

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

July 25-28

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### 1. Civil Aviation Agency – International flights cannot be carried out at Sokhumi airport

The Civil Aviation Agency released a statement which says that international flights cannot be carried out at Sokhumi airport without corresponding permission of Georgia, and unless the Georgian side will ensure monitoring of the movement's security.

If any air company begins implementing flight in direction of Sokhumi, occupied Abkhazia region, it will violate both civil aviation international norms and the Georgian Law on Occupied Territories and will face problems about operating flight in direction of Georgia.

Sokhumi airport has been closed since 1993. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) recognizes Abkhazia as Georgia's territory (*ITV, July 27, 2019*).

#### 2. All 190 students from occupied Abkhazia enrolled after facing obstacles to sit university exams

The Georgian government and the Ministry of Education have made a decision to enroll all the students from Georgia's western occupied Abkhazia region after they faced serious obstacles to sit university exams in early July due to the closure of the so-called border by occupying forces just prior to the exam season. Head of the Gali Education Resource Centre Nona Shonia told Agenda.ge that most of the students who were registered for the elections from Abkhazia were already on Tbilisi-administered territory when the de facto authorities called them back to participate in school graduation events and take school certificates (*Agenda.ge, July 27, 2019*).

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

3.

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

#### 4. Number of asylum seekers in Germany from Georgia decreased by 20 percent

The number of asylum seekers in Germany from Georgia has decreased by 20 percent. According to the Federal Service for Migration and Refugees, in January-June of this year, there were 2 111 applications from Georgian citizens, and in January-June of 2018, this number was 2 640. At the same time, decrease dynamics are fixed by months: January – 534; June – 182.

In 2018, the number of asylum seekers in Germany from Georgia was 4 265, which is 23% higher than in 2017 (*ITV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **5. Military exercise Agile Spirit 2019 to start in Georgia today**

Georgia will host the multinational military exercise Agile Spirit 2019 from July 27 through August 9. According to the Ministry of Defence, the exercise will officially kick off at the 2nd Infantry Brigade of Senaki.

The military exercise will be conducted under the leadership of West Command of Georgian Defense Forces and US European Command. The exercise includes field and CPX components.

Agile Spirit 2019 is aimed to enhance interoperability, train and improve operational capabilities of exercise participants during planning and execution of operations in real time within a multinational environment; as well as making a contribution in maintaining stable and secure environment over the Black Sea region (*ITV, July 27, 2019*).

#### **6. President of Georgia addresses emigrants**

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili addresses the Georgian emigrants and calls on them for using the law based on which they will be able to preserve the Georgian citizenship through a facilitated procedure.

"It is strategically important for me to retain every citizen, and I am glad that thousands of Georgians used the chance. Those, who plan to spend summer in Georgia, please take time and visit Justice House," Zurbishvili wrote on Facebook. The law is active till August 15 (*ITV, July 27, 2019*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **7. Euronews to begin Broadcasting in Georgia**

Euronews will begin broadcasting in Georgia. The Memorandum of Cooperation has already been signed between the international news channel and Silknet.

Euronews Georgia will offer news in the Georgian language, it will have 20% coverage of the developments taking place in Georgia.

The Memorandum of Cooperation was signed by George Ramishvili, Chairman of Supervisory Board of Silknet and Michael Peters, Euronews CEO.

According to the memorandum, new media "Euronews Georgia" will be added to "Silknet". It is guided by the principles of independent journalism and is associated with high awareness and reputation of the Euronews brand. Euronews provides strict impartiality of editorial policy, will appoint the editor of the newly created channel and will be staffed by the editorial board. The editorial board determines strategic directions, establishes editorial policies and balanced broadcasting rules (*ITV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **8. NGOs: Charges against the founders of TBC Bank raise many questions about the investigation**

"We call on the Government of Georgia to consider the gravity of the situation and the potential consequences that will follow if suspicions of selective or political justice are further reinforced. Moreover, any attempt to hinder the construction of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port will be a major blow to the economic

and security interests of the state. We address the international partners of Georgia to pay close attention to the recent developments around TBC Bank and the Anaklia Port project, in order to prevent any irreversible loss to the long-term democratic development of Georgia”, – reads the statement signed by multiple NGOs (*1TV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **9. Salome Zurabishvili: Rustavi 2 is the case, president should not interfere**

As President noted, the Strasburg court decision was unprecedented, which demonstrated the impartiality of the Georgian court.

