

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

July 16-17

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Date: **July 18, 2019**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### **1. Students from occupied Gali cross so-called border to participate in summer school in Tbilisi**

Forty-three students from Georgia's currently Russian-occupied Gali district have crossed the currently closed Enguri 'checkpoint' to participate in a summer school on Tbilisi-administered territory.

"Today's meeting with students is very important and emotional. The students are doing their utmost to receive a better education. In crossing the so-called border they are sending a very loud message - 'we will not be a generation beyond the barbed-wire-fences, we are the children of a united Georgia and with our education we will do our best to restore trust and state integrity,'" Deputy Reconciliation Minister Lia Gigauri said (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

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

#### **2. De-facto Foreign Minister: South Ossetia will never again be part of Georgia**

"One thing can be said with regret and quite definitely: Georgia, which is usual for all Soviet people, no longer exists, it ended in 1990 with the coming to power of new Georgian nationalists. Nazism, erected by Mikhail Saakashvili to the rank of state policy, bore fruit today. The stereotype under the name "sunny Georgia», used by residents of the USSR and in recent years, by citizens of Russia, disappeared. The masks are dropped, the myth of Georgian hospitality and friendliness, created, for the most part, by the Soviet cinema, has been debunked," said Medoev (*Cominf.org, July 16, 2019*).

#### **3. South Ossetia is preparing to open an embassy in Syria, - De-facto Foreign Minister**

"As for our representation in other countries, I note that South Ossetia has an embassy in the Russian Federation, Nicaragua and Venezuela, Abkhazia, and preparations are under way for the establishment of a diplomatic mission in Damascus. I also consider it appropriate to say about our offices in the countries such as Turkey, Brazil, Italy. This direction is also developing and is of particular interest," Medoev told RIA Novosti.

*Reminder: Syria announced the recognition of the independence of the Republic on May 29, 2018 (Cominf.org, July 17, 2019).*

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### **4. Konstantin Kosachev - It's unlikely that there'll be major breakthrough in Georgia-Russia relations in foreseeable future**

It's unlikely that there'll be a major breakthrough in these relations in the foreseeable future – this will most likely take months, but we hope not years. Most importantly, we hope there will not be new provocations – Konstantin Kosachev, Chairman of the International Committee of the Russian Parliament said after the meeting with members of Georgian Patriots Alliance being on a visit in Moscow.

Kosachev said he believed that what happened in the Georgian Parliament and on Georgian television was a pure provocation aimed at disrupting the normalization of Georgia-Russia relations. "In order for this to happen, there's a lot to be done and we can't expect miracles," Kosachev said (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

### **5. Lavrov names precondition for removal of flight ban on Georgia**

"We hope that the Georgian government will be able to stabilise the socio-political situation in the country and eliminate existing threats to the safety of Russians," he said.

"We want to be friends and cooperate for the benefit of the citizens of Russia and Georgia," Lavrov added. He said that the relations of the Georgian government and the opposition is the internal issue of Georgia. However, when the issue involves Russia and "incites anti-Russian attitudes," Kremlin is "forced" to take measures.

Lavrov said that the "radical opposition forces" in Georgia are "hardly thinking" about the damage they inflict to the homeland, "which is largely dependent on economic and humanitarian ties with Russia." (*Agenda.ge, July 17, 2019*).

### **6. Georgia responds to Lavrov: safety of foreign citizens absolutely ensured in Georgia**

"Safety of all foreign citizens and tourists, including Russians, is fully ensured in Georgia as Georgia is a safe country and this is confirmed by the EU and by many international ratings," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Vladimir Konstantinidi said (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

### **7. Rustavi 2 shareholder demands Prosecutor's Office launch investigation against director**

Nino Nizharadze, a nine per cent shareholder of the opposition-minded Rustavi 2 channel, has addressed the Georgian Chief Prosecutor's Office to launch an investigation against the channel director, former Minister of Justice Nika Gvaramia.

Nizharadze's lawyer says that Gvaramia has abused his power and has made a decision which might bankrupt the channel.

"The decision concerns the deal of Rustavi 2 and an advertising agency Intermedia on a fixed payment [and not based on released materials], which financially affected the channel," Nizharadze's lawyer said (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

### **8. Tbilisi to have 18 and 24 meter long municipal buses**

Tbilisi will have 18 and 24 meter long municipal buses – Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze said during the city governmental sitting when speaking about the transport reform.

