HATE SPEECH IN PRE-ELECTION DISCOURSE
Presidential Elections 2018
The report Hate Speech in Pre-Election Discourse has been prepared by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) within the USAID-funded Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness Program in Georgia (PITA), implemented by the UN Association of Georgia (UNAG). The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or UNAG.
Methodology

The present report provides the results of monitoring conducted by the Media Development Foundation (MDF) ahead of the 2018 presidential elections. The monitoring was carried out on the cases of hate speech and discrimination on various grounds expressed by electoral subjects and political parties, as well as hate speech used against presidential candidates and political parties. The report involves only the cases of discrimination on ethnic, religious, racial and gender grounds, as well as the cases of encouraging violence; it does not provide insulting comments made by political opponents against each other.

The monitoring covers the period from 1 August 2018 to 15 October 2018. The subjects of monitoring were selected from both mainstream and tabloid media. The monitored subjects were:

- **News and analytical programs of five TV channels:** Georgian Public Broadcaster (Moambe); Rustavi 2 (Kurieri; P.S.); Imedi (Kronika; Imedis Kvira); Maestro (news program) and Obieqtivi (news program).
- **Talk-shows of five TV channels:** Rustavi 2 (Archevani); Imedi (Pirispir); Iberia (Tavisupali Sivrtse); Obieqtivi (Gamis Studia, Okros Kveta); Kavkasia (Barieri, Spektri).
- **Seven online media outlets:** Sakinformi, Netgazeti, Interpressnews, Georgia and World, PIA, Kviris Palitra, Marshalpress.
- **Four newspapers:** Rezonansi, Prime-Time, Asaval-Dasavali, Alia.

Besides regular subjects of monitoring, the report also involves politicians’ discriminatory statements from social networks selected through a random sampling principle (Tabula).

Aggregated quantitative data

A total of 117 discriminatory comments were covered by monitored media outlets during the pre-election period. Xenophobic and anti-migrant remarks comprise the largest share of these comments (47.9%, 56 comments), followed by Turkophobia (16.2%, 19), homophobia (14.5%, 17), discrimination on religious grounds (10.3%, 12), encouraging violence (6.8%, 8), inciting strife (1.7%, 2), discrimination on gender grounds (1.7%, 2) and racism (0.9%, 1).
Chart 1. Typology of hate speech

The majority of discriminatory remarks (59) were voiced by political party representatives, followed by presidential candidates (49). 11 discriminatory comments were made against presidential candidates and political parties.

Data by sources

1. Discriminatory comments made by presidential candidates

During the pre-election period, media outlets covered 49 discriminatory comments made by the presidential candidates. The majority of discriminatory comments were made by Free Georgia’s presidential candidate, Kakha Kukava (19), involving anti-migrant (most of them), Turkophobic (3) and homophobic (3) remarks, as well as two comments involving discrimination on religious grounds. Kukava is followed by Shalva Natelashvili, the Labor Party’s leader and presidential candidate who made nine comments six of which were xenophobic, two - homophobic and one - Turkophobic. Besarion Tedia shvili, independent presidential candidate, made anti-migrant (5) and Turkophobic (2) comments. Other independent presidential candidates – Giorgi Andriadze (5), Kakhaber Chichenadze (4) and Gela Khutsishvili of the Political Movement of Veterans and Patriots (2) mainly made xenophobic comments. The ruling party-endorsed presidential candidate, Salome Zurabichvili made two xenophobic remarks inciting strife. In one case, she was reminded of her earlier xenophobic comment.
1.1. Xenophobic and anti-migrant messages

The majority of presidential candidates were ill-disposed towards migrants and their comments involved the following narratives:

- **The inflow of migrants to Georgia will turn ethnic Georgians into the minority.**
  
  Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia: “If this pace of resettlement of Indians and Arabs, Turks and Chinese to Tbilisi is kept, we will face the same situation as we had at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Georgians represented an ethnic minority here. Therefore, I will restrict immigration as one of the first steps taken in case of my election (Obieqtivi TV, news program, October 6).”

1 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3687103
➢ **Gela Khutsishvili, Political Movement of Veterans and Patriots:** “What is happening in the country today, an illegal migration wave, has caused the outflow of population from the country (Georgian Public Broadcaster, Moambe, October 1).”

**The process of migration poses a threat to Georgia, including a terrorist threat:**

➢ **Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia:** “One of the terrorists was found in Brussels and they failed to get into that district, Arab district… Should such districts with Turkish and Arab citizens, which do not fall under our jurisdiction, appear in Tbilisi and Batumi, and should we only afterwards slap ourselves in the head? (Kavkasia, Spektri, August 22).”

