

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

September 9-11

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Date: **September 12, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. Georgian FM, OSCE chair discuss situation along occupation line

The Chair of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, met with the Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani earlier today.

Particular attention was paid to the recent developments in two Russian occupied regions of Georgia: Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) (*Agenda.ge, September 10, 2019*).

2. Gov't says occupying forces continue illegal works on Tbilisi-administered territory

The Georgian State Security (SSS) says that the occupying forces are carrying out illegal works at two locations within Tbilisi-administered territory, near the village of Chorchana, in the Khashuri municipality.

The agency reports that the European Union Monitoring mission (EUMM) and participants of the Geneva International Discussions will cooperate to address the problem (*Agenda.ge, September 11, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Georgian clerics in David Gareji report construction of 'two huge barracks' by Azerbaijan

Georgian clerics in the 6th Century David Gareji monastery complex, which lies on the conditional border with Azerbaijan, have reported the construction of 'two huge barracks by Azerbaijan right near the monastery complex.'

"It is a sign that Azerbaijan has no plans to leave the territory of the monastery complex," Archimandrite Kirion told local media.

He stated that the number of Azerbaijani border guards has been increased to 70-80 since the beginning of the year and when the barracks are completed the number "is likely to reach 300."

Kirion says that Azerbaijan has provided electricity "from an 18 kilometer distance [for the barracks], and made an inscription on the rock of the Udabno Monastery that 'death for the homeland is a big honor.'" (*Agenda.ge, September 9, 2019*).

4. English edition of Deutsche Welle made correction to article on appointment of Giorgi Gakharia to post of Prime Minister

The English-language edition of Deutsche Welle made correction to the article on the appointment of Giorgi Gakharia to the position of the Prime Minister of Georgia.

In the article, which is titled "Georgia's parliament backs 'Moscow's man' for prime minister", it is clarified that Giorgi Gakharia was labeled "Moscow's man" by the opposition previously.

As the article notes, the Georgian parliament on Sunday appointed a controversial figure to become the country's prime minister in a move that has triggered protests in the capital, Tbilisi (*1TV, September 10, 2019*).

5. Anders Fogh Rasmussen: It should be considered whether you want to join NATO with mechanism, when Article 5 covers only territory controlled by Georgian Government

"I think Georgia has gone a long way and achieved great results. When it comes to the military, you have demonstrated the ability to meet NATO standards. However, of course, you have also expanded the scope of the reforms, strengthen the fight against corruption, it is about the guaranteeing the rule of law, etc. You have to keep going on this way.

We also have to consider another aspect both in Georgia and within the NATO, namely, the question about Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Because if one day we consider Georgia ready to join the Alliance, we also have to make sure that Article 5 is still credible, which would require NATO to actually help Georgia if Georgia is attacked. But obviously, having unresolved border disputes with Russia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a problem. The question is – how could that be resolved. I think this issue should be discussed internally in Georgia, would you, in this case, be willing to accept such mechanism, according to which Article 5 of NATO will only cover the territory which is actually controlled by the Government of Georgia. And in NATO we have to reflect exactly the same question ", – Anders Fogh Rasmussen said (*1TV, September 10, 2019*).

6. Giorgi Gakharia expresses gratitude to Anders Fogh Rasmussen for supporting Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Georgia

"European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Georgia is a choice made by the Georgian people and our government is loyal to this cause" – stated Giorgi Gakharia, Prime Minister of Georgia at a meeting with Anders Fogh Rasmussen, former Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) held in Tbilisi, Georgia (*1TV, September 10, 2019*).

7. Anders Fogh Rasmussen: I suggest to break stalemate around Georgia/NATO membership

"I suggest to break stalemate around Georgia/NATO membership, Georgia could discuss joining NATO without article 5 coverage of illegally occupied territories. It would show Russia that creating frozen conflicts can't forever freeze Georgia's future" – writes Anders Fogh Rasmussen in the social network (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

8. David Kramer: Issue concerns to find ways to bring Georgia into NATO, which in no way implies recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

"The issue concerns to find ways to bring Georgia into NATO without risks coming from occupied territories. We have such precedents: Cyprus, West and East Germany. The idea is to ensure that Georgia receives protection, but at the same time, it is remarkable to cope with issues related to the disputed territories, which, of course, are the territories of Georgia, which Russia is currently occupying. The task is to neutralize the obstacles that accompany Georgia's membership in NATO. The main goal is to reassure NATO allies, which may be worried about Georgia's accession into NATO due to problems

related to the occupied territories, which in no way implies recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia”, – David Kramer said (*1TV, September 10, 2019*).

9. Tamar Chugoshvili: It is acceptable to join NATO with the whole territory, speculation on this issue does not serve country's interests

“Participants considered various opportunities from the supportive standpoint on how Georgia could be closer to NATO membership and how it can become realistic when 20 percent of our territory is occupied, when Georgia is under constant pressure due this occupation. It was discussion over this issue and there is no cause for such concern”, – Tamar Chugoshvili said (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

10. Lithuanian FM vows firm support while meeting with new Georgian Prime Minister

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius has vowed firm support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration and anti-occupation policy while meeting with the new prime minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia.

