

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 30-September 9

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region

#### 1. **Anatoly Bibilov attends funeral of so-called Donetsk republic "leader"**

Bibilov said Zakharchenko sacrificed his life to his people. "It's amazing how he served his republic, his people. He sacrificed his life to his people," said Anatoly Bibilov (*IPN.Ge, September 2, 2018*).

#### 2. **Two Polish tourists released in occupied Tskhinvali**

Two Polish tourists, who were detained for illegal crossing of so-called "border" in occupied South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region of Georgia, have been released. Reportedly, the tourists were traveling along the following route: Warsaw-Kutaisi-Keli lake (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### 3. **Foreign Minister calls opening of Russian school in Akhagori is continuation of occupation**

"Opening of a Russian school in Akhagori is a continuation of factual annexation and occupation. This is part of the illegal process that is taking place in the occupied territories, both in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, where education in the Georgian language is actively prohibited. Naturally, this is a gross violation of international norms and we are constantly talking about it. The main message to our strategic partners is that this issue should be permanently on the agenda of their relationship with Russia," Zalkaliani said (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

#### 4. **Ketevan Tsikhelashvili terms the opening of Russian school in Akhagori as manifestation of "Russification" policy**

"This is a continuation of the policy that has been carried out over years. This is a manifestation of the "Russification" policy and the real face of the occupation in the region. This should be a very clear message not only for ethnic Georgians but for the Ossetian population as well that this policy does not serve their interests". - said Tsikhelashvili (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

#### 5. **"Ex-minister" : Ukrainian Special Operations Forces plotted a terror attack against South Ossetian and Abkhazian leaders**

The Special Operations Forces of Ukraine plotted a terror attack in Donetsk not only against Zakharchenko, but against the leaders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, - Andrey Pinchuk, so-called former security minister of self-proclaimed republic of Donetsk, has said.

"The series of terror attacks was planned. Their target was not only Zakharchenko. For example, leaders in South Ossetia and Abkhazia often visited Donetsk. Zakharchenko used to meet them - they had dinners together. An explosive device that killed Zakharchenko, should also be launched against other major politicians. They were waiting for Zakharchenko to appear there together with one of these politicians," Pinchuk said (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

## ❖ Abkhazia Region

### **6. De-facto president of occupied Abkhazia arrives in Syria**

Raul Khajimba, de facto president of occupied Abkhazia, arrived in Syria on an "official" visit, - his press secretary Naala Avidzba has said. Valid Al-Mualem, foreign minister of Syria, met Raul Khajimba at the airport.

"During negotiations Khajimba and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will discuss prospects of bilateral cooperation and development of Abkhazian-Syrian relations," Abkhazian media reports (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

### **7. US Department of State imposes financial restrictions on Syria as a country recognizing the so-called independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region**

The US Department of State has put Syria on the list of countries recognizing the so-called independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, meaning that financial restrictions will apply to the Syrian authorities as well.

As InterPressNews was informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, similar restrictions were imposed on Nauru in 2018 and on Venezuela and Nicaragua in 2017 (*IPN.Ge, September 5, 2018*).

### **8. PM - Recent situation in the occupied regions of Georgia is a "humanitarian disaster"**

Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze assesses the recent situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, as a "humanitarian disaster". The Prime Minister said at the conference organized by the "Progressive Alliance" at the Rooms Hotel Tbilisi on Friday that 120 000 people lived in Tskhinvali regions before the August war, while the number is decreased to 20 000 currently. As for Abkhazia, the number of the population has been decreased from 500 000 to 12 000 (*IPN.Ge, September 7, 2018*).

### **9. Abkhazia's de facto prime minister killed in car accident**

The prime minister of Sokhumi regime was killed in a car accident on the road connecting the capital of breakaway Abkhazia with Russia's Sochi on Saturday, when he was returning from his trip to Syria.

Gennadi Gagulia, 71, died when a car crashed head-on into a cortege of Abkhazia's delegation en route to Sokhumi, Russian state news agency TASS reports.

