

GEORGIA UPDATE

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www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge

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Georgians and visitors alike are marking European Week, joining in a host of activities aimed at strengthening cultural, civic, educational, and political ties between Georgia and Europe. The event features special exhibitions, showcasing the work of renowned Georgian photographers and international photographic associations, as well as public debates among leading European politicians and journalists. Pictured above are analyst Vladimir Socor, former EU Commissioner Günter Verheugen, British MP Wayne David, and Georgia's Deputy Foreign Minister Thornike Gordadze in a debate on "The EU As Seen from Its Borders," moderated by Tamar Chergoleishvili, Editor-in-Chief of Tabula magazine. Europe House also is undertaking tours through Old Town Tbilisi and excursions to the Jvary Monastery in Mtskheta, Georgia's ancient capital, the 17th century Ananuri compound, Signagi, and the Svetitskhobeli Cathedral.

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QUOTES OF THE WEEK

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"I think it's also important to remember that there were people included in that protest who were not interested in peacefully protesting but were looking to spark a violence confrontation."

♦ US Ambassador to Georgia John Bass, commenting on this week's protests

"It was very important for the country—for making it feel strong, whatever interpretation those events received in other countries."

♦ Russian President Medvedev speaking last week about the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008

"We do have disagreements with Russia and you mentioned one of them—Georgia. We insist on full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, we pursue a non-recognition policy as regards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, we call on Russia to fulfill fully her international obligations—so we have a very intensive dialogue with Russia, on an issue like Georgia because there are clear disagreements, more generally."

♦ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

UPCOMING MILESTONES

May 25-30: European Week in Tbilisi

May 26: Georgia's Independence Day

May 30: Swiss FM Micheline Calmy-Rey in Georgia

June: Third round of Georgia-Russia WTO talks

Jun. 7: Next round of Geneva peace talks

TOP STORIES

As Georgia Celebrates 20th Anniversary of Independence, Protests Cause Tragic Deaths; Recordings Reveal Pre-planned Violence

A protest organized by fringe elements of the radical opposition led to the deaths of a policeman and a civilian when they were hit by cars driven by protest leaders early Thursday morning. Several dozen people suffered minor injuries; four policemen were wounded, one seriously. About 100 protesters were arrested and arraigned on minor charges related to disturbing the peace and resisting arrest.

On Wednesday evening, several hundred protesters gathered in front of Parliament, seemingly intent on disrupting Thursday's Independence Day celebrations. Although they had received permits to gather from Tbilisi City Hall from May 21-25, those permits expired at midnight of the 25th. Representatives of both City Hall and the police repeatedly offered protest organizers alternative venues so they could continue their demonstrations, but the organizers refused. Protesters also were asked numerous times to clear the area before the police moved in shortly after midnight.

"I thought that the government took an important step, in offering the protestors an alternative place to protest today, this would allow this parade to go forward," said US Ambassador to Georgia John Bass. "I think it's also important to remember that there were people included in that protest who were not interested in peacefully protesting but were looking to spark a violence confrontation." Said President Saakashvili during his Independence Day address: "It was an attempt to hold protests in accordance with a scenario written outside Georgia and sought to thwart Independence Day celebrations, cause sabotage and mass disorder in the country."

In the aftermath of the demonstrations, the Ministry of Internal Affairs released court-approved audio and video recordings of fringe opposition leader Nino Burjanadze, her husband, and others that indicated their intent to foment violence through the demonstrations. One tape began with a man identified as Burjanadze's son Anzor telling his mother that "if you assume responsibility, it would even be worthwhile to launch a civil war" in which up to 500 people died. The woman, presumably Burjanadze, is then heard replying: "Yes, you are right."

Criminal cases have been opened only against Ivane Chigvinadze, assistant to radical opposition leader Nino Burjanadze, and Shakria Zurashvili, a member of Burjanadze's party, who were the drivers of the two cars that hit and killed the civilian and the police officer on May 26, as well as against former General Gia Uchava and a few other protesters who violently attacked and crushed a police car on May 22. None of the organizers of the protests have been detained. Contrary to reports by some media outlets, none of those detained is accused of attempting a coup d'état.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: Georgian police say 2 killed in protest dispersal](#)
[JAMESTOWN: Georgia Thwarts Another Russian-Sponsored Coup](#)
[EDM: Moscow Encourages Turmoil in Georgia](#)
[MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS: Protest-related videos](#)