According to Tbilisi Mayor, a corresponding infrastructure will be arranged with bus lines and work is launched for importing new mini-buses.

“The current condition of municipal mini-buses is critical. They have exhausted all the resources. We are holding negotiations with private companies to replace old minibusses,” Kaladze said (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

#### **9. Procedural Committee supports termination of MP’s authority to Zakaria Kutsnashvili**

The Parliamentary Committee of Procedural Issues unanimously supported pre-term termination of MP’s authority to Zakaria Kutsnashvili, a member of Georgian Dream Party.

As Chairman of the Committee Giorgi Kakhiani said, the issue of termination of authority for Kutsnashvili will be the first issue at the extraordinary plenary session. The Parliament will issue a decree for the final decision.

Zakaria Kutsnashvili headed the Georgian delegation in the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy. Consequently, he was one of the organizers and initiators of the session held in Tbilisi, which became the cause of protests (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

#### **10. Mamuka Bakhtadze: Giorgi Gakharia has repeatedly stated that he will cooperate with investigation**

It is of particular importance for each of us that there be no questions relating to the investigation of the events of 20-21 June, its quality and transparency, – Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said at the briefing held before the governmental session.

According to the PM, he welcomes the involvement of the Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia and the Public Defender in the process of investigation (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).



#### **11. Russian citizens hold rally in Tbilisi opposing Kremlin’s position**

Russian citizens have held a rally in front of the Georgian parliament building today, saying that Georgians’ anti-occupation protests are justified and that they do not share the attitude of the Kremlin on many issues regarding Georgia.

Demonstrators said that they have always felt safe in Georgia, and opposed Russia’s ban on direct flights to

Georgia imposed due to “security threats.”

#### **12. One law enforcer detained in connection with June 20-21 developments**

An employee of Special Tasks Department of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) has been detained in connection with June 20-21 developments in Tbilisi.

A special briefing was held at the General Prosecutor’s Office. According to Prosecutor Koka Katsitadze, the detained law enforcer exceeded his duties that night. The investigation determined that the law enforcer inflicted injuries to two participants of the protest ongoing outside the parliament building.

The Prosecutor's Office will apply to the court with the plea to impose imprisonment as the form of punishment to the detainee (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

### **13. Policeman detained for abuse of power at Tbilisi rally sent to pre-trial detention**

Employee of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Levan Imerlishvili, who was detained yesterday for possible abuse of power during the rally dispersal on Rustaveli Avenue on June 20, has been sent to pre-trial detention (*Agenda.ge, July 17, 2019*).

### **14. Police detain three more persons for participation in June 20-21 group violence**

"Within the frames of the investigation, law enforcers have detained four more persons for participating in group violence. The investigation has established that the mentioned persons participated in the group violence during the June 20-21 developments in front of the Parliament's building. They assaulted police officers using various items, resisted them and tried to storm the Parliament," the Ministry said (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

### **15. Bidzina Ivanishvili – Nobody neither from Washington nor Europe has questions about legitimacy of use of force on June 20-21 night**

"The use of force was legitimate. The question about the issue arises from nowhere. I met with members of the European Parliament, Ambassadors and know the standpoint of Washington," Ivanishvili said.

Protests in front of the parliament building at Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi have been held since June 20 in reaction to the visit of Sergey Gavrilov, a Russian lawmaker and his sitting in the parliamentary speaker's chair during a religious assembly, which many Georgians saw as an unwelcome reminder of Russian military occupation of its breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

### **16. Bidzina Ivanishvili – Resignation of Giorgi Gakharia would be treason of the motherland**

"When violence is taking place and the main institutions and parliament are attacked and police are unable to protect them, the minister has to be held responsible. But Gakharia managed to protect politicians, owners of Rustavi 2 TV Company, state institutions and the parliament and evaded the disaster," Ivanishvili said.

