

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

September 13-17

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Date: *September 18, 2018*

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### 1. EU calls for proper investigation into Archil Tatumashvili's death and justice following killing of Giga Otkhozoria

The EU reiterates its deep concern about the continuing Russian illegal military presence, increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,- it is said in the statement of the European Union Delegation to the Council of Europe.

According to the statement, Russia's recognition of the so called independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and its aforementioned continued actions demonstrate a lack of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours and for the rules based international system (*IPN.Ge, September 13, 2018*).

### 2. Security Service - De-facto government disrupts IPRM meeting

As the State Security Service informs, the representatives of the de-facto government demanded the issues of Archil Tatumashvili and David Basharuli to be removed from the agenda.

"The removal of the mentioned issues from the agenda and ultimatums within the IPRM format are categorically unacceptable for the Central Government of Georgia, due to the fact that demands are contrary to fundamental principles of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism," the Security Service said (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

### 3. EUMM and OSCE reiterate their strong commitment for IPRM format

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) has released information about the 89th Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meeting that took place in Ergneti on 14 September of 2018.

EUMM says that Erik Høeg, Head of the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), and Ambassador Rudolf Michalka, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus, co-facilitated the proceedings. Erik Høeg welcomed Ambassador Rudolf Michalka as the new OSCE co facilitator (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 4. Jens Stoltenberg : Georgia is important for NATO and NATO is important for Georgia

"We help Georgia with implementing reforms, we provide political support, practical support, we are establishing training centers in Georgia. We help with implementing reforms of defence and security institutions. So, Georgia is making progress we welcome that, we will continue to support Georgia ," the NATO Secretary General said (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

### 5. Angela Merkel : Russia is destabilizing the situation in Georgia and other post-Soviet countries

"We see that almost all former Soviet republics, which are not members of the EU and NATO, have to deal with the internal conflicts whipped up by Russia," said German Chancellor.

Merkel said these countries were trying to restore their territorial integrity, since Russia has seized a part of their territories or whipped up conflicts there. German Chancellor cited the situation in Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova and Azerbaijan (*IPN.Ge, September 15, 2018*).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

### **6. Zonal parking system to be launched in Tbilisi**

"The new model envisages a zonal parking, which we have already drafted and will send it to the Parliament. I think that implementation of this reform is very important and this is the part of the transport policy we have presented some time ago," Kaladze said (*IPN.Ge, September 13, 2018*).

### **7. Security Service launches investigation into former Zugdidi Mayor's alleged involvement in corruption**

The State Security Service of Georgia has launched an investigation into former Zugdidi Mayor's alleged involvement in corruption.

As InterPressNews was informed by the State Security Service, the investigation has been launched under Article 338 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, involving bribe-taking.

Zugdidi Mayor Lasha Gogia has resigned. His resignation letter was posted on his Facebook page. The opposition accuses Zugdidi Mayor and local authorities of corruption and demands an investigation (*IPN.Ge, September 13, 2018*).

### **8. Opposition says Zugdidi mayor resigned due to confrontation with ruling party**

"Lasha Gogia was not dismissed because of corruption, this is the internal confrontation with the Georgian Dream. There was a period when Gogia had protector inside the "Georgian Dream", his protectors left the ruling team. You see that deputy governors were dismissed during a month, I call Gogia "dismissed". As soon as his protectors inside the "Georgian Dream" left, he was forced to make an announcement in the social network. However, they could not hide corruption schemes in Zugdidi local government and they were forced to launch proceedings," said Lasha Damenia, European Georgia (*IPN.Ge, September 13, 2018*).

### **9. Salome Zurabishvili received donations totaling GEL 101 701 during three weeks**

Independent candidate Salome Zurabishvili received donations totaling GEL 101 701 from August 23 through September 11, - the State Audit Service of Georgia has said.

According to their information, Salome Zurabishvili donated GEL 40 thousand for herself on August 27.

As for other donations, Salome Zurabishvili received the most solid donation, GEL 50 thousand, from physical person Vakhtang Laghidze (CEO of Coca Cola – Georgia) on September 11. The list of Zurabishvili's donors include only physical persons (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

### **10. PM comments on recent developments around Iberia TV and Omega Group**

"We will always take responsibility media pluralism to be protected in Georgia. One of the main victories of the "Georgian Dream" is that media pluralism has been established here and this is one of our major achievements. As for the tax component of tobacco business and commercial activity, this is a different aspect. It's not nice when a share-holder tries to connect these two things to each other. I

would like to express my sympathy towards all entrepreneurs who employs even one person and creates even one job. The state is always eager to support commercial activities, if [enterprise] can not pay taxes, give it a comfortable payment plan to keep the enterprise, finance ministry and revenue service have demonstrated it. The Revenue Service has rescheduled payment of taxes for 11 times, "said PM Mamuka Bakhtadze (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

#### **11. Prosecutor's Office to study audio recording released by Rustavi 2**

Rustavi 2 TV has released a secret audio recording of alleged conversation between ex-sports minister Levan Kipiani and Omega Group founder Zaza Okuashvili. Levan Kipiani, member of the Supervisory Board of the Georgian Railway, and Omega Group founder Zaza Okuashvili are talking about 3 million, from which part should go to the state budget, and part should be spent as the contribution by "Omega Group".

