

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

June 29-July 3

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❖ Occupied Regions

1. **Head of Syrian opposition's High Negotiations Committee condemns recognition of Georgia's breakaway regions**

“A few days ago, within the frames of the General Secretariat meeting of the Syrian Opposition Forces' High Negotiations Committee, we held a meeting with the Ambassador of Georgia in Saudi Arabia, where we talked about basic principles of international law and "red lines" which cannot be crossed. These principles are: unity, territorial integrity of Syria and unity of the Syrian people. We want these principles to be respected both related to us and to other countries. Therefore, we support Georgia's unity and territorial integrity. We strongly condemn the "recognition" of the occupied territories of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region / South Ossetia by the Assad regime, - said Nasr al-Hariri (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

2. **FM – If there is documentary evidence that deceased persons are included on “Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List”, they will be removed from the list**

“I discussed this issue at the meeting with representatives of the diplomatic corps. We explained in details the main criteria for creation of this list. The resolution of the Parliament of Georgia clearly determines who should be included on the list. There are three criteria: accused and convicted persons; persons against whom criminal proceedings are instituted and crime is committed on the occupied territories. The presented list meets all the three criteria. You mentioned deceased....but legally, when there is no evidence that the person, who committed a crime in the occupied territories is deceased, termination of criminal prosecution against this person was not possible. This list is not complete and if there is documentary evidence that any persons included on “Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List” are deceased, they will be removed from the list. Our foreign partners do not have any questions about this and it is very understandable for them, because it has got legal basis, "Davit Zalkaliani said (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

3. **South Ossetia's de facto militia detain Georgian citizen for illegal possession of marijuana**

South Ossetia's de facto militia have detained 25- year- old Georgian citizen for illegal possession of marijuana, -de-facto interior ministry said.

“Employees of militia stopped Toyota Hilux vehicle. During the person search of the vehicle's driver, they found 3.95 gr. marijuana,” the ministry said (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

4. **Political decisions of Georgian side lead us to worsening of relations with Sokhumi and Tskhinvali – Karasin**

Despite of “kind intensions” and “steps to better future” declared by Tbilisi, the political decisions of the Georgian side lead us to worsening of relations with Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, - Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Gregory Karasin said at the meeting with Toivo Klaar, Co-chair of the Geneva

Discussions on Security and Stability in the South Caucasus – EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus (*IPN.GE, July 3, 2018*).

5. Tbilisi decided to use Archil Tatumashvili's death for gaining political dividends -De-facto foreign ministry

"Taking into consideration the permanent unstable internal political situation in Georgia, which has been particularly acute in recent years, we can conclude that Tbilisi has decided to use the death of a citizen of Georgia, Archil Tatumashvili to receive political dividends, which serve the populist interests of the current government," de facto foreign ministry of South Ossetia says in a statement.

❖ Foreign Affairs

6. Georgia closed its airspace for two Syrian airlines

Georgia closed its airspace for two Syrian airlines Georgia has refused to allow two Syrian airlines access to its airspace, - Gocha Mezvrishvili, Director General of the "Sakaeronavigatsia" (Air Navigation Service), told InterPressNews. He said the decision is related to recognition of so-called "independence" of Georgia's occupied regions by Syria (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

7. NATO Chief looks forward to seeing progress related to Georgia at upcoming NATO summit

"I expect that the leaders, who meet in the NATO summit in July, will recognize the progress made by Georgia and will clearly indicate the intention to continue political and practical support for Georgia," Stoltenberg said in Brussels (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

8. FM - We expect that we will have tangible results at the NATO summit in Brussels

"We have repeatedly expressed our expectations about NATO Summit that the positive reforms in the field of defense policy, development of the democratic institutions, economic direction, and the contribution provided by Georgia to the global security will be reflected in the context of open door policy – this is one direction. The second direction and our expectations regarding the NATO summit is that Georgia will be properly represented in appropriate formats. The third direction is that we are very actively engaged with our NATO partners in order to strengthen our co-operation and security in the context of the Black Sea Regional Security. Our expectations are triggered by these three directions. We are working very intensively with our NATO partners and we expect that at the Brussels summit NATO we will have tangible results," FM Zalkaliani said (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

