

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 9-10

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region

1. Georgian woman abducted by occupants released

Georgian citizen Maia Otinashvili, who was abducted by Russia-controlled border guards on 29 September, has been released today.

De facto Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) leadership claimed that Otinashvili, a mother of three minors, was detained for “illegally crossing the border” and aiding others to do the same. She was sentenced to 10 days pre-trial detention last week (*Agenda.ge, October 9, 2018*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

2. Georgian parliamentary vice speaker at PACE: Russia must not be returned its right to vote

A Georgian delegation headed by First Vice Speaker of the parliament Tamar Chugoshvili is participating in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) autumn session in Strasbourg.

While speaking at the autumn session yesterday, Chugoshvili said that Russia is trying to have returned its right to vote in PACE, of which it was stripped in 2014 because it is not meeting its international obligations - the withdrawal of its troops from the territories of sovereign countries.

“Today [during the voting in PACE] we will see if Russia has supporters on one hand and how the values of the Council of Europe are supported on the other hand”, said Tamar Chugoshvili (*Agenda.ge, October 9, 2018*).

3. Georgia evaluates PACE decision not to restore voting rights to Russia as a ‘big victory’

Georgian lawmakers have stated that the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to not restore Russia’s voting right in the body is a “big victory” for PACE, Georgia and Ukraine.

Commenting on the vote, Vice Parliament Speaker of Georgia Tamar Chugoshvili said “PACE did not allow Russia to have its voting right restored [given that it] continues its aggressive policy in Georgia and Ukraine and refuses to meet its international obligations regarding the withdrawal of its troops from the territories of sovereign countries,”

“The decision is a big victory for PACE, as the decision was made despite strong pressure [by Russia and its supporters]. Despite its efforts Russia did not manage to reach its goal,” Chugoshvili added (*Agenda.ge, October 10, 2018*).

4. European Parliament on Georgia-EU association deal: Georgia is on good reform track

MEPs made the statement yesterday when the EP Foreign Affairs Committee took stock of the implementation of the EU association agreements with Moldova and Georgia, which entered into force two years ago.

“MEPs on the foreign affairs committee welcome Georgia’s sustained reform track, which makes it a key EU partner in the region. They note that the EU is now Georgia’s largest trade partner and the largest source of foreign direct investment,” EP statement reads (*Agenda.ge, October 10, 2018*).

❖ Internal Affairs

5. Parliament postpones marijuana regulatory bill discussion for two months

The Georgian parliament has postponed the discussion of the marijuana regulatory bill for two months, based on the decision of the parliament health committee.

The bill would regulate the rules and procedures of marijuana cultivation for export, for medical and cosmetic purposes only, which is strongly opposed by the opposition and the church (*Agenda.ge, October 9, 2018*).

6. Giorgi Gakharia: Sooner or later, we will have to regulate the cultivation of cannabis

"It was of critical importance for the Interior Ministry to regulate the use of marijuana and progress has been made.

I want to tell you that if you read the legislative initiatives, which we submitted, you will see that we are setting a new standard. This is a step forward.

The second part concerned only medical purposes. It does not matter whether it takes 2,3 or 4 months. We will be discussing the law on cannabis until we achieve consensus with the public”, Gakharia said (*IPN.ge, October 9, 2018*).

7. Interior Ministry: People more open to appealing to police in domestic violence cases

The Georgian Interior Ministry has stated that due to an information campaign and government anti-violence efforts, more and more people have been appealing to the police in cases of domestic violence and incidents.

The Interior Ministry Human Rights Department, which was launched in January 2018, stated in its report that more than 5,000 restraint orders have been issued in the first nine months of 2018, while the figure in 2017 was a bit more than 4,000 (*Agenda.ge, October 9, 2018*).

8. NGOs say Irakli Kobakhidze’s statements are aimed at delegitimizing organizations working on electoral issues and human rights

"We are responding to the statement made by the Executive Secretary of the Georgian Dream and Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia, which continue the aggressive rhetoric towards the NGO sector. We would like to remind the public that similar rhetoric was strengthened in response to the NGOs' criticism against the ruling party and the statements on the situation in the country, alleged facts of corruption, informal governance and signs of political crisis.

Instead of systemic and legal reaction on these facts, some members of the ruling party offer the public to draw their attention from the content of the problem to the authors of the criticism.

We consider that the last statements of the Chairman of the Parliament were aimed at delegitimizing the organizations working on electoral issues and human rights and discrediting their evaluations. It

is a pity that the ruling party creates grounds for polarization of public and extreme politicization of issues”, reads the statement (*IPN.ge, October 9, 2018*).

