

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

April 30 – May 3

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❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

1. Tskhinvali Prolongs Restrictions on Roki Crossing-Point with Russia Until May 31

Moscow-backed leadership of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia announced today that Roki crossing-point connecting the region with the Russian Federation will be closed through 23:59 May 31.

In the meantime, restrictions on educational institutions, as well as entertaining centers, cafes, restaurants, pools, gyms have also been prolonged through 23:59 May 11 (*Civil.ge, April 30, 2020*).

2. U.S. Ambassador Degnan Travels to Tskhinvali Occupation Line

On April 30, the United States Ambassador to Georgia, Kelly Degnan, visited the occupation line near village Odzisi adjacent to Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

On her first trip to the occupation line yesterday, Kelly Degnan denounced the recent 'borderization' activities in Georgia, reiterated the "strong" U.S. support for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and demanded Russia's withdrawal of its occupation forces from Georgia (*Civil.ge, April 30, 2020*).

3. Georgian Reconciliation Minister Visits Tskhinvali Occupation Line

On May 1, Georgian State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Ketevan Tsikhelashvili travelled to the village of Takhtisdziri of Kareli Municipality adjacent to Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia occupation line, where Russian occupying forces resumed "illegal borderization" some two weeks ago.

Georgian authorities "are trying to work actively through all of the channels," including the International Committee of the Red Cross, to provide humanitarian help to the "most vulnerable people" in Akhalkalaki district and the rest of Tskhinvali Region, according to Georgian Minister overseeing Russian occupied regions (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

4. 'Pro-Kremlin' Page Spreading Disinformation in Georgia Removed from Facebook, Watchdog Says

Facebook's administration removed a "pro-Kremlin" page and a dozen of accounts linked with it that were spreading disinformation in Georgia amid the coronavirus pandemic, the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), a local watchdog, reported on May 1.

The watchdog said it had been monitoring News-Front Georgia, posing as a news organization, on the social media platform since November, 2019. As of May 1, News-Front Georgia's Facebook page is no longer accessible to users.

Mikheil Benidze, who heads ISFED, wrote the page was removed by Facebook's administration, along with twelve fictional persona accounts linked with the entity. "Last week we informed Facebook about the results of our research," Benidze said, "and now [the network] is deleted." (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*)

❖ Internal Affairs

5. Georgia Receives 2,000 RNA Extraction Kits from Germany

The National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia received 2,000 RNA extraction kits granted by the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, according to Michael Siebert, Director for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia at the German Foreign Office (*Civil.ge, April 30, 2020*).

6. UNDP: Georgian Healthcare Sector 'Well-Prepared', Economy 'Vulnerable' to Pandemic

The United Nations Development Program in Georgia released a statement evaluating country's capability to weather the COVID-19 pandemic.

Georgia has 26 hospital beds, 51 physicians and 41 nurses per 10,000 people which places it in the group of countries with high-level sector preparedness, noted UNDP. It emphasized that healthcare system's readiness proved crucial in shaping "Georgia's successful management of the pandemic."

On the other hand, UNDP called attention to other, non-healthcare factors that may render the country vulnerable to the coronavirus fallout. It mentioned that travel bans and lockdowns are especially risky for countries that rely heavily on tourism and remittances.

According to the assessment, "with tourism accounting for 21.7% of GDP and remittances worth 12.6% of GDP," Georgia scored as "particularly vulnerable" to economic shocks from COVID-19 (*Civil.ge, April 30, 2020*).

7. Georgian President: Critical and Slandorous Statements against Lugar Lab are 'Unacceptable'

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili released an address slamming recently made "critical and slanderous statements" directed against the Lugar Research Center, a biological laboratory built owing to U.S. support, and a subsidiary of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC).

"Today in the fight against the pandemic, as in the past, Lugar Center's scientific achievements and its key significance, deserve acclaim and our gratitude," stated the President.

Zurbishvili emphasized that the "center's experience, as well its long-running partnership with U.S. partners, and preparedness of our healthcare system have led to Georgia's success in combating the pandemic at the first stage." (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*).

8. COVID-19 Patients Transferred from Quarantined Village to Hospital after Locals Confront Doctors

The Bolnisi Municipality City Hall announced on May 2 that COVID-19 patients from the village of Mushevani have been transferred to hospitals in Tbilisi following a skirmish that erupted in the village between locals and medical personnel a day earlier.

The clash emerged at about 19:00 on May 1 after emergency doctors arrived in the village to transfer COVID-19 patients to hospitals in the capital city. Locals tried to resist them, not allowing medics to transport the patients to Tbilisi.

Police and representatives of the Bolnisi Municipality City Hall were present on the site of incident. As a result of the skirmishes, emergency vehicle, as well as a car owned by the municipality were damaged, according to MP Gogi Meshveliani, who represents Bolnisi constituency in the Georgian Parliament. Radio Marneuli reported citing one of the locals who preferred to remain unidentified that “there is no virus in the village and doctors are simply taking people with fever to hospitals due to the increased coronavirus cases.”

