

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

July 4-8

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❖ Foreign Affairs

1. Davit Zalkaliani: Tbilisi is ready to host second round of expert's Meeting over Davit Gareja issue

The sitting at the level of experts over Davit Gareja issue will be definitely held as it was planned, – Davit Zalkaliani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

According to Davit Zalkaliani, the official Tbilisi is waiting for the answer from the Azerbaijani side about the date of arrival of experts in order to study the situation at Davit Gareji. As the Minister noted, after studying the situation at the site, Tbilisi will host the second round of negotiations.

“This meeting of the experts will be a good opportunity for studying the situation on the ground. We are negotiating with our colleagues to agree on the specific date,” – FM Zalkaliani said (*ITV, July 5, 2019*).

2. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly not removed Georgia's resolution on occupied territories from agenda, despite Russian's resistance

Despite resistance from the Russian delegation, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly did not remove Georgia's resolution on occupied territories from the agenda, – Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, Sopho Katsarava wrote on Facebook.

According to Sopho Katsarava, after the decision of the OSCE, the resolution will be discussed at the committee and plenary session.

“The first day of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly: At the Standing Committee (attended by the heads of the parliamentary delegations of 57 countries), our resolution: “Security and human rights in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region” won the majority of votes, despite resistance from the Russian delegation. This means that in the next few days we will continue to discuss our resolution at committee as well as at plenary sessions in order to achieve maximum support”, – Katsarava writes (*Agenda.ge, July 4, 2019*).

3. Draft resolution prepared by Georgia adopted by Committee on Political Affairs and Security of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The Committee on Political Affairs and Security of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has adopted the draft resolution prepared by Georgia with 50 votes, five voted against.

The 26-point document is about the current situation regarding human rights of locals residing in occupied territories of Georgia. It condemns Russia's illegal actions due to which human rights and humanitarian situation are deteriorated in occupied territories.

The resolution also condemns the killings of Georgian citizens, Archil Tatunashvili, Giga Ovoszori and Davit Basharuli by representatives of Russia's occupied territories. The document also covers the fact of the death of Irakli Kvaratskhelia on the Russian military base in occupied Abkhazia (*ITV, July 7, 2019*).

4. Russian MP declares that resolution prepared by Georgia might be an attempt to continue conflict that arose in Tbilisi

Russian MP Andrei Klimov responded to the decision of the Committee on Political Affairs and Security of OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, which adopted the resolution prepared by Georgia. He said that this resolution might be the attempt to continue the conflict, which arose in Tbilisi.

As Deputy Chair of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, Andrei Klimov said in an interview with Russian media, "Russia as a sovereign state can recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia". As he noted, this is their right, which comes directly from the United Nations Charter (*ITV, July 7, 2019*).

5. Sophio Katsarava: despite impediments from Russia, the OSCE PA has approved our resolution with majority of votes

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has approved the draft resolution initiated by the Head of the Georgian Parliamentary Delegation Sophio Katsarava with the majority of votes.

"Luxembourg Declaration includes the document extremely important for our country. It is a principal and the strict resolution reflecting grave security and human rights situation on the occupied territories according to which the Assembly calls on Russia to adhere to the international norms and the law", – Sophio Katsarava noted (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

6. Rustavi 2 anchor insults Putin on live show, gov't calls step 'dangerous provocation' [VIDEO]

Anchor of Georgian private broadcaster Rustavi 2 Giorgi Gabunia has insulted Russian President Vladimir Putin on his live show P.S. earlier today, using offensive language in Russian.

Rustavi 2 leadership has distanced itself from the statement, saying that they did not know about Gabunia's intention.

Expressing a view in the way Gabunia did is absolutely unacceptable," Rustavi 2 Director Nika Gvaramia said (*Agenda.ge, July 8, 2019*).

7. Mamuka Bakhtadze: I categorize message aired on Rustavi 2 as provocation, containing great threat against peace and security of Georgia

"I am confident that every citizen and friend of Georgia will isolate themselves from such an adventure. Every sensible person will view this fact as a manifestation of a politically utterly dangerous provocation. It is a war of provocateurs against their homeland, a dirty and outrageous game putting the security of the state and citizens at stake.