Two days earlier, Rustavi 2 TV released audio recording of alleged conversation between Levan Kifiani and Zaza Okuashvili. According to the record, ex-sports minister confirmed that Ucha Mamatsashvili would settle the problems of Omega Group and demanded 2 million instead (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

#### **12. Davit Bakradze- Government is doing everything to control the media environment and televisions**

"Of course this audio recording raises reasonable questions and doubts. This case is of high public and political interests and therefore it is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation into these recordings. But investigation should be carried out not upon the request of Ucha Mamatsashvili, but based on the recordings, "David Bakradze said (*IPN.Ge, September 14, 2018*).

#### **13. Murdered teenager's father hospitalized**

Zaza Saralidze, father of one of the teenagers murdered in December in Tbilisi, has been transferred to Ingorokva Clinic today. Saralidze felt ill at to the parliament building in Tbilisi about an hour ago and emergency brigade transferred him to hospital. Zaza Saralidze has been on hunger strike for six days (*IPN.Ge, September 15, 2018*).

#### **14. Patriarch about marijuana production- Why do we need such economy if we lose our children?**

"We must remember that this is dangerous because drug addicts from other countries will come here and enjoy this freedom. This will promote the spread of drug abuse in Georgia. So I would like to ask the government to look into it with great responsibility. We must not regard only economics, the income from the economics, why do we want such economic if we lose our children. I hope that the Church, the people and the government will jointly do everything in order to reduce the number of these sick people," the Patriarch said (*IPN.Ge, September 17, 2018*).

#### **15. Patriarch says government needs to take responsibility to prevent private sector's involvement in marijuana industry**

"I think that the government needs to take responsibility and it should have control over situation, this industry must not move to the private sector. If it is moved to the private sector, we will fail to control over it. it should be defined by the law that the government is responsible for it," the Patriarch said (*IPN.Ge, September 17, 2018*).

#### **16. Patriarch, Parliament Speaker meet over marijuana bill**

"His Holiness and the participants of the meeting once again confirmed the Church's sharp negative attitude towards the cultivation (production) of marijuana and noted that the country could not

endure the risks caused by this process, "the report reads. The draft on "Cannabis Control" involves the issues related to production of cannabis (*IPN.Ge, September 17, 2018*).

#### **17. Parliament postpones discussions of marijuana export bill**

"Quite a bit of false information is being spread concerning the bill which only discusses the export of marijuana from Georgia for medicinal and cosmetic purposes. People need to be informed regarding the bill and the information campaign will need time," Kobakhidze said.

Kobakhidze further said that any bill adopted by parliament will be the result of a consensus between the government and the people (*Agenda.Ge, September 17, 2018*).

### **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **18. Chinese wine importers look into Georgian wine**

The tour consists of eight Chinese wine importers and Meiburg Wine Media director and wine magister Debra Meiburg.

'Our past experience has shown that such activities are very successful. For example, over the last four years, Georgian wine moved from the 18th to the ninth position on the Chinese market. We are all very excited about the success of Georgian wine on the Asian market", Meiburg says.

Chinese wine importers have visited Georgia previously to discover Georgian wine. Meiburg said that the aim of this particular visit was not only to attract the attention of wine importers, but to popularise Georgian wine amongst consumers as well (*Agenda.ge, September 14, 2018*).

#### **19. Large-scale work on Anaklia Deep Sea Port begins**

Large-scale work on the Anaklia Deep Sea Port launched on 16 September.

A cutter suction dredger ship, the Athena, has arrived in Anaklia to help in the implementation of the works being carried out.

The ship will dredge the port bed, and will bring up some five million cubic meters of mud out of the sea. The dredging works will be carried out by the Dutch contracting company Van Oord which is specialised in dredging and land reclamation.

Anaklia Deep Sea Port is planned to be opened in 2020. It will be designed over the course of nine phases. The total investment volume of the project is expected to reach 2.5 billion USD. The Georgian government has allocated 330 hectares of land and 225 hectares of marine territory for the Anaklia Port in Western Georgia (*Agenda.ge, September 17, 2018*).

## Additional Information

**September 18, 2018**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6156 GEL	1 GBP - 3.4259 GEL	100 RUB - 3.8379 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0498 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4189 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3349 GEL

  

Tuesday 18 September	Wednesday 19 September	Thursday 20 September	Friday 21 September	Saturday 22 September
				
15° 26°	15° 25°	16° 25°	16° 25°	17° 25°

  

- **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](#)**