

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

January 10-13

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Date: **January 14, 2020**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Shooting at Administration of de-facto President of occupied Abkhazia

The shooting was heard in the morning in Sukhumi at the Administration of de-facto President of occupied region of Abkhazia. Russian media reports that representatives of the opposition are trying to intrude in the building.

MPs of the de facto parliament of occupied Abkhazia adopted a draft resolution calling on de-facto Abkhazian President Raul Khajimba to resign from the post of "head of state." 19 "deputies" voted "for", four – "against," one abstained.

Earlier, "parliamentarians" sent to Khajimba all the requirements of the protesters. This was reported to journalists by "deputy" Leonid Chamagua. According to him, Khajimba replied that he was not ready to make such a decision.

On the 9th of January, dozens of demonstrators broke into the authorities' headquarters in Abkhazia and demanded resignation of Raul Khajimba.

The second round of the so-called presidential elections was held in Abkhazia on September 8 last year. According to the de-facto election commission, Raul Khajimba got 47.39% and 46.17% of the population voted for Alkhas Kvitsinia. The opposition does not recognize the results of the elections and calls for its annulment (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

2. Irakli Sesiashvili – We want the situation to be peaceful in Abkhazia

Irakli Sesiashvili, Chairman of the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee said that the Georgian government was closely observing the developments in the occupied Abkhazia region.

Sesiashvili said it was important that the situation was peaceful in Abkhazia and that Georgia would use all the available mechanisms to involve the international community in the ongoing processes in the occupied region.

"It is important to evade escalation of the tension but the current situation gives us the ground to say that Russia cannot control the situation. It only controls its own interests. The case has to do with the occupation. Our co-citizens live in Abkhazia," Sesiashvili said (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

3. Supporters of de-facto Abkhazian president gather at so-called Governmental Administration

More than 400 supporters of de-facto Abkhazian president Raul Khajimba gathered outside the so-called Governmental Administration in Sokhumi, occupied Abkhazia.

Tass Russian News Agency reported based on Abkhazian Security Council Secretary Muhammad Kilba that de-facto Vice Prime Minister Daur Arshba called on supporters for gathering.

On January 9, dozens of demonstrators broke into the authorities' headquarters in occupied Abkhazia and demanded resignation of de-facto President Raul Khajimba. The shooting was heard in the morning in Sukhumi at the Administration of de-facto President of occupied region of Abkhazia (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

4. Deputy Secretary of Russian Security Council to arrive in Sokhumi

Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council Rashid Nurgaliyev today will arrive in Sokhumi, occupied Abkhazia – Ria News Agency reports based on its source. The visit aims at discharging the current tense situation in the occupied region.

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5. Supreme Court of occupied Abkhazia orders rerun of presidential election

The so-called Supreme Court of Georgia's occupied region of Abkhazia has overturned the results of September's presidential elections, ordering a rerun of the vote.

The judgment on Friday reversed a previous decision by the court, upholding an appeal by runner-up Alkhas Kvitsiniya that the official results were unlawful as neither candidate won more than 50% of votes, Russian media reported.

The judgment came as tensions remained high in the capital Sukhumi where on Thursday opposition supporters seized the Presidential Administration building demanding the resignation of de-facto Abkhazian President Raul Khajimba.

Khajimba refused to step down despite calls from parliament and opposition groups to do so following the 9 January seizure (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

6. Central Election Commission of occupied Abkhazia to name date of rerun of presidential polls

The so-called Central Election Commission of occupied region of Abkhazia will name the date of the rerun of presidential polls in Abkhazia within the 5-day term – Givi Gabnia, a member of the commission told TASS Russian News Agency.

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7. De-facto Abkhazian President ready to take part in rerun of presidential election

Raul Khajimba, de-facto president of the occupied region of Abkhazia is ready to take part in the rerun of the so-called presidential elections – Vitali Gabnia, de-facto Abkhazian Vice President made this statement.

According to Gabnia, Khajimba will continue serving presidential duties during 3 months based on the law. "Resignation of Khajimba as demanded by the opposition will not resolve problems in the country. Compromise is necessary," he said. Gabnia said that Russia was also involved in regulation of the current situation in occupied Abkhazia.

