

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 15-17

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Date: **April 18, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

1. Ambassadors accredited to arrived at occupation line in Khurvaleti

Ambassadors accredited to the United Nations today arrived at the occupation line in Khurvaleti village. Permanent representatives of the Federal Republic of Finland, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Marshall Islands, Kingdom of Eswatini and the Federated States of Micronesia viewed the site where wire fences are installed. Ambassadors also visited IDP settlement in Tserovani (1TV.ge, April 15, 2019).

2. PM : We have humanitarian disaster in the occupied territories

We have a humanitarian disaster in the occupied territories, Georgia's PM Mamuka Bakhtadze stated at a joint press conference with his Romanian counterpart Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă. The Prime Minister of Georgia expressed gratitude to Romania for its greatest contribution to the EUMM (IPN.ge, April 15, 2019).

3. University applicants living in occupied regions to benefit from preparatory courses, easier admission process

University applicants living in the occupied regions of Georgia can now benefit from a university preparatory course the government has launched. The opening ceremony of the course was held at Tbilisi State University. Tbilisi and Zugdidi state universities will conduct the preparatory course. The educational programme will fully finance the university applicants. They will also be provided with accommodation. They will also receive scholarship while attending the courses (Agenda.ge, April 17, 2019).

❖ Foreign Affairs

4. Israeli Embassy addresses Georgian citizens, who intend to attend Holy Fire Ceremony

The Embassy of Israel to Georgia has released a statement addressing the citizens of Georgia, who intend to attend the celebration of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem. According to the statement, this year the Holy Fire Ceremony will take place on 27 April, in the Christ Church in the Old City of Jerusalem and thousands of Eastern Orthodox pilgrims and official delegations from all over the world attend the Holy Fire Ceremony (IPN.ge, April 15, 2019).

5. Mamuka Bakhtadze: Our thoughts remain with Paris and France during this difficult time

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze has expressed concern over the fire in the medieval cathedral of Notre-Dame. "Shocked and saddened by the scope of devastation from Notre-Dame's catastrophic fire. Our thoughts remain with Paris and France during this difficult time", Mamuka Bakhtadze tweeted (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

6. Catholicos Patriarch – Fire destroyed the beauty not only of France but of whole Europe

Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II sent letters to President of France Emmanuel Macron and Pope Francis and expressed sorrow over the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris (1TV.ge, April 16, 2019).

7. President's spokesperson: After the French government determines what kind of assistance it needs, it is possible to think about how Georgia can help France

According to president's administration, after the French government determines what kind of assistance it needs, it is possible to think about how Georgia can help France. President Salome Zourabichvili noted that the Georgian people stand beside the French people in this difficult time (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

8. Georgian and Bulgarian Prime Ministers meet in Sofia

Georgia and Bulgaria have a long history of traditionally tight and friendly relations – Mamuka Bakhtadze, Georgian Prime Minister said after the meeting with his Bulgarian colleague Boyko Metodiev Borisov in Sofia, Bulgaria.

- According to PM, Petritsoni Monastery of the 11th century was a clear symbol of cultural and historic ties between Georgia and Bulgaria. Georgian PM said that there was a vast potential to expand trade and economic cooperation. He claimed that Georgia and Bulgaria were linked geographically. Bakhtadze said that the sides agreed to launch a unique project that envisages creation of a digital corridor that will link Bulgaria with Georgia and connect the east with the west (1TV.ge, April 16, 2019).

9. Church service held in Georgian language at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Minsk

The church service was held in the Georgian language at St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Minsk, Belarus. The church service, performed by Father Maxim, was organized by the Georgian Embassy in Belarus with support of the Belarusian Orthodox Church.

According to Foreign Ministry, Georgian Ambassador Plenipotentiary in Belarus Valeri Kvaratskhelia addressed representatives of the Georgian Diaspora and summoned them for unity (1TV.ge, April 16, 2019).

10. Creating conditions for a Georgian citizen's illegal stay abroad to become punishable

With the third reading, the Georgian parliament today approved changes proposed to be made into the Criminal Code of Georgia regarding illegal migration. Based on the changes, creating conditions for a Georgian citizen's illegal stay abroad will become punishable by law. The 78 MPs voted for the draft-project, 0 – against.

According to the draft-bill, creation of conditions or organizing the illegal stay of a Georgian citizen in a foreign country with purpose of gaining financial or material benefit will be punished with prison term from 2 to 4 years (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

❖ Internal Affairs

11. Georgian President meeting with President of Cyprus at State Ceremonies Palace

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili is meeting with President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades at Avlabari State Ceremonies Palace. This is the first visit of President of Cyprus to Georgia.

