

# GEORGIA UPDATE

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## TOP STORIES

- European Parliament Resolution Condemns Ethnic Cleansing and Occupation of Georgia
- S&P Upgrades Georgia's Ratings, Underscoring "Strong Growth Prospects" and Stable Finances
- Tbilisi's First-Ever Jury Trial Ends in Triple Homicide Conviction
- Georgia Celebrates Eighth Anniversary of Rose Revolution; Ronald Reagan Honored
- Governing, Opposition Parties Inaugurate Commission to Vet Voter Lists Ahead of 2012 Elections



Prime Minister Gilauri met in Berlin last week with German Vice Chancellor Phillip Rösler (above), Economic Cooperation Minister Dirk Niebel, as well as other senior German officials to discuss ways to deepen economic and trade relations between the two countries. "Germany is one of the most significant political and economic partners of Georgia," Gilauri said after meeting Niebel. "Germany plays a significant role in the EU and NATO, so establishing closer contacts with Berlin is vital task of Georgia." He briefed the German ministers on Georgia's democratic reform progress as well as on regional security issues. At the German Council on Foreign Relations, Gilauri noted the similarities between the two nations: "Twenty years ago Germany was actually divided into two parts—it was a form of occupation from the same Russia, which is now occupying 20% of Georgian territories." Niebel lauded Georgia's progress in the fight against corruption and expressed interest in future partnerships. During his two-day visit, Gilauri also met with Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, and German business and civil society leaders.

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

- AP:** Russian military chief warns of nuclear war risks in Caucasus
- DPA:** Kremlin "understands" mass Kosovo Serb bid for Russian
- WEEKLY STANDARD:** Condoleezza Rice blames Putin for war with Georgia
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- HOLLYWOOD REPORTER:** Julia Laktev wins Grand Jury Prize
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- XINHUA:** Georgia starts preparing for next year's parliamentary elections
- DPA:** Eastern European film festival in Cottbus

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"The idea that I would blame the Georgians couldn't be further from the truth....in no way were the Georgians at fault."

"I think the Russians wanted this war. They were doing all kinds of things to try to provoke the Georgians. The shelling of Georgian cities by the South Ossetians, Russian allies, is clearly what started the war.... The Russians, I believe, wanted a confrontation with Georgia. And I would lay that [on] Putin, yes, because even though he wasn't president at that time, it was Putin who was always toughest on the Georgians."

♦ Former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Nov. 17 interview with the *Weekly Standard*

"[The EU parliament] welcomes the significant progress made by Georgia in the areas of democratic reforms, including the strengthening democratic institutions, particularly the Ombudsman's office, fight against corruption and reform of the judiciary, as well as of economic reforms and liberalization."

"Ethnic cleansing and forcible demographic changes have taken place in the areas under effective control of the occupying force, which bears responsibility for human rights violations in these areas...[The EU] must recognize Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as occupied territories."

♦ European Parliament resolution on Georgia

## UPCOMING MILESTONES

- Nov. 30-Dec. 1:** FM Vashadze participates in EU-Georgia Cooperation Council Meeting in Brussels
- Dec. 6-7:** OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius
- Dec.:** Venice Commission recommendations on Georgian electoral code
- May 15-22:** NATO summit in Chicago
- May 26:** Parliament relocates to Kutaisi
- Jul. 1:** Voter List Commission concludes verification
- Oct:** Georgian Parliamentary election

## TOP STORIES

**European Parliament Resolution Condemns Ethnic Cleansing and Occupation of Georgia, Praises Reform Progress**

By a vote of 527-23, the European Parliament has adopted a landmark resolution condemning Russia's ethnic cleansing campaign and illegal occupation of Georgia, and forcefully calling on Russia to abide by the 2008 ceasefire agreement. MEPs called on the EU to recognize Abkhazia and S. Ossetia as "occupied territories," a term that the EU yet to use in its official references to the territories.

