

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 10-12

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Date: **April 13, 2020**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Sokhumi Extends Restrictions until April 20

Moscow-backed acting Abkhaz leader Valery Bganba has signed a decree, extending the state of emergency restrictions until April 20.

The decree envisages prolongation of the following restrictions until April 20: public and private organizations to limit the number of their employees at the workplaces, while preserving their salaries; employees above 60 should be temporarily released from jobs, while keeping their salaries; kindergartens, schools, universities, as well as sport, cultural and other leisure activities will be suspended; visits at religious sites to be halted except for the representatives of church (Civil.ge, April 10, 2020).

2. Abkhazia Confirms Third Coronavirus Case

Georgia's Moscow-backed Abkhazia region confirms the third case of the novel coronavirus. The third patient, born in 1925, has contracted the disease from the region's first two COVID-19 patients. Abkhaz health authorities noted that the patient, resident of western town of Gagra, undergoes self-isolation and remains under the control of medical workers (Civil.ge, April 11, 2020).

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

3. Tskhinvali Prolongs Restrictions on Roki Crossing-Point with Russia Until May 1

Moscow-backed leadership of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia announced today that Roki crossing-point connecting the region with the Russian Federation will be closed until May 1. Initially, occupied Tskhinvali had closed the crossing-point on April 2 "until further notice."

Meanwhile, amid the "worsened epidemiological situation," the region's leader Anatoly Bibilov prolonged restrictions on public movement and transportation in Tskhinvali from April 13 to April 20 as well (Civil.ge, April 10, 2020).

❖ Foreign Affairs

4. Sixth Georgian National Dies of Coronavirus Abroad

A Georgian citizen has died of COVID-19 in Strasbourg, France, according to Paata Imnadze, Deputy Head of National Center for Disease Control and Public Health. Imnadze has stated at a briefing of the Inter-Agency Coordination Council today that the Georgian Foreign Ministry "is working on this issue."

Prior to this, one coronavirus- infected Georgian citizen died in the U.S., and other four passed away in Spain (*Civil.ge, April 10, 2020*).

5. PM thanks U.S. Ambassador for assistance in bringing Georgian school students from U.S. to Georgia

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia thanked U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Kelly Degnan for assistance in bringing the Georgian high school students from the U.S. back to Georgia.

"As a result of joint efforts between the United States government and government of Georgia, we are bringing 79 Georgian high school students back to their families. Georgia is grateful to Ambassador Degnan and U.S. Embassy for their extraordinary help to make this happen," Gakharia wrote on Twitter. The 79 Georgian high school students returned to Georgia by a special flight on April 10. They are placed in the quarantine zone (*1TV, April 11, 2020*).

6. Georgian scientist in the group working on vaccine against COVID-19

Deputy Head of National Center for Diseases Control and Public Health Paata Imnadze said that Georgian scientist Giorgi Babuadze is a member of the scientific group in Canada that is working on a vaccine against novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Babuadze, who was contacted by Georgian First Channel in Canada, explained that the group began working on a vaccine one week after the coronavirus outbreak.

"Unless modern technologies, production of the vaccine could take up the decades. However, when we have the modern technologies, public support and various organizations are ready to invest funds, we can presume that the clinical phase will end in September or October," Babuadze said (*1TV, April 11, 2020*).

7. Guardian - Georgia successfully slowed or stopped the spread of coronavirus

In its [article](#) British daily newspaper named the factors behind it which are travel restrictions, closure of nurseries, schools and universities.

Guardian added that Georgia has only 252 confirmed cases and three deaths out of a population of 3.7m. The three deaths were all women, aged 79 to 86, who had underlying health conditions.

❖ Internal Affairs

8. Bidzina Ivanishvili Donates 100 mln GEL to StopCov Fund

Bidzina Ivanishvili, the leader of the ruling party Georgian Dream, has donated 100 million GEL to the special fund created to fight against the spread of the new coronavirus.

"The donation of Bidzina Ivanishvili's family to the StopCoV fund is 100 million GEL. Mr. Bidzina transferred this amount to the Cartu Fund specifically for the StopCoV Foundation a few days ago, and it has already been transferred to the account of the special Fund against coronavirus," Nikoloz Chkhetiani, Chairman of the Board of the Cartu Foundation, confirmed (*GeorgiaToday.ge, April 9, 2020*).

9. Additional Checkpoints Set Up in Tsageri, Lentekhi Municipalities

Additional checkpoints have been set up in Tsageri and Lentekhi municipalities in western Georgia's Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti region, the Interior Ministry reported. Road checkpoints will be used to check whether drivers are complying with state-of-emergency regulations, measure passengers' temperature and provide first aid for those in need, "amid high epidemiological threat."

