

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

February 12-13, 2019

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region

1. **Russia launches military exercises, covering territories of Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia**

According to Russian Foreign Ministry Russia has launched military exercises which cover the Georgian occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), Crimea and Russian military bases in Armenia.

The exercises are being conducted in Volgograd, Rostov, Stavropol, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Ossetia, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Armenia; more than 7,000 soldiers are involved in the exercises (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

2. **Explosion in occupation line - Occupants allegedly exploded ammunition near village Ditsi**

Two explosions occurred in the occupation line. The occupants have exploded ammunition in uncontrolled territory of Georgia. According to the local media of so-called South Ossetia, the occupiers have maimed by mines.

According to them, the driver of the tractor found a mine in the vicinity of the village of Ditsi.

The occupants have warned the State Security Service about the blast through the hotline (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

❖ Abkhazia Region

3. **Occupying forces detain two Georgian citizens near Abkhazia region**

Occupying forces have detained two Georgian citizens for “illegally crossing the border” earlier today near the occupation line with the breakaway Abkhazia region, the Georgian State Security Service has confirmed.

Locals say that the individuals were looking for their horses when armed individuals detained them in the village of Ganmukhuri, western Georgia (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

4. **Occupation regime continues the ugly practice that involves illegal detention of people – Tsikhelashvili**

Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality responds to the kidnapping of two people from the village of Ganmukhuri. The minister confirms the information on kidnapping and states that the occupational regime continues to act in a usual manner. According to Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, the EU Monitoring Mission is informed about the incident and the hotline is already working (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

❖ Foreign Affairs

5. **Georgian, French Presidents to meet in France**

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili will pay a working visit to France on February 17-19. The President of Georgia will meet with President of the Republic of France Emmanuel Macron. On February 20-21, the President of Georgia will leave for Germany on a working visit (IPN.ge, February 12, 2019).

6. **Georgian Defence Minister participates in NATO ministerial, meets top NATO figures**

Georgian Defence Minister Levan Izoria is taking part in the NATO two-day foreign minister in Brussels, assembled to discuss pressing security issues, including Russia’s violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and to review NATO peace missions. On the sidelines of the ministerial Izoria met with the US Ambassador to NATO Kay

Bailey Hutchison. Izoria has met with his Lithuanian and Bulgarian counterparts in Brussels and thanked them for their support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the country's Euro-Atlantic goals. Bulgaria will be involved both in the NATO-Georgia 2019 exercise and the Agile Spirit 2019 drills (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

7. Three Georgians detained in Norway, including brother of MP Zardiashvili's wife

The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that three Georgian citizens had been detained in Norway, one of which is Grigol Abralava. According to the reports, Abralava is a brother of MP Vano Zardiashvili's wife. Grigol Abralava has been an employee of the Public Audit Institute of State Audit Office in recent years (IPN.ge, February 13, 2019).

❖ Internal Affairs

8. "It is misinformation and so called "Fake news" - Mamuka Bakhtadze speaks about possible presence of State Security employees in Liege

"It is misinformation and so called "fake news" from the beginning, "- responded the Prime Minister of Georgia to the question in connection with the presence of State Security employees at the meeting of Georgian Emigrants in the Belgian city of Liege. "It's misinformation and the so called fake news. It does not have any connection with the reality. I cannot even seriously comment on it," -Bakhtadze stated (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

9. Parliamentary minority met with the Venice Commission delegation

The parliamentary minority met with Venice Commission delegation. The main issues of the meeting were problems in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Prosecutor's Office. A murder on Khorava street was discussed as well.

- "We had a meeting with the legal experts of the Venice Commission who were interested in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the situation in the Prosecutor's Office. We talked about the deep problems that exist in these agencies," stated Sergi Kapanadze (Rustavi2, February 12, 2019).

10. Gov't opens community centre in the village of Udabno, at the Georgia-Azerbaijan border

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia has opened the 63th community centre in the village of Udabno, at the Georgia-Azerbaijan border, to make up to 200 public and private sector services available to the local population.

The Georgian government believes that the centre will play its positive role for tourism, as the village is next to the David Gareji monastery complex, one of the most attractive destinations for visitors.

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze attended the opening ceremony of the community centre (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

11. National Security Council is formed

The National Security Council of Georgia is to be created. The relevant draft law will be discussed at the session of the Defense and Security Committee. As it is known, the council will include the Prime Minister, Interior Minister, Defense, Foreign and Finance Ministers, Heads of the Department of Intelligence, as well as the Defense Secretary. Presumably, the Secretary of the National Security Council will be the Prime Minister (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

12. First conflict between Parliament and President

After the abolition of the Security Council, the government will begin to set up a new agency. There is no place for the President of Georgia at the National Security Council, which is subordinated to the Prime Minister.

