

# NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 13-15

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Date: **April 16, 2020**

## ❖ Occupied Regions

### ❖ Abkhazia Region

#### 1. Russian Military Sets up Field Hospital in Occupied Abkhazia

Russian soldiers have set up a field hospital at a military base in occupied Abkhazia, ApsnyPress, a local news agency has reported. According to ApsnyPress, the 200-bed hospital is equipped with “modern medical appliances,” including mechanical ventilators, breathing machines for patients with respiratory complications.

As stated by the source, the commander of Russian troops in the South-Eastern Military District, colonel general Alexander Dvornikov has ordered forming reserve units for carrying out disinfection of designated facilities and equipment (*Civil.ge, April 13, 2020*).

## ❖ Foreign Affairs

#### 2. Seventh Georgian National Dies of Coronavirus Abroad

A Georgian citizen, born in 1965, has died of COVID-19 in Barcelona, Spain, Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani stated at a news briefing after the Inter-Agency Coordination Council today. Prior to this, one coronavirus- infected Georgian citizen died in France, another – in the U.S., and other four passed away in Spain (*Civil.ge, April 13, 2020*).

## ❖ Internal Affairs

#### 3. A Village in Khashuri Municipality Placed Under Strict Quarantine

The Georgian government has quarantined Khidiskuri village, part of Khashuri municipality in Shida Kartli region (situated to the northwest of Tbilisi), as two cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in the village. In addition to restrictions enacted by the state of emergency decree, following regulations will come into force in Khidiskuri:

- entering and leaving the village will be banned;
- Police force of the Ministry of Internal Affairs will ensure the implementation and observance of quarantine restrictions;
- Village residents can only leave their homes in case of emergency;
- Locals will be allowed to carry out farmwork in accordance with the recommendations issued by the Ministry of Health;
- Among the media outlets, only journalists of the Georgian Public Broadcaster will be permitted to operate in the village (*Civil.ge, April 13, 2020*).

#### **4. PM, Health Minister, NCDC Chief Attend Vesper at Patriarchy**

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia, accompanied with Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze and NCDC Chief Amiran Gamkrelidze finished their visit with the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Ilia II, Georgian media reported.

The two-hour long visit comes some five days ahead of dusk-to-dawn Easter Vigil on April 18-19, that Georgian Orthodox Church vowed will go as planned despite the state of emergency and curfew between 21:00 – 06:00.

Georgian emergency laws ban gathering of more than three people in public, yet the orthodox churches stayed open throughout the pandemic, including on Palm Sunday, celebrated April 12. During the curfew, citizens shall stay home, and no movement is allowed without special permit. If the Easter celebrations go as planned, the faithful and the Church will be in violation of both provisions (*Civil.ge, April 13, 2020*).

#### **5. Tbilisi-based Georgian Orthodox Priest Tests Positive for Coronavirus**

Maia Sologashvili, chairman of supervisors' board of Tbilisi's Bochorishvili Clinic, one of the medical facilities charged with managing the COVID-19 outbreak in Georgia, told journalists that a Georgian orthodox priest tested positive for COVID-19 yesterday.

Two other members of the priest's family, including sister that serves as medical worker in one of the Tbilisi hospitals, have also been infected (*Civil.ge, April 14, 2020*).

#### **6. State Security Service Employee Guarding Patriarchate Tests Positive for Coronavirus**

A security guard at the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church, who is employed by the State Security Service, has been diagnosed with the novel coronavirus. The guard did not come into contact with other Patriarchate employees in the interior of the building, as his patrolling site was restricted to the entrance, Andria Jagmaidze, GOC's spokesperson stated at a briefing.

According to Jagmaidze, two other employees, coworkers of the infected person, had also been tested, but the infection was not confirmed in their cases (*Civil.ge, April 14, 2020*).

#### **7. Georgia Shuts Down Four Largest Cities**

Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia has announced that the government will shut down the country's four largest cities – the capital city of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Rustavi – for 10 days effective from April 15, 21:00. Entering and leaving these cities will be banned. State of Emergency will be prolonged by May 10.

Urging the citizens to show civic responsibility and observe the state of emergency regulations to the letter during the next three or four weeks, PM Gakharia said the government the government would start easing restrictions in mid-May.

PM Gakharia touched upon the international financial assistance allocated to help the country. Georgia will be the first country to receive an additional USD 447 million package over the course of one year from the International Monetary Fund, he noted.

PM Gakharia also said that Georgia's international partners – including the European Union, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Investment Bank, the German Development Bank and the French Development Agency –

would support the Georgian economy “by injecting USD 1.5 billion until the end of the year.” (*April 14, 2020*).

#### **8. Tbilisi Mayor Calls on Citizens, Parishioners to Stay Home**

Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze has called on the citizens in a video address this morning to stay home, avoid public gathering and maintain social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic. He separately called on the parishioners “to pray for the health and lives of others” from their homes amid the upcoming dusk-to-dawn Easter Vigil.

“Today, as never before, we need to stand together,” Kaladze said, adding that a parishioner also has “a spiritual mission” to take care of a fellow parishioner. Staying home would strengthen their faith, rather than cause ordeal, he stated (*Civil.ge, April 15, 2020*).