Gakharia and Linkevicius said that it is crucial Georgian occupation issues be discussed both in international formats and during dialogues with Russia [with foreign states],” the government of Georgia press office reports.

The press office said that Linkevicius welcomed the fact the 2020 parliamentary elections in Georgia would be held per a proportional representation system and praised reforms geared towards the refinement of the election legislation (*Agenda.ge, September 10, 2019*).

11. Irakli Gharibashvili met with representatives of Atlantic Council

“One of my top priorities will be to further strengthen high-level strategic relations with the United States. Our goal is to become the ally of the US in the region and a full member of NATO and the EU through democratic development and strengthening national defense and sustainable capabilities. Our Euro-Atlantic aspiration is backed by strong support from the Georgian public, and this is reflected in the Constitution, which demonstrates the irreversibility of our foreign and security policy course” – Minister of Defence said (*1TV, September 10, 2019*).

12. Irakli Gharibashvili met with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

Strengthening military cooperation between Georgia and the United States, developing Georgia's territorial defense capabilities and Georgia's contribution to international security were key issues discussed during the meeting between Minister of Defence of Georgia, Irakli Gharibashvili and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense of the United States, Laura Cooper.

On the first working week of his appointment as Defence Minister, Irakli Gharibashvili hosted Pentagon Representative Laura Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

13. Tea Tsulukiani met US Attorney General William Barr

Within the official visit to the United States, the Georgian Justice Minister Tea Tsulukiani met with US Attorney General William Barr. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Minister of Justice, Head of Special Penitentiary Service Giorgi Pataridze and Ambassador of Georgia to the United States David Bakradze.

The Minister of Justice of Georgia expressed gratitude to the US Department of Justice for its support in the fight against domestic violence, organized crime, human trafficking, and corruption in Georgia; For

efforts of the US Department of Justice to support the juvenile justice system, penitentiary and law enforcement agencies (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

14. Georgia has new ambassadors in Ukraine, Kuwait and Vatican

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Teimuraz Sharashidze will serve as Georgian Ambassador to Ukraine, Konstantine Zhenti will be Georgia's Ambassador in Kuwait and Ketevan Bagration-Mukhranbatoni will take the post of Ambassador in the Vatican (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

15. Vakhtang Gomelaurov met Acting Ambassador of US

Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia Vakhtang Gomelaurov held his first official meeting with the Acting Ambassador of the United States of America to Georgia Elizabeth Rood.

According to a press office of the Interior Ministry, at the beginning of the meeting, Vakhtang Gomelaurov mentioned September 11 terrorist attack against the United States, which took place 18 years ago and expressed his condolences to the American people (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

16. President of NATO Parliamentary Assembly to visit Georgia on September 12-13

President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Madeleine Moon will visit Tbilisi along with the NATO Parliamentary Delegation on September 12-13

According to the Press Office of the Parliament of Georgia, within the framework of the visit Madeleine Moon will hold meetings with the President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili, the Speaker of the Parliament Archil Talakvadze and the Minister of Defence Irakli Gharibashvili.

Meetings are scheduled with the Chair of the Defense and Security Committee, the Head of Parliamentary Standing Delegation to NATO, Irakli Sesiasvili and the Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, Sophio Katsarava (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

17. Salome Zurbishvili: Attacks on New York changed the course of history, but unified the world in the fight against terrorism

"18 years ago, New York City, the people of the United States, and the entire world woke up to an unspeakable tragedy. The attacks on New York changed the course of history, but unified the world in the fight against terrorism. Today, Georgia remembers the 2,977 victims of 9/11", – President wrote on Twitter (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

18. Angela Merkel congratulates Giorgi Gakharia on his approval as Prime Minister of Georgia

"Mr. Prime Minister, congratulations on your appointment as Prime Minister of Georgia.

I am glad that the relations between our countries are constantly evolving. This is related to result-oriented cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership and the NATO-Georgia Commission, as well as our bilateral relations.

Germany remains ready to assist in the further development of Georgia's democratic and constitutional structures. We wish you success, strength and achievements in your future endeavor",- official letter reads (*1TV, September 11, 2019*).

19. Ambassador of Norway arrives in Tbilisi to start duties at newly-opened embassy

Ambassador Designate of the Kingdom of Norway to Georgia Helene Sand Andresen has arrived in Tbilisi yesterday to present copies of her credentials to Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani.

Norway opened its embassy in Tbilisi earlier this summer. Its location is Tabidze Street #1, in the heart of the capital city (*Agenda.ge, September 11, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

20. Prosecutor's Office: Khazaradze led investigation to stalemate by not submitting the original copy of 'letter'

"The document submitted by Mamuka Khazaradze was immediately attached to the current criminal case, which means that the investigation has launched and is underway.

Mamuka Khazaradze himself led the investigation to a stalemate since he did not submit the original copy of the letter and not name a mediator during the court inquiry. Therefore, the investigation was deprived of the opportunity to identify the so-called letter. If there is some progress in this direction, which depends on Mamuka Khazaradze's stance, the Prosecutor's Office will immediately give a legal response", – the Prosecutor's Office states (*ITV, September 11, 2019*).

