

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

November 1-4

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Date: **November 5, 2019**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

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

#### 1. Tskhinvali occupation regime not allowed family to transfer injured woman to Tbilisi hospital

Tskhinvali occupation regime did not allow the family to transfer an injured woman to Tbilisi hospital. Local of occupied Akhagori received multiple body injuries after falling into the well, – Nugzar Tinikashvili, Akhagori Municipal Governor told the First Channel.

According to Governor, despite the family's attempt to take the woman to Tbilisi, the patient has been transferred to the hospital of occupied Tskhinvali.

"Tamar Gigauri fell into a seven-meters-depth well and received multiple injuries. She has been placed at Tskhinvali hospital in a grave health condition. As family members claim there is a poor condition in Tskhinvali hospital for providing proper medical assistance. The requests of the family to transfer the patient to Tbilisi immediately was rejected", – Nugzar Tinikashvili said (1TV, November 3, 2019).

#### 2. Zurab Abashidze - The closure of the main crossing point in the area of Akhagori will be discussed in Prague

"The closure of the main crossing point in the area of Akhagori and escalating humanitarian situation will be discussed in Prague," – Zurab Abashidze, Special Representative of the Georgian Prime Minister for Relations with Russia said today.

"Officially, these issues are not listed on our agenda, these issues belong to Geneva discussions, but we use every meeting, every format to focus on the most difficult and pressing topics.

We always discuss these issues in Prague, we always meet media representatives there and try to increase the interest of these topics,"- Zurab Abashidze said (1TV, November 4, 2019).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 3. Georgia in U.S. State Department Terrorism Report

On November 1, the U.S. Department of State released its annual Country Reports on Terrorism, assessing the 2018 global counterterrorism landscape for the U.S. Congress.

The document refers to Georgia as "a longstanding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS," which "continued its robust engagement with the United States across a range of counterterrorism-related issues."

Saying "there were no reported terrorist incidents" in Georgia in 2018, the report says the country "continued to enhance its counterterrorism legislation" through "amendments to its criminal code,

which granted government officials greater authorities for cases with connections to foreign jurisdictions.”

According to the State Security Service of Georgia (SSS), Georgia’s domestic counterintelligence agency, eight individuals were “arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced” for “supporting ISIS member Akhmet Chataev, who was killed in a counterterrorism operation in Tbilisi in 2017.” (*Civil.ge, November 1, 2019*)

#### **4. Maria Zakharova - The dialogue with Georgia carried out between Zurab Abashidze and Grigory Karasin will be continued**

“By the order of the Government of Russia, Grigory Karasin will continue the dialogue with the Special Representative of the Georgian Prime Minister for Relations with Russia Zurab Abashidze, The next meeting in Prague is tentatively scheduled for November”, – Maria Zakharova stated.

Grigory Karasin, who used to represent Russia in the Prague format of the dialogue with Georgia, resigned as state secretary and deputy foreign minister for a seat on the Federation Council. Yevgeny Ivanov succeeded Karasin as state secretary, and Andrei Rudenko was appointed as deputy foreign minister (*1TV, November 1, 2019*).

#### **5. Oppositional MP criticizes Karasin-Abashidze format**

Putin decided to put Georgia in hands of one person and this person has to make decisions, this is humiliating and the situation is abnormal – Sergo Ratiani, a member of the parliamentary oppositional European Georgia Party said.

According to Ratiani, Karasin-Abashidze format of talks harms the format of the internationally mediated Geneva negotiations.

“Geneva International Discussions have to be strengthened. When we remain face to face with Russia without international partners, we show our weakness than when being together with partners,” Ratiani said (*1TV, November 2, 2019*).

#### **6. Davit Zalkaliani visiting Sweden**

Davit Zalkaliani, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia visiting Sweden. Within the framework of the visit, Davit Zalkaliani will participate in Stockholm Ministerial on the 10th Anniversary of the Eastern Partnership organised by Sweden.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the ministerial will be attended by Eastern Partnership foreign ministers, as well as Anna Lindh, Swedish Foreign Minister, Christian Danielsson, Director-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and Polish Deputy Foreign Minister.