The accident occurred in Abkhazia's Gudauta district at 11 pm on Saturday. The car which crashed into Gagulia's vehicle was driven by 'a young resident of Abkhazia'. No reports of his fate have been released so far. Abkhazia's de facto president Raul Khajimba excludes a notion of assassination (*DFWATCH.NET, September 9, 2018*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### **10. Mamuka Bakhtadze: The successful visit to Azerbaijan will give new impetus to our economic cooperation**

"We discussed some new projects that we can jointly implement and that can strengthen our economic relationship. At the same time, we outlined very specific tasks. This year, our trade turnover will reach around 1 billion and we think that in the next two years it is possible to improve this figure by 50-60%. At the same time, we agreed to study the opportunities of setting up joint ventures. Georgia is the only country in the region with a free trade regime with the EU and China. Azerbaijan is one of

the largest investors in Georgia and there is a huge potential in this respect," said the Prime Minister (*IPN.Ge, August 30, 2018*).

#### **11. Matthew Bryza: Russia was at war with Georgia, an undeclared war for years**

I think anybody who has observed how Russia has been conducting its war in Ukraine should realize that Russia was at war with Georgia, an undeclared war for years, - former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Bryza said at the event held in the European Parliament under the title "10 Years – Remember the August War" (*IPN.Ge, August 30, 2018*).

#### **12. Discussion held in OSCE Permanent Council about 10th anniversary of August war**

Discussion was held about the 10th anniversary of the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia at the OSCE Permanent Council meeting in Vienna on the initiative of Georgia. Special envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Shalva Tsiskarashvili delivered a speech at the event.

As IPN was told by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the special envoy talked about the military aggression of the Russian Federation against our country in 2008 and noted that Russia breached fundamental norms and principles of international law (*IPN.Ge, September 1, 2018*).

#### **13. International exercise Agile Spirit 2018 to be held in Georgia**

Georgia will host international exercise Agile Spirit 2018. As InterPressNews was informed by the Ministry of Defense, the exercises will start on September 11 and will last till September 11.

10 NATO member and partner countries are involved in the exercises compared to 2017, when 7 NATO member and partner countries were represented. The countries involved are: Georgia, USA, Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Greece, Ukraine, Turkey, Czech Republic, Estonia (*IPN.Ge, September 1, 2018*).

#### **14. Israeli Ambassador says talks on legitimate employment of Georgians in Israel will accelerated in 2019**

"This issue is currently on the agenda of Israel. Everybody knows that in 2014, when visa regime was abolished between Georgia and Israel, many tourists started traveling to Georgia. Unfortunately, we discovered that, approximately 15 thousand Georgian citizens have been illegally working in the State of Israel for the past two years. A dialogue was held on this issue between the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Georgia (*IPN.Ge, September 3, 2018*).

#### **15. I informed Mr. Hahn in detail about the situation in the occupied territories - Davit Zalkaliani**

"At the meeting we had an opportunity to talk about a lot of issues. I informed Mr. Hahn in detail about the situation in the occupied territories, especially violations of fundamental rights of people who do not have access to education and are unable to visit their relatives. That's why it is important that more steps be taken by the EU, as one of the key actors in the Geneva international talks, for consolidating the international community, in order to make significant progress in terms of implementation of the 2008 ceasefire agreement," Zalkaliani said (*IPN.Ge, September 3, 2018*).

#### **16. Johannes Hahn about Eastern Partnership European School in Tbilisi- We are starting an ambitious project**

"It is a very important commitment to invest in education. Our primary responsibility is to help you get relevant qualifications and opportunities to realize your potential. We are starting an ambitious project, despite the fact that it faced a lot of challenges. I always believed that the "Eastern Partnership European School" would become a symbol of our successful regional cooperation. My

mission was to launch the first school outside the EU, which would attract Eastern Partnership students and give them not only a chance to get a high level of education, but the possibility of lying deep in European values. This gives you the opportunity to learn different languages that will be a key pillar of your future career. I am happy to meet students and listen to their dreams, which they are driven by," said Johannes Hahn (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### **17. Japan simplifies visa regime for Georgian citizens**

"We share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Last year Georgia and Japan celebrated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. I am happy and satisfied with good relations between our countries. During the meeting with Minister Davit Zalkaliani, we discussed ways of closer cooperation between Georgia and Japan in order to advance the agenda of bilateral relations. Japan plans to cooperate with Georgia in order to promote young diplomats, lawyers and other experts who are important actors in the state building process," the Japanese Foreign Minister said adding "Japan has decided to simplify visa regime with Georgia to facilitate deepening of inter-ethnic relations." (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### **18. President Margvelashvili thanks Japanese FM for his support to Georgia's sovereignty**

iorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia, has held a meeting with Tarō Kōno, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, who is paying his official visit to Georgia.

