

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

November 11-13

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Date: **November 14, 2019**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (*so called South Ossetia*)

1. Russian occupational forces detain two locals of Kodistskaro village

Representatives of the occupation forces detained two men in the outskirts of Kodistskaro village, Kaspi municipality.

According to the information available at the moment, the detainees have been transferred to the territory controlled by the de facto regime.

Locals said that Zurab Tukhiashvili and Ramaz Zadishvili were shepherds and were likely detained in the vicinity of the villages located along the occupation line – Karafila and Kodistskaro.

The State Security Service says that a hotline is activated and the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to Georgia is notified about the fact (*ITV, November 12, 2019*).

2. Seventh 'Technical Meeting' in Ergneti Delivers 'No Substantial Progress'

On November 12, security officials from Tbilisi, Tskhinvali and the Russian Federation held the seventh "technical meeting" in village Ergneti, near the line of occupation with Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, over the recent events in Chorchana-Tsnelisi area.

Following the meeting, Irakli Antadze, Deputy Director of the Analytical Department of the State Security Service of Georgia, said that at today's meeting positions remained unchanged, however, Tbilisi was expecting "a more constructive position" from Tskhinvali representatives.

"We again raised the proposals that are necessary to normalize the situation on the ground. Unfortunately our positions did not match again," Antadze noted. He reiterated that the Georgian police checkpoint in Chorchana village of Khashuri Municipality will not be dismantled (*Civil.ge, November 12, 2019*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

3. Prime Minister of Poland - Europe cannot pretend that nothing happened in Ukraine, Belarus or Georgia

Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said that Europe could not "pretend nothing has happened in Ukraine, Belarus or Georgia." According to Polish PM, Poland was in favor to cooperate with peaceful and democratic Russia but Russia was not peaceful and was quite aggressive.

In an interview with Financial Times, Morawiecki said that NATO was “the primary source of security” for Poland. He said that NATO was “the most important alliance in the world when it comes to preserving freedom and peace” (*1TV, November 13, 2019*).

❖ Internal Affairs

4. Business Ombudsman, His Deputy Resign

Business Ombudsman Irakli Lekvinadze and his deputy Levan Kalandadze have resigned, the Business Ombudsman’s Office confirmed today.

Commenting on his resignation, Irakli Lekvinadze wrote on his Facebook page that it was not “a spontaneous decision,” but was rather linked to “agreed alternative plans,” which he will reveal in near future.

“During a 22-month work, our office discussed 565 cases and reacted to 300 of them. Business requirements were partially or fully met in 68% of these cases,” Lekvinadze wrote (*Civil.ge, November 11, 2019*).

5. Prosecutor’s Office Grants Victim Status to Three Persons Injured in June 20-21 Dispersal

The Georgian Prosecutor’s Office announced on November 11 that three persons, who sustained injuries during the dispersal of June 20-21 rally in Tbilisi, have been granted victim statuses.

Mako Gomuri, who lost her eye, is among them. Along with Gomuri, two other citizens, Omar Sekhniashvili and Mirza Liparteliani also have been granted the statuses. The victim status will allow them to receive information about the course of investigation and familiarize themselves with the case files (*Civil.ge, November 12, 2019*).

6. Parliament Suspends MP Mandate to Vano Zardiashvili

Vano Zardiashvili, former member of the parliamentary majority, has been suspended of his MP mandate at the today’s session of the Parliament with 94 votes in favor.

Zardiashvili announced about his plans to renounce his MP mandate in early October, citing “three-year dirty, negative campaign” against him as the reason behind his decision (*Civil.ge, November 12, 2019*).

7. Mikheil Chkhenkeli Regains Education Minister’s Post

Mikheil Chkhenkeli has regained the position of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia. The post became vacant after Mikheil Batiashvili resigned on November 7, citing “personal reasons.”

Chkhenkeli was first appointed as Education Minister in November 2017, but served for only eight months. In July 2018, then new Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze replaced him by Mikheil Batiashvili.

Following his dismissal as Education Minister until now, Chkhenkeli served as the Prime Minister’s adviser on education. Earlier, he was the Deputy Rector of Tbilisi State University (*Civil.ge, November 13, 2019*).

8. Police Investigates Georgian March Leader over Influencing Public Defender

Georgian Interior Ministry has launched an inquest into the incident that took place at the Office of the Georgian Public Defender on November 12.

In particular, yesterday, Sandro Bregadze, leader of ultranationalist Georgian March group, went to the Public Defender's Office to meet with Ombudsperson Nino Lomjaria and discuss recent developments in Tbilisi related to the Georgian premiere of "And Then We Danced."

The meeting, however, was not held, prompting Bregadze to threaten that he would return to the Office of Public Defender together with several thousands of people to throw Nino Lomjaria and her supporters to the "political landfill."

In a statement released on November 13, the Interior Ministry said that investigation has been launched under article 352 of the criminal code of Georgia, involving influencing the Public Defender in order to interfere with her official duties and punished by a fine or corrective labor from one to two years, or with restriction of liberty for up to two years (*Civil.ge, November 13, 2019*).

9. CSOs, Ombudsperson Call on Parliament to Approve Constitutional Amendment

Local civil society organizations and the Georgian Public Defender called on the Georgian Dream parliamentary majority to support the constitutional amendment envisaging the abolition of the majoritarian electoral system for the 2020 parliamentary elections and transfer to fully proportional system. The ruling party-initiated constitutional amendment had to be discussed with its first reading on November 12, but several majoritarian MPs, including those lawmakers, who have co-sponsored the bill, demanded to postpone the voting and discuss its expediency at the parliamentary majority's session.

