

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 2-5

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. Tskhinvali Closes Roki Crossing-Point with Russia

Anatoly Bibilov, Moscow-backed leader of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia announced about the closure of Roki crossing-point connecting the occupied region with the Russian Federation from April 2 "until further notice."

The move came as Russian Federation's North Ossetia recorded the first two cases of the novel coronavirus, while the number of Russian confirmed cases totaled 2,777 as of April 1 morning (*Civil.ge, April 2, 2020*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

2. NATO to Deepen Partnership with Georgia, Ukraine

On April 2, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at a virtual press conference following the Foreign Ministerial that the Alliance has decided to deepen its partnerships with Georgia and Ukraine "even further".

According to Stoltenberg, the package for Georgia and Ukraine includes exercises in the strategic Black Sea region, as well as joint "work to counter hybrid warfare, and efforts to share more air traffic radar data, making the skies safer for all."

The package is "about access to more NATO educational programmes" for Georgia and Ukraine, added the NATO Secretary General (*Civil.ge, April 3, 2020*).

3. Austria Evacuates Five Georgian Nationals from Nigeria

Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani thanked Austrian authorities for evacuating five Georgian nationals from Abuja, Nigeria. "We can only get through the crisis if we act in a spirit of partnership and solidarity," tweeted FM Zalkaliani (*Civil.ge, April 4, 2020*).

❖ Internal Affairs

4. Seven Employees of Central Bank Test Positive for Coronavirus

Seven employees of the National Bank of Georgia (NBG) have tested positive for COVID-19. According to the NBG, the infected patients might have contracted the disease from another Central Bank employee who had been diagnosed with coronavirus a week before. All seven are employees of the same department and have not come into contact with other NBG employees during past two weeks,

reads the statement released by the Central Bank. 90 % of the staff are now working remotely, the NBG added (*TV Pirveli, April 2, 2020*).

5. Georgia Considers Treating Mild Coronavirus Patients at Home

COVID-19 patients showing mild or no symptoms will be treated at home and may only be hospitalized if their medical condition aggravates, Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze has stated at a daily briefing held to update on the coronavirus pandemic in Georgia. "Up to 80 % of cases are from mild to moderate," Tikaradze noted, adding that home physicians and general practitioners are being trained to provide medical advice via telephone consultations (112 – emergency number in Georgia). The measure is aimed at averting hospital overload in case of a flux of new patients (*civil.ge, April 2, 2020*).

6. Police Fine 706 People for Defying State of Emergency Rules

Law enforcement officers have revealed 706 new cases of disobeying state of emergency regulations within the last 24 hours in Georgia. In particular, police have fined 204 citizens for defying the nationwide curfew between 21:00-06:00; 75 citizens – for public gathering; one person and one legal entity – for violating restrictions in the sphere of business activities; ten citizens – for violating rules of quarantine and self-isolation; 415 citizens – for transporting passengers and violating state-imposed restrictions on driving (*Civil.ge, April 2, 2020*).

7. Georgia Reports First Coronavirus Death

On the 39th day since Georgia recorded its first novel coronavirus case, the country has confirmed the first coronavirus death. The patient, a 79-year-old woman, coming from Marneuli-Bolnisi cluster of patients, died at the First University Clinic in Tbilisi. Levan Ratiani, Director of the Clinic said the patient had serious underlying medical conditions, including stage four heart failure, as well as cachexia (*Civil.ge, April 4, 2020*).

8. Shida Kartli, Imereti Regions Shut Down Bazaars

In a bid to halt further spread of COVID-19, regional authorities in Shida Kartli announced today to close down six agricultural open-air markets in the region until further notice. The bazaars have been shut down since the morning in western Georgia's Imereti region too (*Civil.ge, April 4, 2020*).

9. Govt Will not Attend Easter Liturgy

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia announced today that "as an ordinary Christian," he will follow the Easter Liturgy on TV from home. "This is my civic responsibility as an individual citizen, as well as the head of the government," noted Gakharia and called on fellow Orthodox Christian believers in the country to follow his example.

Earlier, other members of Gakharia's cabinet also said they will not attend Easter Vigil on April 19 due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Ministers of Infrastructure, Healthcare and Economy, Maia Tskitishvili, Ekaterine Tikaradze and Natia Turnava, respectively, have also stated that they will skip church on Easter. Instead, the ministers said they will watch the Vigil ceremony on TV at home (*Civil.ge, April 4, 2020*).