As InterPressNews was informed by the Administration of the President, President Margvelashvili has assessed Tarō Kōno's visit as historic, highlighting its positive impact on friendly ties and cooperation between Georgia and Japan. As it was noted, Tarō Kōno's visit stresses Japan's support for Georgia (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### **19. Georgia signs memo with JICA on construction of Shorapani-Argveta section**

Irakli Karseladze, First Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, Chairman of the Roads Department of Georgia, and Noriko Suzuki, Senior Vice President at Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), have today signed a memorandum within the frameworks of the project on construction of Shorapani-Argveta section of Rikoti pass road, - the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia told InterPressNews.

According to the Ministry, JICA will allocate USD 343 million for construction of Shorapani-Argveta section of Rikoti pass road (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### **20. Georgia expresses its interest in launching negotiations on free trade with Japan**

Georgia expresses its interest in launching negotiations on free trade with Japan - Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhatadze voiced this initiative at today's meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan Tarō Kōno.

According to the PM's press office, mamuka Bakhtadze noted that discussion of this issue will bring the relations between the two countries to a new level and will help Georgia's more effective integration into the global economy (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

#### **21. State Border Service of Azerbaijan : Azerbaijani border guard killed in accident at "Red Bridge" crossing point**

"A truck was stopped at the Azerbaijani section of the border. When the truck driver got out it to submit the documents for checking, the vehicle brake system failed, it started moving and crashed into the employee of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan, who died," the statement reads (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

## **22. Three Russian journalists refused to enter Georgia due to violation of Law on Occupied Territories**

According to them, Viktor Litovkin, military correspondent of the Russian state news agency "ITAR-TASS", Gennady Bodryugov, President of the International Council of the Association of Russian Society Researchers and HTB journalist Aleksandr Tokarev were refused to enter Georgia (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

## **23. NATO-Georgia Commission meeting held at NATO Headquarters**

The NATO-Georgia Commission meeting was held at the level of permanent representatives at the NATO Headquarters on September 5. The theme of the meeting was on the Russian-Georgian conflict, - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told InterPressNews.

According to the Ministry, the meeting was chaired by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia Ketevan Tsikhelashvili and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Davit Dondua represented the Georgian side.

According to the information released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the North Atlantic Council expressed its unanimous support for Georgia's peacekeeping policy, including a new peace initiative (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

## **24. Police detain four citizens of Bangladesh for illegal border crossing**

Georgia's border police and employees of the State Security Service have detained four citizens of Bangladesh and one citizen of Georgia for illegal crossing of the country's state border, - the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia told InterPressNews. The Ministry says that the crime is punishable by the imprisonment from 4 to 5 years.

"An investigation established that the suspects had been attempting to cross the State Border of Georgia illegally without official border control from Georgia to the Republic of Turkey," the Ministry said (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

## **❖ Internal Affairs**

### **25. Night buses to appear in Tbilisi in the middle of September**

"In October we plan to conduct a very big forum in Georgia that will be of international importance and "night mayors" from various countries will be invited to the event. We will discuss the efforts of different countries in this direction. The first project, for example, to add the night buses, we intend to launch from the middle of September. We are working on other significant projects as well," Kakha Kaladze said (*IPN.Ge, August 31, 2018*).

### **26. Giorgi Margvelashvili will not run for President**

"Like during the 5 years of my presidency and before that, I will serve Georgia in the future, too. I have never served elite or any other group, my service started and finished with the citizens of Georgia. I do not intend to take part in this election, but I will continue to serve your country in other ways," the President said (*IPN.Ge, August 31, 2018*).

