

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 6-August10

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Date: **August 10, 2018**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region

1. Fire destroys 150 m2 of de facto president's administrative building in Tskhinvali

Fire broke out in the building of de facto president's administration of occupied South Ossetia yesterday. As a result, about 150 square meters of area was burned. The fire coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Russia-Georgia war. Breakaway authorities of Tskhinvali managed to extinguish the fire with five fire brigades (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

2. Georgia's possible accession to NATO threatens the Russian world, part of which is South Ossetia - Zhanur Gaseev

Georgia's possible accession to NATO threatens the Russian world, part of which is South Ossetia - the so-called Ambassador of occupied South Ossetia to Russia Zhanur Gaseev stated. "As for Georgia's possible accession to NATO, it is clear that NATO enlargement is against the Russian world and South Ossetia is part of this world," said the Ambassador. According to him, Georgia's membership of NATO cannot be assessed as a positive fact. NATO leaders stated at the NATO summit in Brussels on July 11-12 that Georgia will become a NATO member (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

3. The Georgian society understands that they will never be able to see South Ossetia and Abkhazia like their ears - Anatoly Bibilov

Georgian Society understands that they will never be able to see South Ossetia and Abkhazia like their ears, - Anatoly Bibilov, the de facto President of the occupied South Ossetia, said. Anatoly Bibilov was speaking about the proposed transit of cargo to Russia via "South Ossetia".

According to him, "This transit is important for South Ossetia as well as for Georgia, but Georgia will try to isolate South Ossetia outside this project even if its own interests are damaged" (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

4. So-called South Ossetian government invites Putin to ceremony marking 10th anniversary of "independence"

So-called South Ossetian government has invited Russian president Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the ceremony dedicated to the 10th anniversary of "independence". Marat Kulakhmetov, so-called ambassador of Russia to "South Ossetia" stated.

"South Ossetia invited several Russian high ranking officials, including the president and the foreign minister. Now, Moscow is discussing who will arrive in Tskhinvali on August 26," Kulakhmetov said (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

5. De-facto-president - There is a reality that should be accepted - Georgia must recognize the defeat

There is a reality that should be accepted - Georgia must recognize the defeat, - de-facto president of occupied Tskhinvali region Eduard Kokoity said. "I do not believe that Georgia will take revenge. I do not want war for Ossetian, Abkhazian, Russian and Georgian people. There is a reality that needs to be accepted. Georgia should recognize its defeat. We are ready for good neighborhood," Eduard Kokoity said. Kokoity pointed out that the "main achievement of the republic during the last 10 years was the recognition by Russia" (IPN.ge, August 8, 2018).

6. Burjanadze - Ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili should be punished for starting the war against "South Ossetia"

Ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili should be punished for starting the war against "South Ossetia" in August of 2008. Reconciliation with Abkhazians and Ossetians will be possible after that, - ex-speaker of the parliament of Georgia Nino Burjanadze said. According to her, "the actions of mad Saakashvili in August of 2008 have caused a state and human tragedy." She said that the United States pushed Saakashvili to start the war (IPN.Ge, August 8, 2018).

❖ Abkhazia Region

7. Raul Khajimba invites Russian President and Prime Minister to Abkhazia

So-called President of the occupied Abkhazia Raul Khajimba invited Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to the events marking the 10th anniversary of independence.

As Raul Khajimba said in an interview with Izvestia, he invited representatives of the Russian Federation, who "actively assisted Abkhazia during war". The Kremlin has not yet commented on a possible visit of Vladimir Putin to the occupied region of Abkhazia (IPN.ge, August 10, 2018).

8. Sergey Shamba – Georgian army was well prepared for the attack on South Ossetia in August of 2008

The Georgian army was well prepared for the attack on South Ossetia in August of 2008, - Sergey Shamba, former de-facto foreign minister of occupied Abkhazia said. According to him, the Georgian army occupied the heights around Tskhinvali, despite the fact that the Ossetian side was protesting against it at the international level. "The Ossetians constantly pointed out that Georgians occupy the heights around Tskhinvali, threatening the city. It was impossible to give a proper answer to Georgia's actions. But everything indicated that this was not happened without reason," Shamba said (IPN. Ge, August 8, 2018).

