after gaining independence, no Georgian government has been able to manage to be at the forefront of this process. There are differences in the policies pursued under different governments; however, there was no specific breakthrough scale policy.

During the previous research, Azerbaijani community activists emphasized that xenophobic and aggressive attitude towards ethnic Azerbaijanis always existed. Though, COVID-19 became a catalyst, which made

the process faster and brought to the surface their disgusting attitude towards the community. According to one of the local Azerbaijani activists interviewed during the research, "This problem is a corpse and they try to bury it, but, the pandemic situation has made it difficult to hide it and the corpse floated to the surface."¹ [Kamran Mammadli](#), a well-known activist of the Azerbaijani community, in his interview to [netgazeti.ge](#) explains that messages towards racialization, which are later heard from dominant ethnic groups, always existed. Simply, communication between groups was rare and ethnic minorities heard it relatively infrequently.

The main reason for xenophobic attitude towards minorities is that our society and the state did not take it into consideration and cannot define what the Georgian state, the Georgian people mean and who are considered under that. Despite the constitutional regulation of the principle of equality, everyday rhetoric, dominant culture, and the existing discriminatory system, together create the virtual society that still considers Citizen – Georgian only in a narrow ethnic context. Such a dominant society excludes and marginalizes all ethnic non-Georgians and willingly, or unwillingly, promotes ethnonationalism and narrow chauvinist sentiments among ethnic Georgians.

Real equality is expressed in building an inclusive state when the nation is standing hard, and the civil nation is functional, despite ethnicity and religion. In another case, we are dealing with narrow ethnic equality, when the causes of all problems and troubles are non-Georgians, non-Orthodox, or the same "strangers".

Only equality before the law enshrined in the Constitution, which is not based on public consensus, the historically established exclusion, and alienation and which is seen at the political and economic, social, and cultural levels, cannot be fully seen/equat-

¹ It refers to hate and racist attitude existed in society against community

ed. Solidarity is hindered by ethnoreligious nationalism that reflects citizens in a narrow ethnoreligious context.

DOMINANT NARRATIVE - “WE” AND “OTHERS”

The xenophobic sentiments during the COVID-19 outbreak showed us, that although a growing number of local Azerbaijani community representatives, speak Georgian and are involved in the socio-economic life of the country, they are still perceived as “others” by a large part of the society and the political spectrum. Generally, in Georgia orthodox and ethnoreligious society tends to look “arrogantly” at the representatives of another religion. This is confirmed by the pathos of the statements spread on the social network.

Also, we should pay attention to the “we and others” narrative: “they must go wherever their place is”, which contains the open text that the real homeland of minorities is somewhere in the other place, therefore, they are not our people. Such an approach supports the marginalization and separation of Georgian-Azerbaijanis from the state.

After all, the main essence of racist statements is to present the citizens of the non-dominant group as temporary residents of the country, secondary citizens who have to go to “their” country. Unfortunately, the pathos and spirit of the thesis declared during the National Movement by the leader of the National Liberation Movement against the Soviet Empire [Zviad Gamsakhurdia](#) at the National Front Congress is still alive and is nourished daily by the ultra-radical, nationalist forces.



Friends, Georgia is a country of Georgians, this axiom must be presented and reflected in this program, the Constitution must express the in-

terests of the Georgian nation and, at the same time, the interests of all individuals, regardless of nationality or other nations, we are not fighting for the interests of Azerbaijan. , Friends, and if someone fights, he will be defeated ...”

Zviad Gamsakhurdia, National Front Congress

This kind of domination, unequal politics and opinions constantly remind the Azerbaijani community, that they live on Georgian land and there is no place for them, that there is a titular ethnos and the rest are “others”. As one of the local Azerbaijani activists explains, [there is a stereotypical attitude in Georgia as if the Azerbaijanis living in Georgia are either the fifth column of Azerbaijan or the Republic of Turkey.](#)

“Georgia only for ethnic Georgians” the hidden policy state policy is also overshadowed by the fact that many Azerbaijani villages in Bolnisi Municipality², where the majority of the population is ethnic Azerbaijani, have been renamed, and the reason was the return of old Georgian names. In fact, the message of this policy is that the Georgian territories are only for ethnic Georgians and there is no place for the local Azerbaijani community there. The people from the other ethnicities are not considered full-fledged citizens in Georgia. This chauvinistic approach has its reasons. One reason is that language, religion, differences in cultural values, and lack of points of contact between the ethnic groups lead to this alienation and discriminatory manifestations.

Xenophobic attitudes on the part of the dominant ethnos cause great resentment and frustration in the minority community. According to the [assessment](#) of a local Azerbaijani activist: “Imagine, being born in a country, living there, thinking that it is

2 Villages - Talaveri, Chapala, Mamkhuti and etc.

your homeland, so to speak, a big family, this country is mine and I am the part of this country, but, it turns out that too many people do not look at us like that"; Unfortunately the Azerbaijanis who live in Georgia have to prove and justify themselves that they are not guests here, that they are full-fledged citizens, who love Georgia as much as ethnic Georgians. The Azerbaijani community is not looking for another homeland outside the existing political space. They see their past and present within Georgia.

The young Azerbaijani living in Marneuli:

"Recently, I was in Baku and when I came back here and crossed the red bridge, I was the happiest person. I was born in Georgia, my parents were also born here, that is why this place is my homeland".

Source: <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/identobis-problematika-kvemo-kartlis-azerbajanelebshi-da-misi-politikuri-da-sotsialuri-ganzomilebebi>

Another activist from the Azerbaijani community notes, that the members of their community are often asked: "Don't you think about returning to Azerbaijan?" However, in the face of such alienation, the dominant community has no idea that Georgia is the only homeland for the ancestors of a large part of the Azerbaijani community, just like their ancestors.

The state policy of associating the local community with the state of Azerbaijan is highlighted by discriminatory statements by high-ranking political officials who are stereotyped towards the community.

The state policy of associating the local community with the state of Azerbaijan is highlighted by discriminatory statements by high-ranking political officials who are stereotyped towards the community. On 26 February, 2019, [Mariam Jashi](#), Member of the Parliament, made public statement on the situation of ethnic Georgians residing

in Azerbaijani territory. She pointed out that "the rights of Georgians living in Azerbaijan must be equal to the rights of Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, in terms of education and other services". The statement of Mariam Jashi also shows that the local Azerbaijani community should be grateful that they are not as oppressed as ethnic Georgians (Ingilos) in Azerbaijan. Mariam Jashi's rhetoric does not differ from other xenophobic people, except, that she has a better education and conveys the same content more subtly. Her statement was translated on Facebook as follows: "[Let them leave Georgia, for a long time they have made only problems for the country!](#)", or "[Can't we appeal to the Government of Azerbaijan to take them out of here? or maybe explain them to be appreciative for being treated well!](#)" etc.

Back in 2018, [Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili](#) declared that he was pleased that Azerbaijani-speaking citizens of Georgia do not lose ties with Azerbaijan, their "historic homeland". [These statements show that political officials do not properly understand the constitutional principle of equality and divide Georgian citizens on ethnic or religious grounds.](#) In fact, the Georgian government views the local Azerbaijani community through the prism of Azerbaijan and considers it as its sphere of influence, which leads to alienation and fair protest in the local community.

During the last thirty years, the state could not explain to the society, that ethnic Azerbaijani-Georgian citizens have no connection to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan has never been their historical homeland, nor do they belong to the state of Azerbaijan.

The lack of a systemic and egalitarian vision of the state towards the minority community is also reflected in the fact, that the local Azerbaijan community is more protected by SOCAR, the embassies of Azerbaijan and Turkey than by the Georgian state. The latter does not have a policy of long-term support for the minority community, which

arouses the feeling that the Azerbaijani citizens of Georgia are perceived as “guests” in their homeland. A clear example of the association of the local community with the state of Azerbaijan is an aggressive narrative that arose during the Covid pandemic -“[Let them go and stand at David Gareji](#)”.

Zaur Khalilov (survey respondent)

“The Ethnic Azerbaijanis are tired of Gareji’s issue, because we are not obliged to answer on that. I can’t understand why a Georgian citizen, an ethnic Azerbaijani, is being asked to answer this question”.

Such chauvinistic expressions clearly show that Georgian society views non-dominant groups through the neighboring state. In itself -“stand at Gareji” indicates that in the fight for the disputed border territories they have to stand with Georgia. There is a narrative outlined in the xenophobic attitude, that ethnically Azerbaijani people should remain silent because they say nothing regarding the David Gareji problem.

The local activist Aithaj Khalili (respondent to the research):

„I was a little boy, when I heard that Georgia was only a country of Georgians, then I realized, that I was not Gergian. This caused alienation in me. There are people, who think that my historical homeland is Azerbaijan, in reality, it is not so. When we defend our rights, they openly tell us that we have to leave this country. Often, when we began to talk about our problems, they draw parallels with ethnic Georgians who live in Azerbaijan. Drawing a parallel is very unfair”.

The [activists](#) working on minority issues point out that “the main problem is probably to be found in the education system, as the topic

of ethnic diversity in the textbooks is obscured or presented in a derogatory way. Ethnocentric attitudes are shown there. [The history of Georgia is understood in a mono-religious and ethnocentric context, where the orthodox is a privileged citizen and a host in this country, while the rest are just guests](#)“.

The voice of ethnic minorities is almost unheard of in social-political discussions, leading to the exclusion and isolation of non-dominant ethnic and religious groups from society. If the ethnic minorities raise their voice, then hate speech and racist statements about their guest status emerge

The alienation of the Azerbaijani community from Georgia is also caused by the fact that **they find it difficult to perceive themselves in the general history of Georgia**. They cannot find themselves and their identity in the shared history of Georgia. This fact contributes to the perception of the community as secondary and undesirable citizens. [As the activists working with the minority community explain](#): “students learn about themselves as Azerbaijanis, not from the history of Georgia or school textbooks, but the internet or the history of Azerbaijan”; they consider themselves as strangers to their own country, who come from somewhere”³. Such alienation policies prevent young people from defining their own identities.

The main and global reason for the alienation of the minority community is that **the perception and definition of Georgia, as homeland, is limited to a narrow ethnoreligious and ethnic definition**. This contributes to the isolation and marginalization of non-dominant ethnic groups. Thus, ethnoreligious nationalism is flourishing in Georgia. For example, there exists a stereotypical attitude in society and the dominant religion, that if you are Muslim, you are a Tatar and therefore you are not Georgian. By the way, this attitude also applies to Georgian Muslims living in Adjara and Guria.