Checkpoints have already been set up in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Poti, Rustavi, Zugdidi, Gori, Telavi, Akhaltsikhe, Kvemo Bolnisi and Vani (*Civil.ge, April 10, 2020*).

10. Government to Shut Down Lentekhi Municipality

Georgian government is shutting down Lentekhi Municipality of Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti region to carry out more “active preventive measures” against the COVID-19, Prime Minister’s Spokesperson Irakli Chikovani announced at a special news briefing today.

According to Chikovani, the said measure comes as Georgian authorities confirmed four cases of COVID-19 community transmission in the municipality.

In a bid to halt further community transmission of the virus, entering and exiting Lentekhi Municipality will be forbidden; freedom of movement will be restricted within the municipality except for grocery and pharmacy shopping, as well as performing some agricultural works (*Civil.ge, April 10, 2020*).

11. Georgian Orthodox Churches Full for Palm Sunday Service Despite Emergency Laws

Georgian Orthodox Churches have been full today for Palm Sunday service, defying state of emergency laws. Georgian government imposed nation-wide quarantine over coronavirus in late March, banning among others gathering of more than three people (*Civil.ge, April 12, 2020*).

12. Govt Shuts Down Seven Villages in Kobuleti Municipality in Adjara Region

Following Inter-Agency Coordination Council, Irakli Chikovani, Prime Minister’s spokesperson has announced about the government’s decision to toughen coronavirus quarantine regime in the rural communities of Gvara, Kvemo Kondidi, Mukhaestate, Legva, Skura, Tskhraphona and Tskavroka of Kobuleti Municipality in the Black Sea region of Adjara.

Chikovani said the authorities have already started thermal screenings of the residents.

The additional restrictions, affecting around 7,630 people, include:

- Entering and leaving the said villages will be banned;
- The residents will be allowed to leave their houses only for essential reasons;
- Only the Georgian Public Broadcaster will be allowed to operate in the villages put under lockdown; GPB will provide the other media outlets with relevant materials;

Kobuleti municipality is the location of Adjara’s worst coronavirus outbreak. As of April 12 afternoon, the number of total confirmed COVID-19 cases in Adjara region stands at 25, of which 20 were recorded in Kobuleti Municipality, health authorities of Adjara Autonomous Republic told *Civil.ge* (*Civil.ge, April 12, 2020*).

13. Tbilisi Institute of Medicine closes as one of the doctors test positive for COVID-19

Tbilisi Institute of Medicine (TIM) will be closed for two weeks as one of the doctors diagnosed with the coronavirus (COVID-19).

According to the director of the clinic, Giorgi Kachakhidze, the medical staff who had contact with the infected doctor will undergo a two-week quarantine.

As for the patients in the clinic, the part of them whose health condition was satisfactory was taken to the quarantine area. Those who are in a critical state remain in the clinic. The doctors who did not have contact with the infected doctor take care of them (*ITV, April 12, 2020*).

14. 257 infected, 67 recovered

Total number of confirmed cases of coronavirus increased to 257, while number of recovered patients increased to 67. Number of lethal cases remain 3. 125 507 320 GEL is mobilized in the StopCov Fund (*StopCov.Ge, April 12, 2020*).

15. ISFED: 'Resignation of Municipal Mayors Raises Questions'

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), a local watchdog, said that a wave of recent resignations by elected municipal mayors raises questions about its true motives.

According to ISFED, a set of resignations from elective positions for unclear reasons fuels perception that self-governments are dictated by the central government and the ruling party.

"Reports about [intra]-party confrontation and apparent pressure [on the mayors] indicate that their resignations might be the result of instructions by the central government or the party rather than their own decision," ISFED stated on April 10 (*Civil.ge, April 11, 2020*).

16. Earthquake hits Georgia


An earthquake has hit Georgia according to Earth Scientific Institute and Seismic Monitoring Center. The quake was observed at 02:03 Tbilisi time. The epicenter of the 3.7-magnitude earthquake was near Ninotsminda town (*1TV, April 12, 2020*).

Additional Information

April 13, 2020

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 3.1456 GEL	1 GBP - 3.9257 GEL	100 RUB - 4.0872 GEL
1 EUR - 3.4425 GEL	1 TRY - 0.4687 GEL	100 JPY - 2.2612 GEL

Monday 13 April	Tuesday 14 April	Wednesday 15 April	Thursday 16 April	Friday 17 April
				
3° 14°	5° 16°	6° 19°	5° 15°	7° 17°

-  **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](#)**