

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

March 22-24

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Date: **March 25, 2019**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### 1. European delegations condemn occupation of Georgia at UN Human Rights Council

Occupation of Georgian territories by Russia was strictly condemned by European countries' delegations during the general debates held by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 22. Georgia's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations Victor Dolidze spoke about close cooperation between the UH High Commissioner's office and Georgia. He emphasised the severe human rights situations in occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) regions as well as the illegal detention and subsequent death of Georgian citizen Irakli Kvaratskhelia in Abkhazia (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### 2. UN Human Rights Council adopts resolution on Georgia

The United Nations Human Rights Council has adopted a resolution on cooperation with Georgia at its 40th session in Geneva yesterday. In the resolution the Human Rights Council reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. The Human Rights Council expresses "serious concern at the continuous process of installation of barbed wire fences and different artificial barriers along the administrative boundary line" in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) (*Agenda.ge, March 23, 2019*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 3. Georgian FM granted status of honored guest of Buenos Aires

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani has been granted the status of an honored guest of the city of Buenos Aires in Argentina. The city officials granted him the status late yesterday and stated that Argentina was one of the first nations to recognise the First Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1919 (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### 4. Georgia's Permanent Mission to Geneva co-organizes an event named Human Rights Abuses and Violations in Venezuela

The Permanent mission of Georgia to Geneva has organized the event named Human Rights Abuses and Violations in Venezuela with missions of the United States, Albania, Argentina and other countries. The invited speakers discussed Maduro's regime humanitarian crisis and repressions they underwent. Georgia's Permanent Representative Victor Dolidze stated Venezuela's crisis hit a concerning level, having caused huge humanitarian catastrophe (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### 5. Georgian, Armenian PMs hold yet another informal meeting

Georgian and Armenian Prime Ministers Mamuka Bakhtadze and Nikol Pashinyan met informally today in the village of Yenokavan in the Tavush province bordering Georgia.

Bakhtadze and Pashinyan discussed various issues of Georgian-Armenian relations and touched upon other topics of mutual interest as well, the Armenian PMs press office reported (*Agenda.ge, March 24, 2019*).

#### **6. FM Zalkaliani: Georgia is a top priority for the NATO political agenda**

"This visit is of great importance as the visit takes place ahead of the NATO anniversary ministerial and the whole week is extremely intense in the context of relations with NATO. The visit of the NATO Secretary General also coincides with the NATO exercise. It is also worth noting that this week we have a meeting of the NATO Military Committee. This week, I will have a separate meeting in Brussels, within the framework of the NATO-Georgia Council, which will be devoted to security issues of the Black Sea. Having such a loaded role on NATO agenda during the whole week shows that Georgia has a high priority on the NATO political agenda," Zalkaliani said (*lpn.ge, March 24, 2019*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **7. Public Defender says less people address her office for possible abuse by law enforcers**

Georgian Public Defender Nino Lomjaria says that less people addressed her office for help in 2018 regarding possible abuse by law enforcers.

However, Lomjaria says that existing cases, which may include abuse by law enforcers, remain uninvestigated.

"The investigation of such cases remain ineffective", Lomjaria said, and added that the State Inspector's Office, which will be tasked to investigate possible crimes by law enforcers, must be created in a timely manner (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

#### **8. National Food Agency seizes more than 1 tonne of harmful, expired meat**

The Georgian National Food Agency has seized more than one tonne of meat from different companies in Tbilisi, as they possessed either expired, harmful or unchecked meat.

The agency says that meat seized from Companies Dadu and Ina was a health hazard, while LTD Nikora [not related to food chain Nikora] possessed more than 240 kg of expired meat (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

#### **9. Georgian PM summoned by parliamentary opposition for 1st time to speak about crime**

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze spoke in parliament about the criminal situation in the country earlier today – this was demanded of him by the opposition. For the first time in the history of the Georgian parliament, the opposition MPs have the right to summon top officials to parliament and ask them questions on specific issues.

Bakhtadze stated that the opposition is trying to mislead people by claiming the crime rate "has catastrophically increased" and the government is "failing to ensure the safety" of its citizens and visitors (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

#### **10. State Audit Office detects low competition in tenders of Interior Ministry, ministry responds**

The State Audit Office of Georgia says that 43 per cent of tenders of the Ministry of Internal Affairs opened in 2017 ran without competition, as single companies were involved.

The office stated that the cause behind was either specific conditions [which could fit to only one company] or the lack of the products needed.

