

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

September 18-19

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region

1. Moscow Accuses Tbilisi of Politicizing IPRM Meetings

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed “deep concern” over the suspension of the 89th Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) in Ergneti village close to the occupation line with Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

In a statement released on September 19, the Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said the Georgian participants insisted on adding “politically-motivated” items to the IPRM meeting agenda on September 14 (*Civil.Ge, September 19, 2018*).

❖ Abkhazia Region

2. Young men are leaving Gali en masse to seek work abroad

Young people are leaving their homes here in Gali, Abkhazia, to seek work opportunities abroad. In the last month, about 50 young people, most of them men, have left for Poland from one of the villages in the district, DFWatch was told by locals.

“Work here [in Poland] is like slavery, but we have no other option. On the other side of Enguri, I can not find a normal pay with my profession and disastrous harvest on this year urge me to find livelihood abroad,” a young pharmacist from Tagiloni village, who left behind his family and now lives in Poland, told DFWatch (*DFWatch.net, September 12, 2018*).

3. Valery Bganba appointed as new de-facto prime minister of occupied Abkhazia

Valery Bganba appointed as a new de-facto prime minister of occupied Abkhazia, replacing Genady Gagulia, who was killed in a car accident on September 8.

“I have signed the decree on the appointment of Valery Bganba,” de-facto president Raul Khajimba told Cabinet members (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

4. 256 Gali youth tried to enroll at Georgian universities, 130 passed exams

Altogether 256 young people from Gali have registered for the Unified National Exams, which is a mandatory step to enroll at Georgian higher educational institutions.

“By the end of September this number may increase by several students, as there are those who have registered online. In addition, some of the Gali schools’ graduates have opted for Sokhumi university,” said Nona Shonia, head of Gali Educational Resource Center.

Since 2005, 4,237 students have graduated from the Gali schools, out of which 2,458 entrants were registered for the UNE, and 1,137 enrolled at the Georgian universities.

Gali is the southernmost district of breakaway Abkhazia with predominantly ethnic Georgian population (*DFWatch.net, September 19, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

5. PM meets John Bolton in White House

The Georgian Prime Minister started his working visit to the US with the meeting with John Bolton, Assistant to the US President for National Security Affairs (NSA). Mamuka Bakhtadze was hosted by John Bolton in the White House.

As the Prime Minister's press office informs, the sides discussed concrete views on further deepening the strategic partnership between the two countries and overviewed every key aspect of bilateral relations (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

6. PM Bakhtadze, Senator John Cornyn discuss -Georgia strategic partnership

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze met with US Senate Majority Whip John Cornyn on Monday.

As the PM's press office informs, the sides discussed US-Georgia strategic partnership and stressed the high level of bilateral political relations.

The Prime Minister of Georgia thanked Senator Cornyn for supporting the 2019 State Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriation Bill increasing support for Georgia from 105 million to 125 million USD (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

7. Mark Green : USAID will continue to fund the programs in support of Georgia

Georgia is one of our most successful partners and democratic transformation achieved by the country in recent years is gratifying, - Mark Green, Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), said at a meeting with Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze at the USAID Headquarters (HQ) in Washington D.C. on Tuesday (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

8. Parliament's Speaker holds introductory meeting with newly appointed Ambassador of EU to Georgia

Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of Parliament of Georgia, has today held an introductory meeting with the newly appointed Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia Carl Hartzell.

As InterPressNews was informed by Parliament of Georgia, the sides discussed the agenda of the Parliament of Georgia and the EU delegation, as well as future plans.

The discussions also focused on the new format of relations between Georgia and the European Union and prospects of further deepening of the cooperation (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

9. Seventh meeting of EU-Georgia PAC opens in Tbilisi

The seventh meeting of the EU-Georgia Association Parliamentary Committee (PAC) has been opened. As it is known, the Committee discusses the relationship between Georgia and the EU, the implementation of Association Agreement, challenges in the fields of democracy and human rights, progress, etc.

Tamar Khulordava, Chairperson of the Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia, said during her opening speech that it was a great honor for Georgia to host the meeting (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

10. President Margvelashvili, OSCE High Commissioner discuss outcomes of Russian aggression in Georgia

Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia has held a meeting with Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, as part of his working visit to Tbilisi.

As the Administration of President informed IPN, the meeting focused on the projects implemented by the OSCE National Minorities Office in Georgia to ensure that national minorities are fully integrated into political, economic, social and cultural areas and their rights are protected (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

11. Sec-Gen of World Health Organisation positive on Georgian healthcare reform

Secretary General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has given a positive assessment to Georgian health reforms, as well as the efforts of the Georgian government to reduce prices on medicines and bring pharmacological production in line with high standards (*Agenda.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

12. Georgia and Albania sign deal on exchanging, protecting classified information

Head of the Georgian State Security Service Vakhtang Gomelauri and Director of Classified Information Security Directorate of Albania Dorian Tola have signed an agreement on the exchange and mutual protection of classified information today in Tbilisi.

