

# GEORGIA UPDATE

WEEKLY EDITION • 29 January 2009

A Publication of the Government of Georgia

[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

## TOP STORIES

- **Georgia, EU Advance Nabucco Pipeline as Key to Europe's Energy Security at Budapest Summit**
- **Human Rights Watch Condemns Russia's "Indiscriminate Attacks," Urges Access to S. Ossetia**
- **Russia Plans New Naval Base in Abkhazia, Deepening Western Worries**
- **President Invites Opposition to Join New Advisory Board Aimed at Fighting Economic Crisis**
- **Georgia Repairs Key Pipeline Damaged by Russian Invasion, Resumes Gas Flow to S. Ossetia**
- **Sweden Announces €50 Million Aid Package for Georgia**



### EUROPE SEES ENERGY SECURITY IN THE NABUCCO PIPELINE

European, Georgian, and other leaders gathered in Budapest this week to address one of the EU's most urgent issues: energy security, and specifically the Nabucco pipeline. Russia's power play earlier this month, when it shut down the supply of gas to Ukraine and parts of Europe, underscored the need to develop alternative routes for Caspian energy to reach Europe. Nabucco is at the heart of these plans. The pipeline would run 3,300 kilometers through Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, ending in Austria. Initially, supplies are expected to come primarily from Azerbaijan, on the western side of the Caspian Sea. The project is due to be completed in 2013. To date, however, not a single segment of pipe has been laid. Energy Minister Gilauri, who said the Budapest Summit had succeeded in generating political support for the project, underscored Georgia's reliability as an energy supplier: "Even during the war, deliveries were not disrupted ... transit of oil and gas through Georgia did not stop," he said.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**DAILY TELEGRAPH:** **Is Mikheil Saakashvili the man for Georgia in 2009?**

**MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS:** **Another foreign challenge for Obama-Georgia/Russia**

**RFE/RL:** **Clinton suggests new foreign policy attitudes**

**SPIEGEL ONLINE:** **Lessons from the Russian gas dispute**

**RFE/RL:** **EU's Ferrero-Waldner discusses Georgian war's aftermath, integration prospects**

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

**"Russia's false allegations of genocide paved the way for what now appear to be war crimes: Protected by Russian tanks, South Ossetian militias looted and torched Georgian villages in an attempt to 'cleanse' ethnic Georgians from the small mountainous region of South Ossetia.... After the initial stage of the conflict, it was almost exclusively the Russians and South Ossetians who violated the laws of war."**

—Tom Lassiter (McClatchy Newspapers, Jan. 21)

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Jan. 28-31:** Georgian delegation visits Spain

**Feb 4:** NATO-Georgia commission convenes in Brussels

**Feb. 6-8:** Annual International Security Conference in Munich

**Feb.10-12:** OSCE PA President visits Georgia

**Feb. 15:** UN monitoring mandate expires

**Feb.16:** Parliament Speaker visits Lithuania to attend Independence Day ceremony

**Feb. 17-18:** FM Vashadze visits Poland

**Feb. 20-21:** FM Vashadze visits Armenia

**Mar. 8-12:** FM Vashadze visits Japan

**Mar. 30-1:** Parliament Speaker visits Denmark, Norway

**Mar. 31:** EU monitoring mandate expires

## TOP STORIES

**Georgia, EU Advance Nabucco Pipeline as Key to Europe's Energy Security at Budapest Summit**

EU member states, Georgia, and other backers of the Nabucco pipeline met this week in Budapest to rally support for the project. EU's Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs called for governments to officially commit to the project by the end of March. Georgia's Deputy PM Gilauri committed Georgia to playing "a serious role" in Nabucco in order to "enhance Europe's energy security and ease its dependence on Russian gas." Said Hungarian PM Gyurcsany: "Having or not having energy could become a question of national sovereignty and stability." The project would link Caspian energy resources to the western European market, diversifying Europe's gas supplies and providing much needed energy security for EU members.

**CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 26): Georgian delegation at Budapest energy summit**

[www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

**HURRIYET (Jan. 27): EU supports Nabucco pipeline**

[www.hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr)

**Human Rights Watch Condemns Russia's "Indiscriminate Attacks," Urges Access to S. Ossetia**

Human Rights Watch this week urged Russia to allow the OSCE access to South Ossetia. In a new report, the group said that South Ossetian forces engaged in the "deliberate and systematic destruction" of ethnic Georgian villages. Although the rights watchdog faults both parties for human rights violations, it condemned Russia's indiscriminate attacks on ethnic Georgian villages and "blatant disregard to the safety of civilians." HRW also called for dual investigation into the widespread human rights abuses committed during Russia's five-day war with Georgia.

**FINANCIAL TIMES (Jan. 24): Russia urged to welcome OSCE**

[www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

**REUTERS (Jan. 23): Russia and Georgia must probe war crimes**

[www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)

**Russia Plans New Naval Base in Abkhazia, Deepening Western Worries**

In blatant defiance of international law, Russia will build a new base for its Black Sea fleet in Russian-occupied Abkhazia. The move, announced Monday, deepens Western concerns about Russia's growing military presence in a geostrategically critical region that is part of Georgian territory. By stationing its Black Sea Fleet in Abkhazia's port of Ochamchire, Russia is further violating the Sarkozy-Medvedev ceasefire agreement by which Moscow committed to rolling back its troops to pre-war positions. In a separate provocation, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Monday appointed a special envoy to demarcate the "state borders" with the two regions of Georgia that Moscow occupies.

**AP (Jan. 26): Russia planning Abkhazia naval base**

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

**President Invites Opposition to Join New Advisory Board Aimed at Fighting Economic Crisis**

President Saakashvili announced the creation of a new economic advisory board that would include opposition members. The group will be charged with developing plans to help mitigate the impact of the global financial crisis on Georgia's economy. "Recently we have been working intensively to avoid the devastating consequences of the global economic crisis," Saakashvili said in announcing the board. It will work in conjunction with experts to provide counsel for the President and debate prospective economic measures.

**CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 22): Saakashvili offers advisory board**

[www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

**Georgia Repairs Key Pipeline Damaged by Russian Invasion, Resumes Gas Flow to S. Ossetia**

Georgia resumed gas supplies to South Ossetia after repairing a critical pipeline that had been damaged during Russia's summer invasion. Greek FM Bakoyannis, the OSCE chair-in-office, welcomed Georgia's initiative: "I commend the parties for the constructive approach which made it possible to solve this urgent humanitarian problem." The pipeline, located along the occupied region's unstable border, was restored last week after security guarantees were put in place.

**CIVIL GEORGIA (Jan. 27): OSCE chair welcomes resumption of gas supplies to Tskhinvali**

[www.civil.ge](http://www.civil.ge)

**Sweden Announces €50 Million Aid Package for Georgia**

On a visit to Tbilisi, Swedish International Development Cooperation Minister Karlsson announced a generous €50 million aid package for Georgia; the funds will be used to help advance Georgia's democratic reform program. She also reaffirmed Sweden's support for Georgia's integration into Europe and for visa regime simplification. Georgian FM Vashadze called Sweden one of Georgia's most "steadfast allies" and expressed gratitude for its work in mitigating the consequences of Russia's invasion.

**INTERPRESS NEWS (Jan. 27): Swedish government to contribute 50 million Euros to Georgia**

[www.ipn.ge](http://www.ipn.ge)

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**DAILY TELEGRAPH: Is Mikheil Saakashvili the man for Georgia in 2009?**

Despite harsh post-war criticism, writes The Telegraph, President Saakashvili has the leadership to provide much needed stability for Georgia. "War apart, in just over five years in office, Saakashvili has brought concrete, positive change to his country. He has started to combat endemic corruption. He has attracted impressive levels of foreign investment. He has fostered an entrepreneurial spirit which has created revenue and jobs. After 70 years in the Soviet wilderness, he gave his country a vision of an alternative future to aspire to."