❖ Foreign Affairs

9. Mikheil Saakashvili: Only absolute idiots can say that Georgia started a war in 2008

"Only absolute idiots can say that Georgia started the war in 2008" - former president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili said in an interview with a Russian newspaper.

"The aim of the Russian invasion in 2008 was not only an attack on Georgia as a state, but it was an attack on Georgia's statehood, as this created problems with its successful reforms at that time. Their goal was to take Tbilisi, change the government and abolish Georgia as a state," Mikheil Saakashvili stated. According to him, it is immoral to say that Georgia started the war. Ask this question of the Russian mothers who sent their children, or Colonel Casachenko, who arrived in the gorge at 03:00 a.m. (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

❖ Internal Affairs

10. US Embassy: Russia pursues a policy of "borderization, separating families and neighbors

In the years since the invasion, Russia has pursued a policy of "borderization" in the occupied regions, erecting barriers that have a profound negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of people on both sides of the barbed wire: separating families and neighbors, cutting off local communities from their farmlands, and putting the vulnerable -- including those requiring medical treatment -- at greater risk, - reads the statement of the US Embassy to Georgia.

- In its fourth statement, the US Embassy calls on Russia to fulfill its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement. Such "borderization" is inconsistent with Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we continue to call for these barriers to be removed and for Russia, as a party to the conflict, to fulfill its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement. This includes withdrawing all its forces to pre-conflict positions, and providing unhindered access for humanitarian assistance", reads the statement (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

11. Security Service says it was aware of release of threatening video by ISIS Georgian group

Investigation is in progress on the dissemination of a threatening video by the ISIS Georgian group. According to the State Security Service, all relevant investigative actions are being conducted at this stage.

"We were aware of this video. We are carrying out relevant investigative activities", - the State Security Service stated (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

12. Pre-trial detention ordered for person accused of terrorism

Pre-trial detention has been ordered for Malkhaz Tokhosashvili, detained on charges of illegal purchase and possession of weapons within the scope of investigation into terrorism. According to the prosecutor, it was established that Malkhaz Tokhosashvili shares the ideology of the Islamic State and has internet connection with the terrorist organization. The defendant does not plead guilty and alleges that the weapons, seized by police, do not belong to him. The detainee faces 3 to 6 years in jail if convicted (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

13. Jacek Czaputowicz: We hope that with the efforts of the international community you will be able to maintain an independent, sovereign and united state

We arrived here together with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and Lithuania and the Vice-Premier of Ukraine to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the arrival of Lithuanian Prime Minister and our President here, when they expressed their support for the Georgian nation, - Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz stated.

We appreciate the efforts of the Georgian people and the government. We also appreciate that Georgia sends its soldiers to NATO missions. We are satisfied with the declaration of the NATO Summit, which leaves an open door for Georgia and Ukraine", Jacek Czaputowicz said (IPN.ge, August 6, 2018).

14. President awards reporters killed in 2008 Russia-Georgia war with Order of Honor

President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili awarded the reporters, who were killed in the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, with Order of Honor. The award ceremony was held on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Georgian-Russian war and it was attended by the family members of the fallen journalists, representatives of the government, diplomatic corps, civil society and media (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

15. Citizens installed symbolic barbed wire fences outside building of former Russian Embassy

Citizens installed symbolic barbed wire fences and held a photo exhibiton at the building of former Embassy of Russia to Georgia. Footages, reflecting the 2008 Russo-Georgia War were also shown at the special monitor.