9. Transparency International Georgia leaves Inter-Agency Commission in protest

According to the organization, Transparency International Georgia cannot see a resource for constructive cooperation with the government regarding the presidential elections and leaves the Inter-Agency Commission for Free and Fair Elections, which had been the last format of cooperation. “the recent developments and aggressive rhetoric of the Georgian Dream leaders, including the Justice Minister, showed us that cooperation in this format loses sense”, reads the organization’s statement (*IPN.ge, October 9, 2018*).

10. State Audit Office to study donation of money to Salome Zurbashvili by doctors

“We will start to study the issue. The Audit Office will act in accordance with the established procedures – we will apply to the Court to study the revenues and bank transactions of the donors”, - the Audit Office told InterPressNews.

The questions regarding the doctors’ donations were raised by the NGO sector. The NGOs plan to apply to the State Audit Office with an official application to study the mentioned issue (*IPN.ge, October 9, 2018*).

11. Omega Group alleges they received response from UK proving authenticity of two audio files

We received responses from the UK about two audio files. The examination was conducted by an experienced digital technology examination company”, Aghdgomelashvili said.

According to him, the two audio files concern the conversation between Irakli Chubinashvili and Zaza Okuashvili, where Irakli Chubinashvili talks about the black money paid to the Georgian Dream during the pre-election period in 2017 and exemption of Tbilisi Tobacco of 26 million tax liability as a result of a meeting held between Bidzina Ivanishvili and Vano Chkhartishvili (*IPN.ge, October 9, 2018*).

12. Former sports minister says Ivanishvili, Okuashvili met upon Okuashvili’s request

Former sports minister Levan Kipiani said during his testimony in the Prosecutor’s Office that the meeting between Zaza Okuashvili, founder of the “Omega Group” and former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili was held upon the request of Zaza Okuashvili (*IPN.ge, October 10, 2018*).

13. Former sports minister claims that Zaza Okuashvili released edited recordings

“Zaza Okuashvili asked me to make a rough formulation and to mention the names. He often mentioned the names of various persons and asked me to repeat. Some episodes are recorded in several doubles since Okuashvili considered that I lacked believability,” Levan Kipiani said.

According to the former minister, the material which was recorded after rehearsing is thoroughly edited (*IPN.ge, October 10, 2018*).

14. Employees of China Railway 23rd Bureau arrested for abusing Rustavi 2 journalist and cameraman

Two persons have been detained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the charge of beating a journalist and a cameraman of Rustavi 2 TV.

As InterPressNews was informed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, both persons were detained for hindering the journalists’ professional activities and harassing them.

"The investigation found that the defendants verbally and physically assaulted and illegally hindered the activities of Rustavi 2 TV crew, when they were performing their professional duties. In connection with the incident, law enforcers arrested the acting head and a translator of the Kvishkheti section of the China Railway 23rd Bureau", reads the statement released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*IPN.ge, October 10, 2018*).

15. Journalist and operator of the "Courier" entered the area without permission - the railway representative

According to Giorgi Zazashvili, official representative of the agency, after the assault on the crew of Rustavi 2, the "Courier" journalist and cameraman entered the territory without permission.

Georgian Railway states that journalists did not have the right to film on the territories and should address only the official agency to ask questions about construction.

Physically "Rustavi 2" crew was assaulted by representatives of the office of the 23rd Bureau of the Chinese Railway, Courier reports on the violations revealed during the construction of the new highway.

In the course of the video footage, the representatives of the Chinese company seized a camera from the journalist and tried to remove the video footage. The company kept locked the TV company's equipment for several hours (*Rustavi 2, October 10, 2018*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

16. Manufacturers in Georgia to regulate waste from December 2019

All manufacturers in Georgia who place a product onto the market will be obliged to reduce negative environmental impact that may follow its production, use, waste recovery or disposal.

This will be regulated by the new Waste Management Code that was adopted in Georgia in 2014 and enters into force from December 1, 2019.

The Waste Management Code is in compliance with the Extended Producers' Responsibility, which is a new concept for Georgia (*Agenda.ge, October 10, 2018*).

❖ Sports and Culture

17. Georgian literature, arts under spotlight as Frankfurt Book Fair opens

Georgian literature, art and culture is taking centre stage at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's leading literary event, through authors, publishers and artists who are set to present their work and meet audiences in the German city over the next five days.

With the official status of the Guest of Honour of this year's fair, the Georgian representation brings 70 authors from the country to the international event where over 250,000 visitors are expected to attend around 4,000 events (*Agenda.ge, October 9, 2018*).

Additional Information

October 11, 2018

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6262 GEL

1 GBP - 3.4556 GEL

100 RUB - 3.9751 GEL

1 EUR - 3.0199 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4322 GEL

100 JPY - 2.3196 GEL

Thursday 11 October	Friday 12 October	Saturday 13 October	Sunday 14 October	Monday 15 October
				
11° 22°	12° 23°	11° 16°	11° 18°	10° 21°

- **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](#)**