### **27. Majority lawmaker says President made logical decision**

"When the President refused to nominate the candidacy of the Chairman of the Supreme Court, it was practically clear about his decision, perhaps it was a logical decision from his side. As it seems, he has evaluated his chances and rating correctly," MP Mdinaradze said (*IPN.Ge, August 31, 2018*).

**28. Civil Movement - Power in Unity to participate in coming presidential and parliamentary elections as coalition**

Civil Movement - Power in Unity will participate in the coming presidential and parliamentary elections as a united political and election coalition, - reads the statement released by the movement (*IPN.Ge, September 1, 2018*).

**29. Georgian National Unity leader detained for illegal purchase and possession of firearms**

"On August 31, law enforcers launched an investigation into the video spread by the Georgian National Unity on the social network. Police seized various types of weapons and 28 cartridges during the search of the detainee's apartment", read the statement released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*IPN.Ge, September 1, 2018*).

**30. Fact-finding commission spreads new video footage regarding Mikheil Kalandia**

"The important thing found by the commission is that the case materials includes video footage, which shows how M.K. showed his friends the object. This footage was available to the investigators and the prosecutor's office from the very beginning of the investigation, although they had not said anything about this very important detail until the creation of the commission. After obtaining the respective evidence, the commission urged the Ministry of internal Affairs to timely respond. The use of a certain object by M.K. further strengthens the interim recommendation of the commission regarding the launch of criminal proceedings against M.K", reads the statement of the commission (*IPN.Ge, September 1, 2018*).

**31. Parliamentary minority says Mikheil Kalandia should have been charged with involvement in the murder of Davit Saralidze**

Despite the fact that on December 1, it was known that M.K. was a cousin of Mirza Subeliani's son and he was one of the major persons involved in the fight between school children, who brought his friends to assist his cousin, and despite the fact that he was hiding on December 1, while on December 2 he gave a false testimony, a number of investigative actions have not been conducted against him, - reads the report of the parliamentary minority concerning the murder of teenagers on Khorava Street (*IPN.Ge, September 3, 2018*).

**32. Sergi Kapanadze: The conclusion of the parliamentary fact-finding commission is legitimate and does not require to be further approved**

"The commission has completed work and adopted recommendations. In my opinion, the authorities should already execute this conclusion. The conclusion of the investigative commission, set up by the Parliament, is legitimate. It is wrong to say that this document requires further legitimacy and approval. Now it is up to the government to fulfill this conclusion, "said Sergi Kapanadze (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

**33. Ministry of Internal Affairs toughens fight against domestic violence and violence against women**

"Risk assessment tool is an important guarantee for the victim safety and prevention of abuse. The tool for assessing risks of domestic violence and violence against women and the monitoring mechanism of restraining orders, have been developed by the Human Rights Department of the Ministry in cooperation with NGOs and other state agencies, with the expert and financial support of UN Women', says the Ministry (*IPN.Ge, September 3, 2018*).

**34. Gigi Ugulava accuses National Movement of simulation**

Gigi Ugulava talked about specific individuals - Gia Tevdoradze and Andro Maghlakelidze. According to him, it is a lie that these people left the party today and joined the National Movement. According to the Secretary General, Gia Tevdoradze and Andro Maghlakelidze left the party 10 months ago and this has been covered by the media several times (*IPN.Ge, September 3, 2018*).

**35. Marijuana consumption to be punished at public places, driving a car under its influence to lead to criminal liability**

According to the statement of the Ministry, marijuana consumption will be possible within strict legal framework. In particular, considering the constitutional principle of sanction prohibition, the use of marijuana will be punished at any place of public gathering; all types of public transport; in the presence of a minor; at educational institutions.

Furthermore, according to the Ministry, driving a car under the influence of any drug will be punished more strictly, by the criminal procedure (*IPN.Ge, September 5, 2018*).