The rally was joined by the students of various universities, non-governmental organizations, representatives of political parties, their supporters and ordinary citizens (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

16. US Secretary of State confirms strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty

A phone conversation was held between President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, upon the latter's initiative. As the press office of the Administration of President informs, the US Secretary of State reiterated US's firm support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The US Secretary of State emphasized that the US will never accept the occupation of Georgia's territories and will also help Georgia to overcome the challenges still remain 10 years after Russia's military aggression in Georgia. The sides also discussed the specific ways of realization of the agreements reached at the NATO Summit (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

17. Sir Alan Duncan - We call on Russia to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Georgia

Today we commemorate with sadness the 10th anniversary of the Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008 August. We mourn the lives of the lost and displacement of thousands of people, who are still unable to return to their homes, - UK State Minister Sir Alan Duncan says in a video address released by the British Embassy to Georgia. We call on Russia to implement 6-point agreement of August 12, 2008 and to withdraw its military forces from the territory of Georgia in order to allow reconciliation and a peaceful resolution of the conflict," Sir Alan Duncan says (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

18. Slovak Foreign Ministry calls on Russia to implement ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008

Ten years since Russia - Georgia conflict of 2008 the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic declares that the Slovak Republic continuously supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognizes borders and its Euro-Atlantic aspirations,- it is said in the August 7 statement released by the Foreign Ministry of Slovakia. The Ministry calls on the Government of the Russian Federation to implement the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008 and terminate its illegal military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Ministry also demands that Russia guarantees the EU Monitoring Mission and humanitarian organizations full access to the occupied territories of the Georgian breakaway regions (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

19. Group of Friends of Georgia releases statement on 10 th anniversary of Russian military invasion of Georgia

A joint statement was made on behalf of Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America on the occasion of the ten-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Georgia. OSCE countries express their full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

20. Georgia, we are with you – the US Embassy

The U.S. Embassy to Georgia has today released a statement on the ten-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Georgia. The Embassy says that they will continue to work together with the Government and the people of Georgia and with our friends and allies to ensure the world's continued support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

21. Latvian FM advises Georgia to become attractive for people living in occupied regions

"I would like to reiterate Latvia's strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. What happened 10 years ago it was an alarming call for everyone, but we did not realize the first call properly. The international community then considered it a local and not very important conflict and we returned to normal relations with Russia. However, after 6 years, developments in Crimea and eastern Ukraine showed us the reality. Now we are better prepared, but we still have a way to go," Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs stated. "We advise you to use all the tools, including the Association Agreement and the programs, which are elaborated with NATO. And we should put the issue of the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine on the agenda of the international community," said FM Rinkēvičs (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

22. Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister – 10 years ago, Russians ignored internationally recognized norms

The world could not realize the existed threat 10 years ago. 10 years ago, Russians crossed internationally recognized borders of Georgia, ignored internationally recognized norms, - Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister Pavlo Rozenko stated. He said that Ukraine will always support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

23. Federica Mogherini - The EU reiterates its firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia

The European Union reiterates its firm support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, - it is said in August 7 statement by EU High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on the 10 years anniversary of the conflict between Russia and Georgia. The European Union reconfirms its commitment to remain engaged and involved in stabilisation and conflict resolution efforts in Georgia, including by continuing its engagements as co-chair in the Geneva discussions, the efforts of the EU Special Representative, and the continued presence on the ground of the EU Monitoring Mission," the statement reads(IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

24. Danish Foreign Ministry - Russia should respect the 2008 ceasefire agreement

Denmark regrets the lack of respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity still 10 years after the Russian invasion, - it is said in August 7 statement twitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. "Russia should

respect the 2008 ceasefire agreement and allow international monitoring in Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” the statement reads (IPN.ge, August 7, 2018).

