

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

September 20 – October 2

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. PM - The recent situation on Georgia's occupied territories is the most acute humanitarian disaster

"Due to the heaviest humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights conditions, the number of population in the occupied regions has been reduced 4-fold compared to the pre-occupation period. Barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers separate families from each other and violate fundamental human rights. The inhabitants of the occupation lines are not even allowed to visit the shrines and graves of their ancestors. Our citizens are banned to educate their children in their own language. The facts of kidnapping, inhuman and cruel treatment, torture and murder continue. Recent victims of these facts are our citizens : Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhazia, 18-year-old David Basharuli. "Otkhazia-Tatumashvili" list has been created based on these and other cruel crime and the persons, who have committed these crimes, are included in this list. The figures of this list should become accountable before the international law, "said the Prime Minister of Georgia (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

2. PM calls on Russia to withdraw its troops from Georgia

"However, our attempts at the negotiating table still face unreasonable and totally unacceptable contradictions from the Russian side. I would like to once again emphasize that the efforts of the UN, which is a co-chair of the discussions with the OSCE and the European Union, in the Geneva negotiations are very important for us. Today, in the 21st century, when people, nations and cultures seek more integration and development, artificial barriers and the installation of barbed wire fences is inadmissible. We want to break our relationship deadlock but only on the basis of the state sovereignty, territorial integrity and respect for the principles of the international law, "the Prime Minister said (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

3. Defence Minister of Fiji visits occupation line

Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security of the Republic of Fiji, alongside other members of the delegation, has visited occupation line in Khurvaleti, Gori district of Georgia (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

4. De-facto foreign minister - Abkhazians, Ossetians and Georgians are citizens of different countries

"The Prime Minister and the leadership of Georgia are wrong when they are calling us - the fellow citizens. We are citizens of different neighboring states, but not the same state, " - the de facto foreign minister of the occupied Abkhazia Daur Kove said responding to the speech of the Prime Minister of Georgia at the UN General Assembly (*IPN.GE, September 29, 2018*).

5. De-facto Sokhumi celebrates "Independence and Victory Day of Abkhazia"

"The Independence and Victory Day, which we are celebrating with our friends and brothers, has become an integral part of our recent history. Our people deserved the holy freedom, hundreds and thousands of brave Abkhazians sacrificed their lives for. Our brothers from North Caucasus, our compatriots from different countries, volunteers from Russia, South Ossetia, Transdnistria and from other foreign countries were standing with us in the unequal struggle with the Georgians who had devilishly invaded the territory of Abkhazia in August of 1992, "Khajimba said (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

6. Putin congratulates Abkhazian de facto president on the day of so-called victory

"I congratulate you on the national holiday - the day of victory and independence. You have achieved a lot since gaining independence. I want to reaffirm that Russia will continue to support you" , Putin said (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

7. Georgian woman detained by Russian occupants sent to prison - News Agency InterpressNews

37-year-old Georgian woman Maia Otinashvili, who was detained by so-called "border guards" near the village Khurvaleti of Gori Municipality, has been sentenced to two-month pretrial imprisonment. According to de-facto state security committee of occupied South Ossetia, Maia Otinashvili has been charged with illegal border crossing (*IPN.GE, October 2, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

8. Giorgi Kvirikashvili becomes international advisor of EBRD

Giorgi Kvirikashvili, ex-Prime Minister of Georgia, signed an agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. As Giorgi Kvirikashvili told *bm.ge*, he signed a contract with EBRD a few weeks ago.

He said that he will help the Uzbek government under the auspices of EBRD to create a dialogue platform between public and private structures, which means sharing experience of the Board of Trustees created by the initiative of EBRD in Georgia (*IPN.GE, September 25, 2018*).

9. PM of Georgia, FM of United Arab Emirates discuss enhancement of economic relations

Further enhancing economic relations and deepening cooperation in multilateral formats were discussed during today's meeting between Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Foreign and International Cooperation Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly, - the PM's press office told *IPN* (*IPN.GE, September 26, 2018*).

