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January-March in Georgia



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Ivane Apkhazi - *Country of Liquid Sun*



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BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Occupation forces in central Georgia's Kareli Municipality carried out an act of borderisation last Friday near the village of Takhtisdziri in the Kareli municipality where the signs denoting 'state borders' were erected by the occupying forces.

The incident was classified by the State Security Service of Georgia (SSS) as 'significantly damaging' to the local security situation and daily lives of the local population.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia 'categorically condemned' the incident that placed locals in 'intolerable conditions' through limiting their access to farmlands.

"Such destructive actions are particularly concerning in circumstances in which the entire world is attempting to combat the spread of the Coronavirus infection," the ministry said.

Besides, the MFA pointed to the damage caused to locals of the occupied Tskhinvali region by a recent closure of cross points of the administrative divide by the occupying forces, which had prevented the civilians from receiving medical treatment on the Georgian-controlled territory.

It's noteworthy that earlier last week the Georgian parliament received the annual 2019 security report from the

#stayhome Stay home, Stay safe #staysafe

Borderisation in parallel to the pandemic



Relatives have been informed that Malkhaz and Tatia will be charged for violating the so-called border and will be fined 20 thousand rubles. Photo: RFE/RRL

SSS, in which the agency said Russia's policy towards Georgia continued to pose major threats for the country throughout the last year.

"To gain influence, Russia has continued to exert military pressure on the occupied territories, as well as various covert and cyber operations and media manipulations," the report said.

It is also noted that the activity of the special services of foreign countries was

aimed at introducing internal political processes and public order.

The report also read that Russian occupying forces are creating (and financially supporting) a waste landfill on the remains of residential areas of Georgia population in the village of Eredvi, one of the hotspots of military clashes during the conflict to cover traces of Georgian villages deserted during the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia.

The report also said the effort was aimed at 'erasing traces of the Georgian population' and preventing their return in the future.

Amnesty International's annual 2019 report for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, released this month, also says that Russia and the de facto authorities of the Georgian occupied Abkhazia and

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International community condemns Russian borderisation in Georgia.

Borderisation in parallel to the pandemic

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Tskhinvali regions continue to restrict freedom of movement with the rest of Georgia, affecting the economic situation of the locals and their rights in general.

The known practice of occupation forces - illegal detention of locals, on the pretext of violating 'border' continues despite the COVID-19-related emergencies.

Malkhaz Kurtaev, the grandson of Data Vanishvili and his wife Tatia Adikashvili, who live behind the barbed wire fences erected by the occupation forces in the village of Khurvaleti in Gori Municipality are currently in two-week quarantine in Tskhinvali. Their relatives have received information that they will be taken to the isolator after quarantine. Due to the transition from one part of the village to another, the representatives of the occupation forces ac-

cused them of the violation of the so-called border.

Kurtaev was detained by the occupation forces on April 16 and his wife was taken out of Vanishvili's house the next morning. Vanishvili became known to the world after his house was razed to the ground in Khurvaleti after the August 2008 war. Most of the foreign leaders who visit Georgia usually visit Khurvaleti and hear Data Vanishvili's troubles from the other side of the barbed wire.

According to the State Security Service of Georgia, "a hotline has been set up in connection with a possible incident in the occupied territories, the European Union Monitoring Mission has been informed and the information is being clarified."

The co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions (GID) as well as the United States and the European Union

have condemned borderisation activities near the village of Takhtisdziri.

"We condemn any actions by the de facto authorities in Tskhinvali that aggravate tensions and distract from urgent efforts to safeguard the lives and health of the affected populations, particularly during the Orthodox Easter weekend and against the backdrop of the global pandemic crisis," the US Embassy stated.

It further called for "an immediate halt to the construction of any signs, structures, fencing, or barriers intended to strengthen or expand the illegal borderisation of the administrative boundary line.

The US also called on Russia to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, to end its illegal occupation of 20 percent of Georgian territory and to allow unfettered access for the delivery

of humanitarian assistance

The European Union Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzell has also condemned the act as completely unacceptable. "I call on South Ossetian and Russian security actors to immediately stop these activities and to refrain from any further steps that could escalate the situation," he added.

British Ambassador to Georgia Justin McKenzie Smith wrote on Twitter that the latest moves by Russia and de facto Tskhinvali officials serve "to destabilise and increase hardship" on the ground.

The co-chairs of the GID from the EU, UN and the OSCE, Toivo Klaar, Cihan Sultanoglu and Rudolf Michalka condemned borderisation activities near the village of Takhtisdziri close to the Russia-occupied Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) region.

They called on UN Secretary General Guterres to "strongly urge all the GID participants to set aside differences and to refrain from actions that could lead to increased tension" amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

The GID Co-Chairs also noted that "in the face of the current global challenge of COVID-19" joint approaches and cooperation is needed.

