

DAILY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Enguri Bridge closed for 40 days - leader of "Samegrelo Voice" accuses government of inaction

Enguri Bridge has been closed for 40 days already. Population remaining in the occupied territory demands assistance. The supply of food and medicines has already been exhausted in the region.

Leader of Samegrelo region held a special briefing on the Enguri Bridge. Tengiz Jgushia accuses government of cooperation with occupants and inaction. The leader of the movement urges the authorities to launch the international mechanisms for 30 thousand people living in captivity of the occupants in the occupied Abkhazia (Rustavi2, February 2, 2019).

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

2. Carl Hartzell about Dmitry Medoev's remark : We support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity

Carl Hartzell, Ambassador of the European Union to Georgia, has commented on the remarks of de-facto foreign minister of occupied Tskhinvali region Dmitry Medoev, who referred to Truso Gorge as South Ossetia.

"The EU's position on Georgia's occupied regions is unambiguous and clear. We support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and will continue to stand firm in this position," stated Carl Hartzell.

Dmitry Medoev, de-facto foreign minister of occupied Tskhinvali/South Ossetia region, said in his interview with German Neues Deutschland that "historic Eastern Ossetia (Truso, Kobi and Gudo Gorge) is under Georgia's control and this problem is becoming more and more difficult every year" (IPN.ge, January 31, 2019).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Georgian chamber of commerce opens in Guangzhou

A Georgian chamber of commerce has opened in Guangzhou, China as part of the One Belt, One Road initiative of the Chinese President Xi Jinping aiming to enhance regional connectivity.

With the support of the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Trade up to 20 Georgian producers will represent their wine, chacha, canned products, mineral water, honey, olives, lemonade, tea and traditional Georgian delights. Ambassador of Georgia to the Republic of China Archil Kalandia and local government officials have participated in the opening ceremony of the chamber of commerce (Agenda.ge, January 30, 2019).

4. ECHR: Russia must pay Georgia €10,000,000 for arrest, expulsion of Georgians in '06-'07

The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has announced its judgment today in the case of Georgia v. Russia, regarding the arrest, detention and collective expulsion of Georgian nationals from Russia in the autumn of 2006. The European Court of Human Rights held by sixteen votes to one that Russia has to pay Georgia 10,000,000 euros for non-pecuniary damage suffered by a group of at least 1,500 Georgian nationals," the court's press office says. The judgment reads Georgian nationals who were the victims of collective expulsion will receive EUR 2,000, and EUR 10,000 to EUR 15,000 will go to the victims of unlawful deprivation of liberty and inhuman and degrading conditions of detention (Agenda.ge, January 31, 2019).

5. Russian senator calls Strasbourg Court judgment "a political decision" contradicting the Russian Constitution

The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights is a political decision and presumably contradicts the Russian Constitution, - Andrei Klyshas, Chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the Federation Council stated. According to the Russian Senator, "Russia's legislation provides for a special mechanism, according to which, international decisions may not be enforced on the territory of Russia". "I would like to note that we have used this mechanism several times. After making detailed analysis of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, it will be possible to discuss Russia's position," he added (IPN.ge, February 1, 2019).

6. US Congressman: We want to see strong Georgia that will be able to resist Russia

We want to see strong Georgia that will be able to resist Russia, - **Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter** stated in an interview with the Voice of America. According to him, " Georgia is on the right path. Now it's time for America to show support and help Georgia. We are doing this in Congress, with a resolution in support of Georgia. We should help Georgia and other free countries fighting against Russia in every possible way," stated **Duncan Hunter** (IPN.ge, February 3, 2019)

7. Laura Linderman: If Georgia loses democracy, it will disappear from the agenda of many western countries, including the United States

Laura Linderman, a representative of the Atlantic Council, said in an interview with the Voice of America that if Georgia loses democracy, it will disappear from the agenda of many western countries, including the United States. Georgia is in a difficult neighborhood, in a difficult situation in terms of security, the economy is growing, but it is not so great compared to other countries. If Georgia loses its democracy, it will disappear from the agenda of many western countries, including the United States", - Laura Linderman stated. The above opinion is shared by the former Ambassador of the United States, John Herbst (IPN.ge, February 3, 2019).