9. PM - We are starting a new format of relations with the European Union

"4 years have passed since signing of the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU. After signing the Association Agreement we achieved a number of tangible success and results. It is worth mentioning the visa-free travel in the Schengen zone, which is of great benefit to our citizens. Despite the progress achieved in Georgia-EU relations, it is important to further integrate Georgia with the EU than it is provided by the Association Agreement. We are also starting a new format that will facilitate Georgia's sectorial integration with the EU. This will be a high-level format within which the meetings will be held headed by the Prime Minister of Georgia and the President of the European Commission", Mamuka Bakhtadze said (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

10. U.S. State Department report says Georgian government fully meets minimum standards for trafficking elimination

The Government of Georgia fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, – the 2018 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report of the U.S. Government says. According to the document, during the reporting period, the Georgian government demonstrated serious and sustained efforts.

“The government demonstrated serious and sustained efforts by updating law enforcement guidelines for victim identification, including on the treatment of victims, screening for indicators at border posts, and victim-centered interview practices. The government identified more victims and continued to provide comprehensive care. During the year, the government created and issued a grant for an NGO to organize awareness-raising activities in 10 cities,”- the reports says (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

11. Georgian border guards, detained by Russian side, released

The Georgian border guards, who were detained by the Russian side, have been released. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia says that based on the agreement achieved between the sides, the Georgian border guards were released within the shortest period of time.

The Ministry says that representatives of the Border Service of the Russian Federation transferred the two border guards to the Georgian side at 12:00.

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, on June 27, two border guards of the Lagodekhi Division of the Border Police of Georgia arrived in the Dagestan section of the State Border of Georgia-Russian Federation to open another temporary summer checkpoint according to the planned task. For some time, communication with the border guards was suspended and their search operation started. At the same time, the Georgian Interior Ministry's Border Police Department revealed that the border guards were on the territory of the Russian Federation (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

12. Georgia is 17th safest country in the world, according to Gallup report

Georgia was ranked 17th among 142 countries, according to Gallup's 2018 Global Law and Order report. According to the report, Georgia's Law and Order Index Score is 87. Portugal and Turkmenistan received the same score. Singapore was named as the safest country with 97 score.

The top 10 countries in the list were Singapore (97 scores), Norway (93), Iceland (93), Uzbekistan (91), Hong Kong (91), Switzerland (90), Canada (90), Indonesia (89) and Denmark (88) (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

13. German FM - The territorial integrity of Georgia is not the subject of trade for us

The EU flag is flying not in front of Parliament, but this blue flag with yellow stars can be seen everywhere in Tbilisi and it makes us happy, - Foreign Minister of Germany Heiko Maas said on July 2 at the meeting with Foreign Minister of Georgia Davit Zalkalian. He said this is an external expression of what Georgians feel inside.

As InterPressNews was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Davit Zalkaliani and Heiko Maas met in Berlin within the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia to Berlin (*IPN.GE, July 2, 2018*).

14. Hungary vows to block decision on Georgia, Ukraine at NATO Summit

According to the Ukrainian "Europeiska Pravda", Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orbán has sent an official letter to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, saying that he would block the NATO resolution on the issue of Georgia and Ukraine at the NATO Summit.

The edition deems that the decision is triggered by the disagreement between Budapest and Kiev. Budapest is demanding Hungarian language to have an official status in Ukraine and the pupils, living

in the districts, where minority members make the majority of the local population, to have the possibility to receive education in Hungarian language (*IPN.GE, July 3, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

15. Mikheil Saakashvili comments on City Court guilty verdict against him

"I am as guilty of beating up Valery Gelashvili as of murdering Kennedy, Trotski and withdrawal of Kaligula. It is an ordinary clown show that has nothing to do with the law," Saakashvili told Rustavi 2 TV on Thursday evening.