**36. Georgia asks international observation missions to send observers for presidential elections**

"We are very open with regard to the presidential election. We are ready to hold these elections democratically, transparently and in full accordance with international standards. We have already begun preparations for these elections. Therefore, we sent letters to all international organizations and OSCE/ODIHR mission long ago and asked them to send observers to Georgia. This year we will have unprecedented number of short-term and long-term observers and we will ensure that these elections are held just as exemplary as in 2013 and 2016, "Zalkaliani said (*IPN.Ge, September 6, 2018*).

**37. Speaker - Our support to the independent candidate is that we will call on our donors to direct their funds to the candidate's foundation**

"A political board of the party will hold a sitting on September 9 to mull over the presidential candidates. 6:00pm Saturday is the filing deadline for the candidates. Afterwards, we will be able to see the list and endorse any independent candidate. Our support will be broad. Our representatives will participate in the planned events. As for financial assistance, there will be a call for donors that the finances, intended for the ruling party, to be directed to the foundation, created by the independent candidate ", Irakli Kobakhidze said (*IPN.Ge, September 7, 2018*).

**38. CEC - 46 applicants applied to CEC for registration as presidential candidates**

"46 applicants have applied to the Central Election Commission for registration as electoral subjects. 26 of them are submitted by the initiative groups, while 20 - by political parties. According to legislation, the list of supporters shall be submitted to the Central Election Commission no later than the 40th day before the Election Day, September 18. The signatures will be checked by a relevant service of the electoral administration. In case of any violation, the appropriate initiative group/political party have a two-day deadline to correct it. After that, the relevant service of the election administration will again check the submitted subscriptions, "said Anna Mikeladze (*IPN.Ge, September 8, 2018*).

**39. GDDG to Back Salome Zurabishvili for Presidentials**

The ruling Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia will endorse the candidacy of Salome Zurabishvili for the October 28 presidential elections, Parliament Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze announced on September 9.

Speaking at a special press briefing at the GDDG headquarters following the political council meeting today, Irakli Kobakhidze said the ruling majority would follow its earlier announced plan and not field a candidate for the elections (*Civil.Ge, September 8, 2018*).

## ❖ Economy and Social Affairs

### **40. Economic growth rate equaled 5.5 percent for seven months of 2018**

The estimated real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in July 2018 amounted to 4.6 percent y/y. An average estimated real GDP growth equaled 5.5 percent for the first seven months of 2018 year-to-year, - the Georgian National Statistics Office, Geostat, has said (*IPN.Ge, August 30, 2018*).

### **41. Statistics Office says annual inflation rate led to increase in prices**

In August 2018 the Consumer Price Index increased by 0.5 percent compared to the previous month, while the annual inflation rate amounted to 3.1 percent, - reads the information posted on the website of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (*IPN.Ge, September 2, 2018*).

### **42. Number of international arrivals increased by 9.8% y/y in August**

The number of international arrivals in Georgia amounted to 1,294,926 in August, showing an increase of 9.8% compared to the same period of previous year, - the National Tourism Administration told InterPressNews (*IPN.Ge, September 4, 2018*).

### **43. Swiss company to build plant in Georgia**

Swiss company “Stadler” will build a factory in Georgia, the “Georgian Railway” has told InterPressNews.

Peter Spuhler, owner of the “Stadler” company, who is visiting Georgia, has met with Director General of the “Georgian Railway” Davit Peradze and Tbilisi Vice Mayor Irakli Khmaladze.

According to the “Georgian Railway”, at the meeting it was noted that the “Stadler” company will start the construction of its regional factory in Georgia in the nearest future (*IPN.Ge, September 7, 2018*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### **44. UEFA awards Guram Kashia 'Equal Game' award for standing up for LGBT rights**

UEFA awarded Georgian football defender Guram Kashia the 'Equal Game' award for standing up for the rights of LGBT persons.

Guram Kashia is the first footballer to receive the 'Equal Game' award that has been established by UEFA this year (*IPN.Ge, August 30, 2018*).



## Additional Information

**September 11, 2018**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.5980 GEL	1 GBP - 3.3579 GEL	100 RUB -3.6879 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0067 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4020 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3378 GEL

  

Tuesday 11 September	Wednesday 12 September	Thursday 13 September	Friday 14 September	Saturday 15 September
				
16° 29°	17° 30°	18° 30°	18° 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](#)**