

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

July 22-24

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Letter sent to German Channel over distorted TV story about occupied Abkhazia

The Georgian Embassy in Germany sent a letter to the German Public TV Channel over the distorted TV story about the occupied region of Abkhazia.

"The Georgian Embassy in Germany reacted about the TV story aired by First Channel of German Public Broadcaster on July 21. The TV story "Abkhazia – descending by a rope on the Soviet ruins" contained distorted historical facts. The letter sent to the broadcaster's management and author of the coverage underlined that the situation in the occupied region does not portray the actual reality," reads the letter sent by the diplomatic mission.

The information about the TV story aired by First Channel of German Public Broadcaster was first released in the social network (*TV1, July 22, 2019*).

2. Universities Admit Abkhazia Applicants Despite Checkpoint Blockage

University entrants registered in the Gali district of occupied Abkhazia, who failed to participate in the nationwide exams amid the crossing point closure, imposed by Sokhumi at River Enguri checkpoint, will be enrolled in their desired universities and fully financed by the state.

Georgian Education Minister Mikheil Batiashvili announced on July 24 that this concerns every entrant who had registered for the Unified National and Joint Master Exams to continue studies at any Georgian state university, but "was fully or partially deprived of this right."

However, the Minister explained that it is necessary that these who will be enrolled at universities gather at least 60 credits during the 2019-2020 academic year. Otherwise, the decision on their enrollment will be abolished (*Civil.ge, July 24, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. President of Georgia to take part in General Assembly of United Nations

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili will take part in the work of the General Assembly of the United Nations – Khatia Moitsrapishvili, Press Speaker of the Georgian President said during the briefing.

The 74th UN General Assembly will be held in New York, US, at the end of September. President Zurbishvili will give a speech. High-level meetings on the topic of sustainable development, global health, and climate changes will be held on the sidelines of the assembly (*1TV, July 23, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

4. Kibar Khalvashi: Editorial independence will be guaranteed, however, editorial independence does not mean fulfilling anybody's whims and caprices

Kibar Khalvashi has released a statement. The statement of the owner of TV company "Rustavi 2" has been posted on Rustavi 2's website.

In his statement Khalvashi states that editorial independence will be guaranteed, however, he thinks that "editorial independence does not mean fulfilling anybody's whims and caprices, adjusting to the taste of the people with destructive tasks and operating in the frames of their ethics". As it is noted in the statement owner of TV company looks for a European or American media manager with high reputation and expertise (*ITV, July 22, 2019*).

5. Jarji Akimidze and Davit Dvali: Today one person stands between us and restoration of justice and this person is not Kibar Khalvashi

Today one person stands between them and the restoration of justice and the television founded by them and this person is not Kibar Khalvashi. We reiterate that the justice will be restored only when "Rustavi 2" will return to its founders, – Jarji Akimidze and Davit Dvali, founders of Rustavi 2 TV have released a statement today.

As the statement notes, they believe that Rustavi 2 should be freed from political party influences in order to restore the function of a critical and impartial watchdog, the function of "4th branch of government".

"Today, the events around Rustavi 2 and the current political situation can radically change the media environment in Georgia (*ITV, July 22, 2019*).

6. MP Levan Koberidze offers Davit Dvali and Jarji Akimidze to hold open discussions in Parliament

Independent MP Levan Koberidze has offered Davit Dvali and Jarji Akimidze to discuss the issue of Rustavi 2 ownership in an open format at the Parliament. Koberidze writes about it on social network "Facebook".

According to the MP, the topic has long gone beyond the matter of private ownership and at the same time, is very important in terms of restoring justice in the country (*ITV, July 22, 2019*).

7. Irakli Okruashvili – I was the fundraiser of United National Movement Party

It's nobody's business how much money I lent to Khalvashi – Former Defense Minister and leader of Victorious Georgia Party Irakli Okruashvili said on TV Pirveli when speaking about Kibar Khalvashi, the new owner of Rustavi 2 TV Company.

According to Okruashvili, his statement about the fact that the Rose Revolution was financed by him turned out to be funny for some people.