Tbilisi City Court found ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili guilty of exceeding official authorities in beating up then opposition MP Valeri Gelashvili, who was severely beaten up by masked, armed men in Tbilisi in 2005. The ex-president was found guilty of exceeding official authorities with use of violence as well as of organizing intentional damage to health and sentenced him to 6 years of imprisonment. Mikheil Saakashvili was banned from holding public office for 2 years and 3 months (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

16. Alleged audio recording of Ahmed Chatayev sent to ISIS leader Abu Jihad released

"We will do what we need, brother. I'm already here, in Istanbul, I did everything - photos, pictures. Perhaps we will start doing it in Ankara tomorrow ... in Ankara and Antalya ... Let's see then. This is the embassy brother ... the brothers will see such places, the embassies, they are heavily guarded, but you will see in photos and videos, brother. We have to find such locations, restaurants, where they gather. Everything is because it's winter ... in short, we can do something in Georgia. It's very close from here brother. I know the heat will be more ... Georgia ... in Turkey ... there will not be the hotels full of Americans. Videos ... from there ... it's still staying in between us. I will see restaurants, embassies here, in Ankara, Antalya, Istanbul...I will be everywhere. We have already done one...I have finished here, but failed to find some points here. Brothers are observing everything. As soon as it is ready, I will send you..."- alleged ISIS member Ahmed Chatayev says. Ahmed Chatayev was killed during the anti-terrorist operation in Tbilisi in November, 2017 (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

17. Analyst Nino Burchuladze - There is the threat of terrorism in Georgia

"We saw that one of the "most wanted" leaders of ISIS, Ahmed Chatayev, and his brothers were in the city center. We will not be ready for the similar threats unless we realize this threat. If I were the authorities, I would consider the special operation as one of the greatest achievements, but on the contrary, they managed to discredit own special services by keeping silence. They have not answered any questions yet and we still do not know what really happened, whether the terrorism has supporters in Georgia and who they are and how we have to fight against them," Nino Burchuladze said (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

18. Head of War Veterans and Soldiers Union, head of Military Police Department Monitoring Division detained for bribery

The officers of Anti-corruption Agency under the State Security Service alongside officers of Military Police Department under the Ministry of Defense, as a result of joint operative-searching and investigative activities, detained Giorgi G., the head of section of Military Police Department Monitoring Main Division under General Staff of Georgian Armed Forces, and Mikheil G.. head of LEPL

Veterans and Soldiers of War and military forces of Georgia – Vaziani Union” on the fact of bribe - taking.

As Investigation established, that Giorgi G. and Miheil G. promised a son of the former employee of the Ministry of Defense of Georgia -L.S. to give the flat which is in military district of Telavi on temporally lease and demanded GEL 4 000 as a bribe from him (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

19. Sergi Kapanadze : We discussed Commission’s work and initiated recommendations at the meeting with NGOs

At the meeting with representatives of the NGOs we talked about the commission’s work as well as about the initiative recommendations. The initiated recommendations will not be the only one, - Sergi Kapanadze, the chairman of the Parliament Fact- finding Commission set up related to Khorava murder case, said after the meeting with representatives of the NGOs and Public Defender’s Office.

The two recommendations apply to the launch of the investigation into the fact of wounding a minor as far as appropriate investigative activities have not been carried out and the second one - to start criminal proceedings against one of the minors involved in the incident. (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

20. Zaza Saralidze’s lawyer supports the both recommendations elaborated by Parliament’s Fact- finding Commission

"The evidence of the case gives us a reason to agree with recommendations. It is important to start an investigation on the person who has been inflicted wound and nothing has been done in this regard. As for the second recommendation, M.K likely played greater role in this case than we, the litigator, constantly appeal. The both recommendations are so perfectly substantiated that we support its approval," said Londaridze (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

21. GYLA chairman hopes Fact-finding Commission to take optimal decision

“As far as the meeting was closed, I am refraining from speaking about possible risks or better scenario. The best option will be if the commission manages to take the decision based on the full consensus. I hope the commission will take an optimal decision,” chairman of the GYLA said (*IPN.GE, June 30, 2018*).

22. 15 candidates are fighting for Chief Prosecutor’s post

A total of 15 candidates, including Head of the Government’s Administration Shalva Tadumadze, are fighting for the post of Chief Prosecutor. Irakli Nadareishvili, Head of the Investigation Department of the Criminal Investigation Act of Georgia's Chief Prosecutor's Office, and former lawmaker Shalva Shavgulidze are also among the candidates.

