

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 19-22

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Date: **August 23, 2019**

❖ **Occupied Regions**

❖ **Abkhazia Region**

1. Fire opened to headquarters of so-called presidential candidate of occupied Abkhazia

The fire was opened to the election headquarters of Oleg Arshba, the so-called presidential candidate of Georgia's occupied Abkhazia region.

De-facto Abkhazian Ministry of Internal Affairs reported that nobody was inside the building of the election headquarters located in Gudauta district and therefore no one was injured in the incident.

The so-called Presidential elections are scheduled to be held in the occupied region of Abkhazia on 25 August 2019 (*ITV, August 21, 2019*).

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

2. Three families affected by the barbed wire in Gugutiantarkari village will receive state aid

State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality of Georgia Ketevan Tsikhelashvili met Givi Razmadze and Lavrenti Gugutishvili in Gori, whose homes were beyond the barbed wire in Gugutiantkari village.

According to the press office of State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality of Georgia, the purpose of this visit in Gori was to inform them about government assistance. Three families affected by the barbed wire in Gugutiantarkari village will receive state aid (*ITV, August 19, 2019*).

3. David Zalkaliani called the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to discuss the borderization in the village of Gugutiantkari

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani today called the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak to discuss the borderization in the village of Gugutiantkari in Gori Municipality.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani provided Miroslav Lajcak with detailed information about frequent provocations and incidents on the occupation line.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office is aware of the whole picture about 8 Georgian citizens who were detained near the occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region for "illegally crossing the border".

Georgian Foreign Minister asked the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to raise this topic on the international community's agenda (*ITV, August 19, 2019*).

4. Eight Georgian citizens detained by occupational forces released

The eight Georgian citizens detained by the occupational forces on August 17-18 have been released for the time being – The journalist of Georgian First Channel reported from Ergneti village.

Vazha Siradze, Director of Patrol Police Department of Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) said that the detained persons were already brought to the territory controlled by the central Georgian authorities. Seven Georgian citizens, locals of Akhalubani village, were detained on August 17. The eighth Georgian was detained near the occupied village of Artsevi on August 18. The Georgian citizens were kept at Tskhinvali isolator (*1TV, August 20, 2019*).

5. PM, Parliament Speaker visit Georgians released from Tskhinvali isolator (Photo)

It was very important that the whole international community stood beside Georgia and all the relevant institutions were involved in the process – Mamuka Bakhtadze, Georgian Prime Minister said in the family of Gerkeulis in Akhalubani village where he visited the eight Georgian citizens released from Tskhinvali isolator. Head of the Georgian government congratulated the eight youngsters on peaceful return to their homes.

Archil Talakvadze, Parliament Speaker, Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equity and Giorgi Khojewanishvili, Shida Kartli Regional Envoy accompanied PM during his visit (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

6. Latvian FM says borderization activities at Gugutiantkari village must be stopped

“The borderization activities in the area of Gugutiantkari village Georgia by the Russian-backed authorities in Tskhinvali are another blatant violation of Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. I support the statement by the EU delegation in Georgia, this illegal activity must be stopped,” Edgars Rinkēvičs has tweeted (*1TV, August 20, 2019*).

7. Czech Foreign Minister condemns borderization process in Gugutiantkari

“The illegal practice of division of the Georgian territory has been lately renewed and several Georgian citizens were even kidnapped. Recently, I familiarized myself with a complicated situation of the locals on the spot. I cannot but strongly condemn the steps taken by the de facto South Ossetian authorities and the Russian troops, Tomáš Petříček Tweeted (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

8. Occupational forces resume borderization works in Gugutiantkari

The occupational forces have resumed the borderization works in Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality since morning.

The journalist of Georgian First Channel reports that Russian soldiers brought and deployed heavy vehicles and are installing iron posts across the occupied line.

Locals fear that one part of their pastures and the cemetery will be located beyond the line. The irrigation channel, fortunately, will remain on the territory controlled by the central authorities.

