

## Armenia and Azerbaijan report attacks despite cease-fire deal



The cease-fire was immediately challenged by mutual claims of violations that persisted since then.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Armenian and Azerbaijani forces continue firing on and around Nagorno-Karabakh, despite international calls from both sides to abide by the terms of a

Russian-brokered peace deal.

The Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced on October 13<sup>th</sup> that the situation in several parts of the conflict zone remained tense overnight. He accused the Armenian Armed Forces of bombing the

Tertter district yesterday morning.

The Armenian Defense Ministry denied the allegations, saying that the Azerbaijani side had 'resumed operations with active rocket and artillery fire on the southern, northern and northeastern parts of the front.'

Both sides accuse each other of violating the October 10<sup>th</sup> peace agreement reached in Moscow. The agreement provided for the exchange of hostages of ethnic Armenians and Azerbaijani troops during the 2 week conflict. The statement came from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov after a meeting with his Azerbaijani and Armenian counterparts. Negotiations lasted for 10 hours behind closed doors. Note that the previous day, President of Russia, Vladimir Putin called on both sides to immediately cease fire.

According to the agreement, the decision to cease fire 'shall enter into force on 12 October 2020 at 12:00 noon, for humanitarian purposes, in order to exchange prisoners of war and other detainees, as well as to exchange the bodies of fallen soldiers through the mediation of the Red Cross and in accordance with established criteria.'



Heavy fighting continues on Tuesday; More than 500 people have been killed since fighting began on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

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# Pre election surprises: square as a present, newly found map and possible 2-day election

BY MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

The pre-election campaign is becoming more active, with pre-election surprises appearing as well. Last week, Bidzina Ivanishvili donated the territory of the former hippodrome to the Tbilisi City Hall to arrange a square there, a map of 1938 appeared, on the basis of which the previous government was accused of ceding part of the Davit Gareja monastery complex to Azerbaijan during the demarcation of the border.

The Covid-epidemic could lead to a two-day election, which also came as a surprise to the opposition. Apart from the surprises, the government's election piggy bank turned out to have a much-anticipated big advantage in terms of mobilized funds, and it was also no surprise that the Georgian Dream did not agree to the pre-election debate with the opposition.

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, it became known that the Cartu Group had returned the area of the former hippodrome to the Tbilisi City Hall and solemnly informed the public that the city's central

square would be built there. Bidzina Ivanishvili redeemed this area from his own charity fund for ₾ 60 million. There were no government spokesmen left who did not speak out and did not thank Ivanishvili. The opposition saw the move as an attempt to bribe voters in the run-up to the elections, noting Ivanishvili could've chosen November for his 'act of charity.'

The opposition criticized Ivanishvili for not giving up the entire area of the hippodrome, leaving 8 hectares of the most valuable part for himself in addition to the former hippodrome 36 hectares in Varketili and 38 hectares of land in Gldani for development. In the run-up to the elections, the most important thing is which information will reach the voters more firmly - Ivanishvili's charity or his 'trick.'

One of the main topics of the run-up to the elections is Davit Gareja this time. Davit Gareja has been a meaningful Orthodox sanctuary for a long time and the fact that Azerbaijan refers to part of it as its territory, is a painful topic for Georgians. The

fact that this topic would emerge in the pre-election period was first discussed by journalist from the opposition Nika Gvaramia. He said that the Georgian Dream would bring an 'accidentally found' map from Russia, marking the Georgia-Azerbaijan border differently, in an attempt to accuse Saakashvili for giving up this part of the country to Azerbaijan in exchange for a bribe and discredit the United National Movement party in the pre-election campaign. Gvaramia's anticipation became true. Private businessman Davit Khidsheli bought a map of 1938 somewhere in Russia, brought it to Georgia and handed it over to the Ministry of Defense. The Ministry handed over to the Prosecutor's Office and on October 7<sup>th</sup> the Prosecutor's Office arrested two experts participating in the Georgian-Azerbaijani border talks - Iveri Melashvili and Natalia Ilychova. The border on the Gareji section has not yet been agreed between the two countries, and the detainees are accused of hiding a 1938 map that would better protect Georgia's interests.

This was followed by a protest by the opposition. They saw this as a pre-election attempt by the government to discredit Saakashvili and his party, while pointing out that Georgia's strategic partnership with Azerbaijan and raising the territorial issue when Azerbaijan is at war is not exactly recommended. They also point out that the government may be playing the 'Russian game' by raising the issue with Azerbaijan and the current events may be the 'Russian scenario.' According to government officials, the ongoing investigation is 'Georgia's internal affair' and will not lead to any problems in relations with Azerbaijan (as if saying to Baku that the Gareji issue is strictly of the electoral context).

The Covid-epidemic is still raging in the country and the opposition fears that the government will use it for electoral purposes. The government is talking about holding the elections not for one day, but for two days, allowing those in quarantine to vote as well, whose votes they would count after 24 hours.

Leaving aside all the other questions that may arise in regard to the idea, it contradicts the existing legislation.

