

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

August 3-4

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

Date: **September 5, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. Tskhinvali occupational regime to hold joint raids with Russia

The Tskhinvali occupational regime will hold joint raids with the Russian border guards across the so-called border in September, de-facto State Security Committee informs.

The raids aim at tightening control on entry and presence of physical persons and vehicles in the border zone. Locals are also asked to carry identification documents.

According to the State Security Committee of the occupational regime, the so-called border with Georgia will be closed on September 4 for 2 days in connection with Knowledge Day (*1TV, September 3, 2019*).

2. State Security Service – Occupational regime will set illegal limitations on free movement

The occupational regime will set illegal limitations on free movement across the occupational line starting 21:00 of September 4 – State Security Service told Georgian First Channel.

According to Security Service, a hotline has been activated and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia and co-Chairs of Geneva International Discussions (GID) are informed.

The Tskhinvali occupational regime will hold joint raids with the Russian border guards across the so-called border in September, de-facto State Security Committee informs (*1TV, September 3, 2019*).

3. Foreign Minister – Illegal borderization in Gugutiantkari and developments at Chorchana show that actual annexation has not ceased

Strengthening of Georgia's sovereignty and restoration of territorial integrity through peaceful means represent the main priorities – Davit Zalkaliani, Foreign Minister said during the expanded sitting of three Parliamentary Committees of Foreign Relations, European Integration and Diaspora Affairs.

According to Zalkaliani, Foreign Minister was engaged in mobilization and consolidation of the international community during the whole year. "Illegal borderization in Gugutiantkari village and the developments at Chorchana show that actual annexation has not ceased. Use of all the available formats with partners is essential," Zalkaliani said (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

4. Davit Zalkaliani – There are attempts to shift accent that poses threat to Geneva Discussions

Davit Zalkaliani, Foreign Minister believes that Geneva International Discussions (GID) is the unique and only format for Georgia where Georgia talks to Russia about unfulfilled obligations with presence and engagement of the international community.

Foreign Minister talked about GID during the expanded sitting of three Parliamentary Committees of Foreign Relations, European Integration and Diaspora Affairs.

Zalkaliani said that Russia often attempted to shift the accent from main to less important issues that posed a threat to Geneva Discussions. "This needs adequate assessment and naming of an actor who attempts to disrupt the format," Zalkaliani stated in an interview with journalists (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

5. Zourabichvili and Zelensky agree on working on a joint strategy to combat Russian occupation

On 1 September, on the sidelines of the 80th anniversary of World War 2 (Caucasus Watch reported), Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky agreed on drafting a joint strategy to combat the Russian occupation of the territories of Tskhinvali (South Ossetia), Abkhazia and Crimea, reported agenda.ge.

"Zelensky did not only invite me to Ukraine, but also offered to work on a joint document which will help us resolve conflicts and take genuine steps towards the EU," Zourabichvili said. The Georgian President also met with the Prime Minister of Belgium and Charles Michel, the president-elect of the EU Council where they also spoke about the occupation issue in Georgia (*CAUCASUSWATCH.DE, September 2, 2019*).

6. Ryanair confirms that flights' schedule will not change

Ryanair Air Company confirmed that the flights' schedule will not change – Giorgi Chogovadze, Director of Georgian Airports Union wrote on Facebook in response to the released information as if some changes were made into the schedule of flights.

"There were some technical faults on the webpage of Ryanair. The problem has been solved for the time being," Chogovadze wrote (*1TV, September 3, 2019*).

7. US President may nominate Career Diplomat Kelly Degnan as new US Ambassador to Georgia

U.S. President Donald Trump has announced his intention to nominate career diplomat Kelly Degnan as the new U.S. ambassador to Georgia, a post that has been vacant for nearly a year and a half.

Degnan currently serves as a political adviser to the commander of the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa, according to a September 3 White House statement, as reported by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

A native of California, Degnan's career has spanned 25 years and has included senior diplomatic postings to Italy, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Turkey. Degnan also served as the deputy executive secretary of the State Department, political counselor at the U.S. mission to NATO, and special assistant to the secretary of state. Degnan speaks Italian, French, Turkish, and Urdu (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

8. US Embassy to Georgia confirms nomination of Kelly Degnan as new US Ambassador to Georgia

The US Embassy to Georgia confirmed the information that U.S. President Donald Trump had announced his intention to nominate career diplomat Kelly Degnan as the new U.S. ambassador to Georgia, a post that has been vacant for nearly a year and a half.

