

WEEKLY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

Date: April 9-15, 2018

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Abkhazian delegation participates in world medical congress in Turkey – Sputnik

"Health Minister Tamaz Tsakhnakia, who led our delegation, met with the mayor of Antalya, head of one of the departments of the Ministry of Health of Turkey. We also had meetings at Marmaris University Clinic, Istanbul Oncology Center and MedicalPark Clinic," said Timur Lagvilava, Head of the Department of Angiology and Vascular Surgery of the Sokhumi Republic Hospital (*IPN.GE, April 12*).

2. OSCE holds discussion on occupation of Georgian territories

The discussion was co-chaired by Italy and Georgia's Deputy Foreign Minister David Dondua informed the representatives from 57 OSCE member states about the harsh violation of human rights in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) regions and Russia's continued steps to annex Georgia's historic lands.

Dondua spoke about the Georgian government's efforts to settle conflicts peacefully and briefed the international community about the government's latest peace initiative, offering economic and other benefits to people on both sides of the occupation line (*Agenda.ge, April 13*).

3. The Ministry of Defense of Abkhazia condemned the actions of the US and its allies in Syria

"The leadership of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Abkhazia reacted with deep seriousness to the strikes of the coalition led by the United States on the brotherly Syrian people. We condemn this incident and regard it as a provocation to unleashing a big war" – reads statement (*Apsnypress.info, April 14*).

4. Ministry of Health of Abkhazia says they are not involved the organization of a nurses' trip to a training seminar in Georgia

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Abkhazia officially declares that there is no involvement in the organization of the trip and the provision of permits in the delegation of nurses to a training seminar in Georgia (*Apsnypress.info, April 15*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

1. Germany announces plans to put Georgia on safe country list

German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer told Deutsche Welle that Germany intends to add Georgia and Armenia to the list of safe countries, which means that no one from those countries will receive asylum in Germany.

Stefan Meier, the representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Germany, says that a big number of Armenians and Georgians request asylum in Germany, but only "very few" gain a positive response (*Agenda.ge, April 10*).

2. President visits United Arab Emirates to enhance bilateral ties

During his two-day visit which kicks off today, Margvelashvili is scheduled to meet with the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and ruler of the Emirate of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, as well as Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (*Agenda.ge, April 10*).

3. Freedom House publishes report about democratic progress in transitional countries

Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world, published a report about countries being in transitional stage where Georgia's democratic progress is evaluated in the rating with 4, 68 points.

Georgia had 4, 61 points according to the last report. The current rating shows the situation turning to the worse by 0, 07 points. The evaluation is based on 7-point system where 1 is the highest, and 7 – lowest (*ITV, April 11*).

Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Democratic Governance	6.00	6.00	5.75	5.75	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Electoral Process	5.25	5.25	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Civil Society	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Independent Media	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25
Local Democratic Governance	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25
Judicial Framework and Independence	4.75	4.75	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.75	5.00
Corruption	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Democracy Score	4.93	4.93	4.86	4.82	4.75	4.68	4.64	4.61	4.61	4.68

4. Mike Pompeo: US continues to arm Georgian fighting against Russian expansion

"The US supplies brave men and women from Georgia and Ukraine fighting against Russian expansionism with weapons," – reads the excerpts of opening statement of Mike Pompeo, who is nominated to the post of Secretary of State of US – Associated Press reported (*ITV, April 12*).

5. Georgian PM congratulates Ilham Aliyev on re-election as Azerbaijani president

The Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili has congratulated Ilham Aliyev on the winning of the Azerbaijani presidential elections and stated that he "firmly believes" under Aliyev's leadership Georgia and Azerbaijan will continue "mutual, beneficial relations." (*Agenda.ge, April 12*).

6. PM says Freedom House report on Georgia is 'extremely biased'

"We have significantly upgraded the level of democracy in Georgia. The situation in terms of human rights is absolutely different. We have one of the most active civil sectors and the media is totally free from governmental influences," Kvirikashvili stated (*Agenda.ge, April 12*).

7. Georgian FM: US, allies' strike in Syria is 'appropriate and needed'

The Georgian Government has lauded coordinated US, UK and French air strikes in Syria as a response to a suspected chemical attack on the town of Douma last week as "appropriate and needed". "The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and those responsible must be held accountable", Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze said via Twitter (*Agenda.ge, April 14*).

8. Mayor Kaladze: Tbilisi is a city of tolerance

A friendly football game between Georgians and foreign students from Africa was held yesterday in Tbilisi and ended with a score of 12 to 12.

The #EqualGame was held in response to a recent confrontation between Georgians and African students at a football pitch at Beliashvili Street on Georgian Easter (*Agenda.ge, April 14*).

❖ Internal Affairs

9. 29 years on from April 9 tragedy: officials, public pay tribute to victims

Today, Georgia remembers the youth who tried to stop Russian tanks with their bare hands and other people who were killed by Russian troops as they supported the independence of Georgia 29 years ago.