“Rustavi 2 case is a private commercial issue. The Strasburg decision is unprecedented since it recognized impartiality of the Georgian court. This fact is worth mentioning daily. I believe that freedom of speech is not threatened in Georgia”, – President Zurabishvili said (*1TV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **10. Salome Zurabishvili on Khazaradze-Japaridze case: President has no right to interfere and express opinion in such case**

“I observe the developments and have my opinion, but the President has no right to interfere in such case and express her own opinion,” – President of Georgia made this statement when commenting on the case of founders of TBC Bank – Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze.

According to President, until the Prosecutor’s Office and the Court are involved, the President’s comments can be perceived as interference (*1TV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **11. British Embassy: UK is closely watching developments related to the criminal charges against TBC co-founders**

“It is critical that this case is handled in an impartial and transparent manner. This is crucial for Georgia’s banking sector and its ability to attract foreign investment from diverse range of sources, in support of Georgia’s inclusive economic growth”, – the statement reads (*1TV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **12. Mamuka Bakhtadze – Anaklia Port Project has strategic importance for Georgia**

“The Georgian government has expressed full support to the project. The government made many steps including taking financial liabilities, attracting investments or leading negotiations with various international financial institutions to carry out the project successfully. The government will do its best for Georgia to have a deepwater port,” Prime Minister said (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

#### **13. PM - We all share spirit of statement made by US Embassy**

“As for the statement of our strategic partner, the US Embassy, we all share its spirit – of course, a transparent process must be guaranteed and it will be so.

I want to repeat once again – Georgia has a justice system of the European level and this is the main thing. Therefore, I am sure there will be no questions around this process like any other process,” Mamuka Bakhtadze said (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

#### **14. Prosecutor’s Office appeals to Tbilisi City Court regarding measure of restraint into case of TBC Bank founders**

The General Prosecutor General’s Office of Georgia filed a motion with Tbilisi City Court regarding the use of measure of restraint into the case of Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Supervisory Board of TBC Bank.

The Prosecutor's Office demands the imposition of bail to each person in the amount of 1 million GEL as Zviad Kordzadze told Georgian First Channel (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

#### **15. Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze leave positions in Anaklia Board of Governors**

"Anaklia is a vital project for our country, which can turn the country's economy into a gateway between Europe and Asia and attract big investors. This is absolutely incomprehensible. On the one hand, the government says it supports Anaklia and, on the other hand, they are directly fighting against this project. The damage that they inflicted to the Georgian economy in 2 days in exchange for 2 million GEL is a crime and the time will come when they will pay for that.

Therefore, Badri and I decided that next week we will have a press conference and will change the Anaklia Board of Governors. I will leave the chairman's position and Badri will resign as deputy chairman, in order to end speculations once and for all," Khazaradze said (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

#### **16. Lawyer of TBC Bank founders appealed against Tbilisi City Court's decision**

Zviad Kordzadze, the lawyer of TBC Bank founders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze has appealed against Tbilisi City Court's decision.

According to the lawyer, the ruling was fully appealed. As lawyer claims the ruling of the court is unfounded.

GEL 700 000 bail was ordered by the court for TBC Bank founders Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze on July 26. The Prosecutor's Office demanded the imposition of bail to each person in the amount of 1 million GEL (*1TV, July 28, 2019*).

#### **17. MIA detained Irakli Okruashvili and four persons in connection with June 20-21 developments**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia detained the leader of Victorious Georgia Party Irakli Okruashvili on the charge of organizing, heading and participating in group violence committed during June 20-21 developments in front of the Parliament. In addition, the other four persons have been detained.

