

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 8-12

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Date: **August 12, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. State Minister – No works carried out at present by occupants at Gugutiantkari village

No additional works are currently being carried out by occupants at Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality – Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality Issues said.

According to Tsikhelashvili, official Tbilisi promptly reacted over the fact of illegal activities and activated a hotline to inform the international community about the installation of additional artificial barriers in proximity to the village. The State Minister also called on everybody to refrain from speculations over the issue.

The occupational forces resumed the illegal process of installation of artificial barriers near Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality on August 7 (*ITV, August 9, 2019*).

2. Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman says 'borderisation' in Georgia 'a myth'

The Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a recent news briefing that on the eleventh anniversary of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, "Georgian and Western media and politicians are again trying to play the 'borderisation' card".

"Artificial frenzy over the alleged violations on the South Ossetian-Georgian border is once again being created. A myth is being spread on the shifting of the border by Russians and South Ossetians and their movement inside Georgian territory", Zakharova stated on August 9 (*Agenda.ge, August 11, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Mikheil Saakashvili: We miscalculated Putin because we thought Russians would never go for Tbilisi

"I miscalculated Putin because we thought Russians would never go for Tbilisi," – the former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili said in an interview with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). He noted that all Georgia's Western partners had assured him that this option was not on the cards. "Everyone said the Russians would never invade us; Condi Rice always said that", – Saakashvili said. Saakashvili singled out current German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier as a rare leader who had an accurate assessment of Russia's plans (*ITV, August 8, 2019*).

4. Mikheil Saakashvili: West has double standards, they have this attitude which I think might be a remnant of colonialism

"The thing is, the West is motivated by several instincts and one of the main instincts is appeasement. They always want to delay the problem, they always want to refer to the past, to the future, anything but the present. Nobody wants trouble and the [Western] politicians' basic instinct is to keep trouble away, to ignore it or to pretend they don't see it and that it's not real", – Saakashvili said (*ITV, August 8, 2019*).

5. Russian Foreign Ministry - Georgia and Western countries could not learn a lesson from tragic events developed in August 2008

"It is unfortunate that neither Georgia nor the West has learned a lesson from the tragic events developed in the Caucasus in August 2008. Instead of trying to foster good neighborly relations between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, official Tbilisi and its Western partners are involved in the anti-Russian hysteria, equip the region with weapons and drag Georgia to NATO. All this creates a deadlock and does not contribute to peace, stability and security in the region," reads the statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Press and Information Department.

The Ministry notes that Russia "uses all its efforts" to launch dialogue and proper negotiation process "between Georgia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia." (*ITV, August 8, 2019*)

6. US, five European countries issue statement on the occasion of 11th anniversary of August war at UN Security Council

The United States and five European countries have issued a joint statement on the occasion of 11th anniversary of the Georgian-Russian August War with an appeal to Moscow to implement agreements reached in 2008 to withdraw its military forces to positions held before hostilities began.

The ambassadors of Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Poland, Britain and the United States issued a statement after the meeting of the UN Security Council on Thursday, supporting Georgia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity (*ITV, August 8, 2019*).

7. Closing ceremony of Agile Spirit 2019 at Orpholo Polygon

The closing ceremony of Agile Spirit 2019 multinational international military training is being held at Orpholo polygon in Akhaltsikhe town of Georgia.

Agile Spirit 2019 began on July 27. The exercise was held on three locations – 2nd Infantry Brigade in Senaki, Orpholo and Vaziani fire ranges. More than 3000 military servicemen of NATO member and partner countries participated in Agile Spirit 2019.

The following 14 countries were engaged in the exercise: Georgia, USA, UK, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine.

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, August 9, 2019*).

8. Salome Zourabichvili - Path to NATO is a path to global peace and stability of the region

The path to NATO is a path to global peace and stability of the region, – Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili said at the closing ceremony of Agile Spirit 2019 multinational international military training at Orpholo polygon.

In her speech, President noted that agile spirit has been characteristic to Georgian warriors for centuries and with the successful completion of this year's exercise Georgia will move closer to the goal of increasing interoperability among the countries participating in the multinational exercise.

"The key message of this exercise – "Power is in Partnership" – is fully consistent with our joint efforts. Today we are once again expressing our commitment to the chosen path. The path to NATO – this is a path to global peace and stability of the region; a path to safety. International partnership is of great importance on this path," Zurabishvili said (*1TV, August 9, 2019*).

