

WEEKLY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

Date: June 11-17, 2018

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. UN General Assembly adopts resolution initiated by Georgia

The UN General Assembly has once again adopted the Resolution on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia” yesterday in New York City.

The number of supporters of the resolution was high as in previous cases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia said today (*Agenda.ge, June 13, 2018*).

2. Breakaway Sokhumi plans to import Abkhazians from Middle East to shift demographics

Breakaway authorities in Sokhumi plan to invite ethnic Abkhazians in the Middle East to come and settle in the southern Gali and northern Gagra districts.

The scheme will shift the demographics in parts of the disputed territory where the Abkhazians are not the prevalent ethnicity.

This will diminish the share of ‘representatives of other nationalities’ near the ‘borders’, the de facto minister of repatriation Beslan Dbar said.

According to him, about 130 people living in Jordan have already expressed their desire to return to their historical homeland (*DFWATCH.NET, June 14, 2018*).

3. European Parliament adopts resolution in support of Georgia

The European Parliament today adopted a [resolution](#) supporting Georgia’s territorial integrity and condemning Russia’s occupation of historic territories of Georgia (*Agenda.ge, June 14, 2018*).

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

4. Occupied Tskhinvali makes Russian and Ossetian languages mandatory for kindergarten teachers

The de facto leadership of Georgia’s eastern occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region has made Russian and Ossetian languages mandatory for teachers of kindergartens in Georgia’s occupied Akhalgori area, which is mostly resided by ethnic Georgians.

Akhalgori governor Nugzar Tinikashvili, who confirmed the information, says that all the teachers of two kindergartens and other staff have been dismissed as they did not know both of the mandatory languages (*Agenda.ge, June 12, 2018*).

5. Court sends two charged for Tatumashvili’s case to pre-trial detention in absentia

The Mtskheta District Court in the east Georgia sent two individuals from the occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region to pre-trial detention in absentia for illegal deprivation of liberty of a Georgian citizen Archil Tatumashvili and support in torturing of him. The Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia stated that the court shared their motion.

Tatunashvili's father welcomed the decision but said that it would be better to see the people behind cells.

The individuals, employees of the so-called law enforcement agencies of Tskhinvali, David Gurtsiev and Alik Tabuev, were charged by the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia yesterday in absentia (*Agenda.ge, June 15, 2018*).

6. Russia conducts drills in Georgia's occupied Tskhinvali region

Russia's 4th Infantry Brigade is conducting military drills in Georgia's occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region.

More than 2,500 soldiers, both from Russia and the region, and 500 military techniques are involved in the exercise, de facto Defence Ministry of Tskhinvali says (*Agenda.ge, June 15, 2018*).

7. Georgian citizen kidnapped from village near Russian occupied Tskhinvali

A Georgian citizen has been kidnapped from the village Akhalubani, Gori district near the Administrative Boundary Line of Tskhinvali currently occupied by Russia.

Misha Petriashvili, 68, was herding cattle with two fellow villagers, according to the Gori municipality office. The EU monitoring mission is informed about the incident, the State Security Service said today.

Locals say at the moment of the incident the three people were on Georgian controlled territory and did not cross the so-called "border" (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

8. State Minister for Asylum and Migration of Belgium visits Georgia

The State Minister for Asylum, Migration and Administrative Simplification of Belgium Theo Francken has arrived in Georgia to discuss migration and several related issues with state officials of Georgia.

During his meeting with Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Gakharia Francken familiarised himself with reforms in Georgia which aim to decrease the number of illegal migrants in the EU from Georgia (*Agenda.ge, June 12, 2018*).

9. Georgians can travel to Montenegro visa free

From now on citizens of Georgia can travel visa free to Montenegro, the Georgian Foreign Ministry announced today.

Within the deal Georgians will be able to stay on the territory of Montenegro for 90 days in any 180-day period.

Georgians, who have ordinary passports, can travel visa free to [57 countries](#) worldwide (*Agenda.ge, June 15, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

10. Marneuli mayor from ruling party detained for inhumane treatment

Temur Abazov, the mayor of the Marneuli region of Georgia in the country's east, has been detained for abuse and inhumane treatment of a local man, as the mayor physically abused and forced the individual to wash his face with urine in a live video.