3 Article-“omitted necessities interests and history- Georgian language teaching problem in the Azerbaijani Community of Georgia”, EMC, 2020, [https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavl](https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavlis-problema-sakartvelos-azerbajanel-temshi)

Georgia has failed to establish the principle of civic nationalism in the state, according to which the main thing is the citizenship of the country and not ethnic or religious affiliation. Today there is a misunderstanding of equality from both the state and society sides. Narrow ethnic equality or even the constitutional protection of minority rights is not equality, equality is the building of an inclusive and multicultural state.

SIGNS OF ALIENATION OF CULTURES, ERASURE OF LOCAL CULTURE AND DOMINATION OF GEORGIAN CULTURE

One of the deepest causes of xenophobic and racist attitudes is the total alienation of dominant and non-dominant cultures. Stereotypical assessments are often made that the Azerbaijani community is less developed, uneducated, backward, uncivilized, who do not have their own culture. Such stereotypes are firmly entrenched in a large part of society, which sees the community through the prism of the "backward". The presentation of the

Azerbaijani Community Activist Elnur Alisoy:

"For example, if you ask the ethnic majority what they know about our Azerbaijani-speaking ethnic minorities, what Kakhetian in Kakheti, Megrelian in Samegrelo know about my community, there will be the same answer: early marriage, they do not know Georgian, drug trafficking in Phonichala, red ribbons and their connection with the girls to be married, and so on. These are the stereotypical and negative information in Georgian media about minorities. The alienation causes xenophobic manifestations."

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/EMCRIGHTS/videos/293613875286423>

topic by a certain part of the civil sector and the media takes place in a negative context, mainly in terms of early marriage, domestic violence or drug crime.

The reason for such a narrative is that the cultural relations between Georgians and Azerbaijanis are minor, which is reflected in the lack of knowledge about each other's cultures. There is no space for non-dominant culture, to be included in a common culture. One of the activists, interviewed during the research, Elnur Alisoy explains that "today there is no opportunity for ethnic groups to get to know each other and to get familiar with each other's culture, traditions and rules of conduct". A respondent to the research, Azerbaijani activist Aitaj Khalili says: "Dominant and non-dominant ethnic groups do not know each other's values and therefore, they have no information about each other's concerns".

Another problematic shortcoming of the Georgian state policy is that it is unilateral with regards to the integration of minorities. That only means that minorities have to be closer to Georgian rules and language. It is difficult for the state and the society to understand, that integration is a bilateral process, and Georgians themselves need to get acquainted with non-dominant culture to achieve real inclusion.

Neither the state and nor the local Government does anything to bring dominant and non-dominant cultures closer together or to advance the non-dominant culture. The major problem in Georgia is the mono-ethnic and mono-religious perception of the past and the culture, which leads to the self-identification and self-determination of the society through the prism of ethnonationalism. The researchers explain that the minorities are represented in school textbooks mainly by their ethnographic mark, and their political integration is not shown there⁴. The alienation between cultures

⁴ Online discussion -we" and „others“? - Policy of the culture in Kvemo Kartli EMC, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/diskusia-chven-da-skhvebi-kulturis-politika-kvemo-kartlshi>.

and the marginalization of minorities is also caused by the expulsion of the community from dominant history and collective memory. Researchers, local activists talk about the signs of cultural domination and the disappearance of the culture of local ethnic minorities in the Kvemo Kartli region⁵. The cultural domination and the disappearance of minority cultures indicate the state's attitude towards the Muslim holiday "Elat", which was considered a threat by the state and was abolished. It acquired a new name "Dmanisoba" and Dmanisi Municipality was entrusted to organize its celebration⁶.

Attempts to erase non-dominant culture are manifested in different directions, which is perceived very painfully by the community. Ethnic minorities lack the reading of their history in the school textbooks, which is why they are protesting against the fact that despite centuries of coexistence in Georgia, their place in the history textbook could not be found⁷. You will not need to waste a lot of time to find out that our school history textbooks say practically nothing about members of the Azerbaijani or Armenian communities. Furthermore, such unequivocal and unambiguous facts of history, such as the role of the Armenian community in the development and strengthening of modern Tbilisi, are constantly concealed and ignored.

In order to bring the Azerbaijani and Georgian ethnic groups closer, it is important to describe in the history textbook the best experiences of historical relations between the Azerbaijani and Georgian people, as well as the representatives of the Azerbaijani community who have made special contributions to the deepening of Georgian-Azerbaijani relations⁸. It is important that the history textbooks contain infor-

Famous Azerbaijanis

The conquest of Kartli and Kakheti regions by Russia, followed by the capture of Transcaucasia, as well as the establishment of Vice-King in Tbilisi, made this city the political and cultural center of Transcaucasia. The intelligentsia of the Caucasian nations, including the Azerbaijani thinkers from the provinces of Baku and Elisabethpol (Same as Ganja), also get here.

The most famous of them are:

Mirza Shafi Vazeh - A poet and educator who opened a salon in Tbilisi, where philosophy, culture, poetry, etc. were discussed;

Abaskuli Agha Bakikhanov - A poet, the governor's interpreter, and scientist;

Mirza Fatali Akhundov - An Educator and the first playwright to be called the "Moliere of the Caucasus", critical thinker in the Muslim East. He arrived in Tbilisi in 1834 and he died in Tbilisi in 1878, in his own house (where there is the museum named after him and the Azerbaijani culture center). He is buried in the present-day Botanical Garden (the Tbilisi Muslim graveyard at that time).

Source: <https://tdi.ge/ge/page/ra-unda-vicodet-tanamokalake-etnikuri-azerbajanelebis-shesaxe>

mation about the history of Azerbaijanis in Georgia and their identity⁹.

To bring them closer, it is also important to provide information on Georgian-Azerbaijani cultural relations in the literature textbooks. The textbooks must include the writings by Azerbaijani authors as a sample of Georgian literature. Georgian-Azerbaijani literary relations date back to ancient times and are as old as the history between the Georgian and Azerbaijani ethnic groups.

5 TV show on the subject - Signs of domination and signs of local cultural deletions in Kvemo Kartli EMC, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temis-mimart>.

6 Article - Dmanisoba - " Copied Celebration and Mechanisms of Cultural Domination ", EMC, 2019, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dmanisoba-gadatserili-dghesastsauli-da-kulturuli-dominatsiis-mekanizmi?fbclid=IwAR3zITq16c6nJt-pl5QitT5I1QHttq8itevgRELHnJwjTHKbAvjjOMAKFaP4>.

7 Idem, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temis-mimart>

8 Mushvig Chobanov, Azerbaijani-Georgian Literary Relations, Journal "Kartvelologi", 2017. <https://www.academia.edu/35407801>

9 "What do we need to know about our Azerbaijani compatriots?" TDI, <https://tdi.ge/ge/page/ra-unda-vicodet-tanamokalake-etnikuri-azerbajanelebis-shesaxe>

Azerbaijani poet Mamed Arzma:

"The question is, when did the relationship between these two nations begin? Did either party inspire this relationship? Or maybe everything happened at once and by itself? These are the questions that are very difficult to answer. We are united by one sun, land, water and air for many years now."

**Azerbaijani translator and philologist -
Shuradin Mammadli**

"Geographical similarities and the fact that Georgians and Azerbaijanis have always shared the sun, water and soil, brought together the representatives of these two nations in mountain and lowland pastures and winter huts, all of which are reflected in the literature."

Source: [Mushvig Chobanov, Azerbaijan-Georgian literature relationship, journal-Kartvelologi, 2017 https://www.academia.edu/35407801](https://www.academia.edu/35407801)

Mainly, it is through the textbooks of history and literature that human identity and attitudes are formed. The standard of ethnos and religion, which dominates the Georgian state education policy, best of all illustrates the essence of the problem and the nonexistence of an in-depth, coherent state policy for the formation of a civilized nation. Consequently, schools fail to create a multicultural environment based on mutual respect and equality of ethnic groups. In the regions populated by ethnic minorities, the tendencies of state culture dominance are noticeable and revealed in the local cultural policy. The practice of deleting¹⁰ local holidays and weak representation of minority cultures is evident¹¹.

A recent example of the erasure of cultural domination and history is the demand aired by the [high hierarchs of the church](#)

Ethnic Azerbaijani primary school teacher from Kvemo Kartli:

Now I remember one paragraph of "Me and Society", about us, that we are shepherds, Turkmen tribes, displaced during the reign of Shah Abbas. Besides, I don't think anything else is written about us in the textbooks."

Assessment of the Georgian language teacher about the negative impact of alienation policy

"Because of the state policy of alienation, the minorities perceive themselves as secondary citizens. The children from school age, imagine themselves as strangers to their own country, coming from somewhere. Textbooks also play a big role in the establishment of such thoughts. The student does not see himself/herself in any of the textbooks, moreover, it often hinders them in the process of establishing their own identity and self-determination. Consequently, not all students can link their future plans to their homeland."

Source: <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavlebis-problema-sakartvelos-azerbajianel-temshi>

[and extremist forces](#), in connection with the dismantling of a monument of the Azerbaijani writer and Bolshevik Nariman Narimanov in Marneuli¹². Despite Nariman Narimanov's controversial figure, the local Azerbaijani community considers him a part of its culture. The issue of dismantling Nariman Narimanov's monument should be resolved by the state and local authorities, together with the Azerbaijani community, without the intervention of the clergy, using democratic and inclusive formats.

The [researchers](#) working on minority issues highlight that from the point of view of the Azerbaijani cultural representatives, there is a huge setback in the state and society. The studies prove, that when the local

¹⁰ Opinion: - Dmanisoba - "Copied Celebration and Mechanisms of Cultural Domination", EMC, 2019, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dmanisoba-gadatserili-dghesastsauli-da-kulturuli-dominatsiis-mekanizmi>

¹¹ Marneuli Cultural Center Policy Assessment EMC, 2019, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/marneulis-kulturis-tsentr-is-politikis-shefaseba>

¹² Statements by the Bishop of Marneuli and Hujab and the Fascist Forces, 2020, <https://mtavari.tv/news/5636-kartuli-eklesiis-rusuli-motivebi-meupe-giorgi>; <https://mtavari.tv/news/10543-nariman-narimanovis-dzegli-aktsia-kontraktsia>

community talks about the Azerbaijani culture, they do not view it as a culture of the neighboring state - Azerbaijan, as opposed to ethnic Georgians dominated by the primacy of a neighboring state¹³.

