

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 3-8

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region

#### 1. Occupants kidnap 50-year-old man near the occupation line

Russia controlled forces have kidnapped another Georgian citizen from the village of Kribali in Gori municipality today.

50-year-old Akaki Dotiashvili has been detained for so called “illegally crossing the border” near the occupation line of Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) (*Agenda.ge, October 7, 2018*).

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### 2. Illegally detained Georgian citizen released from Sokhumi prison after two months

52-year old Georgian citizen Zaur Gurchiani has been released from two-month illegal detention in the occupied Abkhazia region today.

The Gurchiani family addressed Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze’s advisor for Regional Issues Sozar Subari shortly after the detention of the man for so-called ‘illegally crossing the border’ on 5 August,” Subari’s department announced (*Agenda.ge, October 3, 2018*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

#### 3. Jens Stoltenberg: We call on Russia to reverse its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

“It is hard for me to comment on the specific case that I do not know, but what I can say in general is that we support the territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders, meaning that we call on Russia to reverse its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states, as these regions are part of Georgia, and we call on Russia to withdraw its forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia.” – Secretary General of NATO, Stoltenberg said (*IPN.GE, October 3, 2018*).

#### 4. US to allocate half a million USD to boost Georgia’s strategic communications

Bakhtadze stated today that Georgia is challenged by the aggressive propaganda masterminded by hostile forces and the US had allocated funding to address these very challenges.

We have developed a very significant action plan together with our strategic partner. It was for this very challenge that US State Department has allocated half a million USD. It is aimed at boosting strategic communications. It is a unique project, which reaffirms the solid support of US government towards western integration of Georgia”, Bakhtadze stated (*Agenda.ge, October 3, 2018*).

#### 5. Three natives of Pankisi gorge die in Syria

Locals confirm the death of natives of Pankisi gorge in Syria. According to the InterPressNews reporter, relatives of the family-of-three, who were reportedly killed in Syria, have been receiving the condolences since morning.

The news about the death of 34-year-old Aghazha Borchashvili, her husband 35-year-old Kakha Tokhoshashvili and their child came about a year ago, but the information was denied later.

Reportedly, Kakha Tokhoshashvili was fighting for the “Islamic State” group in Syria.

At least 30 natives of Pankisi gorge have died fighting in Syria (*IPN.GE, October 4, 2018*).

#### **6. PM to paid official visit to Moldova**

Georgia’s Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze paid an official visit to Moldova on Thursday. The Prime Minister met the Heads of Governments of the GUAM member states within the frameworks of the visit (*IPN.GE, October 5, 2018*).

#### **7. Visa-free travel launched between Georgia and Ukraine**

Visa-free travel launched between Georgia and Ukraine Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze and Prime Minister of Ukraine Vladimir Grosman signed an bilateral agreement between the Georgian government and Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers on visa-free travel.

According to the document, traveling between Georgia and Ukraine will be possible only with ID documents (*IPN.GE, October 5, 2018*).

#### **8. Georgian health official says Russia’s allegations about Lugar Lab in Tbilisi are false**

Head of the National Centre of Disease Control (NCDC) of Georgia Amiran Gamkrelidze says that recent allegations of the Russian media and state officials regarding illegal experiments at the Tbilisi-based, US-built Lugar Laboratory are “unimaginable falsehoods and slander.”

The Russian media and Commander of the Radiological, Chemical and Biological Defence Troops of Russia Igor Kirilov said at a special briefing on Thursday that illegal experiments have been made on humans in the lab which led to the death of more than 73 people in 2015 and 2016 (*Agenda.ge, October 5, 2018*).

#### **9. US Embassy say Russian reports on Lugar Centre in Tbilisi are ‘nonsense’**

The US Embassy in Georgia has responded to Russian allegations and reports about supposed illegal experiments conducted at the US-built, Tbilisi-based Lugar Center and stated that those accusations are “nonsense and typical of Russian misinformation and propaganda campaigns.”

A special statement by Acting US Ambassador to Georgia Elisabeth Rood reads that Russia has refused to participate in the upcoming, international medical event in Tbilisi which will once again prove the transparency of the facility (*Agenda.ge, October 8, 2018*).