10. EU will support Georgia's education system reform

As InterPressNews was informed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, at the meeting Minister Batiashvili stated that development of education system is the country's most important priority and the support of the delegation of the European Union to Georgia is very important in this regard.

On the other hand, Ambassador Carl Hartzell expressed his readiness the delegation of the European Union to Georgia to be actively involved in the process of reforming the education system in the country. At the meeting the sides agreed on the direction of the future cooperation (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

11. President Margvelashvili: It's crucial to call things what they are – aggressor is aggressor, occupation is occupation

Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of Georgia, has opened the 14th International Forum “Sustaining Peace and Development in a Changing World” in New York and addressed the audience.

President Margvelashvili, highlighting Trans-Atlantic relations and security challenges, has discussed Georgia's role in international relations. He began his address by remembering the fall of Sokhumi and the Russian-Georgian War of 2008 (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

12. Georgian, Slovakian FMs pledge to boost bilateral relations

As InterPressNews was informed by the Foreign Ministry, the ministers reaffirmed the friendship and close partnership between the two countries. According to the Slovak Foreign Minister, Slovakia firmly supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as its European and Euro-Atlantic integration. It was emphasized that Georgia achieved important results on this path and it is the leader in of reforms in the region and meets all requirements for membership of the Alliance (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

13. Security Service says flight of Russian helicopters near the occupation line damages security environment

“The Hotline has been activated and the EU Monitoring Mission has already been informed related to this fact. Such facts damage the security environment in the region, “the State Security Service told InterPressNews on Tuesday. According to media reports, Russian helicopters overflew several villages of Gori today. They were supposedly flying from Tskhinvali to Akhagori (*IPN.GE, October 2, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

14. 25 candidates to run for presidency

The registration of presidential candidates for the 28 October elections has ended in the Central Election Commission.

25 candidates are running for presidency. 19 of them were nominated by political parties and 6 – by initiative groups.

According to the Central Election Commission spokesperson Ana Mikeladze, the registered presidential candidates will have the right to withdraw their candidacies no later than October 16. After the term expires, all presidential candidates will be included in the ballot paper.

21 applicants were refused to be registered as presidential candidates for various legal reasons (*IPN.GE, September 24, 2018*).

15. Security Service detains Health Ministry senior official

The State Security Service of Georgia has detained Gia Tvalavadze, head of the State Regulation Agency for Medical Activities of the Ministry of Health of Georgia.

Reportedly, Tvalavadze's detention is related to the case of pharmacy drug addiction. The Anti-Corruption Agency of the State Security Service has also detained 5 persons in the same case (*IPN.GE, September 24, 2018*).

16. Health Ministry comments about detention of its senior official

“The Georgian government carries out complex measures to eliminate drug abuse. The employee of the Ministry of IDPs, Labor, Health and Social Affairs of the Occupied Territories has been charged

with issuing psychotropic drugs from different pharmacies without prescriptions. We hope that the investigation will establish the full picture in the shortest period of time enabling us to defeat the pharmacy drug addiction. As for Gia Tvalavadze, head of the State Regulation Agency for Medical Activities of the Ministry of Health, the court will bring a final verdict about him,” Sopho Chumburidze said (*IPN.GE, September 24, 2018*).

17. Health Ministry official charged with abuse of power

Anti-corruption Agency under the State Security Service of Georgia, as a result of searching and investigative activities conducted within the framework of ongoing investigation into illicit traffic of psychotropic medications in an area of so-called “pharmacy drug addiction”, on the grounds of judge's decision detained Gia Tvalavadze, the head of LEPL State Regulation Agency for Medical Activities under the Ministry of Internally Displaced persons from the occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs on the fact of for misusing his official powers (*IPN.GE, September 25, 2018*).

18. Kobakhidze - Our opponents pre-election campaign is built on cheap black PR, misinformation, personal insult and provocation

Our electoral opponents are conducting a campaign that is built on cheap black PR, misinformation, personal insult and provocation, - Irakli Kobakhidze, executive secretary of the ruling "Georgian Dream " party, said at the briefing held at the party office on Monday.