On April 9, 1989, at least twenty people were tragically killed as Soviet troops attacked peaceful protesters in the centre of Tbilisi.

The date has been etched into the minds of locals and is remembered as the day of National Unity. It is recognised as a public holiday in Georgia (*Agenda.ge, April 9, 2018*).

10. Violent attack on Nigerian students sparks racism debate in Tbilisi

A group of Nigerian students were physically assaulted in the Dighomi neighborhood of Tbilisi Sunday evening. They claim the attack was unprovoked and motivated by racism.

The incident, which took place on a playground as the students were playing football, has triggered a heated debate in Tbilisi with differing accounts about what caused the brawl.

On Monday, the police launched a formal inquiry into the case based on clause 126 of Georgia's criminal code, which covers physical violence and carries a prison sentence of up to six years (*DFWATCH.NET, April 10*).

11. Giorgi Kvirikashvili: "It is even undesirable the majority to be always unanimous"

A completely new reality has been created in Georgia after 2012 and the country has really taken the path of democracy, - Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili told journalists yesterday when responding to the decision of Gedevan Popkhadze to leave the majority (*IPN.GE, April 10*).

12. MP Davit Chichinadze : Parliament's Chairman violated party discipline

Davit Chichinadze, member of the Georgian Dream party, says Chairman of Parliament Irakli Kobakhidze and Chairman of the Georgian Dream fraction Mamuka Mdinardze violated the party discipline by making statements against Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili (*IPN.GE, April 11*).

13. Mamuka Mdinardze accuses three majority MPs of violating party discipline

"Yesterday the meeting was held in the office of the party. According to our estimation, several MPs violated the discipline and made inaccurate statements. The Prime Minister and the party leadership have agreed our assessment. Despite this, very sadly, such statements and violations of party discipline continue. I ask everyone not to follow separate statements. Everything will be arranged in the coming days. A meeting will be held in the party. All the applications will be discussed and appropriate decisions will be taken, "Mamuka Mdinardze told reporters (*IPN.GE, April 11*).

14. "Social-Democrats" do not plan to leave parliamentary majority

Today, we are not going to leave the majority - time will show us the future,- Gia Zhorzholiani, chairman of the parliamentary fraction “Georgian Dream – Social Democrats”, which is the part of the parliamentary majority, told InterPressNews.

Zhorzholiani explained that the "Social-Democrats" have different positions from "Georgian Dream" on a number of program and platform issues, but at this stage they do not see the need to leave the majority (*IPN.GE, April 11*).

15. Shalva Tadumadze appointed as Head of Governmental Administration

Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili has appointed Shalva Tadumadze as the Head of the Governmental Administration. Tadumadze served as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Government (*IPN.GE, April 12*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

16. Georgia discusses free trade agreement with Gulf countries

Georgia is seeking to establish a free trade agreement with the countries of the Gulf to access their markets and facilitate increased bilateral business and trade.

Future free trade agreement with the Gulf countries was one of the main and important issues discussed at the meeting with Georgia’s Economy Minister Dimitry Kumsishvili and the Minister of Economy of United Arab Emirates Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansuri (*Agenda.ge, April 10*).

17. Delegations of United Arab Emirates to explore new investment opportunities in Georgia

Several important delegations from the United Arab Emirates will visit Georgia to explore new investment opportunities, Georgia’s Minister of Economy Dimitry Kumsishvili has announced.

Kumsishvili participated in a meeting held yesterday between the President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zaid al Nahyan (*Agenda.ge, April 12*).

18. Georgia’s Economy Minister joins high-level conference in China

Georgia’s Economy Minister Dimitry Kumsishvili has participated in a joint People's Bank of China - International Monetary Fund high-level conference on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Georgian minister delivered his speech at the session of ‘Macroeconomic and Financial Frameworks for Successful Implementation of the BRI’.

There he said the One Belt, One Road initiative will bring significant benefits to all participating countries, as it promotes regional cooperation, development of infrastructure and transport links between the states (*Agenda.ge, April 12*).

19. China to help Georgia develop Trans-Caspian international transport corridor

China will help Georgia develop a Trans-Caspian international transport corridor, the so called ‘middle corridor’ within the "One Belt, One Road” initiative, announces Georgia’s Ministry of Economy.

Georgia’s Economy Minister Dimitry Kumsishvili and Chinese Minister of Transport Li Xiaopeng talked about the Trans-Caspian international transport corridor at today’s meeting in China.

The Georgian minister stated that Georgia had been actively working to develop the Trans-Caspian international transport route together with other partner countries (*Agenda.ge, April 13*).

20. European Council approves €45 million in financial assistance for Georgia

The Council of the European Union is providing up to €45 million in macro-financial assistance to Georgia to help cover the country's financing needs, support economic stabilisation and its agenda for structural reforms.

This is the third operation for Georgia since the country's military conflict with Russia in August 2008. The EU's first two macro-financial assistance operations, amounting to €46 million each, were pledged at an international donors' conference in October 2008 (*Agenda.ge, April 13*).