

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

January 24-27

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Date: *January 28, 2019*

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### 1. Slovak gov't denies connection with tourism event hosting Abkhaz 'delegation'

The Slovak Foreign Ministry says that the state government has no connection with the ITF SLOVAKIATOUR 2019 international tourist exhibition in which the members of the so-called government of the Georgian occupied region of Abkhazia are participating.

The Abkhaz media reports that “the delegation of the Abkhaz republic” is participating in the exhibition which opened yesterday in Bratislava.

“The Slovak Foreign Ministry says that the event was organised by a private company which is headed by a Russian national,” the Georgian Foreign Ministry told the media (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

### ❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

#### 2. New barbed wire fences appear in Khurvaleti, locals say occupation forces continue borderization

New illegal barbed wire fences have been noticed by the locals in the village of Khurvaleti, alongside the occupation line of Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) today.

Locals said the borderization was carried out by the occupation forces in the garden of Kujoshvili family. They said the occupants have started works since morning but disappeared as soon as police and media arrived at the place.

Speaking with media, locals have expressed concerns that the Russian soldiers will continue installing the barbed wire fences as their car has been still noticed in the Dzukaantkari village during the day.

#### ***Earlier: January 26, 18:44***

The illegal barbed wire fence placed by the occupation forces previously in the village of Dzukaantkari, near Russian-occupied Tskhinvali, has been replaced with a new one, the State Security Service said today.

The European Monitoring mission has been informed about the incident which happened on January 21.

On the other hand, one of the locals has noticed a [soldier] on the territory of his garden on 10 January. This case was also reported to the EUMM and the hot line was enacted. Borderization did not take place at this particular section,” the State Security Service said (*Agenda.ge, January 27, 2019*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### **3. French Embassy to Georgia provides details for legal employment of Georgians in France**

The Embassy of France to Georgia has provided details regarding the recent agreement between France and Georgia which will allow a certain category of Georgian citizens to receive temporary residency permits and work legally in the country. The agreement covers both the employment of Georgians in France and French citizens in Georgia.

Young Georgian specialists, as well as graduates of French educational institutions and their branches will be able to stay in the country for work experience and then return to Georgia (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **4. Georgia joins US, recognises opposition leader Guaido as interim President of Venezuela**

Georgian Foreign Ministry hopes that the political process in Venezuela will continue peacefully and the country's legitimate government will join the international community and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other nations. [Venezuela is one of the five countries which has recognised two occupied regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali as independent republics] (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **5. Georgia, International Criminal Court sign deal on enforcement of justice**

Georgia and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have signed an agreement today regarding the enforcement of justice.

The agreement refers to Georgia's involvement in the ICC justice enforcement system and says that Georgia is ready to receive certain individuals convicted by the international court in its prisons.

Based on the agreement Georgia has the right to discuss individual cases and only after make a decision whether to receive a convict.

The Georgian Justice Ministry says that as of now there is now necessity from the side of ICC to use Georgian prisons for enforcement of justice, as the number of convicts is not high (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **6. Georgian president sums up her 1st working visit abroad, says meetings in Brussels were positive**

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili has summed up her first official visit abroad, in Brussels, and stated that her meetings with top EU and NATO figures were "very positive."

"The EU and NATO are ready to take steps to further deepen cooperation with Georgia. Everyone has a very friendly attitude to our country," she stated today.

Zurbishvili said that she did not hear "any warnings" regarding the suspension of the EU-Georgia visa free agreement.

"However, this does not mean that we should stop working. This means that the Georgian people should have a very responsible attitude toward this issue," Zurbishvili said (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **7. PACE adopts resolution demanding Russia immediately cease erection of illegal barriers in Georgia**

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has unanimously adopted a resolution which urges Russia to immediately suspend the erection of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line in Georgia.

The resolution, which was initiated by the Georgian delegation, also expresses support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"PACE is concerned by the illegal actions of Russia in the Tskhinvali region, which aim to erect artificial barriers at the village of Atotsi, near the occupation line," the Georgian Parliament cites the PACE resolution as saying.

Georgian Vice Parliament Speaker Tamar Chugoshvili says that through the adoption of the resolution, PACE has once again expressed its attitude to the occupation of Georgian lands by Russia (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **8. UK Interior Minister thanks Georgian counterpart for aid in detaining British convict**

UK Interior Minister Sajid Javid phoned Georgian Interior Minister Giorgi Gakharia yesterday to thank him for the support in detaining British convict Jack Shepherd in Georgia this week .

Shepherd, who was convicted in absentia in the UK in July 2018 of manslaughter by gross negligence of a woman on their first date in December 2015, surrendered to Georgian police on Wednesday.

(*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **9. Georgia strengthening ties with Jordan**

Georgian Ambassador to Jordan Zaza Kandelaki met with the mayor of Amman Dr. Yousef Shawarbeh on 24 January to discuss the relationship of and future cooperation between the two countries.

Kandelaki informed the mayor of Amman about Georgia's investment and business opportunities and the close relations between the two capitals were underlined at the meeting.