#### **9. Cemeteries in Kutaisi, Zestaponi Municipality to be Shut Down During Easter Celebrations**

Shalva Shalamberidze, State Representative of Imereti region in western Georgia stated that 13 cemeteries in Kutaisi and three cemeteries in Zestaponi municipality will be closed during the Easter celebrations. Shalamberidze could not yet specify the date of closure, but he said the cemeteries will be supposedly closed for three days to avoid large public gatherings amid the coronavirus.

Along with the capital city of Tbilisi, Batumi and Rustavi, Kutaisi is among the four largest cities, that will be shut down for 10 days effective from April 15, 21:00. Entering or leaving the city will be restricted, however movement within the city, both by foot and cars, will still be possible, except for curfew between 21:00 and 06:00 (*Civil.ge, April 15, 2020*).

#### **10. Gov’t Spokesperson: GOC Parishioners Allowed to Attend Easter Vigil with Some Restrictions**

Parishioners of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) will be allowed to attend dusk-to-down Easter Vigil in church houses, albeit with some restrictions, Irakli Chikovani, Prime Minister’s spokesperson has announced at an emergency briefing. “We made a joint decision with the Church so that law will not be violated and churches will not be shut down [during Easter service],” Chikovani noted.

The spokesperson added that parishioners will be able to attend service in large churches (cathedrals), provided that they observe the two-meter physical distancing advice, while only clergymen and lay assistants of the clergy will be allowed to enter smaller, less spacious church houses.

Chikovani stressed, that police officers will patrol church surroundings to enforce strict observance of all public health regulations, including physical distancing on Easter Eve. The spokesperson reiterated that all citizens are obliged to obey the nighttime curfew (effective from 9 pm to 6 am), implying that parishioners attending Easter Vigil must not leave church premises until daybreak (*Civil.ge, April 15, 2020*).

#### **11. 30 new cases of coronavirus confirmed in Georgia**

According to the StopCov.ge, number of infected with coronavirus increased by 30 and hit 336, out of which 74 recovered (*StopCov.ge, April 16, 2020*).

#### **12. Ex-Defense Minister Okruashvili Sentenced to 5 Years in Jail over June 20 Events**

On April 13, the Tbilisi City Court sentenced Georgia’s former defense minister Irakli Okruashvili to five years in jail for engaging in mass violence during the unrests on the night of 20-21 June, 2019.

Okruashvili was charged with “organizing, directing and engaging in” a mass violence incident, although the court cleared him of the charge of “directing” the wrongdoing.

The Tbilisi City Court announced that the list of offenses included “violence, ravage, property damage, resisting and assaulting [law enforcement] officials by means of firearms.” (*Civil.ge, April 14, 2020*).

### **13. Roman Kakulia: “Georgian Dream violated two point agreement”**

“We are not planning to cooperate with Georgian Dream as they have violated two point agreement signed with our international partners. They have once more proved that they are not planning to implement their duties. They have detained Irakli Okruashvili and moratorium on political prisoners had been violated.” – said representative of the UNM during the session of the Parliament (*TV Pirveli, April 14, 2020*)

## **❖ Economy and Social Affairs**

### **14. Anti-Crisis Economic Group Established under Govt ad hoc Task Force**

According to the government press office, the group will include Parliament Speaker Archil Talakvadze, Sector Economy and Economic Policy Committee Chairman Roman Kakulia, Budget and Finance Committee Chairman Irakli Kovzanadze, European Integration Committee Chairman Davit Songhulashvili, Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee Chairperson Nino Tsilosani, Agrarian Issues Committee Chairman Otar Danelia, National Bank President Koba Gvenetadze, Tbilisi Mayor Kakha Kaladze, Business Ombudsman Mikheil Daushvili, Prime Ministerial Advisors Sozar Subari and Beka Liluashvili, Investors’ Council Secretary Giorgi Cherkezishvili; as well as members of President Salome Zurbishvili’s administration and Ministers of the government’s economic team (*Civil.ge, April 15, 2020*).

### **15. Georgia’s Foreign Trade in January-March 2020**

Georgia’s foreign trade turnover in the first three months of 2020 decreased by 2.7%, compared to the same period last year, reaching USD 2.8 billion, according to the preliminary figures released by the National Statistics Office, Geostat, on April 13.

Exports from Georgia decreased by 5.9% year-on-year to USD 778.2 million, and imports were down by 1.4% y/y to USD 2 billion in January-March, with trade gap standing at USD 1.2 billion. Geostat will publish detailed data on foreign trade on April 21 (*Civil.ge, April 13, 2020*).

## **Additional Information**

**April 16, 2020**

### **OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES**

1 USD - 3.1334 GEL

1 GBP - 3.9158 GEL


100 RUB - 4.2165 GEL


1 EUR - 3.4173 GEL

1 TRY - 0.4554 GEL


100 JPY - 2.9189 GEL


Thursday 16 April	Friday 17 April	Saturday 18 April	Sunday 19 April	Monday 20 April
				
6° 16°	7° 19°	10° 23°	10° 22°	10° 22°

 **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](#)**