A classic example of cultural domination is [the video released in 2018 by the Kvemo Kartli Governor's office](#)¹⁴, aiming to increase the tourism potential of the Kvemo Kartli region. There were only Orthodox cultural monuments captured in the video. There was nothing said about the local traditions, the charm of the country's diversity that can be especially found in this region, not a single word about the cultural traditions of the Azerbaijani community, its kitchen, the invaluable significance of history, and the charm of Georgia as a multicultural society. The minority culture was not represented in the video at all, which is probably more, than cultural domination and is aimed at deliberately ignoring or simply erasing the culture of a non-dominant community. ["Ethnic minorities have become "dead souls" for the state, decision-makers or the institutions"](#)¹⁵.

For example, [a large part of the resources of the Marneuli Cultural Center is spent on the dominant culture](#), while the non-dominant ethnic group represents the most of the local population. For the past three years, the cultural events held by Marneuli Cultural Center were in a language obscure for ethnic Azerbaijanis. In 2018 there were 68 events and only 8 of them were dedicated to the ethnic minorities or contained elements of ethnic minority culture. Besides, due to transportation and infrastructure problems, the residents of the villages have difficulties accessing the center, even to attend such cultural events¹⁶. Instead of holding the cultural events with the tradi-

tional Azerbaijani elements, the activities are saturated with only Georgian elements. Moreover, [in those Azerbaijani villages of Kvemo Kartli, where only ethnic Azerbaijanis live, Christian crosses are erected at the beginning of villages and in cemeteries, indicating that Kvemo Kartli is marked as an exclusively Christian land](#)¹⁷. Meanwhile, it is unclear what goal the people who are responsible for making this level of state policy decisions are trying to achieve. What outcome can be expected? The fact is that this kind of policy does not contribute to the formation of a civilized nation nor the rapprochement. Even 30 years after independence, the "equalization policy" mentioned and rejected by Zviad Gamsakhurdia nowadays is still excluded. And in an attempt to perpetuate this constant domination and ignorance, we have only multiplied problems and state tragedies.

The state finds it difficult to comprehend the fact that cultural policies, collective memory policies, and education policies carry great significance and potential for the construction of a truly inclusive and egalitarian state and society. The positive obligation of the state is to promote the role of ethnic and religious minorities in the common history, and thus make our interdependence and unity inevitable. Because of the alienation of cultures and marginalization of minority cultures and because of the problems in the statehood, all groups cannot see one another as compatible and their place and link with a common past, culture, and history. Today, the dominant ethnos and culture itself, because of their alienation rhetoric, create the image of "stranger" from the ethnic minorities, at the time, when the ethnic minorities have

13 Online discussion- "Domination and local cultural deletion signs in Lower Kartli", EMC, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temis-mimart>

14 Video on Kvemo Kartli, spread by Kvemo Kartli Governor office, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=external&v=1792717770786947>

15 The article by the local Azerbaijani activist Kamran Mammadli 2019, <https://bit.ly/2oJGC0y>

16 The assessment was carried out by the EMC non-governmental organization, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temis-mimart>

17 Video on the subject- "Domination and local cultural deletion signs in Lower Kartli" 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temis-mimart>

a completely different attitude and desire towards integration.

NARRATIVE – “IF YOU DO NOT KNOW THE LANGUAGE, YOU HAVE TO KEEP SILENT AND NOT DEMAND THE RIGHTS”

In the xenophobic context, there was an aggressive [narrative](#) outlined¹⁸ – “Welcome and learn the language”, “Integrate and get involved in the affairs of the country” “[if they knew the Georgian language during the pandemic, they would understand everything](#)”¹⁹, etc. This narrative dates back to the 1990s - “If you do not know the language, you should be silent and not demand rights.” Such sentiment still haunts a solid section of society, creating an even greater environment for the exclusion of minorities.

Due to fundamental shortcomings in the state education system, the knowledge of the language by local communities is significantly lower in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities. [According to various data, it averages 65%](#)²⁰.

The local community is blamed for the problems that occurred from the low level of knowledge of the Georgian language within the ethnic Azerbaijani population as if they have no desire to learn the language and integrate further. The Azerbaijani community is so reprimanded for the “ignorance of the Georgian language” that no one even asks how the state has taken care of this issue over the years. Neither a large part of society nor the state ever talks about what are the structural reasons for not knowing the language and

in what ways minorities can be taught the language effectively.

The State somehow forgets that its positive obligation is to teach the language to the minority community and to create a favorable atmosphere for that. At the same time, in a democratic state that cares for its citizens, even if minorities do not know the state language any information must be available for them in the language, which they can understand. Ensuring access to information in the minority language is the state's international obligation.

Local activist – Elnur Alisoy:

“How can we study Georgian language for 12 years in Azerbaijani language schools and most of the students still do not know the language after graduation? It means there are many problems in the education system. But, for some reason, they are accusing the Azerbaijani community, as if the issue of the Georgian language is the fault of the community itself.”

Source: <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/dominanturi-mzera-azerbajaneli-temi>

When we delve into the issue of learning the Georgian language for minorities, it is obvious, that the part of the community, especially young people, know the language well. [The responses of the young people of the local Azerbaijani community](#)²¹, campaigns on Georgian languages²² have shown, that, in reality, the young members of the community are fluent in the Georgian language. However, their integration

18 Statement by the Prime Minister of Georgia in Azerbaijani and attached comments containing hate speech, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1098509560501465>

19 Assessment containing hate speech towards Azerbaijani community 2020, <https://www.marneulifm.ge/ka/marneuli/article/28034-koronavirusis-akhali-simptom-qsenofobia>; <https://www.facebook.com/%E1%83%98%E1%83%AA%E1%83%9C%E1%83%9D%E1%83%91%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%A4%E1%83%90%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A1-106152431031076>

20 Statement by the Coalition for Equality - “we call for State and media, to consider minority languages in information policy”, 2020, <https://osgf.ge/movuwodebt-sakhelmwifosa-da-mediabs-sainformacio-politikashi-umciresobebis-enebi-gaitvaliswinon/>

21 Statements of local Azerbaijani community representatives, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/SalamGeorgia/posts/206977754050287>

22 Information about the Azerbaijani community campaign, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/kamran.mamedov3/posts/4227002153992129>

and effective inclusion in society are still not achievable due to various problems. Only, the knowledge of the language itself does not mean integration. The language is one and not the only tool for the integration of minorities. The constant emphasis on the issue of non-knowledge of the language by minorities and its political instrumentalization poses a significant obstacle to the integration of minorities and leads to their alienation from society. According to the assessment by local Azerbaijani activist interviewed within the frames of the research: "When hate speech is read by young people in the local community who know the language well and want integration, after hearing such xenophobic statements, they lose the desire to integrate and have a complete distrust of the government."

Lack of language knowledge in the regions, densely populated by the Azerbaijani community, is caused by complex problems, including the low quality of education in schools, poor quality textbooks, low qualifications and the shortage of teachers, school infrastructure, lack of pre-school facilities, etc.

The studies prove that the quality of teaching in regions densely populated by non-dominant groups is low²³, however, the number of Georgian language learners has increased dramatically since the launch of the 1 + 4 program²⁴, indicating that there is the desire, readiness, and progress among the minorities to learn the state language. The 1+4 program provides real support for higher education for Azerbaijani-speaking and Armenian-speaking youth. This in-



The public school in the village of Lambalo, Sagarejo district, where about 900 students study, has been operating in privately rented premises for three years. Students are given lessons in the rooms where cattle-shed used to be.

Source: <http://icode.ge/2011/05/23/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9A%E1%83%90-%E1%83%91%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A1%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%A8%E1%83%98-%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%AE%E1%83%A1%E1%83%9C%E1%83%94%E1%83%A1/>

dicates the effectiveness of this program, and its launch is welcome.

In terms of language teaching, the main challenge is the low quality of Georgian language teaching in schools. The students cannot learn the Georgian language in school for 12 years, while in the universities, they can learn the language in one year with the help of the 1+4 program. According to the students, "the one-hour lesson every day at school does not meet their needs, it is often not enough to learn Georgian and they usually require the help of additional private tutors"²⁵. The teachers explain that the grammar in the Georgian textbooks is very scarce, moreover, the textbooks are written entirely in Georgian by Georgians who do not know what problems the community has or how to teach them the language²⁶.

23 Article-"omitted necessities, interests and history- Georgian language teaching problem in Azerbaijani community", 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavlebis-problema-sakartvelos-azerbajanel-temshi>

24 Information about the 1 + 4 program <https://www.smr.gov.ge/ge/page/58/saganmanatleblo-programa>

25 Article-"omitted necessities, interests and history- Georgian language teaching problem in Azerbaijani community", 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavlebis-problema-sakartvelos-azerbajanel-temshi>

26 Idem, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/gamotovebuli-sachiroebebi-interesebi-da-istoria-kartuli-enis-stsavlebis-problema-sakartvelos-azerbajanel-temshi>

Georgian state requires that ethnic minorities must learn the state language.

This is the beginning of politics, the essence and the end. Perhaps this is reflected in the fact that in the Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions, self-governments do not even provide public information in the minority language, and the translation resources are also disorganized²⁷. The concentration on the requirement to learn the Georgian language is the reason why self-government websites are not bilingual either, thus, the local community has no opportunity to interact with the self-government, as a first-level democracy. The participation of the non-Georgians in central and local government is illusory. The aim of the government is not to make public officials representing minority interests work at the central or local level but rather to show only an imaginary diversity.

“ While participation in the process of self-government is possible only in the Georgian language, and ethnic minorities living in Marneuli Municipality do not speak the state language, it becomes hard to talk about strengthening their political participation. The factor we mentioned deprives a significant part of the population of the political process in the municipality and puts it in an unequal position²⁸”. - *Strengthening the Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Marneuli Municipality, Policy Paper, EMC, 2020*

Concerning the study of the state language, the policy of the state is sharply discriminatory. It feeds on superstitions and ste-

reotypes, as if the minorities are not interested and have no desire to learn the Georgian language, they have no appropriate education and culture to get the information from media, etc. Consequently, the state considers that if minorities are willing to integrate, they should learn the language. The statement made by Emzar Kvitsiani, Member of the Parliament is a good illustration of language domination. He reprimanded the sheikh of the highest Muslim division of Georgia for not knowing the Georgian language and indicated that if he was a citizen of Georgia, he should speak Georgian²⁹.

