

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

October 22-29

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region

#### 1. Two citizens of Georgia, detained by Russian occupants, released

Two citizens of Georgia, who were kidnapped from Okami village on October 20, have been released. The State Security Service of Georgia has confirmed this information.

Soso Shukakidze, DoB 1985, and Giorgi Shamanauri, DoB 1987, were detained for "illegal border crossing". Locals say the two men were collecting firewood when they were detained by so-called border guards (*IPN.GE, October 22, 2018*).

#### 2. De facto South Ossetian foreign minister arrives in Sicily within his "visit" to Italy

Dimitri Medoev, the de facto foreign minister of the occupied region of South Ossetia, arrived in Sicily within the framework of his "visit" to Italy.

"An official ceremony of a meeting between Dimitri Medoev and the Mayor of Randazzo was held in the city of Randazzo. The Deputies of the Mayor and the Consul General of Russia in Palermo took part in the ceremony. Anthems of South Ossetia and Italy were performed at the beginning of the event," the de facto foreign ministry reports (*IPN.GE, October 22, 2018*).

#### 3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs Italian side of Dimitri Medevayev's visit to Italy

"Obviously, Moscow's efforts are ineffective, as the international community, including Italy, is fully informed about the ongoing processes in the occupied territories and strongly support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The above only indicates that the efforts of the Russian Federation aimed at lobbying the so-called independence of the occupied territories of Georgia are futile and Moscow is trying to legitimize the illegal processes by organizing similar "visits". With our diplomatic channels, we immediately informed the Italian side of the "visit" and they promised us strong support. We are grateful to the international community, including Italy, for its unwavering support for the non-recognition policy of the occupied regions of Georgia", - the Ministry said (*IPN.GE, October 23, 2018*).

#### 4. Foreign Ministry accuses Russia of trying to use Open Skies Agreement as instrument for illegal recognition of Georgia's occupied regions

As InterPressNews was informed by the Foreign Ministry, Russia openly violates the fundamental norms of international law, namely, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states within the internationally recognized borders and it should not be allowed to use the above agreement to legalize illegal acts.

The Open Skies Consultation Commission held a meeting in Vienna on October 22. The Georgian delegation made a statement on the accusations made by the Russian delegation at the meeting (*IPN.GE, October 25, 2018*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### **5. Ambassador of Italy says organized crime may inflict damage on Georgian people's achievements, including visa-liberalization**

"As you know, in Italy as well as in other countries the problem is not only illegal migrations but also organized crime and these are all in the interests of EU member states. The Government of Georgia understands very well that we should fight together against this painful phenomenon because it affects the image of your country and the existence of an organized crime in Italy may inflict a long-term damage on such great achievements of the Georgian people as the visa-liberalization. So, Georgia's public interest is to join the fight against the organized crime and illegal migration to open the doors for properly managed legal migration," the Ambassador of Italy said (*IPN.GE, October 24, 2018*).

### **6. John Bolton: Georgian officials told me that Georgia is interested in holding free and open elections**

"I'm not going to get involved in the pre-election campaign in any form two days before the elections. There will be a large number of international observers in Georgia, including the Americans. Georgian officials told me that Georgia is interested in holding free and open elections," John Bolton said.

According to the US National Security Advisor, the voter turnout and full confidence of the public towards the elections (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

**7. U.S. National Security Adviser meets Georgia's Interior Minister, Head of State Security Service**  
Vice Prime Minister of Georgia, Minister of Internal Affairs Giorgi Gakharia and Head of the State Security Service of Georgia Vakhtang Gomelauri have today hosted U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton. The meeting has been held at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

As the Internal Affairs Ministry informs, the sides discussed security challenges facing Georgia, regional threats and cooperation enhancement perspectives in this context. The importance of the US-Georgia strategic cooperation was also highlighted during the meeting (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

### **8. John Bolton - Some sanctions against Russia were imposed following the occupation of the territories of Georgia**

"A number of sanctions are imposed against Russia and some of them are imposed after Russia occupied the territories of Georgia - Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I cannot tell you whether the issue of Georgia will be discussed at the meeting between Trump and Putin or not, as the meeting will be held at the celebration marking the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I and this will be a short meeting.

I can tell you that we have invited President Putin to Washington. A full day of consultations is planned. We do not know the agenda of this meeting at this stage," John Bolton said (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

### **9. Georgia's PM, US National Security Advisor discuss situation on occupied territories, Georgia's peace initiative**

"With Mr. Bolton we discussed all those topics that were initiated during my visit to Washington D.C. We touched upon the most painful issues for Georgia, including the humanitarian disaster in the occupied territories of the country and the peace-keeping initiatives that will help us in overcoming these challenges. At the same time, we talked about the potential introduction of a free trade regime between the USA and Georgia, which will advance the bilateral relations to a principally new phase of development. We discussed the regional context and security architecture, which should exist in Georgia to address the

challenges facing the country. John Bolton is a loyal friend of Georgia. He has a clear vision on how to make our relations further more strategic, with a greater focus on specific outcomes and outputs. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to him for this very vital support," the Prime Minister of Georgia said (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

#### **10. US Secretary of Defense thanks Georgia's PM for his commitment to defense reforms**

US Secretary of Defense James Mattis thanks Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze for his commitment to the country's defense reforms and investment in Georgia's armed forces.