Chairman of Georgian Dream Party said that investigation was ongoing on facts of the excess of duties on part of some law enforcers and they would be punished by law (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

### **17. Bidzina Ivanishvili - Taking the speaker's chair by Gavrilov has been an "error in protocol" and not Kobakhidze's mistake**

"Kobakhidze has not committed any crime. The "National Movement" has managed to provoke the situation. Taking the speaker's chair by Gavrilov has been an "error in protocol". It was not Kobakhidze's mistake. It was followed by a fair protest from society. Kobakhidze looked into the situation, he covered the team and left his mandate. Gakharia [Interior Minister] is a better man, he will not fight for the post at all. Gakharia's resignation, the "National Movement" wants today, means that tomorrow, they will arrive at the Parliament, and there must not be police officers there and the violators must be able to enter the Parliament's building freely," Ivanishvili said (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

### **18. Minister of Internal Affairs questioned at General Prosecutor's Office**

Gakharia told journalists that he had answered all questions regarding facts of the excess of duties on part of some law enforcers on the night of June 20-21 in Tbilisi (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

#### **19. Giorgi Gakharia says Bidzina Ivanishvili learned about June 20 events next day**

"He did not know about [the June 20-21 developments] that evening. I have not communicated with him. He got to know the next day. He phoned me the following day and I explained to him what happened that night," Minister Gakharia said (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

#### **20. Kakha Kaladze - Georgian Dream has the ambition and resource to win a majority in the Parliament in 2020 elections**

"I welcome the decision of our team on the change of the electoral system. This is a very important step forward. Everything depends on the population of our country. The population should show its civic responsibility in 2020 elections and make the decision based on its taste, political opinion and the programs, introduced by the political parties," Kaladze said (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

#### **21. Strasbourg Court orders Georgian state to pay 50 thousand euros to family of Zurab Vazagashvili**

The Strasbourg Court ordered the Georgian state to pay 50 thousand euros to the family of Zurab Vazagashvili, who was killed in a special operation in 2006, - Minister of Justice Tea Tsulukiani stated at a special briefing.

"Today the judgment in the case of Vazagashvili and Shanava v. Georgia has been published, which concerns the right to life. The state has been fully defeated in the case both in terms of the murder and the delay in the case. The state was ordered to pay 50 thousand euros as a compensation," Tea Tsulukiani said (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

#### **22. Strasbourg Court found the violation of Article 3 into Gogaladze's case**

The European Court of Human Rights has found the violation of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights into Nodar Gogaladze's case. The decision has been published on the web page of ECHR today.

In addition, the European Court of Human Rights imposed compensation in the amount of € 6,000 to the applicant for non-pecuniary damage, which should be paid in three months after the final decision by the European Court of Human Rights. The Strasbourg Court did not satisfy other claims about compensation requested by the applicant (Gogaladze's defense side demanded 50,000 euros as compensation).

Gogaladze was arrested by Borjomi police on February 2008. He claimed that he had been physically and verbally assaulted at the police station (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

#### **23. European Court of Human Rights finds no violation by Georgian courts in Rustavi 2 case**

The European Court of Human Rights has published a judgment in the Rustavi 2 case.

The Court held that there had not been violation in so far as the independence and impartiality of judges of Tbilisi City Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court was concerned.

"The Court holds, by six votes to one, that there has been no violation of Article 6 § 1 of the Convention in so far as the independence and impartiality of the single-judge composition of Tbilisi City Court (Judge T.U.) was concerned;

The Court holds, unanimously, that there has been no violation of Article 6 § 1 in so far as the independence and impartiality of the bench of Tbilisi Court of Appeal, which included Judge N.G., was concerned;

The Court holds, by six votes to one, that there has been no violation of Article 6 § 1 in so far as the independence and impartiality of the bench of the Grand Chamber of the Supreme Court, which included the President of the Supreme Court and Judge M.T., was concerned. Done in English, and notified in writing on 18 July 2019, pursuant to Rule 77 §§ 2 and 3 of the Rules of Court", reads the judgment (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

**24. Kibar Khalvashi: Change will only apply to one person and this will be Nika Gvaramia**

"I hope that the company staff will adequately meet the decision of the Strasbourg Court and continue their professional activities. We will all work together to ensure that Rustavi 2 is a successful and popular channel.

The changes will apply to only one person. Nika Gvaramia, who was actually appointed by the regime that deprived me of the company, will not be able to continue to work in the company not as a journalist and not as a director general. Instead, my company will be headed by my lawyer, Paata Salia", - Khalvashi said (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

**25. Mikheil Saakashvili: I call on everybody to mobilize, now we have a state of emergency**

"Let's put aside vacations, good life, some other plans and defend our homeland. The evil must not prevail. The dark forces should not eventually take possession of Georgia. We stand together and declare universal mobilization. I would like to call on all political forces, for whom Georgia's future is important, to stand together without any personal interests and fight for our country, for the victory, for the removal of Ivanishvili. We must achieve snap elections to save the judiciary," Mikheil Saakashvili said (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

**26. Nika Gvaramia: I cannot but say that this decision was shocking and absolutely unimaginable**

"Rustavi 2 is on air and we are not going not to be! First of all, I cannot but say that this decision was shocking and absolutely unimaginable. I am a lawyer and not a bad one. I think I have the right to criticism regardless of which court it concerns.