The challenges in language policy and low political participation of ethnic minorities increase social inclusion and vulnerability. In political life, with the ignorance of existed reality, the policy of Georgian language domination excludes non-dominant ethnic groups from public life and marginalizes them. It is unequivocal, that the integration without knowing the state language is an illusion. International experience shows that if they do not know the state language, and speak solely local language, their involvement in the state activities is minimal and often limited to the local level. Unfortunately, the state through the prism of its responsibility, cannot realize what systemic problems lie behind the ignorance of the state language and in this discourse neglects the right of minorities to receive information in their language.

MINORITIES AS A THREAT

One of the manifestations of the dominant view and chauvinism is that minorities are perceived and valued as a threat

27 Statement of the EMCS, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/emc-moutsodebs-marneulis-munitsipalitets-shekmnas-umtsiresobis-enaze-targmnis-resursebi>

28 Strengthening the Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Marneuli Municipality, Policy Paper, EMC, 2020, 11, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/etnikuri-umtsiresobebis-politikuri-monatsileobis-gadziereba-marneulis-munitsipalitetsi>

29 Statement of Emzar Kvitsiani, Member of the Parliament, 2019, <https://gyla.ge/ge/post/mirtagi-asadovis-sachivris-safudzvelze-emzar-kvicians-sakhalkho-damcvelma-zogadi-tsinadadebit-mimarta#sthash.HR0ugMns.9shggxNc.dpbs>

and unreliable citizens. The perception of minorities as a threat is typical of the state bodies as well as the dominant religion and a section of society³⁰. Instead of a vision based on the formation of a civil nation, religious or ethnic associations are assessed by the state from a security perspective, which further increases the vulnerability and marginalization of the community. As revealed from the [reports](#) of the State Security Service:

The state considers ethnic and religious minorities as a probable object of use by foreign special services in terms of security³¹. - Report of the State Security Service of Georgia (01.01.2018 - 31.12.2018).

[Xenophobic attitudes towards ethnic minorities are often translated by the state into specific political approaches, especially when it presents minorities as a threat and a dangerous force to the state](#)³². The state disregards international obligations and instead seeks to establish total control over ethnic minority areas through the State Security Service, especially during the election period. In a minority-populated region, dissatisfaction voiced by the non-dominant community immediately translates into a security problem. The consideration of minority through the prism of the security concern, was well-expressed, for example, on April 16, 2020, towards Chairman of the Supreme Religious Administration of Georgia's

All Muslims, Sheikh [Mirtag Asadov](#), who was called by the State Security Service and an investigation was launched against him on charges of sabotage³³. The circumstances of the case were as follows.

On May 30, 2020, in connection with the events in Marneuli, the State Security Service [launched an investigation](#) on a completely vague basis³⁴, concerning the fact of racial discrimination³⁵. [The State Security Service explains](#) that specific individuals and groups of individuals in Georgia tried to stir up strife between the ethnic Georgians and Azerbaijanis in Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions³⁶. As part of the investigation, [Muslim spiritual leaders and activists were summoned for questioning at the State Security Service](#)³⁷. The State Security Service did not mention the names and also did not say a word about the groups who violated the principles of equality. The statement of the State Security Service remained as a text that could be used against any person or group of persons in the interests of the "security". Such vague investigations pose a threat to intimidate minorities and further distance them.

Sometimes, the excuse for discussing the issue of ethnic minorities in the context of security is mentioned as the fear of stirring up Russian propaganda and separatist tendencies. It must be clearly stated, that one cannot overcome the mentioned fear through the exclusion or marginalization of the minorities.

30 The chauvinistic speech and narrative of Nikoloz Mzhavanadze, journalist of the Media Union Obietivi - Georgia, only for Georgians. From the Obiektivi TV He systematically voiced the disinformation during quarantine about how ethnic Azerbaijanis oppress ethnic Georgians and spoke loudly about the dangers posed on ethnic grounds in the region. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=207815850328671>

31 Report of the State Security Service of Georgia (01.01.2018 – 31.12.2018), <https://ssg.gov.ge/page/info/reports>

32 Article - "Restriction in the name of security", 2017, <https://batumelebi.netgazeti.ge/news/96718/>

33 Information on the summoning of Mirtag Asadov to the State Security Service 2020, <https://jam-news.net/ge/sheikhi-mirtagi-asadovi-sus-shi-daibares-gamodzieba-sabotadjis-mukhlit-mimdinareobs/>

34 The investigation was related to the scandal surrounding the monument to Nariman Narimanov.

35 Information about the launch of the investigation, 2020, <https://ssg.gov.ge/news/597/saxelmitsifo-usaftrxoebis-samsax-uris-saxelmitsifo-usaftrxoebis-departamentma-rasobriv-diskriminaciis-faqtze-gamodzieba-daitsyo>

36 Statement of the State Security Service, 2020, <https://imedinews.ge/ge/samartali/145422/susi-garkveuli-jgupebi-qvemo-qartlsa-da-kakhetshi-qartvelebsa-da-azerbajianebs-shoris-shuglis-gagvivebas-tsdloden>

37 Information on the summoning of members of the minority community to the survey, 2020, <https://imedinews.ge/ge/samartali/146713/saqartvelos-muslimta-sammartvelos-tavmjdomare-susshi-gamokitkhvaze-imkopeba;> <https://imedinews.ge/ge/samartali/146924/susshi-dges-motsmis-statusit-marneuleli-aqtivistebi-da-arasamtavroboebis-tsarmomad-genlebi-daikitkhebian;> <https://mtavari.tv/news/6771-sus-shi-gamokitkhvebi-grzeldeba-rasobriv>

Transformation of the behavior of minorities into a national security issue is connected with 1991-1992 years “when the 1991-1992 war left painful memories and cracked the ethnic majority - Georgians and ethnic minorities, forming the relations with minorities as a matter of national security”³⁸. - *Policy Paper - “Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: From Involvement through the Media to Empowerment”*, OSGF

Mikheil Saakashvili's stated policy regarding the relations with minorities was based on an idea of civic nationalism and broader integration of minorities. During Mikheil Saakashvili's governance, the terms, “Georgian Armenian” and “Georgian Azerbaijani” were introduced. The minorities positively perceived the new terminology. Consequently, “Georgian”, was not addressed to one particular ethnic group, but emphasizes common nationality. The “Georgian Dream” party is also declared to be building a path of civic nationalism, although, in both cases, concrete steps, with varying intensity, point to ethnoreligious domination and the portrayal of minorities as “icons of the enemy and the stranger.” In Georgia, in the space of practical, real politics, the policy of ethnoreligious nationalism was constantly pursued, meaning that if you are not an orthodox ethnic Georgian, you are not a full-fledged citizen of this country and worthy of trust. If you are a Muslim, you are a priori considered more of a problem than a resource.

Paata Zakareishvili, the former State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, points out the constant consideration of minority issues in the security context. Accord-

ing to him, the state policy of minorities has always been a domain of the security service and multiethnicity is considered a threat. Today the minority issues are managed by the State Security Service. The former State Minister explains that he could not make even minor decisions regarding minorities without involving the State Security Service³⁹.

Survey respondent: Paata Zakareishvili

“In our time we raised religious nationalism, we also managed to raise national nationalism, and it is incomprehensible to me why we do not pursue civic nationalism today. We are not a handful of nations, we are a modernizing nation, educated abroad, and suddenly we are struggling with a basic problem, we cannot move towards equality. I still believe that generation must change. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union made us lose our sense of solidarity and equality. Therefore, it takes generations to change.”

The Advisory Committee of the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities addresses the problem of perceiving minorities in the security context. According to [the 2019 report](#) of the Committee, minority issues are considered in the context of security and nation-state building, and distrust of some minorities is also noticeable. The Issues of religious and linguistic minorities are politicized, without an objective study of the issues⁴⁰.

Considering the minorities as a threat is also reflected in the state's approach to the existence of non-Georgian language broadcasting. According to the dominant opinion, the latter may have a detrimental effect on the people living in Georgia and on the interests of the country. [Studies](#) show that “the appeal is often made to the national self-consciousness or identity for-

38 Policy Paper - “Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: From Involvement through the Media to Empowerment”, OSGF, 2016, 3, https://www.osgf.ge/files/2016/EU%20publication/Angarishi_A4_Media_GEO.pdf

39 Paata Zakareishvili was interviewed within the framework of the present research.

40 ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES, 2019, 6, <https://rm.coe.int/3rd-op-georgia-en/1680969b56?fbclid=IwAR2SAJxrUXjd0cilySFHOI5DNP-0N0Q5m-qI082t7AdAUZwA-zLJ-xsswIA>

mation“⁴¹. The state somehow cannot analyze the severe social and humanitarian consequences of keeping its non-dominant group of citizens in the information vacuum, the price of which is paid by minorities, and ultimately by the Georgian state itself daily.

