

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

November 8-11

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region

#### 1. **Georgian PM: we won't tolerate neither the old nor the new barbed wire fences**

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has stated that the government will not tolerate neither old nor new barbed wire fences on its historic land, responding to the erection of new barbed wire fences by occupants at the village of Atotsi near the occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region. Bakhtadze stated that the new barbed wire fences are the “visiting card” of the occupants, who have been carrying out a creeping occupation on Georgian soil since the Russia-Georgia 2008 war.

We will use all available levers to stop the process. Our allies and all international organisations have been informed regarding the illegal activity. We have the firm support of the international community, and I am sure that we will end this injustice,” Bakhtadze said (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### 2. **Ruling party supported presidential candidate visits village where occupants erected new barbed wire fences**

Ruling Georgian Dream party supported independent presidential candidate Salome Zurbishvili has visited the village of Atotsi, where Russia-controlled forces began the erection of new barbed wire fences on 7 November.

Zurbishvili said that Russian actions in Georgia, the occupation of Georgian lands and the creeping occupation, are the “biggest pain of the country” and the process “must never be tolerated.”

This is the issue the future president must care about-to destroy the occupation line. We should reintegrate our territories,” Zurbishvili said.

She stated that before achieving the ultimate goal the Georgian government and the president should provide genuine socioeconomic support for the people living in the villages near the occupation lines (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### 3. **Georgian PM raises the issue of new barbed wire fences with PACE representatives**

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has raised the issue of new barbed wire fences erected by occupants during his meeting with the members of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Tbilisi yesterday.

The dire security and humanitarian situation in Georgia's occupied territories was singled out, and deep concern was expressed over the process of reinforcing the occupation line near the village of Atotsi in the Kareli Municipality. The importance of response from the international community was also emphasised,” the government of Georgia press office reported late yesterday (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### 4. **US embassy on new barbed wire fences in Georgia: “Russia must end its occupation”**

“The U.S. condemns Russia’s “borderization” at Atotsi village. Installing fences harms livelihoods and restricts freedom of movement on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line. Russia must end its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.” – Posts US Embassy’s account on Twitter (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **5. EUMM speaks about significant borderisation activities by occupants in Atotsi village**

The European Union Monitoring mission (EUMM), the only international monitoring presence in Georgian [with no access to occupied regions] has confirmed that “significant borderisation activities have been taking place in the area of the Georgian villages of Atotsi (Balta) since early November 2018.”

“A total of nearly 400 meters of new fencing work, running alongside the administrative boundary line with South Ossetia, have been observed by EUMM patrols in the area.

The EUMM is closely monitoring and reporting on such borderization activities that affect stability as well as the rights of people in the area,” the EUMM reported (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **6. De facto minister Dimitry Medoev to meet with Sergey Lavrov in Moscow**

"On November 10-13, South Ossetian Foreign Minister will be in Moscow on a working visit. On November 12, he will hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The sides will discuss the basic issues of bilateral relations," Maria Zakharova said (IPN.ge, November 11, 2018).

### **❖ Abkhazia Region**

#### **7. None of Georgia’s political parties campaigned in Gali in first round of presidential election**

None of the political parties in Georgia’s presidential election campaigned in the conflict zone, according to locals DFWatch spoke to in Gali, the southern district of breakaway Abkhazia.

This is unlike previous elections, when the ruling party had local campaign workers out among the population promising various benefits, a resident of the village Tagiloni said. “Minibuses were amassed at the ‘border’. We were taken by these minivans and brought back,” she recalls, adding that nothing similar happened this year (*DFWatch.net, November 9, 2018*).

### **❖ Foreign Affairs**

#### **8. Ireland adopts resolution on Georgia’s territorial integrity and EU integration**

The Senate of Ireland has adopted a resolution on support for the territorial integrity of Georgia and its integration into the European Union. The resolution was adopted unanimously yesterday.

In the resolution Ireland reaffirms its unwavering support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders and calls upon Russia to fulfill the 2008 ceasefire agreement with Georgia and withdraw its troops from Georgian territory.

The resolution expresses concern that 10 years after the Russia-Georgia war the occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali by Russian still continues and the security, human rights and humanitarian situation on the ground has deteriorated further (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### **9. UK Minister for Europe says Georgia is a role model of democracy in the region**

UK Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan told Georgian PM Mamuka Bakhtadze in Tbilisi today that Georgia is a role model for democracy and human rights protection in the region. He praised the Georgian reforms and condemned Russia's actions in the Georgian occupied regions.