➢ **Foreign nationals grab our lands.**

➢ **Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party of Georgia:** “The world has called us farmers and today they compel our farmers to reject land cultivation and to serve others abroad. Instead, our lands are being grabbed by aliens (Rustavi 2, Kurieri, August 30).”

➢ **Migrants of Asian origin promise us prostitution, drug addiction and criminality.**

➢ **Giorgi Andriadze, presidential candidate:** “They invite everyone to Georgia, they bring them, I will not name the country, but they are mostly of Asian origin with their chadors and so on… Let them visit night clubs on Agmashenebeli Avenue and in Batumi. Georgia enjoys the status of a brothel, drug addicted country and a casino among its neighboring countries (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 12).”

➢ **Besarion Tediashvili, presidential candidate:** “Some dirty people are arranging sex tourism tours in our streets and our cities… They are bringing dirty people, tramps like them (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 27).”

➢ **Kakhaber Chichinadze, presidential candidate:** “Mainly those people are arriving, who are accused of various crimes, rape, drug-related crimes in Iran;”

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2 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3681769](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3681769)

3 [http://www.myvideo.ge/v/3655897](http://www.myvideo.ge/v/3655897)

4 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3660555](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3660555)

5 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668598](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668598)

6 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3679048](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3679048)
there is a threat that this wave, the criminal wave will move towards our
democratic and liberal country (Georgian Public Broadcaster, Presidential
Elections 2018, October 9).

1.2. Xenophobic attitudes towards various groups

In some cases, xenophobic expressions were made against the Chinese:

➢ Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party: “Chinese dictatorship has been added to Russian,
Arabic and Iranian expansion (Asaval-Dasavali, October 15-21).”

➢ Salome Zourabichvili, the ruling party-endorsed presidential candidate: “The
Chinese do not die. Several members of one family use one identification card or
passport and who will distinguish them? When you suppose that only ten persons have
arrived, their number may be one hundred (Rustavi 2, Kurieri, October 4).”

Free Georgia’s presidential candidate, Kakha Kukava also disseminated false reports about
the Ministry of Education allegedly authorizing the teaching of Arabic language in the first grade.

1.3. Turkophobia

The presidential candidates have made the following Turkophobic messages:

● Turkey has occupied Georgia.

➢ Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party: “The entire coastal area from Sarpi to
Kobuleti has been occupied by Turkey (Iberia, Tavisupali Sivrtse, September
10).”

➢ Giorgi Andriadze, presidential candidate: “We handed over the streets in
Tbilisi and Batumi to various groups from Turkey (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September
12).”

● Turkey is carrying out religious expansion in Georgia.

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7 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688485
8 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3684135
9 http://mythdetector.ge/ka/myth/kakha-kukavas-tquili-titkos-ganatlebis-saministrom-arabuli-dedaenis-
avtorizatsia-moakhdna
10 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3667084
11 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668590
➢ **Kakha Kukava, presidential candidate:** “It is necessary to restrict not only uncontrolled migration, but also the funding, kind of proselytism carried out in various countries and, first of all, in Turkey (GPB, Presidential Elections 2018, October 9).”

### 1.4. Inciting strife

Two comments inciting strife were made by the ruling party-endorsed presidential candidate, Salome Zourabichvili. During her campaign meeting with ethnic Armenian population, she spoke about the bill on dual citizenship and compared with each other the contemporary human rights situation in the nations having a historical conflict. Salome Zourabichvili emphasized the fact that Georgian ethnic minorities, unlike the Turks, had no opportunity to acquire Georgian citizenship:

➢ **Salome Zourabichvili, the ruling party-endorsed presidential candidate:** “The previous President, I will not name him, granted Georgian citizenship to Turkish nationals, who arrived in Batumi and who had no links to Georgia. And you have not been granted citizenship (Rezonansi, October 15).”

### 1.5. Discrimination on religious grounds

The cases of discrimination on religious grounds were mainly Islamophobic in nature and were related to migrants:

➢ **Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia:** “Muslim migrants represent a greater and larger scale threat for Georgia than raping of a Georgian woman by an Iranian (Asaval-Dasavali, September 3-9).”

➢ **Giorgi Andriadze, presidential candidate:** “If only it were true and Laz people were as many as infidels and uncertain people who were granted Georgian citizenship…Mikheil Saakashvili used his both hands to sign orders on granting citizenship to them; so, they received 45 000 votes of these people with doubtful religion, including fundamental religion (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 12).”