CHALLENGES OF THE STATE AND THE MEDIA IN INFORMING MINORITIES AND THE RELEVANT CONSEQUENCES

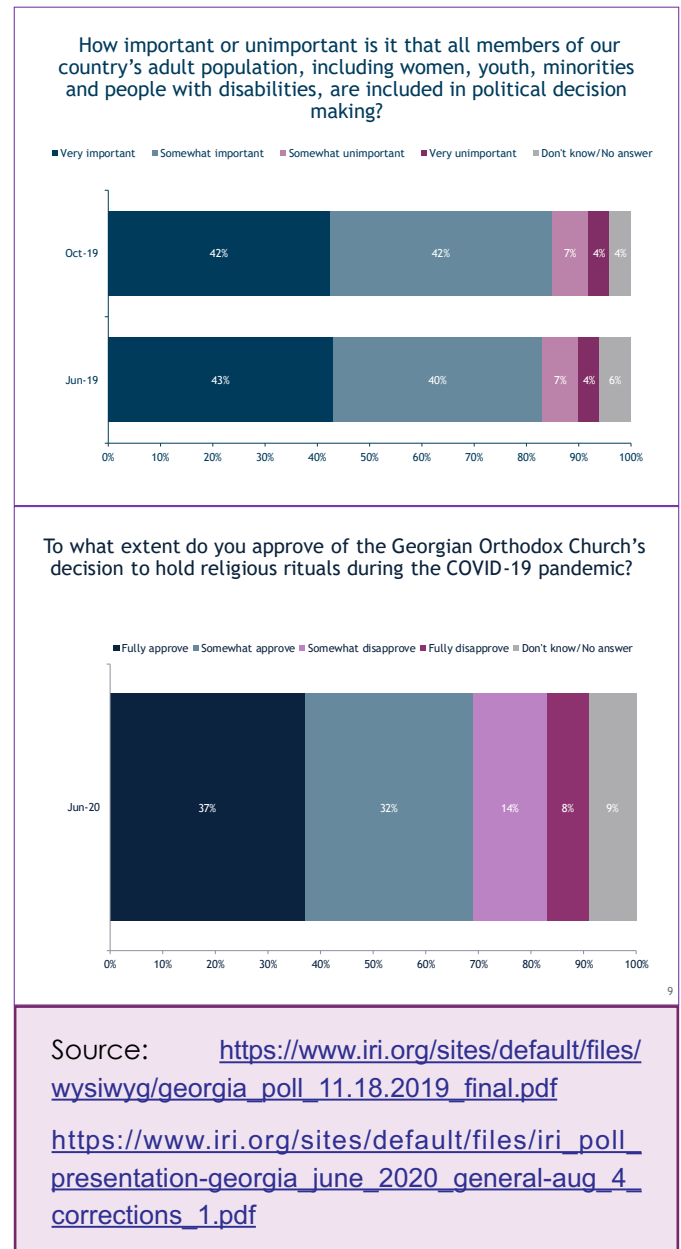
Ethnic minorities have little access to information disseminated by the public broadcaster or private television stations, leading to ignorance of the minority community and exclusion from public life.

According to a 2019 survey by the Institute for Social Research and Analysis, only 21 percent of the Armenian community and 13 percent of the Azerbaijani community receive information about current events in Georgia daily⁴².

Studies have shown (For example, the study - “The needs of ethnic minorities, the Public Broadcaster and the pandemic, EMC, 2020) that even during the spread of the coronavirus, “the information aired on Georgia's Public Broadcaster was delayed for Armenian and Azerbaijani-speaking people, its spreading was not organized well enough to be accessible for a wide range of the audience, the disseminated information itself was very short, shallow and non-renewable“⁴³.

Limited access to Georgian-language media outlets of the local Azerbaijani community is the main reason why the state's recommendations were insufficiently perceived by the population during the quarantine⁴⁴,

causing confusion within the community. A survey conducted by the Open Society - Georgia Foundation shows that a very small part of Azerbaijani-speaking and Armenian-speaking populations watch Georgian media⁴⁵. Hence, to fill the information gap, minorities watch foreign media, mainly Russian TV channels, and become easy targets for propaganda and disinformation.



41 Research - “Needs of Ethnic Minority, Public Broadcaster and Pandemic”, EMC, 2020, 5, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/etnikuri-umtsiresobebis-sachiroebibi-sazogadoebrivi-mautsqebeli-da-pandemia-1>

42 Research - “Study on the Participation of Ethnic Minorities in Political Life”, Institute for Social Research and Analysis-2019, 44, <https://osgf.ge/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Analytical-Report-ISSA-GEO.pdf>

43 Research - “Needs of Ethnic Minority, Public Broadcaster and Pandemic”, EMC, 2020, 23, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/etnikuri-umtsiresobebis-sachiroebibi-sazogadoebrivi-mautsqebeli-da-pandemia-1>

44 Article - The fourth day of quarantine in Marneuli - Interview with Kamila Mamedova, 2020, <https://civil.ge/ka/archives/344232>

45 Research - “Needs of Ethnic Minority, Public Broadcaster and Pandemic”, OSGF, 2016, https://www.osgf.ge/files/2016/EU%20publication/Angarishi_A4_Media_GEO.pdf

Unfortunately, the Public Broadcaster also limited its minority language broadcasting resources and switched to creating online platforms. We have to mention that the internet is not the primary source of information for the public. Internet is used by young people, most of whom already know the Georgian language. In ethnic minority regions, the primary source of information for the middle and older generation is television. The situation is aggravated by the fact that private TV stations have no practice of providing information in minority languages, and local and regional public or private media coverage is weak.

There are two targets in terms of identifying language and information policy:

The first is local self-government, which pursues a harsh policy and refuses to provide information in the language of ethnic minorities, despite the state having a positive obligation to provide information to minorities in an understandable language. The second is the central government, which continues the rhetoric that minorities do not know the language, and it is necessary to continue learning the language.

The management of the Public Broadcaster is in line with the state policy stating that the ethnic minorities should learn the state language. Perhaps this rhetoric echoes the fact that in regions densely populated by minorities, local governments do not provide public information in the minority language, and translation resources are unsystematic and disorganized. Even local government websites do not exist in two languages, which would allow ethnic minorities to interact with the government. Unfortunately, the state broadcaster does not take into consideration the challenges faced by the ethnic minorities in learning the state language. There are low-quality educational services for Azerbaijani and Armenian communities. In regions densely populated by minorities, the policy of state language dominance is evident at all

levels of government, and throughout this discourse, the right of minorities to receive information in their language and to use their language in public spaces is neglected. The state does not even realize that such an approach leads to the political exclusion and alienation of minorities. The authorities should understand that teaching language to minorities is their positive obligation. And, if it is not properly secured, they are obliged to assist the citizens in the process of obtaining information.

If we look at the media today, ethnic minorities are mainly presented in a stereotypical and negative context, such as premature marriage, the kidnapping of girls, drug trafficking, and others. The alienation between dominant and non-dominant communities creates specific social problems. Consequently, such negative perceptions of minorities are firmly entrenched in society and then expressed in xenophobic and racist manifestations against them. During the pandemic, xenophobic sentiments revealed flaws in this information vacuum, language, and broadcasting policy. It is the information vacuum and isolation that has led to cases of the racialization of ethnic and religious minorities during the Covid pandemic.

The media needs to understand its role to avoid the alienation and xenophobic attitudes between dominant and non-dominant groups. It can play an important role in positively sharing the culture and traditions of the ethnic groups living in Georgia. In this regard, the Public Broadcaster has a special workload, which has the potential of increasing the visibility of minorities and covering the issues based on the interests of minorities. The media has the resources and opportunities to integrate ethnic minorities and positively represent them. One of the most relevant tasks of Public Broadcaster is to promote interethnic dialogue and multiculturalism.

"All people are equal, but some people are more equal than others."

George Orwell

According to ethnoreligious nationalism, the history and identity of Georgia are understood from the mono-religious and ethnocentric prism. The orthodox in this country is a privileged citizen and host, while the rest are just "guests", "visitors", and "strangers". In the Georgian Orthodox society, there is a tendency to look at the representatives of another religion with "arrogance", as if they are "different". The state favors the religion of the dominant ethnic group and its followers because they are ethnically Georgian and make up the majority of the country.

Samira Bairamova (Survey respondent)

"Once I was in Racha with my friends, and we visited one of the churches, where a certain religious ceremony was taking place. We became interested, and when we came to the priest, he started talking to me warmly. However, later he asked me about my accent. When I told him that I was ethnic Azerbaijani, he became cold to me and then told me he did not have time for me."

The ideology of the Georgian Church is based on sharply expressed, aggressive ethnoreligious nationalism and chauvinism. It is distinguished with a special hatred for religious and ethnic minorities. Generally, the church's approach is that being Georgian and Christianity are the same, and their separation is inadmissible. Hence, if you are not a Christian, you cannot be a Georgian.

Demonstration of power and disrespect by the Georgian Church towards religious

and ethnic minorities is manifested in specific provocative actions. While the majority of the local population is non-Orthodox, against this background, [the Bishop of Marneuli and Hujab teaches the Azerbaijani community how to manage their values](#)⁴⁶. In the regions populated by ethnic minorities, the strong influence of the Orthodox Church and the tolerant attitude of the state towards the representatives of the dominant religion creates an unequal situation and a xenophobic environment, isolating and excluding ethnic and religious minorities from society.

Religious and ethnic domination was manifested in all its intensity during the state of emergency, during the quarantine period. The COVID pandemic gave an additional to the clergy to stir up xenophobic sentiments. They were eager to express their aggressive attitude towards ethnic and religious minorities.

[The Georgian church cooperates with homophobic and fascist forces](#)⁴⁷ and often shares their ideology. It aggressively interferes with the competencies of the secular authorities and provides them with directives regarding the management and resolution of significant secular issues. The Georgian Church has a great influence on the political elite and enjoys immeasurable privileges.

[More than 83 percent of the Marneuli population is Muslim, though, Marneuli and Hujabi Eparchy is financed with 400 000 \(four hundred thousand\) GEL, and the mosques are financed only with 10 000 GEL \(including the utility expenses\) from the local budget](#)⁴⁸. In regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, there is a big-budget fund only for one dominant religion. This occasion results in inequality and alienation in the ethnic minority community living in Marneuli Municipality.

46 Sermon of the Bishop of Marneuli and Hujab, 2020, <https://mtavari.tv/news/5636-kartuli-eklesiis-rusuli-motivebi-meupe-giorgi>

47 A story about cooperation, 2020, <https://mtavari.tv/news/5636-kartuli-eklesiis-rusuli-motivebi-meupe-giorgi>

48 Statement EMC, 2020, <https://emc.org.ge/ka/products/vekhmianebit-kartvelta-marshis-da-skhva-interesta-jgufebis-mi-er-chven-tsinaagmdeg-tsarmoebul-kampanias>

STATEMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

“Georgia enjoys good-neighborly relations with both Azerbaijan and Armenia. We aim to maintain and further strengthen these relations.”

Melik Raisian, the candidate of the “National Movement” in Ninotsminda-Akha-



Կրկին
գործը

Enzel Mkoyan, then a member of the ruling “Georgian Dream” party, also commented on the developments in Nagorno-Karabakh and on evaluating the current situation called on the youth: “Do not take any steps and do not hinder the Armenian Defense Army in carrying out its sacred mission.”

Another member of Parliament from the “National Movement” party, [Azer Suleymanovi](#), who was particularly notable for his



MŪRACĪĀTĪ

Möhtərəm Prezident!