It is not yet known who will take over the new agency, but it is clear that the president will not participate in work of one of the main structures. According to the president's administration the President cannot be a member of the new Security Council. However, the administration believes that since the President is the Commander-in-Chief, she should be able to exercise her rights constitutionally (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

13. "What are they doing?" - Gia Khukhashvili speaks about creation of the Security Council

Disruption of security system and incomprehensible change - experts evaluate the creation of a Security Council subordinated to the Prime Minister, which will not include the President, the Commander-in-Chief of the country. In their opinion such decisions are harmful to the country's security.

- "This lady has herself diminished her role, they are incomprehensible, what are they doing or what is the security council at all, they do not understand its function and do not properly understand it", says Gia Khukhashvili (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

14. Irakli Kobakhidze alleges Georgian Dream team is united

Our team is not in danger of being collapsed. We may make some decisions with regard to certain MPs if they act in their subjective interests, - Chairman of Parliament Irakli Kobakhidze stated. According to him, the team is united (IPN.ge, February 11, 2019).

15. Gov't allocates 20mln GEL for prevention of natural disasters

The Georgian government has approved the Natural Disaster Prevention Programme for which 20 million GEL will be allocated from the state budget. The funding of any one project must not exceed one million GEL. (Agenda.ge, February 12, 2019).

16. Scandalous letter of Father Giorgi Mamaladze - what the Deacon writes about the patriarch's family business

Giorgi Mamaladze's scandalous letter from the Matrosov prison might open a new front line in the Patriarchate. The contents of the letter are secret, but it is known that the appeal has 4 addressees and all of them are the clergy of high hierarchy. Among the addressees are the Patriarch Petra Tsaava, Archbishop Andrea Gvazava, Archbishop Dimitri, whose Diocese Archpriest Mamaladze belongs to and Archbishop David Alaverdeli. According to Tornike Mamaladze, brother of Deacon, part of the contents of the letter concerns ecclesiastical business. According to him, the message is about the Patriarch's family members. According to Mikheil Ramishvili, the lawyer of Archpriest, the message has caused great tension inside the Patriarchate (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019)

17. Polish Embassy in Georgia to operate as NATO-Georgia contact point

The Embassy of Poland will play the role of a contact point embassy between NATO and Georgia for two years until the end of 2020.

Ambassador of Poland to Georgia Mariusz Maszkiewicz has announced the project will significantly contribute strong support to Georgian integration in NATO. The contact point embassy will serve as a channel for spreading information on NATO's role and policy in general (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

18. Distribution of secret videos showing private life - Zaal Latakia, former member of Special Forces detained

A search operation is up to start in Zugdidi, in the house of Zaal Latakia, the former member of Special Forces. At this time it is known that Zaal Latakia, a former military and combat activist, is engaged in the spread of video, showing Eka Beselia's private life. Zaal Latakia was detained in Batumi (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

19. Open War in "Georgian Dream" - Vano Zardiashvili criticizes Eka Beselia's qualifications and lack of knowledge of constitution

The open war in the Georgian Dream returns to the corridors of the Parliament. Eka Beselia's proposal to suspend judges lifetime appointment has provoked a new conflict. Scandalous MP Vano Zardiashvili appeared in the scene, who told the lawyer Beselia that she did not know the constitution. MP from Irakli Kobakhidze's team compared the former chairperson of the legal committee with a freshman student. After a long silence, Vano Zardiashvili appeared on his own wish in front of cameras only with one purpose - to criticize Eka Beselia.

Eka Beselia's response was even more acute. According to her Vano Zardiashvili does not have a lawyer's class or qualification (Rustavi2, February 11, 2019).

20. Mikhail Batiashvili should resign - Opposition speaks of need for changes in education system

The United Opposition demands timely investigation of Ia Kerzaia's case. According to the members of the movement, the education system is politicized, which makes the basis for fundamental changes. Opposition demands resignation of the Minister of Education Mikheil Batiashvili. Nino Kvitashvili, member of the "United National Movement" also urges the corresponding agencies to immediately investigate the case. "The minister did not present any evidence that would strengthen his opinion. Based on revealed circumstances and evidence we demand; Firstly, Mikheil Batiashvili resignation from his position. The relevant agencies should immediately investigate the case and carry out the activities envisaged by the law," -Kvitashvili stated (Rustavi2, February 11, 2019).

21. Police in Georgia detain citizen of Ukraine for drug crime

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has detained a citizen of Ukraine O.S. for illegal purchase and keeping of especially large amount of narcotic drugs. According to MIA, police seized 31 packages of narcotic drug during a personal search of the detainee. An investigation has been launched (IPN.ge, February 12, 2019).