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8. De-facto president Raul Khajimba is meeting with Aslan Bzhaniya

The so-called President of Russian-occupied Abkhazia Raul Khajimba is meeting with the leader of the opposition, the deputy of the parliament of Abkhazia Aslan Bzhaniya, local media reports.

The main topic of the discussion is the court's decision. On January 10, the so-called court declared the results of the second round of the presidential election and the decision of the court of the first instance illegal.

Repeated presidential elections in Russian-occupied Abkhazia will be held on March 22, leader of the Abkhaz opposition Aslan Bjanina announced earlier today (*1TV, January 12, 2020*).

9. De-facto president Raul Khajimba met with opposition

The so-called President of Russian-occupied Abkhazia Raul Khajimba has met with the leaders of the opposition Aslan Bzhaniya and Alkhas Kvitsinia earlier today.

As Russian media reports, the so-called Vice-President and spokesperson of the Security Council attended the meeting.

The sides discussed ongoing developments in Russian-occupied Abkhazia and exchanged the views on the ways of resolving the crisis (*1TV, January 12, 2020*).

10. De-facto president Raul Khajimba resigns

De-facto president of Russian-occupied Abkhazia Raul Khajimba decided to resign, Russian media reports (*1TV, January 12, 2020*).

11. Raul Khajimba's awards have been stolen in occupied Abkhazia

Raul Khajimba's awards have been stolen in occupied Abkhazia, – Russian media reports. "All the awards of the president have been stolen. All safe boxes have been broken. The room where the weapons were stored has been robbed" – Russian media reports.

De-facto president of Russian-occupied Abkhazia Raul Khajimba decided to resign and sent a resignation letter to so-called Parliament on January 12 (*1TV, January 13, 2020*).

12. Raul Khajimba not to run for president at so-called elections appointed for March 22

Raul Khajimba is not going to run for president at the so-called elections appointed for March 22. The so-called Vice President of Abkhazia Aslan Bartsits told the Russian agency "Tass".

"Raul Khajimba will not run for president. He is a citizen of his own country; therefore he will stay in his own country and take part in the political process to bring order and legality to the country" – Aslan Bartsits said (*1TV, January 13, 2020*).

13. Alkhas Kvitsinia - Relationship with Tbilisi depends on Tbilisi's attitudes towards us

"All is well. The government works in the usual way. We are preparing for the new elections. The relationship with Tbilisi depends on Tbilisi's attitudes towards Abkhazia.

There is a need for a peace treaty that there will be no more war between us and that Georgia has no purpose to bring back Abkhazia through war. We can talk when the peace treaty will be signed between competent people," Kvitsinia said (*ITV, January 13, 2020*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

14. Jens Stoltenberg - Black Sea region is strategically important for NATO

The Black Sea region is of great strategic importance for NATO – Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary-General of NATO said.

NATO Chief said that the alliance was constantly increasing its presence in the region with military vessels and ground forces.

According to Stoltenberg, three members of NATO – Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey — were located in the Black Sea region as well as two partner states – Ukraine and Georgia. He said that NATO was helping these two countries by holding of training and tight cooperation.

NATO Chief underlined that annexation of Crimea by Russia had preconditioned the latest build-up of collective defence (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

15. Volodymyr Zelensky: Ukraine and Georgia have always been side-by-side in the difficult moments of history

Ukraine and Georgia have always been side-by-side in the difficult moments of history, – the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on his twitter page.

Volodymyr Zelensky expressed gratitude to Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia for his support and condolences.

"Ukraine and Georgia have always been side-by-side in the difficult moments of history. Grateful to Giorgi Gakharia for the support and condolences" – President of Ukraine wrote.

The Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia expressed condolences over Ukrainian Boeing 737 crash in Iran. "My heartfelt condolences to the families of tragically deceased aboard of the Ukrainian Airliner in Tehran" – Georgian PM wrote on his twitter page.

On January 8, Ukrainian Boeing 737 crashed two minutes after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran, killing all passengers and crew (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

16. Georgian PM and President of Ukraine hold telephone conversation

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia talked to President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky over the phone.