Marek Szczygiel, new Head of the European Union Monitoring mission (EUMM - the only monitoring mission patrolling at occupation lines in Georgia), said the EUMM 'closely monitors' the situation, urging to remain calm and avoid any provocation.

The Estonian, Polish and Ukrainian Foreign Ministries also strongly condemned further illegal borderisation in Georgia.

"For Russia, the Coronavirus is serving as a smokescreen for further 'borderization'. We strongly condemn militarization along the occupation line of Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia," Minister of FA of Lithuania, Linas Linkevicius wrote on twitter.

The Secretariat of the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM), which unites Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, also reaffirmed its support to independence and sovereignty of Georgia.



COVID-19 pandemic: Council of Europe's body GRECO warns about corruption risks

Strasbourg, 21.04.2020 – The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) has published guidelines addressed to its 50 member states aimed at preventing corruption in the context of the health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The guidelines, issued by GRECO's president, Marin Mrnela, underline that the COVID-19 outbreak increases corruption risks, the health sector being specifically exposed, in particular owing to surges in the immediate need for medical supplies and the simplification of procurement rules, overcrowded medical facilities and overburdened medical staff.

"As countries face undeniable emergencies, concentration of power, derogation of rights and freedoms, and as large amounts

of money are infused into the economy to alleviate the crisis corruption risks should not be underestimated," said GRECO's president. "Decisions related to measures by central, regional and local authorities to face the pandemic must be transparent and subject to oversight and accountability. Whistle-blowers in the health sector must be protected", he added.

GRECO's president also recalled that transparency in the public sector is one of the most important means for preventing corruption, whatever form it takes. "The need for regular and reliable information from public institutions is crucial in times of emergency. This concerns the spread and risks of the pandemic as such, but also emergency measures taken in response to them. We should not allow COVID-19 to compromise our values and our standards, including transparency and accountability. Digital information platforms, such as dedicated transparency portals, are valuable corruption-prevention tools

and instrumental to protect the rule of law", he said.

Corrupt practices may affect the public or the private sectors, and be related to the procurement system, bribery in medical-related services, corruption in new product research and development (R&D), including conflicts of interest and the role of lobbying, and COVID-19-related fraud related to the marketing of counterfeit medical products, among others risks.

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is a Council of Europe body that aims to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with anti-corruption standards. It helps states to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms. Currently it comprises the 47 Council of Europe member states, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the United States of America.

Foreign trade 2020 January-March in Georgia

By NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) released the preliminary data of foreign trade in January-March 2020. According to the information, Georgia's external trade turnover amounted to \$2.77 billion in January-March 2020, which is a decrease of 2.7% compared to the same period of last year.

The volume of exports of goods from Georgia amounted to \$778.2 million. This figure is 5.9% lower than the same period last year, while imports also decreased 1.4%, amounting to \$1.99 billion.

"The share of domestic exports (export of locally produced goods and services, including those of foreign origin that have been substantially changed through local processing) in total exports constituted 69.3% and amounted to \$539.5 million (-1.7% y/y)," said Geostat.

In the reporting period the share of the top 10 trading partners by domestic exports in the total domestic exports of Georgia amounted to 79.6%.

In the first 3 months of this year, the share of the 10 largest countries in Georgia's total local exports was 79.6%.

Azerbaijan tops the list of largest trading partners by exports with \$121.9 million, followed by China, Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey with \$ 99.9 million, \$ 91.2 million, \$83.5 million and \$ 54 million, respectively.

Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, China and the United States are the top trading partners of Georgia in terms of imports with USD 348.3 million, USD 210.1 million, USD 184.3 million, \$181.4 million and \$119.8 million, respectively.

Trade turnover with Turkey reached \$402.2 million, \$306.2 million with Azerbaijan and \$301.4 million with Russia.

According to Geostat, copper ores and concentrates ranked first in the top 10 of local exported commodities in January-March 2020 with \$159.0 million (20.4% of total exports), followed by Motor cars - \$127.9 million (16.4% of total exports) and ferroalloys - \$58.2 million (7.5% of total exports).

Meanwhile, the top import commodities were motor cars - \$173.8 million (8.7% of total imports), petroleum and petroleum oils - \$150.4 million (7.5% of total imports) and Petroleum gases and other gaseous - \$135.5 million (6.8% of total imports).

The trade deficit of Georgia in January-March 2020 amounted to \$1.23 billion which is 43.9% of total trade turnover.

Weather

Wednesday, April 22

Day Rain
High: 12°C

Night Rain
Low: 6°C

Thursday, April 23

Day Rain
High: 11°C

Night Mostly Cloudy
Low: 6°C

published by
The Messenger

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The Messenger welcomes your contributions. If you are interested in submitting an article or news item please contact.

All contributions should be submitted by e-mail.