10. Georgia Reports Second Coronavirus Death

Georgia has confirmed its second coronavirus death. The patient, an 81-year-old woman died at the First University Clinic in Tbilisi. Levan Ratiani, Director of the Clinic said acute double pneumonia and consequent respiratory failure and septic shock led to the patient's death. The patient, transferred to

First University Clinic from Tbilisi Sea Hospital on April 3, had serious preexisting medical conditions, including serious cardiovascular condition, noted Ratiani (*Civil.ge, April 5, 2020*).

11. 188 confirmed cases of coronavirus, two deceased in Georgia.

According to the Government elaborated web-page data there are 188 confirmed cases of coronavirus in Georgia. Out of 188 two deceased and 36 recovered (*StopCov.ge, April 6, 2020*).

12. CSOs Slam Appointment of Constitutional Court Justice amid State of Emergency

On April 3, sixteen civil society organizations, including Georgian Democracy Initiative, Transparency International Georgia, Open Society Georgia Foundation and Institute for Development of Freedom of Information have slammed the process of appointment of a Constitutional Court justice amid the state of emergency as “unacceptable.”

A 10-year tenure of one of the Constitutional Court justices, appointed through the Supreme Court quota, expired in December 2019.

CSOs say the top court failed to appoint a new judge within the timeframe envisaged by the law. The new justice should have been selected in November (*Civil.ge, April 3, 2020*).

13. Top Court Picks Khvicha Kikilashvili as Constitutional Court Justice

On April 3, the Plenum of the Supreme Court unanimously elected Khvicha Kikilashvili as a new justice of the nine-member Constitutional Court.

Khvicha Kikilashvili, 54, has been the judge at the Khelvachauri District Court in Adjara region from 2011. Earlier in 2006-2011, he was a judge of the Signagi District Court in Kakheti region (*Civil.ge, April 3, 2020*).

14. Public Defender of Georgia Releases Annual Human Rights Report

On April 2, the Public Defender's Office (PDO) published an annual [report](#) on human rights and freedoms in 2019 in Georgia. The report, which was submitted to the Parliament, covers a vast array of human rights issues in Georgia, highlighting major shortcomings that emerged or persisted during the reporting period. It also assesses record of various state institutions in terms of their compliance with the recommendations and proposals made by the Public Defender (*Civil.ge, April 4, 2020*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

15. Gov't Expands List of Authorized Business Activities

The Georgian government has amended a decree issued on March 23 adding types of economic activities authorized under the state of emergency regulations which are effective until April 21. Oil and gas production companies, as well as businesses adopting remote work model will now be permitted to resume operations. “In case of critical need”, reads the decree, no more than five employees are allowed to work from office. Home delivery service of food and medication/medical supplies is also permitted.

Restriction of home delivery service (of other consumer goods) has annoyed businesses and a part of society. As stated by Economy Minister Natia Turnava at today's briefing of the Inter-Agency Coordination Council on Coronavirus, delivery service businesses must “prove” their adherence to all public health and safety recommendations – “we must be certain that all employees in the warehouses wear relevant [personal protective] equipment,” she said. “We [the government] will soon provide

businesses with guidelines and if they undertake all necessary measures, guaranteeing that said regulations are observed, they will be allowed to operate freely,” noted Turnava (*Civil.ge, April 2, 2020*).

16. Geostat: Annual Inflation 6.1% in March

Georgia’s annual inflation stood at 6.1% in March 2020, while on a monthly basis prices increased by 0.7%, the National Statistics Office (Geostat) reported on April 3 (*Geostat.ge, April 3, 2020*).

17. Georgian Opposition Backs Government in Securing International Financing

22 opposition political parties and one independent lawmaker have sent a letter to foreign governments and international organizations, expressing full support to the Georgian government’s efforts to gain international financial support to avoid grave economic crisis in the country amid the global coronavirus pandemic.

In a statement released on April 3, the opposition parties noted that the steps aimed to counter the COVID-19 outbreak, have “hit a serious blow to economy.”

The signatories said it is “vital interest” of the whole nation to receive the international aid, that would help the government, both incumbent and the one formed after October 2020 parliamentary polls, to cushion blow to Georgian economy caused by the pandemic (*Civil.ge, April 3, 2020*).

Additional Information

April 6, 2020

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD – 3.1576 GEL	1 GBP – 3.8782 GEL	100 RUB – 4.1072 GEL
1 EUR – 3.4134 GEL	1 TRY – 0.4701 GEL	100 JPY – 2.9102 GEL

Monday
6 April



5° 16°

Tuesday
7 April



1° 6°

Wednesday
8 April



1° 6°

Thursday
9 April



2° 9°

Friday
10 April



5° 12°

 **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](#)**