Duncan touched upon recent developments in the village of Atotsi, where Russians have erected new barbed wire fences, and stated that the UK firmly supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The UK minister came to Tbilisi to open the fifth round of the annual strategic Wardrop Dialogue (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### **10. Norwegian Embassy to open in Georgia**

Norway is going to open an embassy in Georgia, announces the Government of Norway.

“Georgia is one of our priority partner countries in the Eurasia region. For many years, it has been following a course of reform, which has brought it closer to European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures”, said Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Soreide.

“It is on the basis of an overall assessment of Norwegian interests and our ties with the countries in the Southern Caucasus that Norway has decided to open an embassy in Georgia. A permanent presence in Tbilisi will put us in a good position to follow developments in the region as a whole”, she added (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### **11. Georgia nominates candidate for Director General of Food and Agriculture Organization**

Dr. David Kirvalidze has been nominated for the position of Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for the period of 2019-2023 by Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze. Kirvalidze has 28 years of leadership experience in agriculture and rural development sectors.

He is currently an adviser to the prime minister of Georgia and a member of the board of directors of a US-based, international, non-profit organization – Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA) (*Agenda.ge, November 10, 2018*).

#### **12. President Margvelashvili joins world leaders to mark the Armistice Day in Paris**

President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili and the first lady Maka Chichua have participated in the event devoted to 100 years since end of first world war in Paris with world leaders.

Leaders of more than 100 countries including the US president Trump, German Chancellor Merkel and Canadian PM Trudeau, gathered in Paris to walk with the President of France Emmanuel Macron to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a memorial to France's fallen under the Arc de Triomphe (*Agenda.ge, November 11, 2018*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **13. Interior Ministry initiates changes for sexual crimes against minors**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has drafted a bill which provides civil restrictions and tougher punishment for those convicted of sexual crimes against minors.

The ministry has not yet provided the details of the bill, but reported that convicts in sexual crimes against minors will be deprived of the right to work at educational institutions.

“They will be deprived of their other civil rights as well. The ministry will create a special database of all people convicted for sexual crimes against minors. The individuals will be under permanent

surveillance to prevent sexual crimes against minors,” the ministry statement reads (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **14. Georgian gov’t approves Open Government Georgia 2018-19 action plan**

The Georgian government has approved the 4th Open Government Georgia Action Plan, for high level governance in the country, the Georgian Justice Ministry says.

The action plan which has been drafted through the involvement of local and international organisations, includes 23 obligations for 21 state bodies.

“To ensure large-scale public involvement in the drafting of the document, the Justice Ministry has held consultations with people of 13 towns of Georgia, to reveal the most challenging directions for governance,” the Justice Ministry says.

he five challenges are: improving of public service, raise of the good faith in the public sector, better management of public resources, creation of a safe environment and improvement of corporate responsibilities.

- Georgia gathered OGP in 2011 and has carried out genuine reforms for high level governance.
- Georgia became the chair country of OGP in 2017 for one year and hosted the 5th OGP global summit in Tbilisi.
- Open Government Partnership brings together government reformers and civil society leaders to create action plans that make governments more inclusive, responsive and accountable.
- Since 2011, 79 OGP participating countries and 20 subnational governments have made over 3,100 commitments to make their governments more open and accountable, OGP official page reads (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **15. Rally in support of Malkhaz Machalikashvili and Zaza Sarlidze turns into physical confrontation**

The rally in support of Malkhaz Machalikashvili and Zaza Sarlidze on Rustaveli Avenue turned into physical confrontation.

Police officers were not allowing rally participants to set up tents. However, NGOs managed to set up three tents.

According to Executive Director of Transparency International – Georgia, Eka Gigauri, who is in front of the Parliament, no law forbids demonstrators from setting up tents.

The rally is being organized by NGOs. The event under the slogan “We protect freedom with tents” was announced yesterday (*IPN.ge, November 10, 2018*).

#### **16. Public Defender: Any attempt to force demonstrators not to set up a tent is illegal restriction of freedom of expression**

"We have repeatedly stated that Georgian citizens have the unlimited right to set up a tent at any place, if it does not obstruct traffic. Consequently, any attempt to force these people not to set up a tent is illegal restriction of freedom of expression. My recommendation is that any citizen should be allowed to express his/her protest in a form that does not go beyond the freedom of expression. In the given case, even the New Year event is not a legitimate goal for restricting the freedom of expression," said Nino Lomjaria (*IPN.ge, November 10, 2018*).