The Messenger Georgia's English language daily is an independent newspaper, and,

therefore, the opinions expressed in some articles do not necessarily coincide with those of the newspaper. We take no responsibility for any claims made in advertisements.

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Exchange Rates: US Dollar - 3.1696; Euro - 3.4343; GBP - 3.9116; 100 Russian Ruble - 4.1409; Swiss Franc - 3.2659

Culture & Lifestyle

Ivane Apkhazi - *Country of Liquid Sun*



ternational wine exhibitions where they were awarded prizes.

According to stories, Ivane was a great Russophile whose house and vineyards were torched when the rebels failed to recruit him to support the rebellion. Ivane and Dimitri Abkhazi had famous and beautiful estates and unique wine cellars in the

villages of Kardenakhi and Vejini in the province of Signaghi. Prince Abkhazi had wine cellar outlet in Tbilisi, near the Molokan marketplace, where Kakhetian wines, which were made in the Prince's estates, were sold with success. This cellar, together with the estates and wine cellars of Prince Abkhazi, were later bought by Earl Sheremetev who renamed it "Kardenakhi" although people still associated it with the name of Prince Abkhazi.

The old wine cellar was located in the middle of tall-growing bushes. The new wine cellar was in the middle of an oak grove and was constructed upon the order of Dimitri Abkhazi with the plans having been developed by the Prince himself. He ordered that the cellar be cut into the rock. During the same period, he had vineyards on 21 hectares and followed wine making with a serious interest. According to stories, many unpleasant adventures happened to Dimitri Abkhazi during this period. Once, when he had just started his business, he was taking a large amount of money to pass to the Treasury. Unfortunately, his carriage overturned in high water and was swept away together with the money. Saved but bankrupted by the accident, Dimitri was forced to sell his estate to a wealthy man of Tatar origin named Ajia who bought his estates, vineyards and wine cellars and decided to cut down the vines and plant tobacco plantations instead. On learning of the news, Dimitri Abkhazi's cousins put some pressure upon the man and managed to make him sell the estates to Earl Sergei Sheremetev.

Sheremetev entrusted the economic activities of his newly purchased Kardenakhi estate to Pavel Averkin. One can hear the surname of this man, often in disfigured forms such as Avakin, amongst others, from Kardenakhian peasants even to this day. In Kardenakhi, Sherevetev built a palace on the top of a hill with a forest-park surrounding it as well as a wine cellar, cut into the rock by Dimitri Abkhazi, where 40-50 tons of grapes could be processed in the traditional Kakhetian way. In addition to the kvevris, large oak barrels also were placed in the wine cellar.

For a long time, this wine cellar was still referred to as Prince Abkhazi's wine cellar. On the whole, Earl Sheremetev's vineyards occupied 25 hectares in Kardenakhi and six hectares in Vejini. The vineyards were planted amongst high-growing bushes, cut forests and at the foot of Tsvi- Gombori Mountain along slightly declining slopes below the oak grove.

Baron Joseph de Bay wrote with enthusiasm about the Kardenakhi farm and its famous wine cellar and how grapes were harvested and wine was made in his book, *In Georgia*, which was published in 1898.

After Georgia became a Soviet Republic, the breathtaking Kardenakhi vineyards were pronounced to be the people's ownership. A man by the name of Khuchua was appointed as the manager of the estate with Earl Sherevmetev's butler, Averkin, handing over the vineyards and wine cellars. At a later time, the "Kakheti" Association was established whose composition also included the Kardenakhi.

There is some surviving information about Ivane Abkhazi, son of Dimitri (1863-1921), who lived in Tbilisi and worked in the position of the Councilor of State. His wife was Mariam Kartsivadze who bore him twin daughters, Marian and Salome. Information related to Ivane Abkhazi's family and ancestors is very few because his wife, fearing repressions, burned all of the writings and documents belonging to her husband and his ancestors as well as destroying all of the photographs and everything else that was available. It is hard to reproach her for these actions as the great Ilia Chavchavadze's nephew, Kote Abkhazi, was also shot at that time with her brother Nikoloz Kartsivadze, alongside a great many other nobles, also sharing his fate in Tbilisi.

The ancestors of Ivane Abkhazi's father Dimitri were Abkhazian princes who carried the surname Anchabadze, One of the ancestors, Giorgi Anchabadze, came with Mariam, the wife of King Rostom, as a wedding marriage gift portion. In 1653, the King married him to David Gushparishvili's orphaned daughter and granted him his father-in-law David's estates. According to other information, Ivane Abkhazi's great-grandfather, Iovane Abkhazi, was in charge of arranging the banquets at the royal court.

The wines made by Dimitri's father Ivane, in the village of

Kardenakhi in Kakheti, were famous in Georgia in the nineteenth century. In 1839-1845, these wines participated in in-



Alexandre (kokhta) Apkhazi