Locals are observing the process of illegal borderization. Representatives of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia are also present at the site (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

9. EU releases statement about telephone conversation between Federica Mogherini and Davit Zalkaliani

The European External Action Service – EEAS released a statement about the telephone conversation held this morning between Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission and Minister of Foreign Affairs of

Georgia Davit Zalkaliani. The sides discussed the issue of the 'borderisation' activities in the vicinity of Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality (1TV, August 21, 2019).

10. Georgian PM - Occupation is the most painful challenge, it is an issue that should unite every Georgian citizen

„The role of the international community is crucial in this strategy and the support of our friend countries have a special role in this process. We should not have the illusion that this process will stop in the shortest possible time, because unfortunately, the Russian occupation force continues to take its occupational steps. We must have a principled position and be united and stand together with the international community“, – Mamuka Bakhtadze noted (1TV, August 22, 2019).

❖ Foreign Affairs

11. State Security Service – Violation of Georgia's air space by Russian helicopter is a provocation

The State Security Service confirms the fact of violation of Georgia's air space by a Russian helicopter this afternoon.

“A hotline is activated and the European Union Monitoring Mission is informed about the fact. The move represents yet another provocation that seriously damages the security environment at site,” Security Service said.

The Russian helicopter flew over the occupied territory in the proximity of Gugutiantkari village at about 12:00.

The occupational forces have resumed the borderization works in Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality since morning. Russian soldiers brought and deployed heavy vehicles and are installing iron posts across the occupied line (1TV, August 21, 2019).

12. President of Georgia to open Business Leaders Forum in Paris

President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili will open Business Leaders Forum in Paris on August 28. The forum is organized by MEDEF International, the leading network of French entrepreneurs.

Representatives of French leading companies, which actively cooperate with the Georgian side, will also participate in the forum. President of Georgia is also planned to hold high-level meetings in Paris on the sidelines of the event (1TV, August 21, 2019).

13. President Zurbishvili to pay official visit to Lithuania

The president of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili will pay an official visit to Lithuania today.

As part of the visit, a meeting with the President of Lithuania Gitanas Nauseda and giving a speech on President Valdas Adamkus Annual Conference are planned.

According to the Administration of the President of Georgia, one of the key issues of the President of Georgia's speech will be occupation and illegal borderization (1TV, August 22, 2019).

14. Citizens of Georgia in Bulgaria will be able to get temporary legal jobs

Citizens of Georgia in Bulgaria will be able to get temporary legal jobs. The agreement will be signed by both countries in the near future.

In order to operate a specific scheme for the temporary legal employment, within six months after the contract is concluded, the required documents will be prepared.

The official round of negotiations on the draft agreement on the regulation of labour migration was held by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia and the Republic of Bulgaria (*1TV, August 22, 2019*).

15. Kurt Walker - Russia's continued borderization of Georgian territories, continued annexation deserves more international attention

Russia's continued borderization of Georgian territories, continued annexation deserves more international attention, – former US ambassador to NATO Kurt Walker told First Channel in Vilnius.

Kurt Walker and the President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili discussed this issue in Lithuania. According to Kurt Walker, Russia's actions have made people leave their homes, family graves. Kurt Walker emphasized the importance of the international community's attention to this issue (*1TV, August 22, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

16. NGOs urge for continuation of work on amendments into election legislation

The Georgian non-governmental organizations urge for continuation of work on the amendments to be made into the country's election legislation.

A meeting of the electoral reform working group was held on August 5-6 to discuss the initiatives prepared by the ruling party about amendments to the Law of Georgia on Political Associations and the Election Code.

Representatives of International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), Transparency International – Georgia, Georgian Democracy Initiative, Human Rights Center, Open Society Foundation, Georgia's Reforms Associates and Liberal Academy Tbilisi took part in the working meeting.