25. Canadian FM - Russia must abide by its obligations under the Ceasefire Agreement of August 12, 2008

Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, has released a statement on the 10 th anniversary of the Russo-Georgia August War. Canadian FM explained that Russia must abide by its obligations under the Ceasefire Agreement of August 12, 2008, and the Agreement on Implementing Measures of September 8, 2008 in order to reach a peaceful and sustainable solution to this conflict. According to the statement, Canada welcomes the Government of Georgia’s new peace initiative, “Step to a Better Future”, directed at improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of residents in Georgia’s Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions (IPN.Ge, August 8, 2018)

26. Murdered teen’s father announces protest rallies from September

Zaza Saralidze, father of one of the teenagers murdered on Khorava Street in Tbilisi, has announced a new wave of protests from September. The rallies are the part of a new plan, which was announced by Zaza Saralidze a few days ago after his and Malkhaz Machalikashvili’s joint visit to Strasburg was canceled. Zaza Saralidze stated that the protests will be resumed from September (IPN.Ge, August 7, 2018).

27. Who started the 2008 war - Salome Zourabichvili explains her scandalous statement

Salome Zourabichvili gave explanation in the social network regarding her statement on the August 2008 war, which was followed by a critical reaction. The presidential candidate says that her statement, where she blamed Georgia for starting August 2008 war was wrongly interpreted. Salome Zourabichvili explains that in 2008 the aggressor country was Russia and the August war was unfolded in accordance with the Russian scenario. The presidential candidate, however, accuses Mikheil Saakashvili, the third president of Georgia and the then government in the implementation of the Russian scenario (Rustavi2, August 9, 2018).

28. Davit Zalkaliani: Salome Zurabishvili’s statement about the war in 2008 was her personal statement

Salome Zurabishvili is an independent presidential candidate - her statement about the war in 2008 was her personal statement, - Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani stated. In the same context, Zalkaliani confirmed that the Georgian Dream has no presidential candidate (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

29. Salome Zurabishvili: “I want Georgia to become like me, namely European and Georgian”

I want Georgia to become like me, namely European and Georgian, - independent presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili said at a press conference today, where she officially named her candidacy for presidential elections. According to Zurabishvili, Georgia's prospect is Europe, but it is necessary to work in this direction.

"I want Georgia to become like me, namely European and Georgian. Georgia is European with its values and past. We want the EU, we want NATO - these should not be dead slogans, we need to become Europeans in our daily life",-stated Zurabishvili (Agenda.ge, August 6, 2018).

30. We will make a decision whether or not to support Salome Zurabishvili after we will hear her program - Health Minister

We will decide whether or not to support Salome Zurabishvili in the presidential elections after we will hear her vision and program, - Health Minister Davit Sergeenko stated. The Minister also noted that he does not have any question about who started aggression in 2008 (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

31. Georgian PM calls on Russia to withdraw forces from country

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has called upon Russia to withdraw its forces from historic Georgian lands while making a statement on the 10th anniversary of the Russia-Georgia 2008 war. “It will be the most appropriate message for streamlining our relations”, the Georgian PM stated.

PM stated that the Georgian government has launched several significant programmes and that will be complete with "ultimate success by all means" (Agenda.ge, August 9, 2018).

32. Prime Minister meets Head of NATO Liaison Office in Georgia

Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, met with Rosaria Puglisi, Head of NATO Liaison Office in Georgia. According to the Governmental Administration, the meeting focused on the close cooperation between Georgia and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO), reforms currently being implemented in the country and significant contribution of Georgian military forces to the international peace-keeping operations performed under the aegis of NATO (IPN.Ge, August 9, 2018).

33. The Pardon Commission to consider pardoning the Archbishop at next meeting

According to the Chairperson of the Pardon Commission Zviad Koridze, the Petition to pardon Archbishop Giorgi Mamaladze will be discussed at the next meeting of the Commission. The lawyer acting for Archbishop Giorgi Mamaladze (convicted in the so-called "cyanide case"), addressed the President of Georgia with a request to pardon the Archbishop. In addition, according to another lawyer Mikheil Ramishvili, the petition for pardoning does not mean that Giorgi Mamaladze pleaded guilty (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

34. Three people, who had been detained on charges of not reporting the crime committed on Khorava Street, have been released on bail

Three people, who had been detained on charges of not reporting the crime committed on Khorava Street, have been released on bail. In particular, Tengiz Kalandia was released after paying 5000 GELS bail, Zakaria Tsotskaladze and Giorgi Shaburishvili paid 3 000 GELS bail each. The crime on Khorava Street was committed on the 1st of December 2017. Two teenagers were killed in the conflict between school students (IPN.ge, August 9, 2018).

