THE RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED REGIONS OF GEORGIA: MAIN EVENTS AND TRENDS OF 2025

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2025

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The Russian-Occupied Regions of Georgia:

Main Events and Trends of 2025

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INTRODUCTION

In 2025, Sergey Kiriyenko, First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, served as the curator for the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (The former South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast). Under his leadership, substantial personnel and structural changes were implemented within the Russian Presidential Administration with respect to these territories.

Following the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, Kiriyenko was the first curator to be directly and actively involved in ongoing developments in the occupied regions. Under his direct oversight, illegitimate presidential elections were conducted in occupied Abkhazia, resulting in the victory of the Kremlin's preferred candidate, Badra Gunba, who thereafter assumed the role of de facto President of Abkhazia. In 2025, similarly illegitimate local self-government elections were held in Abkhazia, leading predominantly to the election of pro-government candidates as "deputies."

In 2025, Abkhazia implemented several major infrastructure initiatives. The longstanding proposal to establish a permanent Russian naval base at the port of Ochamchire, first announced in 2023, remains unresolved. Nevertheless, two key economic projects at the port have been completed: the construction of a container terminal and a new platform. A particularly notable milestone was the reception of the first civilian flight at Sokhumi Airport in 32 years. Restored with Russian investment, the airport welcomed its inaugural flight on May 1, 2025. Throughout the year, flights operated exclusively from four Russian cities, with frequency decreasing after the close of the tourist season. By year's end, it was also reported that, with Russian support, a transit and logistics hub was under construction at the so-called Enguri checkpoint in the Gali district, intended to facilitate the movement of transit cargo. The announcement took many by surprise, and considerable uncertainty remains surrounding the project.

In 2025, no progress was made toward the international recognition of the occupied regions. Belarus continued to resist Russian pressure, refusing to extend recognition. Occupied Abkhazia demonstrated comparatively greater activity in foreign policy, with its representatives participating for the first time in events held in South Korea and Iran. Concerns in the occupied regions regarding a potential revision of relations with Syria proved unfounded, as bilateral ties were maintained. Over the course of the year, the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia visited Syria twice. Additionally, in 2025, the de facto foreign ministries of both occupied regions renewed their consultation plans with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the 2026-2027 period.

The established format of relations between the occupied regions and Tbilisi remained in place. In 2025, three rounds of the Geneva International Discussions were conducted, supplemented by seven meetings in Ergneti under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). Additionally, the potential resumption of comparable meetings with the Abkhazian side in Gali was actively discussed.

In 2025, a Russian bank subject to Western sanctions commenced operations in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, facilitating the provision of pensions to Russian citizens residing in the occupied regions.

The ongoing Russian military aggression in Ukraine has affected the Georgian regions occupied by Russia, which remain politically and economically dependent on Russia.

In 2025, concerns about “espionage” in these regions intensified, leading to the arrest, in Tskhinvali, of Tamar Mearakishvili—a civil activist and outspoken critic of the de facto government—on “espionage” charges.

Numerous other significant events occurred in the Russian-occupied regions of Georgia throughout 2025; however, in this report, we focus on only those issues that are most likely to influence trends in 2026.

THE IMPACT OF RUSSIAN MILITARY AGGRESSION IN UKRAINE ON THE OCCUPIED REGIONS

Russia's ongoing full-scale military aggression in Ukraine is also impacting the Russian-occupied regions of Georgia, which remain fully dependent on Russia for politics, economy, and security.

International Isolation

The isolation of the occupied regions continued in 2025. In 2022 and 2023, the European Union and Switzerland restricted the issuance of Schengen visas to residents of the occupied territories of Georgia and Ukraine, who cannot enter the Schengen area with travel documents issued by Russian authorities. Exceptions are made in certain cases, such as for humanitarian reasons. This policy directly affects residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, who primarily travel abroad with Russian-issued passports. As a result of these movement restrictions, during recent international negotiations in Geneva, the Russian side, supported by Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, requested a change of venue.

Participation in Military Aggression

The involvement of the occupied regions in Russia's military aggression is largely symbolic, uncoordinated, and primarily limited to humanitarian activities.

The war in Ukraine is fought primarily by volunteers, independent of the de facto authorities. In some cases, local servicemen from Russian military bases in the occupied regions, serving under contract with the Russian army, also take part in combat. According to open sources, since Russia began its full-scale military aggression in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, up to 90 fighters from the Tskhinvali region and up to 65 from Abkhazia have been killed. These figures do not include those currently missing, or deaths that have yet to be officially confirmed.

From the very beginning of the war, there were concerns in the occupied regions that local residents, particularly those with Russian citizenship, might be drafted. These concerns were first raised publicly in Abkhazia at the end of the year, when it became apparent that Abkhaz students at Russian universities could face conscription. On December 12, 2025, the de facto Foreign Minister of Abkhazia, Oleg Bartsits, and the de facto Defense Minister, Vladimir Anua, met to discuss whether Abkhaz citizens with Russian citizenship studying in Russia would be required to register for military service there. The issue sparked mixed reactions in Abkhazia. On December 13, Jemal Bganba, head of the Strategic Cooperation Department of the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, clarified that the meeting aimed to find legal means to prevent Abkhazian "citizens" from being required to register for military service in Russia, stating that "they are part of the republic's mobilization reserve and should be registered for military service in the Republic of Abkhazia."