Irakli Kobakhidze spoke about pre-election environment in the country and noted that "Georgian Dream" is making attempts to hold the elections of the European standards (*IPN.GE, September 24, 2018*).

19. PalitraMedia's statement

We would like to inform the public that investigators of the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia entered Colourpack Ltd, a printing house of PalitraMedia, with the motive of investigating case N 074210818803 (unknown case for us) on September 24 and requested “full legal, accounting, financial and economic documentation (original) covering the period from 01.01.14 to 11.09.18, as well as the correspondence (original) of the printing house of the same period”- a cite from the order (*IPN.GE, September 25, 2018*).

20. Prosecutor's Office releases information about entering PalitraMedia's printing house

The Prosecutor's Office has spread information about the reason for requesting financial documentation from Colourpack printing house of PalitraMedia.

As InterPressNews was informed by the Prosecutor's Office, the above-mentioned is related to the investigation into the alleged embezzlement of large amounts of state funds through the abuse of power by individual officials within the framework of the Produce in Georgia state program (*IPN.GE, September 25, 2018*).

21. Tbilisi Mayor says taxi drivers will be obliged to provide taxi service with white cabs from October 1, 2019

“We are working on visual standards that will be mandatory from October 1, 2019. We have had a lot of discussions about the color. We have decided that the white color will be mandatory for the taxis. From October of 2019, three-door vehicles as well as right-hand-drive vehicles will not be allowed to provide this service,” Kakha Kaladze said (*IPN.GE, September 26, 2018*).

22. Taxi drivers will have to change vehicle registration certificate in case they repaint their cabs

“A citizen, who wants to change the color of his/her vehicle, is obliged to address the Service Agency for a standard examination of his/her vehicle, based on the examination the Service Agency will make the change in the vehicle registration certificate and the vehicle owner will receive a new document,” MIA told InterPressNews (*IPN.GE, September 26, 2018*).

23. State flags flying at half-staff in connection with 25th anniversary of the fall of Sokhumi

According to the decree of the Government of Georgia, the state flags are flying at half-staff in the buildings of the Government of Georgia and all administrative bodies throughout the country, as well as in the Kutaisi and Tbilisi parliament buildings (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

24. According to another secret recording, Dimitri Kumsishvili was going to fine Vano Chkhartishvili's company, which was prevented by Ivanishvili

Another secret audio recording has been released by Rustavi 2 TV relating to Omega Group. According to the recording, Dimitri Kumsishvili was going to fine Vano Chkhartishvili's company 26 million, but it has not happened after Ivanishvili intervened in the case.

In the recording, Irakli Chubinishvili, the founder of Tbilisi Tobacco, in a conversation with Omega Group founder Zaza Okuashvili, recalls a specific case settled by former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

25. Dimitri Kumsishvili demands launch of prosecution against former Sports Minister Levan Kipiani

“Dimitri Kumsishvili's application has been submitted to the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia regarding the launch of criminal prosecution against Levan Kipiani. The case concerns the high-profile audio recordings. Specifically, in one of the audio recordings (if it is authentic), Kipiani mentions Dimitri Kumsishvili's name and offers a deal to Omega Group in agreement with Kumsishvili.

We categorically demand from the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia to immediately initiate criminal prosecution against Levan Kipiani. Dimitri Kumsishvili categorically denies such a fact and is ready to arrive at the Prosecutor's Office tomorrow,” Gabunia said (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

26. Lawyer: The fabricated recordings are aimed at discrediting Dimitri Kumsishvili

"This is fabrication. We are well aware of why all this was planned. At this stage we will refrain from making any statement. The only thing I can say is that some entrepreneurial entities do not want to pay money to the budget and all the fabricated recordings are aimed at discrediting Dimitri Kumsishvili and the current government.

