

DAILY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

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Date: **January 6, 2020**

❖ Occupied Regions

1. Tskhinvali to close the only checkpoint at the so-called border with the rest of Georgia during New Year's Days

According to the so-called South Ossetian de-facto security committee, they will close the only checkpoint at the so-called border with the rest of Georgia during the New Year's Days, - the Res agency reports. According to the agency, two other "border" crossing points were closed as early as September because of the tense situation at the "border" (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

2. So-called Perevi-Kardzmani checkpoint reopened

The so-called Perevi-Kardzmani checkpoint has been reopened today. Citizens are able to leave the occupied territories and enter the territory controlled by the Georgian authorities. They say many people wanted to visit their relatives on holidays. Representatives of the occupation regime closed the only remaining crossing border on December 30. They named security as the reason for the decision (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020).

3. Georgian Doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili Released from Tskhinvali Custody

The Georgian State Security Service has confirmed that doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili, who has been sentenced for one year and nine months for "illegally crossing the border" in Russia-occupied Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia on December 20, was released on December 28 and is now on Tbilisi-administered territory (Civil.ge, December 28, 2019).

4. Former de-facto Prime Minister of Abkhazia dies in Moscow

Henry Jergenia, who was the so-called Prime Minister of Abkhazia in 2001-2002, has died in Moscow. According to Sputnik, the death of Jergenia was confirmed by former Prime Minister Vyacheslav Tsugba. About a year ago, Jergenia recalled the declaration on the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict signed in Moscow 25 years ago, which he said was drafted by him and brought success to Abkhazia (IPN.ge, January 5, 2020).

❖ Foreign Affairs

5. Foreign Minister – It is time for diplomacy to reduce tension

It is time for diplomacy for reduction of tension and de-escalation of the situation – Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani said about the recent developments between the U.S. and Iran.

"We condemn the latest violence and the provocative attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The U.S. has the legitimate right to protect its citizens," Zalkaliani stated.

Before that Georgian Foreign Minister expressed concern about the recent developments and violence in Iraq in Twitter.

"I am concerned about the escalation of tension and violence in Iraq. We condemn the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Security and protection of diplomatic missions should be ensured in accordance with the Vienna Convention," Zalkaliani wrote in the social network.

- The commander of Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps was killed early Friday in a drone strike at Baghdad International Airport that was authorized by President Trump, American officials said.
- The commander, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani and several officials from Iraqi militias backed by Tehran were killed when an American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the airport.

- General Suleimani was the architect of nearly every significant operation by Iranian intelligence and military forces over the past two decades, and his death was a staggering blow for Iran at a time of sweeping geopolitical conflict (TV1, January 1, 2020)

6. Foreign Ministry neither denies nor confirms information about Sergey Lavrov's visit

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated with regard to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's possible upcoming visit.

"Georgia, as a chair of the Council of Europe, will host a meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in May. We have coordination with the Secretariat of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe with regard to the organizational issues and all the details of the Ministerial will be in line with the rules and procedures of the organization". (IPN.ge, January 5, 2020).

7. Georgian citizen dies after being injured during robbery in Athens

A Georgian citizen died in a robbery attempt in Athens, Greece. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the incident happened on December 31, when the deceased and another Georgian were robbing an apartment (Rustavi2, January 3, 2020).

8. Four Georgians detained in Italy for robbery

Four citizens of Georgia have been detained in Fasano town of Italy, local media has reported.

Reportedly, the detainees were illegal migrants. Police have released all the four citizens of Georgia and gave them 7 days to leave Italy (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020)

9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs spreads information for Georgian citizens in Iraq

The Georgian Embassy in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is in contact with Georgian citizens living in Iraq, many of whom are concentrated in the Kurdistan region.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, citizens in Duhuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah say the situation is calm and they are in no danger (IPN.ge, January 5, 2020).

10. MFA : Georgian citizens in Iraq warned over security measures

Georgian citizens in Iraq are warned about security measures. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Georgia in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is in contact with Georgian citizens in Iraq. "Georgia does not have diplomatic representation in Iraq. The Embassy of Georgia in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is working with Georgians in Iraq through the honorable consuls of Georgia in Iraq. All of whom are warned about security measures," the Ministry stated. "As for Iran, the embassy is also working in this direction, too," the Ministry added (IPN.ge, January 4, 2020).

11. Mikheil Saakashvili calls 2019 the year of great awakening in Georgia

2019 has been the year of great awakening in Georgia, - former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili says in a video message released by him. According to Saakashvili, the Georgian society fully saw the existing challenges in 2019 and started to fight against them. "I would like to congratulate all our compatriots in Georgia; I would like to congratulate the Georgians all over the world. I would like to congratulate all friends of Georgia. This fight will come to an end. We will prevail. Although we are in different countries, we are united by one great love and nothing can break it," Saakashvili stated (IPN.ge, December 31, 2019).

