

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 21-22

Compiled by: *Aleksandre Davitashvili*

Date: *August 23, 2018*

❖ Occupied Regions

1. Georgia submits new lawsuit against Russia to European Court of Human Rights

The Georgian Justice Ministry has submitted a suit against Russia to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg.

The suit accuses Russia of being responsible for several murders and multiple human rights violations in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia).

“Massive assaults, detainment, harassment and the murders of Georgian citizens has become administrative practice in the occupied regions and in settlements along the occupation line.”

(Agenda.ge, August 22, 2018).

2. The aim of the suit filed with the European Court is to identify the responsibility of Russia in the grave violation of Archil Tatumashvili's right to life - Ketevan Tsikhelashvili

"This is the heaviest crime and the investigation is ongoing under relevant articles. The task is to identify the responsibility of Russia, apart from the specific offenders. The broader purpose of this suit is that, ultimately, with the use of all the leverage, we have to put end to this gravest practice of violation of fundamental human rights. This suit is directed at the prevention of such grave crimes against the Georgian population," said Tsikhelashvili *(IPN.ge, August 22, 2018).*

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. UK Foreign Secretary: the limp response to Russian intervention in Georgia can only have made the annexation of Crimea more likely

“The seizure of Crimea in 2014 was the first time that territory has been annexed in Europe by the use of arms since 1945 but in fact it was not the Kremlin’s first territorial incursion in this century, which was the invasion of Georgia in 2008,” he said.

Hunt used his first official visit to the US as foreign secretary to urge Europe to impose tougher sanctions on Russia as the country “repeatedly flouts the established rules of international conduct” *(Agenda.ge, August 22, 2018).*

❖ Internal Affairs

4. Prime Minister presents seven new governors

- ✓ Aleksandre Motserielia – Governor of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti
- ✓ Shalva Kereselidze - Governor of Mtskheta-Mtianeti
- ✓ Shota Rekhviashvili - Governor of Kvemo Kartli
- ✓ Besik Amiranashvili – Governor of Samtskhe Javakheti

- ✓ Giorgi Khojivanishvili - Governor of Shida Kartli.
- ✓ Shavleg Tabatadze - Governor of Imereti,
- ✓ Zurab Nasaraia – Governor of Giroa (*Rustavi 2, August 20, 2018*).

5. "Political loyalty is one of the criteria by which the governor is appointed" - Irakli Kobakhidze

"The governor is a political position, a member of the team, and therefore should be chosen according to a political loyalty. If someone disapproves that, it means that they do not know the legislation," said Irakli Kobakhidze (*Rustavi 2, August 20, 2018*).

6. Jan-July 2018: 33,054 crimes reported in Georgia, 36.67% solved

A total of 33,054 crimes were reported in January-July of 2018 in Georgia, which is a 55.81 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2017, reveal data from Georgia's Ministry of Internal Affairs. 36.67 percent of recorded crimes were solved, says the ministry (*Agenda.ge, August 21, 2018*).

7. Deputy Head of Security Services, Ioseb Gogashvili resigns

The reason for the resignation of the first deputy head of the State Security Service is unknown. Reportedly he has left the position on his own application.

Ioseb Gogashvili was appointed as deputy head of the State Security Service in August 2015. In 2014-2015 she was the head of the General Inspection of the Interior Ministry. Prior to that, he worked as Deputy Chief of Operations Maintenance Division (*Agenda.ge, August 21, 2018*).

8. PM says remarks about resignation of deputy head of State Security Service is political stir

PM Bakhtadze stated about it when responding to the reporter's question whether Gogashvili's resignation was linked to misappropriation of funds and the special operation, conducted in Pankisi Gorge.

"The agency will comment about this issue. As for other opinions, I think this is just political stir," PM Bakhtadze said (*IPN.ge, August 22, 2018*).

9. International Black Sea University forbidden from matriculating new students for one-year period

The International Black Sea University has been restricted from receiving new students for a one-year period by the Authorisation Council today.

The authorisation body claims that the restriction is legal since the university owes money to the government while the management of the IBSU calls the council's decision unfair.

The management of the IBSU claims that the Authorisation Center's decision is not fair and the university meets all criteria to keep its authorisation. Moreover the Head of the Quality Enhancement Department at IBSU, Diana Mchedlishvili, notes that the contested amount which has been disputed since 2013 is not related to the teaching process at the university.

The university initiated by Georgia's former President Eduard Shevardnadze and former PM of Turkey Tansu Chiller was established in 1995 (*Agenda.ge, August 21, 2018*).

10. Georgia bows to Turkey's Erdogan again, cracks down on Gulen-linked university in Tbilisi

The decision to bar the university from accepting new students for a period of one year means a huge financial loss and a significant blow to its image. University officials have been reluctant to comment, fearing a backlash from the government, but no one is in any doubt that the crackdown comes as a result of pressure from Turkish President Recep Erdogan, who regards Gulen as the number one enemy of the state.

Turkey has been pressuring countries around the world to close or hand over control of schools linked to Gulen, an influential U.S.-based Muslim cleric who was once a close ally of President Erdogan.