"I took 600 thousand dollars from one of Shevardnadze's law ministers alone in April 2003. I did not need governmental leverages for attracting this kind of money. I was the fundraiser of United National Movement," – Okruashvili told TV Pirveli.

When asked if the money was needed for the Rose Revolution, Okruashvili responded: "Not only for the Rose Revolution but for preventing any dangers for them later."

When asked of whether these people were buying security, Okruashvili replied: "Yes, of course. They saved themselves. And this kind of things will happen in the future too." (*TV Pirveli, July 23, 2019*).

8. Kibar Khalvashi – Irakli Okruashvili is a schmuck

Irakli Okruashvili is a schmuck – Kibar Khalvashi, the new owner of Rustavi 2 TV Company said after leaving Levan Samkharauli National Forensic Bureau where he left the sample of his signature.

The expertise has to reveal the authenticity of the document which was signed in 2010 in Berlin between the businessman Kibar Khalvashi and Irakli Okruashvili, former defense minister and Leader of Victorious Georgia Party. The result will become known in 1 month.

Several days after Khalvashi was returned ownership of Rustavi 2, Irakli Okruashvili, a former Defence Minister and former ally of the ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, claimed he was the real owner of Rustavi 2. According to him, Saakashvili's government had used Khalvashi in 2004 as a formal middle-man (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

9. Ministry of Justice Publishes Letter from Strasbourg Court regarding Rustavi 2 Case

The Ministry of Justice of Georgia published a letter from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in response to the ungrounded PR campaign launched by the former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company.

The letter states that the fifth chamber of the European Court has made a judgment on the case, which is uploaded on the court internet site and is also attached to the letter. The letter indicates that the Government of Georgia has the right to appeal this decision before October 18, 2019.

At the end of the letter, it is noted: "Please, note that the Chamber decided to discontinue the application of Rule 39 of the Rules of Court (suspension mechanism) in the above application." (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

10. MIA charges person for uploading and distribution of video reflecting MP's private life

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) charged the person who uploaded and distributed the video material reflecting the private life of a Georgian lawmaker.

Mamuka Chelidze, acting Director of Central Criminal Police Department of MIA held a briefing into the case this afternoon.

According to Chelidze, the investigation determined that a Georgian citizen being in imprisonment for murder released the material in January of 2019 from the Republic of Armenia via Messenger of the social network Facebook. The person received the video from a Russian citizen (*ITV, July 22, 2019*).

11. General Prosecutor - I consider my candidacy for post of Supreme Court Chairman

"I consider my candidacy for the position of Supreme Court Chairman, – General Prosecutor of Georgia Shalva Tadumadze, who is the Supreme Court Judicial Candidate, told reporters on Tuesday after being interviewed at the High Council of Justice.

Tadumadze said he is free of any political influence. The process of the interview lasted for more than 5 hours (*ITV, July 23, 2019*).

12. Prosecutor's Office - Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze charged for legalization of illegal revenues

The General Prosecutor's Office presented charges to Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Supervisory Board of TBC Bank on the fact of legalization of illegal revenues in the amount of USD 16 754 000.

General Prosecutor's Office began an investigation against TBC Bank governors on August 2 of 2018 under Article 194 of Criminal Code of Georgia.

Khazaradze and Japaridze are called to Prosecutor's Office for presentation of charges. The Prosecutor's Office will then apply to the court to impose punishment to TBC Bank officials (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

13. Archil Talakvadze – Investigation into TBC Bank case preceded Mamuka Khazaradze's statements

Archil Talakvadze, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament said that the investigation into TBC Bank case preceded the statements of Mamuka Khazaradze (Chairman of Supervisory Board of TBC Bank) about his plans to establish a public movement.