- The Cypriot governmental delegation includes President's Spokesman Prodromos Prodromou, Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides, Ambassador Plenipotentiary of Cyprus to Georgia, Deputy Head of President's Diplomatic Service.

Bilateral relations, investments and trade-related issues will be discussed. Strengthening ties of Georgia with the European Union will be also considered within the framework of the visit (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

12. President of Georgia - Cyprus recognizes Georgia as a safe country

Cyprus recognizes Georgia as a safe country and this is a very important fact – Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili said during a joint briefing after the meeting with President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades at Avlabari State Ceremonies Palace.

- ✓ "This is welcoming that more Europe in Georgia and more Georgia in Europe is shared by Cyprus, as one of the main partners to Georgia in the European Union," Zurbishvili stated.
- This is the first visit of President of Cyprus to Georgia. Within the frameworks of the official visit, the President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades and his spouse Andri Anastasiades will meet Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II.

The Georgia-Cyprus business forum is also scheduled to take place and the Presidents of the two countries, along with business representatives, will attend it (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

13. President Zurbishvili posthumously awards Cypriot philanthropist

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili has awarded the late Cypriot businessman Photos Photiades with the Presidential Order of Excellence. President Zurbishvili said Photiades was a "great Cypriot friend", who supported Georgia and helped launch the strong ties that led to today's visit of the Cypriot President Nicos

Anastasiades. Photos Photiades, a prominent businessman, died at the age of 98 last year (Agenda.ge, April 17, 2019).

14. PM meets with President of Jordanian Senate

Bilateral investment projects, trade relations and cooperation in tourism have been discussed at the meeting between Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, and Faisal Al-Fayez, President of the Senate from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The sides focused on the successful reforms implemented in Georgia. Discussions were also held over current challenges facing the region, situation in the occupied territories of Georgia and peaceful initiatives of the Government of Georgia (IPN.ge, April 17, 2019).

15. Sisters from Saudi Arabia seek asylum and protection in Georgia

Two sisters from Saudi Arabia released a video saying that they have arrived in Georgia to seek asylum. 28-year-old Maha and 25-year-old Vafa Al-Subaia claim they need protection. According to the young women, they have fled from their family where they were oppressed. (IPN.ge, April 17, 2019).

16. Georgia initiates to advance relations with Romania

Georgia proposes to advance relations with Romania to a strategic level, Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze stated during the meeting with his Romanian counterpart, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă. The Prime Ministers underlined Georgia's progress on the path to European and Euro-Atlantic integration and the importance of Black Sea security for ensuring common Euro-Atlantic security. The conversation also touched on regional challenges and the state of affairs in Georgia's occupied territories.

- ✓ After the meeting, the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation between Georgia and Romania was signed by Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani and Romanian Minister of Culture and National Identity Valer-Daniel Breaz (IPN.ge, April 15, 2019).

17. CEC defines sequence numbers of electoral subjects for May 19 elections

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Georgia defined the sequence numbers of electoral subjects registered for the May 19, 2019 parliamentary by-elections, Sakrebulo by-elections and extraordinary mayoral elections. According to the current information, 18 NGOs, 5 media organizations and 3 international organizations will observe the parliamentary by-elections, Sakrebulo by-elections and extraordinary mayoral elections (IPN.ge, April 15, 2019).

18. Ombudsman to deliver report to Parliament on April 18

Public Defender of Georgia Nino Lomjaria will report before the lawmakers on April 18. The Ombudsman will talk about the draft law on the criteria of selection and appointment of the Supreme Court judges (IPN.ge, April 15, 2019).

19. Parliament's hall of plenary sessions named after first President Zviad Gamsakhurdia

The Parliament's hall of plenary sessions has been named after first President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The Parliament's Bureau considered the proposal of Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia and unanimously supported it (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

20. Ministry of Internal Affairs installs crashed cars in the capital and regions as part of road safety campaign

The installation of crashed cars in the capital and regions was carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, - Interior Minister Giorgi Gakharia stated. According to Minister Gakharia, the aim of the campaign was to bring the public out of the comfort zone so that they could realistically assess the challenges related to road safety (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

21. Irakli Kobakhidze: Bipartisan support from Congress means that relationships between the two countries is reliable

Bipartisan support from Congress means that relationship between the two countries is reliable and future-oriented, - Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairman of the Parliament, stated after meeting with members of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP), a bipartisan commission of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Chairman of the Parliament talked about the close partnership between the two countries. The Chairman of the Parliament emphasized the spheres of cooperation in the region and expressed hope that the free trade between the two countries would move to a new level (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

22. Salome Samadashvili: Bidzina Ivanishvili has launched a crusade against NGOs

According to Salome Samadashvili, a member of the National Movement, Bidzina Ivanishvili has launched a crusade against NGOs.

