

NEWS DIGEST ON GEORGIA

June 1-3

Compiled by: **Aleksandre Davitashvili**

Date: **June 4, 2020**

❖ Occupied Regions

❖ Abkhazia Region

1. Sokhumi Says All COVID-19 Patients Recovered, No Active Cases Left

Moscow-backed authorities of Abkhazia reported that there are no active COVID-19 cases region-wide, as remaining 12 patients had recovered from coronavirus infections, according to Russian media. To date, Sokhumi has recorded a total of 28 confirmed cases, out of which 27 have fully recovered and one has died of the virus (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

2. New Abkhaz Leader Appoints More Cabinet Members, District Heads

Aslan Bzhania, newly sworn in Moscow-backed leader of Abkhazia, has appointed several more ministers of his 14-member cabinet.

minister of defense – Colonel General Vladimir Anua (on June 1);

- minister of tourism – Teimuraz Khishba (on May 12).
- vice prime minister, minister of economy – Kritsina Ozgan (on May 4);
- minister of internal affairs – Dmitry Dbar (on April 30);
- minister of taxation – Daur Kurmazia (on April 30);
- minister of healthcare – Tamaz Tsakhnakia (on April 29);
- minister of emergency situations – Lev Kvitsinia (on April 29);
- minister of social protection and demographic policy – Ruslan Adzhba; (on April 29) (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

❖ Tskhinvali Region (so called South Ossetia)

3. Tskhinvali Registers 3 New Cases, Total Hits 42

Moscow-backed authorities of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia have recorded three new cases of COVID-19 infection, according to local media. The total number of confirmed cases in Tskhinvali stands at 42.

Alina Gagloeva, public health “official” of the occupied region, stated that all patients had been quarantined for a fortnight upon their arrival in Tskhinvali (*Civil.ge, June 1, 2020*).

4. 3 More Cases Confirmed in Tskhinvali, Total Rises to 45

Kremlin-backed authorities of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia have recorded three new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total to 45, according to “Res” news agency.

Two of the three patients are cadets at Russian military academies, and the third infected person is a hospital orderly.

According to the source, to date, there are 14 active cases of the coronavirus infection in the occupied region (*Civil.ge, June 3, 2020*).

❖ Foreign Affairs

5. Czech Republic to Reopen Borders to Georgian Tourists

The Czech Republic has included Georgia on a list of COVID-safe countries, paving the way to lifting entry restrictions for Georgian visitors, Georgian Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani has stated today. According to Georgia's chief diplomat, the central European country may reopen its borders for Georgian travelers tentatively in late June/ early July (*Civil.ge, June 3, 2020*).

6. Poland Names Helping Georgia's EU, NATO Aspirations as National Security Priority

Poland has updated its national security strategy, defining support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well its striving for European and Euro-Atlantic integration, as priorities for the country's security vision.

"[Russia's] aggression against Georgia, as well as illegal annexation of Crimea and activities in eastern Ukraine have violated the basic principles of international law and undermined the pillars of the European security system," reads the document released on May 12 (*Civil.ge, June 3, 2020*).

7. Visegrád Four, Nordic-Baltic Eight Reaffirm Support for Georgia

At the 8th annual meeting held via videoconference held on June 3, the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrád Group and Nordic-Baltic Eight reiterated their support for Georgia and other Eastern Partnership countries.

In their join press release, the Foreign Ministers pledged to uphold independence and territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine.

"Lasting international security, stability and peace requires genuine and continuous adherence to international law and norms, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states," the Ministers stressed.

The group highlighted the necessity of "carrying out deep and comprehensive reforms with a view of enhancing stability and resilience of EaP countries." (*Civil.ge, June 4, 2020*)

❖ Internal Affairs

8. Shopping Malls Reopen, Restaurants Reopen Outdoor Spaces

Starting today, all non-essential stores, including shopping malls are allowed to resume operations, as part of a phased reopening devised by the Inter-Agency Coordination Council, a government task-force to combat the pandemic.

All stores are obliged to install new safety measures – customers and personnel must wear face masks, and there are restrictions on the number of people allowed on floor space.

Additionally, restaurants, bars, cafes and eateries can reopen outdoor dining spaces, in addition to delivery/drive-thru services (*Civil.ge, June 1, 2020*).

9. NCDC Head: Georgia Will not Allow Tourists from Armenia, other COVID-hit Neighbors

Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, told TV Pirveli that Georgia will maintain entry restrictions for tourists hailing from Georgia's neighboring countries, gravely affected by coronavirus, including Armenia – for the foreseeable future.

Gamkrelidze said the Government will designate special “green zones” – least affected countries by COVID-19 – from which passengers can arrive in Georgia for tourism. However, Georgia’s chief public health official noted that there will be strict requirements put in place for all entering tourists – “something like a PCR certificate confirming negative COVID-19 result issued within the last 48 hours,” he added (*Civil.ge, June 1, 2020*).