8. Georgian Patriarchate concerned by position of Russian Orthodox Church official

The Georgian Orthodox Church sees signs of a 'threat' in an interview given by the Chairman of the Department of External Relations of the Russian Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion, says the statement of the Georgian Patriarchate. Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) said that 'it is unimaginable that the Georgian Orthodox Church leaders [would] recognise the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church'. Alfeyev did not directly answer a question regarding the Russian Patriarchate's potential response to the Georgian Church recognising the independence of the Ukrainian Church.

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani has not sent an official congratulatory letter to Kiev, explaining that this decision should be made within the Georgian Orthodox Church and it is unacceptable for the state to interfere in the Church's affairs. The Georgian Orthodox Church has not yet made a decision (Agenda.ge, February 2, 2019).

9. MFA: Ireland supports EU enlargement and welcomes Georgia -EU cooperation

Giorgi Zurabishvili, Georgia's Charge d'Affaires in Ireland, has held a meeting with State Minister for European Affairs Helen McEntee.

Ireland supports EU enlargement and welcomes closer cooperation between Georgia and the EU in this regard, in particular, the success achieved in terms of the implementation of the Association Agreement. According to the Ministry, the sides agreed to continue working on strengthening of inter-state ties between Georgia and Ireland, deepening economic and cultural cooperation, as well as planning and implementation of high-level visits (IPN.ge, February 2, 2019).

10. Case of archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze sent to Strasbourg Court

The case of archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze, who was found guilty in the so-called "cyanide case", has been sent to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Lawyer Davit Jandieri stated. The lawyer does not speak about the content of the complaint, but hopes that the Strasbourg Court will take into consideration the violation of human rights in this case (IPN.ge, February 2, 2019).

❖ Internal Affairs

11. Parliament to open Spring Session on Feb.5

Parliament of Georgia will open its Spring Session tomorrow, February 5. First time since 2012, the Parliament's plenary sitting will be held in Tbilisi. President Zurabishvili will deliver her first annual report regarding the situation in the country soon after the Spring Session is opened. In addition, according to new regulations, Chairman of Parliament will also deliver the report summing up his annual activities (IPN.ge, February 4, 2019).

12. Georgian PM on 'big victories', tragedies and challenges of the week

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze spoke about the positive and negative news of the week before the government meeting.

✓ 'Big Victories'

Speaking about the victories Bakhtadze mentioned the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights which demanded the payment of 10 million EUR from Russia to Georgia for the arrest and expulsion of Georgians in 2006. Bakhtadze also mentioned the third Association Agreement report released by the EU yesterday which mostly praises Georgia and says that the country fulfills its obligations on scheduled times. Bakhtadze cited the Global Finance rating, which said that Georgia is the safest country in the region.

✓ Tragedy of the week

Speaking about the fatalities of the week Bakhtadze spoke about the gas-related incident which claimed seven lives. Bakhtadze touched upon the detention of 16 individuals for the release of personal footage. Condemning the action Bakhtadze vowed that the government will do its utmost to ensure the protection of the personal space of each Georgian citizen. In the end Bakhtadze stated that school graduation exams will be removed both for 11th and 12th graders (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

13. "Georgia is the leader in the fight against corruption" - Mamuka Bakhtadze

"Georgia is the leader in the fight against corruption and Georgia is the leader regarding investment opportunities," the statement was made at the press conference at the government's administration. Mamuka Bakhtadze responded to the results of NDI survey, according to which most of the interviewed citizens believe that there is corruption in state structures. According to the PM, the government is actively fighting corruption" (Rystavi2, February 1, 2019).

14. I strongly condemn the violation of personal space - Mamuka Bakhtadze

Mamuka Bakhtadze, the Prime Minister of Georgia commented on spreading the video footage of private life. "I strongly condemn the violation of personal space and Any manifestation of this. This is the gravest crime that will be responded ", - stated Bakhtadze (Rustavu2, February 1, 2019).

15. Grigol Vashadze: They released secret recordings and are now trying to blame innocent people for it

Grigol Vashadze, former presidential candidate of the United Opposition, has responded to the detention of the supporters of the National Movement in connection with the spread of videos showing private life. "It is impossible to discuss the recent developments in the legal or political context. Ivanishvili's regime is busy with fighting against its own member with dirty methods. They released secret recordings and are now trying to blame innocent people for it. This is a sign of dirtiness and not strength. All offenders will soon be identified", Vashadze stated (IPN.ge, February 1, 2019).