As for the opposition, in September Lelo received the largest donation - ₾1.3 million, followed by Strategy Builder - 1.3 million, the third - National Movement - 665 thousand, and the fourth - European Georgia - ₾408 thousand. Authorities say their advantage is logical, as they say they have freed businesses from the harassment of the previous government, while the opposition claims that large donors should be screened because the government is in a privileged position in return.

Last week, the opposition tried to turn political debates in Georgia into part of the election campaign, in which government officials also took part. The political union Lelo also submitted a bill to the parliament, according to which it was obligatory for the government candidate to participate in the debates planned by the Public Broadcaster, but to no avail.

*(Translated from Georgian by Mariam Mchedlidze)*

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'The Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group States, will enter into substantive negotiations based on the basic principles of the settlement, with a view to a speedy and peaceful settlement of the conflict.'

As a result of trilateral consultations, the parties confirmed the unchanging format of the negotiations.

Shortly after the agreement came into force, the parties accused each other of violating it. During the talks, the representative of the Armenian Ministry

of Defense said that Azerbaijan had carried out an attack on the unrecognized so-called Stepanakert, the 'capital' of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

The Azerbaijani side says that the opposing forces in Karabakh carried out an artillery attack on the territory of Azerbaijan, whilst Both sides deny any military activity.

Azeri President Ilham Aliyev told Russia's RBC news outlet the warring parties were now engaged in trying to find a political settlement, but suggested there would be further fighting ahead.

Azeri Foreign Minister said the truce would last only for as long as it took for the Red Cross to arrange the exchange of the dead, adding that his country hoped and expected to take control of more territory in time.

Armenia's foreign ministry

said it was using all diplomatic channels to try to support the truce, while Nagorno-Karabakh's foreign ministry accused Azerbaijan of using ceasefire talks as cover to ready military action.

If the truce holds, it would mark a major diplomatic coup for Russia, which has a security pact with Armenia but has also cultivated warm ties with Azerbaijan. But so far the agreement "is not being adhered to in full, and hostilities continue," Lavrov said Monday at a meeting with his Armenian counterpart.

Turkey, which has publicly sided with Azerbaijan in the conflict, also accused Armenia of violating the truce.

After the 1994 peace agreement, dozens of soldiers and civilians have been killed when clashes resumed on September

27<sup>th</sup> in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The separatist region, ruled by ethnic Armenians and populated mainly by Armenians, is internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan.

The conflict in the region has become the ground for disinformation about Georgia, as Foreign Ministry claims. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Lasha Darsalia, released a statement, saying that as soon as the escalation began in Karabakh, Georgia suspended the transit of military cargo by land to both countries.

"According to the documentation available to Georgia, the flights that end in Georgian airspace are of humanitarian and civil nature only and fully comply with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards," he added.

Darsalia assures that Georgia

continues to fulfill its international obligations in the field of humanitarian and civil, including commercial cargo, and this is done in full compliance with the norms of international law and the regulations of the ICAO.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says that despite this, the manipulation of information in the media has intensified, as if military shipments through Georgia are carried out through civil flights.

As Darsalia stated, "It is the responsibility of a particular carrier and cargo holder to fully comply with the norms of international law and not to abuse the humanitarian corridors. If violations are found and there is solid evidence, Georgia will take appropriate action and violators will be held accountable under international law, including before ICAO."

### Weather

Wednesday, October 14

Day  Clear

High: 25°C

Night  Partly Cloudy

Low: 11°C

Thursday, October 15

Day  Partly Cloudy

High: 25°C

Night  Partly Cloudy

Low: 13°C

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## Foreign trade down by 14.9% in January-September



In September, the export has grown by 8.6%.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

The National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat) has published preliminary data on Georgia's foreign trade turnover for the first 9 months of 2020. In January-September the corresponding number amounted to \$ 8 121 million, excluding the undeclared trade. The figure is 14.9% less than the same period 2019.

According to Geostat, of these, exports were down by 12.1% (\$ 2,403.5 million), whilst imports were down by 15.9% (\$ 5,717.6 million).

The negative trade balance in Janu-

ary-September 2020 reduced by \$752.6 million and amounted to \$3,314.1 million, accounting for 40.8% of foreign trade turnover, 1.8% improvement compared to the previous year. Note that 2019 export reached record-high \$3.798,4 million, improving the previous year's outcome by 12.4%.

According to Geostat, exports increased to € 332 million in September alone. At the same time, the trade deficit improved by \$ 98.5 million.

"Georgia's economy is gradually returning to positive development," said Natia Turnava, the Minister of Economy



According to the Minister Turnava, the economy is returning to a positive development track.

and Sustainable Development, while assessing Geostat's express foreign trade data for September 2020.

She said she was pleased that exports grew by 8.6% in September. "Imports have decreased and this means improving the foreign trade balance," Turnava emphasized, adding that agricultural and textile products make a special contribution to the growth of exports.

According to the ministry of agriculture, Georgia has exported 6 273 tones of nuts, the cost of which has amounted to \$ 33.7 million - surge of 63% compared to the corresponding number of 2019.

