

GEORGIA UPDATE

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www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

TOP STORIES

- Demonstrations Dwindle as Government Pushes Forward on Dialogue
- World Bank Ranks Georgia's First in Economic Reform
- Georgia, Russia, Separatists Meet to Prevent Incidents, as New Shooting Takes Place
- EU Lauds Georgia's Progress in Advancing European Neighborhood Program Action Plan
- NATO Moves Ahead With Georgian Military Exercises, Dismissing Moscow's Protests; Invites Russia



President Saakashvili, buoyed by his Government's successful handling of the opposition protests, urged Georgia's politicians to eschew "hatred and aggression" and instead come together to overcome poverty and foreign occupation. He made his appeal on Tuesday at Tbilisi's Holy Trinity Cathedral, in the presence of Patriarch Ilia II and several opposition leaders. Among them were several Christian Democrats, the leading opposition party, and Irakli Alasania, head of the Alliance for Georgia, who was the only organizer of the ongoing demonstrations to attend. [CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili Says Ready for Dialogue](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Russia moves troops closer to Georgia's capital

EURASIANET: Georgian political opposition confronts credibility gap

RADIO FREE EUROPE: South Caucasus emerges as "crossroads of energy exports"

AFP: Georgian separatists detain OSCE observers

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Medvedev tells West to keep out of Georgia

WASHINGTON POST: A world of trouble for Obama

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Most of the world disagrees with Russia's decision to recognize the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia—a decision which raised obvious concern over Russia's respect for the territorial integrity of its neighbors."

—William J. Burns, US Undersecretary of State

"I deplore that due to the activity of a few hundred people, the head of the Parliament is obliged to work with us in a hotel. This is against the law."

—French Ambassador Eric Fournier, after small groups of protesters continued to force the closure of Parliament

UPCOMING MILESTONES

May 1: Official opening ceremony of the Embassy of Japan in Georgia

May 1-9: State Minister Yakobashvili visits US

May 4-6: National Security Advisor Tkeshelashvili visits France

May 7-8: President Saakashvili, State Minister Baramidze attend Eastern Partnership Summit

May 11-13: Parliament Speaker Bakradze visits Sweden

May 13-17: Prime Minister Gilauri visits the UK

May 15: UN Secretary General to submit report on UN mission in Georgia

May 18-19: Fifth round of Georgian-Russian peace talks in Geneva.

Jun. 30: OSCE's monitoring mandate in Georgia expires

TOP STORIES

Demonstrations Dwindle as Government Pushes Forward on Dialogue

The number of demonstrators attending daily rallies that aim to force President Saakashvili’s resignation continue to dwindle—despite concerted efforts by opposition parties to recruit protesters from around the country. Meanwhile, opposition tactics of blocking roads in Tbilisi have caused a backlash among residents, whose anger at the radical opposition is swelling. The Government continues to allow the rallies to unfold without interference, earning plaudits for its transparency and professionalism from international observers. President Saakashvili also reiterated his call for dialogue on all issues with the opposition

[EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Numbers Declining, Risks Mounting in Tbilisi Demonstrations](#)

World Bank Ranks Georgia's First in Economic Reform

The World Bank has ranked Georgia as the most successful reformer country in Europe and Central Asia, and fifth out of the 150 states the Bank evaluated throughout the world. The rankings, announced last week, were based on a five-year study. Georgia was nominated for its success in reforming the country’s tax system and the financial sector. Parliament Speaker Bakradze accepted the honor at a Vienna award ceremony.

[RUSTAVI: World Bank names Georgia among leaders of reformer countries](#)

Georgia, Russia, Separatists Meet to Prevent Incidents, as New Shooting Takes Place

Representatives from Georgia, Russia, and South Ossetia met last week to find ways to prevent incidents near and in the occupied territories, as agreed in Geneva in February. The talks, held in the village of Ergneti, were mediated by EU and OSCE monitors. Meanwhile, Georgia’s interior ministry reported yet another shooting near Tshkinvali—further evidence of the uncontrolled militia violence emanating from the occupied territories.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Sides meet at administrative border](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Shooting reported at S. Ossetia border](#)

EU Lauds Georgia's Progress in Advancing European Neighborhood Program Action Plan

A new EU report praises Georgia’s efforts to advance its European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) action plan. Despite extraordinary circumstances, Georgia’s government achieved significant progress in “fighting against corruption, instituting the rule of law, and especially in facilitating access to justice, improving detention conditions in the penitentiary system, and in efforts to combat torture and inhumane and degrading treatment,” said the EU report. It also notes the need for more progress to ensure media freedom and pluralism.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU’s report on Georgia’s ENP Action Plan](#)

NATO Moves Ahead With Georgian Military Exercises, Dismissing Moscow’s Protests; Invites Russia

NATO continues to dismiss Russian objections to two military exercises planned for May in Georgia. The routine training exercises, planned more than a year ago, have drawn the ire of Moscow, which has called for a boycott. The Allies insist that the exercises are in now way aimed at Russia, and even invited Moscow to participate. Said US State Department spokesman Robert Wood: “The Partnership for Peace exercises are no threat to Russia...they’re important to go forward, and we’re going to do so.”

[AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: NATO To Press On With Georgia Exercises Despite Russia Threat](#)

[REUTERS: Russia criticizes NATO Georgia war games, urges boycott](#)



For the first time ever, the European Judo Championships were held in Georgia, from April 24-26. Over 600 wrestlers from 40 countries competed, and several Georgians notched medals. Nestor Khergiani and Levan Tsiklauri earned bronze medals, while 20-year-old Varlam Liparteliani won silver.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

ASSOCIATED PRESS: Russia moves troops closer to Georgia's capital

Russia has stationed its armed forces just 40 kilometers from Tbilisi, further violating the EU-brokered ceasefire. Moscow also has relocated its Black Sea naval fleet and mobilized armored vehicles to positions closer to Georgia's borders. Russia's incessant remilitarization in sovereign Georgian territory reflects the Kremlin's determination to maintain pressure on President Saakashvili's regime and to reassert its dominance in the region.

www.cbs.com

EURASIANET: Georgian political opposition confronts credibility gap

What opposition leaders touted as "the final epoch" in their protest campaign to drive President Saakashvili from power seems to have stalled before it got started. As a result, opposition leaders can expect to start facing questions about their own political futures. But for now, they seem to be in a state of denial. Local analysts say the Government's calm approach to the protests—a marked change from the crackdown on the November 2007 rallies—is a sign that President Saakashvili has learned the value of restraint.

www.eurasianet.org

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY: South Caucasus emerges as "crossroads of energy exports"

The South Caucasus has emerged as a crossroads of energy-export routes, with several proposed pipeline projects that could generate billions in revenue and enhance EU energy security. Russia's invasion of Georgia last year makes the security of current and future pipelines an issue of mounting importance for the EU. Says one expert: "There is no internal risk or threat for Georgia as a transit country, and this makes Georgia for routes via the Caucasus a very reliable and a key element for the East-West corridor."

www.rferl.org

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE: Georgian separatists detain OSCE observers

Russian-backed separatists in occupied South Ossetia briefly detained two OSCE observers last week. "This provocation further destabilizes the situation in the region and is another breach of the ceasefire agreements that the Russians and their South Ossetian proxies have committed," said National Security Advisor Tkeshelashvili. Russia has repeatedly denied international observers access to the occupied territories in order to monitor Sarkozy ceasefire agreement.

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/>

EURASIA DAILY MONITOR: Medvedev tells the West to keep out of Georgia

The desire by the US to "reset" relations seems to have been interpreted in Moscow as a vindication of its invasion of Georgia last August and a tacit recognition of Russia's special rights within the South Caucasus. In this context, the Kremlin has interpreted NATO's upcoming exercises in Georgia as Western double-crossing, or as an attempt to redress the facts on the ground after the Russian invasion. After the exercises, if the West keeps out and gives Moscow a free hand in the South Caucasus, the row might end. Meanwhile, the presence of foreign forces in Georgia for most of May could interfere with prepared plans for possible Russian action. This might explain the fury behind Moscow's reaction.

www.jamestown.org

WASHINGTON POST: A World of trouble for Obama

Despite the Administrations' effort to "reset" relations with Moscow, the Kremlin continues to violate international law and pursue a belligerent foreign policy agenda. Russia has deployed thousands of additional troops, tanks, and warplanes in Georgia, greatly enhancing the threat of another Russian attack on Georgia. Obama is not the first president to discover that facile changes in US policy don't crack long-standing problems. Some of his new strategies may produce results with time. Yet the real test of an administration is what it does once it realizes that the quick fixes aren't working—that, say, North Korea and Iran have no intention of giving up their nuclear programs, with or without dialogue, while Russia remains determined to restore its dominion over Georgia.

www.washingtonpost.com

WEBSITES @ GEORGIA

Civil Georgia: Leading independent English-language news website: www.civil.ge

Georgia Update: Official government information service: www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies: Leading NGO focusing on domestic, foreign policy: www.gfsis.org

Georgian Mission to NATO: embassy.mfa.gov.ge

Georgian Parliament: www.parliament.ge

Government of Georgia: www.government.gov.ge/eng

Tbilisi: Official website of Georgia's capital: www.tbilisi.gov.ge

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.gov.ge

National Investment Agency: www.investgeorgia.org

President Saakashvili's official website: www.president.gov.ge