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk>

**MCCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS: Another foreign challenge for Obama–Georgia/Russia**

Addressing the repercussions of Moscow's August invasion of Georgia and the widespread human rights violations that followed is a key foreign policy challenge for the Obama Administration. "Russia's false allegations of genocide paved the way for what now appears to be war crimes." According to a Human Rights Watch, "As an occupying power in Georgia, Russia failed overwhelmingly . . . to ensure law and order. After the initial stage of the conflict, it was almost exclusively the Russians and South Ossetians who violated the laws of war, according to witnesses' accounts and McClatchy's reporting in Georgia during and after the fighting."

[www.mcclatchydc.com](http://www.mcclatchydc.com)

**RFE/RL: Clinton suggests new foreign policy attitudes**

US Secretary of State Clinton emphasized energy security and advancing integration measures with former Soviet republics as foreign policy objectives under the new Obama administration. "I hope we can make progress with our friends in NATO and the EU to understand that we do need a broader framework in which we can talk about energy security issues," adding: "It may or may not be Article 5, but I certainly think it is a significant security challenge that we ignore at our peril."

[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

**SPIEGEL ONLINE: Lessons from the Russian gas dispute**

Russia's brazen and calculated freeze on Ukrainian gas supplies poses highlights the need to diversify Europe's energy supplies. "The recent gas dispute is sure to energize the search for alternative routes, adding political impetus to projects such as Nabucco." Integrating the EU's energy markets and investing greater resources in Central Asian pipeline projects would enhance Europe's energy security. "The combination of the LNG glut and the economic crisis will create a very difficult situation for Russian gas in Europe and tremendous pressure on the market share of Russian gas," one analyst says.

[www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de)

**RFE/RL: EU's Ferrero-Waldner discusses Georgian war's aftermath, integration prospects**

In an interview with Radio Free Europe, EU External Relations Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner, says Europe's support for Georgia territorial integrity is steadfast, and offers insights into the Union's Eastern Partnership initiative. She pointed to visa facilitation, free trade, socioeconomic development, and energy security measures fields for further cooperation and integration between Georgia and the EU. "The next step would indeed be the possibility...to have an Association Agreement with the European Union," she said.

[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

**WEBSITES @ GEORGIA**

**Civil Georgia:** Leading independent English-language news website on Georgia: <http://www.civil.ge>

**Georgia Update:** Official government information service:

<http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge>

**Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies:** Leading non-governmental organization that focuses on Georgian domestic and foreign policy: <http://www.gfsis.org>

**Georgian Mission to NATO:** <http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge>

**Georgian Parliament:** <http://www.parliament.ge/>

**Government of Georgia:** <http://www.government.gov.ge/eng/>

**Local Government:** Official website of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi:

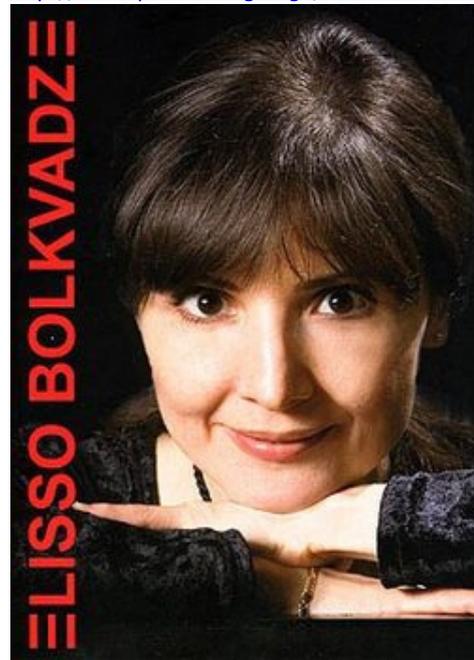
[http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=ENG&sec\\_id=1](http://www.tbilisi.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** <http://www.mfa.gov.ge>

**National Investment Agency:** <http://www.investgeorgia.org>

**President Saakashvili's official website:**

<http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=0>



"On February 5, internationally renowned Georgian concert pianist Eliso Bolkvadze will perform at the Cathedrale Saint-Louis des Invalides in Paris, together with French conductor Laurent Petitgirard and the Georgian National Orchestra. The concert is supported by the French Ministry of Defense and the Georgian Embassy in France. For further information, please visit Elisso Bolkvadze's website at [www.elisso-bolkvadze.com](http://www.elisso-bolkvadze.com)."