As for the exports of apples, the ministry says that in the first 9 months of 2020, 2 148 tones have been exported (\$ 947 000), 6 times more than 2019.

## E-Apostille now available in Georgia

UNDP and the UK help Georgia promote digital delivery of public services

**T**BILISI. 13 October 2020 – Georgian and foreign citizens now have access to a user-friendly digital solution allowing them to verify up to 100 types of documents issued by Georgia's public authorities and health and educational institutions. Introduced this month, the e-Apostille can certify birth and marriage certificates, health-related papers, court orders and other documents for use abroad. By launching this innovative electronic service, Georgia has become the 19th country out of 119 members of the Hague Convention to roll out an e-Apostille programme.

The e-Apostille service is provided by the Public Service Development Agency (PSDA) with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UK's Good Governance Fund.

"Digital tools save time and reduce bureaucracy, offering easier access to public services for citizens," said UNDP Head **Louisa Vinton**. "Our shared vision is to create a people-centred system that ensures citizens can receive quality and secure services wherever they are, in the cities, villages or even outside the country. But what was a nice-to-have approach has be-

come need-to-have in pandemic conditions."

"As the world transitions to a digital standard, electronic services are more important than ever," British Ambassador to Georgia **Mark Clayton** said. "Digital tools let citizens enjoy the benefits offered by their national institutions, as well as promote international cooperation and exchange between the countries."

With UNDP and UK support, the PSDA studied international experience in the electronic verification of public documents and developed an e-Apostille service in compliance with technical requirements.

In October 2020, the e-Apostille was integrated into the national system of e-services. Applications are now accessible on the PSDA website, [www.sda.gov.ge](http://www.sda.gov.ge), and the unified Government portal, [www.my.gov.ge](http://www.my.gov.ge), and verification is available on the PSDA-run website, <http://apostille.cra.ge>.

Working under the aegis of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia, the PSDA is one of the national partners engaged in UNDP's robust programme to support Public Administration Reform in Georgia, implemented in partnership with the UK Government.

## Digital solutions to fight COVID-19: Council of Europe report assesses compliance with data protection principles

**S**trasbourg, 12.10.2020 – A report published today by the Council of Europe identifies a number of shortcomings in the protection of privacy and personal data in some of the legal and technical measures adopted by governments to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic among the 55 African, Latin-American and European countries which have joined the data protection "Convention 108".

The report "*Digital solutions to fight COVID-19*" provides an analysis of the impact on the rights to privacy and data protection of the legislative framework and policies adopted by governments as well as an in-depth and technical review of digital contact tracing applications and monitoring tools.

It calls on governments to ensure transparency of digital solutions in order to ensure respect of the rights to privacy and data protection. It also regrets that in spite of numerous calls for coordination and interoperability of digital solutions to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, countries have individually implemented widely diverging systems, thereby limiting the efficiency of the measures taken.

Whilst aiming to assess how the measures adopted comply with the data protection convention, the report also contains recommendations on how to ensure the efficiency and resilience of the data protection framework.

In most countries, governments adopted emergency mea-

sures that gave governments extensive powers, usually only for a limited period of time.

The report identifies shortcomings in a number of countries concerning compliance with the principles of "Convention 108" with regard to issues such as the requirement for a legal basis of the measures adopted, their proportionality and aspects such as their justification by public interest and the consent of the data subject for data processing.

A particularly challenging aspect is the limitation of the purposes for data processing – the report points out that in some countries the boundaries between healthcare and police enforcement purposes have been sometimes blurred. The report also points to data protection risks related to the security, storage and sharing of data, which has led to the withdrawal of certain measures in some countries.

When examining compliance with the principle of privacy by design, the report notes that out of 55 Parties to "Convention 108", 26 jurisdictions have chosen a de-centralised approach for proximity and contact tracing apps whilst 14 have chosen a centralised approach. 5 countries have decided not to use apps at all.

The report contains the findings of a survey among the states Parties to "Convention 108" on the use of digital solutions to control the dissemination of the virus. Out of the 47 respondents participating in the survey, 36 use apps for contact

tracing or proximity alerts (77%), 20 for self-diagnosis (43%), 11 for quarantine enforcement (23%) and 8 for mapping travel patterns (17%). Only two countries used apps for crowd control and another two for immunity passports.

Finally, the report welcomes that 20 countries participating in the survey have published the apps source codes, a measure that can contribute to building the trust of users and to make the apps effective. To further strengthen this trust, the reports recommends involving civil society and the general public in the development of digital solutions and transparency measures.

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The Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, also known as "Convention 108", is the only legally binding instrument on the protection of privacy and data protection open to any country in the world. Adopted in 1981, the treaty was updated in 2018 by an amending protocol, not yet in force, ensuring that its data protection principles are still adapted to today's tools and practices, and strengthening its follow up mechanism. So far, 55 countries have ratified "Convention 108" and many others have used it as a model for new data protection legislation throughout the world. Eight countries have already ratified the updated "Convention 108+" and another 34 have signed it but not yet ratified it.