

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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

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President Saakashvili last week attended the Venice Biennale in Italy to view Georgian artists on exhibit, including Andro Wekua's "Sokhumi Before the Collapse"—a rendition of 15 buildings in the capital of Georgia's territory of Abkhazia that shows the city's original façades prior to Russia's 2008 invasion. "It is very significant that Wekua has made this, because the occupier of our country will never be able to remove Abkhazia from the mentality of the Georgian people," Saakashvili said at the exhibit. "The occupier will not be able to maintain what it has invaded, because Abkhazia belongs to Georgia and the multi-ethnic people of Georgia." Saakashvili also visited the exhibition of another Georgian sculptor, Tamar Kvesitadze, whose exhibit was among the most popular at the event. Kvesitadze's sculpture of nameless people (above) will be erected in front of the new parliament building in Kutaisi.

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## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Russia needs to understand and see that there are costs in its relations with a whole range of countries that care about its occupation of Georgia. The US, I think, has been reasonably clear in the objection it has to the events of the August 2008 and to the ongoing state of affairs in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I would not say the same about the European allies, including allies that the United States gave extremely strong, vigorous, and costly support throughout of the cold war. I think some stiffening of European spines is probably going to have greater impact on Russian policy towards Georgia. I think the members of Congress in particular can play a role through the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and others in engaging with European colleagues and talking to them about this."

♦ Ambassador Ross Wilson at US House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Committee hearing

"Georgia will have a democratic transition, Georgia will have a more open society, and Georgia will never again be run by one person or a small group. It is a country that should have many stakeholders in politics and be more liberal and open-minded, and more egalitarian too in terms of access to power."

♦ President Saakashvili in an interview with Euronews

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

**Jun. 13-14:** Azeri FM Mammadyarov visits Georgia

**Jun. 15:** Swedish FM Bildt visits Georgia

**Jun. 29:** Armenian FM Nalbandian visits Georgia

**Jul. 1:** FM Vashadze visits attends ministerial of Community of Democracies in Vilnius, Lithuania

**Aug. 18-20:** FM Vashadze visits Austria

**Aug. 25:** FM Vashadze visits Brazil

**Oct. 4:** Next round of Geneva peace talks

## TOP STORIES

**Georgian Police Thwart 11th in Series of Attempted Terror Attacks Directed by Moscow**

Georgian authorities foiled yet another Russian-backed terror attempt, this time thwarting a planned bombing of a NATO liaison office in Tbilisi. "Another terrorist act has been averted," the interior ministry said in a statement. According to the ministry, police arrested a man carrying explosives who was ordered to target the liaison office by Russia's FSB border troops stationed in Akhlagori and two policemen from Georgia's Russian-controlled territory of S. Ossetia. "According to the suspect's testimony, he was promised \$2,000 to stage the terrorist attack," the Ministry statement said. The explosive device was seized by the police and destroyed. The foiled attack comes just four days after police arrested a man and woman for planning to detonate bombs at a popular Georgian market, again under the orders of Russian military intelligence officers. Since Russia's 2008 invasion, Georgian police have arrested a host of suspects for carrying out a series of planned bombings and attacks on behalf of Russian military intelligence. Three men were accused of trying to blow up state buildings in Georgia's second-largest city of Kutaisi in March, while several more suspects were held on suspicion of staging explosions last year, including a blast near the US embassy in Tbilisi, a central railroad station, and local grocery store.

[AFP: Georgia Foils 'Russian-backed anti-NATO Attack'](#)

[BLOOMBERG: Police Foil Attack in NATO Liaison Office in Tbilisi](#)

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: Georgia Says 2 Abkhazians Planned Blasts](#)

**Russian-backed Terrorist Attacks in Georgia Threaten Viability of Geneva Talks**

Georgia on Tuesday said Russia is sponsoring terrorist acts in Georgia, warning that the Geneva talks could collapse unless the bombing campaign stopped. "I can say that it is hardly foreseeable that the Georgian government will be able to continue a security discussion, including in the Geneva format, with the Russian Federation if this bombing campaign continues," said Giorgi Bokeria, secretary of Georgia's national security council. "It's impossible to have a meaningful attempt at dialogue if the other party is blowing people up and killing innocent civilians, or attempting to," he said. Eleven explosions and attacks have occurred in Tbilisi and occupied parts of Georgia since late last year, killing a police officer and civilians. Georgia presented evidence, including testimony and electronic evidence, to the Russian leadership. "And it is corroborated by the intelligence of our partner countries," Bokeria added. UN and EU mediators said the incidents dominated the closed-door talks and reflected a "potential for dangerous escalation." Said Pierre Morel, the EU's special representative: "In the last few days and weeks, we've had explosions on the Georgian side, and in the last few days arrests connected with potential other explosions. In April we had officers and different personnel killed on the Abkhaz side. We have had also shootings in the middle of May. So this is alarming. Such a level of casualties after two-and-a-half years of intensive work is a kind of warning signal."