EU-Georgia Make Progress on Association Agreement

Georgian and EU representatives made "very good progress" last week during discussions on an Association Agreement. "I hope that there will come, in the not too distant future, the time when we are able to start negotiations on a deep and comprehensive free trade area," said Gunnar Wiegand, the EU's chief negotiator, adding that both sides agreed "to a large extent" on key foreign, security, and justice terms. Negotiations on economic cooperation, industrial and environmental policy, and banking and financial services have concluded, Wiegand said. Remaining topics for discussion include transportation, employment and social policy, health, taxation, and cross-border cooperation.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: EU Chief Negotiator Speaks of Association Agreement Talks with Georgia](#)



A Scene from Tuesday's "Portrait of Georgia" Independence Day celebration at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, which drew nearly 3,000 guests

EU Deplores Border Shootings; Proxy Regime Releases Georgians

The EU strongly condemned the indiscriminate shooting and detention of unarmed Georgian civilians by occupation forces in Georgia's Russian-controlled territory of S. Ossetia. "The EU Monitoring Mission deplores the serious shooting incident," the EUMM said. Last week five uniformed guards opened fire on a group of 15 Georgian citizens, aged 12-30, who were collecting wild plants near the occupation line. Two villagers were shot and wounded, including a 17-year old who remains in critical condition. Although Russian proxies have since released four Georgian civilians, the incident underscores the need for international observers to monitor civil and human rights in the region, said Shota Utiashvili, Georgia's Interior Ministry spokesperson. "We need a more concerted Western effort—that's the only way to avoid more escalation and more violence," he said. "What's important is that the Russians see that these things don't go unnoticed." The US emphasized the need to station international observers in the occupied territories: Said the US embassy: "The incident highlights the ongoing need for EUMM access to both sides of the administrative boundary line."

[BLOOMBERG: Georgia Says Russia Shoots, Wounds Two People](#)

World Bank Grants \$235 Million in Support for Georgia

The World Bank has boosted its support for Georgia, offering an additional \$235 million of international aid for the next two years. The World Bank Group last week presented a progress report on its Country Partnership Strategy with Georgia and applauded the country's strong economic recovery and reconstruction progress following Russia's 2008 invasion and the global financial crisis. "We are very pleased with the strong results from the programs supported by the World Bank," said Asad Alam, World Bank Regional Director for the S. Caucasus. "As a result, the Bank is putting \$235 million in new financing for the next two years to help sustain economic growth and support the needs of the vulnerable. Much of this will go towards local and secondary roads and regional development," he said. With the new financing, the Bank will continue supporting further improvements in social safety nets, fiscal efficiency, and competitiveness.

[WORLD BANK: World Bank Enhances Support to Georgia](#)

EU and Georgia to Recognize Traditional Wine Names

The EU and Georgia struck a deal last week to recognize each other's unique geographical names for domestically produced wines and spirits. According to the agreement, traditional Georgian wine names such as Akhasheni, Gurjaani, Manavi and Tsinandali will be protected across the EU's 27 member states, helping the country to brand its award-winning wines in European markets. In return for EU protection, Georgian producers will not use names such as Bordeaux and Champagne.

[JUST DRINKS: EUROPE: EU Signs Wine Trade Deal with Georgia](#)

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

FOREIGN POLICY: Violence breaks out on the Georgian-South Ossetian boundary

A group of Georgians was fired upon last week at the boundary line between Georgia and its Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia, the first clash there since March 2009. "We need a more concerted Western effort, that's the only way to avoid more escalation and more violence," said Shota Utiashvili of Georgia's Interior Ministry. "What's important is that the Russians see that these things don't go unnoticed." Meanwhile in Washington, several US senators are trying to push for greater US involvement in the Russian-Georgian dispute over Georgia's occupied territories. In an interview with Foreign Policy, Senator Jeanne Shaheen said she would continue to push for US involvement in mediating the conflict, as well as more defense cooperation between the US and Georgia. "Georgia is an important ally in a tough neighborhood," she said. "The US should continue to strongly support Georgia's sovereignty, to support non-military efforts to restore Georgia's territorial integrity, to reject any claims of spheres of influence in the region, and emphasize that all nations should be free to enter into alliances and relationships as they see fit."

