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BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

# Several restrictions lifted in Georgia

The decision was announced by Inter-Agency Coordination Council



The Inter-Agency Coordination Council has recently made a decision regarding the current restrictions in Georgia. According to the council, starting

**In Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Rustavi, most of the restrictions will not be lifted**

from today, several restrictions will be lifted in the country.

As the council announced, starting from today, schools, municipal transport,

malls, and shops will open in Batumi, Zugdidi, Gori, Poti, and Telavi. However, throughout February, all of the restrictions will still be in effect on weekends.

As for Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Rustavi, most of the restrictions will continue in full effect. Only shops and malls will open during weekdays.

As for the restaurants and fast-food facilities, they will be able to open outdoor areas only in the Adjara region. Weddings and other ritual events will still continue to be prohibited. In Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Rustavi, schools will remain to be closed until March 1. Public transportation will also continue to be limited.

According to the Inter-Agency Coordination Council, the so-called curfew will also continue to be adopted until March 1. However, the representatives of the government have noted that they will keep checking the situation in the country.

If the situation continues to get better, they will be able to change some of these restrictions throughout the country.

According to the Vice Prime Minister Maia Tskitishvili, any opening should be gradual and cautious. Tskitishvili said this after meeting with the owners of



Georgia has reported a total of 258,111 Covid-19 cases

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# Rallies in Georgia continue: restaurant and business owners demand the COVID-19 restrictions be lifted

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On January 30, in a continued civil unrest, owners of restaurants and other businesses joined a protest in front of an administrative building of the government of Georgia to demand the immediate lifting of the existing COVID-19 induced regulations. The protesters claimed that as a result of the existing restrictions, restaurants, hotels and winter resorts will not be able to recover from the economic crisis caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Failure to allow the above mentioned sectors to open up will result in the businesses dying out eventually, the protesters claimed.

Similar incentive was expressed by the head of the Association of Georgian Restaurateurs, Shota Burjanadze, who said that protest aims at showing the Georgian officials that the failure to support the businesses that are suffering the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will hamper an entire Georgian economy. Burjanadze added that more than 250,000 people are employed in the aforementioned sectors, and all of them are faced with unemployment as a result of the existing restrictions.

Almost 200 restaurants stopped functioning (for takeaway services) for 24 hours



in defiance. Previously, a similar protest was held on January 24, when the opposition politicians, civilians and business owners came to gather to demand the lifting of restrictions. Leader of the opposition Girchi party, Zurab Japaridze, claimed that the failure to lift the restrictions will result in the country

“sinking into a further dump”. “We are a rather poor country already, and any restrictions [that we introduce] would only lead us to more poverty” – Japaridze added. Similarly, member of the “Lelo for Georgia” party, Grigol Gogelia, said that the government failed to adequately respond to the crisis and

too, called for a “wise” removal of the restrictions. Head of the National Disease control, Amiran Gamkrelidze, said that the two main weapons against the pandemic are the restrictions and vaccines are the country’s two main weapons against the virus. Georgia is removing some restrictions on Feb-

ruary 1, however, it is not yet clear when the restaurants and catering services will be able to return to the normal way of providing their services. Nevertheless, starting February 1, restaurants in the Adjara region will be allowed to start functioning in open spaces.

## First batch of Pfizer vaccine doses due to arrive at the end of February

BY VERONIKA MALINBOYM

On January 31, Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia held a phone conversation with the head of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom; following the phone call, PM Gakharia announced that the

first batch of Pfizer vaccine are to be expected in late February this year. Gakharia thanked Tedros Adhanom for supporting Georgia’s National Plan for Vaccination and added that the first batch of vaccines will be administered to healthcare workers.

Mr. Adhanom tweeted on his personal page that the first doses of the vaccine will first be available to workers on the frontline, who are currently both “under-protected” and “over-exposed”.



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### Weather

Monday, February 1

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 13°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 1°C

Tuesday, February 2

Day Partly Cloudy  
High: 15°C

Night Partly Cloudy  
Low: 2°C

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## Company renews works on Namakhvani HPP; police takedown protesters' tents

BY NIKA GAMTSEMLIDZE

The company Enka has renewed works for the Namakhvani hydropower plant on January 30. Locals have been protesting against the construction of the HPP cascade in the Rioni gorge for months.

According to those protesting, the company doesn't take their interests into account. They believe the construction of the massive HPP cascade would harm the environment and the people living near the gorge.

The announcement regarding resuming the construction works was made by the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava who said that the company continued the works lawfully.

The minister once again showed her approval of the project against the backdrop of hundreds of locals protesting the process of building the HPP, camping there even at night. The protests started 96 days ago.

Yesterday, police demolished the tents set up by the activists. Varlam Goletiani, one of the local activists protesting the HPP, talked about this with media representatives. According to him, one of the protesters was also detained.

Green Alternative responded to the incident on the construction site of Namakhvani HPP near the village of Joneti. The organization calls on the government to stop using force "against the people affected by the project, who have been protesting against the construction of the Namakhvani HPP for 96 days, and to take into account their just demands."

According to the Green Alternative, the steps taken by the



According to the activists, the company doesn't take their interests into account



The announcement regarding the continuation of the construction was made by the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development

government are totally different from the statements that were made by them over the last few weeks.

The Center for Human Rights Education and Monitoring responded to the events related to the construction of the Namakhvani HPPs on the Rioni River. A statement from EMC said the NGO considers the construction of the Namakhvani HPP to be a violation of permit conditions.

EMC initially called on the government to inspect the construction works of the company through relevant agencies. The organization noted that the government should make sure that the company carries out the project in compliance with the local laws, without endangering the environmental situation.

## Several restrictions lifted in Georgia

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shopping centers. As Tskitishvili noted, the main topic of discussion at the meeting was how the facilities should work as safely as possible from February 1.

Initially, it was said by the representatives of the government that the restrictions in the country would be lifted starting from mid-January; however, the

council decided to postpone the date.

As of today, there are a few hundred cases reported in Georgia daily, an improvement compared to November and December when the country reported as many as 5,000 cases daily.

Georgia has reported a total of 258,111 Covid-19 cases with 49,028 recoveries and 3178 deaths.

## First batch of Pfizer vaccine doses due to arrive at the end of February

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Earlier this month, the Deputy Head of National Centre for Disease Control Paata Imnadze announced that the vaccination for the non-risk groups in Georgia will start in summer or early autumn. First ones to receive the vaccine will be the country's health workers, senior citizens, residents of care homes and high-risk individuals with chronic diseases.

To this day, Georgia has already ordered vaccines sufficient for 700,000 individuals (or a total of 1,400,000 doses, as one individual will need to be vac-

inated twice) via the Covax platform. The total cost for the ordered vaccines will amount to \$17 million; the cost has been partially paid out.

According to the Georgian health officials, Georgia will only be able to store 200,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines, due to the lack of refrigerator facilities that can store the vaccine at the required temperature- that of -70 degrees Celsius. Chairman of the Parliamentary Health Committee, Dmitri Khundadze announced that the country can only store 100,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine.

Health officials in Georgia welcome the arrival of Pfizer vac-

cines. Head of the Infectious Diseases and AIDS Centre Tengiz Tsertsvadze claimed that the aspired vaccines will mark the "beginning of an end" of the COVID-19 pandemic. He congratulated Georgia for being among the first few developing countries to receive the first doses of the highest quality vaccine shortly.

Tsertsvadze also noted that the Pfizer vaccine can refuse the cases of COVID-19 in the most effective way, and it will also be able to bring about the gradual and safest way of removing all the healthcare-related restrictions and regulations currently in place.