❖ Internal Affairs

12. 2019: The Year in Review

Most important events of 2020 selected by civil.ge:

1. Chorchana-Tsnelisi Crisis
2. Closures of Crossing Points with Tskhinvali
3. Doctor Gaprindashvili's Case
4. June 20 Events

5. Giorgi Gakharia Tapped as New PM
6. Voting Down the Promised Electoral Law
7. Georgian, Russian FMs' First Meeting in a Decade
8. Rustavi 2 Case and Launching of Mtavari TV
9. TBC Bank Case and Launching Lelo for Georgia Party
10. Tensions alongside Azerbaijani border/ Davit Gareji Monastery Issue
11. Impromptu Tbilisi Pride
12. Lifetime Appointment of Supreme Court Judges
13. Presidential Pardons Scandal
14. Strikes, Social Discontent and Labor Rights (Civil.ge, December 31, 2019)

13. Lasha Chkhartishvili arrested in front of parliament

Law enforcers detained Lasha Chkhartishvili, a member of the Labour Party, in front of the parliament building. A clash has occurred between activists and law enforcers in front of the Parliament building today. Activists were trying to reach and express protest in the area in front of the Parliament building, where tents were set up a few days ago, which was prevented by the law enforcement officials (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020)

14. Vazha Gaprindashvili publishes letter of gratitude on social network

Vazha Gaprindashvili, a doctor who has recently been released from Tskhinvali prison, published [a letter of gratitude](#) on social network (IPN.ge, December 31, 2019).

15. US Embassy: We join all Georgians and the international community in welcoming Vazha Gaprindashvili home

The US Embassy to Georgia has released a statement on the release of Dr. Vazha Gaprindashvili. "We welcome the news that Dr. Vazha Gaprindashvili has been released by the de facto authorities in South Ossetia. We join all Georgians and the international community in welcoming him home to spend the holidays with his family. We again call on the de facto authorities to open crossing points along the administrative boundary line and to allow freedom of movement for the local population and humanitarian access. The United States maintains its unwavering commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity", reads the statement (IPN.ge, December 28, 2019).

16. Latvian Foreign Minister applauds release of Georgian doctor

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics has responded to the release of doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili from custody (IPN.ge, December 28, 2019).

17. OSCE Secretary General welcomes release of doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger has welcomed the release of doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili on his Twitter page (IPN.ge, December 28, 2019).

18. Carl Hartzell: I very much welcome today's release of Dr. Gaprindashvili

I very much welcome today's release of Dr. Gaprindashvili, - EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell thus responded to the release of Georgian Doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili (IPN.ge, December 28, 2019).

19. Georgian Patriarch Ilia II turns 87

Catholicos Patriarch of Georgia Ilia II turned 87 today. He has been leading the spiritual life of the Orthodox Georgian parish for 42 years now.

Ilia II was born as Irakli Ghudushauri-Shiolashvili in Vladikavkaz, currently Russia's North Ossetia in 1933. In 1967 he was consecrated as the bishop of Tskhumi and Abkhazeti in the western, currently occupied region, and elevated to the rank of metropolitan in 1969. He was elected the new Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia on December 25, 1977. In the new position Ilia II initiated a range of reforms, enabling the Georgian Orthodox Church to largely regain its former influence and prestige by the late 1980s. From 1978 to 1983, Ilia II was Co-President of the World

Council of Churches (WCC), an ecumenical organisation the Georgian Orthodox Church had joined with other Soviet churches in 1962. In May 1997, the Holy Synod of the Georgian Orthodox Church announced its withdrawal from the WCC (Agenda.ge, January 4, 2020).

20. Georgian patriarch addresses Russian President Putin

Georgian Patriarch Ilia II has addressed Russian President Vladimir Putin in his New Year video and stated that the "occupation of the historic Georgian territories [by Russia] should end." Ilia II has wished happiness to the people of Georgia, stating that "happiness is dependent on us." He urged the new generation to respect and listen to elderly ones (Agenda.ge, January 1, 2020).

21. Prime Minister congratulates Patriarch on his birthday

Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia congratulates Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II on his birthday. "I congratulate His Holiness, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II on his birthday. Our patriarch's contribution to development of the spirit of our nation is invaluable. All of his work is an embodiment of wisdom, love of his homeland, kindness, patience and forgiveness. I wish our Patriarch a long life and health for the benefit of our nation and country," reads the congratulation letter to Giorgi Gakharia (IPN.ge, January 4, 2020).