In February 2017, the council of the National Center for Educational Quality revoked the Sahin Friendship School's authorization to carry out educational activities due to 'serious violations' of the rules about enrollment and procedures. Seven months earlier, on July 19 of 2016, just a few days after Turkey's failed coup attempt, Turkish consul in Batumi Yasin Temizkan called on Georgian authorities to close down the school because it is fostering terrorism.

Georgian authorities eventually gave in, despite claims that the school was the best in Batumi. Later, in August 2017, the government cracked down on Demirel College, a school belonging to the same holding company that runs IBSU (*DFWATCH.NET, August, 21, 2018*).

11. 433 new HIV/AIDS cases reported in Georgia in 2018

The number of people suffering from HIV (Immunodeficiency Virus) in Georgia is on a slight upward trend, the latest medical data reveals.

As of 20 August 2018, 433 new cases of HIV/AIDS were revealed in Georgia, says the Centre for Infectious Diseases, AIDS and Clinical Immunology. To compare, 404 new cases of the infection were revealed in the same period of the last year (*Agenda.ge, August 22, 2018*).

12. PM Bakhtadze: Discussions Underway over Presidential Candidate

Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said on August 21 that discussions over the presidential candidate are still underway in the ruling Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia party.

Bakhtadze said that there are some in the ruling party, who consider the GDDG should have its own presidential candidate, while others believe that it might be better for the country's democratic development if they do not join the presidential race.

The PM also reiterated his August 17 statement, saying the party would continue observing the developments, as well as the candidates registered for the polls, and make "a decision accordingly." (*Civil.ge, August 22, 2018*).

13. I hope they will support me, but I am not in a hurry - Salome Zurabishvili

"I hope they will support me. I am collecting signatures and I will be a presidential candidate. As for the discussions within Georgian Dream. We all know that the deadline for making the final decision is the 8th of September. Let's wait and see what they will decide.

I think nothing has changed. We know that there were people who wanted to have an internal candidate.," Salome Zurabishvili said (*IPN.ge, August 22, 2018*).

14. Saakashvili says Ivanishvili warned him not to return to Georgia

"Almost all of the newly-appointed governors are law enforcers submitted by the State Security Service and it means that Ivanishvili is preparing for mass falsification [of elections] and ignoring the will of the people. Also, for my arrival ...

Yesterday, he called our mutual acquaintance in the US and send me a threat not to return to Georgia. Boria, I'm not afraid of your threats, I'll definitely visit you and check your blood pressure, I will appoint you medical treatment and people will take care of you," Saakashvili writes in the social network (*IPN.ge, August 22, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

15. January-July 2018: Georgia's external trade with EU up 25.6%, with CIS up 33.5%

In January-July 2018, trade turnover with EU countries increased by 25.6 percent (amounted to \$1.95 billion) and with CIS countries by 33.5 percent year-on-year (y/y) (amounted to \$2.38 billion), says the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

In the reporting period export from Georgia to the EU countries amounted to \$417.7 million, while imports amounted to \$1.53 billion.

In January-July 2018 export to the CIS countries stood at \$872.9 million and reached 46.7 percent of total exports, while imports equalled \$1.51 billion with 29.2 percent in total import.

Overall, Georgia's top 10 trade partners in January-July 2018 made for 66.4 percent of the country's total trade turnover, with Turkey (\$1 billion), Russia (\$760.9 million) and China (\$611.7 million) filling the top three spots (*Agenda.ge, August 20, 2018*).

16. Q2 of 2018: Unemployment rate declines by 1.9%

In the second quarter of 2018 the annual unemployment rate in Georgia declined by 1.9 percentage points and equalled 12.1 percent, says the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

In the reporting period, the economically active population constituted 64 percent of the working population (population of 15 years and older).

Employment level has been increased by 2.5 percentage points in Georgia's urban areas, while in rural areas it has been reduced by 0.2 percentage points. The share of self-employed people was 48.7 percent in the total employment data, said Geostat (*Agenda.ge, August 20, 2018*).

17. Georgia ranks 5th in world for value of wine export

Georgian wine took 5th place in the world in terms of the value of wine exports in 2014-2016, show data published by the American Association of Wine Economists, a non-profit, educational organisation.

With an export price of \$3.49 per litre Georgia ranks 5th in the world. France is leading in the rating (6.59 \$), followed by New Zealand (5.39 \$), Austria (\$3.51), the United States (3.68 \$) and finally Georgia filling the top five spot (*Agenda.ge, August 21, 2018*).

Additional Information

August 23, 2018
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 USD - 2.5851 GEL | 1 GBP - 3.3312 GEL | 100 RUB - 3.8077 GEL |
| 1 EUR - 2.9954 GEL | 1 TRY - 0.4266 GEL | 100 JPY - 2.3414 GEL |

| Thursday 23 August | Friday 24 August | Saturday 25 August | Sunday 26 August | Monday 27 August |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 19° 30° | 19° 29° | 19° 30° | 19° 31° | 18° 30° |

- **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](#)**