What the Georgian society has witnessed today on Rustavi 2 is categorically unacceptable! I profoundly categorize this television message as a provocation and as that of containing the greatest threat against peace and security of Georgia", – the Georgian Prime Minister says (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

8. Salome Zurabishvili: Patriotism is something different, defending country's interests by aggression, destabilization and unrest is not right thing

"The President condemns the statements made by anchor of one of the TV company, when he mentioned the head of the neighboring country with provocative and insulting words. Patriotism is something different; defending the interests of a country by aggression, destabilization and unrest is not the right thing. Our path is peaceful, our perspective is Europe, our strength is stability. Division of

the country into two camps, incitement to external confrontation and stirring up aggravation on our part in the region is unacceptable! Does it serve to provoke a new war, or is it revenge on the uncompleted coup? In any case, this action is directed against the country! The name of this action is – damaging the interests of the country!”- President said (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

9. Kakha Kaladze: We cannot leave provocation of such scale hidden under “patriotism” without a strict response

“When our country faces such challenges, we cannot leave provocation of such scale hidden under “patriotism ” without a strict response. This is hostility towards own country.

“We have already seen once, how this political force has brought the country into a difficult situation. We cannot allow it happen again. We will not allow it! ”, – writes Kakha Kaladze on a social network (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

10. Archil Talakvadze: Statement that we heard on the air of “Rustavi 2” is a direct provocation against our country and people

“Statement that we heard on the air of “Rustavi 2” is a direct provocation against our country and people. The Question no longer exist. This political group is acting against Georgia, ”- Archil Talakvadze writes (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

11. Russian MFA Condemns Rustavi 2 Broadcast as ‘unbridled Russophobia’, Notes Positively Georgian Government Response

“We are categorically condemning the prank unprecedented in its baseness, with unacceptable attacks using obscene language against the Russian leadership, which has taken place on the Georgian TV Channel Rustavi 2. We see this as one more open provocation of the radical forces in Georgia, aimed at dynamiting the Russo-Georgian relations. This flagrant incident is a vivid demonstration of where the unbridled Russophobia may lead.

We are noting that this time around – in contrast of the attack on the members of the Russian parliamentary delegation on 20 June – the Georgian authorities did not try to justify the actions of the radicals, but found in themselves the force to dissociate from provocateurs and to condemn their behavior. We are also seeing justified indignation, with which the Georgian society has met the developments.

We are expecting an adequate reaction from the thematic international and regional organisations and the journalistic community. These kinds of manifestations must have no place in civilized countries.” – reads the statement (*Civil.ge, July 8, 2019*).

12. Communications Commission released a statement regarding Rustavi 2

“We believe that what we saw on the air of “Rustavi 2” on July 7 has nothing to do with freedom of speech and expression. Expressing opinions in such form and content is unethical and indecent. The statement, which contains hate speech, is directed against the state and stirs the violence, pose a serious threat to our country and citizens.

At the same time, the offensive and provocative statements made by the journalist go beyond the professional framework recognized by international standards, which is detrimental to the Georgian media as a whole and discredits our journalists. Against the background of the fact that freedom of speech and expression is our truly invaluable achievement”, – the statement reads (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

13. 2019 opinion polls show continued support for EU in Georgia

71% of people in Georgia trust EU, 80% feel relations are good – this is the results of 2019 opinion polls in Georgia, financed by EU.

The EU has financed 2019 opinion polls in Georgia through its 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' project.

The survey took place between February and April 2019 and was based upon face-to-face interviews among a representative sample of 1,000 people throughout the country.

The annual survey is now into its fourth year, with the first wave having been carried out in 2016. Similar surveys were also carried out five other Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

According to the main findings of the opinion poll:

80% of Georgians feel relations with the European Union are good.

71% of people in Georgia trust the EU (unchanged since 2018).