35. Failed visit to Strasbourg - Zaza Saralidze and Eliso Kiladze Demand from Prosecutor's Office to Start Investigation

Zaza Saralidze and Eliso Kiladze will address the Chief Prosecutor's Office with a statement today. They are demanding from the agency to determine why they and Malkhaz Machalikashvili were hindered to depart for Strasbourg. Before going to the Chief Prosecutor's Office, they will hold briefing with at the European Union representation of and provide the information in connection with this fact.

Kiladze and Saralidze request the explanations from the State Security Service as well. They think that the meetings planned in Strasbourg has been deliberately disrupted (Rustavi2, August 10, 2018).

36. Vacant position of Chairman of the Supreme Court - advisors of the President will meet representatives of international organizations

Consultations in Presidential Administration continue with regard to the candidacy of the Chairman of the Supreme Court. Margvelashvili's advisors will meet representatives of international organizations today.

What requirements should meet the person nominated on this position - it will still be a topic of discussion. So far no specific candidate are determined. The president will name the candidate after the consultation in September (Rustavi2, August10, 2018).

37. Presidential Elections - Davit Usupashvili filed an application for registration to the CEC

A head of Grigol Vashadze's election headquarters accuses the CEC of preparations to rig elections. Giorgi Vashadze states that the election administration is composed by the CEC with the relatives of the Georgian Dream members and state Security Service, which means that they control the election headquarters in the regions. "They are going to totally rig the elections. I would like to call on the CEC and tell them that we will not let them to do it," Giorgi Vashadze said. Giorgi Vashadze has published the list of those people who are family members of Georgian Dream (Rustavi2, August 10, 2018).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

38. Japanese winemakers visiting Georgian wine regions

A group of winemakers from Japan are visiting Georgia, exploring local wine culture and traditions in the country's wine regions of Kakheti and Kartli. The guests invited Georgian winemakers to Japan, where some Japanese winemakers produce wine using the qvevri method.

Japan is one of the strategic export markets of Georgian wine, to where about 167,000 bottles of wine have been exported in the first seven months of 2018, which is 124 percent higher than the same period last year (Agenda.ge, August 9, 2018).

39. Library opened in the village of Chela with funding of President’s reserve fund

With the support of the president’s reserve fund, the library was opened in the village of Chela. The head of the administration, visited the library in the Center for Civic Engagement of Muslims. President’s administration also handed computer equipment to the village Chella Library within the framework of the project "Internet to Libraries of All Villages" funded by the President’s Reserve Fund (Rustavi2, August 10, 2018).

40. 1 539 vehicles banned from being exploited after technical inspection

From January 1 through August 6 of 2018, 56 906 vehicles passed periodic technical inspections in Georgia. According to the “BusinessPressNews”, 13 360 vehicles could not meet the requirements. 1 539 vehicles were banned from being exploited (IPN.Ge, August 8, 2018).

41. GEL depreciates - the cost of 1 dollar in commercial banks reaches 2.62 GEL

The national currency significantly diminished today. One dollar reaches 2.62 GEL in commercial banks. The price of one dollar in TBC Bank is 2.61 GEL. As for the Bank of Georgia, one dollar is available for 2.60 GEL. The dollar rate is high in foreign currency booths as well. The cost of the dollar reaches 2.56 GEL(Rustavi2, August 10, 2018).






 **Additional Information**

August 10, 2018

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.4687 GEL	1 GBP - 3.1817 GEL	100 RUB -3.7416 GEL
1 EUR - 2.8622 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4576 GEL	100 JPY - 2.2219 GEL

25 day forecast

Friday 10 August	Saturday 11 August	Sunday 12 August	Monday 13 August	Tuesday 14 August
				
19° 26°	17° 21°	17° 25°	19° 29°	20° 29°

- **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](#)**