During his visit, David Zalkaliani will hold bilateral meetings with Anna Lindh, Swedish Foreign Minister and with other top officials too (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

#### **7. Irish PM says Georgian and Albanian migrants driving rise in asylum-seeker numbers in Ireland**

The Prime Minister of Ireland Leo Varadkar has said Georgian and Albanian migrants travelling to Ireland with fake documents are the “big driver” behind what he says is a rise in asylum seekers coming to this country. Varadkar made this statement in an interview with Sunday Independent.

Irish Prime Minister said there has been a 60% increase in asylum seekers in recent years but said we are not being “swamped or flooded”.

As Irish media reports, a total of 450 Georgian nationals sought refugee status in Ireland in 2018, representing 12% of all applicants (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

#### **8. Georgian ambassador to Ireland - There are no political circumstances for Georgian citizens to seek asylum in Ireland**

This is confirmed by the fact that 15 EU countries, including Ireland, have put Georgia on the list of safe countries. In order to discuss Georgian citizen application for asylum, we will use an accelerated procedure which significantly reduces deadline. As far as I know, most of the requisition for the asylum are unfounded, thus, they receive a negative response.

The Georgian side is interested in co-operating with the Irish side on temporary labour migration. In order to manage migration processes and to eliminate unauthorized, irregular migration, the Georgian government is taking appropriate measures and implementing reforms, which the EU has positively assessed, which is confirmed but the fact that the Visa-Free Travel came into effect for Georgia," – Giorgi Zurabishvili said (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

#### **9. Greek police arrested Georgian driver transporting 41 illegal migrants**

Greek police have arrested the truck driver, Georgian national, who was transporting 41 illegal migrants. The Greek edition Ekathimerini reports in this regard.

According to edition, the driver of refrigerator truck was detained after police stopped the vehicle near Xanthi City, northern Greece and found the migrants in an inspection (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

#### **10. PM Giorgi Gakharia to pay a visit to the Netherlands**

Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia departed for the Kingdom of the Netherlands to pay a one-day visit, – Prime Minister's Press Office reports.

According to Press Office, within the framework of the visit the head of the Georgian government will meet with his Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte. After the meeting, the Prime Ministers of the two countries will make statements to the media (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

#### **11. MTA - Pirates kidnapped Georgian sailor**

"Georgian sailor was kidnapped by pirates,"- The Maritime Transport Agency of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia confirmed the information.

As official statement reads, the attack resulted in the kidnapping of four of the ship's 24 crew members. Of the kidnapped crewmen, one is Greek, one Georgian and two are Filipino nationals (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **12. State Inspector Service Assumes Investigative Mandate**

The State Inspector Service, an independent investigative agency for crimes committed by law enforcement officers and public officials, has started to perform its investigative mandate from November 1.

The State Inspector mandate applies to various crimes committed by law enforcement officers and public officials, among them torture, threat of torture, inhumane or degrading treatment.

The State Inspector will also investigate the facts of exceeding or abuse of official powers, committed using violence, weapon as well as the cases of offending personal dignity of a victim (*Civil.ge*, November 1, 2019).

### **13. Government, Opposition on Recent Developments in Georgian Orthodox Church**

#### **Ruling party assessments**

**Giorgi Gakharia, Prime Minister:** "What we saw yesterday is a deliberate attack against the state and the church. Of course, certain groups, which do not want calm, peaceful development of our country, are trying to harm the country's future through various types of provocations. We have already witnessed such attempts some time ago, when a revolutionary scenario was masterminded against the state and the government. It seems that today they decided to incite unrests in the church through destructive actions. Of course, it is inadmissible and we understand well that the Patriarch of Georgia is a symbol of the church and a symbol of statehood, and we will not allow anyone to jeopardize our future and the future of our children through such destructive actions."

**Gia Volski, Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia:** "It is easy to analyze who attacks the church, who is radical, who is destructive in [their] expressions or actions ... I was always saying that destabilization is a desire of a specific group of our opponents."