Mamuka Chelidze, acting Director of Central Criminal Police Department of MIA stated about it at the briefing held this afternoon (*1TV, July 25, 2019*).

#### **18. MIA detains 2 more people in connection with June 20-21 events**

Officers of the Central Criminal Police Department of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) detained two more persons in connection with June 20-21 developments outside the parliament building in Tbilisi.

The 2 people born in 1993 and 1976 were detained on fact of organizing group violence, attack on law-enforcers and attempt to intrude into the parliament building.

The MIA continues an intensive investigation into June 20-21 events. A total of 19 people have been held criminally responsible for the time being including lawmaker Nikanor Melia, a member of National Movement Party (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

#### **19. Gubaz Sanikidze – Irakli Okruashvili is a personal captive of Bidzina Ivanishvili**

"We saw the video material about the events taking place outside the parliament building on the night of June 20-21. The material does not show any violence, intrusion into parliament or attempt of the coup. . . . This is a political vengeance over the issue of Rustavi 2," Sanikidze said (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

## **20. Judge denies former defence minister bail**

A Tbilisi City Court has denied bail to Irakli Okruashvili, the former Georgian Defence Minister under the United National Movement (UNM) leadership.

Okruashvili was detained on July 25 for incitement to violence during the clashes of June 20 in front of the parliament of Georgia. However, he denies the charges against him (*Agenda.ge, July 27, 2019*).

## **21. Leader of Labor Party calls on political parties for launch of consultations**

Shalva Natelashvili, Leader of Labor Party called on political parties for the launch of consultations to take people to the street and hold political rallies rather than participate in talk-shows.

"The penitentiary facilities are full of political prisoners, the national currency is depreciated, financial and economic systems are ruined. The public is divided into antagonist groups and the Georgian territories are given out without punishment. There is nothing bad beyond that," Natelashvili said during the briefing (*1TV, July 27, 2019*).

## **22. Dismissed director of Rustavi 2 announces creation of a new channel**

Nika Gvaramia, a former Director General of Rustavi 2 TV, who was dismissed as soon as the ex-owner of the channel Kibar Khalvashi was given back his shares of the channel July 18, has announced the creation of a new channel, "which will start broadcasting earlier than you think."

Gvaramia, who took top posts under the United National Movement leadership, including the post of justice minister, says that investors have already been found.

However, expenses will be high and we will also kick off a public campaign to attract additional funds," Gvaramia wrote on his Facebook post (*Agenda.ge, July 26, 2019*).

## **23. Rustavi 2 founders say they will use all legal means to regain the channel**

David Dvali and Jarji Akimidze, the founders of Rustavi 2 TV channel in 1994, say they will use "all legal" means to regain the channel from its new owner Kibar Khalvashi. Dvali and Akimidze spoke about the TV channel ownership dispute with parliament members yesterday.

Akimidze said they demand "the restoration of justice and recognition of the fact that the state committed a crime" [when they "illegally seized the channel from its lawful owners" in 2004, under the United National Movement leadership] (*Agenda.ge, July 27, 2019*).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **24. Georgia plans to increase wine exports to Japan**

Georgian Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili and President of Japanese alcoholic drinks consultation company ASIA AC Wataru Iwamoto met yesterday to discuss the prospect of exporting more Georgian wine to the Japanese market.

Wataru Iwamoto stated that Georgian wine is in high demand on the Japanese market after the 'Georgia – Homeland of Wine' exhibition was held.

The employees of the Asia AC company will have a two-day tour in Tbilisi and Kakheti region to taste different varieties of Georgian wine.

In partnership with the company the Georgian side carried out a project 'Georgia – Homeland of Wine' in the Japanese capital of Tokyo between March 10 – May 7, 2019 (*Agenda.ge, July 25, 2019*).

### **25. Rehabilitation of road leading to Davit Gareji launched**

Rehabilitation of the 13.3-kilometer-long road leading to Davit Gareji, a rock-hewn Georgian Orthodox monastery complex located in the Kakheti region of Eastern Georgia, has been launched from the territory of Udabno village, Roads Department informs.

