

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 24-26

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❖ Occupied Regions

1. Vladimir Putin to meet with de facto Presidents of occupied Abkhazia and “South Ossetia” today

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with the de facto Presidents of the occupied regions of Abkhazia and “South Ossetia” Raul Khajimba and Anatoly Bibilov in Moscow (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

2. Raul Khajimba: We had a war and we do not want it to be repeated; but we have the right to defend ourselves if necessary

"Outlining our joint security with Russia - this is our security guarantee. Relevant measures are now being taken for this - Russian-Abkhaz military exercises completed several days ago. This is necessary for the strengthening of the country's defence capabilities. We are also working on the issue of material-technical maintenance of the Abkhazian army and its armaments," Khajimba said (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

3. Vladimir Putin says despite difficulties, “South Ossetia” is developing

"We remember the difficulties , but despite these , the republic is developing. We are trying our best to ensure South Ossetia's security and help it economically," said Vladimir Putin.

In turn, Anatoly Bibilov thanked Vladimir Putin for "his personal contribution to the development of the republic" (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

4. MFA: Russia will have to change its decision on recognising the independence of Georgian regions

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has released a statement regarding the 10th anniversary of Russia’s illegal 2008 decision to recognise the independence of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia).

“Sooner or later, Russia will have to change its illegal decision of 2008 to recognise the so-called independence of our regions and deoccupy our territories. On August 12, 2008 the Russian leadership took on an international obligation to withdrawal of troops from Georgia and must fully comply with the ceasefire agreement reached through EU mediation,” the MFA added (*Agenda.ge, August 26, 2018*).

5. De-facto president invites German Chancellor to the “republic”

South Ossetian de-facto President Anatoly Bibilov invited German Chancellor Angela Merkel to “South Ossetia”.

"As for Merkel's arrival at the Russian borders, in my opinion, this was not original. On the one hand it is very good, it turns out that they are interested in our country. We receive guests when they come from the door. I invite Angela Merkel to arrive in South Ossetia from the door and not from the gardens," Bibilov said (*IPN.GE, August 26, 2018*).

6. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili: The region has blocked all doors and windows with barbed wires and tanks

"The region has blocked all doors and windows with barbed wires and tanks. 80% of the population has left the Tskhinvali region. That's a reality. These are not only IDPs but many Ossetians who were forced to leave left their homes because they had no prospect there. The villages are divided with barbed wires," said Tsikhelashvili (*IPN.GE, August 26, 2018*).

7. Secretary of Russian Security Council congratulates Anatoly Bibilov on 10th anniversary of recognition of so-called independence of "South Ossetia"

"Congratulations on the 10th anniversary of recognition of South Ossetia as a sovereign and independent state. Russia appreciates very close relations with South Ossetia, which is based on the long traditions of friendship and good neighborhood," reads the letter of congratulation (*IPN.GE, August 26, 2018*).

8. De facto presidents of occupied Abkhazia and "South Ossetia" congratulate each other on 10th anniversary of recognition of independence

The de facto presidents of occupied regions of Abkhazia and "South Ossetia", Raul Khajimba and Anatoly Bibilov, congratulated each other on the 10th anniversary of the recognition of independence (*IPN.GE, August 26, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

9. Angela Merkel: "Germany supports Georgia. That's why I am here"

"Germany supports and will support Georgia in the future. That is why I am here. Georgia is a very important partner in the context of the Eastern Partnership: there is the Association Agreement (with the EU), the free trade agreement, the broadening and reinforcement of relations between our countries. For the present, we are working on the expansion of the instruments we already have," said Merkel, answering a question about Germany's role in Georgia's road to the EU." – said Merkel (*Agenda.ge, August 23, 2018*).

10. German Chancellor: Georgia has made great progress during last decade

I am happy to see Georgia on a path of democratic and economic improvement. I think you have made great progress during the last 10 years," Merkel said while meeting with President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili (*Agenda.ge, August 23, 2018*).

11. German Chancellor on Russian illegalities against Georgia: "Yes, this is occupation"

"You are asking me if I assess this as an occupation? Yes, this is occupation", Merkel replied. Earlier, she spoke about the situation in the occupied territories describing it as 'unfair' and 'unacceptable' (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

12. German Chancellor visits occupation line

She was accompanied by representatives of the EU monitoring mission who provided her with detailed information about the situation across the occupation line.

Merkel spent half an hour in the village and took the opportunity to observe the territories beyond the occupation line through binoculars (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

13. Merkel visit: chancellor receives gift, sings with Georgian ensemble

Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel was treated to a display of Georgian hospitality on Thursday, with a vocal performance and a "surprising gift" offered to the high-profile visitor in Tbilisi.

Merkel, on her first official visit to Georgia in a decade, was at a dinner hosted by the Georgian government, following her meetings and visits during the day.

As a mark of honour for the chancellor, the the Georgian ensemble Shvidkatsa was at the dinner to offer a rendition of a German song.

The German Chancellor could be seen singing along with the members of the ensemble, before she also received a notable present from Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze.

A 17th century painting by Baroque-era Italian artist Pierfrancesco Cittadini (1616-1681) will be returning to Germany, more than 70 years after it disappeared from a museum in Dresden.

The oil painting, titled Still Life with a Rabbit, was presented to the German politician by Bakhtadze after the Georgian government obtained the work (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

14. Missing oil tanker with 17 Georgians on board found off coast of Gabon

A missing oil tanker with 17 Georgian citizens has been found off the coast of Gabon, writes African News, following released information from the Regional Center for Maritime Safety of Central Africa (CRESMAC), based in Pointe-Noire in the Republic of Congo.