16. Video footage showing Eka Beselia's private life - 16 persons detained

16 individuals have been detained regarding a release of Video footage showing Eka Beselia's private life. A Special briefing was held at the Ministry of Internal Affairs today. The offense envisages from 4 to 8 years of imprisonment. The investigation found that the detainees had been massively keeping and spreading the video recordings showing private life via social networks and mobile internet application,"- reads the statement (Rustavi2, February 1, 2019).

17. "Girchy" activists are among detainees on secret recordings

"This is selective justice," stated Zurab Japaridze, member of the "Girchy" political council, about detention 17 people on the case of distribution of personal life recordings. Mr. Japaridze came to the city court where the

preventive measure for the detainees were discussed. Among the detainees were "Girchy" activists. According to Zurab Japaridze, the main thing is to punish the person who uploaded the video and who had a political goal (Rustavi2, February 2, 2019).

18. I think it is dangerous that our citizens are in the hands of such judge - Beselia on Gvritishvili

Eka Beselia responds to the statement made by a Judge of the Supreme Council of Justice regarding the spread of recordings of personal life. Judge Dimitri Gvritishvili once again reiterated that Beselia herself is behind the spread of the footage. Eka Beselia says that Gvritishvili represents a crash of the judiciary system. "I think it's dangerous for our citizens to be in the hands of such judge. This is a reality which explains simply, what for do we fight," - Beselia said (Rustavi2, February 1, 2019).

19. "Unacceptable Form of Moral Terror" - Beselia Demands to Detect and Punish those, who ordered to spread footage

Many people seem to be involved in this crime - Eka Beselia asks to investigate who ordered to distribute footage of her personal life. According to Eka Beselia, the identification and detention of the person or persons who is an initiator of distributing the staff is the most important issue.. Beselia says that dissemination of personal information is inappropriate and it is psychological and moral terror. However she does not plan to stop fighting (Rustavi2, February 1, 2019)

20. Ruling Georgian Dream party names candidate for chair of Legal Affairs Committee

The ruling Georgian Dream party has decided to support the candidacy of **Anri Okhanashvili** as the Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee in the Georgian Parliament. Since the former Chair of the committee Eka Beselia left in December, Davit Matikashvili is serving as the acting Chairman (Agenda.ge, February 3, 2019).

21. Parliamentary majority members have a meeting with Bidzina Ivanishvili for four hours already

It has already been four hours that majority members have been holding a closed meeting with Bidzina Ivanishvili. Eka Beselia was also attending the meeting. According to the members of the ruling team the main topic of discussion was the criteria for selection of judges (Rustavi2, February 2, 2019).

22. The fight against state institutions and their dismantling - Opposition talks about the possible opening of the museum in Avlabari Residence

The Georgian National Museum of Culture will be opened in Avlabari Palace of Georgia. Members of the majority discussed the issue at the sitting in the party office, which was attended by Bidzina Ivanishvili. The final decision will be taken together with the special commission, which is specially designed to determine the future function of the Avlabari residence (Rustavi2, February 3, 2019).

23. Protest rally in Pankisi Gorge - Locals protest against construction of HPP

Protest rally is taking place in the Pankisi Gorge. The locals gathered in the area where the construction of the HPP is to be started. The company plans to construct a 110-kilowatt power transmission line in the Birkian-Jokolo-Duisi section, but works can not start due to the protests (Rustavi2, February 2, 2019).

24. "Outcome of the activity of the Owner of the Glass Palace " - Attorneys Speak about the Crisis in the Court System

Crisis in the judiciary and confrontation due to the lifetime appointment of the judges - the special meeting of lawyers is held to discuss these issues. Legal rights defenders talk about the problems of independence and transparency of the judiciary, which further weakens the confidence of the public. Lawyers at the special meeting will discuss the criteria for selecting judges. The initiative will be sent to the legislative body and NGOs (Rustavi2, February 3, 2019).

25. Government doubles funds allocated to support rural development

Residents of Georgian villages will receive twice as much funding as was previously allocated within the framework of a special government programme aimed at supporting rural development in Georgia. The amount allocated for the programme has been doubled to 40,000,000 GEL (approx. 15.063.643 USD/13.135.426 EUR). The decision was made because of the active involvement of the rural population and their needs, Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze stated (Agenda.ge, February 3, 2019).

