

# DAILY NEWS REPORT ON GEORGIA

Compiled by: **Mary Bugadze**

Date: **January 9, 2020**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### 1. Lapland Santa Claus arrived in Ditsi together with ambassadors

Santa Claus from Lapland arrived in Ditsi together with the ambassadors. Children from several villages along the occupation line were waiting for Santa from the morning. He gave gifts to the little ones at the local school and wished them a happy New Year (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

### 2. The President of Georgia met Christmas in the village of Nikozi near the occupation line

Salome Zourabichvili attended Christmas Liturgy at Ascension Church in Nikozi village, which is adjacent to the occupied Tskhinvali region. The President has not commented on the issue of Giorgi Mamaladze. The Metropolitan of Athens and Gori did not speak in this case either. Reverend Andria dedicated the sermon entirely to the meaning of the Christmas holiday and congratulated the parishioners on Christmas (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

### 3. "I apologize for the actions of my Government ... I ask the Georgia for political asylum" - Russian journalist

Russian journalist and civil activist Yuri Izotov seeks asylum in Georgia. He talks about the repression of the Russian government and says that he has to protect himself from the possible extradition to Russia. "While in Russia, I was holding protests in front of a government building with posters in hand. I went to Ukraine because some Russian government groups threatened me. Putin is a dictator who started a war with sovereign states. He kills, persecutes, and arrests political opponents. 20% of Georgian territories are occupied by the Putin regime. I apologize for the actions of my government. Russian people suffer under Putin's regime. He must liberate the occupied territories of Georgia. I ask the Georgian government for political asylum, I hope they give me the right to stay here and continue my journalistic work", - said Yuri Izotov (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

### 4. Russian President's Spokesman responds to Salome Zourabichvili

Russian President's Spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded to Salome Zourabichvili's statement, which called for a "Normandy Format" of dialogue with Russia. As Peskov said, this format is unique and was created for Ukraine, but the problem with Georgia is different. "The Normandy Format is unique and it was developed based on the need for conflict resolution in South-eastern Ukraine. Here we are talking about bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia. The problem structure is different. Therefore, each structure must have its own format", - explained Russian President's Spokesman (Rustavi2, January 8, 2020).

### 5. Lavrov's possible visit to Tbilisi - occupant countries first diplomat has repeatedly violated occupation law

The possible visit of the first diplomat of the occupant country to Tbilisi remains the main topic for several days. Georgia, who assumed the Presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, will host the Ministerial of the Council of Europe and the delegations of the member countries in May. Reportedly, Sergey Lavrov will represent the Russian delegation.

Official Tbilisi neither denies nor confirms reports about Lavrov's visit.

- ✓ According to Zurab Abashidze, Prime Minister's Special Representative for Relations with Russia, the country will act not in accordance with its own laws, but in accordance with the organization's charter and standard.

- “Everything will be done in accordance with the statute and the relevant standards. We are chairing it now. It is a very big responsibility and the foreign ministry is working with the Council of Europe”, - said Abashidze.

The occupant countries first diplomat has repeatedly violated Georgia’s law on occupation (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020)

#### **6. 2 Georgian citizens detained in Madrid**

The Spanish law enforcers detained 2 Georgian citizens on fact of robbery in Madrid.

The Georgian citizens attempted to break-in in one of the apartments during New Year days (1 TV.ge, January 4, 2020).

### **❖ Internal Affairs**

#### **7. US Embassy to Georgia warns its citizens amid heightened tension in the Middle East**

The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi warns its citizens being abroad about the heightened tension in the Middle East.

“There is heightened tension in the Middle East that may result in security risks to U.S. citizens abroad. The Embassy has implemented additional security measures as a precaution. U.S. government personnel are instructed to exercise a higher level of personal security awareness”, - reads the statement.

The Embassy calls on U.S. citizens for keeping a low profile, being aware of the surroundings, staying alert in locations frequented by tourists, reviewing personal security plans, having travel documents up to date and easily accessible (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

#### **8. Georgia’s President says crash of Ukrainian airliner is “unspeakable disaster”**

No word can relate to the crash of the #PS752 Ukrainian International Airlines, an unspeakable disaster, President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili said. “I send my deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims,” President Zurbishvili has tweeted (IPN.ge, January 8, 2020).