"Russia continues to occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and S. Ossetia, in violation of the fundamental norms and principles of International law," states the resolution, which was tabled by Krzysztof Lisek of Poland. "Ethnic cleansing and forcible demographic changes have taken place in the areas under effective control of the occupying force, which bears responsibility for human rights violations in these areas," the resolution says, making an explicit reference to Russian troops and Moscow-backed militias illegally operating in the territories. The EP also expressed concern over a series of Russian-linked terrorist attacks that occurred in Georgia the past year.

The resolution also contains a host of recommendations to key EU institutions to support Georgia and ensure Russia's compliance with the 2008 ceasefire agreement. The European Council, the European Commission, and the European External Action Service should intensify talks with Russia "to ensure that it fulfills unconditionally" all ceasefire provisions," the resolution reads, which includes withdrawing its troops to pre-invasion positions, demilitarizing Georgia's territories, allowing access to the EU's Monitoring Mission, reversing its recognition of the regions, and protecting human and civil rights.

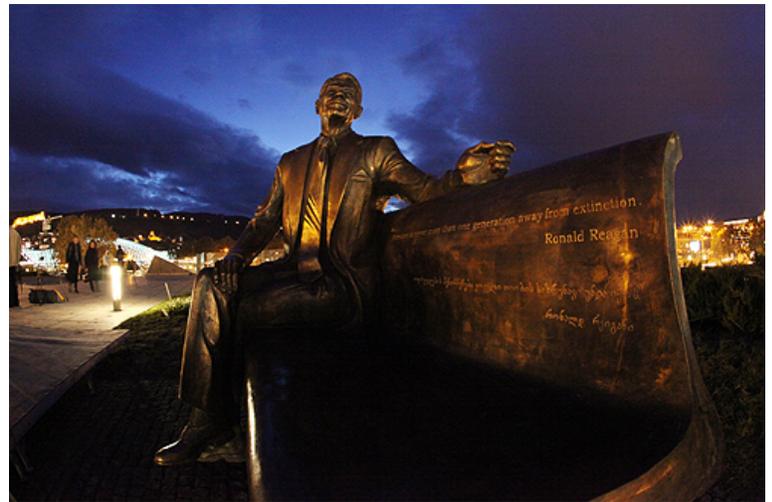
Recognizing Georgia as a "European state," the EP hailed the country's reform achievements and its effort to attain regional peace and stability. The EP "welcomes the significant progress made by Georgia in the areas of democratic reforms, including the strengthening democratic institutions, fight against corruption, and reform of the judiciary, as well as economic reforms." Lawmakers also commended Georgia's action plan for resettling displaced persons and its reintegration strategy—which provides basic civil and social benefits for S. Ossetia and Abkhazia residents—and its unilateral pledge not to use force in its Russian-occupied territories. They called on Russia to "reciprocate" Georgia's commitment to preserving peace. President Saakashvili hailed the "historic" document: "The resolution is important and decisive in our struggle for Georgia's eventual liberation, de-occupation and European future," he said, adding that it creates a legal basis for the "irreversible unification" of Georgia. "No matter how things will develop, after this resolution Europe will never recognize Russia's occupation as a legitimate act."

**[EUROPOLITICS: EP Want Georgia Recognised as "European State"](#)**  
**[CIVIL GEORGIA: Saakashvili Hails "Historic" EO Resolution](#)**

**Standard & Poor's Upgrades Georgia's Ratings, Underscoring "Strong Growth Prospects" and Stable Finances**

As most of Europe remains mired in a sovereign debt crisis, Standard & Poor's on Tuesday singled out Georgia for its growth prospects and stable economic environment. "In our opinion, Georgia remains committed to market-oriented policies and fiscal consolidation," S&P said. "We also note its relatively strong growth prospects and its stabilizing political climate." S&P raised its ratings on Georgia's long-term debt to BB-, and in doing so underscored "the government's improving fiscal flexibility as it continues to meet its fiscal and reform targets." The rating—one level higher than Ukraine and Albania—has a stable outlook, meaning it is more likely to remain unchanged than to be lowered or increased. The country's fiscal deficit will narrow to 3.7 percent of GDP this year from 9.2 percent in 2009, S&P said. A reduction of Georgia's external vulnerabilities through energy and tourism exports, or foreign-investment inflows, would prompt S&P to consider another upgrade.