The decision is absolutely incredible. Unfortunately, it is very difficult that the court left the right to appeal only in one case, which, of course, we will use. In other cases, the right to appeal has been blocked.

I do not support conspiracies and I cannot doubt the court's impartiality. I'll just describe all this as an absolutely wrong interpretation. I have a right to criticism and obviously I disagree with this decision," Nika Gvaramia said (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

**27. Nika Gvaramia calls on Ministry of Justice not to register Rustavi 2 TV Company under Kibar Khalvashi's ownership until expiration of terms of appeal**

"If this is done, we will regard this as a criminal act and misappropriation of Rustavi 2. We have the right to appeal. Satisfaction of this right will cause complete collapse of the case. Abolition of this right is violation of the law by the Minister of Justice and contains signs of a crime," Nika Gvaramia stated at a special briefing (*lpn.ge, July 18, 2019*).

## **28. You Can Make New Television - Akaki Zoidze Responds to Strasbourg's Decision on Rustavi 2**

Akaki Zoidze believes that freedom of expression in Rustavi 2 will not be suspended. The statement was made by the member of the ruling team regarding the decision of the Strasbourg Court. He said it was a property dispute. As for journalists of Rustavi 2, Zoidze said that they can establish a new TV any time.

"It's awkward if we say that the decision has suspended the freedom of expression, especially yours. You can do the same on a new TV. Nothing hinders opening of new television," said Akaki Zoidze (*Rustavi 2, July 18, 2019*).

## **29. "Georgian Court has once again passed an international, very critical test" - Mamuka Mdinardze about Rustavi 2 case**

The ruling party evaluates the decision of the European Court of Human Rights. Mamuka Mdinardze, one of the leaders of the "Georgian Dream" said that the Georgian court passed the test of justice.

"Today the Georgian court has passed an international, very critical test. The European Court of Human Rights declared that the right of fair trial was not violated by the Georgian court. The suspension mechanism canceled and the absolute majority of the judges agreed," - Mamuka Mdinardze said (*Rustavi 2, July 18, 2019*).

## **30. "There are no questions about the issue of justice," - Gia Volski assesses the decision of the Strasbourg Court**

"Strasbourg's decision, the Court's decision would be acceptable for us in any case, no matter what the final would be. This time it was confirmed that the mechanism of suspension was removed from the agenda and it was confirmed that the applicant's side was entitled to a fair trial," Gia Volski said (*Rustavi 2, July 18, 2019*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **31. Pensioners and persons with limited physical capabilities to buy medicines for chronic diseases at 1 GEL**

Changes will be made into the program about medicines for chronic diseases, based on which some differentiation will be lifted and pensioners, persons with limited physical capabilities and other groups will be able to buy medicines for chronic diseases at 1 GEL together with socially vulnerable persons.

Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said during the briefing before the governmental sitting that the change will refer to 35 medicines. "The money paid for medicines was too much and the government worked actively to resolve the problem," PM said (*1TV, July 16, 2019*).

### **32. Turtle lake ropeway to stop working for 4 months**

The ropeway leading to the Turtle Lake in the outskirts of Tbilisi will be stopped for rehabilitation works for 4 months – Tbilisi Transport Company told Georgian First Channel.

The ropeway was detected to have technical problems during one of the planned inspections. The tender is already announced to eradicate the technical fault.

The ropeway was opened in October of 2016. It took one million GEL to rehabilitate it. The exploitation term is 2-4 years. The 150 thousand GEL is allocated for rehabilitation works (*1TV, July 17, 2019*).

## **Additional Information**

### July 18, 2019

#### OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.8687 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5580 GEL	100 RUB -4.5670 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2178 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5050 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6496 GEL

Thursday 18 July	Friday 19 July	Saturday 20 July	Sunday 21 July	Monday 22 July
				
19° 33°	19° 32°	22° 34°	21° 34°	21° 34°

-  **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](#)**