

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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## TOP STORIES

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- Georgia Sends Strong Signal on Sovereignty; Captain Who Violated Laws on Occupied Territories Briefly Jailed
- PM: Georgia Prepared to Begin Talks on Free Trade With European Union
- Georgia Sets Target of 3 Million Tourists for 2012



Ten photographers from the renowned photo agency Magnum spent three months in Georgia to capture the country's contemporary cultural mystique through a grand photographic lens. Last week, Berlin hosted an exhibition of the newly published book—"Georgian Spring: A Magnum Journal"—that commemorates the project. "Honesty is the main value of the book," said Culture Minister Nika Rurua. The images also will be showcased in Spain, and the book will be available for purchase worldwide (including on Amazon.com as of October 31, 2009). More images from the exhibition are on page 2.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

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## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"With the political stability we have achieved in recent months, and with the failure of the aggressor's attempt to launch a new war in August, we now have a chance to move towards a very significant economic breakthrough. However, it needs a further, well-elaborated program on which the Georgian government, which is united like a single fist, is working very intensively."

—President Saakashvili, speaking Sep. 2 at the opening of the \$100-million SAS Radisson Hotel in Tbilisi

"Given the speed of action, the signal to go ahead also had to have been sent before the news media and general public were aware of what was happening militarily."

—From the report by the US Cyber Consequences Unit, an NGO, on the cyber attacks against Georgia before Russia's August 2008 invasion

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Sep. 10-11:** Latvian FM Riekstins visits Georgia

**Sep. 12-17:** Vice Premier Baramidze visits US

**Sep. 17:** 7th round of Geneva talks

**Sep. 17-19:** FM of Turkey visits Georgia

**Sep. 23:** Georgian delegation and EU officials to discuss free trade agreement in Brussels

**Sep. 24:** President Saakashvili addresses UN General Assembly

**Oct. 27:** FM Vashadze visits Brussels

**Oct.:** Danish FM Møller visits Georgia

**Oct.:** Vice Premier Baramidze visits UK

**Oct.:** Next meeting of US-Georgia Commission

TOP STORIES

**United Nations Adopts Landmark Resolution Supporting Return of Georgian IDPs to Occupied Abkhazia, S. Ossetia**

The United Nations General Assembly yesterday passed a landmark resolution supporting the return of displaced persons to Georgia's Russian-occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The resolution garnered 48 votes in favor, versus just 18 opposed, despite a vigorous push by Russia to derail it. Significantly, all member states of the European Union voted in favor of the resolution, which is the first to reaffirm the rights of those displaced by last year's invasion of Georgia by Russia. It also is the first UN resolution to address the status of IDPs and refugees from the S. Ossetia region of Georgia.

Said Georgia's ambassador to the United Nations, Alexander Lomaia, in presenting the resolution before the vote: "We strongly believe that last year's armed conflict—and the new wave of displacement and misery it created—gives ample cause for the General Assembly to consider anew the question of internally displaced persons and refugees in Georgia."

President Saakashvili hailed the adoption of the resolution as a critical moment in Georgia's efforts to secure the rights of the displaced, and expressed special gratitude to the European Union: "The EU supported the right of refugees to return, has refused to confirm a forced change in the demographic picture, and supported the territorial integrity of Georgia," he said. "This again points to the fact that the truth is on our side." The resolution calls for "the development of a timetable to ensure a voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of all internally displaced persons and refugees" back to their homes. The draft also calls on the UN Secretary-General to present at the next, 64th session of the General Assembly "a comprehensive report on the implementation" of this resolution.

[UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: General Assembly adopts text recognizing right of return of IDPs throughout Georgia](#)

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Russia slams Georgia's UNGA draft resolution on IDP's](#)

**Opposition Party of Irakli Alasania Joins Election Code Working Group**

Underscoring the normalization of Georgia's democracy after last spring's demonstrations, one of Georgia's most prominent opposition parties has joined the inter-party working group that is redesigning the country's election code. "We came here to hear how things go in this group, what are the positions of representatives of other parties," said Zurab Abashidze a member of Irakli Alasania's "Our Georgia-Free Democrats." MP Akaki Minashvili welcomed the new members, and said he anticipates an agreement on new electoral legislation by year's end.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Alasania's party joins election code working group](#)

**Georgia Sends Strong Signal on Sovereignty; Captain Who Violated Laws on Occupied Territories Briefly Jailed**

Georgia sent a strong signal on its commitment to policing its sovereignty, sentencing the captain of a Turkish cargo ship to 24 years in prison after his unauthorized entry into Abkhaz ports. The captain was released on Tuesday after President Saakashvili personally intervened, following talks with Turkey. The Georgian court had found the captain guilty of smuggling and in violation of Georgia's law on occupied territories, which bans economic activities in Russian-occupied S. Ossetia and Abkhazia without Tbilisi's consent. Meanwhile, the EU Monitoring Mission underscored its support for Georgia's territorial integrity after Russian and Abkhaz officials made hostile remarks after the ship's seizure. "EUMM urges all sides concerned to refrain from words and actions that could cause an increase in tension and a deterioration of the situation."