The meeting participants welcomed the changes in the political party finance regulation, based on which funding from the State Budget will follow the so-called regressive rule. This will help reduce imbalance in political party financing, the NGOs said (*1TV, August 20, 2019*).

17. Several employees dismissed from Rustavi 2 TV Company

Several employees have been dismissed from Rustavi 2 TV Company including Head of Information Service Nodar Meladze.

Paata Salia, General Director of Rustavi 2 TV Company said during the news briefing that conflict of interests had served as the reason for dismissal.

According to Salia, several other employees are planned to be dismissed from work after their return from summer vacations including Giorgi Laperashvili and Giorgi Gabunia (*1TV, August 20, 2019*).

18. NGOs - Dismissal of leading journalists at Rustavi 2 is actually a change of editorial policy of the channel

"We, the undersigned organizations, want to express our concern about the staff changes in Rustavi 2 TV that were announced and carried out by its new owner. Paata Salia, the new General-Director of Rustavi 2

TV, dismissed Nodar Meladze, the Head of TV's News Department, and TV anchor Nanuka Zhorzholiani. Moreover, Eka Kvesitadze, Giorgi Gabunia and Giorgi Laperashvili, the Deputy General-Director, will be fired as soon as they return from vacation," the statement reads (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

19. Presentation of Presidential Fund to be held on September 17

As Presidential Administration reports, the salary of the president in the amount of 35 880 GEL has been accumulated in the charity fund for the time being.

Also, on September 17, the project of Children's Oncology Center will be presented. This will be the first project for which the presidential fund will begin attraction of funds. The gross salary of President is 5 520 GEL (*1TV, August 20, 2019*).

20. Ryanair to begin carrying out of flights from November

Ryanair Air Company will be carrying out flights from Tbilisi and Kutaisi airports in direction of Italian and French cities starting November.

The information about flights is already available on the official webpage of the air company. The flight Tbilisi-Milan will land at Bergamo Airport and will be carried out 4 times a week. The price for air tickets begins from 19.99 Euro.

The flights from Kutaisi airport will be carried out in direction of Bologna, Italy, and Marseille, France (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

21. PM – I was receiving many requests about seeing Ryanair in Georgia

I was receiving many requests from citizens about seeing Ryanair in Georgia and we accomplished that – Georgian Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze said after the meeting with David O'Brien, Chief Commercial Officer of Ryanair Air Company.

Prime Minister claimed that the agreement with the air company would give the opportunity to Georgia to attract more tourists from the European Union counties, while it would give the chance to Georgian citizens to travel to Europe least costly (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

22. Ryanair to carry out flights in direction of Köln starting next year

"We're pleased to announce Ryanair's low fares have arrived at Tbilisi and Kutaisi, our newest airports and 1st airports in Georgia. These four new routes that will start in November (except Cologne, starting in April next year), will further promote Georgian tourism and will deliver over 170,000 customers annually to/from two European countries to one of Europe's fastest-growing tourism destinations. We look forward to developing new Georgian traffic growth, new routes, and jobs in the coming years," David O'Brien said (*1TV, August 21, 2019*).

23. Ministry of Economy to start talks with US airlines over launch of direct flights

According to the Minister of Economy, corresponding research had been conducted that revealed that direct flights were both strategically and commercially attractive.

"We have conducted a quite detailed study, confirming that direct flights from Georgia to the United States are attractive. This is not just our strategic objective, because the US is our strategic partner and the launch of direct flights will be a very clear, uniquely positive political regime," Turnava said (1TV, August 21, 2019).

Additional Information

August 23, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9336 GEL	1 GBP - 3.5602 GEL	100 RUB -4.4689 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2487 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5086 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7566 GEL

Thursday 2 May	Friday 3 May	Saturday 4 May	Sunday 5 May	Monday 6 May
				
12° 25°	13° 24°	11° 17°	11° 22°	13° 24°

-  **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](#)**