According to the Presidential Administration of Ukraine, Georgian PM expressed condolence about the crash of the Ukrainian jetliner in Iran and condoled to the families of victims of the tragedy. Gakharia told Zelensky that Georgia was ready to provide any kind of assistance to Ukraine.

President of Ukraine said that it was necessary to conduct an objective investigation to determine the exact causes of the tragedy and claimed that Ukrainian investigators were already involved in the process. "Ukraine and Georgia have always been side-by-side in the difficult moments of history. Grateful to Giorgi Gakharia for the support and condolences" – President of Ukraine wrote on Twitter (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

17. Former Prime Minister of Armenia responds to statement of ex-president of Georgia

Former Prime Minister of Armenia Hrant Bagratian responded to the statement made by the ex-president of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili about outrunning Georgia by Armenia with respect to the Gross Domestic Product first after Tigranes II, more commonly known as Tigranes the Great, King of Armenia.

Economist Bagratian said that Armenia was ahead of Georgia during Saakashvili's rule in 2005-2009. He said he did not share the viewpoint of the former president of Georgia. Bagratian claimed that Armenia lived better than Georgia before the rule of King Tamar of Georgia historically.

"Mikheil Saakashvili has no information about the issue," Portal aysor.am quoted the post of Hrant Bagratian in the social network (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

18. Georgian Civil Aviation Agency recommends overflight of Iranian and Iraqi airspace should be avoided

"Based on recommendations issued by the Integrated EU Aviation Security Risk Assessment Group, due to Iranian and Iraqi air space safety risks and Ukrainian aircraft disaster probable causes, Georgian Civil Aviation Agency calls on airlines registered in Georgia to avoid overflight of Iranian and Iraqi airspace", the statement released by the Agency reads (*ITV, January 13, 2020*).

19. Mikheil Saakashvili: I would have closed the border and not allowed any Iranian citizen to enter Georgia

"Given the situation in Iran, first of all, I would have closed the border and not let any Iranian citizen enter Georgia as it constitutes a threat to the country. Can our security system prevent terrorist threats? Now easiest way out is to close the border. At this stage, we should temporarily close the border for Iranian citizens, this does not raise any doubts, that is what the state is for. Those for whom the border is now closed are political refugees. The border should be closed for people who pose a threat to the country. Completely different type of lobbying is necessary. Trump has repeatedly mentioned the NATO's expansion in the Middle East, and this is a new opportunity for Georgia. Trump has acted correctly and adequately, " – Mikheil Saakashvili said (*ITV, January 13, 2020*).

❖ Internal Affairs

20. Extraordinary sitting of parliament planned for January 17

An extraordinary sitting of the parliament is called for January 17. The parliamentary bureau will apply to President with this purpose today. About 30 issues including organizational and 10 draft-projects are on the working agenda for discussions.

The fall session of the parliament was closed on December 20 of 2019. The spring session will be opened on February 4, 2020 (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

21. About 60-80 patients apply to Iashvili Clinic every day

About 60-80 patients apply to Iashvili Children's Clinic every day with flu virus and the index has remained unchanged lately – Nato Gatenashvili, Doctor of the Clinic said.

"The patients have different types of the virus. There are cases of complicated condition with pneumonia that require hospitalization," Gatenashvili said.

However, as Doctor claimed, the majority of patients continue treatment at home under the supervision of family doctors (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

22. Police arrested one person for wounding 3 people at Bassiani

One person has been detained for wounding 3 people at nightclub Bassiani, the Ministry of Internal Affairs says.

"Investigation revealed that the detainee opened the fire at the entrance of the club Bassiani on January 12 and wounded three people," MIA said. The committed crime entails the term of imprisonment to 15 years or lifetime imprisonment (*ITV, January 12, 2020*).

23. Movement "Make a Change" held a protest rally at Bidzina Ivanishvili's business center

Organizers of the rally address the international community to impose sanctions on Bidzina Ivanishvili. Protesters say the ruling Georgian Dream party chairman and the leader did not follow his promise regarding Anaklia Deep Sea Port project. Demonstrators announced the next rallies will be held in front of the embassies (*ITV, January 12, 2020*).

24. Ilia II of Georgia - We lack peace as we are confused in modern life

"Peacefulness is necessary for us. We lack peace because we are confused in modern life.