#### **9. Georgia’s PM offers condolences to families of Ukrainian plane crash victims**

Georgia’s PM Giorgi Gakharia offers condolences to the families of Ukrainian plane crash victims.

“My heartfelt condolences to the families of tragically deceased aboard of the Ukrainian Airliner in Tehran,” has tweeted (IPN.ge, January 8, 2020).

#### **10. PM met with acting US Ambassador to Georgia**

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia met with Elizabeth Rood, Acting US Ambassador to Georgia.

As Press Center of the Governmental Administration reports, the sides talked about achievements of the US-Georgia cooperation in 2019 and future plans. Discussions were also held about the latest developments in the Near East and security issues. The meeting was attended by Liz Zentos, Head of Political-Economic Department of U.S. Embassy and Irakli Chikovani, PM’s Advisor in International Relations Affairs (1 TV.ge, January 8, 2020).

#### **11. Georgian PM wishes to the Armenian people for the feast of Epiphany**

Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia wishes to the Armenian people for the feast of Epiphany.

The Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates Christmas and the Epiphany on January 6th (1 TV.ge, January 6, 2020).

#### **12. Georgia’s FM “deeply saddened” by Ukrainian plane crash**

Georgia’s Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani says he is saddened by the news of the Ukrainian plane crash in Iran

claiming the lives of all on board. “Deeply saddened by the news of the Ukrainian plane crash in Iran claiming the lives of all on board. Our sincere condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones in this terrible tragedy,”

Davit Zalkaliani has tweeted (IPN.ge, January 8, 2020).

#### **13. The opposition thinks that Zourabichvili’s decision was not independent**

Opposition parties think that Salome Zourabichvili’s decision on Giorgi Mamaladze’s pardon was not independent and it was a result of the influence of Bidzina Ivanishvili.

“Salome Zourabichvili does not make independent decisions. She is Ivanishvili’s puppet. It was Ivanishvili who bought her the presidential chair. If Ivanishvili wanted Giorgi Mamaladze not to be in custody today, he would not be in custody”, - stated Tina Bokuchava, the secretary of the parliamentary faction National Movement. Giorgi Vashadze, the Chairman of the New Georgia party, linked the issue of non-pardon to the Georgian Dream. According to him, the ruling party is trying to hide something (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

#### **14. The release of Giorgi Mamaladze would be acceptable and desirable for us – Patriarchate**

Archbishop Andrea Jaghmaidze, the Head of the press-center of the Patriarchate of Georgia, commented on the decision of Salome Zourabichvili.

As he said during the special briefing, the release of Archbishop Giorgi Mamaladze would be acceptable and desirable for Patriarchate at least because it could put an end to the performance that is underway against the church in recent period (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

#### **15. "I can surely say that Giorgi Mamaladze is a Prisoner of the Patriarch" - Gocha Mirtskhulava**

Analyst Gocha Mirtskhulava commented on the case of pardoning Giorgi Mamaladze. As he said, the President’s statement indicating that she did not know the details of the case.

According to Mirtskhulava, Mamaladze is a personal prisoner of the Patriarch (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

#### **16. With such unjust decision the President brings more tension to the society – Mamaladze’s lawyer**

With such unjust decision the President brings more tension to the society. Such a statement made Mikheil Ramishvili, the lawyer of Giorgi Mamaladze. “I had an expectations of such a decision. She would not pardon the archpriest. I said that there are some people who do not want Giorgi Mamaladze to be pardoned. Today it has been reaffirmed and it is a shame when the President mentions lawyers that we had no arguments. In the country where justice is dead and where there is no justice, no one will change anything. With such unjust decision the President brings more tension to the society”, - stated Ramishvili (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

#### **17. Metropolitan: The Patriarchate is one of those who want the release of archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze**

The Patriarchate is one of those who want the release of archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze, - said Batumi and Lazeti Metropolitan Dimitri. Metropolitan stated that he expected that President Salome Zourabichvili would pardon the archpriest (IPN.ge, January 7, 2020).

#### **18. Nika Gvaramia says Archbishop Giorgi Mamaladze goes on hunger strike**

Archbishop Giorgi Mamaladze, convicted of the so-called Cyanide case, have gone on a hunger strike in the prison, stated Nika Gvaramia, one of his lawyers. Giorgi Mamaladze also has have some difficulty with speaking.