The plenary session reopened at 12 noon today, following the parliamentary majority's meeting, which was also attended by Bidzina Ivanishvili, chairman of the Georgian Dream party (*Civil.ge, November 13, 2019*).

10. Protest rally "Don't Dare!" is being held in front of the Parliament

"Don't Dare!" – a rally with this slogan is being held in front of the Parliament on Rustaveli Avenue, Tbilisi. The protest is organized by "It's a Shame" movement. The participants say that the parliamentary discussions revealed that holding the parliamentary elections through the proportional system by 2020 is in danger.

Members of the "It's a Shame" movement called on the ruling team to fulfill its commitments and adopt the draft bill (*1TV, November 12, 2019*).

11. Christian Urse – We have expectation that promise about transformation onto proportional system of elections will be met

"We have the expectation that the promise about transformation into the proportional system of elections will be met" – Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia Christian Urse said in an interview with journalists.

"In summer, when transformation onto the proportional system of elections was proposed, the rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe backed the initiative," Urse said.

The 2020 parliamentary elections will be held with the proportional (party) system under the conditions of 0%, so-called 'natural' election barrier. Discussions over constitutional continue in the parliament (*1TV, November 13, 2019*).

12. Grigol Vashadze - Either 2020 elections will be conducted under proportional system, or we take to streets

Either the 2020 elections will be conducted under the proportional system, or we will take to streets, – said Grigol Vashadze, Chairman of the United National Movement Party.

Vashadze evaluated the behaviour of the parliamentary majority members and described it as being a 'poor performance.'

"I do not know what the purpose of yesterday's poor performance was – to show our allies how difficult it is to keep a promise in a democratic Georgia or to show Georgian citizens how much internal democracy they have in the so-called Georgian Dream. But the outcome will be simple – either the 2020 elections will be held under the proportional system, or we will take to streets. You can be sure that everybody who votes for the bill today will do the same in spring too," Vashadze said (*1TV, November 13, 2019*).

13. Parliament Once Again Postpones Voting on Constitutional Amendment

Following two-day noisy discussions, the Parliament of Georgia once again postponed the voting on the ruling party-sponsored constitutional amendment envisaging transition to fully proportional electoral system. The MPs will vote for the constitutional amendment on November 14.

According to the bill, the mixed electoral system will be abolished and from 2020, parliamentary elections will be held through fully proportional system with the so called natural threshold. In addition, the bill preempts the parties from setting up election blocs for the parliamentary elections (*Civil.ge, November 13, 2019*).

14. Tbilisi Mayor – Work is launched on formation of Georgian Dream's election list

The draft-bill about transformation onto a proportional system of elections is important and there is an accord over the issue in the ruling team – Kakha Kaladze, General Secretary of Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia Party said.

Kaladze said that preparations for the 2020 parliamentary elections were already launched and meetings were planned both in Tbilisi and in regions. He also said that work was ongoing on the formation of Georgian Dream's election list.

The Georgian parliament today began to discuss the constitutional changes for transformation onto the proportional system of elections. There are two draft-projects on the working agenda – one prepared by the ruling party, the other – by the opposition (*1TV, November 13, 2019*).

15. Georgian Security Council Convenes Under New Chairmanship

On November 13, the National Security Council (NSC) of Georgia held its first session under chairmanship of the new Georgian Prime Minister, Giorgi Gakharia.

At the session, the NSC members discussed the security challenges of Georgia and the region as a whole, including the recent developments in occupied Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, as well as cyber security issue.

"The security of this country is critically important today... Our number one security challenge is occupation," Gakharia said, noting that "this challenge is utmost critical for every citizen, especially for those, who live on the both sides of the line of occupation." PM Gakharia underlined that it is "critically important" to work on the security issues in a coordinated manner (*Civil.ge, November 13, 2019*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

16. Tobacco producers holding protest in Keda

Farmers producing tobacco are holding a protest in Keda, mountainous district of Georgia's Adjara region, in objection to the new regulations based on which selling of tobacco products without packaging will be prohibited starting November 21 and excising the production will become obligatory.

Locals, whose main source of income is the production of tobacco, claim that traditional cultivation of tobacco will lose sense under the conditions of new regulations.

Levan Gorgiladze, Keda Mayor met with protesters and said that he shared the demand and would transfer the message to Finance Minister (*1TV, November 13, 2019*).

❖ Sports and Culture

17. U.S. Embassy to Fund First Phase of Jvari Monastery's Conservation Works

The U.S. Embassy in Georgia will finance the first phase of Jvari Monastery's conservation works, reads the statement released by the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi. The \$100,000 project will be implemented by George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation, with the help of various interdisciplinary teams. This project is intended to cover the first phase of the conservation cycle by carrying out a comprehensive study, to identify, classify, and map the extent of damage and deterioration of the façade (*1TV, November 12, 2019*).

Additional Information

November 14, 2019
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.9568 GEL	1 GBP - 3.8010 GEL	100 RUB -4.5941 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2566 GEL	1 TRY - 0.5132 GEL	100 JPY - 2.7144 GEL

Thursday 14 November	Friday 15 November	Saturday 16 November	Sunday 17 November	Monday 18 November
				
4° 14°	5° 11°	2° 8°	-1° 10°	0° 10°

-  **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](#)**