thecable.foreignpolicy.com

GLOBAL POST: Arab Spring, act II

While the enduring legacy of the Arab Spring will be forged after the battles have ended, as liberated lands like Tunisia confront the task of building stable, democratic societies, we should take heart from the transitions elsewhere that have transformed failing states into promising democracies in relatively short order. My country, Georgia, is a more recent case, writes Georgia's Ambassador to the US, Temuri Yakobashvili. While cultures and contexts might differ, there is a great deal to be learned from these stories of relatively successful transformation. Perhaps the biggest lesson is this: We must not underestimate the potential for change. Transitions can happen more quickly than conventional wisdom would have us believe. It is incumbent on all countries to share our experiences—successes and failures—with the nations that have just liberated themselves. Georgia is already working with the new governments in the southern Mediterranean so that they can draw on our experiences to help build sustainable civic institutions and enduring democracies. Perhaps it is no surprise that this is a learning experience for us as well, since the essence of democracy is that it must constantly adapt and improve.

www.globalpost.com

THE ECONOMIST: Medvedev keeps mum—Russia's fake politics

Medvedev's leadership differences with Putin remain stylistic. It was too early to bring back regional elections (which he helped scrap in 2004), Medvedev said at his first press conference last week, even though most Russians want to choose their own governors and mayors. He listed among his successes the war against Georgia in 2008: "It was very important for the country—for making it feel strong, whatever interpretation those events received in other countries," Medvedev said. Putin can be proud of his protégé.

www.economist.com

REUTERS: Georgia lawmakers call Circassian killings genocide

Georgia's parliament branded the 19th-century killings of a Muslim minority by Russia's tsarist forces genocide in a resolution last week. Originally from the northwest Caucasus, Circassians say 1.5 million of their ancestors were systematically killed in a Russian military campaign in 1860-64 to conquer the Caucasus mountain area on the southern border of today's Russia. Meanwhile, members of the Circassian diaspora are demanding the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games be cancelled or moved unless Russia apologizes for what they say was genocide against their ancestors.

www.reuters.com



Paris this weeks host an exhibition featuring the work of celebrated Georgian contemporary artist, Zezva Artchemachvili. The show is part of a series of artistic and cultural exchanges between France and Georgia, held to create a dialogue between Georgian and French audiences and to illustrate the rich intellectual and artistic traditions of both ancient and contemporary Georgia.

NATIONAL INTEREST: Kyl, Johnson, Sessions, and Crapo outline hearts and minds battle for former Soviet republics

Senators John Kyl, Ron Johnson, Jeff Sessions, and Mike Crape have detailed a plan to promote democracy and free-market economies in Georgia and elsewhere. Their plan includes: allowing Georgia to buy defensive weapons from the US; placing US and European missiles in the country; a free-trade agreement; admission into the EU; hosting US nuclear weapons in the Baltic States; and encouraging US companies to invest in a nuclear power plant that Russia has tried to block.

nationaljournal.com

EURASIANET: Georgia—pooped by protests?

In the first decade-plus following the Soviet Union's collapse, Georgians showed themselves to be a protest-happy people. But local experts say they are now losing steam, with apathy taking the place of activism. In part, that has to do with a shift in the balance of power within Georgia, one observer believes. With the advent of President Saakashvili's government in 2004, the impetus for change shifted from civil society to the state.

www.eurasianet.org

BLOOMBERG: Carrefour to open first Georgian store

Carrefour SA, the world's second-largest retailer, will open its first store in Georgia after signing an agreement with a real-estate developer to expand in the eastern European country. The outlet will be in the Uptown Tbilisi mall, which is located in the capital. Carrefour's business in Eastern Europe includes stores in Romania and Bulgaria.

www.bloomberg.com

NEW EUROPE: Georgia to continue improving investment climate

"We have been able to recover quickly from the economic downturn following Russia's 2008 invasion and the global financial crisis; economic growth reached 6.5% in 2010," Georgia's Economy Minister Kobalia said. "This is why many investors have returned here and resumed their investments. In addition, we are pursuing an investment diversification policy by offering a wide range of areas for investments, including transport, energy and tourism. This helps reduce the risks of losses."

www.neurope.eu

EVENING STANDARD: Do we look like refugees?

In the new play "Do we look like refugees?!" actors from Rustaveli Theatre speak the recorded words of compatriots displaced by Russia's August 2008 invasion of Georgia. The play gives us a peek into real lives. There's a commendable lack of sentiment. No rending stories of battles or bereavement, just the quiet horror of being utterly uprooted and the awful, background-hum fear of soldiers and rape. People mourn what they've left behind: parents, graves, mountains. But Georgians "overcome suffering with dignity." Stories of love and enterprise emerge in this poignant and surprisingly humorous play. The play won the Stage Award for Best Ensemble and the Fringe First award at last year's Edinburgh Festival.

www.thisislondon.co.uk