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12 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688486](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688486)

13 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668561](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668561)
1.6. Homophobia

The presidential candidates made the following homophobic messages:

- **Expressing solidarity towards the LGBT community is inadmissible.**
  
  ➢ *Kakha Kukava, Free Georgia*: “In my opinion, such an act [supporting LGBT community] is shameful. I do not know Guram Kaschia, but I will neither shake hands, nor raise a glass with him (Asaval-Dasavali, September 17-23).”

- **The West imposes homosexuality/drug addiction on us.**
  
  ➢ *Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party*: “We see how this issue is being addressed in the West; [homosexuality] has been removed from the registry as a disease and now the fight is underway to legalize them as families and give them the right to adopt a child. Similar processes have been launched by certain international forces in the world, so that to turn morphine and other drugs into daily use consumer products (Iberia, Tavisupali Sivrtse, September 17).”

  ➢ *Kakhaber Chichinadze, presidential president*: “He [Sergi Kakachia who attacked a representative of LGBT community during the anti-homophobia rally on May 17, 2018] struck a blow not at an individual, but at immorality; he struck a blow at the processes imposed on us…And if Europe wants Georgia, let them accept our rules, our nature, our traditions, because we are Georgians; we are not either Europeans, or Asians (GPB, Presidential Elections 2018, October 9).”

- **Homosexuality and drug addiction are unacceptable for Georgian identity.**
  
  ➢ *Giorgi Andriadze, presidential candidate*: “Does a Georgian man deserve the country turned into the nation producing drugs, the country turned into a brothel with LGBT flags flying in the Caucasus? (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 12).”

2. Discriminatory statements made by political parties

Among political parties, the pro-Russian Alliance of Patriots party is leading with hate speech comments (30), followed by Georgian Troupe (13). The Georgian Dream members made 5 discriminatory comments and the United National Movement – 4.

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14 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3672032](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3672032)

15 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688486](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688486)

16 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668600](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3668600)
2.1. Xenophobia and anti-migrant messages

The political parties’ xenophobic messages were mainly directed against migration:

- **Georgia is unprotected against migration and certain category of people.**
  
  ➢ **Mikheil Saakashvili, United National Movement:** “They have brought people from Turkey and other countries and all those persons, who are not reluctant, are arriving, because there is no control here. Our borders have been demolished under Ivanishvili’s rule (Rustavi 2, Kurieri, October 3).”

  ➢ **Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** “Georgia has turned, let me say in Russian, into “проходной двор” (thoroughfare), where everyone can enter and

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17 https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3683259
nobody knows who these people are, where they are from (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 2).\textsuperscript{18}

- **The state should segregate migrants.**
  
  ➢ Ilia Tsulaia, Georgian Dream: “We will protect ourselves against undesirable migration; financially strong rather than job seeking foreigners will arrive here… New amendments will promote the arrival of those foreigners who will create wealth here (Prime Time, September 17).”

  ➢ Mikheil Saakashvili, National Movement: “Jobs belonging to Georgians were taken away by poor Iranians, Turks and other foreign nationals. Instead of rich investors, who should have employed Georgians, we have received impoverished migrants, who can hardly employ themselves (Sakinformi, October 9).\textsuperscript{19}”

- **Iranians and Turks are especially dangerous because of historical factors.**

  ➢ Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots: “Today, the number of Turks, the number of Iranians is much higher than their safe number. Why are these two peoples especially dangerous? Because these are the nations, who constantly have territorial claims to Georgian land (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 14).”

- **Covert annexation of Georgia is underway.**

  ➢ Emzar Kvitsiani, Alliance of Patriots: “A lot of lands are being sold in our country and a lot of foreign nationals are arriving; so, it can be said that covert annexation of our country is underway (Obieqtivi, news program, September 20).\textsuperscript{20}”

- **The West plans to change ethnic balance in Georgia.**

  ➢ Jondi Bagaturia, Georgian Troupe: “It is planned to change ethnic balance in Georgia! Mass resettlement of aliens is underway while our children are being turned into drug addicts, our citizens are being forced to leave for foreign countries to earn their livelihoods! The purpose of Angela Merkel’s visit\textsuperscript{21} was also unveiled – 200 000 migrants should be resettled to Georgia (Asaval-Dasavali, September 10-16).”

