

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

July 9-11

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❖ Occupied Regions

1. Salome Zurabishvili: While Abkhazia and South Ossetia no longer make world headlines, it remains an open wound for every single citizen of Georgia

Georgia's President Salome Zurabishvili said that Georgia needs to implement three of the most needed institutional reforms, which require political support and practical assistance from the EU and its member states. President said in that regard in her speech at the International Conference "Ten years of Valued Partnership – Passed Way and Perspectives" taking place in Batumi city of Adjara region.

"While Abkhazia and South Ossetia no longer make world headlines, it remains an open wound for every single citizen of Georgia. This is an issue that cannot nor will go away. The popular demonstrations that took place on June 20th were a natural expression of what has been brewing for a decade: on the one hand, popular outrage against the illegal occupation of a sovereign Nation; on the other, frustration with the lack of political progress towards reunification", – President said (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

2. Vladimir Putin says he is against imposition of sanctions on Georgia

Russian President Vladimir Putin says he is against the imposition of sanctions on Georgia. "I would not do this because of respect for the Georgian people," the Russian president was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti.

The Russian State Duma supported sanctions against Georgia earlier today. The State Duma categorically condemned "continuous anti-Russian provocations" in Georgia and noted that "open attacks of the radical forces of this country further degrade the Russia-Georgia relations." (*ITV, July 9, 2019*).

3. Kremlin says too early to speak about resuming flights to Georgia

"The restrictions on flights, the flight ban is an absolutely forced measure, and consequently, the situation will be constantly monitored. As soon as the signs emerge that the situation has normalized for Russian tourists after such Russophobic manifestations, time will come for analyzing this and taking other decisions. Now it is early to speak about this," Peskov said as reported by Tass News Agency (*ITV, July 10, 2019*).

4. US Department of State: We welcome the statements and decisions made by Russian and Georgian leaders to stabilize bilateral relations and call on Russia to resume flights with Georgia

"The United States is concerned about the disproportionate reaction of the Russian Government and the Duma in connection with the ongoing events in Georgia. We welcome the statements and decisions made by Russian and Georgian leaders to stabilize bilateral relations and call on Russia to resume flights to Georgia and back", -the representative of US Department of State told the special correspondent of Voice of America.

"We keep supporting Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and call on Russia to end the occupation of 20% of the territory of Georgia," – the representative of Department of State said (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

5. French Ambassador – Georgia's reaction to Vladimir Putin's statement was positive

"Russia's first reaction was emotional. We understand that seeing a Russian MP in the Georgian parliament was followed by emotion from Georgian people but the same could happen in Russia when Russians saw that their member of parliament was forced to hide and leave the country," French Ambassador said. According to Meunier, it was high time for returning to reality and acting with responsibility (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

6. Mamuka Bakhtadze and Donald Tusk discuss new opportunities of integration

Georgia is a significant partner of the European Union, with its associated freedom and courage. It was announced by Donald Tusk, President of the European Council at a meeting with Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia held in Batumi today.

Head of Government of Georgia expressed his gratitude to the visiting European dignitary for participation in the key-note international conference and noted that authorities of the country highly appreciate the messages heard from Donald Tusk today.

Parties discussed the success stories and achievements made during the 10 years of Eastern Partnership and noted that Georgia is a leader of this platform.

Significant progress achieved by Georgia towards European integration has been stressed, including the Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), along with a visa-free travel granted to the citizens of Georgia (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

7. Meeting of Donald Tusk and Bidzina Ivanishvili

After today's meetings I feel that Georgia has a very good and promising future, – Donald Tusk, President of the European Council addressed to the chairman of the Georgian Dream party, Bidzina Ivanishvili. The head of the ruling team hosted the President of the European Council in Batumi city of Adjara region.

Bidzina Ivanishvili thanked Donald Tusk for friendship with Georgia and noted that the visit of a such number of high-ranking guests in Batumi once again demonstrates that Georgia is developing in the right direction.

The President of the European Council assessed the meeting with the leader of the ruling party as an interesting and impressive and expressed hope that with joint efforts Georgia will still succeed (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

8. Elizabeth Rood – We call on Russia for resumption of flights to Georgia

"We call on Russia for the resumption of flight to Georgia because tourists from all over the world are welcomed in Georgia and they feel safe here," Rood said.

Acting United States Ambassador to Georgia also reiterated support to Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on July 9 that he was against the imposition of sanctions on Georgia. "I would not do this because of respect for the Georgian people," the Russian president was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).

9. EU, gov't of Georgia sign €28 mln programme for security sector support

The European Union and the government of Georgia have signed a €28 million deal to support security sector reforms in Georgia on the sidelines of the 16th Batumi International Conference.

The five-year 'SAFE: EU4 Security, Accountability and Fight Against Crime in Georgia' programme will focus on the fight against crime, cyber and hybrid threats, border management, civil protection and supervision of the security sector (*Agenda.ge, July 11, 2019*).

10. Georgia, Hungary sign 4 deals at 16th Batumi International Conference

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani and Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto, as well as other Georgian and Hungarian officials, concluded deals on responding to emergency situations, teaching Hungarian in Georgia, agricultural development in addition to a deal on cooperation between the Georgian Partnership Fund and the Hungarian Export-Import Bank (*Agenda.ge, July 11, 2019*).