Elmaddin Mammadli, an activist from Bolnisi, reported that the medics were confronted not by the whole village, but a few local youngsters, that were drunk following May 1 celebrations.

Georgian Interior Ministry told Civil.ge today that the probe into the incident was launched under article 187 of the Criminal Code, dealing with property damage and destruction. Interrogation of the persons connected to the incident is underway, the Ministry added. The police have also confirmed that two vehicles have been “slightly damaged.” (*Civil.ge, May 2, 2020*)

9. Total Confirmed Cases Rise to 589; Recoveries Total 215, Death – 9

Government-run website StopCov.ge reports that seven new cases of the novel coronavirus were confirmed in the country, bringing total cases to 589. In the meantime, eight more patient recovered, increasing the number of recoveries to 215. 9 death cases had been reported (*StopCov.ge, May 3, 2020*).

10. Rights Group Appeals Georgian Gov’t over Attempted Self-Immolation by Transgender Woman

The Equality Movement, a local human rights group focusing on LGBTQ rights, released a statement on April 30 in response to an attempted self-immolation by a transgender woman, appealing to the Georgian Government to take heed of LGBTQ people’s needs and address their needs amid COVID-19 state of emergency.

On April 30, a Georgian media outlets disseminated a video depicting what was said to be a deliberate attempt of suicide by a transgender woman who set herself on fire outside Tbilisi City Hall, where a number of transgender people were protesting precarious living conditions compounded by the coronavirus fallout. The woman was later hospitalized (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*).

11. Adjara TV News Anchor Suspended for Allegedly ‘Discrediting’ Employer

On May 1, Giorgi Kokhreidze, director of Adjara TV, has suspended Teona Turmanidze from anchoring “Mtavari,” channel’s prime newscast, for a term of one year.

Teona Turmanidze was first suspended from anchoring the program on April 21 – for an indefinite term – after she had openly criticized on Facebook Kokhreidze’s policy of staff changes.

Turmanidze said that the TV management accused her of violating one of the clauses in her employment contract, which stipulated that an employee must not take any action contravening legal and moral norms at work or outside – which leads to “discrediting of an employee or the employer.”

Turmanidze noted that, prior to the TV management voicing its complaints, she supposed she was suspended due to her violating of new rules of conduct in social network that had been uploaded on the broadcaster’s website on April 20 (*Civil.ge, May 2, 2020*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

12. Slovakia Allocates Additional Funds to Help Georgia Combat Pandemic

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic has committed additional funds worth EU 44,198 to finance five projects run by Georgian CSOs aimed at mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout for Georgia (*Civil.ge, April 30, 2020*).

13. UK Donates Personal Protective Equipment Worth GEL 100,000 to Georgia

The United Kingdom's Embassy to Georgia has donated personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, disinfectants and etc.) worth GEL 100,000 (USD 31,200) to Georgian Armed Forces (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*).

14. IMF Allocates USD 200 Mln to Help Georgia Mitigate COVID-19 Fallout

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund approved a disbursement of USD 200 million for budget support to "help Georgia meet urgent balance of payments and fiscal needs" prompted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Board also concluded reviewing the sixth review of Georgia's economic reform program, paving the way for increasing Fund's total assets available for Georgia to USD 448 million (*Civil.ge, May 2, 2020*).

15. Food Agency: 28 Agricultural Bazaars Resumed Their Work

National Food Agency has reported that as of today 28 open air agricultural bazaars resumed their work throughout the country.

Georgia started lifting some of the coronavirus-related restrictions since April 27, paving the way to reopening agricultural bazaars.

Number of open air agricultural bazaars that reopened since April 27 include agricultural markets in the country's largest cities of Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi and Rustavi (*Civil.ge, May 2, 2020*).

16. EBRD, GCF to Invest EUR 75 Mln in Modernization of Tbilisi Metro

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) will provide the Georgian capital with EUR 75 million sovereign loan to finance the modernization of Tbilisi Metro.

"The funds, extended to Georgia and on-lent to the city of Tbilisi for the benefit of the Tbilisi Transport Company, will finance the acquisition of 40 modern metro cars as well as the modernisation of a depot and a tunnel," according to the statement released by EBRD on April 30.

The investment is part of EBRD Green Cities and a follow-on investment under Tbilisi's Green City Action Plan, which identifies areas for urgent action addressing the city's main environmental challenges, the Bank noted.

According to EBRD, it is the first project to be co-financed by the GCF under EBRD Green Cities. From a €75 million loan, €65 million will be provided by the EBRD and €10 million by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Bank stated (*Civil.ge, May 1, 2020*).








Additional Information

May 4, 2020

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

1 USD - 3.1923 GEL 1 GBP - 4.0076 GEL 100 RUB - 4.2341 GEL
1 EUR - 3.5048 GEL 1 TRY - 0.4540 GEL 100 JPY - 2.9893 GEL

Monday 4 May	Tuesday 5 May	Wednesday 6 May	Thursday 7 May	Friday 8 May
				
11° 23°	12° 24°	10° 24°	11° 18°	11° 21°

-  **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](#)**