[REUTERS: Georgia accuses Russia of bombings, warns on talks](#)

[ASSOCIATED PRESS: Peace Talks With Russia at Risk](#)

**European Union Report Underscores Progress on Justice, Elections, Women's Rights**

Georgia made significant progress in reforming its judicial and electoral system and advancing women's rights last year, according to a new report by the European Union. The report applauded the country's accomplishments in pursuing trade and business reform, regional development, and curbing administrative corruption—all priorities under the EU Neighborhood Policy. Newly approved amendments to the criminal code also earned praise. The EU called the new code a "positive step towards the liberalization of criminal policies in Georgia" and a "major achievement" in 2010. "Georgian authorities worked intensively to ensure the new code was successfully implemented. Continuing these efforts and effectively implementing the legislation will be key to ensuring its long-term success," the report reads.

[THE MESSENGER ONLINE: Georgia in EU's ENP PA Report](#)

**Georgia To Become Largest Non-NATO Force in Afghanistan**

Georgia plans to send an additional 625 troops to support NATO-led operations in Afghanistan, making the country the largest non-NATO contributor to the mission. Although details of the latest deployment have not yet been released, the White House issued a statement acknowledging the move: "VP Biden expressed his appreciation to President Saakashvili for Georgia's significant new contribution of forces to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, which will make Georgia the largest non-NATO contributor to ISAF," said the statement, released shortly after last week's meeting between Biden and Saakashvili in Rome. Georgia has deployed 925 troops to fight alongside US and international forces in Afghanistan since joining the mission in Nov. 2009. The majority of Georgian soldiers are fighting in the notoriously violent Helmand province. Meanwhile, the US Department of Defense announced this week plans to donate 40 Humvee vehicles to a Georgian battalion preparing for deployment to Afghanistan.

[CIVIL GEORGIA: Georgia Mulls Sending More Troops to Afghanistan](#)

[EURASIANET: Georgia Planning Even Bigger Troop Deployment](#)

**Parliament Passes Freedom Charter**

Parliament last week passed with its final reading the "Freedom Charter"—a package of proposals, sponsored by MP Gia Tortladze, that include measures to restrict the public display of Soviet and Nazi symbols and prohibit former Soviet functionaries from holding public office. The legislation also advances public safety measures, such as the installation of video surveillance systems for strategic facilities.

[DPA: Georgian Parliament Passes "Freedom Charter"](#)

**US Economic Prosperity Initiative Launched**

The US has launched the "Economic Prosperity Initiative" in Georgia, a four-year-long program aimed at developing the private sector and free market economy. USAID, which allocated \$40 million to the project, will help implement it in coordination with Georgian authorities and partners. The program's top priorities are to create new jobs in the country, attract foreign investment, and increase economic productivity.

[RUSTAVI: Economic Prosperity Initiative Project Presented](#)

**New Center to Assist Returning Georgian Migrants Opens in Tbilisi**

A new "Mobility Center" for migrants returning to Georgia opened its doors last week, providing critical social services and support to ensure the return and reintegration of repatriated Georgian migrants. The new center offers guidance to migrants on vocational training, employment opportunities, medical aid, and temporary housing. The EU-funded project was coordinated by the Czech Foreign Ministry together with another eight EU member-states and Georgia's refugee ministry. At the launch, Minister for Refugees Koba Subeliani and Czech FM Karel Schwarzenberg also signed a memorandum aimed at deepening relations on migration and mobility between the two countries.

[RUSTAVI: Mobility Center for Migrants Opens in Tbilisi, Georgia](#)

**INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA**

**EURONEWS: Interview with Mikheil Saakashvili—“Georgia will have a democratic transition”**

“Our drive towards the West is not led by geopolitical priorities but by our values. I believe that an open society—tolerant, democratic and transparent—is something that brings us towards the principal European model,” President Saakashvili said. “Georgia has an entirely different system. We will remain focused on very important reforms. I can assure you of something: Georgia will have a democratic transition, Georgia will have a more open society, and Georgia will never again be run by one person or a small group. It is a country that should have many stakeholders in politics and be more liberal and open-minded, and more egalitarian too in terms of access to power.”

[www.euronews.net](http://www.euronews.net)

**WASHINGTON POST: Has Russia “reset” its behavior?**

Last December I reported on a foiled terrorism plot in Georgia that was linked to Russia. In that plot the US embassy was targeted as well. The Russians are at it again. Last week another Russian bomb plot was uncovered. Russia continues to occupy Georgia, promote violence, and disregard admonitions about its human rights abuses at home. Meanwhile, Georgia just sent an 625 more troops to supplement US Marines fighting in Helmand province, making Georgia the largest non-NATO contributor in Afghanistan. It certainly seems that our democratic ally is getting the worse end of the deal here.