We take a lot into our own hands, we have high hopes for science, culture, modern achievements. We must remember that everything is in God's hands.

The speed that is in the world today in science, culture, etc, indicates that the Lord is close to us," Ilia II of Georgia said (*ITV, January 12, 2020*).

25. Mikheil Saakashvili: We've missed the moment, a bit more and this regime would have fallen

'I think on June 20, the appropriate moment has been missed. It was not a conspiracy. Bidzina Ivanishvili was simply rebelling against himself. By his impudence, he provoked the people. Now we realized that there is no way back; it means the destruction of Georgia. Today the opposition is ready for everything. I am personally ready to sacrifice myself to the last drop of my blood. This year we will see Ivanishvili off. The Georgian people will follow us when they see that the leaders sacrifice themselves. We have leaders. Nika Melia showed examples of amazing courage, the same did Jorika Rurua", – Mikheil Saakashvili said (*ITV, January 13, 2020*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

26. Over 9 million international tourists visited Georgia in 2019

A total of 9 357 964 international tourists visited Georgia in 2019 – Mariam Kvrivishvili, Head of the National Tourism Administration reported. The number is an increase of 7.8% in comparison to 2018.

The number of visits by international visitors was 7 725 774 that made an increase of 7.3% in comparison to 2018 (*ITV, January 10, 2020*).

27. Georgian Company to sew clothes of Marks & Spencer

"Imeri" Sewing Company, a beneficiary of Produce in Georgia Agency, will make the clothes of Marks & Spencer Group, a major British multinational retailer specializing in selling high-quality clothing and home products.

Clothes of "Imeri" Sewing Company will be sold in shops of Marks & Spencer in different countries with the label Made in Georgia.

The company, based in Kutaisi city of Imereti region, has increased the assortment and number of the products within the framework of Produce in Georgia Program and currently employs 400 people (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

28. Head of National Center of Diseases Control – Georgia has best indicators for Hepatitis C Medication

Georgia has best indicators in revealing and medication for Hepatitis C – Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of the National Center of Diseases Control and Public Health said.

Gamkrelidze provided explanations regarding the state program for the elimination of Hepatitis C, activated in 2015, during a press conference.

According to Gamkrelidze, about 1 750 000 people out of 2.8 million adults underwent through screening. 60% of the population is already examined. The 65 thousand people were involved in the program and the 58 thousand persons have already completed medication with 98, 7% of them in having fully eliminated the virus.

"This is an unprecedented achievement. Georgia is viewed as an exemplary country in the whole world," Gamkrelidze claimed. He added that it would take additional 2-3 years for implementation of the plan prognosticated for 2020.

The terms of validity to the medicines in the value of 560 646 083 GEL, obtained free of charge within the framework of the state program for the elimination of Hepatitis C, have expired – read the conclusion of the State Audit published on January 10 (*ITV, January 11, 2020*).

29. CNN – Tbilisi is the perfect place to prolong the magic of Christmas and the New Year festivities

The article says that the end of the year is a time for celebration across the world. But in Tbilisi, the historic Georgian capital, the festive period lasts well into January because of orthodox traditions.

"If you're not ready to say goodbye to magical lights, seasonal street food, and the sound of carols in the streets, Tbilisi could be your ideal winter escape," according to the article.

Lighting up the darkest months of the year is something Tbilisi takes pride in, and the city is adorned with beautiful Christmas light displays throughout December and January, CNN writes.

"Each year is an opportunity to outdo the last with mesmerizing illuminations. Displays differ in each neighborhood with Rustaveli Avenue and Orbeliani Square featuring the most extravagant. You can spot

starry nights, snowfall decorations, and Christmas characters hanging depending on where you look," author of the article says (1TV, January 11, 2020).

Additional Information

January 14, 2020
OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 2.8980 GEL	1 GBP - 3.7636 GEL	100 RUB -4.7403 GEL
1 EUR - 3.2214 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4946 GEL	100 JPY - 2.6372 GEL

Tuesday 14 January	Wednesday 15 January	Thursday 16 January	Friday 17 January	Saturday 18 January
				
-2° 8°	-1° 9°	-3° 4°	-3° 5°	0° 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](#)**