Anybody and not only Levan Kipiani, who accuses Dimitri Kumsishvili of committing an offense, should be punished. “90% of of the recordings surprisingly mention the name of Dimitri Kumsishvili. This is a well-organized fabricated action. I would like to warn every person who planned this that they will be strictly punished for this. This is a well-planned black campaign against Dimitri Kumsishvili and the former Prime Minister,” Gabunia said (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

27. UNM spends GEL 344 618, European Georgia - GEL 198 631, Salome Zurabishvili - GEL 29 742 on pre-election campaign from Aug. 22 through Sept. 11

As the State Audit Service informs, United National Movement party spent GEL 344 618, European Georgia party – GEL 198 631, Industry Will Save Georgia– GEL 73 457, Movement for Free Georgia - GEL 48 226, Independent Presidential Candidate Salome Zurabishvili - GEL 29 742, National Democratic Party - GEL 26 516, State for People movement- GEL 21 046, Georgian Labour Party – GEL 19 241, Civil Platform - New Georgia – GEL 17 253, Christian - Democratic Movement – GEL 7

453, Georgian Traditionalists Union – GEL 7 024 , Freedom - Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Way" – GEL 7 014 , New Christian-Democrats- GEL 5 335, Georgian Christian-Conservative Party - GEL 4 968, Independent candidate Besarion Tediashvili – GEL 4 610, Free Democrats - GEL 4 481, Girchi- Gel 4 401, the Political Movement of Veterans and Patriots GEL 3 616, Free Georgia – GEL 3 006, independent presidential candidate Kakhaber Chichinadze- GEL 200.

In the period between August 22 to September 12 the political parties received a total of GEL 1 159 205.00 in donations (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

28. Salome Zurabishvili invites Grigol Vashadze and Davit Bakradze to debate

“This election campaign, as all you are witnessing it, develops as an un-European, unworthy, uncivilized campaign. False, black PR, insult, defamation - this is characteristic of today's election campaign and unfortunately, it also causes damages to Georgia. The most unacceptable for me is not these allegations and insults that are directed personally against me, but what against my relation to this country with which is a red line for me...I have decided to take this initiative and say that I will invite both representatives of this black force to these debates, I will take part in a neutral space, in order to express my truth, positions and make clear to everyone what is happening in the country today, "Zourabichvili said (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

29. Davit Bakradze and Grigol Vashadze express readiness to take part in debate with Salome Zurabishvili

Presidential candidates Grigol Vashadze and Davit Bakradze say they are ready to accept Salome Zurabishvili's offer and participate in debates with her. According to Vashadze, a candidate of the united opposition, the abovementioned is as easy as walkng on Rustaveli Avenue for him. He advised Zurabishvili to exercise in the grammar of the Georgian language for the debate.

According to another opposition presidential candidate, Davit Bakradze, the initiative of Salome Zurabishvili is a bit strange, as debate between presidential candidates is usual and necessary thing (*IPN.GE, September 29, 2018*).

30. GD says false information is spread from fake e-mail address on behalf of Parliament's Chairman

False information is spread from a fake e-mail address on behalf of Parliament's Chairman Irakli Kobakhidze as if the political union “Georgian Dream – Democratic” movement endorses presidential candidate Zurab Japaridze, and not Salome Zurabishvili in the upcoming election, - the press office of the “Georgian Dream” said on Sunday(*IPN.GE, September 30, 2018*).

31. Rustavi 2 TV says former chief prosecutor Otar Partskhaladze threatened former sports minister Levan Kipiani to rape him

According to the broadcaster, the abovementioned is related to the Omega group case, where Otar Partskhaladze was fulfilling Bidzina Ivanishvili's order.

Otar Partskhaladze and the people accompanying him took Levan Kipiani to one of the cellars in the vicinity of the Saburtalo market, beat him and threatened him that they would rape him.

