

WEEKLY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

Date: February 19-25, 2018

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. Citizen of Georgia dies in Tskhinvali Region

According to released information Archil Tatumashvili died in the hospital of the occupied Tskhinvali district today. For the time-being, the State Security Service of Georgia is demanding via the hot line of the de-facto government and Russian occupation forces comprehensive information regarding his death and the illegal detention," the State Security Service says. Tskhinvali media reported that 35-year-old Tatumashvili was detained in Akhalkori for "cooperating with Georgian law enforcers and participating in the Russia-Georgia 2008 war" (*Feb. 23*).

2. Gov't demands details on death of Georgian citizen in occupied Tskhinvali

The Government of Georgia has demanded "clear and comprehensive information" on the death of Georgian citizen Archil Tatumashvili in the country's occupied Tskhinvali region today (*Feb. 23*).

3. EU Special Representative for South Caucasus concerned about death of Georgian citizen in occupied Tskhinvali

The European Union (EU) Special Representative for the South Caucasus Toivo Klaar is concerned about the death of Georgian citizen Archil Tatumashvili in the country's Russian occupied Tskhinvali region (*Feb. 23*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

4. With the assistance of Georgian asylum seekers, shelters became thieves and looting bases - Joachim Stamp

"Welt" publishes an article on the request of suspending visa-free travel for Georgia on the request of one of the regions of Germany. The Minister of Refugees of North Rhine-Westphalia says that the explosion of crime in the region is largely caused by the Georgian asylum seekers due to whom the shelters have been turned into organized crime and robbery bases (*Feb. 19*).

5. Germany considering listing Georgia in category of safe countries

Germany is discussing the issue of listing Georgia in the category of safe countries, Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced. The move would be a reaction to Georgia's progression in human rights and democratic development (*Feb. 19*).

6. Foreign Ministry to launch new structure for European integration

The minister stated that the name of the structure will be the General Directorate for European Integration. Janelidze explained that the new structure will unite some departments of the foreign ministry and former departments of the Ministry for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, which was merged with the Foreign Ministry last year (*Feb. 19*).

7. NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General arrives in Tbilisi

NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General arrived in Tbilisi. During the visit Jamie Shea will held meetings in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense of Georgia (*Feb. 21*).

8. Russia has occupied our territories and, of course, Russia is a threat - Davit Sujashvili

"Georgia's territories are occupied, so what do you think where the main threat comes from? We talked about a lot of countries and talked about those countries where the threat comes from. Russia

has occupied our territories and of course Russia is a threat,"- said Davit Sujashvili, head of the Georgian Intelligence Service (*Feb. 20*).

9. TV company "Iberia" accuses government of pressure

According to journalists, Iberia's financial problems were created after the Omega Group suffered due to the damping prices imposed by the British-American Tobacco. The loss is about 100 million dollars. The company filed a lawsuit last year in court regarding the breach of competition laws and won the case in the first instance court, however the appeal and the Supreme Court passed the decision in favor of the British American Tobacco (*Feb. 20*).

10. World Bank: Georgia leader in blockchain technologies

The productions of bitcoins and blockchain technologies are very well developed in Georgia and furthermore, the country is among the leaders in this field, believes a World Bank delegation to Georgia (*Feb. 20*).

11. Turkey's Calik Energy will invest \$70m to build new wind power plant in Georgia

It was decided that the Turkish energy company will build a 50 MW wind power plant in Kartli, announced Georgia's Ministry of Economy. To implement this project Calik Energy will invest \$70 million in Georgia. The projects will be implemented in coordination with Georgia's Energy Development Fund (*Feb. 21*).

12. Free Trade Agreement between Georgia and Switzerland will be launched

FTA between Georgia and Switzerland will enter into force on May 1. The FTA between Georgia and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) has entered into force since September 1, and the first stage of the agreement was enforced with Norway and Iceland. FTA between Georgia and the EFTA was signed on June 27, 2016 in Berne (Swiss Confederation) in the framework of the European Free Trade Association Ministerial (*Feb. 21*).

13. Crimean Tatar Mejlis Chairman Visits Georgia

On February 20, Refat Chubarov, member of the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada and Chairman of the Mejlis – a representative institution of the Crimean Tatar people – met with Parliament Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze in Tbilisi. According to the Georgian Parliament, the two noted the connections between Georgia and Ukraine in terms of the two countries' shared challenges and goals, and discussed the situation in the Russian-occupied regions of both nations (*Feb. 21*).

14. Mass deportation of Georgians from Germany - 65 citizens of Georgia were expelled from different cities

"65 citizens were deported not only from Germany but from other countries, including Iceland," the statement was made by the Consul General of Georgia in Frankfurt. Ioseb Chkhikvishvili responded to the deportation of Georgian citizens from Germany. Among the deported people are citizens who went to Germany before the visa-free travel. Some of them have German family members and children who were born in Germany. According to him, the deportation of Georgian citizens will continue in the future. According to the General Consul, deportation of Georgians from Germany is planned for March 21. The consulate has not been informed on violations of citizens' rights. "Those people are deported who have not received shelter," said Ioseb Chkhikvishvili (*Feb. 21*).

15. Ukrainian border service prohibited Mikheil Saakashvili to enter the country for three years

Ukrainian border service prohibited Mikheil Saakashvili to enter the country for 3 years until 2021. The information was provided to the lawyers of the leader of the "New Forces Movement" (*Feb. 21*).

16. US Ambassador completes three-year mission in Georgia - Kelly urges ruling party to restraint

The US Ambassador to Georgia has completed his three years of diplomatic mission in Georgia and a 33-year-long diplomatic career. Jan Kelly delivered one of the last public speeches in the capacity of a Diplomat (*Feb. 22*).

