

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 26-28

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

Date: **August 29, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Salome Zurbishvili - 11 years ago on 26 August Russia violated international law by recognizing "independence" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

„11 years ago on 26 August 2008 Russia recognized the independence of the two integral parts of Georgia – Abkhazia and South Ossetia and violated principles and norms of international law“, – the president of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili said in her statement.

„Today, because of the Russification policy, Abkhazian and Ossetian culture, language, and identity, in general, are on the edge of disappearance. The social and economic situation of our Abkhazian and Ossetian citizens is difficult too.

Despite the problems created by the Russian occupation, our government doing its best to solve their humanitarian, medical, educational and business interest problems.

I believe that the time will come when Abkhazia and South Ossetia will return peacefully in the united space of Georgia“, - the official statement reads (*ITV, August 26, 2019*).

2. Sergey Lavrov: Process of international recognition of Abkhazia's independence irreversible

The process of international recognition of Abkhazia as an independent state is irreversible, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in a documentary about former so-called Abkhazian “president” Sergey Bagapsh.

Lavrov said that this process started during Bagapsh’s presidency. “The first country to recognize Abkhazia was Nicaragua, followed by Venezuela, Nauru, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. Now Syria has also joined the group of countries that recognized Abkhazia,” the Russian foreign minister said. “I am confident that this process is irreversible,” he added.

Sergey Lavrov noted that Abkhazia has shown itself as a “democratic state,” the “foundations of which were laid by Bagapsh.”

Russia recognized the independence and sovereignty of Georgia’s two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia on 26 August 2008, immediately after the Russia-Georgia War over Georgia’s Tskhinvali region (*ITV, August 27, 2019*).

3. Breakaway Abkhazia election heads to second round as incumbent fails to pass 50% threshold

There will be a runoff election for de facto president of breakaway Abkhazia on September 8, since none of the candidates received over 50% of votes in the first round on Sunday.

Incumbent de facto president Raul Khajimba is in the lead, trailed by Oleg Arshba and Alhaz Kvitsinia, according to preliminary results.

Although it was said earlier in the morning that Arshba was in second place, recently his electoral staff acknowledged that he is behind Alhaz Kvitsinia. It seems therefore likely Khajimba will face Kvitsinia, leader of Amsakhara party, in the runoff.

Observers had predicted a solid victory for Khajimba, a former KGB operative and close ally of the Kremlin, but preliminary results indicate he has only a minor lead on his opponents (*DFWatch.net, August 26, 2019*).

4. Ambassador of Italy to Georgia – So-called presidential elections in Abkhazia have no value

Italy, together with the European Union, is a strong supporter of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty – Antonio Enrico Bartoli, Ambassador of Italy to Georgia told journalists when commenting about the so-called presidential elections held in the occupied region of Abkhazia.

"There is no such thing – presidential elections – with a simple reason. We do not recognize either the republic of Abkhazia or its president. The elections have no value for us," Ambassador of Italy said.

The so-called presidential elections were held on August 25 in occupied Abkhazia. Nine candidates ran for the post including incumbent de-facto president Raul Khajimba. Not a single candidate managed to collect 50 percent of votes. Therefore, the second round of elections will be held in occupied Abkhazia (*ITV, August 27, 2019*).

5. Georgian FM, UN Sec-Gen discuss Russian occupation, de-facto 'presidential elections' in Abkhazia

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres have held a phone conversation today.

David Zalkaliani provided Guterres with information on the situation in the Russia-occupied regions of Georgia. The latest developments along the occupation line have also been discussed including the illegal erection of a 'border' and detentions.

Zalkaliani and Guterres have also discussed the 'presidential elections' held in Russia-occupied Abkhazia on August 25 (*Agenda.ge, August 27, 2019*).

6. Armenian Prime Minister – Conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia differ from Nagorny Karabakh

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan believes that conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia differ from Nagorny Karabakh.

According to Armenian news agencies, Pashinyan made this statement during the meeting with Armenian diplomats.

Armenian PM said that equalizing conflicts of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdnestr and Nagorny Karabakh by the international community was problematic.

"Demonstration of the difference is essential. For instance, locals of Abkhazia and South Ossetia can peacefully travel to Georgia's capital Tbilisi and sell their agriculture products at local markets. . .

A Russian citizen is sent back from Baku Airport on the ground that he/she has an Armenian surname. Sometimes, this example makes full picture about Nagorny Karabakh issue than an hours-long lecture," Pashinyan said (*1TV, August 28, 2019*).