21. Ex-Georgian Finance Minister Nodar Khaduri dies aged 49

Former Georgian minister of finance Nodar Khaduri, who was the first to hold the position under the current Georgian Dream leadership back in 2012, has passed away at age 49.

Heart complications have been named as the possible reason for his early death. Since December 2016 up to now he headed the Georgian Competition Agency.

Khaduri was a professor of Tbilisi State University and is the author of more than 100 academic works which have been published in the US, Hungary, Sweden, Russia and Azerbaijan (*Agenda.ge, September 10, 2019*).

22. For the 1st time in Georgia, coastal city of Batumi will have electric buses

Georgia's coastal city of Batumi will be the first in the country to serve passengers with electric buses, as per an agreement signed between Batumi City Hall and the Belarussian electric car manufacturer Belkommunmash.

The rollout will begin with eight buses. The budget for the project amounts to €3,777,000 which includes a €1,500,000 grant from the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership fund (*Agenda.ge, September 11, 2019*).

23. IDFI: Georgian crime rates increased by 17.23% between January and July 2019

A total of 38,748 crimes were reported in Georgia between January and July of 2019, which is a 17.23% increase when compared to the same period of 2018, announces the Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI).

The increase in crimes such as domestic violence or threat can be explained by the increase in public awareness and the number of appeals to the police, said IDFI.

However, the increasing prevalence of theft, robbery and rape indicates a worsening criminal situation, says the IDFI. The institute also calls into question the efficacy of Georgian law enforcement agencies due to the downward trend in the number of solved crime cases (*ITV, September 11, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

24. Georgia attracts \$187 mln in FDI in Q2 of 2019

Foreign direct investments (FDI) in Georgia amounted to \$187 million in Q2 of 2019 which is a 53.7 per cent decrease compared to the same period of 2018 show the latest preliminary data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat).

The main reasons for decreasing the FDI included completion of a pipeline project, reduction in liabilities to non-resident direct investors and reduction of the amount of reinvestment (Geostat, September 9, 2019).

25. Georgian Economy Minister: local investments steadily increasing in Georgia despite drop in FDIs

Local investments are steadily increasing in Georgia despite the fact FDIs have decreased, announced Georgian Economy Minister Natia Turnava today, commenting on the 53.7 per cent drop in the second quarter of 2019 in FDIs compared to the same period of last year.

Georgian investments are steadily increasing and it is very important for me, as the minister of economy of Georgia, that despite political instability, Georgian investors and entrepreneurs, believe that the Georgian economy is attractive and invest money in their own businesses", Turnava said (*Agenda.ge*, September 9, 2019).

26. "Keep Georgia Tidy" – Georgia-Sweden governments begin new project

The ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, The Greens Movement of Georgia and the nongovernmental organization Keep Georgia Tidy (KGT) begins implementing of a new project "Keep Georgia Tidy" with the support of Sweden government.

Ulrik Tideström, the Ambassador of Sweden to Georgia and Armenia made a statement about the project and the importance of environment protection in detail at the Ministry of Environment Protection:

"The main aim of the project is to reduce polluting the environment and greenhouse gases by 2030, promoting sustainable environmental education and circular economy (a circular economy is an economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources).The main target groups of the project are The Government of Georgia, business sector and the population of the country", said Ulrik Tideström." (*Agenda.ge*, September 10, 2019).

27. Georgia starts negotiations with the US on direct flights

Giorgi Chogovadze, Director of Georgian Airports Union along with the Georgian delegation, led by Minister of Economy Natia Turnava, will meet with the representatives of the largest US airline Company UNITED AIRLINES in Chicago, US, today. Talks will focus on launching direct flights between the US and Georgia.

As Giorgi Chogovadze noted, launching direct air services with the United States would be a step forward from the point of political as well as economic development (*1TV*, September 11, 2019).

28. Levan Davitashvili: "It is important for Georgia to increase trade turnover of wine and spirits with EU and US"

Georgia's Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili, together with representatives from US and French state agencies and business communities, attended a grape harvest in Kakheti, Georgia's winemaking region yesterday.

"It's very important for us to increase the trade turnover of wine with EU. Especially with France, which sets the highest quality standards for grape origin spirits. Wine and spirits holding Bolero & Company has signed a very important contract, which provides several thousand tons of alcohol export by the end of the year in France"

"As for the US, we have been working regularly with the US for several years to create market awareness. As a result, the US market is in the top ten export countries currently, though our ambition is for the US market to become one of the top export markets," Levan Davitashvili said (*Agenda.ge*, September 11, 2019).

Additional Information

September 12, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9624 GEL	1 GBP - 3.6624 GEL	100 RUB - 4.5293 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2634 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5131 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7503 GEL

Thursday 12 September	Friday 13 September	Saturday 14 September	Sunday 15 September	Monday 16 September
				
11° 22°	13° 23°	13° 24°	14° 25°	14° 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](#)**