“This man is not just a prisoner of Ivanishvili and the Patriarchate, but he is sentenced to death,” Nika Gvaramia stated (IPN.ge, January 6, 2020).

#### **19. He directly told us that humility is important, not arrogance – the Prime Minister on epistle of Patriarch**

Representatives of the Government and opposition attended the liturgy at the Trinity Cathedral. As they said, the epistle of the Patriarch was distinguished from previous years by different accents and the focus was mainly on the strengthening of faith and forgiveness. According to the Prime Minister, the Patriarch’s epistle included direct indication that humility and not arrogance, forgiveness and not conflict are the most important things.

In the end, His Holiness said that this country is ours and it is everyone’s obligation, regardless of their political opinion, to take care of this country together. This was the essence of the epistle for me”, - Giorgi Gakharia stated (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

#### **20. Iranians living in Georgia held mourning rally in connection with Soleimani’s murder**

Iranians living in Georgia held a mourning rally dedicated to Qassem Soleimani that was killed on Friday, January, 3. Citizens of Iran symbolically brought a wreath to the Embassy. They asserted that the deceased general was an unstoppable military commander fighting against terrorist groups. They condemn the action of the United States (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

**21. If Lavrov arrives in Georgia he will face very principal position of the Government – Archil Talakvadze**

The Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia comments on the possible visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia to Tbilisi. According to Archil Talakvadze, if Sergei Lavrov arrives to Tbilisi, he will face strong protest.

- ✓ If he arrives in Georgia, he will face objections, because our territories are occupied and will meet the principal political statements of our governmental team. Georgia will have very principled stance that the Russian government must fulfill its commitments, Georgia will have concrete conclusions and assessments regarding cases where our citizens' rights have been severely violated, including killings, kidnappings and illegal detentions", - stated Talakvadze.

Georgia, who assumed the Presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, will host the Ministerial of the Council of Europe and the delegations of the member countries in May. Reportedly, Sergey Lavrov will represent the Russian delegation (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

**22. A 23-year-old man was found frozen in Akhalkalaki**

A 23-year-old man was found frozen in the forest near the villages of Majadia and Olaverdi (Akhalkalaki). The investigation was launched under Article 116 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

**23. In Terjola a 3-year-old boy by accident shot his 6-year-old brother**

A 3-year-old boy by accident shot his 6-year-old brother, which resulted in his death. The tragedy happened in the village of Kvakhchiri in the Terjola municipality. The investigation was launched under Article 116 of the Criminal Code of Georgia (Rustavi 2, January 7, 2020).

**24. I'm currently looking for ways to help and get involved - Bera Ivanishvili on Australia fires**

Bera Ivanishvili wrote on Instagram a post about Australia fires. As the son of the leader of the Georgian Dream says, he currently looking for ways to help and get involved (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

**25. Opposition blacklists five persons**

The multiparty commission studying political persecution has blacklisted five persons. The following persons have been blacklisted: Valerian Pilishvili (judge), Giorgi Arevadze (judge), Vazha Todua (prosecutor), Kakha Bukhradze (Deputy Chief of Tbilisi Police Department), Nugzar Chonkadze (Head of City Hall Security Service).

The opposition will reveal other members of the list in the coming days.

According to the opposition, the so-called black list will be handed over to Georgia's western partners, who must ensure sanctions – be it fines or restrictions on the right to travel to EU member states (IPN.ge, January 7, 2020).

**26. Gia Volski on opposition's blacklist**

Gia Volski, the first vice-speaker of the parliament says the opposition's so-called blacklist has not got perspective to gain the profile of the international sanctions.

"The so-called blacklist has no future to gain the profile of the international sanctions. It is simply the lustration of this destructive force," Volski stated. According to the opposition, the blacklist mainly focuses on three areas: politicians who have been exposed to the forgery of justice and to the use of it for political purposes; a judge, prosecutor or investigator who have been exposed to fraud, misconduct, and political use of justice; the list also includes victims of political persecution, blackmail and justice (1 TV.ge, January 8, 2020)

**27. The Prime Minister met the members of coordination group to discuss water supply problems at ski resorts**

The Prime Minister of Georgia held a meeting of the coordination group members on the immediate recovery of jeopardized water supply in ski resorts of the country. According to officials, problem originated from mostly dry climate with no rainfall, as a result of which water resources have been reduced sharply (Rustavi2, January 6, 2020).

