

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

June 17-19

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### 1. **40 graves to be exhumed in occupied Abkhazia to identify victims of armed conflict of 1992-93**

Forty graves will be exhumed in Georgia's occupied region of Abkhazia in the west of the country to take DNA samples and to try to identify the individuals buried there, reports the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

If the remains are identified, they will be handed over to their families. More than 26 years will have passed since the war. ICRC experts plan to begin work on June 19 and will exhume more than 40 gravesites by September.

An agreement was reached with the ICRC to begin exhuming bodies in order to provide answers for the families of missing people in 2010 (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

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

#### 2. **President Salome Zurbishvili marks traditional Georgian-Ossetian holiday near occupation line**

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili has visited the village of Gremiskhevi to celebrate the traditional Georgian-Ossetian holiday 'Tijroba' with local residents.

President Zurbishvili assessed the separation of the Georgian and Ossetian population as an "enormous crime." (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*)

#### 3. **Germany condemns co-called parliamentary elections in Georgia's occupied Tskhinvali**

Germany has condemned the so-called parliamentary elections conducted on June 9 in Georgia's occupied region of Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), the Georgian Foreign Ministry reports.

"The results of the so-called elections are illegitimate. We fully share the position of the European Union in this regard. Germany reaffirms its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity," the Georgian Foreign Ministry cited the spokesperson of the German Foreign Ministry by saying (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

#### 4. **Azerbaijani activist arrested in Georgia**

The Georgian Interior Ministry arrested Azerbaijani national and human rights activist Avtandil Mammadov today and reported he was wanted by the Azerbaijani police.

Mammadov, born in 1983 was detained on charges of fraud. He was arrested in Marneuli, in the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia.

Mammadov was charged on May 17, 2017 in Azerbaijan for repeated fraud and was sentenced to imprisonment in absentia on May 24, 2018.

To note, Mammadov lived in Georgia for the past several months with his family and asked to be provided with asylum but Georgian authorities rejected the request (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

#### **5. Ambassador of Ukraine leaves the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy in protest as Russian MP addresses audience**

The Ambassador of Ukraine to Georgia Ihor Dolhov temporarily left the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy in protest when the member of the Russian parliament Sergei Gavrilov was addressing the audience in Tbilisi.

Dolhov later told the journalists that he refused to listen to the Russian MP as the Russian Federation continues to occupy Ukraine and Georgia.

Gavrilov is the President of the General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy, which is held in Tbilisi on June 19-23 (*Agenda.ge, June 19, 2019*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **6. Interior Ministry launches information campaign against child marriage**

The Georgian Interior Ministry has launched an information campaign against child marriage.

The presentation of the campaign was held at Rooms Hotel today, where Deputy Interior Minister Natia Mezvrishvili called on the public to immediately inform police of cases of early marriage.

"We have enough resources to act in time and save minors," Mezvrishvili said. She highlighted the importance of education stating that minors should not be deprived of the right (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

#### **7. Investigation continues into 'illegal seizure' of Rustavi 2 channel as limitation period ends**

The Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office says that the investigation into the possibly illegal seizure of the Rustavi 2 private broadcaster under the United National Movement leadership in 2004 continues, despite the 15-year limitation period of the case expired on June 16.

Founders of Rustavi 2, David Dvali and Jarji Akimidze, who founded the channel with now deceased politician Erosi Kitsmarishvili in 1994, asked for the continuation of the investigation around the case last week (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

#### **8. Tbilisi City Hall drafts bill to make construction violations a criminal offence**

Tbilisi City Hall has drafted a bill and sent it to parliament earlier today which makes several construction violations a criminal offence, which are currently only considered administrative violations. "We were forced to take the step to address the problems," Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze said.

The violations which might become a criminal offence include violations in height parameters, illegal construction works, ignoring an official demand to suspend construction and several others (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

### **9. Ekaterine Tikaradze to replace Health Ministry's Sergeenko**

Davit Sergeenko, Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, announced his resignation on June 18, citing the "need for changes" ahead of the "new wave of reforms".

He has been replaced by Ekaterine Tikaradze, 43, dentist by training, who served as CEO of a "non-commercial legal entity" clinic "Dostakari" – a quasi-governmental health clinic, which also runs a spa/hotel located in Sachkhere. This provincial town is known to be a family home to Bidzina Ivanishvili, billionaire and the leader of the ruling Georgian Dream party. Ivanishvili's "Cartu Foundation" is known to fund "Dostakari" (*Civil.ge, June 19, 2019*).

### **10. Davit Sergeenko says resignation was his personal initiative**

Sergeenko said at the joint briefing held together with the Prime Minister and the new Healthcare Minister, he asked Mamuka Bakhtadze to consider his resignation, as he was sure this would make reforms more successful.

According to Sergeenko, Ekaterine Tikaradze's candidacy for the minister's position was recommended by him personally. "We had intensive consultations for several weeks. We agree that such a change would be good for proper implementation of the new wave of reforms. I will not hide that this was my initiative," Sergeenko said (*ITV, June 18, 2019*).

### **11. Police investigate calls to form anti-LGBT patrol in Tbilisi**

The Georgian Interior Ministry has launched an investigation regarding a threat made by businessman Levan Vasadze last week to create self-organised groups in Tbilisi to prevent the holding of LGBT events during upcoming Tbilisi Pride – a week-long event to raise public awareness about the rights of sexual minorities in the country.

The ministry reported earlier today that the creation of such groups, chairing them or making appeals to form them is illegal (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

### **12. PM Bakhtadze on Tbilisi Pride: human rights, including LGBT rights, are protected**

Bakhtadze made the statement in response to recent rallies and unrest related to the LGBT pride event which is scheduled to take place this week.