InterPressNews was informed by Prime Minister's press office that the letter received by Mamuka Bakhtadze from the Pentagon reads that Georgia's spending of 2% of GDP on defense and 20% of defense spending on major equipment purchases is in line with NATO standards.

The US Defense Secretary praises the work of Georgia's Defense Minister Levan Izoria and his in-depth knowledge of US-Georgia bilateral defense cooperation (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **11. Bidzina Ivanishvili: It is inappropriate to talk about informal governance**

"It is inappropriate that you talk about informal governance as I am a chairman of the party that has majority in the parliament and in the self-governments of almost all regions. The government was also approved by the parliament. Therefore, the role of the party is significant and I am the chairman of the party, so it is inappropriate to talk about informal governance", Ivanishvili said (*IPN.GE, October 23, 2018*).

#### **12. Group of 11 NGOs say government's attack on civil society harms democracy in Georgia**

Leading members of the Government of Georgia and the ruling party continue their purposeful attacks on non-governmental organizations and their heads, - a group of 11 non-governmental organizations said in a statement released on October 24.

According to the statement, Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani carried out yet another attack of this kind at the International Anti-Corruption Conference in Copenhagen on 22 October (*IPN.GE, October 24, 2018*).

#### **13. According to Georgian Dream's another survey, Salome Zurabishvili wins elections with 54 of votes**

The new survey was conducted last week - from 15 October to 21 October. The survey was carried out throughout the country and covered all regions and the capital of Georgia, excluding the occupied territories. 2200 respondents were interviewed in all. The survey provides 95% reliability of the results and the margin of error is 3%', Mdinardze said.

According to him, the results of the survey are the following:

- Salome Zurabishvili - 54%

- Grigol Vashadze - 18%

- Davit Bakradze - 16%

- Other candidates - 12% (*IPN.GE, October 25, 2018*).

#### **14. UNDP head in Georgia: The use of hate speech prevails in the pre-election period**

The use of hate speech prevails in the pre-election period, especially in the print and online media, - Munkhtuya Altangerel, head of UNDP in Georgia, told journalists before the presentation of interim media monitoring results.

According to him, the quality of TV information is quite high and the coverage of presidential candidates is balanced (*IPN.GE, October 25, 2018*).

**15. EU ambassador: The positive trend is that generally the level of balance has increased in the media**

The positive trend of the 2018 presidential elections is that generally the level of balance has increased in the media, professionalism is growing, but the use of hate speech remains a problem, - Carl Hartzell, EU ambassador to Georgia, told journalists before the presentation of interim media monitoring results. According to him, the in-depth coverage of the issue remains a challenge in the Georgian media (*IPN.GE, October 25, 2018*).

**16. Mikheil Saakashvili's uncle calls audio recording "full fabrication"**

The phone conversation allegedly between me and the president is a complete fabrication and will not cause any turmoil. I will make only two comments. It seems they think either we are stupid, or people. This is not my voice, especially swearing. We do not order murders, especially by phone. And secondly, it seems they are in trouble and defeat is unavoidable. How do I know? Because they are fabricating evidence against family members", Temur Alasania posted.

The audio recording was responded by former president Mikheil Saakashvili as well.

"Does this swindler from Chorvila really think that he will deceive people? People have already delivered a verdict for his six-year lies, thievery and falsifications and this verdict will be announced on the 28th of October," Mikheil Saakashvili posted.

According to *Imedinews.ge*, the audio recording of alleged conversation between former President Mikheil Saakashvili and his uncle Temur Alasania was posted on the Ukrainian website. In the audio recording, allegedly Temur Alasania says: "I will pay one million to a person who will kill Bidzina" (*IPN.GE, October 25, 2018*).

**17. MIA - Zaza Saralidze detained for attacking police officers**

Patrol police officers detained Zaza Saralidze, father of murdered teenager Davit Saralidze, following the attack on police officers, - the Ministry of Internal Affairs said in a statement on October 26.

"Zaza Saralidze attacked police officers, who were performing their duties on Rustaveli Avenue, and hit them with a stick," the Ministry said (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

**18. "Transparency International" - Salome Zurabishvili received GEL 3 105 011, Grigol Vashadze - GEL 583 820, Davit Bakradze - GEL 516 404 in donations**

"Six presidential candidates received a total of GEL 4 226 120 in donations, 99 percent of the total donation is from individuals. GEL 3 105 011 - 73 percent of the total amount -- was raised by Salome Zurabishvili, followed by Grigol Vashadze (GEL 583 820), Davit Bakradze (GEL 516 404), Davit Usupashvili (GEL 13 290), Kakha Kukava (GEL 6 596), and Shalva Natelashvili (GEL 1 000)," the report reads (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

**19. With 99,57% of votes counted, Salome Zurabishvili gets 38,66%, Grigol Vashadze - 37,7%**

According to the preliminary data of the Central Election Commission, Grigol Vashadze, candidate of the National Movement, received majority of votes in all big cities of Georgia.