The State Audit Office made the purchase of SKODA cars by the ministry in 2017 [for driving exams] as an example and stated that the tender conditions listed could fit the brand only (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **11. New early warning system to ensure flight safety in Georgia**

An early warning system in the Black Sea port town of Poti has been installed, announces Georgian Air Navigation of the Ministry of Economy.

Georgian Air Navigation purchased meteorological radars, the total cost of which exceeded 3 million GEL (about \$1.12m/€0.99m), from the tender winner US company Enterprise Electronics Corporation (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **12. Interior Minister says cyber-attack on TBC Bank was identified and responded to before bank's appeal**

"When we received a letter from TBC Bank officials [founder of the BBank Mamuka Khazaradze] the room from where the attack was carried out had already been found and threats removed," Gakharia said, and added that when the investigation is over he will be able to provide more details (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **13. Giorgi Gakharia: I have not sent a letter**

"I have not sent a letter! - Interior Minister Giorgi Gakharia said on TV Pirveli talk show. "This person says that he sent this letter somewhere, he refuses to name the mediator. Do you know easy it is to testify like this, including against you?" Gakharia said. According to him, his name is related to a "fake letter" (*lpn.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **14. Mamuka Khazaradze calls on Interior Minister to prove in court that he did not send letter**

"I named the person from whom I received the letter. Who wrote it, who printed, who dictated – I do not have this information. Yesterday, I heard the information : "I have not sent the letter" and etc...When I tell something, I want to tell the things what happened to me. I do not have any other interests. God, save me from slandering anyone. I am neither politician nor an interested party, who wants some official post and is involved in intrigues... When you are the object of the interest, you have principles and someone slanders you, you must justify and defend yourself in court...If he wants this case to come to an end, he must prove in the court that he did not send it," Mamuka Khazaradze said in his interview with "Rustavi 2 " program "Forbes's Week" (*lpn.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **15. Former first lady Sandra Roelofs to run for Zugdidi Mayor**

Former first lady and wife of the third President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili Sandra Roelofs has announced plans to run in the by elections for Zugdidi mayor, in western Georgia.

She ran for Zugdidi MP in 2016. However, neither she nor the Georgian Dream ruling party candidate won in the first round of elections. She refused to run in the second round, claiming that the first round was fabricated (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **16. Guria's Bakhvi village opens plaque in memory of first Georgian female MP**

A memorial plaque named after one of the first Georgian female MPs Kristine (Chito) Sharashidze (1887-1973) has been unveiled in her home village of Bakhvi, in the Guria region of Georgia. The plaque was erected on the initiative of the Centers for Civic Engagement and EWMI Access.

Besides being a member of the Presidium of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia Kristine Sharashidze was a teacher and lecturer and worked in the National Institute of Manuscripts (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **17. Beka Odisharia elected as Chairman of Parliament's Committee on Diaspora Issues**

Parliament has elected Beka Odisharia as a Chairman of Parliament's Committee on Diaspora Issues. His candidacy was nominated by the parliamentary majority. 97 lawmakers voted in favor of Beka Odisharia. Zviad Kvachantiradze was a Chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Diaspora Issues, but the ruling team made the decision to dismiss MP Kvachantiradze after he left the majority. Eventually, Zviad Kvachantiradze resigned of his own accord (*lpn.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **18. Grigol Vashadze elected as UNM chairman**

Grigol Vashadze was elected as a chairman of the United National Movement at the congress of the party on Sunday. Vashadze was the only candidate nominated to the post.

The delegates of the congress voted for his candidacy using electronic system. This post was vacant after Mikheil Saakashvili lost the Georgian citizenship.

The eighth congress of the United National Movement underwent at the hotel "Biltmore". The meeting was attended by members and supporters of the "United National Movement", "United Opposition". Members of other opposition parties are also attending the congress (*lpn.ge, March 24, 2019*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **19. New 15 mln GEL factory to produce Aptos face and body lifting thread in Tbilisi**

A new factory will be built in Georgia's capital of Tbilisi that will produce Aptos face and body lifting thread, announces the Ministry of Economy of Georgia.

A total of 15 million GEL (about \$5.59m/€4.91) will be invested in the factory that will be built within the state programme 'Produce in Georgia'. The factory will become operational in December 2020 and will produce 300,000 units annually (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **20. Green Lake infrastructure to be renovated, better organised**

The infrastructure around Green Lake in Khulo, Adjara Region of Georgia will be renovated and better organised this year.

The lake's dock, roads, administrative buildings and garden-houses will all be renovated during the project. The project also includes the installation of toilets, parking places and an irrigation system.