The candidatures of Shalva Shavgulidze, Nino Gogniashvili and Edisher Putkaradze were nominated by Tbilisi State University. Tbilisi Open University, Caucasus International University and "Education Academy" nominated the candidature of Irakli Nadareishvili, while Shalva Shavgulidze’s candidature was presented by the European Georgia opposition party. The deadline for nomination of candidatures expires on July 4 (*IPN.GE, July 2, 2018*).

23. The reorganization of Bakhtadze's Cabinet will be as unsuccessful as Kvirikashvili’s one – MP Zurab Chiaberashvili

“The "European Georgia" will not support Bakhtadze's Cabinet because the structural reorganization will be as unsuccessful as the change carried out by Kvirikashvili in December, which has not brought any positive results for our country and citizens,” Zurab Chiaberashvili said.

The Parliament of Georgia will hold an extraordinary sitting on July 4 to endorse a legislative package on the planned structural reorganization in the government with its first hearing (*IPN.GE, July 3, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

24. PM – Country's economic growth confirms that the government is carrying out a proper economic policy

PM Bakhtadze said at a briefing prior to the Cabinet meeting on Friday that the increased economic data and implemented and announced reforms create the environment where economic growth rates will be accelerated. I would like to note that the quality of economic growth is improved. First of all, we should touch the export growth that was increased by 50% compared to the previous year, this is a significant contributor to this economic growth, "said Mamuka Bakhtadze (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

25. Georgia's foreign debt amounted to \$17.5 billion

The gross external debt of Georgia amounted to 17.5 billion USD (42.2 billion GEL) as of 31st March 2018 and 111.5 percent of the last four quarters' GDP, - the National Bank of Georgia said.

According to the NGB, during the first quarter of 2018 the gross external debt of Georgia increased by 192.6 million USD. Out of that 238.3 million USD increase were due to exchange rate changes and transactions also lead to its increase by 21.0 million USD. While price and other changes lead to its decrease by 57.0 and 9.7 million USD, respectively (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

26. Finance Minister - International Monetary Fund shares and supports the Georgian government's economic and structural reforms

The International Monetary Fund shares and supports the Georgian government's economic and structural reforms aimed at maintaining macroeconomic stability, - Finance Minister Nikoloz Gagua said when commenting on the assessment of the International Monetary Fund. According to him, the current program within the International Monetary Fund's expanded funding mechanism is based on the agenda of the reforms of the Government of Georgia and supports the country's achievements (*IPN.GE, June 29, 2018*).

❖ Sports and Culture

27. PM awards famous sportsman Zaza Pachulia with the title of Knight of Sports

Zaza Pachulia, the former captain of the Georgian national basketball team and power forward for the Golden State Warriors, the current NBA champions, was awarded by Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze with the title of Knight of Sports.

Zaza Pachulia is the first basketball player to become an NBA champion (with the Golden State Warriors in 2017). This year, he repeated this success with the same team and winning another NBA Championship ring. Zaza Pachulia is the first European center, along with Pau Gasol of Spain, to have won two NBA championships. In addition, Pachulia, together with the Georgian national team, has qualified to participate in EuroBasket three times (*IPN.GE, July 3, 2018*).

Additional Information

July 3, 2018

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.4469 GEL






1 GBP - 3.2211 GEL

100 RUB - 3.8757 GEL

1 EUR - 2.8494 GEL

1 TRY - 0.5289 GEL

100 JPY - 2.2090 GEL

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 July	4 July	5 July	6 July	7 July
				
21° 38°	21° 39°	20° 36°	20° 34°	21° 32°

- Movie Events - English Sessions - [Tickets](#)
- Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - [Membership](#)
- Marjanishvili Theatre – [Events and Tickets](#)
- Rustaveli Theatre - [Events and Tickets](#)
- Opera and Ballet – [Events and Tickets](#)
- Concerts – [Events and Tickets](#)
- Sports – [Events and Tickets](#)