

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

November 5-7

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

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## ❖ Occupied Regions

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

#### 1. Russian occupation forces resumed works at Khurvaleti village

Russian occupation forces have resumed works in the village of Khurvaleti, – State Security Service confirmed the information.

According to locals, Russian occupation forces are supposedly cutting the road by the special equipment on the occupied territory of Georgia. As locals added, the detour road will connect the occupied villages with Tskhinvali (*ITV, November 6, 2019*).

#### 2. Geneva Talks Co-Chairs Call for Immediate Reopening of Tskhinvali Crossing Points

The Co-Chairs of Geneva International Discussions (GID) call for the immediate re-opening of all crossing points on the line of occupation between Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Georgia proper.

In their statement of November 6, the Co-Chairs “appealed to the relevant actors to re-open, without delay” the crossing points that have been closed since early September following the Chorchana-Tsnelisi crisis.

The Co-Chairs stressed that the recent months “have seen a serious deterioration of the security situation on the ground, which has raised fears amongst the local population.”

According to them, “the ongoing closure of crossing points is aggravating an already difficult situation, as illustrated by recent medical cases, with a severe impact on the local conflict-affected population.” (*Civil.ge, November 7, 2019*)

#### 3. EUMM: No Shots Fired in Koda Village Near Dividing Line

On November 7, the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) stated that “no EUMM monitors have confirmed any shots being heard” in the vicinity of village Koda, in Kareli Municipality, adjacent to the occupied Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

The EUMM statement follows recent reports from Tskhinvali “security committee,” claiming that unidentified persons had made 10-15 shots near Koda village from Georgia proper on November 5.

“There was no activation of the Hotline over allegations that shots were fired in or near Koda on Tuesday 5 November. The EUMM itself initiated the Hotline on 6 November to seek clarification when allegations emerged in statements and in the media,” the Mission said (*Civil.ge, November 7, 2019*).

#### 4. Illegally detained Georgian citizen kept at Tskhinvali isolator

No one from Tskinali has contacted the family of 28-year-old man, who was illegally detained by occupation forces yesterday.

Russian soldiers abducted Zakro Butkhuzi from the territory near the occupation line. According to family members he was there together with his brother, who managed to escape.

"There are no wires or anything else at the site incident took place. These gardens always belonged to the village. We have not received any information from Tskhinvali yet", – the aunt of detainee told the First Channel. Zakro Butkhuzi was illegally detained for crossing the so-called border four years ago as well (*1TV, November 7, 2019*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### **5. American Congressmen to visit Georgia**

American Congressmen Adam Kinzinger and Alex Moon will visit Georgia on November 5-9. According to the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Congressmen will hold meetings with Georgian Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defense Minister and Parliamentary Speaker.

The Congressmen will visit Georgia's occupied line with Tskhinvali region and will become introduced with the current situation firsthand. The guests will take part in the Defense and Security Conference and visit Batumi and Poti ports as well (*1TV, November 5, 2019*).

### **6. Eight people detained for an attempt to cross Azerbaijan-Georgia state border illegally**

Eight people have been detained for having attempted to cross the Azerbaijan-Georgia state border illegally. There are 5 juveniles, the elder – born in 1999, among the detained persons as Azerbaijani media reports.

According to the Azerbaijani Border Control Service, the detained persons tried to cross the state border from the territory of Sadikli checkpoint on November 3. An investigation into the case is opened (*1TV, November 5, 2019*).

### **7. Georgian, Dutch PMs Pledge to Deepen Trade Ties**

On November 4, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia visited western Europe for the first time since taking office. PM Gakharia met his Dutch counterpart, Mark Rutte, in the Hague, the Netherlands late yesterday.

At the joint news briefing following the meeting, PM Rutte called Gakharia's visit to the Netherlands "historic," as this is "the first ever bilateral visit of a Georgian prime minister to the Netherlands." "I see your visit as confirmation that the relations between our two countries are flourishing as never before, and that's especially true of our trade ties," Rutte stated.