According to the US Embassy to Georgia, President Donald J. Trump announced his intent to nominate Kelly C. Degnan of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Georgia. The next step in the process is a public hearing, time and date to be determined, held by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee (*ITV, September 4, 2019*).

9. Tbilisi Mayor awarded special medal for contribution to Georgia-Azerbaijan relations

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze has been awarded a special medal for contribution to Georgia-Azerbaijan relations in connection with the 100th anniversary of Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Dursun Hasanov, Ambassador Plenipotentiary of Azerbaijan to Georgia gave the medal to Tbilisi Mayor. "The government of Azerbaijan, Azeri people and youngsters have always appreciated Kaladze's achievements. Being Tbilisi Mayor, Kaladze continues close cooperation and friendship with Azerbaijan," Hasanov said (*ITV, September 4, 2019*).

10. Hungarian President János Áder visiting Georgia

President of Hungary János Áder has arrived to Georgia on his first official visit. He will meet his Georgian counterpart President Salome Zurbishvili and Parliament Speaker Archil Talakvadze tomorrow. However, today he was welcomed by Georgian foreign ministry officials at Tbilisi International Airport.

Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandre Ghvtsiashvili said Hungary is Georgia's friend and supporter. He said Hungary also actively supports Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations (*Agenda.ge, September 4, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

11. Lawmaker Zakaria Kutsnashvili suspended MP mandate

Lawmaker Zakaria Kutsnashvili was suspended MP mandate during the parliamentary plenary sitting this afternoon with 96 votes for.

Kutsnashvili rejected MP mandate on June 20 after the developments in front of the parliament building. He was the initiator of the religious assembly, which triggered the protests.

Protests in front of the parliament building at Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi have been held since June 20 in reaction to the visit of Sergey Gavrillov, a Russian lawmaker and his sitting in the parliamentary speaker's chair during a religious assembly, which many Georgians saw as an unwelcome reminder of Russian military occupation of its breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (*ITV, September 3, 2019*).

12. Davit Bakradze – Proportional electoral system is the victory of Georgian public

The proportional electoral system is the victory of the Georgian public. The minority has to do its best so that the majority is not left with the excuse to withdraw the initiative – Leader of European Georgia Party said.

Members of European Georgia Party left the parliamentary plenary session by whistling in protest to the nomination of Giorgi Gakharia for PM's position but returned to the parliament hall for balloting procedures.

According to Bakradze, transformation onto the proportional electoral system is the achievement of the youngsters who were holding protests in front of the parliament after June 20 developments in Tbilisi.

"The majority should not be given the reason to withdraw the initiative on the pretext of lack of the opposition's votes," Bakradze said (*ITV, September 3, 2019*).

13. Grigol Vashadze – We will not tolerate humiliation

The government is doing everything so that political civil war and confrontation continues in the society," Grigol Vashadze, Chairman of National Movement Party said in connection with the nomination of Giorgi Gakharia for PM's position.

Vashadze said that members of the united opposition and supporters would gather at the parliament starting 19:00 to protest against presentation of Gakharia on the post. "We will not tolerate so much humiliation," he said (*ITV, August 3, 2019*).

14. Organizer of "It is a Shame" Movement – Bidzina Ivanishvili thinks that promotion of Giorgi Gakharia has legitimacy in public

Bidzina Ivanishvili thinks that promotion of Giorgi Gakharia has certain legitimacy in public – Shota Dighmelashvili, Organizer of "It is a Shame" Movement and protests at parliament told journalists.

Members of the movement, united opposition and supporters will gather at the parliament today starting 19:00 to protest against the nomination of Giorgi Gakharia for PM's position.

"We should put aside different viewpoints and find something in common. The common thing is that we all want a better future," Dighmelashvili said (*ITV, September 3, 2019*).

15. Sandra Roelofs – Bidzina Ivanishvili will be soon removed, poisoned, killed or lost

"Russia already has its man as head of the Georgian government who can make any decision. Believe me, Bidzina Ivanishvili will be soon removed and he cannot realize that. Ivanishvili will be poisoned, killed or lost. Remember my words. This is Russia and it never jokes," she said.

Roelofs said that if Ivanishvili has 1% of healthy mentality left and wants to help Georgia, he should not appoint Gakharia on post of Prime Minister.

Former First Lady also called on people to stand together and continue protesting. "When people are united, they cannot be defeated," she said (*ITV, September 3, 2019*).

16. Tbilisi Mayor wishes success to ministerial candidates

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze thanked former Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze for his support to Tbilisi Municipality and wished success to Giorgi Gakharia, Minister of Internal Affairs nominated for the post of Prime Minister and other ministerial candidates of the proposed reshuffled cabinet.