17. Danish Foreign Minister to visits Georgia

Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen, on an official visit to Georgia on February 22-23, met with his Georgian counterpart, Mikheil Janelidze and discussed partnership between the two nations, situation in Georgia's Russian-occupied territories, and the country's European and Euro-Atlantic integration (*Feb. 23*).

❖ Internal Affairs

18. Court releases Turkish national accused of terrorism from pre-extradition detention

The Court of Appeals of Georgia has released Turkish national Mustafa Emre Cabuk from pre-extradition detention. The verdict has been long demanded by the civil sector and the opposition, which believe Cabuk had nothing to do with the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016 (*Feb. 19*).

19. "Georgian Dream wants to control all media outlets," - Giorgi Kandelaki

"Unfortunately we do not know all the details about this case. Would be good to know all the details of this story," the statement was made by Giorgi Kandelaki, the secretary of the parliamentary faction "European Georgia" in regard to pressure on "TV Pirveli" (*Feb. 19*).

20. Parliament overrides President's veto on Broadcasting Law

The Parliament of Georgia has overridden the president's veto on the amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, which boost support for the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), the only media outlet in the country receiving more than 50 million GEL budgetary financing annually (*Feb. 21*).

21. Pressure on TV Company "Iberia"

The pressure on TV Company "Iberia" - Journalists of the TV Company openly speak about the pressure on the TV channel for the third day already. According to them, the government intentionally creates financial problems for them. The journalists ask the government to investigate causes, which pushed the channel into the hardest financial crisis (*Feb. 22*).

22. There will be severe consequences - NGOs assess adoption of Law on Broadcasting

"Funding is rising, but its rating is declining, it will not be good for media and what is not good for media, it is not good for a democratic state," said Mamuka Andguladze, manager of the Transparency International Georgia Program (*Feb. 22*).

23. New textile factory opens in Georgia's port town of Poti

Products of some of the world's biggest sportswear manufacturers, including Nike, Puma, New Balance and Under Armour, will soon be made in Georgia's Black Sea port town of Poti. Adjara Textile's new factory will employ around 3,000 people. The total cost of the factory is estimated at about 40 million GEL, of which 25 million GEL has been already invested (*Feb. 22*).

24. PM says people have question marks to some judges

The Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili has stated that the most recent decision of the High Council of Justice to appoint several judges for life has triggered question marks in public. "The High Council of Justice appointed 44 judges for life today. The Council's decision to several such judges has caused question marks in public and the governing team," Kvirikashvili stated (*Feb. 23*).

25. Parliament did not support creation of investigative commission on Mukhtarli case

The parliamentary majority voted down the initiative on the creation of an investigative commission on the case of Afgan Mukhtarli. The ruling team did not support the initiative of "European Georgia" (*Feb. 24*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

26. Georgia's trade with EU worth \$211.5 million in January 2018

Last month, trade turnover with European Union (EU) countries increased by 6.6% year-on-year (y/y) and amounted to \$211.5 million, shows the preliminary data from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat). Exports were worth \$64.2 million (21.4% higher), while imports reached \$147.2 million (1.2% higher) (*Feb. 19*).

27. Georgian wine events held in Japanese cities of Tokyo and Osaka

The unique taste of Georgian wine has made a lasting impression in Japan last week, where 35 local wine producers participated at prestigious wine events. Georgian wine was showcased in the cities of Tokyo and Osaka. In total over 100 wine varieties from 35 Georgian companies were represented at wine events in both Japanese cities, announced the Georgian National Wine Agency. About 350 wine professionals, distributors, importers and sommeliers attended the Georgian wine event in Tokyo, while Osaka's wine event attracted about 300 guests (*Feb. 19*).

28. Israel to transfer its enterprises to Georgian city of Anaklia

Georgia and Israel are discussing the possibility of transferring several Israeli enterprises to Georgia's Black Sea town of Anaklia. At today's meeting with Georgia's Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, President of Israeli Entrepreneur Association Shraga Brosh said that it was easy to do business in Georgia thanks to minimal bureaucracy, a flexible tax system and the government's emphasis on the country's economic growth, which also leads to the business society's interest towards Georgia (*Feb. 19*).

29. Georgia and Turkey boost trade by widening free trade agreement

Georgian producers will soon be able to increase export volume to Turkey by 20% as Georgia and Turkey have agreed to widen an existing free trade agreement. The quotas set on Georgian lemon, kiwifruit, grape, dry fruit, fruit and vegetable cans, juices and food ingredients, were abolished. Meanwhile, the quotas increased on honey and livestock animals (*Feb. 21*).

30. Georgia recognised as easiest place in emerging Europe to do business

Georgia is the easiest place in emerging Europe to do business, shows the World Bank's Doing Business report and this achievement was recognised at a conference held yesterday in Washington, D.C. The conference 'Fifteen Years of Doing Business: Opportunities for Future Directions' reviewed the Doing Business Indicators of past 15 years (*Feb. 23*).

31. British company to create Anaklia City concept plan

A leading British company, BuroHappold Engineering, will be responsible for developing a visionary master planning and development plan study for Georgia's Black Sea town of Anaklia, which soon will be transformed into a modern, bustling city (*Feb. 23*).

❖ Culture and Sport

32. Georgian sumo wrestler Tochinoshin receives Medal of Honour

Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili has awarded Georgian wrestler Levan Gorgadze with the prestigious Medal of Honour. Gorgadze, known in the sumo community as Tochinoshin, has been awarded for promoting Georgia abroad (*Feb. 23*).