“The agreement will create a solid legal basis for the exchange of classified information in the fields of security, law enforcement, as well as foreign relations and other [fields] between the two countries”, the Georgian State Security Service reported (*Agenda.Ge, September 19, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

13. Interior Ministry launches investigation system reform

Speaking at the opening of the conference, the Minister of Internal Affairs spoke about the implementation of the criminal police reform, which, according to him, is one of the most important components of the "system renewal" process at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Minister said that investigative, operative and district directions will be separated within the frameworks of the Criminal Police Reform. He said that all the three directions will be strengthened through effective activities of the criminal police. One of the main goals of the reform is to increase the quality of investigation through the increased qualification and distribution of functions within the system (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

14. Minors' department to be set up under Interior Ministry of Georgia

Juvenile Police Department will be set up under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Gakharia said at the conference on the planned investigation system reform at the Radisson Blue Iveria Hotel in Tbilisi on Tuesday (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

15. Minister says MIA has ability to control cultivation and export of marijuana

"Even if the regulation of consumption is followed by further steps in medical point of view, the MIA has a lever of carrying out an effective control. The steps made in the part of regulation helps the Interior Ministry to carry out its strict drug policy even more effectively. If there are other questions, consultations will continue," Minister Gakharia said (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

16. "Night buses" to start running from September 21

“Night buses” will launch running from September 21 in Tbilisi. The buses will run from 00:00am to 06:00am on Fridays and Saturdays.

As Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze said at Tuesday’s meeting of the city government, the night routes will operate within the Tbilisi City Hall “Night Economy” project from “Akhmeteli Theatre” subway station to “Varketili” metro station (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

17. Georgian PM’s signature appears on list of supporters of opposition presidential candidate

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze’s signature appeared on the opposition presidential candidate Mikheil Antadze’s supporters’ list, Imedi TV reports. On the list Bakhtadze’s personal information and signature was No. 22.

Antadze is the presidential candidate of the State for People movement chaired by Giorgi Vashadze. The State for People Movement announced in July 2018 that it was among the 10 opposition parties which supported the United National Movement candidate Grigol Vashadze as president.

However, the movement maintained Antadze as its presidential candidate and stated that it was “part of a strategy” to benefit Grigol Vashadze.

Giorgi Vashadze, head of the State for People Movement, said that he did not know how the prime minister’s personal information appeared on the supporter list of Antadze (*Agenda.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

18. Georgia’s economy grows by 5.5% in Q2 2018

Georgia’s economy grew by 5.5% in the second quarter of 2018, higher than the 4.8% growth compared to the previous year, according to the preliminary data released by the state statistics office, Geostat, on September 18.

According to the report, real growth was registered in the following activities: Financial Intermediation (22.0 percent), Other Community, Social and Personal Service activities (17.9 percent), Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities (13.8 percent), Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles, Motorcycles and Personal and Household Goods (10.5 percent), Manufacturing (8.5 percent), Mining and Quarrying (8.1 percent), Transport (8.0 percent), Education (4.8 percent), Hotels and Restaurants (4.5 percent), A decrease in the real value-added occurred in Construction (-7.1 percent), Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry; Fishing (-3.3 percent) (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

19. Truck drivers give Finance Minister deadline to change decision on ban on land transportation of wheat

Truck drivers who are rallying in Lilo district of Tbilisi, give Finance Minister one day to change his decision about ban on land transportation of wheat.

The drivers vow to start large-scale protests in case the Finance Minister does not change the decision of prohibiting the land transportation of wheat.

The Georgian government imposed a ban on the land transportation of wheat. According to the Georgian Ministry of Finance (MoF), the ban was imposed due to long lines of trucks at the border

crossing with Russia. The MoF argued that the ban would not affect the economy, and would not trigger a rise in prices (*IPN.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

20. Georgia’s Foreign Trade in January-August 2018

Georgia’s foreign trade turnover in the first eight months of 2018 increased by 22.6% year-on-year, reaching USD 8.1 billion, according to the preliminary figures released by the state statistics office today.

Exports from Georgia increased by 27.1% year-on-year to USD 2.1 billion and imports were up by 21% y/y to USD 6 billion, with trade gap standing at USD 3.8 billion (*Civil.Ge, September 19, 2018*).

21. Online exporters database launched to help Georgian entrepreneurs enter global market

Enterprise Georgia, a government institution that promotes the country’s export growth, has created online platform to help local businesses enter the global market.

The programme offers Georgian entrepreneurs to register on the new online platform tradewithgeorgia.com to introduce their products and services to potential foreign partners. Currently more than 20 companies have already started using the system (*Agenda.Ge, September 18, 2018*).

 **Additional Information**

September 18, 2018
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6179 GEL	1 GBP - 3.4517 GEL	100 RUB -3.9087 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0606GEL	1 TRY - 0.4156 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3287 GEL

Thursday 20 September	Friday 21 September	Saturday 22 September	Sunday 23 September	Monday 24 September
				
15° 24°	15° 26°	16° 25°	14° 25°	14° 26°

- **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](#)**