According to PM Rutte, the Netherlands is "one of Georgia's biggest trade partners," and the "second largest investor in Georgia," that, as he said, is "a sign that we have every confidence in your country's future; confidence that fuels by the macro economic stability, economic growth, and reforms that Georgia has achieved." "Whenever confidence and stability prevail, opportunities arise," the Dutch PM added (*Civil.ge, November 5, 2019*).

## **8. Defense Minister Garibashvili Visits Afghanistan**

Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Garibashvili has visited Georgian servicemen deployed in Afghanistan, Defense Ministry reported on November 5.

The Georgian troops, whose duties focus on security and rapid reaction force, are deployed in Kabul; at the Bagram Air Field, and Camp Marmal in Mazar-i-Sharif (*Civil.ge, November 6, 2019*).

## **9. Georgian FM Concludes Visit to Sweden**

Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani paid his first official visit to Sweden on November 3-6. As part of his visit, Minister Zalkaliani held meetings with Swedish officials and participated in the high-level ministerial seminar on the 10th anniversary of the Eastern Partnership (EaP).

On November 5, Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Poland, Ann Linde and Jacek Czaputowicz, respectively, together with their counterparts from the six EaP countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, discussed "the value of an ambitious EU policy for Eastern Europe, how to profit from a deepened and continued cooperation, as well as what areas the EaP should focus on in the future." (*Civil.ge, November 6, 2019*)

## **10. Georgia in Freedom House's Internet Freedom Report**

Georgia is among the "free" countries with freedom on the net, according to the latest report released by the U.S.-based rights watchdog Freedom House on November 5.

The report, covering the developments between June 1, 2018-May 31, 2019 says authorities in Georgia, "generally respected digital rights," however, "threats to internet freedom persisted on a number of fronts." Divided in three major parts, the report describes the situation in the countries in terms of obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of user rights.

According to the report, "trolling, particularly by government-affiliated bots and users, intensified, most notably around June 2018 protests and the 2018 presidential election." "Relatedly, harassment continues to mar the internet landscape, with several high-profile cases of online intimidation during the coverage period," it says (*Civil.ge, November 6, 2019*).

## **11. Georgian, Foreign Officials Address Defense and Security Conference in Batumi**

Georgia is hosting the 13th Defense and Security Conference (GDSC) on November 6-7 in Batumi on the Black Sea coast, bringing local and foreign dignitaries together.

In her opening remarks earlier today, Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili spoke of the growing security challenges for Georgia and the entire region. She said that in spite of current challenges of security, peace and development, the country "nevertheless, has remained, an island of stability," succeeding to maintain its "economic and democratic development."

President Zurbishvili noted that Russian military occupation of two Georgian regions brings "everyday security concern" to her country. "This occupation means a constant tension with Russia, endless incidents that could flare up in more dangerous situations that Georgia is constantly trying to prevent," she stated, adding that "the humanitarian distress" of the people living on both sides of the dividing line "could challenge the peace and the peaceful development at any time." (*Civil.ge, November 6, 2019*)

## **12. Rose Gottemoeller: The decision stands, Georgia will become NATO member**

Over years Georgia has moved closer to the membership of NATO and all allies support this progress, – the former NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller made this statement in her video address from Brussels to the participants of the 13th Conference on Defense and Security of Georgia (GDSC). As Gottemoeller noted, NATO's cooperation with Georgia is unique and it is based on several pillars.

"The first and foremost it is based on Georgia's aspiration for membership in the Alliance. You all know the decision made at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, that decision stands, Georgia will become a member of NATO. Through the work we have done together over years since the decision, Georgia has moved closer to the membership of NATO and all allies support this progress. There are several tools at Georgia's disposal to spur this continued progress. These comprise the second pillar of our cooperation. NATO-Georgia Commission is a dedicated venue through which we take forward political dialogue. The Annual National Program (ANP) frames the reforms necessary for eventual membership and enables us to assess progress each year. Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) supports your security and defence reforms" – Rose Gottemoeller said (*1TV, November 7, 2019*).