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

7. Georgian FM: gov't to use "all opportunities" with Geneva discussions to stop unlawful borderisation

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia David Zalkaliani has told reporters his office will use "all available opportunities" to prevent unlawful actions along the administrative boundary line separating Russian-occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and Abkhazia regions from the rest of Georgia.

Zalkaliani spoke following his meeting with co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions, a platform for international talks launched between the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia that has seen the two regions occupied by Russian military.

The foreign minister told reporters the meeting had concerned the process of "unlawful borderisation" on the administrative line - the demarcation and moving of the separation line by occupying forces intermittently taking place in locations adjacent to the ABL (*Agenda.ge, August 28, 2019*).

8. Co-chairs of Geneva International Discussion say 'borderisation' raises tension on ground

Co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID), who met with the Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani on Wednesday, have released a statement on the "borderisation" process near occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region.

The recent developments in the Gugutiantkari area have raised tensions on the ground and have humanitarian consequences for the local people. As with all such fencing, the newly erected structures hinder freedom of movement for people living there, prevent them from reaching their orchards and threaten access to irrigation water", the GID co-chairs stated (*Agenda.ge, August 29, 2019*).

9. Head of EUMM – New barbed wires are further dividing communities

Eric Hoeg, Senior Danish Diplomat leading the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia arrived in Gugutiantkari village of Gori Municipality together with two co-chairs of Geneva International Discussions.

"I joined the monitoring mission, which was patrolling in Gugutiantkari at administrative border observing the so-called borderization. The new barbed wires are further dividing communities. This issue will be discussed tomorrow within the framework of the meeting of Group on Incidents Prevention and Response Mechanisms," Hoeg wrote in Twitter.

Toivo Klaar, Co-Chairman of Geneva International Discussions also released a statement in Twitter social network.

"Thank you to team of EUMM and HoM Eric Hoeg for instructive visit to Gugutiantkari today. Fencing divides communities and causes hardship. "Borderisation" cannot be accepted," Toivo Klaar wrote (*1TV, August 28, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

10. Joint Azerbaijani-Georgian-Turkish military training to be held in Baku

The joint Azerbaijani-Georgian-Turkish military training Eternity-2019 will be held in Baku on September 2-6. Military units of the three countries will be trained in defense of economic projects in field conditions. Multinational training is conducted under the leadership of the General Staffs of the Georgian and Turkish Armed Forces. The aim of the training is to establish multinational brigade headquarter, which will ensure the strengthening of strategic cooperation to protect the pipelines. Similar training was carried out in 2017. The scenario of the training was based on peacekeeping operations to provide protection of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline during the crisis (*1TV, August 27, 2019*).

11. Switzerland to put Georgia on 'safe country' list in October

From October 1, Switzerland will add Georgia to its list of safe countries, joining the other 14 countries in the EU/Schengen zone to do the same.

The other countries that listed Georgia as a 'safe country' are Bulgaria, France, Lichtenstein, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Iceland, Luxembourg, Ireland, Estonia, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Cyprus and Slovenia.

Following this decision, Georgian asylum-seekers' applications in Switzerland will be examined in an accelerated mode. Those, not applicable will be refused from asylum and sent back home (*Agenda.ge August 28, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

12. Yet another police officer charged with abuse of power during June 20, protester-police clash

Yet another police officer has been accused of power abuse against a protester during the June 20 - 21 protest held near the parliament of Georgia.

The Prosecutor's Office of Georgia reports that the police officer has been accused of physical violence towards a person that had already been arrested. The Prosecutor's Office says there was no need for the use of force towards the detainee.

An investigation has been looking into violations by police officers that occurred when Georgian police were brought in to disperse demonstrators on June 20-21, protesting against the visit of Russian MPs in Georgia.

Three police officers were detained earlier in July for the abuse of power during the rallies (*Agenda.ge, August 27, 2019*).

13. Founders of TBC Bank – Government tries to block our legal financial resources in Britain

Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, founders of TBC Bank and co-founders of the Anaklia Development Consortium said during a press conference that the Georgian Financial Monitoring Service had applied to the British side to block their financial resources in Britain.

Japaridze said that the move served as yet another repressive measure and called on embassies of partner states to become interested with the issue. He also pledged that Anaklia deepwater port would be still built for sure.

Khazaradze said that his co-mates were working days and nights to successfully complete negotiations with those corporations which were bullied by the Prosecutor's Office alleging that Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze were laundering the money (*1TV, August 27, 2019*).