According to the anchor of the broadcasting company, Bidzina Ivanishvili promised Zaza Okuashvili, who had lately returned to Georgia, assistance relating to his business problems. After that, former chief prosecutor Otar Partskhaladze contacted Zaza Okuashvili and told him that he was to pay 4 million if he wanted assistance (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

32. Kakha Kaladze: The political power that committed double treason offered us a presidential candidate organically related to Russia

“The traitorous actions of this political force gave Russia a chance to fulfill its long-time desire - to complete the occupation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. These are the people who left the peaceful population alone with the enemy; If not our patriarch and the church, we would perhaps not be able to bury our heroes. They declared their defeat in the war as a victory and made people celebrate on Rustaveli Avenue. Then they started to play the role of a victim, but at the same time, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe they voted for the resolution which calls Russian intervention as a counterattack. The political power that committed double treason offered us a presidential candidate organically related to Russia, while they call Salome Zurbishvili, born in emigration due to the Bolshevik occupation, and who achieved the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia, a betrayer, "said Kaladze (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

33. Bidzina Ivanishvili: The forces, which had been ruling before 2012, are trying to make people still live in the virtual world

“Today is October 1. Our team earned the biggest victory 6 years ago. We have gathered in order to evaluate today's reality. Unfortunately, 6 years turned out to be too little to principally change the political situation in Georgia. However, you can see how we have been changing the ugly things in the country.

Despite this, the forces, which had been ruling Georgian before 2012, are trying to make people still live in the virtual world. They are trying to blame the Georgian Dream and Salome Zurbishvili, a candidate supported by Georgian Dream, of their own offenses," Bidzina Ivanishvili said (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

34. Bidzina Ivanishvili says Zaza Okuashvili asked him 4 million

"The statements about the pressure on media and business are funny. I really met and helped him, like all other businesses. I have this obligation to help any businessman who asks for assistance from me, the PM or any official. The rest is funny. This man turned out to be a master of recording, though he did not record our meeting," Ivanishvili said (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

35. NGOs release statement regarding Omega Group case

13 NGOs have released a statement regarding the Omega Group case. The joint statement of NGOs says that the recent developments in the country indicate a serious crisis of democracy in the country's governance system, the signs of elite corruption and informal clan ruling (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

36. Opposition accuses State Security Service employees of disseminating illegal agitation posters

Giorgi Vashadze, leader of the opposition “Power is in Unity” party, claims the employees of the State Security Service of Georgia posted up illegal agitation posters in the streets of Tbilisi last night (*IPN.GE, October 1, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

37. Irakli Kobakhidze says they have not refused the bill on cannabis and there will be consultations

Kobakhidze once again stressed the necessity of intensive consultations with the public. As he explained, the pre-election period is a difficult working period and it is unknown when they will start consultations. According to him the income to the state budget from this initiative will be 1 billion USD (*IPN.GE, September 27, 2018*).

38. EU, EIB allocate EUR 30m to improve access to finance for around 600 small and medium-sized businesses in Georgia

The European Union (EU) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) have allocated EUR 30m to improve access to finance for around 600 small and medium-sized businesses in Georgia, - the EIB has reported (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

39. Georgia’s foreign debt amounted to \$ 17.4 billion as of June 30, 2018

The gross external debt of Georgia amounted to 17.4 billion USD (42.7 billion GEL) as of June 30, 2018, 108.7 percent of the last four quarters' GDP – the National Bank of Georgia has said.

During the second quarter of 2018 the gross external debt of Georgia decreased by 346.9 million USD. Out of that 242.4 million USD decrease was due to exchange rate changes, transactions led to 66.1 million USD decrease and price changes to 49.5 million USD decrease. At the same time other changes led to 11.1 million USD increase of the external debt (*IPN.GE, September 28, 2018*).

40. Food prices have risen 3,3%, prices on medicines increased by 10,3 % and on gasoline – by 19,5 y/y in August

Food prices have risen 3,3 percent y/y in August, prices on medicines increased by 10,3 percent and on gasoline - 19,5 percent during the reporting period. Gogita Todradze, executive director of the Georgian National Statistics Office – Geostat, told IPN (*IPN.GE, September 28, 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](#)