- ✓ "Mr Ivanishvili says on TV that certain leaders of the civil society are unacceptable to him and this is accompanied by an orchestrated attacks on these people on the Internet. When coordinated trolls attack you, it is equivalent to a physical attack. However, the government does not even investigate physical assaults and of course, we do not have an expectation that they will investigate the Internet attacks or the threat letters," – stated Samadashvili.

She addressed Vice-Speaker of the Parliament Tamar Chugoshvili to express her opinion about the attacks against her former colleagues. Tamar Chugoshvili called Samadashvili's allegations a lie and misinformation (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019)

23. Davit Usupashvili says Bidzina Ivansihvili accused him of ruining the court

According to Davit Usupashvili, leader of the Movement for Construction, there was a conflict between him and Bidzina Ivanishvili in December 2015, when Levan Murusidze was appointed for a new term. As Davit Usupashvili stated, Bidzina Ivanishvili told him that the court was being ruined by him.

- "I called Bidzina personally and told him that the abovementioned was unacceptable, that it was against their agreement and that it would put the judicial system in a very bad situation. It was the day when Giorgi Kvirikashvili's new government was approved in Kutaisi. Ivanishvili told me that I was ruining the court and I was undermining his authority", Usupashvili stated (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

24. Malkhaz Machalikashvili demands that parliament timely start consideration of creation of fact-finding commission into his son's death

Malkhaz Machalikashvili, father of Temirlan Machalikashvili who was killed in the special operation, has arrived at the parliament and categorically demands that the parliament timely start consideration of the opposition's initiative, which envisages creation of a fact-finding commission. According to Machalikashvili, the government should answer a question of why his son, Temirlan Machalikashvili, was killed (IPN.ge, April 16, 2019).

25. Meeting at Parliament over recommendations of Venice Commission

Chairman of Parliament Irakli Kobakhidze met with representatives of non-governmental organizations and Diplomatic Corps to discuss the recommendations provided by Venice Commission, an Advisory Board of the Council of Europe about the draft-project for selection of judicial candidates for Supreme Court of Georgia. The Venice Commission published the recommendations on April 16. According to one of the recommendations of the Venice Commission, conducting secret ballots in the High Council of Justice should be abolished.

- According to Kobakhidze, the ruling team is ready to take the recommendations into consideration (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

26. Taxi drivers owning cars with right-side steering wheel to continue working until 2021

The taxi drivers who have cars with the right-side steering wheel will be able to continue working in "B Category" until January 1, 2021 – Kakha Kaladze, Tbilisi Mayor reported during the city governmental sitting. According to Kaladze, the decision was made after the meeting with the initiative group of taxi drivers, who protest against some of the new regulations about taxi service in Tbilisi (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

27. Tsotne Ebralidze appointed as GCF Executive Director

Tsotne Ebralidze has been appointed as the Executive Director of Georgian Co-investment Fund, replacing Giorgi Bachiashvili.

In 2013, a group of Georgian and International investors established a private investment fund in Georgia "Georgian Co-Investment Fund". GCF has several priority sectors, including tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, logistics and hydro energy (1TV.ge, April 17, 2019).

❖ Sports and Culture

28. Georgia's U18 rugby team defeats Russia, prepares for Rugby Europe championship final

Georgia's Under 18 rugby team has defeated Russia in the semifinal of U18 European Championship in the Russian city of Kaliningrad. The young Georgian 'Lelos' handed a defeat to Russia with the score of 64 to 10 (Agenda.ge, April 17, 2019).

29. Experts and family members are uncertain that painting posted on eBay sale belongs to Lado Gudiashvili

Family members of prominent Georgian painter Lado Gudiashvili say that they have never seen the painting "Theatrical traditional folks festival of Georgia" which is posted on the Internet auction eBay for sale. The technical analysis should be conducted, as the stylistic inspection is insufficient for determining the authenticity of the work.






- ✓ A painting by Lado Gudiashvili "Theatrical traditional folks festival of Georgia" is sold on eBay for \$ 120,000. (1TV.ge, April 15, 2019).








Additional Information

April 18, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.6931 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5137 GEL	100 RUB - 4.2150 GEL
1 EUR - 3.0456 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4684 GEL	100 JPY - 2.4041 GEL

25 day forecast

Thursday 18 April	Friday 19 April	Saturday 20 April	Sunday 21 April	Monday 22 April
				
5° 14°	6° 10°	5° 9°	5° 10°	6° 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](#)**