**[BLOOMBERG: Georgia Sovereign-Debt Rating Raised One Notch](#)**  
**[WALL STREET JOURNAL: S&P Raises Georgia Rating](#)**

**Georgia Celebrates Eighth Anniversary of Rose Revolution; Ronald Reagan Honored With New Statue in Tbilisi**

Georgia on Wednesday unveiled a monument to former US president Ronald Reagan, a hero in many Eastern European states for his tough anti-Communist stance. The bronze statue of a smiling Reagan relaxing on a bench was inaugurated in a park in the capital as part of events to mark the eighth anniversary of the Rose Revolution that swept the current government to power. "Twenty years ago, Ronald Reagan destroyed the Soviet empire and liberated millions of people," President Saakashvili said at the unveiling ceremony that also coincides with the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Soviet Union. After his speech, Saakashvili invited US Congressmen David Dreier, Ed Whitfield, and Donald Payne—who are visiting Tbilisi this week—to jointly unveil the statue. Said Reagan's wife Nancy in a letter thanking the Georgian authorities: "My husband always felt closeness with people who struggle for freedom."

**[AP: Georgian president unveils monument to Reagan](#)**

**Tbilisi's First-Ever Jury Trial Ends in Triple Homicide Conviction**

In a historic first, Georgian citizens delivered a verdict last week to conclude the country's first jury trial. Over the past two weeks, the 12-person jury composed of both men and women heard witness testimony and arguments from the defense and prosecution; the 17-year-old homicide case ended in a triple conviction. Officials hope that the new trial-by-jury procedures will bolster Georgians' faith in the legal system. To ensure a smooth transition to trials by jury, the Tbilisi City Court will only hear cases involving aggravated and attempted aggravated homicide, as well as rape. This aims to help prevent overwhelming the judicial system as the country adapts to jury trials, according to David DeVillers, a legal advisor at the US Embassy. Officials plan to expand the jury trial system to Kutaisi in October 2012.

**[EURASIANET: Tbilisi Jury Trial Marks Step Forward for Justice System](#)**

**Governing, Opposition Parties Inaugurate Commission to Vet Voter Lists Ahead of 2012 Elections**

Lawmakers last week inaugurated a new, state-funded commission to verify voter's lists ahead of the next year's elections. Approved by President Saakashvili in an executive decree, the commission is part of an electoral reform deal signed by the ruling and several opposition parties last summer. The 14-member commission consists of one representative from the governing United National Movement party and opposition parties: Christian-Democratic Movement, New Rights Party, Industry Will Save Georgia, National-Democratic Party, Georgia's European Democrats, Democratic Party of Georgia, and Christian-Democratic People's Party. Seven other commission members represent local non-governmental organizations including an election observer group, the New Generation-New Initiative. An elected opposition party representative will chair the new committee.

**[CIVIL GEORGIA: Voter List Rechecking Commission Established](#)**

## INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ON GEORGIA

**AP: Russian military chief warns of nuclear war risks in Caucasus**

Russia is facing a heightened risk of being drawn into conflicts at its borders that have the potential of turning nuclear, the nation's top military officer said. Gen. Nikolai Makarov specifically referred to NATO's plans to offer membership to Georgia and Ukraine as potentially threatening Russia's security. Russia routed Georgian forces in a brief August 2008 war over S. Ossetia. Moscow later recognized S. Ossetia and Abkhazia, another Georgia region, as independent states and increased its military presence there.

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

**DPA: Kremlin "understands" mass Kosovo Serb bid for Russian passports**

Russia historically has been tough on extending citizenship to foreign nationals living inside the country, while at the same time liberally providing passports to ethnic Russians living in minority enclaves in other nations. Moscow's issuance of thousands of passports to ethnic Russians living in Georgia's Russian-occupied territory of S. Ossetia and the Ukrainian province Crimea is one of the contentious issues in relations between Moscow and Tbilisi and Kiev.