22. Archil Talakvadze denies reports about his possible appointment to MP's post

Parliament Speaker Archil Talakvadze denies reports of his possible appointment to the Prime Minister's post, saying that "such a thing is not being considered". "It is not right and it is not being considered," Talakvadze stated (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

23. Nika Gvaramia, Beka Basilaia expelled from courtroom

Former Director General of Rustavi 2 Nika Gvaramia, as well as Beka Basilaia, lawyer of Zurab Iashvili, Director of Inter Media Plus, have been expelled from the courtroom. The decision was made by Judge Giorgi Arevadze. According to him, Nika Gvaramia and Beka Basilaia disrespected the court. The incident was caused by the appointment of a trial. The defense did not like the schedule drafted by the judge, as they are not able to attend the trial on the day chosen by the judge (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020).

24. 8 miners admitted to Iashvili clinic with fireworks-related injuries

8 miners were admitted to Iashvili clinic with fireworks-related injuries on New Year's Day, InterPressNews was told by the clinic's press service. According to them, 7 of them required surgery to treat (IPN.ge, January 2, 2020).

25. Smoking banned in stadiums and sports complexes as of January 1

People in Georgia were banned from smoking in stadiums and sports complexes as of January 1. In case of violation, the administration will be fined 500 GEL for the first time, 1000 GEL for the second time and then the fine will increase to 2000 GEL (IPN.ge, January 2, 2020).

26. President hosts Vazha Gaprindashvili and his family

President Salome Zourabichvili has hosted Vazha Gaprindashvili and his family at Orbeliani Palace and congratulated him on his release. Salome Zourabichvili congratulated the doctor and his family on the coming New Year and wished him success in his professional activities. At the meeting, the President emphasized the importance of the involvement of the international community and thanked all those who contributed to the release of Dr. Vazha Gaprindashvili (IPN.ge, December 31, 2019).

27. Elene Khoshtaria gets on Tbilservice Group cleaning vehicle

Elene Khoshtaria, a member of European Georgia, got on a cleaning vehicle belonging to the Tbilservice Group. Khoshtaria and members of the Shame Movement came to the Parliament area, when the Tbilservice Group employees started to clean up the area.

- ✓ "They stole the banner and they do not understand that they will always get protest for such actions. Today, ten policemen and iron constructions may defeat us, but we will not tolerate the behavior of people who

act so because they know that people are now focused on New Year. This is about expression of opinion, this is not about banners. The law tells me that the banner can stand here and I want it to stand here. People want a banner here, but they came and stole it," Khoshtaria stated (December 31, 2019).

28. City Hall says they had warned demonstrators about arranging children's playground and Christmas market in Parliament area for New Year's Day

Tbilisi City Hall has informed the demonstrators about arranging a children's playground and Christmas market in the area of Parliament for the New Year's Day. According to them, the infrastructure was removed without any objection; this will be stored and handed over to the owner if requested.

"The City Hall has informed the rally participants in advance about arranging a children's playground and Christmas market in the area of Parliament for the New Year's Day. The on-site infrastructure has been removed without any resistance and will be handed over to the owner if requested," the Tbilisi City Hall stated (December 31, 2019).

29. All tents removed from Parliament area

All the tents placed in front of the Parliament building have been removed. The above is likely linked to New Year's Eve. Representatives of the 112 Service and Tbiliservice Group cleaned up the area.

Elene Khoshtaria, a member of European Georgia, and Zuka Berdzenishvili, an activist of the Shame Movement, were also in front of the Parliament building. They were protesting against the removal of tents (IPN.ge, December 31, 2019).

30. Tsotne Gamsakhurdia's health condition remains critical, with only slight positive dynamics

Tsotne Gamsakhurdia's health condition is still critical, - Doctor Nikoloz Kvachadze told reporters. According to him, despite this, there is a slight positive dynamics. Tsotne Gamsakhurdia was wounded on December 19. Two persons have been charged with murder attempt and three have been arrested for not reporting the crime (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

31. PM: We need to continue the reform of the investigative system in 2020 to increase the quality of investigation

Reforms launched in the law enforcement system to strengthen the quality of human rights and investigations are extremely important, both in terms of democratization of the country and in the fight against crime, - Georgian PM Giorgi Gakharia stated. According to the head of government, it will be worthless to defeat crime unless human rights standards are upheld. "This is critically important. We need to continue the reform of the investigative system in 2020 to increase the quality of investigation. The efforts of the Inter-Agency Human Rights Council and Secretariat will be intensified, as human rights will be a priority in 2020, like previous years," the Prime Minister stated (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

32. President to issue another pardon act for Christmas

President Salome Zourabichvili will issue another pardon act for Christmas. The information was confirmed by the Administration of the President. According to the Administration, the President is not going to issue a pardon act for the New Year. As for the case of accused Archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze, it is not yet known whether the President will pardon him or not (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