"I, as an ordinary citizen of Georgia, believe that this issue [Tbilisi Pride, which aims to raise the public awareness regarding the rights of sexual minorities] is artificially exacerbated. I believe that the [claim that the LGBT community faces problems] is exaggerated and serves the goal of Georgia having a more aggressive atmosphere" Bakhtadze said (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

### **13. Tbilisi Pride organisers say event will go ahead**

"Despite existing risks, Tbilisi Pride will be held for the first time in the history of Georgia. The LGBT community, their supporters, family members, friends, international organisations, members of the

diplomatic corps, citizens of European and neighboring countries will take part in the march [the final event of pride week]," the statement reads.

They say that "informal groups" pose threats to the LGBT events and the state is unable to ensure the rights of supporters and participants of Tbilisi Pride (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

#### **14. Turmoil around Tbilisi Pride continues, LGBT march date kept confidential**

Turmoil around the first Tbilisi Pride - a week-long event dedicated to the rights of LGBT individuals - continues as organisers decided yesterday to hold the events despite threats coming from nationalist groups.

One of the organisers of the event Nino Bolkvadze refrained from naming the date of the march which will be the final stage of the event at the end of the week and warned possible participants regarding existing threats (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

#### **15. Patriarchate Distances itself from "Aggressive Remarks" by Clerics, Parish as Tbilisi Pride Organizers Receive Death Threats**

The Georgian Orthodox Church released brief statement on June 19, distancing itself from "any aggressive statements made by both clerics and the parishioners."

It started by noting that recent developments related to "the so called LGBT Pride" have made the situation in the country "extremely tense" and that the Patriarchate has already expressed negative attitude towards the Pride (*Civil.ge, June 19, 2019*).

### **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **16. Deal signed with int'l company to use revolutionary blockchain system in Georgian education**

The Georgian Education Ministry and global leading technology company Input Output HK Ltd have signed an agreement earlier today to use revolutionary blockchain data technology in the Georgian education field.

Education is seen to be the next to use the technology, and will enable users to confirm that information pertaining to a person's skills, education and knowledge is genuine.

Specialists say that digital data will be a source for employers to have correct information about an individual's knowledge who might be hired, as a number of people indicate that they have degrees on their CVs of which they are not actually in possession (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

#### **17. Gov't prolongs obligations of Anaklia Development Consortium by 6 months**

The government of Georgia will prolong the term for submitting financial closer documents for the Anaklia Development Consortium, which is overseeing the Anaklia deep sea port, by six months.

The decision to extend the deadline to accumulate the necessary funds was made at today's government meeting. Georgian Infrastructure Minister Maya Tskitishvili said this is the sixth time the term has been prolonged.

The Anaklia Development Consortium asked the government of Georgia to prolong the term (expiring on June 15) by six months during their last meeting on May 21 and “we have accepted the date the consortium suggested”, stated Tskitishvili (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

### **18. Georgia boosts investment in energy with World Bank support**

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) is offering a \$62 million loan to help increase the reliability of the electricity supply and prevent outages across the regions of the western Georgia.

The loan will ensure the financial viability of the Georgia State Electrosystem (GSE), and help the GSE access long-term commercial financing.

The money will be allocated as part of the Energy Supply Reliability and Financial Recovery Project, which was approved by the World Bank on May 24 and will be financed by the IBRD, the first of five member institutions that compose the World Bank Group (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

### **19. Austrian Development Cooperation allocates €2 million to support Georgian agriculture**

A new four year project will be carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) has provided a loan of €2 million to Georgia to support agricultural development, the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia reports.

The project aims to develop rural and agriculture policy in Georgia, sustainably use the country’s natural resources and support environmentally friendly agricultural activities (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

### **20. Economy minister announces Gori wind farm to be privatised shortly**

A wind energy plant in Gori in the Shida Kartli region of Georgia will be privatised in a month or month and a half, Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava said.

Turnava stated certain facilities belonging to the state are difficult to sell as the privatisation process requires special preparation in advance. She added that the Kartli Wind Farm and the Georgian Post are among the facilities.

As Natia Turnava said the farm’s financial liabilities towards the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) make the privatisation procedures comparatively complex (*Agenda.ge, June 18, 2019*).

### **21. Georgian parliament examining bill to protect consumers’ rights**

The bill reads that a consumer who believes that his/her rights were violated, will be able to address Georgia’s Competition Agency to study the possible violation.

If violation is confirmed the agency will give a “reasonable time” to a trader to improve the flaw or suspend the activity violating consumers’ rights.

If the agency demands are ignored, a possible violator will have to pay a fine, which must not be more than two per cent of the annual turnover of the previous year of the trader. If the violation is re-repeated in 12 months, fine will be doubled (*Agenda.ge, June 19, 2019*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 22. Georgia wins first emerging nations trophy in handball, beating Cuba

Playing on its home turf, the Georgia national handball team finished the International Handball Federation (IHF) Emerging Nations Championship with its first Emerging Nations Trophy, beating Cuba with a win of 31:21 on Sunday night in Tbilisi Sports Palace (*Agenda.ge, June 17, 2019*).

## Additional Information

**June 20, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.7871 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5084 GEL	100 RUB -4.3536 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1229 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4751 GEL	100 JPY - 2.5707 GEL

Thursday 20 June	Friday 21 June	Saturday 22 June	Sunday 23 June	Monday 24 June
				
19° 32°	20° 31°	21° 33°	21° 35°	21° 35°

-  **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](#)**