Invited by Tbilisi City Hall, the Jordan delegation has attended the celebration of the annual Tbilisoba festival several times in the past years (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **10. ECHR statistics 2018: 99 applications received from Georgia**

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has released its statistics for 2018, which reads that there were 99 new applications allocated from Georgia. In 2017, 89 cases were lodged with the court.

For Georgia, 141 applications were declared inadmissible or struck out in 2018, and judgements were delivered in 15 cases", the report reads

The report says that for Georgia, 1,873 applications are still pending, a slight decrease from 1,924 applications in 2017.

"Georgia, as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan, are in the top-ten countries with the highest number of pending applications," the report reads.

For Georgia, 10 judgments were delivered in 2018, and in 9 of them a violation was found, comparable to 12 judgments delivered in 2017.

The highest number of violations was related to the right to liberty and security, the right to a fair trial and the right to protection against inhuman and degrading treatment, the report says (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **11. Georgian parliamentary delegation headed by the first Deputy Chair to visit US**

First Deputy-Chairperson of the Georgian Parliament Tamar Chugoshvili will visit US with the parliament delegation on January 28.

The Georgian delegation will meet the US congressmen including Gerald Connolly and Adam Kinzinger, Co-chairs of the Georgia Caucus of the US Congress.

Meetings with the President of the International Republican Institute (IRI) Den Twining and the President of the National Endowment for Democracy, Karl Gershman are also planned during the visit.

Georgian delegation will also meet with the management of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and USAID (*Agenda.ge, January 27, 2019*).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

### **12. Georgian police uncover online drug trafficking scheme, five drug dealers detained**

The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs has uncovered an online drug trafficking scheme and detained five drug dealers in the process. The crime is punishable by eight to 20 years in prison or life imprisonment.

The ministry says that so-called ‘drug-shops’ were set up on Telegram messenger and internet platform Matanga, through which the drug dealers would connect with their clients and agree upon drop spots (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

### **13. Head of Tskaltubo City Assembly detained for bribery**

Head of the Tskaltubo City Assembly in western Georgia Grigol Ivaneishvili has been detained by the Anti-Corruption Department of the Georgian State Security Service (SSS) for bribe-taking in especially large quantities. The crime is punishable by 11-15 years in prison.

The State Security Service says that the detainee took a bribe worth 250,000 GEL (\$93,000) from a foreign businessman who wanted to buy a former building of the Tskaltubo City Assembly and its land plot (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

### **14. Georgia adopts national strategy against terrorism**

The Georgian government has adopted a National Counterterrorism Strategy.

The strategy was developed by a permanent Interagency Commission comprised of different state authorities and chaired by the State Security Service.

“The strategy emphasises the threats and challenges Georgia is facing in terms of terrorism and extremism as well as the vision how to address them,” the state Security Service said adding that the document is especially oriented towards gathering information connected with terrorism, extremism and radicalism by the State entities (*Agenda.ge, January 26, 2019*).

### **15. Georgian government presents new policy to prevent air pollution**

Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze has presented the government’s plans to deal with air pollution in the country.

Protection of the environment’s air is an important part of our green policy. We take care of our environment, share responsibilities and have fresh air as a result. When we are talking about the environment, preventing air pollution is vitally important and certain steps need to be made in this regard,” PM Bakhtadze said. He named air pollution as one of the major challenges for urban areas in Georgia and worldwide (*Agenda.ge, January 26, 2019*).

### **16. Non-judge members of HCJ, UNM members leave the court reform working group meeting in protest**

The non-judge members of the High Council of Justice Nazi Janezashvili and Anna Dolidze, as well as the members of the United National Movement left the court reform working group meeting headed

by the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Irakli Kobakhidze.

Nazi Janezashvili said that it is not acceptable to discuss the procedures of the judge selection with those people who have been nominated by the High Council of Justice for the Supreme Court of Georgia and thus have a 'personal interests'.

"The HCJ and Murusidze have brought at the meeting people who are among the 10-people list including the judges Kadagidze, Tsiskaridze, Alania and others. It is not acceptable for me that people who agreed on being nominated before the parliament are now discussing the criteria and procedures for selection of the judges in the future. They are interested to once again being nominated on and that the group decided on procedures in a way to allow them be once again nominated before the parliament," she said and categorically demanded to create a different working format which will be 'fair'.

Anna Dolidze also said that she does not see any sense of her involvement in the discussions until it is not ensured that her positions are considered (*Agenda.ge, January 26, 2019*).

## ❖ Economy and Social Affairs

### **17. Davos 2019: Swiss chocolate producer Camille Bloch to enter Georgia**

Swiss chocolate producer Camille Bloch will enter the Georgian market, announces the government of Georgia. Georgia will be the first destination of Camille Bloch's foreign investment, says the government.

The decision was made at a meeting between Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Chief Executive Officer of Camille Bloch Daniel Bloch in Davos, Switzerland, at the World Economic Forum, which is taking place from 22-25 January.