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

**WEEKLY STANDARD: Rice blames Putin for war with Georgia**

"It's outrageous," said Condoleezza Rice of an *Atlantic* magazine story that asserts that she blames Georgia for Russia's 2008 invasion. "The idea that I would blame the Georgians couldn't be further from the truth," the former US secretary of state said. "I think the Russians wanted this war," she said, adding that the Russians got what they wanted. "They were doing all kinds of things to try to provoke the Georgians. The shelling of Georgian cities by the S. Ossetians, Russian allies, is clearly what started the war."

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

**COMMENTARY: No, Rice does not blame Georgia for the war**

Not only had Russia planned the war with Georgia in advance, but the Kremlin had done so in order to overthrow the elected president of a post-Soviet country. Joshua Kucera gets it backwards in last week's story in the *Atlantic*; Condoleezza Rice's account—when read and quoted in full—confirms the bipartisan consensus that Russia deserves the lion's share of the blame for the war. So, far from being some kind of Republican conspiracy theory, the evidence points the finger at Russia. Partisans of both parties have followed that evidence.

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

**AFP: US spurns "so-called" South Ossetia vote**

"The US does not recognize the legitimacy or the outcome of these so-called presidential elections and referendum that were held in Georgia's S. Ossetia region on November 13th," the State Department said. "We reiterate our strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity with its internationally recognized borders and we again urge Russia to fulfill all of its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement."

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

**DPA: EU, NATO condemn vote in South Ossetia**

The EU and NATO condemned the presidential elections held in S. Ossetia, stressing that they do not recognize the region's self-declared, and Russian-backed, independence from Georgia. "The EU does not recognize the constitutional and legal framework within which these elections have taken place," said a spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. Said NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen: "The holding of such elections does not contribute to a peaceful and lasting settlement of the situation in Georgia."

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

**HOLLYWOOD REPORTER: Julia Laktev wins Grand Jury Prize**

Calling it a "staggeringly acute examination of the fissures that develop between couples," the American Film Institute last week awarded its coveted New Auteurs Grand Jury Prize to "The Loneliest Planet," an independent movie filmed in Georgia. Written and directed by Julia Loktev, the film features Mexican star Gael Garcia Bernal and Israeli-American actress Hani Furstenberg as a young couple backpacking in the Caucasus mountains who find their love for each other put to the test. "The Loneliest Planet" plays out against a landscape that conveys both profound beauty and profound alienation. "It's an exceptionally great honor to win at this specific festival because, along with the New York Film Festival, this is a very significant event in the US," Furstenberg said. "The Loneliest Planet" was also shown at the New York Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival, and will be screened at the upcoming Tbilisi Film Festival in December.

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

**AFP: Biden calls Georgia's president, hails WTO entry deal**

VP Biden hailed a deal between Georgia and Russia on Moscow's WTO accession, in a call to President Saakashvili. Biden commended Saakashvili "for his leadership in the talks and called the agreement a historic step that has the potential to increase economic ties between the peoples of both countries and help reduce tensions in the region."

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

**EGYPTIAN GAZETTE: Georgian PM eyes cooperation with Egypt**

PM Gilauri last week praised the Egyptian revolution and said it has many similarities with the Georgian revolution, stressing that the most important thing is that the purpose of both revolutions is to fight corruption. "Our revolution is concerned with fighting corruption, boosting the economy, decreasing debt, improving transparency, and attracting investments," Gilauri said, speaking to visiting Egyptian journalists "We will boost our relations with Egypt, so that Egypt can be a gate for Georgia to Africa and Georgia a gate for Egypt to Eastern Europe and Western Asia."

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

**XINHUA: Georgia starts preparing for parliamentary elections**

A special commission in charge of voters' list preparation met for its inaugural session in Tbilisi last week when it elected the commission chief and secretary. The commission is composed of representatives from both the ruling and opposition parties of the country. Procedures and technical issues were also discussed.

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

**DPA: Georgian actor honored at Eastern European film festival**

Georgian actor Gagi Svanidze received the best actor award at the Eastern European Film Festival in Cottbus, Germany. He won the award for his role as Abkhaz refugee in the Georgian film "Salt White." Thirty-three countries submitted nearly 150 films to the 21<sup>st</sup> annual film festival.

[relevant.at](http://relevant.at)