26. Georgia's Energy Ombudsman stresses stricter gas regulations for consumer safety

Regulations on the provision of gas to Georgian consumers must be made stricter, says the Energy Ombudsman of Georgia Salome Vardiashvili. Deputy Economy Minister Natia Turnava also announced last month that regulations on the provision of gas to Georgian consumers will be more stringent (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

27. First agricultural drone to increase work efficiency in Georgian agriculture

The first agricultural drone has been registered in Georgia to aid in the aerial application of pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides, bringing new levels of efficiency and manageability to Georgian agriculture.

The drone is also capable of taking spectral images that allows for the analysis and monitoring of soil and plant structures (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

28. Anonymous call and evacuation in Tbilisi Public School # 147

The alarm and evacuation at the Tbilisi Public School # 147 - after the anonymous call in the educational institution the pupils were evacuated from the building.

The school director Irine Tsiklauri does not rule out that the phone call, which informed her about a bomb in the building was implemented by a minor (Rustavi2, February 1, 2019).

29. Demonstration in Telavi - Population protests high taxes on natural gas in January

The population of Telavi protests high taxes on natural gas in January. According to them, the gas rate is different from the last months and it reaches 100 GEL. The locals say that they can not pay such money (Rustavi2, February 2, 2019).

30. Tbilisi City Hall floats idea to install electric car chargers for free

Tbilisi residents owning electromobiles may soon enjoy free chargers in the vicinity of their homes.

This is the initiative Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze has declared. Installation will be free of charge (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

31. 69 133 illegally installed gas heaters cut off by KazTransGas-Tbilisi in 2018

KazTransGas-Tbilisi specialists detected and cut off 69 133 gas and water heaters installed by the customers themselves in a prohibited way in 2018. According to the KazTransGas-Tbilisi, owners of the apartments, where the devices were cut off, were warned and informed of possible hazards, but the company specialists could again detect prohibited devices during the repeated inspection (IPN.ge, February 3, 2019).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

32. Small Georgian businesses to benefit from new credit guarantee programme

Small and medium sized businesses in Georgia will have better access to finances thanks to a new credit guarantee programme that will be launch in the first quarter of 2019, Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze stated.

The credit guarantee programme will support small and medium sized businesses (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

33. Georgia's Kutaisi airport to introduce 6 new European destinations

Starting 1 August, Kutaisi International Airport will introduce six new European destinations, announces Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze. Bakhtadze stated that a \$100 million investment will be made in the Georgian economy "as a result of the deal". Hungarian low-cost airline Wizz Air will carry out flights from Georgia's Kutaisi International Airport to six European cities (Agenda.ge, February 1, 2019).

34. PM pledges implementation of large-scale infrastructural projects in Svaneti region

Large-scale infrastructural projects will be implemented in Svaneti in 2019-2020, - Prime Minister of Georgia Mamuka Bakhtadze said after visiting the Tetnuldi and Hatzvali alpine ski resorts. According to the Prime Minister, more than 100 million GEL will be spent on road construction (IPN.ge, February 4, 2019).

35. Early results : Georgia's GDP grows by 5.6 % y/y in December

The estimated real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in December 2018 amounted to 5.6 percent compared to the previous year, while the real GDP average growth amounted 4.8 percent for 2018 y/y.

As the National Statistics Office, Geostat, informs, in December of 2018, the estimated real growth, compared to the same period of the previous year, was posted in the following activities: Manufacturing, Construction, Hotels and restaurants, Real estate, renting and business activities.

According to Geostat, electricity, gas and water supply, transport and financial sectors suffered contraction during the mentioned period (January 31, 2019).

❖ Sports and Culture

36. Mariah Carey may perform in Georgia






American singer Mariah Carey may arrive in Georgia within the framework of the Check in Georgia project, - Giorgi Kobulia, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, stated. According to him, in case of successful completion of the negotiations, the singer will hold the first concert at the Black Sea Arena in May (IPN.ge, February 1, 2019).

Additional Information

February 4, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6554 GEL	1 GBP - 3.4677 GEL	100 RUB -4.0559 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0452 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5109 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4384 GEL

25 day forecast

Monday 4 February	Tuesday 5 February	Wednesday 6 February	Thursday 7 February	Friday 8 February
				
0° 9°	0° 9°	1° 11°	3° 13°	4° 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](#)**