### **13. 51% of applications on granting Georgian citizenship rejected**

The 51% of applications on granting Georgian citizenship were rejected in 2015-2018. The share of making negative decisions increased from 21%.

Based on the information published by the governmental commission on migration issues, the 3406 positive and 3570 negative decisions were made in 2018 regarding granting of Georgian citizenship.

The 4434 positive and 1287 negative decisions were made in 2015, the 4677 positive and 1216 negative decisions – in 2016, and 4527 positive and 3722 negative decisions – in 2017 (*1TV, November 6, 2019*).

### **14. 2904 Georgian citizens received U.S. Citizenship in 2015-2017**

The 2904 Georgian citizens received the U.S. Citizenship in 2015-2017, while 4674 persons – permanent residence permit.

Based on the information published by the governmental Commission on Migration Issues, permanent residence permits were issued based on marriage with an American citizen and Green Card lottery.

Obtaining residence permit in the U.S. is also possible on the basis of employment and receipt of the refugee or asylum-seeker status (*1TV, November 6, 2019*).

### **15. State Commission on Migration Issues - Russian citizens are on top of registering real estate in Georgia**

"Russian citizens are leaders among the foreigners who registered real estate in Georgia," – State Commission on Migration Issues released the statement.

According to the official information, there were 15 133 cases of Russian citizens who registered real estate in Georgia in 2015-2018 which is 40% from the total. Iran (5 598) is in the second place, followed by Ukraine (2,599), Israel (1634) and Armenia (1447).

As official information reads, foreigners mostly register apartments. In 2018, this figure almost doubled compared to the previous year, resulted in 11 038 registered apartments (*1TV, November 6, 2019*).

### **16. SCMI - The citizens of India are on top of obtaining a Study Residence Permit in Georgia**

As State Commission on Migration Issues (SCMI) stated, over the last four years, citizens of India, Iraq and Nigeria have been leaders among the foreigners who obtained a residence permit for the purpose of study in Georgia. Herein, the number of Study Residence Permits issued for citizens of India has been increasing, while the number of Study Residence Permits issued for the citizens of Iraq, Turkey and Nigeria has decreased.

Iraqi citizens (1209 permits which were 26% from the total) were leaders in 2015 followed by citizens of India (1062 permits which were 23 % from the total).

In 2018 the number of Study Residence Permits issued for the citizens of India increased (4 486 permits) and went up to 73 %,- State Commission on Migration Issues said in an official statement (*1TV, November 6, 2019*).

### **17. 9272 Iranian and 4238 Indian citizens were denied entry into Georgia this year**

Since the beginning of this year till October 20, 21975 cases of refusal to cross the state border of Georgia were registered. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 9272 Iranian and 4238 Indian citizens were denied entry into the country this year.

The top five also includes Azerbaijan (1607), Turkey (1231) and Russia (949). As for citizens of the other countries the statistic is as follows: Armenia 507, Turkmenistan 430, Pakistan 392, Uzbekistan 386, Egypt 288, Iraq 234, Kazakhstan 206, Kyrgyzstan 168, Syria 165, Yemen 152, Philippines 136, China 125, Moldova 121, Afghanistan 110, Jordan and Sri Lanka – 105-105. In the case of other countries, the number is less than 100 (*1TV, November 7, 2019*).

## **❖ Internal Affairs**

### **18. Prime Minister Appoints New Parliamentary Secretary**

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia has appointed Beka Dochviri as the government's parliamentary secretary, replacing Natia Mikeladze, who served at the post from April 2018. Both Dochviri and Mikeladze will remain as the deputy heads of the government's administration.