33. Giorgi Margvelashvili: Georgian Dream has failed to create its own reality and alternative opposition

Former Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili says the Georgian Dream has failed to create its own reality and alternative opposition. Margvelashvili was asked if the government will be able to remain in power until there is opposition liked by it. "Nobody could achieve this. Attempts to create your own reality, where white is yours, black is yours and gray is yours, have been made virtually by all authorities. If you remember, Shevardnadze also made an attempt to create an alternative opposition, and Saakashvili did so too. Plus, Saakashvili and Shevardnadze were much more political than the Georgian Dream is today and they had a political team, but they could not succeed," Margvelashvili said (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

34. Cardinal Pietro Parolin: As soon as I told the Pope I was going to Georgia, his face was filled with joy

I would like to convey you a greeting from His Holiness, the Pope of Rome, - Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, said in the Georgian Patriarchate, where he met with the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II.

According to the Cardinal, it is important to appreciate Christian roots, "especially during the challenges we have today, because people seem to have lost God in the time of secularization."

"I want to convey you a greeting from His Holiness, the Pope of Rome. I met the Pope on Monday and told him I was going to Georgia on Christmas Eve. As soon as I mentioned Georgia, his face was filled with joy and told me to convey his warm greeting to the Patriarch of Georgia. Yesterday I said how old the Georgian Christianity is, Georgia's roots goes deeply into Christianity and it is one of the oldest countries in Christianity," the Cardinal stated (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

35. Bidzina Ivanishvili: Georgia is a land of wine and polyphony, which is not accidental

This is one of the most remarkable days in the history of Georgian culture, because we are witnessing a unique publication, - Bidzina Ivanishvili, chairperson of the Georgian Dream, said at the presentation of a scholarly research on national culture at the Youth Palace. Ivanishvili thanked everyone who participated in the "preparation of such a unique, history-telling textbook." At the same time, Ivanishvili focused on Georgian wine and polyphony of folklore and talked about their importance (IPN.ge, December 30, 2019).

36. Russian tourist dies in avalanche in Gudauri

A Russian tourist has been found dead in Georgia's mountainous Gudauri resort, buried under an avalanche, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed earlier today. The body was transported to Tbilisi. Police are investigating the incident (Agenda.ge, January 6, 2020).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

37. Over GEL 563 million accumulated in pension fund in one year

According to the Pension Agency, GEL 563,489,312 has been accumulated in the pension fund, while the accrued benefit is GEL 17,287,125. The number of citizens registered in the pension fund is 959 548 and the number of organizations is 61 165 (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020)

38. Annual inflation rate reached 7.0 % in 2019

According to the National Statistics office in December 2019 the Consumer Price Index increased by 0.4 percent compared to the previous month, while the annual inflation rate amounted to 7.0 percent. The 7.0 percent inflation rate is the highest since 2017 (7.1% in June 2017) (IPN.ge, January 3, 2020)

39. Nenskra Hydro invested 16 million USD in the first three quarters of 2019

"In the first three quarters of 2019, Nenskra HPP Project company JSC Nenskra Hydro invested up to 16 million USD," according to the information requested by BM.GE from JSC Nenskra Hydro.

As reported by the company, during the year the investment was directed to implementation of both: infrastructure and social projects (IPN.ge, December 31, 2019).

40. Georgian gov't to discuss future of Anaklia Deep Sea Port

The Georgian government will discuss the investment agreement signed with Anaklia Development Consortium to build the Anaklia Deep Sea Port as the consortium was unable to obtain the needed \$400 million in loans from international financial institutions and \$120 million from potential investors by the official expiration of the term limits at the end of 2019.

The Ministry of Infrastructure says that government will discuss ways to continue the construction of the port. On December 31, 2019 Anaklia Development Consortium announced that they are doing their best to keep the project alive and push it further.

On December 6, 2019, Director General of the Anaklia Development Consortium Levan Akhvlediani said that negotiations with investors were ongoing but had come up against difficulties because of recent months' developments around the project. He also noted that the business environment in the country had influenced the negotiations as well.

On December 6, 2019, Minister of Infrastructure Maia Tskitishvili urged Akhvlediani to admit that the Anaklia Development Consortium cannot carry out the project.

Tskitishvili said that cancelling the agreement with the Anaklia Development Consortium does not mean disrupting the project. The Georgian government did not cancel the investment agreement with Anaklia Development Consortium on October 15 despite the expired deadline for the consortium to fulfil its interim obligations (Agenda.ge, January 3, 2020).

Additional Information

January 6, 2020

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.8672 GEL	1 GBP - 3.7489 GEL	100 RUB -4.6208 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1918 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4798 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6531 GEL

25 day forecast

Monday 6 January	Tuesday 7 January	Wednesday 8 January	Thursday 9 January	Friday 10 January
				
-2° 8°	0° 9°	0° 10°	-1° 7°	-1° 7°

- **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](#)**