\textsuperscript{18} https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3663367

\textsuperscript{19} http://saqinform.ge/news/39528/bolo+2+wlis+ganmavlobashi+sagarTvelos+moqalamoeoba+miRo+15+229+ucxoeil ma%2C+romelTa+umravlesoba+ruseTidan+aris.htm

\textsuperscript{20} https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3677542

2.2. Turkophobia

Turkophobic messages were mainly voiced by the Alliance of Patriots.

- **Turkey is Georgia’s enemy.**
  
  ➢ [Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots]: “I have said many times that Turkey is one of the serious enemies of Georgia, which still thinks about grabbing not only Adjara, but other countries as well (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, October 11)."^^22^

- **The Turks have occupied Georgia.**
  
  ➢ [Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots]: “We are losing everything. A Turk is reigning. The whole Adjara region is full of Turkish agents (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 14)."^^23^

- **Turkey is carrying out economic expansion.**
  
  ➢ [Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots]: “About 2 billion outflows from our country [to Turkey] annually and only 300 and now 400 million inflows. They live at our expense… We are the force that will liberate Georgia from this foreign semen (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 26)."^^24^

2.3. Discrimination on religious grounds

Discrimination on religious grounds was mostly Islamophobic in nature and it was expressed by the Alliance of Patriots. The same party, however, also made comments against Catholics.

- **Islamophobia**
  
  ➢ [Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots]: “The Supreme Religious Administration of Muslims, a governing body of Georgia’s Muslims, like the Patriarchate, has been created in the country. This is how fragmentation of our country is being launched. It is the Turkish theory and it is carried out in all those countries, where Turkey has its claims. And now, let me say to the attention of Georgian Muslims that this path leads towards fragmentation (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, October 11)."^^25^

- **Against Catholics**

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^^22^ [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688002](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3688002)

^^23^ [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3672146](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3672146)

^^24^ [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678279](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678279)

^^25^ [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3689369](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3689369)
➢ **Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots**: “The Catholic Church is a guest in our country and nobody oppresses it, nobody struggles against it, nobody obstructs its activities, but this guest, in the person of Giuseppe Pasotto, files a lawsuit against the Orthodox Church in the Constitutional Court and demands the same rights as those exercised by the Orthodox Church. … Let me remind you with respect that the Catholics make up 0.5% of the population of Georgia (Marshalpress, August 2).”

### 2.4. Homophobia

Among political parties, the majority of homophobic comments were made by Georgian Troupe. Moreover, Rostom Sesiaxvili, Mayor of Kvareli and chairman of Georgian Dream’s Kvareli office, released a homophobic post on his Facebook page on October 2. In particular, the Mayor of Kvareli shared a video of Archevani talk show aired by Rustavi 2 TV, where the program host, Giorgi Gabunia interviewed Parliamentary Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze. Rostom Sesiaxvili added a homophobic comment containing discrimination on gender grounds to the video:

**Rostom Sesiaxvili, Mayor of Kvareli**: “He has done with (Mr./Mrs.) Gabunia.”

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26 [https://marshalpress.ge/archives/189870](https://marshalpress.ge/archives/189870)
Political parties made the following homophobic messages:

- **Religious identity vs. sexual identity**

  ➢ **Davit Tarkhan-Mouravi, Alliance of Patriots**: “They [the National Movement] had the following ideology: “No to religion,” “no to homeland,” “no to nationality” and finally “no to sex” – a man should not be a man. We were saying the opposite – “Yes to homeland”, “yes to religion”, “yes to nationality”, a man should maintain his manliness and a woman should maintain her womanliness (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, September 26).”

- **Homosexuality = Prostitution/drug addiction**

  ➢ **Emzar Kvitsiani, Alliance of Patriots**: “No to prostitution, no to drug addiction and no to LGBT propaganda (Asaval-Dasavali, September 24-30).”

  ➢ **Gigla Baramidze, United Democratic Movement**: “Legalization of marijuana will be followed by legalization of harder drugs. Then same-sex marriage will be legalized (Asaval-Dasavali, August 6-12).”

2.5. **Racism**

The only racial comment was made by the ruling party representative, Mayor of Gori Konstantine Tavzarashvili, when he accused the previous authorities of unleashing the 2008 Russian-Georgian war:

➢ **Konstantine Tavzarashvili, Georgian Dream, Mayor of Gori**: “Condoleezza Rice also arrived – that Negro woman (Imedi, Kronika, October 9).”