9. President - Saakashvili's statements distort history and represent an insult to our partner nations and leaders

"Since becoming President, I have made a point of never commenting on former President Mikheil Saakashvili's opinions even when they have been personally offensive. But his most recent interview regarding his relations with the West during the 2008 war has crossed a line and affects Georgia's strategic interests.

Saakashvili's statements distort history and represent an insult to our partner nations and leaders who have stood by Georgia since its independence. Such falsehoods and misrepresentations are irresponsible and unacceptable from a former President.

This is a clear attempt to undermine the relations between Georgia and its strategic partners at this crucial juncture in our path towards the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance," President Zurabishvili has tweeted (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

10. Former General Director of Rustavi 2 – Decision of Strasbourg Court became opening of Dictatorship's Pandora Box

The Decision of Strasbourg Court became the opening of dictatorship's Pandora Box in Georgia -Nika Gvaramia, former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company said at General Prosecutor's Office.

As Gvaramia said, his arrest and indictment of charges were not the first signs of dictatorship. Leaders of the National Movement Party and European Georgia are present outside the Prosecutor's Office.

Nika Gvaramia, former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company was summoned to General Prosecutor's Office to be presented charges officially.

The General Prosecutor's Office began an investigation on July 20 into Gvaramia's case on fact of misuse of duties based on the application of Nino Nizharadze, former 9% shareholder of the TV Company.

According to the Prosecutor's Office, the criminal case was also filed on the application of Paata Salia, current General Director of Rustavi 2 on presumable inflict of financial damage to the TV Company (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

11. Former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company imposed payment of bail

The Tbilisi City Court imposed payment of bail in the amount of 40 thousand GEL as the punishment form to Nika Gvaramia, former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company.

Judge Giorgi Keratishvili announced the decision. The hearing lasted about 6 hours before the judge announced the decision. Former General Director of Rustavi 2 has to pay the bail within one month. Gvaramia has also been prohibited to leave Georgia's territory. The next court hearing is scheduled for September 30. Gvaramia said after the court sitting that he was not planned to pay the bail (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

12. Nika Gvaramia refuses to pay bail

"I would not pay the bail even if it were 5 GEL, it's a matter of principle, – said Nika Gvaramia, former General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company after the court hearing. Nika Gvaramia told reporters that he plans to appeal the judge's decision.

"I told the judge that I would not pay the bail. I have not heard anything like this. I told the judge I would not pay the bail, but Judge still made such a decision.

"I will not pay it and let's see what happens in a month – let's see whether they will be afraid to arrest me or not", – Nika Gvaramia said (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

13. Mamuka Bakhtadze congratulated Muslim citizens on Kurban Bayram

Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia congratulated Kurban Bayram to Muslim population of the country. He has visited Jumah Mosque in Tbilisi.

As noted by the Head of the Government of Georgia, a strong state has been built together over centuries by every religious and ethnic group living in Georgia and this tradition continues presently (*August 11, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

14. Unresolved problems in Sagarejo – Special reporting from regions

Georgian First Channel begins preparing the series of special reporting from Georgia's different regions.

The shooting teams will arrive in all regions and villages to inquire about problems facing the locals and to show how budgetary expenditures are spent.

The first coverage is from Sagarejo, Kakheti region, where people have claims against the local authorities about the incorrect allocation of 25-million-GEL budget. All the 44 villages face the problem of potable water supply and nothing is done in infrastructure direction.

The City Hall building has been repaired twice for the last 2 years while employees are regularly receiving compensation for overtime work (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

15. Georgian Railway Workers New Trade Union and Georgian Railways to launch talks on increase of salaries

Negotiations over the increase of salaries have started between the Georgian Railway Workers New Trade Union and the Georgian Railways, – Vitali Giorgadze, chairman of the Georgian Railway Workers New Trade Union, said at a news conference today.

According to him, they leave the decision of the strike in force, though at this stage they do not name a specific date and are moving to the format of negotiations.

The employees of the Georgian Railway, whose salaries are less than GEL 1000, demand 50 percent increase in their salaries (*1TV, August 10, 2019*).

Additional Information

August 12, 2019

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9360 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5511 GEL	100 RUB -4.4852 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2898 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5331 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7743 GEL

Monday 12 August	Tuesday 13 August	Wednesday 14 August	Thursday 15 August	Friday 16 August
				
19° 29°	17° 29°	18° 31°	20° 32°	20° 33°

-  **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](#)**