Three individuals - a parliament member from the opposition United National Movement Azer Suleymanov, a member of Marneuli City Assembly from the Georgian Dream ruling party, Ramin Alakhverdiev and Abazov's relative E.G. have also been charged with the physical abuse of the same individual.

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office held a briefing today, where they said that a Marneuli local Elchin Alakhverdiev arrived at a rally in Tbilisi on June 10, dedicated to the murder of two teenage boys in Tbilisi last year (*Agenda.ge, June 13, 2018*).

11. Meeting of the Political Council of Georgian Dream

On June 13, Political Council meeting of GD had started and was finished at 18:00. As journalists were disclosing rumors the top topic of the Agenda was political crisis in the country and it could be followed by the resignation of PM Kvirikashvili and reshuffle of the government. After the finish of the meeting all participants mentioned that changes in the government were not discussed. In addition they said that the main topic of the meeting was UNICEF report according to which country's economic development does not affect positively population of Georgia and in order to overcome this challenge the Government is tasked to deliver action plan how to overcome the poverty (*IPN.GE, June 12, 2018*).

12. Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili resigns

Despite the comments of the MPs that resignation of the Prime Minister was not planned very next day Kvirikashvili had announced about his intention to leave the post and according to him reason behind his resignation was economic problems in the country and disagreement with Ivanishvili over the economic policy of the Government.

"I would like to emphasize that in recent months, there have been a number of fundamental disagreement with the chairman of the party," Kvirikashvili said, clearly referring to, yet not mentioning, Bidzina Ivanishvili.

"This is a normal process. Today is the moment when the chairman of the party should be given the opportunity to form a team based on the views it has," Kvirikashvili added (*DFWATCH. NET, June 13, 2018*).

13. Georgian Dream party names acting finance minister Mamuka Bakhtadze new prime minister

The Georgian Dream ruling party has named acting Finance Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze, for the prime minister's candidacy, after the resignation of Giorgi Kvirikashvili yesterday. Georgia will be a powerful, European-style country," Bakhtadze stated at a briefing shortly before. He said that people have been and will be the main value of the Georgian Dream government.

"Each initiative or effort will be for the better future of each Georgian citizen. To achieve this goal we [the government] should be unanimous and principled, focused on high quality," he said (*Agenda.ge, June 14, 2018*).

14. Georgian president officially confirms nomination of Mamuka Bakhtadze for prime minister

President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili has officially confirmed the nomination of Mamuka Bakhtadze for the country's premiership.

The president of Georgia has the ability to reject a candidate put forward by the parliamentary majority.

"Under Article 80 of the Georgian constitution, Mamuka Bakhtadze, put forward by the parliamentary majority, will be confirmed as a candidate for the premiership", says the presidential decree (*Agenda.ge, June 16, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

15. Georgia's Myway Airlines launches 5 new regular flights

The flight schedule will be the following:

- Tbilisi-Kharkiv-Tbilisi – from June 12 to September 4 (on Tuesdays and Saturdays)
- Batumi-Kharkiv-Batumi – from June 13 to September 29 (on Wednesdays and Saturdays)
- Tbilisi-Tehran-Tbilisi – from June 14 to October 25 (on Mondays and Thursdays)
- Batumi-Tehran-Batumi – from June 22 to October 26 (on Fridays)
- Tbilisi-Samara-Tbilisi – from June 23 to October 27 (on Tuesdays and Saturdays)
- Flights will be performed with a Boeing B737-800 aircraft.

Myway Airlines appeared on the Georgian market in February of this year (*Agenda.ge, June 11, 2018*).

16. Q1 2018: Georgia attracts \$279.3m foreign direct investments

The top three countries that invested the most in Georgia during this period were:

- United Kingdom (29.6 percent)
- Azerbaijan (18.2 percent)
- China (14.9 percent)

Three sectors of the Georgian economy enjoyed 78.7 percent of all FDIs in Q1 of 2018:

- Financial sector - \$110.6 million
- Construction sector - \$69.1 million
- Manufacturing sector - \$40.2 million

The National Statistics Office noted that the adjusted data will be published on August 15, 2018 (*Agenda.ge, June 11, 2018*).

17. New textile factory comes to Tbilisi

Georgia is fostering its growing textile industry by building a new factory in the capital city of Tbilisi. Georgia's Economy Minister Dimitry Kumsishvili opened a new factory Tiflis Textile today. Tiflis Textile was opened within the state program 'Produce in Georgia'.