"It is important that all questions are answered and we welcome the openness of the Prosecutor's Office into TBC Bank case. The parliament is monitoring the case until it is exhausted," Talakvadze said (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

14. Salome Samadashvili – Government plans to bury Anaklia Port Project

"Disruption of Anaklia Project is the objective of the government and it is working on that. Khazaradze has serious resources and his entering into political processes would radically change the political landscape. Ivanishvili wants to neutralize Khazaradze and this is a punishment operation that has nothing to do with the judiciary and unbiased investigation," Samadashvili claimed (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

15. Minister of Economy pledges that nothing threatens Anaklia project

"As we have repeatedly stated, the Anaklia project is a very high-level priority for our country. We definitely need a deep-water port in Anaklia, which has unprecedented support by the state and therefore, nothing threatens this project," Turnava said.

According to Minister, investors of the Anaklia port will be answered by the court and the public should wait for the court decision (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

16. Koba Gvenetadze – Interests of TBC bank clients will be protected in the same quality as before

Interests of TBC bank clients will be protected in the same quality as before – Koba Gvenetadze, President of National Bank of Georgia (NBG) said.

Gvenetadze said that NBG, as a regulatory body, was working with TBC bank in the usual regime. He said that there was no dispute between TBC Bank and NBG. Gvenetadze also claimed that TBC Bank was one of the healthy and strong financial institutions and there was no threat to its financial stability (*ITV, July 24, 2019*).

17. Bank of Georgia will provide services for Tbilisi State University instead of TBC Bank

On July 23 the decision was made by the leadership of the Tbilisi State University that their corporate bank will be Bank of Georgia instead of TBC. For this purpose meeting with the representatives of Bank of Georgia had been planned for July 26.

NETGAZETI contacted the representative of TSU and asked about the decision of changing service provider and if it was affected by ongoing processes around TBC. The response was that the reason behind this decision was better offer from BOG (*NETGAZETI.GE, July 24, 2019*).

18. Mamuka Khazaradze: Just because we had to come here for 5 minutes, TBC Bank shares devaluated by 8%

"I will not comment on the charges now. It is clear that everything is absurd. This is continuation of the orchestrated attack, which has very bad conductors and very bad musicians.

Today's briefing is a repeat of the previous two briefings, which damaged our shareholders in London and caused the loss of 200 million. Today, just because we had to come here for 5 minutes and get some papers, TBC Bank shares devaluated by 8% and our investors lost tens of millions. This is a direct, purposeful action," said Khazaradze (*lpn.ge, July 24, 2019*).

19. Mamuka Khazaradze, Badri Japaridze leave posts of chairman, deputy chairman of TBC Bank Board of Directors

Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze are leaving the positions of the chairman and the deputy chairman of the Board of Directors of TBC Bank until the investigation is completed. Mamuka Khazaradze wrote in the social network about it (*lpn.ge, July 24, 2019*).

20. US Embassy about charges against TBC Bank co-founders : We are concerned about the context and timing of these charges

"We are closely following developments related to the criminal charges the Georgian Prosecutor General's Office has filed against TBC Bank co-founders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze. We are concerned about the context and timing of these charges.

An impartial and transparent legal system that is free of political influence is vital for Georgia's Western integration and its ability to attract foreign investment.

We continue to support the Anaklia port project, a significant source of U.S. investment in Georgia that has the potential to advance the country's economic growth," the statement reads (*lpn.ge, July 25, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

21. Government to subsidize transit flights from Russia with up to 600 thousand Euros

The Georgian government will subsidize transit flights from the Russian Federation with up to 600 thousand Euros.

Based on the decision, subsidizing will refer to the flights from Russia through Yerevan in direction of Tbilisi and Batumi.

The corresponding agreement will be signed by the Airports Union of Georgia. However, the decision does not specify the air company with which the agreement will be concluded.

"Georgian Airways" is carrying out the transit flights from Russia through Yerevan in cooperation with the Armenian air companies at present (*TV1, July 24, 2019*).

Additional Information

July 25, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9010 GEL

1 GBP - 3.6251 GEL

100 RUB - 4.5990 GEL


1 EUR - 3.3243 GEL

1 TRY - 0.5070 GEL


100 JPY - 2.6854 GEL


Thursday 25 July	Friday 26 July	Saturday 27 July	Sunday 28 July	Monday 29 July
				
20° 31°	17° 29°	19° 28°	19° 30°	20° 29°

 **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](#)**