The company plans to plant hazelnut plantations in Georgia and use Georgian-made ingredients for its famous trademark chocolate labelled Ragusa (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **18. 8 regional landfills worth €26 mln to be built in Georgia**

A new international standard landfill will be built in Georgia's third largest city of Kutaisi to reduce the effects of waste pollution and to introduce modern standards of waste management in the country. The Solid Waste Management Company of Georgia French-Slovenian consortium Sade Riko signed an agreement today for the construction of the first regional landfill in Georgia.

The construction of the Kutaisi landfill will be launched in March 2019 and will be completed in about a year.

In total eight regional landfills, worth €26 million will be built in the country by the end of 2023, announced the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia Maia Tskitishvili (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

### **19. Davos 2019: global energy company looks to develop wind and solar energy in Georgia**

Acciona, one of the world leaders of renewable energy, got interested in the development of wind and solar energy stations in Georgia, announces the government of Georgia. Acciona delegation will visit Georgia next month to see the existing opportunities.

The decision came after the meeting held between Chief Executive Officer of Acciona Rafael Mateo Ascala with Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze in Davos today.

Bakhtadze spoke with the investor on the investment climate and rich hydro resources of Georgia, low tax rates, leading position of the country in the Ease of Doing Business rankings (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

#### **20. Davos 2019: VPS Healthcare considers investing in Georgia**

VPS Healthcare, a multinational healthcare group headquartered at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, will study investment opportunities in Georgia, announces the government of Georgia. For this reason a group from the company will visit Georgia in about a month.

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze met VPS Healthcare's Chairman Shamsheer Vayalil in Davos today, where they talked about Georgia's investment opportunities (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

#### **21. Davos 2019: Georgian PM says partners assured of country's potential to become regional hub**

Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze has praised the results of his visit to Davos and the meetings he held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

“The 2019 WEF was fantastic for our country. Almost all international organisations and experts have praised Georgia's success and refer to the country as to an example of democratic transformation. I am happy that more partners are assured that Georgia has all the prerequisites to become an economic hub of the region. This is an important message we have delivered to the international community and powerful global companies and we received very positive feedback,” he said to Imedi TV while on air from Davos.

He said the Georgian delegation promoted a reforms package planned to be implemented from the second half of 2019 at meetings held in Davos (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **22. Netherland PM praises Georgia's democratic transformation and economic development**

Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze met with his Dutch colleague Mark Rutte in Davos, Switzerland to discuss Georgia's Euro-Atlantic agenda and the progress made by the country in this regard.

Mark Rutte praised steps made by the Georgian government towards the country's democratic transformation and economic development, the PM's office reported (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **23. Davos 2019: Georgia, Poland seek to further deepen political, economic relations**

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze met with the Prime Minister of Poland Mateusz Morawiecki at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The two prime ministers talked about ways of deepening political and economic relations between Georgia and Poland.

Bakhtadze and Morawiecki welcomed the cooperation between the two countries under the Tbilisi Forum, an ongoing partnership format, and pointed out that the results achieved so far allow for advancing the close political and economic relations between Georgia and Poland to a new level (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

#### **24. Davos 2019: Philips company Signify to introduce energy efficient lighting in Tbilisi**

Streets and monuments in Georgia's capital of Tbilisi will be illuminated with energy efficient lighting by Signify, the new company name of Philips Lighting.

Chief Executive Officer of Signify Eric Rondolat noted during his meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze that energy efficient lighting will be introduced primarily in Tbilisi but also in other cities of the country (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

## 25. 2019 Index of Economic Freedom: Georgia 16th in world and 8th in Europe

Georgia's economic freedom score is 75.9, making its economy the 16th freest in the 2019 Index of Economic Freedom by the Heritage Foundation.

Georgia now ranks 16th among 180 countries and 8th among 44 European countries, and its overall score is above regional and world averages.

Georgia's overall score has decreased by 0.3 point, with a sharp drop in judicial effectiveness and lower scores on government integrity and monetary freedom exceeding a big gain in financial freedom", read the survey (*Agenda.ge, January 25, 2019*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 26. Khachapuri cheese bread making granted cultural heritage status

The tradition of making khachapuri, one of Georgian cuisine's iconic dishes, has received the status of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Georgia.

A traditional cheese-filled bread produced in various parts of Georgia, khachapuri became the latest addition to the list this week, as the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation inscribed its production on the roster.


The addition came on the back of an initiative by Gunda LTD company and individuals N. Dolidze and L.Kokiashvili, whose proposal was reviewed by the agency before the decision (*Agenda.ge, January 24, 2019*).

## Additional Information

**January 28, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**


1 USD - 2.6573 GEL	1 GBP - 3.4744 GEL	100 RUB - 4.0221 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0123 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5033 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4197 GEL

**Monday**  
28 January




**4° 13°**

**Tuesday**  
29 January




**1° 12°**

**Wednesday**  
30 January




**0° 9°**

**Thursday**  
31 January



**0° 10°**

**Friday**  
1 February



**1° 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](#)**