The lives and health of the sailors are not in danger and their condition is satisfactory, says Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and announces that the ship is on its way to the port of Lome in the republic of Togo (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

15. Georgian leaders send good wishes to Ukraine on Independence Day

Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili and Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze have sent wishes of peace and success to Ukraine on its Independence Day. Both statements stressed that the country is still fighting for its territorial integrity and sovereignty (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

16. US Navy destroyer visits Batumi Black Sea port to reaffirm partnership

A United States Navy vessel is on visit to Georgia's Black Sea port of Batumi in a trip aimed at reaffirming the US support for the country and to enhance partnership for regional stability.

USS Carney, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, arrived in the port of the seaside city on Thursday, where it was welcomed by officials from the Adjara Autonomous Republic (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

17. Georgian Coast Guard and USS Carney conduct joint naval training on Black Sea

"The visit of the USS Carney was aimed at security operations across the Black Sea as well as the support of Georgian allies and partners in terms of raising their alignment with maritime components and the improvement of US-Georgia maritime cooperation," the MIA said today (*Agenda.ge, August 26, 2018*).

18. Georgian officials, people saddened by death of US Senator, great supporter of Georgia John McCain

Vietnam veteran and six-term US senator John McCain has died at the age of 81 in Arizona after battling brain cancer since 2017.

McCain, the initiator of several resolutions in the US Congress to support Georgia, was a close friend of the country, especially during the Russia-Georgia war of 2008 when he said: "Today we are all Georgians" (*Agenda.ge, August 26, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

19. President not to nominate candidate for Supreme Court Chairperson

"The President of Georgia wanted to achieve a broad consensus about the candidacy of the Chairman of the Supreme Court. The broad consensus was needed for the candidate, especially given that the Georgian Dream openly stated that they would not take part in the consultation. The only chance of the candidate to be approved in the Parliament was a broad consensus. Unfortunately, no such consensus could be achieved. I would like to remind you that even today, several candidates are submitted to the Parliament, but they are not considering any of them", Abashivhili said (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

20. Mamuka Mdinardze: President failed to undertake his constitutional responsibility and is now trying to blame us

"At the end of his presidential terms, it's becoming harder to comment on his decisions, because he is inadequate. He failed to undertake his constitutional responsibility and is now trying to blame us. We announced that we were ready for consultations, but he called it a quarrel and did his best not to hold real consultations", Mdinardze said (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

21. Public Defender regrets President's decision over Supreme Court Chairperson

"I said at the meeting with the President and I still repeat that the President should have done everything to achieve consensus and name a candidature. The President had full support of the attendees of the meeting. It was important to reach an agreement. The civil society, the Public Defender, all the attendees of the meeting supported the President to nominate a candidacy. I am very sorry that the President made such decision", - Lomjaria said (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

22. Irakli Kobakhidze says Georgian Dream will definitely support one of the presidential candidates

"Today we talked with our party members about our decision not to nominate our own candidate. We will definitely support one of the candidates. Our position is important. We have responsibility before our voters in this presidential election. Therefore, our involvement will be active, we will not have our own candidate in the elections, "said Irakli Kobakhidze (*IPN.GE, August 24, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

23. Germany to sign two agreements worth €193mln with Georgia

Two agreements will be signed worth €193 million between Georgia and Germany during German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Georgia.

One agreement will be about constructing an underground gas storage facility in Georgia and the other to develop a modern sewage system in the country.

Merkel, who is visiting Georgia 10 years later once again, said at today's press-conference with Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze that Georgia is following a "very well-guided economic path" (*Agenda.ge, August 23, 2018*).

24. Germany offers €43 million for water supply and sanitation programmes in Georgia's Adjara region

The German government is offering €40 million in financial resources and a €3 million grant to Georgia for water supply and sanitation programmes in the country's Adjara region.

The loan and grant agreement was signed today between Georgia's Finance Minister Ivane Machavariani and German Development Bank (KfW) Regional Director Olaf Zimmelka (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

25. German Parliamentary State Secretary: German investors find Georgia favourable for doing new business

“Our delegation includes representatives from different sectors such as infrastructure, mining, education. We see good opportunities to establish different types of relations between us” said Bareiss.

Bareiss stated that there should be the proper legal conditions and “the country should be safe. This is possible in Georgia and this will support the implementation of various projects”, he said (*Agenda.ge, August 24, 2018*).

26. Fitch affirms Georgia at 'BB-', outlook positive

Global rating agency Fitch Ratings has assessed Georgia's Issuer Default Ratings (IDR) at 'BB-'. The outlook is positive, says Fitch.

“Georgia's ratings are supported by governance and business environment indicators that are above the current medians of 'BB' category peers, and a track record of macroeconomic resilience against regional shocks. Confidence in the authorities' economic strategy is also anchored by an IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme. Georgia's external finances remain significantly weaker than the majority of 'BB' category peers”, says Fitch.

 **Additional Information**

August 27, 2018
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

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|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 USD - 2.5720 GEL | 1 GBP - 3.3073 GEL | 100 RUB - 3.7990 GEL |
| 1 EUR - 2.9791 GEL | 1 TRY - 0.4247 GEL | 100 JPY - 2.3096 GEL |

| Monday 27 August | Tuesday 28 August | Wednesday 29 August | Thursday 30 August | Friday 31 August |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 18° 29° | 19° 30° | 20° 31° | 20° 32° | 19° 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](#)**