22. Davit Kirkitadze: Today, the task of the government is to send Davit Kirkitadze to prison

Today, the task of the government is to send Davit Kirkitadze to prison, - Davit Kirkitadze, member of the "United National Movement" party, stated at trial. He noted that his case is political and he is not going to stop fighting. The UNM member expressed gratitude to all his friends and politicians for support. The Gurjaani District Court remanded Davit Kirkitadze in custody on Tuesday. The defence offered GEL 5000 bail as an alternative to imprisonment for Davit Kikritadze, however, according to the prosecutor, they do not consider it appropriate to use less severe preventive measure against him (IPN.ge, February 12, 2019).

23. The EU closely monitors the processes around the Court-EU ambassador

The EU closely monitors the processes around the Court - the EU Ambassador recently made this statement. Carl Hartzell says that the selection process should be transparent so that there are no question marks. The Ambassador also evaluated Eka Beselia's initiative and said that it was clear for him why this issue was on the agenda.

"The EU together with other organizations is closely following the reform. We believe that the rules and criteria, which should be developed for the process of the election of judges should be transparent and reliable. It is necessary to have trust in the Georgian justice not only for Georgians, but also for foreign investors as well. As for the initiative of Beselia, I understand why she presented this initiative. However, I am not authorized to assess it. This is an issue that should be resolved in accordance with local legislation and the Constitution," - said Carl Hartzell (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

24. Marneuli Mayor Temur Abazov appeals to Sakrebulo to lift his authority

Marneuli mayor Temur Abazov will appeal to the Sakrebulo with a request for resignation. According to Abazov, in parallel to the court proceedings, he does not want to hold the position and will be waiting for the decision without this status. Sakrebulo will discuss the lifting of power in a few days.

- Temur Abazov was detained by the police several months ago for humiliating and inhuman treatment. According to the case materials Abazov forced a Marneuli residents to wash his face with his own urine. This process was filmed by video cameras and placed in social networks. After the journalists learned about it, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had to arrest Marneuli Mayor. He was released after the elections (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

25. Georgia among 19 locations not to be missed in 2019

The Contemporary Class travel magazine has put Georgia on the list of destinations that should be visited in 2019. There are 19 countries on the list in total. Contemporary Class is a British online magazine about sharing travel experiences, destinations, people to meet, food and helpful pieces of advice (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

26. Tourists spent \$164 million in Georgia last month

Foreign tourists spent \$164.5 million in Georgia last month, which is five times more than the income received in the same month of the last year, the Georgian National Tourism Administration of the Ministry of Economy of Georgia has reported (Agenda.ge, February 12, 2019).

❖ Sports and Culture

27. "Presidium is fraudulent" - Secretary General of Tbilisi Wrestling Federation makes scandalous statement

The Secretary General of Tbilisi Wrestling Federation makes a scandalous announcement. Gocha Chorgoliani says that the presidium is unqualified today and it is staffed by Gega Gegeshidze's colleagues. According to him, this fact is a bigger violation than what happened in the Sports Palace on January 11. "There is no presidium. I state openly that the presidium is fraudulent. I can show you the documents. 10 members of the Presidium were left out. For me it is a bigger crime than what happened in the sports palace," Gocha Chorgoliani stated (Rustavi2, February 13, 2019).

28. Georgian-French film school to open for hundreds of international students

Hundreds of aspiring filmmakers, producers and promoters will be able to develop their talent at a brand-new international cinema school in Georgia, set to open next year in a project by the acclaimed Babluani family of cinema professionals. The group is aiming to capitalise on the international success of Georgian film scene over the recent years and provide opportunities for emerging talent in the country with the school 9Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

29. Georgians 'conquer' International Judo Federation world ranking

The International Judo Federation (IJF) has published an upgraded world ranking list of senior male judokas. Seven out of the top ten are of Georgian origin.

Five of them – Varlam Liparteliani, Guram Tushishvili, Vazha Margvelashvili, Amiran Papinashvili and Lasha Shavdatuashvili – compete on behalf of Georgia while the other two represent Spain (Nikoloz Sherazadishvili) and Russia (Robert Mshvidobadze) (Agenda.ge, February 12, 2019).

30. Georgian wheelchair fencer Irma Khetsuriani wins gold in UAE

Georgian wheelchair fencer Irma Khetsuriani has won her fourteenth gold medal in Sharjah, UAE, where the first world cup of 2019 as part of the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS) World Games is underway. Georgian wheelchair fencer Irma Khetsuriani was named the best paralympic female athlete of 2018 as she won the Wheelchair Fencing World Cup five times (Agenda.ge, February 13, 2019).

Additional Information

February 14, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6438 GEL

1 GBP - 3.4060 GEL

100 RUB - 4.0208 GEL

1 EUR - 2.9917 GEL

1 TRY - 0.5022 GEL

100 JPY - 2.3885 GEL

25 day forecast

Thursday
14 February



2° 9°

Friday
15 February



2° 6°

Saturday
16 February



1° 10°

Sunday
17 February



2° 8°

Monday
18 February



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](#)**