The cost of to-be-carried out works is 6 079 673 GEL. The Roads Department says that rehabilitation works are important for locals, believers and tourists (*1TV, July 26, 2019*).

### **26. Solar power systems to be installed in 87 Georgian villages without electricity**

Solar power systems will be installed in 87 Georgian villages that are not hooked up to the national electricity grid in mountainous regions of Georgia.

The government of Georgia will provide 178 permanent resident families of Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Racha-Lechkhumi – Kvemo Svaneti, Kakheti and Imereti with the solar panels.

Each solar panel will have a 1,500W capacity that is sufficient for a household to use several appliances at the same time.

The USAID/Energy Program will provide the Regional Development and Infrastructure Ministry of Georgia with technical support (*Agenda.ge, July 26, 2019*).

### **27. Euronews - Georgia's EU bid stepped up with new electric car manufacturing plant**

The city of Kutaisi in Georgia hopes to put itself at the forefront of global automobile production with the opening of an electric car factory that plans to produce 40,000 vehicles a year.

A construction memorandum was signed in May by the Georgian industrial holding AiGroup and Changan, a Chinese state-owned vehicle manufacturer. The Changan corporation is the largest electric car manufacturer in the world, and has partnerships with Ford, Volkswagen, Volvo, Mazda and Suzuki.

Georgia's Prime Minister, Mamuka Bakhtadze, is enthusiastic about the project: "This factory will open a new chapter in our economic history. It will have a very positive influence on our economic structure, by creating more than 2,000 jobs and – at the same time – will help us to increase our export potential."

The plant will be the first of its kind not only in Georgia but the entire South Caucasus region, and will sit on 100 hectares of land on the outskirts of Kutaisi. In addition to the manufacturing plant, it will comprise facilities for painting, welding and the construction of solar panels (*Euronews.com, July 26, 2019*).

### **28. Mamuka Bakhtadze – Hepatitis C Elimination Program is a national project**

"Struggle with Hepatitis C remains a challenge to many countries. But Georgia is a unique country because the program for the elimination of Hepatitis C is already practiced and it has the status of a national project. The program has been introduced since 2015," Bakhtadze said.

According to PM, about 1.5 million patients underwent thorough screening on Hepatitis C and more than 58 thousand people are involved in the program. About 54 thousand patients completed the program successfully (*1TV, July 27, 2019*).

### **29. Opposition Slams Government for Intending to Subsidize Russia Flights**

The opposition slammed the government's decision to offer subsidies to travelers from Russia to Georgia's airports of Tbilisi and Batumi via Yerevan. The government decreed on July 24 that state company United Airports of Georgia will be authorized to subsidize airfare.

The same decision also covers the flights from Brussels and London.

A total of 600,000 euros (without VAT) has been allotted for this purpose per destination country. The airfare subsidy per each passenger should not exceed EUR 90 (excluding VAT). The airline which would win the government contract will have to schedule at least two flights per week.

The decision comes less than a month after Russian flight ban, imposed by the Kremlin on the wave of Tbilisi street protests, which Moscow considers anti-Russian, has entered into force (*Civil.ge, July 28, 2019*).

## ❖ Sports and Culture

### 30. Nikoloz Basilashvili won Hamburg Open for the second time in a row

Georgian tennis player Nikoloz Basilashvili won Hamburg European Open for the second time in a row. Georgian tennis player faced Russian Andrey Rublev in ATP 500 event final. Nikoloz Basilashvili gained victory in 1 hour and 10 minutes – 7: 5, 4: 6, 6: 3. From Monday, Basilashvili will regain the 16th position in the world ranking (*1TV, July 28, 2019*).

## Additional Information

**July 29, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.9321 GEL	1 GBP - 3.6446 GEL	100 RUB -4.6456 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2637 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5180 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6984 GEL

  

Monday 29 July	Tuesday 30 July	Wednesday 31 July	Thursday 1 August	Friday 2 August
				
19° 30°	22° 35°	21° 34°	20° 34°	20° 30°

  

-  [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](#)