2.6. **Discrimination on gender grounds**

**Marshalpress, August 10, Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots**: “It [the Public Defender’s statement on discriminatory nature of the term “head of the family”] is an attempt to derogate Georgian man and it has already turned into a purpose-oriented campaign over the past years. Against this background, the more active women raise their voices and defend the dignity of their husbands as the heads of families, the better it will be… They will soon offer a bill – let men give birth to their children, because women have no time and their rights are restricted. Go away, move to another island and stage your experiments there. We like what we have!”

3. **Hate speech and discrimination against presidential candidates and political parties**

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27 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678231](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3678231)


29 [http://marshalpress.ge/archives/190925](http://marshalpress.ge/archives/190925)
11 discriminatory comments were made against the presidential candidates during the monitoring period. The majority of these comments (5) were made against the ruling party-endorsed candidate, Salome Zourabichvili; 3 comments – against the National Movement; 2 – European Georgia and 1 – Girchi’s presidential candidate, Zurab Japaridze.

Chart 4. Hate speech and discrimination against presidential candidates and political parties by typology

Hate Speech/Discrimination in Pre-Election Discourse
Against Presidential Candidates and Political Parties

3.1. Salome Zourabichvili – the ruling party-endorsed independent candidate

Among the comments made against Salome Zourabichvili, two were about her religious identity; two comments were encouraging violence against her; one comment involved discrimination on gender grounds.

- **Religious identity**
  - **Metropolitan Petre Tsaava of Chkondidi**: “Georgian people from western Georgian regions of Guria and Samegrelo called them [Catholic missionaries] Dapraangi (Frenchified) that means people with depraved and immoral thinking.”
So, our Frenchified lady with her Frenchified thinking will not bring us any welfare.” (Rustavi 2, Kurieri, September 17)\(^{30}\).

➢ **Beso Barbakadze, journalist:** “They say that Salome Zourabichvili is a Catholic Christian, and you can judge yourself whether it is correct to elect a Catholic as the President of the Orthodox country.” (Georgia and World, August 15)\(^{31}\).

**• Encouraging violence**

➢ **Citizen:** “How can I agree? She [Salome Zourabichvili] should be shot a bullet at her head. How can I agree? When did Georgia unleash this war? (Rustavi 2, Archevani, September 18).\(^{32}\)”

➢ **Rustavi 2, Archevani, September 18, citizen:** “You should shoot a bullet at Salome [Zourabichvili] (Rustavi 2, Archevani, September 18)\(^{33}\).”

**• Discrimination on gender grounds**

➢ **Giorgi Shengelaia, film director:** “How can a woman become a ruler in Georgia?! It is a modern, allegedly liberal approach in the West; now look at their families – women are on managerial positions and their husbands are holding babies. It is not correct. I am conservative by nature! This Zourabichvili knows nothing. Salome is actually sunken! (Interpressnews, August 30).\(^{34}\)”

### 3.2. United National Movement

Out of three comments encouraging violence against the United National Movement, two were made by representatives of the public and one – by a journalist of newspaper Asaval-Dasavali:

➢ **Dito Chubinidze, journalist:** “There was not even one man among these Nazi [referring to the National Movement] – this pack of murderers, betrayers of Georgia and shameful people – who, if not fired a shot at Saakashvili, would at least smash in his face a wine glass or a large ashtray, with which [businessman] Vakhtang Rcheulishvili’s head was once broken and then [late PM] Zurab Zhvania was killed.” Asaval-Dasavali, August 27 – September 2.


\(^{31}\) [https://bit.ly/2nK8lVs](https://bit.ly/2nK8lVs)


3.2. European Georgia and Girchi’s presidential candidate, Zurab Japaridze

Out of two comments encouraging violence, one was made by the ruling party representative and the other – by the member of the Alliance of Patriots; the both comments were made against European Georgia and one was partially directed against Girchi.

➢ **Zaza Puspashvili, Georgian Dream**: “It is not proper for me and it does not befit my human nature, but they really deserve to get punched in the head… Frankly speaking, I would gladly slap Bokeria or any member of the National Movement in their faces! Had there been no limits, I would have gladly torn them apart!” (Asaval-Dasavali, September 24-30).

➢ **Vazha Otarashvili, Alliance of Patriots**: “Iveria should wake up once and forever and these people [Giga Bokeria and Zura Japaridze] should be stoned to death. They should be put on a donkey backwards and taken around from city to city, from village to village, with spitting at them and stoning them to death (Obieqtivi, Gamis Studia, August 5).”

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35 [https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3647768](https://www.myvideo.ge/v/3647768)