Şon 30 ildə Azərbaycanın ərazi bütövlüyü daima mənfur qonşumuz Ermənistanın və erməni terror silahlı birləşmələrinin işğalçı hücumlarına məruz qalmış və bu işğalçı siyasəti və onların havadarlarının dəstəyi sayəsində Azərbaycan 20 faiz ərazisini itirmişdir. Cənubi Qafqazda məhriban qonşuluq münasibətlərinə böyük zərbə vuran ermənilər, Azərbaycanla birgə, doğma Gürcüstanımızın da ərazisinə və əhalisinə qarşı ağlasmıgma vəhşiliklər törətmişdir. Bu gün hər iki dost, qardaş ölkənin ərazi bütövlüyünün bərpa edilməsinə qarşı üçüncü qonşu dövlət-Ermənistan tərəfindən daima təhdidlər yağdırılır. 1988-ci ildən bəri Azərbaycanın sağalmaz yarəsina çevirilen Qarabağ itkisi və səvaşı bu gün bütövlüklə Azərbaycan-Ermənistan şərhəddi boyunca daha da alovlanmaqdadır.

Hörmətli Prezident İlham Heydər oğlu!

Sizin dəqiqliklə yürütdüyünüz daxili və xarici siyasətin sayəsində biz bir daha əmin olduk ki, uzaqgörənlikiniz və Ali Baş Komandan olaraq ən hassas nöqtəsində qədər hesablanmış hərbi taktikalarınız bu gün geniş miqyasda icrası, zamanın tələbi kimi qarşınızda müqəddəs vəzifəyə çevrilmişdir. Azərbaycan əsgərinin hərbi gücünün ifadəsi olaraq bir neçə il öncə baş vermiş "Lələtəpə əməliyyatı" artıq qüdrətli və döyüşçən rühlü bir ordumuzun olduğunu göstərdi. Mənfur düşmən bizim dars çıxartmayaraq bir neçə ay əvvəl, yenidən cəbhə xəttini dəyişməklə Qarabağdan yüzliklər kilometr aralı Tovuz rayonu istiqamətində Azərbaycanın ərazilərini işğalçı niyyətlə soxulmağa cəhd etdi. Ancaq Azərbaycan ordusunun cavab atəşləri düşmənin hərbi qüvvələri bir daha dəmarmadın edildi. Bu döyüşdə general Polad Həşimov və polkovnik həmyerlimiz İlqar Mirzəyev kimi dəyərli zabitarlarımız şəhid olması bizi də üsə da, o vaxtdan bu yana böyük səfəşin olacağı günü səbrsizliklə gözləmişik. Bu gün 27 sentyabr o tarixin başlanğıcı ola bilər, əmin ola bilərsiniz ki, Gürcüstandakı soydaşlarımız 1990-cı illərdə Qarabağ və Abxaziya səfəşinə könüllü qatıldığını kimi, indi də Azərbaycan adlı Milli Dövlətimizin, Gürcüstan adlı Böyük Vətənimizin ərazi bütövlüyü uduşunda hər bir cədrinə hazırdır.

radical statements on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, wrote a [letter](#) to the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev. The MP published the letter on his official webpage. The letter reads: "Armenians, who have dealt a heavy blow to the good-neighborly relations in the South Caucasus, have committed great atrocities not only against Azerbaijan but also on the territory of their native Georgia as well as against its people."

Such a position of a member of the Georgian Parliament naturally does not serve to promote peace or the country's policy of neutrality, and this may not only further strain the relations between the ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis living in Georgia, but they will also stir up the Armenophobia that has existed for years, and which indeed shows itself from time to time in the fascist and radical parts of society.

The ambassador of Azerbaijan to Georgia was also active during the conflict. In a [statement](#) issued by him in Georgian, we read: "Against a positive background (meaning in Georgia) there is a sharp discord of official Yerevan-inspired efforts to arouse the desire of the Armenian population of Georgia to participate in aggression against Azerbaijan. These attempts became active in Samtskhe-Javakheti, a region densely populated by Armenians. Since the end of September, various campaigns were held here to raise funds and enroll "volunteers". The aim is to support the Armenian military structures, which have been consistently destroyed by the blows of the Azerbaijani armed forces. That is, Georgian citizens are being encouraged to fight the country's strategic partner - Azerbaijan".

In the present study, we would not have focused on the statement of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan had it not been for his attempt to declare Armenians living in Georgia separatists. [**Such statements cannot have a place within the framework of diplomatic communication with a friendly**](#)

[**country, as they are aimed at inciting ethnic hatred.**](#)

Despite the declared neutrality, there has been no response from the authorities against these statements, including the stated positions of the ruling party MPs.

The third President of Georgia, [Mikheil Saakashvili also made](#) remarks on the ongoing war in Nagorno-Karabakh. "My position is very clear, it is based on the principle of state territorial integrity, that is, Nagorno-Karabakh is the sovereign territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and nothing can change that." he wrote on his official Facebook page. Saakashvili's statement was followed by a huge response on the social network from the Georgian citizen ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijanis. If we take a look at the comments to the ex-president's post, we will notice two hostile sides.

Following and in response to Saakashvili's statement and for the biased coverage of the events around Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnic Armenian population of Georgia staged a rally in front of the "Mtavari Channel" that was soon followed by another statement from the ex-president, in which he expressed his grief for the fallen Azerbaijani and Armenian citizens, and at the same time reminded the Armenians living in Georgia of the numerous projects ["implemented for their good"](#).

The text and the spirit of President Saakashvili's statement clearly show the established division between "us" and "them". It was done in Akhalkalaki, that is, it was done for them, specifically for the Armenian population and not for Georgia as a whole, and vice versa, things are considered "done" only if they are done specifically for Armenians or Azerbaijanis, otherwise we would have been reminded of the reform of the House of Justice in this context. Such an approach, in turn, promotes the fragmentation and disintegration of society.

From this perspective, we can see that the ethnic minorities living in Georgia are

only a cosmetic part of Georgia, and in many cases are considered as if they are unconnected societies simply living on the territory of Georgia.

A special mention should be made of the [video clip](#) that appeared on social networks during the hostilities and attracted the attention of the ethnic Armenian population. The release of similar videos during the war created an illusion among the Armenian population living in Georgia that Georgia sided with only one of the parties to the war. The annotation of the clip: "soon, a new clip in support of Azerbaijan" also contributed to the formation of such an opinion.



It should be noted that according to Paragraph 5 of Article 45 of the [Law](#) of Georgia on Military Duty and Military Service, "Citizens shall be held responsible according to the legislation of Georgia for wearing military uniform and insignia illegally." Nevertheless, no one has been held accountable.

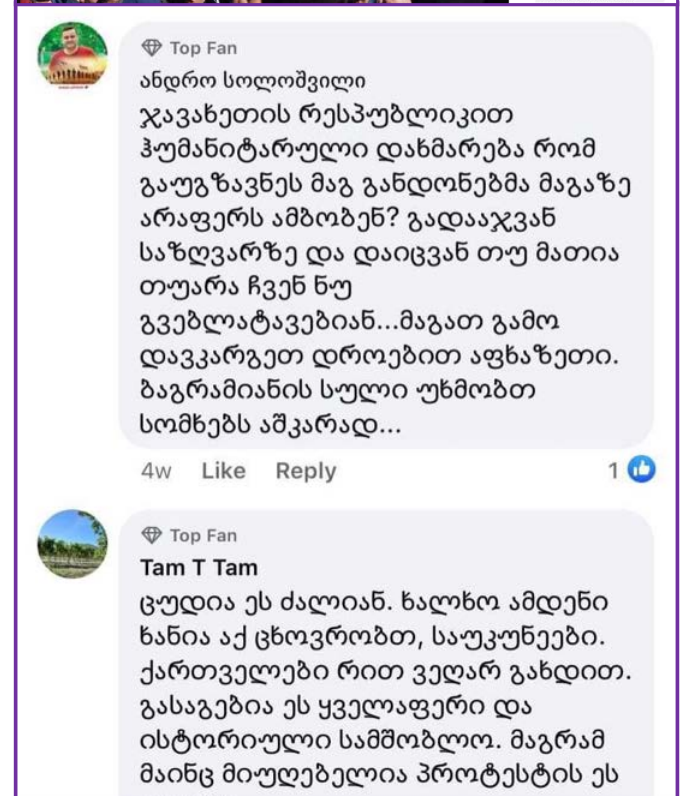
In the end, it can be said that the Georgian government has limited itself only to the statements on remaining neutral although it has not taken any concrete steps

to at least distance itself from the statements of its members of Parliament. Besides, there has been no reaction from the Georgian Foreign Ministry concerning the statement of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Georgia about the existence of separatist movements in our country.

MINORITIES AS A THREAT

On October 11, 2020, the [Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan](#) wrote on his official Facebook page:

"These days, Armenians across the world show strength of unity. This movement must also be made attractive to the representatives of other nations who are against violence, corruption, terrorism, and pursue victory of justice, freedom, and love."



He even uploaded 60 photos there. The photos had been taken in different countries of the world where the Armenian Diaspora supported the people living in Nagorno-Karabakh with peaceful rallies. The photos show the name of the country or the city where the rally had taken place. Among these 60 photos are two photos taken in Georgia. "Javakheti" is written in Latin letters on one picture and "Javakhk" on the other. This has caused a great amount of outcry in Georgia.



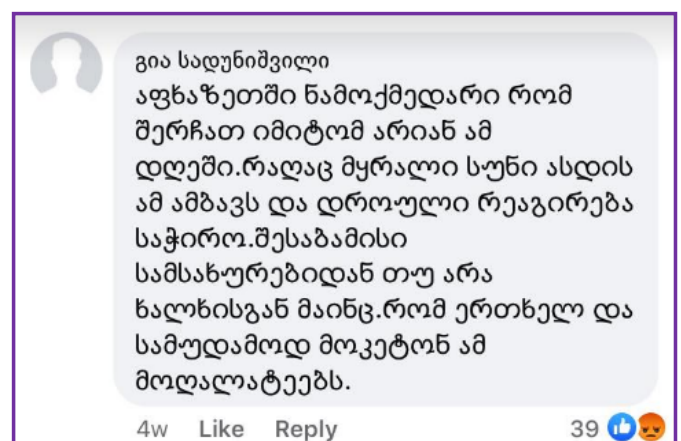
Due to the caption "Javakhk" written instead of Javakheti on the photo, radical groups reacted immediately, and in connection to the post of the Prime Minister of Armenia, it was said that this had been a part of Nikol Pashinyan's deliberate campaign. "Do you realize that this post has been published for one day already and Pashinyan has not deleted or changed this photo yet? This clearly indicates that he did it on purpose and is by no means a mistake. I advise you to start protecting your regions from Armenians" - Facebook users wrote these and posts with similar content.