#### **Opposition assessments**

**Mikheil Saakashvili, ex-President of Georgia:** "I am watching recent developments in the Georgian church with a great pain in my heart and regardless of who says what, it is the result of oligarch Ivanishvili's policy. It was just him who trampled down our values, our church, our faith, our state institutions; he turned people against each other and is now inciting strife, robbing and destructing Georgia. It is important for him that real heroes are not left in Georgia; it is important for him to make everything dirty; it is important for him to weaken [our] belief."

**Roman Gotsiridze, the United National Movement:** "Unfortunately, like a Russian trace is seen in the Georgian government's activities, there is a serious crisis in the Patriarchate, which generally deepens the crisis throughout the country. It is necessary to find the way out of this crisis timely and the civilian way for it is to change the government through elections. Moreover, people will appear in the Patriarchate in order to launch reforms there so that it enters upon a real, patriotic path and gets rid of Russian influence."

**Otar Kakhidze, European Georgia:** "Unfortunately, they failed to get rid of Russian influence and the majority of them [clerics] are one of serious representatives of Russia's soft power. It is alarming and it has a very negative impact on our public."

**Zurab Japaridze, movement Girchi:** "So, we have the following picture – the Patriarch is old, he faces health problems and in my opinion, what is now happening at the Patriarchate is a very banal story. It is a usual struggle for the Patriarch's chair, or if the Church is divided, for seizing church property, on the one hand, and dividing political power, on the other. I think, ultimately, it is what we are witnessing now and that is why they are throwing mud at each other."

**Mamuka Khazaradze, movement Lelo:** "Regrettably, Ivanishvili's role is felt in the entire process. It's his style to incite unrests, undermine institutions and leaders of various spheres. But it cannot continue further. The church should be an independent body and the state should not interfere in its affairs, like

the church should not interfere in politics. Actually, the process of grabbing state institutions is underway and in a lot of civil institutions, this process has ended with Ivanishvili's success. Naturally, he could not have seized the church. So, I see the present government's serious role in the deplorable situation created today."

**Shalva Natelashvili, Labor Party:** "Bishop Petre wanted to strengthen his influence in the Georgian church, targeting the Patriarch's chair in the future. It is not a crime at all. It depends on how you decide to achieve this goal. Bidzina Ivanishvili wants not only to misappropriate everything, but also to impoverish the society, to seize statehood and destruct reputable people. He hates highly reputable church, reputable Patriarch and therefore decided to profane it, using Bishops Petre and Iakob for this purpose."

**Davit Usupashvili, Development Movement:** "The Georgian Orthodox Church is facing an extremely deep crisis and dismissal of one senior cleric cannot be a solution. What is now happening in Georgia is what our main enemy wants most of all. The ongoing developments are another blow against Georgian society, Georgian state and we should understand well who needs it most of all."

**Kremlin-friendly politicians:**

**Irma Inashvili, Alliance of Patriots:** "It is a dirty defamation against the Patriarch of Georgia, dirty lie and slander... In its time, Saakashvili and Bokeria [editorial note: Giga Bokeria, MP of European Georgia] planted their agents [in the church] and Petre Tsaava is just such an agent... in order to explode the situation from inside, when it would be necessary. The Holy Synod made a wise decision."

**Nino Burjanadze, United Georgia – Democratic Movement:** "It is an absolute disaster. It is a huge blow against the country, the nation, our spirituality. It is not a blow only against one institution or one person. It is a great insult against us and actually an attempt to bury the nation. It, first of all, has been caused by the government's interference in the Patriarchate's affairs." (*Civil.ge, November 1, 2019*).

#### **14. Ilia II - I am grateful for your support**

"I will not preach today, but admonish you. Grief has united us and united us with God. That is the strength of the Georgian nation. Take care of the homeland and the church. This will give you mercy and alms. You are blessed to read one chapter of the Gospel today throughout Georgia. God bless you. I am grateful for your support. Support was also given by representatives of other religions. Rejoice, God is with us," – Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia said (*1TV, November 3, 2019*).