#### **17. NGOs put up tent in front of Parliament as demonstration of “selective justice” in the country**

Representatives of non-governmental organizations removed part of their tents in front of Parliament's building in Tbilisi. They said putting up the tents was a kind of performance, which reminded the authorities that this is not a law violation.

A group of the NGOs said this performance confirmed the practice of selective justice, which creates unequal conditions for the citizens of Georgia. The NGOs were allowed to put up tents while Zaza Saralidze and Malkhaz Machalikashvili were refused to do so (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **18. "I refuse a Christmas tree; I choose a human!" – online petition started to support Zaza Saralidze, Malkhaz Machalikashvili**

"I refuse a Christmas tree; I choose a human! – An online petition has started to support Zaza Saralidze, father of one of the teenagers murdered in Tbilisi in December 2017 in Khorava street murder case, and Malkhaz Machalikashvili, father of Temirlan Machalikashvili who was shot during the special operation in late December and died of the injuries several days later (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **19. Tbilisi City Hall releases statement related to recent developments on Rustaveli Avenue**

"Unfortunately, the letter of Tbilisi City Hall triggered misinterpretation and political speculation. Let us emphasize that the New Year events planned for December have nothing to do with yesterday's developments on Rustaveli Avenue.

Due to a high public interest, we would like to explain the letter, sent by Tbilisi City Hall to the organizers of the protest rally.

on November 1 of this year, the organizers of the rally sent a letter to Tbilisi City Hall applying for continuation of rallies until December 31. Within three days provided by the law, the Tbilisi City Hall administration sent a response letter informing the organizers about the events planned in December and requested them to take into consideration the mentioned circumstances. As you know, New Year events are held traditionally in front of the parliament in Tbilisi. Tbilisi City Hall is not authorized to prohibit or permit participants of the rally to set up tents. Consequently, taking the request of the City Hall into account is the prerogative of the organizers of the protest rally.

Tbilisi City Hall protects the law and interests of the population...We urge politicians and media representatives not to use administrative process for political purposes and not to mislead the public. The events planned by Tbilisi City Hall are directed only for the city's prosperity and not for splitting the society and confronting the people," Tbilisi City Hall statement reads (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **20. Interior Minister - We took measures as soon as we saw the growing danger of escalation and the risk of destabilization**

"The police always acted in the interests of citizens and rally participants. We made decisions and today we see more tents in front of Parliament than there is the need. The police always acted and cared for its citizens, it will continue taking care of the participants of the rally. For this purpose, we will do everything, we will use all the tools that are in our hands. You know that we had specific information on destabilization and I would like to emphasize that under these circumstances the police will fulfil its function - will ensure the safety of citizens. I would like to point out that the use of pain of one person for narrow political or any other kind of interest is the responsibility of each citizen," said Minister Gakharia (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **21. Rally dedicated to Temirlan Machalikashvili's memory to be held outside ruling party's office**

Temirlan Machalikashvili's father Malkhaz Machalikashvili told reporters that he was waiting for his supporters from Pankisi Gorge and they planned to rally outside the central office of the "Georgian Dream" where Soso Gogashvili, former deputy head of State Security Service, is employed (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **22. 16 tents remain in front of Parliament building**

Representatives of NGOs removed part of the tents set up in front of the Parliament building on their will. According to them, the erection of tents was a kind of performance to tell the authorities that the abovementioned was not a violation.

Representatives of the NGOs indicate that the performance confirmed the practice of selective justice, which puts the citizens of Georgia in unequal conditions.

According to them, the abovementioned was confirmed by the fact that NGOs were allowed to set up a tent, while Zaza Saralidze and Malkhaz Machalikashvili had been restricted to do the same for two months (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **23. Kakha Kaladze: When December comes, we will make a decision together with our population what and how to do**

"Neither I nor the City Hall have the power or prerogative to allow or forbid the placement of tents by certain people. Our letter asks them to act in accordance with Article 10 of the Law of Georgia on Assembly and Demonstration and to take into account that a number of events are planned for December 15 and to change the time and place of their demonstration. It is not December yet. When December comes, we will make a decision together with our population what and how to do", Kaladze said (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

#### **24. Grigol Vashadze - Mtskheta is evacuated due to the wedding of oligarch's son**

"Criminals, nestling in power, have created a violent "government". The government is not the one who attacks fathers of murdered sons and tells them – we must restrict your constitutional right of freedom of expression and meeting. When Mtskheta [town] is evacuated and worshippers are expelled from Svetitskhoveli – [cathedral]. We congratulate Mr. Bidzina on your son's wedding, but this is not a feudal domain, it's our homeland. Svetitskhoveli belongs to everyone and it has not been closed for so many years," Grigol Vashadze said (*IPN.ge, November 11, 2018*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **25. 7,726 Georgian military servicemen will receive higher salaries starting in 2019**

Also, it is planned to raise the salaries of other units, including the special security service, from January 1, 2019.