50% of Georgians have a positive image of the European Union (EU). Only 4% of Georgians have a negative view of the EU.

74% of Georgians (up 16% since 2017) are aware of the EU's financial support to the country, and 62% consider the support to be effective (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

14. Gigi Tsereteli elected as President of OSCE PA for the second term

The 28th sitting of the Parliamentary Assembly of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) has ended in Luxemburg today.

Gigi Tsereteli, Member of the Permanent Delegation of the Parliament of Georgia has been elected as the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA) for the second term.

The Gigi Tsereteli candidacy was supported by 120 votes of Assembly delegates and he will head the OSCE PA during a year (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

15. Giorgi Gabunia suspended from duties for two months

The self-regulatory body of Rustavi 2 TV company has suspended Giorgi Gabunia, anchor of P.S. program, from duties for a term of two months. The regarding information is posted on Rustavi 2 website.

According to the statement of the self-regulatory body, restrictions have been imposed on the programs prepared and hosted by Gabunia (*Rustavi 2, July 8, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

16. Mikheil Giorgadze: My resignation is not related to any particular event

The former Deputy Minister of Culture Mikheil Giorgadze states that his resignation is not related to any particular event and the reasons for his decision are clearly explained in his Facebook post. Mikheil Giorgadze has left the post today. Giorgadze wrote about his decision on his Facebook page.

"You know that I assumed the post of the first Deputy Minister of Culture 5 years ago. I spent my energy, knowledge and experience for this field, which is of utmost importance for our country. Today, I have decided to leave the post of the first deputy minister and move to a private sector. It's time to give the possibility to new people, new energy," – wrote Mikheil Giorgadze (*ITV, July 4, 2019*).

17. Opposition parties released a joint statement on Court judgment regarding Nika Melia

Opposition political parties released a joint statement in connection with Nika Melia, one of the leaders of the National Movement Party. The statement notes that the decision made by the court against Nika Melia is contrary to the Constitution of Georgia and represents the “best” example of the anti-democratic ruling (*ITV, July 4, 2019*).

18. MIA applied to the court in connecting with the questioning of Gigi Ugulava, Gia Baramidze and Irakli Okruashvili

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has applied to the court in connecting with the questioning of the leaders of the oppositional parties Gigi Ugulava, Gia Baramidze and Irakli Okruashvili.

As MIA explains the above-mentioned persons refused to arrive at the investigative body for questioning. Ministry appeals to the court with the request to conduct the questioning of these persons before the Magistrates Court.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched an investigation under Article 225 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, involving organization, management or participation in group violence (*ITV, July 4, 2019*).

19. Four persons arrested for participating in group violence on June 20-21

Police detained four persons for participating in group violence committed during June 20-21 developments in front of the Parliament.

Deputy Interior Minister Vladimer Bortsvadze made this statement at the briefing held today.

“The Ministry of Internal Affairs is intensively investigating the developments which took place in front of Parliament on 20-21 June 2019.

Within the scope of the investigation, Nikoloz Melia was accused of inciting and organizing mass violence, or participating in it, during the June 20-21 rally in front of the Parliament of Georgia. The court sentenced a bail to the accused as a preventive measure and imposed a number of restrictions, including electronic monitoring (*ITV, July 4, 2019*).

20. Defense Ministry begins registration for active reserve

The Georgian Defense Ministry has begun registration of those who are willing to serve in the active military reserve program.

The Ministry says that citizens aged 18-50 living in Tbilisi, Mtskheta and Imereti region will be able to retain their job places at the same time. The 45-day-long military training program is distributed onto 12 months.

Representatives of the National Guards met with students of Tbilisi Technical University and introduced them with the program details (*ITV, July 6, 2019*).

21. Working Group on Election Legislation Reform to hold a field meeting

The members of the group led by the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Archil Talakvadze will discuss the recommendations provided by OSCE/ODIHR and consider the proposals submitted by the participants.