#### **10. Georgia appoints new ambassadors to Turkey, Jordan, Latvia and Austria**

The President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili appointed all four ambassadors today.

Georgia’s new ambassador for Austria is Davit Dondua, who will also be the country’s representative to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and other Vienna-based organisations. Dondua recently served as the deputy foreign minister of Georgia.

Giorgi Janjgava, who previously was the ambassador to Saudi Arabia will now serve as ambassador to Turkey.

Zaza Kandelaki is Georgia’s new ambassador to Jordan. Previously he was ambassador of Georgia to Hungary.

And finally, Tea Maisuradze is the new ambassador to Latvia. Previously, she served as the head of the Department of International Organisations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Agenda.ge, October 5, 2018*).

#### **11. Georgian Defence Minister: we will continue to buy armaments from the US**

Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria says that the country will continue to buy military armaments from the United States.

Izoria stated today in the wake of the NATO Defence Ministerial last week that the US has “faith in Georgia” and the faith was built due to successful Georgian reforms in the defence field (*Agenda.ge, October 5, 2018*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **12. Former sports minister in Omega case: we staged audio recording to deliberately discredit the gov't**

Former minister of sport and mediator in the Omega Group's negotiations with the government Levan Kipiani says the audio recordings broadcast by Rustavi 2 were staged.

Kipiani says he and the founder of Omega Group, Zaza Okuashvili, recorded the fake audio tracks in the summer of 2018 to deliberately discredit the government.

Kipiani has come forward in the wake of Okuashvili's allegations of business corruption against the government. The ruling Georgian Dream party dismisses the allegations and says Okuashvili is trying to avoid his financial obligations to the state budget and the Bank of Georgia (*Agenda.ge, October 3, 2018*).

#### **13. Omega case: Prosecutor's Office says audio recordings have been edited**

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office says that the audio recordings in which representatives of the Omega Group business corporation speak about pressure on business from the government have been edited.

The Prosecutor's Office reported that the Tbilisi Forensic Bureau's conclusion on the four audio recordings released by Rustavi 2 TV channel last month reads that the recordings are obviously “non-authentic” (*Agenda.ge, October 3, 2018*).

#### **14. NGOs call on presidential candidates to refrain from making xenophobic statements**

A group of non-governmental organizations call on presidential candidates to refrain from making xenophobic, racist and discriminatory statements. 16 NGOs released a joint statement on Thursday condemning xenophobic statement of Georgian Dream-backed presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili.

“Non-governmental organizations respond and condemn the xenophobic statement of Salome Zurabishvili, a presidential candidate supported by Georgian Dream.

On October 2, during the pre-election meeting with local ethnic Armenian citizens in Ninotsminda (Samtskhe-Javakheti region), Zurabishvili stated: “Till now, citizenship was granted only by the decision of a president. One of the presidents [Mikheil Saakashvili], whose representative is my opponent, granted citizenship to a lot of Turkish people, but did not give a citizenship to you” (*IPN.GE, October 4, 2018*).

#### **15. 192 drug dealers detained this year in Tbilisi's Ponichala district, 7 are policemen**

Of the 192 detainees 13 are women, the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported and said that seven policemen have also been held accountable for the illegal purchase, possession and sale of drugs. Fighting against drug trafficking is one of the top priorities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We show zero-tolerance to the crime and everyone, no matter whether they are an employee of the ministry or not, will be held accountable,” the Interior Ministry says (*Agenda.ge, October 5, 2018*).

#### **16. According to poll, Salome Zurabishvili and Grigol Vashadze got equal number of votes**

According to the poll conducted on ipn.ge, ambebi.ge and kvirispalitra.ge, presidential candidates Salome Zurabishvili and Grigol Vashadze got equal number of votes.

More specifically, citizens had answer a question: Which candidate would you vote for if there were presidential elections tomorrow? As a result, Grigol Vashadze, the candidate of the united opposition, and Salome Zurabishvili, the candidate of the ruling party, received 28% of votes each (*IPN.ge, October 5, 2018*).

#### **17. Salome Zurabishvili accuses media, NGOs of inaction on violence during election campaign**

In today's world, NGOs provide stronger protection to women, but this does not happen here, on the contrary, they are fighting against me with my words, taken out of context, - independent presidential candidate Salome Zurabishvili said at the meeting with voters at Rustaveli Theatre on Friday.