A large number of such comments ultimately generated an illusion that Armenians living in Javakheti had been demanding independence and posed a threat to Georgia. Many have fallen victim to this provocation. The responses that followed Pashinyan's post accused the population of Javakheti of separatism. This was aggravated by the above-mentioned statement by the Azerbaijani ambassador to Georgia. In response, one of the civil activists, [Harut Malkhasyan](#), wrote on his Facebook page:



"A month has passed since the start of the Karabakh war, and during this period, personally I, and my friends found ourselves tangled in an information war. It has been a month now some people completely unaware of Javakheti's whereabouts have been talking about its separatism and have been warning the Georgian state about the "escape" of these lands. Added to all this is the ambassador of Azerbaijan. Imagine, the ambassador of Azerbaijan to Georgia talks about the separatism in Javakheti and he even invented a flag. As a Georgian citizen born and raised in Javakheti, I would like to tell you one thing: all those people who talk about this topic be it a Georgian, Armenian, or Azerbaijani are Georgia's biggest enemy and they should stop that wild goose chase."

The present study has revealed numerous cases that show deep-rooted aggression and intolerance in one part of the society towards the different ethnic group representatives.



In the posts published on the social network, we often come across such interjections as “Throw these damn fools out of here! When the Armenians fought against us in Abkhazia, why didn't they protest then?” “Let them go back to their country and make demands there.” One of the respondents to the survey gives two reasons that are keys to the intolerant and aggressive attitude towards the ethnic Armenian population. Namely:

- Baghramian Battalion consisting of ethnic Armenians and fighters of other nationalities participating in the Abkhaz war; and
- Ethnic Armenians living in Javakheti who are often accused of anti-state activities.

The surveyee

“As a young ethnic Armenian living in Georgia, I believe that it is necessary to speak openly and express our opinions on these issues because all doubts should be dispelled and a rational assessment of the past should be made. Me and my compatriots should not be reprimanded unjustly for the actions of a particular battalion, we should not be accused of a non-existent separatism.”

Xenophobic attitudes towards ethnic minorities are a problem for any state. When one part of the society considers ethnic minorities as unreliable, secondary citizens and a threat to the state, the government of the country must be vigilant and the relevant steps and strategy must be clear to the public. It is undeniably obvious that the representatives of the ethnic Armenian population are constantly in a state of self-defense and have to constantly prove that they do not pose a threat to Georgia and Georgians, they love Georgia, and are good subjects of this country. Unlike ethnic Armenian activists, no concrete, clear and tangible political statement or a strategic

The surveyee: Inna Sukiasian

“When someone writes something we have to clear ourselves of the guilt, why is it so? I do not know why everyone asks me if any Armenian around the world writes something or if he posts something, I do not know why I have to respond. This collective responsibility is some kind of a disease. This is a Soviet legacy. Back then there was a collective responsibility because there was no private property, there was nothing private then, everything was shared and the responsibility, too was shared.”

communication narrative is offered by the authorities of the country.

**THE ONLY POLITICAL PRIORITY IS GEORGIA'S RIGHT
COMMITMENT TO TEACHING THE STATE LANGUAGE**

From the dominant community representatives, we often hear that every Georgian citizen must know the state language. In a developed and democratic society, this view is quite acceptable and legitimate. However, when talking about this problem in Georgia they usually blame the local community for the low-level language proficiency and the resulting problems as if they do not want to learn the language and to integrate. We have tried to study the circumstances and environment that meet the conditions for this stated political task.

There is a positive obligation of the state to create an accessible environment for the ethnic minorities living in the country to learn the state language. It should also be noted that in a democratic country where ethnic minorities do not speak the state language any information should be provided in a language they understand. It is the state's international obligation to provide information in minority languages.

Although formal school education ensures that the state language is taught in all educational institutions of Georgia huge

problems persist as a result of which the young people have language barriers after graduation. This is largely due to the fundamental shortcomings in the public education system.

When a person leaves school and does not speak the state language properly he/she suffers from certain fears and inferiority feelings. It is difficult to concentrate on the career and success in such circumstances. People are focused on integration into society and on “making no mistakes.”

As they do not know the language well the schoolchildren are not able to fully receive various information on educational programs. Consequently, it is from the school-age that we come across the first cases of structural inequality. The educational system in the non-Georgian language schools represents a separate problem. There are problems concerning both the teaching materials and the teachers.

It should also be mentioned that the dynamics of language proficiency have been showing positive results in recent years. As for the state language programs, here we have to mention the [program “1 + 4”](#) that has been a game-changer. Another effective program is the [project of the Assistant Teacher](#). This project envisages sending bilingual support teachers to non-Georgian language schools in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and Kakheti. They assist local teachers in planning and giving integrated language and subject lessons.

Due to the new initiatives from the state, ethnic minorities now have more chances to master the state language and they actively take this opportunity. However, although more young people speak the state language today, their full integration remains an insurmountable problem.

To objectively think about integration the state must implement reforms across the board. The commitment to provide information is among them.

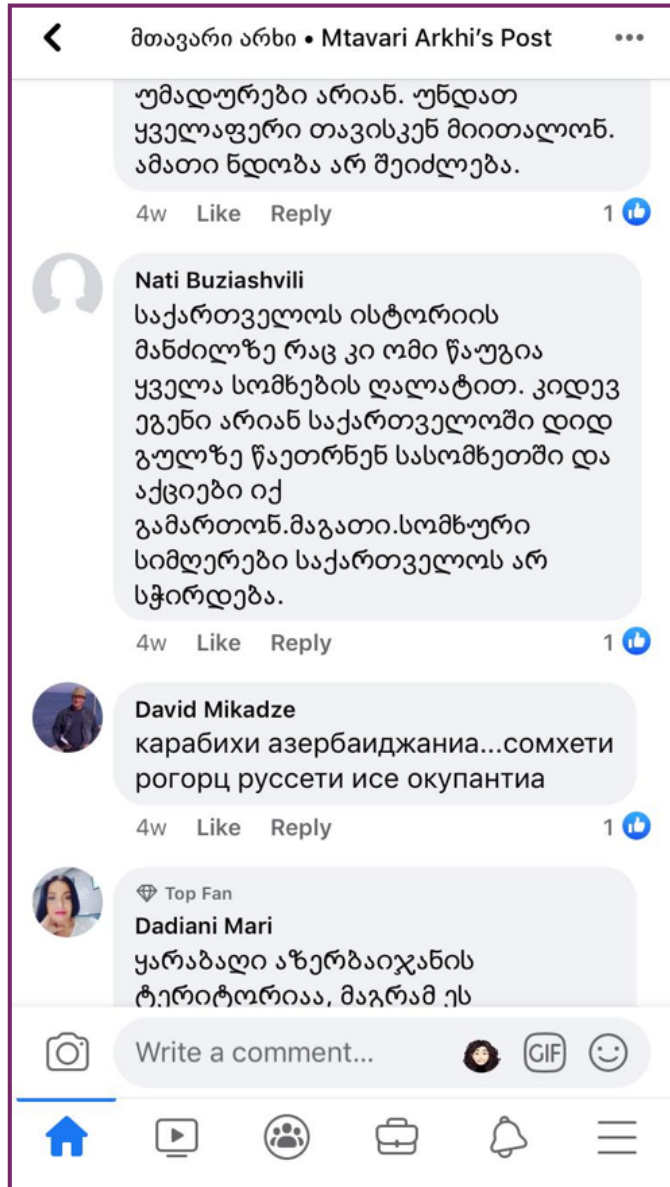
Modern technologies facilitate the rapid dissemination of information and offer a range of ways to establish communication. Today people from different countries representing ethnic minorities connect in a much simple and swift way which in turn helps them to maintain ties with their historical homelands as well as to establish new ties. Yet, despite the new technologies, social networks, the Internet gradually replacing traditional means of information, the media is still an important tool for ethnic minorities.

Numerous [studies](#) confirm that the population in the ethnic minority populated regions in Georgia still consults the traditional media resources which are rarely in Georgian. Consequently, the lack of knowledge of the state language remains the biggest [challenge](#). The public broadcaster, which is responsible for providing information to ethnic minorities, has not been exactly successful in this regard. The fact that public broadcasting is not available in ethnic minority languages was extremely evident in 2020 during the Covid Pandemic and the Karabakh war.

To prevent artificial escalations in a multi-ethnic state the consultation and constant coordination with the media on matters of national integration and formation of the united civil nation is also critical.

The situation in Georgia is something like this: the media content practically never spares any time to talks about ethnic minorities, their problems, their daily life, traditions and the only occasion they are referred to is an event in the community that negatively affects the progress and development of the country. If we take a closer look at the information broadcasted by the media outlets operating in Georgia we will notice that ethnic minorities are mainly mentioned in negative contexts: crime, domestic violence, early marriage, separatism, and so on. When you analyze the coverage of minority issues in the Geor-

gian media you will come to almost the same conclusion as it is in this [article](#) by the journalist of the “Georgia and World” media outlet: “**They are absolutely usual enemies and what is most important, they publicly acknowledge it**” (Beso Barbakadze, “Georgia and World”).



“**Georgia, a common homeland**”, will remain only a slogan until the Georgian education system facilitates the formation of the united civil nation, and until like the Georgian heroes, benefactors, distinguished figures of various fields the people mentioned below occupy their well-deserved place for their contribution to the development of the Georgian history, culture, art, and literature.

Famous Armenians in Georgia

The construction of the first clinical hospital in Tbilisi is attributed to [Mikael Aramyants](#). In 1899, with the donation from Mikael Aramyants the Tbilisi Second Classical Gymnasium for Boys was built, currently the Ministry of Education. A building built by the benefactor, [Melik-Azaryants](#) in 1912-1915 can still be seen on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi, which is a distinctive monument of modernism in Tbilisi. Melik-Azaryants headed the [Charitable Society of the Caucasus Armenians](#). The foundation supported 100 rural schools and provided scholarships to students who left for Europe to receive an education.