In 2017-2019, Dochviri served as the Director of the Interior Ministry's Legal Department; earlier he was the Head of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (*Civil.ge, November 5, 2019*).

### **19. MIA's statement on the premier of "And Then We Danced"**

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia has released a statement regarding the screening of the film "And Then We Danced".

As the statement reads, one of the tasks of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia is to protect human rights and freedom, regardless of gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, political beliefs, etc.

"On November 8, 9 and 10 of 2019, the film "And Then We Danced " will be premiered in Tbilisi and Batumi. Certain groups of people make announcements about the activities that hinder the premier.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia ensures the protection of public safety and law, as well as, the freedom of expression that does not go beyond the law.

We address everyone to abide by the requirements of the law. Otherwise, the police will act within their mandate and any violations will be immediately prevented," - the statement said (*1TV, November 6, 2019*).

#### **20. Education Minister Resigns Citing 'Personal Reasons'**

Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Mikheil Batiashvili announced his resignation on November 7, citing "personal reasons." Speaking at a news briefing today, Batiashvili expressed his hope that the decision will not trigger "additional political speculations."

In his remarks, Batiashvili said that during his tenure, the ministry had "a lot of unprecedented achievements in the sphere of sports," as well as "started to carry out reforms in the sphere of culture that should be further intensified, and achieved an important breakthrough in the system of education." (*Civil.ge, November 7, 2019*).

### **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

#### **21. Executive Director of Partnership Fund holding meetings in China**

Davit Saganelidze, Executive Director of Partnership Fund, the state-owned shareholding company, is visiting Shanghai, the People's Republic of China.

Within the framework of the visit, Saganelidze held business meetings with Xi Jinping, President of China, French President Emmanuel Macron and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi.

Meetings are planned to be held with Chinese governmental and business circles, representatives of private and state-run companies and potential investors (*1TV, November 5, 2019*).

#### **22. Export of wine increased by 11%**

Export of Georgian wine increased by 11% in January-October of 2019 in comparison to the same period of last year.

About 75, 6 million bottles (0,75 litre) were exported to 53 countries of the world. The cost of the exported wine reaches USD 195 million, according to the National Wine Agency.

Export increased to strategic markets including the U.S., Great Britain, Lithuania and Estonia. In October – January, the 23, 8 million bottles of brandy were exported to 23 countries and 521,7 thousand bottles of Chacha – to 27 countries (*1TV, November 5, 2019*).

#### **23. Number of international visitors to protected areas increased by 14% in October**

The number of visitors to protected areas of Georgia increased by 21% in October 2019 in comparison to the same period of the last year.

According to the data of ten months of the current year, 1 130 400 tourists visited the protected areas, that means a 7% increase compared to the same period of 2018. 49% of the visitors are Georgian citizens and 51% – foreigners. The number of international visitors increased by 14%.

Based on data of the first ten months of 2019, majority of guests visited Kazbegi National Park, Martvili Canyon, Prometheus Cave, Okatse Canyon and Tbilisi National Park (*1TV, November 7, 2019*).

#### **24. The first Chinese freight train from China to Europe enters Turkey**

The first Chinese train, called the China Railway Express, which will go to Europe using the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad has entered Turkey's eastern province Kars. The train crossed into Europe using Istanbul's Marmaray subsea tunnel.

The train is traveling over two continents, 10 countries, two seas and 11,483 kilometers (7,135 miles) of road in 12 days with 42 container-loaded wagons. The China Railway Express line is carrying an electronic product load equivalent to 42 tractors (*1TV, November 7, 2019*).

## **Additional Information**

**November 8, 2019**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.9586 GEL	1 GBP - 3.8071 GEL	100 RUB -4.6420 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2808 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5147 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7098 GEL

Friday 8 November	Saturday 9 November	Sunday 10 November	Monday 11 November	Tuesday 12 November
				
5° 18°	5° 18°	5° 19°	6° 19°	5° 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](#)**