10. Georgia Reports 2 New Cases, 10 More Recoveries

Georgia reports two new cases of COVID-19, taking the number of total confirmed cases to 796, according to stopcov.ge, a state-run website. In the meantime, 10 more patients have recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 634 (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

11. 4 More Cases Confirmed

Amiran Gamkrelidze, Head of the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, told the First Channel of the Georgian Public Broadcaster that four more people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus in Georgia, bringing the number of total confirmed cases to 800.

According to Gamkrelidze, one new patient belongs to a newly emerged ‘cluster of Saburtalo,’ and other three are truck drivers, who are ‘not Georgian citizens.’ (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

12. 13th Death Reported

Georgia has confirmed 13th coronavirus-related death. According to Georgian media reports citing Levan Gopodze, the Director of Tbilisi’s Republican Hospital, the deceased patient was a 75-year old man, native of the village of Mushevani in southern Bolnisi Municipality, Georgia’s COVID-19 hotspot (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

13. Georgia Reports 6 More Recoveries

Six people have recovered from the novel coronavirus in Georgia, bringing the total number of recoveries to 640, according to stopcov.ge, a state-run website (*StopCov.ge, June 3, 2020*).

14. Georgia Reports 1 New Case, 4 More Recoveries

Georgia reports one new case of COVID-19, taking the number of total confirmed cases to 801, according to stopcov.ge, a state-run website. In the meantime, 4 more patients have recovered, taking the number of recoveries to 644 (*Civil.ge, June 4, 2020*).

❖ Economy and Social Affairs

15. 123,000 People File for COVID-related Unemployment Benefits, USD 9 Mln Disbursed

Up to 72,000 citizens, who had lost their income due to the COVID-19 crisis, applied for the unemployment benefits as of June 1, Health Minister Ekaterine Tikaradze announced at a briefing of the Inter-Agency Coordination Council. In total, GEL 14 million (USD 4.53 million) was disbursed in payments for furloughed workers.

According to the Minister, around 51,000 self-employed citizens – who were also hit by the fallout from COVID-19 crisis – claimed up to GEL 15 million (USD 4.85 million) allowance (*Civil.ge, June 1, 2020*).

16. Georgian Lari Strengthens against US Dollar

Georgia’s national currency has regained ground as the Government is gradually lifting most of COVID-related restrictions. Georgian Lari is trading at 3.01 per U.S. dollar on Bloomberg’s platform. Earlier, on March 24, Lari dipped to historic low, trading at 3.54 per dollar (*Civil.ge, June 3, 2020*).

17. Finance Ministry Sells GEL 120 Mln Benchmark Bonds

The Ministry of Finance of Georgia sold benchmark bonds worth GEL 120 million (USD 38.7 million) on June 2 at the Treasury Bill Auction, according to the National Bank of Georgia.

The Central Bank said benchmark bonds with nominal value of GEL 70 million (USD 22.5 million) were sold with a maturity of 2 years. Six commercial banks took part in the auction. The total demand equaled GEL 148,650,000 (USD 48 million). Minimum interest rate stood at 8.5 %, maximum – at 8.7 %, while the weighted average interest rate amounted 8.65 % (*Civil.ge, June 2, 2020*).

18. Geostat: Annual Inflation 6.5% in May

Georgia's annual inflation amounted to 6.5% in May 2020 year-on-year, while Consumer Price Index increased by 0.2 % compared to the previous month, the National Statistics Office (Geostat) reported on June 3.

The annual inflation rate was driven by price changes in food and non-alcoholic beverages, and transport services. According to Geostat's breakdown of the relevant subgroups:

- prices on fruit and grapes rose by 47.1 % y/y;
- milk, cheese and eggs – 24.6 % y/y;
- meat – 13.5 % y/y;
- fish – 17.1 % y/y ;
- sugar, jam, honey, chocolate and confectionery – 14.5 % y/y;
- oils and fats – 13.1 % y/y;
- coffee, tea and cocoa – 13.9 % y/y.






As for transport category, prices decreased by 4.6 % (down by 6.9 % for personal transport equipment) (*Civil.ge, June 4, 2020*).






Additional Information

June 4, 2020

OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATES

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1 USD - 3.0416 GEL | 1 GBP - 3.8294 GEL | 100 RUB -4.4290 GEL |
| 1 EUR - 3.4087 GEL | 1 TRY - 0.4500 GEL | 100 JPY - 2.7971 GEL |

| Thursday 4 June | Friday 5 June | Saturday 6 June | Sunday 7 June | Monday 8 June |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 15° 30° | 15° 26° | 16° 26° | 17° 29° | 18° 30° |

-  **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](#)**