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

**SUDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG: Former Russian official highlights Georgia as role model**

Many Russians feel that their country’s police system is dominated by corruption and violence. One of Medvedev’s main objectives—reform of the police—has not yet been fully implemented. A former top official in the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Ovchinsky, is now highlighting the successful police reforms in Georgia as a paradigm for Russia.

[jetzt.sueddeutsche.de](http://jetzt.sueddeutsche.de)

**BLOOMBERG: Georgia charges anti-government demonstrators**

Georgian authorities said a group of anti-government protesters detained last week are suspected of organizing a military uprising led by Temur Khachishvili, a former interior minister who now lives in Russia. As many as 24 detainees were charged as part of the plot after anti-government protests in the capital turned violent. Several exiled former officials were also charged, including the husband of opposition leader Nino Burjanadze.

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

**JAMESTOWN FOUNDATION: Georgia thwarts another Russian-sponsored coup attempt**

The latest events, including the scandalous record of opposition leader Nino Burjanadze’s conversation with her son, show both the ability of Georgia’s pro-Western government to defend the nation’s sovereignty and the incessant attempts by the Kremlin to destabilize Georgia and bring it back under its suzerainty. But it is also true that until Georgia becomes a formal ally of the West, its long-term stability and security will remain under a big question mark. Greece and Turkey of the 1940s could serve as a good reminder.

[jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com](http://jamestownfoundation.blogspot.com)

**NEW YORK TIMES: Georgia says Russia committed genocide in 19th century**

The Georgian Parliament voted last month to recognize the 19th-century killings and deportations of ethnic Circassians by czarist Russia as genocide. “This is Caucasian solidarity, a centuries-old tradition—much greater than Russia and the Russian empire,” said Georgian MP Guram Chakhvadze. The declaration may also strengthen calls for a boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, which the Circassians consider part of their homeland.

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



**WASHINGTON LIFE: Life of the Party—Great Georgia!**

As remarkably beautiful as Georgia is, it is said that the Eurasian country has always been a victim of its geography. But Georgia’s 4.7 million people have never stopped pursuing their own, independent future and a yearning for a normal life. Georgians never stopped living the “Georgian way of life.” Those cultural hallmarks were evident in grand style last week at the National Portrait Gallery, where the 20th anniversary of the restoration of Georgia’s independence was celebrated. The larger-than-grand event was visually stunning, causing more than even a few jaded Washingtonians to gasp at the event’s scope and breadth. The performance was followed by the soaring remarks of Ambassador Temuri Yakobashvili, who gave an uplifting yet traditional Georgian toast. “Georgia cannot be discovered through words and paper,” said Yakobashvili. “It needs to be felt.”

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

**AFP: France and Russia agree unprecedented warship deal**

France and Russia have finalized an unprecedented deal for Paris to sell four powerful modern warships to Moscow, President Sarkozy and his counterpart Medvedev said last week. Under the deal, two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships will be built in France and two in Russia to the French design, the two men said without giving further details. Some former Soviet nations like Georgia have expressed fears in the past that Russia could use the powerful ships against them.

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

**EURASIANET: Trademark travails hamper Tbilisi’s wine exports**

The Georgian government applied earlier this year to the US Patent and Trademark Office for trademarks on 18 Georgian wines. But Georgian officials were chagrined to find that two of the country’s most popular types of wine—Khvanchkara and Kindzmarauli—were already trademarked, with the distribution rights belonging to a New Jersey-based company, Dozortsev & Sons.

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

**DPA: Georgian journalists arrested, fined for filming in Russia**

FSB agents arrested two journalists employed by a Tbilisi-based television company during a memorial service in Moscow last week. The two had been interviewing people attending a memorial service for Sergei Bagapsh, who had served as Russia’s proxy president in the now-occupied Georgian Black Sea province of Abkhazia until his Sunday death from surgery complications.

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

**RADIO FREE EUROPE: Beyoncé dances through war-torn Georgia**

A sign in Beyonce’s “Run the World (Girls)” music video is in Georgian and points the way to the capital, Tbilisi, as well as to Tskhinvali and Gori. Some think the Georgian road sign is actually suggestive of the 2003 Rose Revolution: “Music fans are subtly referred to another peaceful, and forgotten, revolution with a similar cause and result: The Rose Revolution occurred peacefully in Tbilisi, Georgia, around Freedom Square and nearby locations after the contested parliamentary elections of 2003.”

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