Significant steps have been taken since 2016 to improve the financial situation of the armed forces and to increase their social support... I would like to remind you that the salaries of about 14,000 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were raised in summer 2018. This process will continue", Bakhtadze said (*Agenda.ge, November 8, 2018*).

#### **26. French Development Agency offers €35 mln for social welfare in Georgia**

The French Development Agency (AFD) is offering €35 million to Georgia to support reforms planned by the government of Georgia in order to improve the social welfare system in the country.

The AFD-supported social welfare program that will last three years in Georgia includes:

- Development of social support and solidarity system, including providing an adequate service to people with disabilities.
- Provision of an affordable and high-quality health-care system.
- Optimisation of resources allocated for internally displaced persons, which implies closing of at least 20 damaged buildings and providing proper residence to at least 350 families (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **27. Georgia's Samegrelo region will be completely gasified in two years**

The process has already started and Turunava, Deputy Minister of Economy and other officials attended the traditional ceremony of the first time of gas oven lighting in one of the households of the village of Teklati yesterday.

The construction of the 79,044 meter long pipeline, crossing the five villages of Shua Nosiri, Nosiri, Akhalsopeli, Sagvaramio and Teklati, has been completed, giving access to natural gas to 1,345 households.

Turnava said that very important works have been carried out in the Samegrelo region during the past years. Namely, 70,000 households of four municipalities have already been provided with gas supply with the participation of the state, private companies and Socar. Turnava said that in the coming three years 200 million GEL will be spent to complete the gasification process in Georgia (*Agenda.ge, November 9, 2018*).

#### **28. New terminal to more than triple capacity of Kutaisi Airport**

The construction of a new terminal in Kutaisi international Airport will be completed by the end of 2019.

The more than 24,000 square meter building will be three times larger than the already existing terminal.

“Over the first ten months of this year we have already received 512,000 passengers in Kutaisi Airport. 52% of them are foreigners coming to Georgia as tourists and of course we are interested in keeping this number growing”, Akaki Sagirashvili, the Deputy Minister of Economy said while visiting the terminal building construction site yesterday (*Agenda.ge, November 10, 2018*).

## **❖ Sports and Culture**

#### **29. Georgian weightlifter Lasha Talakhadze wins world championship, beats world record**

Weightlifter and Olympic champion in the 105 kg + category Lasha Talakhadze has received three gold medals and beaten the world record the world championship held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. This is the third time Talakhadze has earned the title of World Champion.

Warming up on 207 kg in the snatch he managed to set two world records at 212 and 217kg. In the clean and jerk, after a 245kg introduction he lifted 212 and 217kg, both world records. In total, he rewrote the record three times (462, 469, 474).

“I think I could go a lot higher in the clean and jerk. My maximum was 264kg so far, but this time, winning was the most important thing. I'll train even harder and deliver the 264 kg lift in the near future,” Talakhadze was quoted by the International Weightlifting Federation as saying.

#### **30. How do sumoists live? - Georgian wrestler's exclusive interview- Part 1**

Levan Tsaguria or Kokkai Futoshi is a former professional sumo wrestler from Georgia. He is the first Caucasian rikishi (professional sumo wrestler) to reach sumo's highest division, makuuchi. His highest rank was komusubi. In April 2018 he was appointed as the president of the Georgian Sumo Federation for four years.

Levan Tsaguria shares his experience with the people interested in the sport and talks about the challenges the federation faces nowadays. He made exclusive interviews ([Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#)) with Georgian Journal, describing essences of SUMO and life in Japan.

## Additional Information

**November 12, 2018**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.7146 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5325 GEL	100 RUB - 4.0430 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0800 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4925 GEL	100 JPY - 2.3848 GEL

  

Monday 12 November	Tuesday 13 November	Wednesday 14 November	Thursday 15 November	Friday 16 November
				
7° 12°	5° 11°	4° 7°	4° 6°	3° 9°

  

- **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](#)**