11. World Bank to support Georgia's human capital development efforts

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and the World Bank's Regional Director for the South Caucasus Sebastian Molineus spoke of "close cooperation" between the World Bank and the Government of Georgia at a meeting on the sidelines of the Batumi International Conference.

Sebastian Molineus said the World Bank will support the Georgian Government's efforts in human capital development to help the country transform into the regional leader, PM Bakhtadze's press office reported (*Agenda.ge, July 11, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

12. Mamuka Khazaradze to found public movement

Mamuka Khazaradze, founder of TBC Bank, will establish a new public movement in September. Khazaradze posted the statement about his plan on his Facebook page.

According to Khazaradze, he will found a movement together with his friends and professionals of various fields, the main purpose of which will be to unite the country and maintain its independence and freedom (*ITV, July 9, 2019*).

13. MIA summoned several leaders of the oppositional parties for questioning

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia summoned leaders of the oppositional parties Khatia Dekanoidze, Bachuki Kardava, Gubaz Sanikidze and Irakli Ghlonti for questioning.

According to MIA leaders of the oppositional parties will be questioned within the investigation into the case of June 20-21 developments, conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The investigation into June 20-21 developments is ongoing under article stipulating rebellion intended to overthrow or seize state power (*1TV, July 11, 2019*).

14. Giorgi Gakharia: I don't have any problem to talk with these youngsters on issues of concern to them

“Everyone, first of all, those active young people who are taking part in the rally today, should take into account one thing – this is a great responsibility. When you think that you act according to the interests of the country daily, it does not matter whether you are at any post or not, when you think that your action is not based on subjective, individual interests, but based on general public interests and the interests of the state, we all should learn one important thing – to listen to each other. I do not have any problem with these young people, who are standing outside, to invite them even today, in this studio and talk on issues of concern to them”, – Minister said.

According to him, the police will always protect peaceful protesters, but once the action becomes violent, the state is obliged to act (*TV Pirveli, July 11, 2019*).

15. Minister of Internal Affairs – When you put a hand on one eye, remember about those police officers who lost 95% of their eyesight

“I issued the order, especially after the protest got violent. I acted within the constitution and the legislation of Georgia. The main responsibility of the police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs is to protect the institutions and public order in the country,” Gakharia said.

As for the orange bullets used during the dispersal of the rally, the Minister said that the police have the right to use such bullets. “This orange bullet is not lethal and it can be legally used all over the world, including in Georgia,” said Gakharia (*TV Pirveli, July 11, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

16. Eastern Partnership countries create catalogue of investment projects

The countries of the Eastern Partnership have created a catalogue of ongoing projects in need of investments, which will enable investors from the EU to examine the projects in detail, Deputy Minister of Economy Genadi Arveladze stated yesterday at a briefing.

The catalogue includes both state and private sector projects in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine. Projects in agriculture, recycling, infrastructure, transport and tourism are the focus of the catalogue (*Agenda.ge, July 10, 2019*).

17. Minister of Regional Development – Anaklia deepwater port is European project

Anaklia deepwater port is a European project and an additional opportunity for European and Asian businesspersons to be in contact with each other through Georgia – Maia Tskitishvili, Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure said during giving a speech at the International Conference “Ten years of Valued Partnership – Passed Way and Perspectives” taking place in Batumi city of Adjara region.

Tskitishvili said that the government would do its best to support the implementation of the project. She said that negotiations were ongoing to mobilize finances and support private investors. "I am sure that investors and all the interesting sides will make some commercial risks and take decisions," Minister of Regional Development said (*ITV, July 11, 2019*).



18. US announces \$200,000 grant competition in Georgian agriculture sector

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is announcing a \$200,000 grant competition for NGOs and entities operating in the agriculture sector of Georgia.

"In order for Georgia to increase its competitiveness in new export markets, it needs to successfully adopt EU requirements. We are happy to announce that to help Georgia go through this process swiftly and effectively the US Department of Agriculture is providing up to \$200,000 in grant assistance", read the press release published by the US Embassy in Georgia.

Those interested must submit an application by July 26, 2019. The anticipated funding selection date is August 9, 2019 and the award date is August 23, 2019 (*Agenda.ge, July 11, 2019*).

 **Additional Information**

July 12, 2019						
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES						
1 USD - 2.8476 GEL		1 GBP - 3.5760 GEL		100 RUB -4.5207 GEL		
1 EUR - 3.2098 GEL		1 TRY - 0.5022 GEL		100 JPY - 2.6333 GEL		
Saturday 13 July 12-18	Sunday 14 July 12-18	Monday 15 July 10-16	Tuesday 16 July 10-16	Wednesday 17 July 10-16	Thursday 18 July 10-16	Friday 19 July 10-16
						
25°	25°	23°	26°	27°	29°	28°
<p> Movie Events - English Sessions - Tickets</p> <p> Friends of Museum (Membership to access Georgian National Museums For free of charge after one payment) - Membership</p> <p> Marjanishvili Theatre – Events and Tickets</p> <p> Rustaveli Theatre - Events and Tickets</p> <p> Opera and Ballet – Events and Tickets</p> <p> Concerts – Events and Tickets</p> <p> Sports – Events and Tickets</p>						