The factory is equipped with modern machineries and equipment. Currently Tiflis Textil employs 50 people, while the total volume of investment amounts over 6 million GEL (*Agenda.ge, June 11, 2018*).

18. UNICEF: Children remain most vulnerable group in Georgian society

Social protection programmes can better identify poor families with children though poverty still remains a challenge in Georgia, UNICEF's new Welfare Monitoring Survey says.

"Targeting of social assistance increased and together with Child Benefit has a high impact on reducing child poverty; targeted social assistance can better identify poor households with children; poverty levels increased for all groups though people's perception of being in poverty have improved; less people experience financial barriers in accessing health services; the gap for preschool attendance decreased; due to absence of kindergartens, around 14,000 children still do not attend preschool

services” – these are some of the findings of the UNICEF’s Welfare Monitoring Study (*Agenda.ge, June 12, 2018*).

19. UNICEF survey of 2017: Household income increased by 26.7% in Georgia

The survey says that the increase in revenues is mainly driven by a rise in salaries and self-employed revenues.

“Salary constitutes the largest part of the average monthly household income (52.2 percent), followed by income from social transfers (22.4

percent), and self-employment (19.1 percent)”, read the report (*Agenda.ge, June 12, 2018*).

20. TANAP natural gas pipeline via Georgia opens today

The Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), a natural gas pipeline from Azerbaijan passing through Georgia and Turkey to Europe, has opened today in Turkish city of Eskisehir, reports Trend.az.

TANAP, a 1,850km pipeline, will travel through Georgia to better connect Europe with natural gas from the Caspian Sea as a way to reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian gas.

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations, Kaha Imnadze posted on his Twitter channel:

The first gas transportation via TANAP is planned for 2018. The 1,850km pipeline will deliver 10 bcm to Europe once it is connected to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) by 2020. By 2023 TANAP’s capacity will rise to 23 bcm per year and then to 31 bcm by 2026 (*Agenda.ge, June 12, 2018*).

21. Jan-May 2018: Georgia’s external trade up 24.5%

Georgia’s external trade grew by 24.5 percent in January-May 2018 and reached \$4.89 billion, says the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

In the first five months of 2018 the value of Georgia’s exports increased by 28 percent to \$1.28 billion, while the value of imports also increased 23.3 percent to \$3.61 billion with respect to January-May 2017, says the Geostat data.

Georgia’s trade deficit equalled \$2.32 billion in January-May 2018, which was a 47.5 percent share of the country’s total trade turnover (*Agenda.ge, June 13, 2018*).

22. Georgian Minister of Economy: ‘Georgia’s exports grow to record high’

Kumsishvili talked about several factors which led to an increase in exports last month.

“First of all we should mention that the geography of those countries with whom we have free trade deals has increased and soon Hong Kong will also be added to this list. Besides we are implementing business-support programs that encourage the production of export-oriented products. At the same time, we help local entrepreneurs in order to take on new markets”, said Kumsishvili (*Agenda.ge, June 13, 2018*).

23. Georgians spend 122.3m GEL on domestic tourism in Q1 2018



In total 983.600 Georgians aged 15 and older took trips within their home country in the first quarter (Q1) of 2018, reports the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

These travellers spent 122.3 million GEL (about \$49.82m/€42.12m*) in total while travelling in Georgia.

People aged 31-50 were the most avid domestic travellers (205,700 people), while the least people willing to travel were the elderly (38,800 people).

In terms of gender, more women (445,400) travelled around Georgia than men (390,800) in Q1 2018 (*Agenda.ge, June 14, 2018*).

24. EU-Georgia launch two projects for supporting sustainable rural development

EU-funded projects with a budget of 22 million euros (60 million GEL) implemented by the UNDP and the FAO will provide direct assistance to rural communities and support the governments of Georgia and the Adjara Autonomous Republic in sustainable agriculture and rural development policy.

The launch ceremony of the two projects funded under the EU's European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) was held in Kobuleti, Adjara region on June 15.

The project "FAO support to Georgian agricultural sector under ENPARD-3" with a budget of 12 million EUR will provide direct assistance to rural communities and farm holdings while the other project "ENPARD-3: Improving Rural Development in Georgia" with a budget of 10 million EUR will provide direct assistance to non-agriculture related economy in rural areas (*Agenda.ge, June 16, 2018*).