The Central Election Commission counted 3678 precincts (+11 special precincts) out of 3705 polling stations.

Central Election Commission tabulated 3692 precincts out of 3705 (99.95%) by 11 AM. The votes distributed as follows:

- Salome Zurabishvili – 615'403 (38.63%)
- Grigol Vashadze – 601'175 (37.74%)
- David Bakradze – 174'699 (10.97%)
- Shalva Natelashvili – 59'805 (3.75%)
- Davit Usupashvili – 36'005 (2.26%)
- Zurab Japaridze – 35'971 (2.26%) (*CEC.GOV.GE, October 29, 2018*).

#### **20. Deadline for conducting second round of elections is December 2**

"Considering the preliminary results, it is possible to say that we will have a second round. The second round has its own procedures. Results shall be published within 20 days. The second round shall be held on Sunday, within two weeks after the publication of the final summary protocol. So, the deadline is 2 December,"- said Zhvania (*IPN.GE, October 29, 2018*).

#### **21. Grigol Vashadze: We do not need euphoria, we have a second round ahead**

"I have a request; we do not need euphoria, celebration. We have a second round ahead, which we will surely win. This is inevitable.

Citizens of Georgia expressed their position in the elections of dignity. We promise you to work hard like we had been doing up to now.

I would like to express my gratitude to the European Georgia and personally Davit Bakradze, who showed the highest standard. I would also like to thank the Republican Party, representatives of which I have already met. I am sure the rest of the parties will do the same.

Yesterday I was asked of why I was not celebrating. I was so tired. We will start celebrating today," Vashadze said (*IPN.GE, October 29, 2018*).

#### **22. Kakha Kaladze: This election was a message from people that a lot of things need to be changed in the country**

"On behalf of all our political team, I want to express my gratitude to our citizens, who showed high civic responsibility and went to polls. I also want to thank observers, foreign partners, international organizations, law enforcement officers, election administration and media.

We would like to express special gratitude to our loyal voters, who voted for the candidate backed by us, despite the unprecedented negative campaign of the opposition.

The results of the first round of the presidential election showed a number of important things.

Thanks to the Georgian people and our government, we live in a democratic state, where the Georgian Dream gave population the freedom of choice. The need for the appointment of the second round indicates a high political standard established by us in Georgia and the whole international community and every citizen clearly see it. The Georgian Dream will guarantee that elections will never be rigged in Georgia!

Most importantly, this election was a message sent by people that a lot of things need to be changed in the country quickly and efficiently, by taking into consideration the interest of every citizen," Kaladze said (*IPN.GE, October 29, 2018*).

### **23. Kakha Kaladze: We relied only on internal surveys, which weakened our perception of people's attitudes**

"Sadly, like all other governments, the concentration of power gave us excessive self-confidence, and in a number of cases there has been no adequate feedback, communication with the public. We only relied on internal surveys, which weakened our perception of people's attitudes. However, for any healthy political organization, such a signal serves as a beginning of rapid changes and effective response. The message has been received and we are ready to respond to this challenge with effective steps," Kaladze said (*IPN.GE, October 29, 2018*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **24. Ivanishvili says devaluation of GEL triggered by external factors. Government, National Bank are not to blame**

"They consider devaluation against the dollar. Few days ago, the National Bank of Georgia published that the GEL was strengthened by 9 %. Dollar is not the only used currency for trade for us. I am not the specialist to make good explanations but do not blame the government and the National Bank. That's what's going on outside, not just such small economy but big economies also fail to cope with," Ivanishvili said (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

### **25. Omega Group resumes functioning after paying 1 000 000 GEL**

By the decision of the ministry finances, Omega Group has been granted the right to resume functioning after it paid 1 000 000 GEL. As BusinessPressNews was told by the ministry, the Omega Group had submitted the relevant request to the ministry of finances, which partially granted the request.

According to this ministry, Omega Group must submit a new scheme regarding its liabilities in the nearest days.

Omega Group paid 35 203 170 GEL to the budget in 2015, but the company was fined for not paying the rest 1 358 919 GEL. In total, the company has paid 16 182 788 GEL to the budget since 2016, but its debt has increased to 52 823 844 due to not paying the fines imposed on it (*IPN.GE, October 26, 2018*).

## **❖ Sports and Culture**

### **26. New President of Judo Federation elected**

Giorgi Atabegashvili has today been elected as a new president of Judo Federation of Georgia.

40 out of 41 delegates, who attended the Judo Federation congress, voted for Giorgi Atabegashvili.

As for other candidates - Davit Khakhutashvili, Davit Kevkhishvili, Davit Khakhaleishvili and Giorgi Alexidze, they withdrew their candidacies (*IPN.GE, October 24, 2018*).

## Additional Information

**October 29, 2018**

**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6986 GEL

1 GBP - 3.4512 GEL

100 RUB -4.1018 GEL

1 EUR - 3.0632 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4800 GEL

100 JPY - 2.4108 GEL

Monday 29 October	Tuesday 30 October	Wednesday 31 October	Thursday 1 November	Friday 2 November
				
5° 18°	5° 19°	8° 19°	8° 14°	6° 11°

- **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](#)**