Kaladze commented about changes in the government during the sitting of Tbilisi government. "I believe that with joint efforts and cooperation, we will manage to carry out more projects for Tbilisi. There are so many problems in Tbilisi that requires strong backing from the central authorities," Kaladze stated (*ITV, September 4, 2019*).

17. Tina Bokuchava – We are not going to participate in comic show of approval of executioner Gakharia's government

The opposition will do its best that executioner Giorgi Gakharia is not sitting comfortably in the chair belonging to Prime Minister in the same way when Gavrilov (Russian lawmaker) was not given the pleasure to sit in the chair of Georgian Parliament Speaker – Tina Bokuchava, a member of United National Movement Party said.

The opposition refused to participate in the committee hearings to the ministerial candidates of the reshuffled government. "We are not going to participate in a comic show of approval of executioner Gakharia's government. Georgian public representatives had demanded Gakharia's resignation for more than 2 months," Bokuchava said (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

18. Court to begin discussions into case of Special Task Unit officer charged for June 20-21 developments

The court will begin discussions into the case of Giorgi Esiashvili, an officer of Special Task Unit charged for June 20-21 developments outside the parliament building in Tbilisi on September 17.

Esiashvili, who is accused of exceed of duties, pleads guilty. He was detained in July but was bailed out in the amount of 10 thousand GEL (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

19. High Council of Justice selects 20 judicial candidates to be presented to parliament

The High Council of Justice selected 20 candidates contending for posts in the Supreme Court of Georgia to be presented to the Georgian parliament for approval. Two balloting procedures were held at High Council of Justice today.

The first balloting revealed the 20 candidates out of 49 competing candidates contending for posts in the Supreme Court. Though the second voting procedure, the name of each candidate was put for balloting in order to determine whether his/her candidacy would be submitted to the parliament (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

20. NBG increases refinancing rate to 7%

The Monetary Policy Committee of National Bank of Georgia (NBG) today made the decision to increase the refinancing rate by 0.5 points. i.e. from 6.5 to 7%.

The bank explained that the annual inflation was fixed at 4.9% in August and the influence has increased of the depreciation of effective nominal exchange rate.

The bank said that it will continue to observe the ongoing economic processes and financial markets, and will use all the available resources to ensure the stability of prices (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

21. Health Ministry to hold negotiations with countries for medication of oncology patients at reasonable price

Health Ministry plans to hold negotiations and reach an agreement with several countries for the medication of oncology patients at a reasonable price. This initiative refers to the countries where Georgian patients leave for to undergo treatment and rehabilitation.

Ekaterine Tikaradze, the candidate for post of Minister of IDPs, Labor, Health and Social Affairs introduced the initiative to lawmakers during the expanded sitting of three parliamentary committees.

Tikaradze said that detection of oncology diseases at an early stage and introduction of new approaches were priorities for the Ministry (*1TV, September 4, 2019*).

22. August inflation: prices for food, non-alcoholic beverages increase by 1.5 per cent

The price of food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 1.5 per cent in June 2019, show the latest inflation data by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

In particular, prices increased for the following subgroups:

- Milk, cheese and eggs - 4.8%
- Meat - 2.3%
- Sugar, jam, honey, chocolate and confectionery - 1.6%
- Fish - 1.3%
- Oils and fats - 1.2% (*GEOSTAT.GE, September 4, 2019*).

23. McCain Institute head says completing Anaklia Port Project of strategic importance

Completing the Anaklia Port project is of strategic importance, the Executive Director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership Kurt Volker said in an exclusive interview with Georgia Today published on September 2.

Volker touched on disagreements between the Anaklia Development Consortium and the government. "There are obviously issues around financing for the project - [the government] says that the consortium has been unable to secure sufficient financing and [the consortium] is asking too much from the government for a private project - so, [you have] conflicting narratives", said Volker.

Volker said that Georgia is a small country wedged between Russian and Iran, which is a potential transit hub for commerce from Central Asia to Europe and from Europe to Central Asia (*ITV, September 4, 2019*).

Additional Information

September 5, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9660 GEL	1 GBP - 3.6153 GEL	100 RUB - 4.4651 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2668 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5220 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7926 GEL

Thursday 5 September	Friday 6 September	Saturday 7 September	Sunday 8 September	Monday 9 September
				
16° 25°	16° 25°	15° 26°	14° 22°	15° 23°

-  **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](#)**