The working group, which includes representatives of political parties, government and non-governmental organizations and international partners, began work in June of this year. The meeting will take place starting from today till July 10 in the hotel “Lopota Spa Resort” (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

22. Giorgi Tabagari: March of Dignity was held

March of Dignity was held, we will not yield public spaces to them, – one of the organizers of “Tbilisi Pride” Giorgi Tabagari made this statement in front of the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The participants of the March of Dignity have been already disassembled because they were informed that the counter-protest participants headed for the MIA building.

“Levan Vasadze is still holding rallies and the state still does not stand on our side. March of Dignity was held, we will not yield public spaces to them. We could not manage to hold the action of the scale that was planned, but it is still important. We will grow year by year, ” – Tabagari said (*ITV, July 8, 2019*).

23. Anti-occupation protest, counter-rally square up as police separate demonstrators in Tbilisi

Police has blocked the road on Rustaveli Avenue to separate two ongoing demonstrations on Rustaveli Avenue, as tensions between an anti-occupation rally and a counter-protest involving clerics and nationalist groups are high in the capital.

Those involved in a rally against the Russian occupation - ongoing since June 20 in front of the Parliament of Georgia - are now facing a counter-protest involving clerics and nationalist groups on the street.

The latter moved on the avenue starting earlier on Monday, with its leaders alleging the anti-occupation protest had ties with Tbilisi Pride, an LGBTQ protest announced for the same day.

The Pride event was first postponed in the morning, before a small group of its activists gathered outside the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in the evening (*Agenda.ge, July 8, 2019*).

24. Two rallies underway in downtown Tbilisi with different demands

Peaceful demonstrators who have been holding protests in Tbilisi for 19 days already say they will not stop until Interior Minister Giorgi Gakharia resigns.

Today however they were unable to take up their traditional spot in front of the parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue in central Tbilisi as a counter-protest had taken their place.

Later this group managed to take their place at the platform and microphone and anti-LGBTQ movement had been moved to the opposite direction. The rally was held without tensions but activists of the both rallies have stayed on Rustaveli Ave. until morning (*TV Pirveli, July 9, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

25. Minister of Economy – Georgia is the safest country based on rating in tourism sphere

Georgia is the safest country based on international rating in tourism sphere and nobody should question that – Natia Turnava, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development said after the meeting with representatives of tourism and agriculture sectors in eastern Kakheti region.

The Minister said that the government and economic team would strengthen work in marketing direction to prove that Georgia was a peaceful country. “We will be speaking about the message for the whole world to hear including for Russian tourists to persuade them that the information as if something threatens them in Georgia, is false,” Turnava said.

Minister of economy said that the introduction of the so-called air-embargo inflicted damage to Georgia in the amount of about 2 million GEL (*ITV, July 6, 2019*).

26. Company which wins in tender for construction of Anaklia Port to be announced in one week

The Company which wins in the tender for construction of Anaklia Port will be announced in one week – Badri Japaridze, one of the founders of Anaklia Development Consortium said.

Japaridze claimed that construction of Anaklia port would not be suspended. “One stage for deepening the water is over and the next stages are still ahead. We needed USD 10 million which we borrowed but we will need additional finances further,” Japaridze said.

Japaridze said that holding of trilateral negotiations was an uninterrupted process and that only several points remained to be agreed (*ITV, July 6, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

27. Hollywood movie to be produced in Georgia

One of the Hollywood films will be made within the framework of Produce in Georgia programme. The movie will be made by a Georgian production company, Produce in Georgia Agency reported.

According to the Agency, the above decision was made within the framework of the visit paid by Hollywood high ranking officials from April 26 to May 2. The American delegation was hosted by the Produce in Georgia programme.

The filmmakers visited several regions of Georgia and got acquainted with the opportunities of filmmaking in Georgia (*ITV, July 5, 2019*).

Additional Information

July 9, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.8320 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5471 GEL	100 RUB -4.4369 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1778 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4947 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6094 GEL

Tuesday 9 July	Wednesday 10 July	Thursday 11 July	Friday 12 July	Saturday 13 July
				
17° 30°	19° 33°	20° 33°	18° 32°	19° 28°

-  **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](#)**