**28. Minister of Infrastructure arrives in Gudauri together with new head of water supply company**

The water company will have a new head, Giga Mandaria, who has several years of experience in the water supply industry. Such a statement made the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure Maia Tskitishvili in Gudauri, where she arrived together with the new head of the United Water Supply Company. As Tskitishvili said, the main reason for arriving in Gudauri is to plan how to solve the problem of water supply system for the current season (Rustavi2, January 7, 2020).

### **29. Georgia takes 53rd place in Henley Passport index**

Georgia has taken 53rd place in the Henley Passport index, with citizens enjoying visa-free/visa-on-arrival access to 116 destinations, two countries more than in 2019. As for Georgia's neighboring countries, Armenia took 81st (access to 62 destinations), Azerbaijan – 76 (67 destinations), Turkey – 55 (111 destinations), Russia 58 (118 destinations) (Agenda.ge, January 8, 2020).

### **30. Doctors warn citizens about seasonal influenza**

Seasonal influenza will peak between the end of January and February, announced officials from G. Zhvania Academic Clinic of Pediatrics. Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of Georgia's National Centre for Disease Control and public Health stated that the morbidity rate of seasonal influenza is 191 in 100,000 people, which is less than the same period of last year. His advice to the citizens is to vaccinate.

The Georgian Health Ministry announced that pregnant women and members of vulnerable groups will receive the antiviral medication Tamiflu free of charge with a doctor's prescription (Agenda.ge, January 8, 2020).

### **31. H1N1 kills two in Georgia**

Flu virus H1N1 has killed two people in Georgia, the Director of the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) and Public Health, Amiran Gamkrelidze says. As he adds, in both cases, patients had preexisting chronic complications (1 TV.ge, January 8, 2020).

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **32. Government to discuss issue of investment agreement with Anaklia Development Consortium**

The government will discuss the issue of an investment agreement with Anaklia Development Consortium at the nearest sitting. The government will make the decision about continuation of the strategically important Anaklia Deepwater Port project. According to the statement of the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, the Consortium failed to meet the taken commitments about the allocation of credits from international banks and contracts with potential investors and construction companies. The deadline set by the government to Anaklia Development Consortium expired on December 31 of 2019 (1 TV.ge, January 3, 2020).

## **❖ Sports and Culture**

### **33. Liana Isakadze's performance aired in 1985**

Liana Isakadze's performance at the festival called – "Musicians Joke." The record was made in 1985. (1 TV.ge, January 1, 2020).

### **34. Georgian athletes geared up as 2020 Winter Youth Olympics start**

There will be Georgian athletes among the nearly 1800 competitors showing up in Lausanne for the 2020 Winter Youth Olympics starting on Thursday, with members of the team competing in four disciplines at the global event. Over the next two weeks, 10 young Olympians from the country will represent their country among 79 nations in figure skating, ski jumping, alpine skiing and luge.

Five of those in the Georgian team will appear before sports fans following figure skating fixtures in individual, pair and dance sections. The Winter Youth Olympics will run between January 9-22 (Agenda.ge, January 8, 2020).

### 35. Premiere of The Nutcracker to be held at Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theater

Premiere of The Nutcracker, a two-act ballet by Pyotr Tchaikovsky will be held at Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theater on January 11.

The ballet was first staged on December 6 of 1892 in Sankt Petersburg choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov. The Georgian premiere of The Nutcracker was first held in Tbilisi in 1900 (1 TV.ge, January 8, 2020).

## Additional Information

**January 9, 2020**  
**OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 2.8734 GEL	1 GBP - 3.7693 GEL	100 RUB -4.6392 GEL
1 EUR - 3.1972 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4825 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6461GEL

**25 day forecast**

Thursday 9 January	Friday 10 January	Saturday 11 January	Sunday 12 January	Monday 13 January
				
0° 8°	-2° 8°	-2° 7°	0° 7°	-1° 9°

- **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](#)**