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EUMM concerned over Abkhaz maritime incidents](#)



**PM: Georgia Prepared to Begin Talks on Free Trade With European Union**

PM Gilauri believes Georgia is prepared to launch dialogue with the EU on a new free trade agreement, having completed all the necessary proposals and documents. "Everything is fulfilled on our part for launching talks on a free trade agreement with European Union," he said. Newly appointed Economy Minister Pololikashvili said that Georgian and EU officials will meet in Brussels on September 23 to move talks forward.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: PM Georgia ready for starting talks on free trade with EU.](#)

**Georgia Sets Target of 3 Million Tourists for 2012**

President Saakashvili said that Georgia would probably welcome at least 3 million tourists or by 2012. According to the Department of Tourism and Resorts, the number of tourists coming to Georgia increased by 0.3 percent in the first seven months of 2009 against the same period last year, after "a significant drop" in visits following the August war. The President has supported plans to construct the largest airport in the South Caucasus in the Black Sea resort town of Poti next year, in preparation for a future influx of tourists.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia Sets Target of 3mln Tourists for 2012](#)



## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

### **DAILY TELEGRAPH:** Russia “helped co-ordinate” attacks on Georgian websites

A detailed report by the US Cyber Consequences Unit says that last year's cyber attacks on Georgian websites, in advance of Russia's invasion, were carried out by civilian hackers in coordination with the Russian government. “Many of the cyber attacks were so close in time to the corresponding military operations that there had to be close co-operation between people in the Russian military and the civilian cyber attackers,” the report said, adding: “Given the speed of action, the signal to go ahead also had to have been sent before the news media and general public were aware of what was happening militarily.”

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

### **STARS & STRIPES:** U.S. training Georgians for Afghanistan

Aside from the Georgians, most other European nations have resisted calls to increase commitments to NATO's Afghanistan mission. But public sentiment is different in Georgia, according to Alexander Rondeli, president of a leading think tank in Tbilisi. Helping to fight the Taliban also contributes to Georgia's own security interests, he says. “We need this professionalism. We need a good army. The Americans are formidable and we can learn a lot from them.”

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

### **THE NEW YORK TIMES:** Neighborly hatred

In an extraordinary series of images, award-winning Polish photojournalist Justyna Mielnikiewicz captures the fragile Caucasus as a place perfectly suited to explore the crossroads between ethnicity, political borders, and history. She was especially riveted by last year's invasion of Georgia by Russia. While the chaos of war was a jarring experience, it was the empty streets of the Georgian city of Gori that really bothered her. “I never realized that silence was the scariest thing, more than the explosions,” she said. “There were no cars, no one walking. It is not normal to hear silence in a big city. During war, reality goes upside down.”

[Lens.blogs.nytimes.com](http://Lens.blogs.nytimes.com)

### **AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE:** Georgia refugee tower re-opens as luxury hotel

Once home to those displaced by conflict, the 18-story Iveria Hotel in central Tbilisi re-opened last week as a five-star Western-owned hotel following a \$100-million renovation. President Saakashvili praised the launch of the SAS Radisson Iveria as a sign of Georgia's progress since the civil wars and chaos of the 1990s. “This is the fulfillment of our promise...that in a place that was a symbol of destruction, desolation, humiliation, and hopelessness, something which represents the new image of Georgia will be built,” he said.

[news.yahoo.com](http://news.yahoo.com)

### **VARIETY:** Georgia fines Russian TV companies

Georgian authorities have issued fines to Russian television companies broadcasting in S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia's Russian-occupied territories. A number of Russian broadcasters—including independent channels NTV, TV-Center and Ren-TV, along with state channels Kultura and Rossiya—have been airing programs in the two territories without program licenses from the Georgian government. Georgia says the unlicensed broadcasts are illegal and has demanded the channels pay fines of \$30,000 each.

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

### **CAFEBABEL.COM:** Temuri Iakobashvili—“Russia loves Georgia; they just don't love the Georgian state”

In an interview with online magazine Cafebabel, Georgia's Deputy Prime Minister Temuri Iakobashvili spoke candidly about Georgian-Russian relations, saying “people-wise relations are good.... We are neighbors; neighbors always quarrel. Russia loves Georgia; they just don't love the Georgian state.”

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

### **NEWSWEEK:** The World According to Russia

Modern Russia's quest for respect is so intense that it has ensured that it has warped the worldview of citizens and policymakers alike, casting everything in 19th-century terms, with winners and losers and enemies in different uniforms. Whether it's planting a flag on the bottom of the sea to claim the North Pole or squeezing the Americans out of a base in Kyrgyzstan, Moscow still sees diplomacy as a zero-sum game where every international engagement—even supposedly friendly ones like the Eurovision Song Contest—becomes a litmus test for Russian pride and power.

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

### **TANK STORAGE MAGAZINE:** Georgian oil industry recovers, exports rise 23%

Georgia's Black Sea port of Batumi exported 23 percent more crude oil and refined products last month than the previous August, recovering from a decline caused after Russia's invasion of Georgia last year. It also noted a 15% rise from July 2009. Foreign investment projects are becoming increasingly prevalent in Georgia's port cities as a result of the region's booming and lucrative oil industry.

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

### **REUTERS:** Georgia quits ex-Soviet group as Moscow allies rebel

Georgia became the first country to withdraw from the Commonwealth of Independent States last month, a dated grouping of former Soviet republics, signaling a permanent retreat from Moscow's imperialistic control. “Russia has very few mates, and the mates it does have are becoming very fickle,” said James Nixey, research fellow at London-based Chatham House. “Russia's allies are looking for alliances elsewhere to ease the heavy hand of Moscow,” echoed Alexei Malashenko, an analyst with Carnegie Moscow Center.

[REUTERS: Georgia quits ex-Soviet group as Moscow allies rebel](http://REUTERS: Georgia quits ex-Soviet group as Moscow allies rebel)

### **RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY:** New Georgian defense minister says goals “clear and unchanged”

New Defense Minister Bacho Akhalya outlined his agenda for his ministry, saying he has three basic priorities: peace, modernization, and integration with NATO. “Peace is why we are trying to strengthen our defense capabilities,” Akhalya explained at his first press conference. “After we win the peace, we must strengthen our defense capability in order to preserve that peace.” He added that the Georgian army must become “a military force that will not be a burden on NATO.”

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

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

**City of Tbilisi:** 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)

**Office of the President of Georgia:** <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=0>