14. Prosecutor – British side provided Georgia with information about Khazaradze-Japaridze financial activities

The Georgian General Prosecutor's Office responded to the statements made by TBC Bank founders during a press conference held earlier today.

Prosecutor Giorgi Mikava said that the Financial Monitoring Service had not applied to the British colleagues and that, on the contrary, the British side provided Georgia with the information about Khazaradze-Japaridze financial activities.

Mamuka Khazaradze and Badri Japaridze, founders of TBC Bank and co-founders of the Anaklia Development Consortium said during a press conference that the Georgian Financial Monitoring Service had applied to the British side to block their financial resources in Britain saying they were 'illegal.' (*1TV, August 27, 2019*)

15. Businessman Avtandil Tsereteli imposed to pay fine

Tbilisi City Court imposed businessman Avtandil Tsereteli to pay the bail in the amount of 500 thousand GEL.

The court also prohibited the businessman from crossing the state border without preliminary notification of the investigation body at the request of General Prosecutor's Office.

Avtandil Tsereteli has to pay the bail within 14 days term. However, as the businessman said, he does not plan to do so. The pre-trial sitting into Tsereteli's case is scheduled for October 10.

Avtandil Tsereteli is charged with providing assistance to the TBC Bank founders in the legalization of illegal incomes (*1TV, August 27, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

16. CNN unveils web page advertising tourism potential of Georgia

American media outlet CNN has created a webpage on its site titled Discover Georgia, which offers visitors a wide array of information about Georgia's long history, exquisite nature and unique cuisine. The web page is a part of the Georgian National Tourism Administration's fall-winter advertising campaign.

In addition to the page, CNN is broadcasting videos about Georgia's tourism and travel opportunities and publishing text articles about the country (*Agenda.g.e August 27, 2019*).

17. Hotels and hotel-type institutions served 3, 666 million guests in 2018

Hotels and hotel-type institutions across Georgia served 3, 666 million guests in 2018. The number is 8.4% higher than the same data of 2017.

Based on the information of the National Statistics Bureau, 71.3% of visitors were foreigners among them 19.7% – Russian citizens. Foreign visitors also included citizens of Germany, Poland, Turkey and Israel (*GEOSTAT.GE, August 27, 2019*).

18. How to steal money from the budget?

2018 report of the State Audit Service gives answers to that question. Reportedly, they have found many violations in terms of management of the budgetary fund.

According to the State Audit Service after their inspections questions have been raised regarding efficiency of spending 66 million GEL.

Representative of the Audit Service will present findings to the parliament and is planning to report that these occasions are systemic and it needs further investigation. Additionally, they have already sent the findings from the report to the law enforcement agencies to start investigations over these cases (*BPN.GE, August 28, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

19. National Bank of Georgia issues collection Rugby World Cup Coin

The President of National Bank of Georgia has presented collect Rugby World Cup Coins. 5 Lari coin illustrates Rugby Player Holding ball and written Rugby World Cup 日本 2019.



Price for golden model of the coin will be 1500 GEL, Silver coin will cost 75 GEL. Selling of the coins will start from 2019 (*NBG.GOV.GE, August 28, 2019*).

20. Ruins of ancient palace discovered at Alazani Valley

Members of the international archaeological expedition of the Georgian National Museum discovered ruins of an ancient palace, expanded across 1 hectare of land, dating to V-IV century BC, at Alazani Valley in Signaghi Municipality of eastern Kakheti region of Georgia.

The National Museum distributed photos reflecting the discovery. The building is of complex planning with a big hall with décor and a square-shape podium where presumably the king's domain was located. The ruins are close to the soil surface and are seriously damaged by agricultural cultivating works.

The expedition members included specialists of the National Museum, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich and students of Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University (TSU) (*1TV, August 27, 2019*).

21. And Then We Danced to be presented at Oscar's

And Then We Danced, a 2019 Swedish-Georgian drama film directed by Levan Akin, Swedish film director of Georgian descent, will be presented at Oscar's on behalf of Sweden. It will contend in the category of foreign film.

The film is about a young man Merab, who has been training from a young age at the National Georgian Ensemble with his dance partner Mary. His world turns upside down when the carefree Irakli arrives and becomes both his strongest rival and desire (*1TV, August 28, 2019*).

Additional Information

August 29, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9415 GEL	1 GBP - 3.6063 GEL	100 RUB -4.4307 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2670 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5048 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7802 GEL

Thursday 29 August	Friday 30 August	Saturday 31 August	Sunday 1 September	Monday 2 September
				
17° 30°	16° 24°	15° 22°	16° 24°	16° 25°

 **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](#)**