During her speech Salome Zurabishvili read the remarks, posted by Rustavi 2 TV Director General Nika Gvaramia on Facebook, saying that everybody, who funds or assists Salome Zurabishvili, must be extremely oppressed (*IPN.ge, October 6, 2018*).

#### **18. Salome Zurabishvili is ready to meet with NGOs**

“When the language of hatred is used against a woman, perhaps it is necessary those, who protect the women's rights, to react to it, and on the other hand, I during the election campaign there is the slander, which has no basis. I am ready to meet with NGOs, because I respect the non-governmental sector and at the same time, I, as the President, will have to have a relationship with them, "said Zurabishvili. (*IPN.ge, October 6, 2018*).

#### **19. World Bank: Georgia reaches its historic maximum for effectiveness of corruption control and governance**

Georgia has reached a historic high in terms of effectiveness of corruption control and governance, reveals the World Bank report ‘Worldwide Governance Indicators’.

More specifically, Georgia scored 77.40 per cent on Control of Corruption 100 per cent scale - this figure is a historic high.

Georgia is among the leaders in the fight against corruption, and by this figure, it is ahead of 13 EU member states, such as Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Slovakia, Italy, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria (*Agenda.ge, October 8, 2018*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **20. Georgia-Hong-Kong free trade deal to be ratified by Parliament of Georgia**

A free trade deal signed between Georgia and Hong-Kong this June will be sent to the Parliament of Georgia for ratification, the Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze announced at today's government meeting.

The most important priority of our economic strategy is to better integrate Georgia into the global economy. I want to remind you that we are the only country in the region who has free trade regimes with the European Union, China and neighbouring countries simultaneously”, said Bakhtadze (*Agenda.ge, October 3, 2018*).

#### **21. German KfW and French AFD allocate €74mln to support energy reform in Georgia**

German KfW and French AFD sign have signed €74 million in loan agreements to support energy sector reform in Georgia, announces the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia.

Georgia’s Finance Minister Ivane Matchavariani and KfW’s Director for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia Olaf Zymelka signed a loan agreement worth €49 million on 2 October for the “Support of Georgia’s Energy Sector Reform”.

On the same day Matchavariani signed a second loan agreement worth €25 million with the French Ambassador in Georgia Pascal Meunier and AFD’s Head of the regional office for the South Caucasus, Gaelle Assayag, with the same purpose (*Agenda.ge, October 4, 2018*).

#### **22. Asian Development Bank offers over €255 mln for Georgia’s East-West Highway**

This money will go towards the construction of the four-lane, 12km long Khevi-Ubisa section of the highway, announced the Finance Ministry of Georgia.

“This section of the highway is considered one of the most difficult sections of the Rikoti-Zestaponi motorway. Due to complex geologic conditions, it is planned to build 35 bridges (8.3 km of total length) and 20 tunnels (9.4 km of total length)”, read the press release published by the Finance Ministry (*Agenda.ge, October 5, 2018*).

#### **23. Jan-Sept 2018: Georgia earns \$142 mln by exporting 60 mln bottles of wine**

Georgia exported about 60 million bottles of wine to 53 countries in the first nine months of 2018, announces the Georgian National Wine Agency. In January-September of 2018 Georgia generated about \$142 million from the sale of wine abroad.

Export growth was notable in the following countries:

- Japan – 68% percent increase (172,673 bottles)
- Poland – 32% increase (2,465,541 bottles)
- Great Britain – 22% increase (67,310 bottles) (*Agenda.ge, October 8, 2018*).

## **❖ Sports and Culture**

#### **24. Nikoloz Basilashvili wins China Open**

Georgian tennis player Nikoloz Basilashvili has beaten the world number four and top seed Juan Martin del Potro in the men’s final of China Open in Beijing today. The 26-year-old Georgian tennis player won in two sets with results of 6-4 and 6-4 (*Agenda.ge, October 7, 2018*).

## Additional Information

**October 9, 2018**

### **OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6184 GEL

1 GBP - 3.4128 GEL

100 RUB - 3.9155 GEL

1 EUR - 3.0033 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4258 GEL

100 JPY - 2.3100 GEL



- **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](#)**