The work will be completed by November 1. Green Lake is located 2058 meters above sea level (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

### **21. Anaklia Development Consortium responds to claim of investors' '8 demands'**

The Anaklia Development Consortium has published a statement responding to yesterday's speech of the Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development Maya Tskitishvili in parliament, where she said that investors in the project have eight demands before moving forward.

Anaklia Development Consortium stated that Tskitishvili made many "false, biased and distorted statements, which harms this project and its construction process, as well as the international investors, willing to take part in the construction of the port, who took risks and made solid investments just four kilometers away from the conflict zone, near Abkhazia" (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

**22. Khazaradze: If we lose time, Anaklia project will either be delayed for a few years or will not be implemented at all**

"It is regrettable, that I have met just once with the Minister of Infrastructure regarding this project. No other meeting has been held with my participation. On the contrary, the state should be keen to implement this project," said Khazaradze adding that someone wants to "baptism" as if the Anaklia Port is Mamuka Khazaradze's project.

"This is not Mamuka Khazaradze's project. This is the project of each of us. If we lose this time, I'm telling you directly that this project will either be delayed for a few years or will not be implemented at all," Mamuka Khazaradze said.

The co-founder of the Anaklia Development Consortium explains that if the Anaklia port project is delayed "based on the calculus that a new tender will be announced or the government will invest 600 million, the country will lose the project." (*lpn.ge, March 22, 2019*).

**23. Finance Expert: We Should not Expect FDI to Grow with Current Management Model**

Financier Giga Bedineishvili believes that having the current management model, Georgia should not expect an increase in foreign investment.

Bedineishvili speaks about unfavorable investment climate and pouring money in the Georgian economy has become risky for both foreign and Georgian investors.

"We should not expect FDI to increase with the management model we have, on the contrary, foreign investments always decrease due to unfavorable and non-transparent investment environment. Make money in the Georgian economy is a risk for foreigners and even Georgians," he says (*CBW.GE, March 22, 2019*).

**24. Memorandum of Cooperation Signed between Social Service Agency and Liberty Bank**

Tamaz Modebadze, director of the Social Service Agency and Levan Tkheldidze, deputy director general of Liberty signed a memorandum on cooperation.

Liberty continues to cooperate with Social Service Agency within the framework of Social Responsibility Program in 2019. According to the Memorandum, the Bank will fully pay the cost of electricity and natural gas consumed by the 2 small family type houses located on the territory of Georgia, 6 shelter for homeless children and 6 specially equipped family type house of children with deep disabilities.

This memorandum represents the best example of cooperation between the private sector and the state agency. Liberty Social Service Agency is a distinguished partner and has been paying for the utility expenses of small households and homeless children in the country for the fourth year already (*CBW.GE, March 22, 2019*).

**25. PM: We fully support the Anaklia Consortium**

According to the Prime Minister, Georgia will definitely have a deep-water port.

"Georgia has a unique geographical location. It is an integral part of our economic strategy to turn Georgia into a regional hub, which includes all dimensions and of course Georgia will have a deep-

water port. We have largely contributed to the fact that our European and US partners are very interested in this port," Bakhtadze said.

The Prime Minister also emphasized the strategic role of the Black Sea and noted that specific steps should be taken for strengthening security in the Black Sea region.

"The Black Sea is one of the main priorities of NATO today and we welcome it. Everybody understands that Georgia has a unique role in the Black Sea security concept, so we have joint plans with NATO to ensure that security in the Black Sea region is sustainable and I think this will become more obvious in the coming years," Mamuka said (*lpn.ge, March 25, 2019*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 26. The Grand Tour: popular TV series showcases Georgia

Viewers of The Grand Tour, an internationally popular motoring TV series, will see its star presenters Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond traverse across Georgia in the show's latest episode released today.

Episode 11 of the ongoing third season shows the trio cover over a thousand kilometres between the Black and Caspian seas, travelling in three high-performance grand touring-class cars.

They drive "across motorways, rural roads and beautiful cities staging many challenges along their journey" featuring Georgia and Azerbaijan.

The episode shows visit of the hosts to the Occupation Line and describing the life of locals behind the ABL (*Agenda.ge, March 22, 2019*).

## Additional Information

**February 18, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.6821 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5254 GEL	100 RUB -4.1751 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0327 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4830 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4277 GEL

<b>Monday</b> 25 March	<b>Tuesday</b> 26 March	<b>Wednesday</b> 27 March	<b>Thursday</b> 28 March	<b>Friday</b> 29 March
				
2° 10°	1° 8°	5° 16°	5° 12°	5° 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](#)**