[Alexander Mantashev](#), an Armenian entrepreneur from Tbilisi was a well-known philanthropist in Georgia. Mantashev financially supported a school for the blind; a shelter for the elderly and children. Mantashev founded a trading house - the Guild of Merchants - which had its representations in Europe and Asia. At present, the Tbilisi N43 public school is located in that building. [Mikael Aramyants](#), [Melik-Azaryants](#) and [Alexander Mantashev](#) spent a total of 150,000 Rubles for the restoration of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in the twentieth century. [Gavril Tamamshev](#), an Armenian benefactor living in Georgia is also well known. The first Opera (Treasury) House in Tbilisi was built through his funds, the foundations of the building laid on April 15, 1847. Tamamshev provided financial support to artists and teachers. Nineteenth-century Tbilisi was the center of intellectuals and artists from Armenia and the whole Caucasus. An Armenian writer [Hovhannes Tumanyan](#) was based in Tbilisi during this period. Here he founded the “Vernatun” Literary Union of Armenian Writers.

Ethnic Armenian artists, painters, graphic artists, and illustrators worked in Georgia in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries. Among them were Hakob Hovnatanyan, Karapet Grigoryants, Vano Khojabekov, Harutin Shamshyan, Sarkis Khachaturian, Vagharshak Elibekyan, and others.

One cannot conceive the Georgian culture without the great works of the filmmaker and artist [Sergei Parajanov](#). Parajanov was born and raised in Tbilisi.

It should be emphasized that the communication of this and similar types of information and knowledge can lead to the fastest and most efficient integration. Nothing can bring people and, consequently, ethnicities and cultures closer together than the joint efforts to build and strengthen the state. Acknowledging and understanding the virtues and contributions of both Armenian and Azerbaijani figures creates windows of exactly such opportunities and it is also important to modify the textbooks accordingly, together with the state language and teacher training programs.

An analysis of the attitudes of social media users shows that a part of Georgian society thinks that the knowledge of the language is sufficient for integration into the society, although other problems that hinder the integration of ethnic minorities are forgotten. Socio-cultural integration and compatibility is a complex and multifaceted process and involves several other elements in addition to the full mastery of the state language by members of the ethnic minorities.

THE SIGNS OF ALIENATION OF CULTURES, ERADICATION OF THE LOCAL CULTURE, AND DOMINATION OF THE GEORGIAN CULTURE

One of the reasons for the negative attitudes of different ethnic groups in the state may be the paucity of information about each other's cultures. One of the respondents said: "One thing is clear, we are closer today but the new generations know very little about each other." In an interview, [Inna Sukiasyan](#), a surveyee notes:

Inna Sukiasyan, the surveyee:

“A lot of people do not understand at all why this city and this country are multicultural, how come we, the representatives of different ethnic groups live here? Well, all this

is the result of having little knowledge of each other.”

Another surveyee, [Tigran Tarzyan](#) of the NGO “Youth for a Democratic Change”, tells us:

“Georgia is a multicultural country, but culture is on the bottom of the list among the representatives of non-dominant communities, because here, too, local self-government and people in this area are passive and completely politicized. We, the people of different nationalities have been living together for a thousand years, and do we consider our culture to be solely a Dolma festival or folk music and dance concert?”

Our respondents also added that not only there is a lack of additional measures and new initiatives to bring the ethnic and religious minority cultures closer to the dominant culture, but whatever has been associated with them for centuries is being subsidized and vanished. To illustrate, we can recall the endless saga of the disputed Armenian churches in Georgia. There are 6 disputed churches on the territory of Georgia. Those with Armenian references are [“Norashen”](#); [“Shamkhoretso Surb Astvatsatsin” \(Karmir Avetaranots\)](#); [“Surb Minas”](#); [“Surb Nshan”](#); [“Mughnu Surb Gevorg”](#) in Tbilisi and [“Surb Nshan”](#) in Akhaltsikhe. Part of the disputed churches is regularly ruined and due to the dispute over the owner they do not have someone to take care of them. For example, [in 2014 the roof of Surb Minas Church collapsed, in 2012 the pillar and entrance of Surb Nshan Church collapsed](#). Such cases of neglect of even disputed cultural monuments on the territory of Georgia endanger their existence, and at the same time do not promote the rapprochement between ethnicities and religions.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

As the research revealed, there are large-scale problems in integrating ethnic minorities and the implementation of real equality policies, leading to the exclusion and marginalization of the minority community. The Georgian state should take comprehensive measures based on inclusion and equality to boost ethnic and religious minorities' effective involvement in public and political life and increase their representation in the overall state context. Georgia must shift from the declared course of building civil nationalism to real implementation, where the main thing is citizenship and not ethnic and religious affiliation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT BODIES:

Increasing the participation of minorities in public and political life:

- Participation of ethnic minorities in the socio-political life should become one of the central issues on the political agenda; Take appropriate steps at the central and local levels to increase the representation of ethnic minorities and their effective participation in public and political life;
- The Government of Georgia, together with the local self-government, should develop special programs for real and intensive teaching of the state language in secondary schools;
- As long as full knowledge of the state language remains a major challenge in the country, the state should ensure the right of minorities to receive information from local self-government bodies in a language they understand;
- Create appropriate translation resources for citizens who do not know

the state language when requesting administrative proceedings and public information;

Education Policy:

- To study the level of teacher training and the quality of teaching in non-Georgian schools in order to identify gaps in teaching and learning; based on the research, develop a relevant policy for the introduction of special programs;
- Issues of multiculturalism and religious diversity should be taken into account when developing Georgian high school textbooks;
- The content of the textbooks should include issues of tolerance, equality, and ethnic diversity; Textbooks should include texts on solidarity, issues of the mutual understanding of culture and the state;
- Ensure the teaching of the contribution of minorities to the development and strengthening of the Georgian state in Georgian school textbooks.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GEORGIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER:

Minority coverage issues:

- Facilitate the visibility of minorities and the coverage of programs focused on their interests;
- Take appropriate measures to promote interethnic dialogue and multiculturalism;

RECOMMENDATIONS TO POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC FIGURES:

- When discussing minority issues, make statements in support of equality and thus contribute to the social integration of ethnic minorities;

- Take appropriate measures to protect the principle of a secular state;
- Ensure that Georgia's tourism potential is reflected in its diversity as a major and important treasure.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1. **Minorities** - A minority is "a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics differing from the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language." (Francesco Capotorti's definition)

2. **Xenophobia** - Xenophobia is a Greek word meaning "fear of a stranger, foreigner, guest". It is anxiety characterized by negative stereotypes and prejudices towards all strangers. This fear is manifested in the unacceptability of people different from others and hostility towards them. <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=5&t=2523>

3. **Chauvinism** - This word was coined to denote the extreme belief in extreme patriotism that a certain nation and culture are absolutely better and superior to others. Chauvinism also implies that a chauvinist has overconfidence and a belief in his or her innate superiority over anyone who does not belong to his or her culture or nation. <http://dictionary.css.ge/content/chauvinism>

4. **Racism** - a reactionary ideology, psychology, politics, and practice based on the supposedly natural, biological, predetermined heterogeneity of the human race and their "high", "low", "complete", "incomplete" divisions, which give rise to domination over one race over another. <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=6&t=6018>

5. **Racial Discrimination** - Any distinction, specificity, restriction, or advantage based on race, color, national or ethnic origin intended to abolish or impede the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis in the political, economic and in cultural or other fields. <http://www.su->

premecourt.ge/files/upload-file/pdf/aqte-bi7.pdf

6. **Dominance** - the exercise of power by one person or social group over another and its control. <http://dictionary.css.ge/content/dominance>

7. **Extremism** - the tendency to solve political problems in extreme ways and means. Extremism in politics means calling for the most radical means to achieve the set goals and objectives, including the use of violence and terror. <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/gwdict/index.php?a=term&d=6&t=4193>

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RESPONDENTS

1. Oktai Kazumov - Member of the Board, Non-Governmental Organization - "Salam";
2. Kamilla Mamedova - Director, Community Radio "Marneuli";
3. Kamran Mammadli - Civil activist; one of the founders of "Salam";
4. Leila Mamedova - Local Azerbaijani community activist, human rights activist;
5. Nona Samkharadze - Civil activist, information coordinator of the International Organization "Mercy Corps";
6. Zaur Khalilov - Executive Director of the Civic Integration Fund - CIF;
7. Ravil Memmedoğlu - Civil activist, founder of the Center for Civic Engagement and Activism;
8. Samira Bayramova - Local Azerbaijani community activist, Journalists Network for Gender Equality;
9. Elnur Alisoy - Civil activist, one of the founders of "Salam";
10. Aitaj Khalilli - Civil activist, member of the board of the platform "Salam";
11. Paata Zakareishvili - Former State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civic Equality;
12. Tamta Mikeladze - One of the founders of EMC, a member of the Board of Directors.

ORGANIZATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

1. Civic Initiative for Democratic and Euro-Atlantic Choice (Civic IDEA) - <https://civicidea.ge/en/>
2. The Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC) - <https://emc.org.ge/en>
3. Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI) - <https://tdi.ge/en>
4. Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI) - <https://www.gdi.ge/en/>
5. Public Movement "Multinational Georgia" (PMMG) - <http://www.pmmg.org.ge/?lang=eng>
6. Civic Integration Foundation (CIF) - <https://cif.org.ge/>
7. Human Rights Center (HRC) - <http://www.hridc.org/?lang=en>
8. Salam - სალამ - <https://www.facebook.com/SalamGeorgia>
9. Georgian Muslims Union (GMU) - <https://islam.ge/>
10. "Sapari" - <https://sapari.ge/en/>
11. International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) - <http://www.isfed.ge/eng#none>
12. Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS) - <https://grass.org.ge/en>
13. Transparency International - Georgia (TI)- <https://transparency.ge/en>
14. Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) - <https://gyla.ge/en>
15. Civil Society platform "No to Phobia!" - <http://notophobia.ge/eng/home>

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Council of Europe Office in Georgia-<https://www.coe.int/en/web/tbilisi>
2. High Commissioner on National Minorities-<https://www.osce.org/node/107881>
3. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx>
4. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/georgia/>
5. Human Rights Watch-<https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/georgia>



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