#### **15. Bidzina Ivanishvili met with Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia**

Bidzina Ivanishvili, the chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party and his wife Ekaterine Khvedelidze met with Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II, – the Patriarchate reports.

"Bidzina Ivanishvili discussed the latest events, which caused well-known irresponsible accusations and great anxiety in the society. As it was said at the meeting, such acts are not the attack only on church, but on the state too.

Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II paid particular attention to the ongoing situation and the challenges Georgia facing today.

At the end of the meeting Catholicos-Patriarch thanked Bidzina Ivanishvili and Ekaterine Khvedelidze for the visit and blessed them," – the statement of the Patriarchate reads (*1TV, November 3, 2019*).

#### **16. Prosecutors Add New Charges to Nika Gvaramia**

he Prosecutor's Office has added new charges to Nika Gvaramia, former director general of Rustavi 2 TV, accusing him of abuse of power "for the purpose of receiving personal profits" against the broadcaster's legal interests.

In a statement released on November 1, the Prosecutor's Office said that in February 2019, Nika Gvaramia offered Porsche Center Tbilisi to sell Porsche Macan S with a EUR 76,700 price, a car of his choice "for personal use," to his trustee, Zurab Gumbaridze, who presently serves as the director general of Formula TV, in exchange for placing ads on Rustavi 2 TV. The Prosecutor's Office explained that Gvaramia also offered Porsche Center to place their video clips on Rustavi 2 TV through Proesko Media, an advertising agency, at a preferential price (*Civil.ge, November 4, 2019*).

#### **17. Bidzina Ivanishvili - Entering politics is probably the most valuable thing I have ever done in my life**

"Since my participation in politics made possible and facilitated the peaceful removal from power of the regime that was based on the oppression of the people, entering politics probably is the most valuable thing that I have done in my life," - Bidzina Ivanishvili, the chairman of the ruling Georgian Dream party said in an interview with Entrepreneur Georgia (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).

### **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **18. Flights Tbilisi-Delhi-Tbilisi to be carried out every day starting March 5**

Regular flights will be carried out between Georgia and India. The Indian low-cost air company IndiGo – InterGlobe Aviation Limited is entering the Georgian aviation market.

Regular flights in direction Tbilisi-Delhi-Tbilisi will be carried out every day starting March 5, 2020, as reported by Civil Aviation Agency.

The Civil Aviation Agency of Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development granted IndiGo Company with the permit to carry out regular flights on October 30 (*1TV, November 1, 2019*).

#### **19. Geostat: Annual Inflation 6.9% in October**

Georgia's annual inflation stood at 6.9% in October after 6.4% in the previous month, the National Statistics Office (Geostat) reported on November 4. On a monthly basis prices were up by 0.8% in October.

The annual inflation rate was driven by higher prices in the group of food and non-alcoholic beverages (up by 13.5% y/y); alcoholic beverages and tobacco (up by 13.8% y/y); recreation and culture (up by 7.3% y/y); transport (up by 3% y/y); restaurants and hotels (up by 6.9% y/y) (*Civil.ge, November 4, 2019*).

#### **20. IMF lowers Georgia's economic growth forecasts for 2020**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has lowered the forecasts of Georgia's economic growth for 2020. The GDP growth in Georgia is projected to reach 4.3% in 2020, while the previous forecast was 4.8 per cent, – says the International Monetary Fund. The World Bank forecasted 4.6% economic growth in Georgia in 2019.

Besides, according to the Head of the IMF Mission Mercedes Vera-Martin inflation forecasts for this year increased to 7.2 per cent. However, the Fund predicts a decline in inflation for 2020 (*1TV, November 4, 2019*).








## **Additional Information**

**November 5, 2019**

### **OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.9653 GEL	1 GBP - 3.8494 GEL	100 RUB - 4.6865 GEL
1 EUR - 3.3093 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5207 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7340 GEL

Tuesday 5 November	Wednesday 6 November	Thursday 7 November	Friday 8 November	Saturday 9 November
				
3° 14°	5° 19°	5° 19°	6° 19°	6° 19°

-  **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](#)**