Ukrainian Aircraft in Abkhazian "Airspace"

In 2025, for the first time, concerns emerged that occupied Abkhazia could become a military target for Ukraine. In February, Ukrainian drones entered Abkhazia's "airspace," marking their first appearance there since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. On July 24, Ukrainian drones targeted Sochi and Adler in their largest attack to date. Local media reported that the drones entered Abkhazia's "airspace" from the sea, flew over Gantiadi, and crossed into Russia near Adler. The Russian Ministry of Defense stated that 21 drones were intercepted, but one struck an oil depot in the "Sirius" territory, causing a fire, evacuations, and temporary airport closures.

A meeting of the so-called Security Council was held in occupied Abkhazia on July 24 to address the recent violations of Abkhazian "airspace" claimed by Sokhumi. The council also discussed measures to protect critical infrastructure. On July 28, the de facto Secretary of the Security Council, Raul Lolua, led a follow-up meeting. The so-called Ministry of Emergency Situations was tasked with developing procedures to inform the public in the event of unmanned aerial vehicle threats, while law enforcement agencies were advised to draw on Russia's experience in this area. Participants also discussed enhancing the security of "vital facilities."

On August 8, the so-called "Psou" checkpoint on the Abkhaz-Russian "border" was closed due to another Ukrainian drone attack on the Russian city of Sochi. According to Sokhumi, all combat units in adjacent areas on the Abkhaz side were placed on a state of combat readiness. On the same day, Russian and Abkhaz border guards conducted a joint raid in the "territorial waters" of Abkhazia. The temporary closure of the "border" resulted in severe traffic congestion during the tourist season, causing thousands of cars and trains to come to a standstill.

This incident heightened concerns in the occupied region that Abkhazia may be drawn into the conflict, with many feeling that "the war has already come close." It also revealed that the de facto government is unprepared to prevent Ukrainian drones from entering its "airspace."

Exposing "Spies"

In 2025, Russian authorities reported several incidents involving the detention of individuals accused of espionage for Ukraine in Abkhazia. On June 10, a Russian employee was detained at Sokhumi Airport on suspicion of spying for Ukrainian military intelligence. The Russian Federal Security Service stated that the suspect "provided the enemy with a plan of the airport and the adjacent closed parking area used to receive official international delegations. The plan has the potential to be employed in the carrying out of a terrorist attack through the planting of explosives."

On December 17, another report indicated that a Russian father and daughter had been detained in Sochi who were planning to travel to Ukraine to participate in the hostilities there. The Russian Federal Security Service stated that they had contacted Ukrainian special services in Sokhumi and intended to reach Ukraine via Georgia. In response to similar incidents, the so-called State Security Service of Abkhazia warned Abkhazian "citizens" that Ukrainian special services are

allegedly recruiting individuals for terrorist attacks and sabotage against Abkhazia and Russia through social networks.

Economic Challenges

The economies of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region remain heavily dependent on Russia, which supplies most of their budgets, salaries, and pensions. Although a reduction in Russian funding was anticipated, both regions continue to receive financial support from Russia. Investment programs are also expected to continue in 2026, with over 1 billion rubles allocated annually to socio-economic projects in both regions.

The ongoing war against Ukraine has led Russia to make decisions that negatively impact the occupied regions. In July and August 2025, Ukrainian drone attacks on Russian oil-refining facilities triggered a fuel crisis that extended to these territories. In Abkhazia, long lines formed at gas stations, and some areas faced complete fuel shortages. Russia responded by temporarily banning fuel exports. Because Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region rely entirely on Russian fuel, any disruption in Russia's fuel market has immediate effects on these areas. Similar issues have arisen in previous years.

Forms of Assistance

Representatives of the occupied regions have been supporting Russia by providing military equipment, drones, and humanitarian aid. While this support remains limited, it signals the endorsement of Moscow's policy by Sokhumi and Tskhinvali.

De facto President Alan Gagloev regularly provides aid to Ossetian fighters from the "Alania" battalion involved in Russia's military actions in Ukraine. In August, his representatives delivered 36 unmanned aerial vehicles, 20 sets of body armor and helmets, five night vision devices, and two diesel generators to fighters in the Rostov region.

In October, representatives of budgetary organizations in the Akhalgori district collected 290,000 rubles for participants in Russia's military actions in Ukraine.

Children from the war-affected Russian regions of Kursk and Belgorod were invited to vacation in Abkhazia, and visited twice during the holiday season.

In November 2025, Gagloev issued a decree appointing the de facto health minister and several senior officials as his representatives to provide assistance to participants in Russia's military aggression and their families. The minister is to oversee the treatment and rehabilitation of combatants, while the other representatives will handle additional responsibilities.

In December 2025, 85 tons of citrus fruit and drinking water were shipped from occupied Abkhazia to Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine.



Humanitarian aid sent from occupied Abkhazia to the regions of Ukraine occupied by Russia. *Source: apsnypress.inf*

FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVITIES IN THE OCCUPIED REGIONS, AND RUSSIA'S ROLE

The "foreign policy" of the occupied regions relies on Russia's political, diplomatic, and logistical support. A formal document also defines the legal framework for "foreign policy" cooperation between Moscow and these regions.

On October 1, 2025, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov hosted the de facto foreign ministers of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region in Sochi. Lavrov held separate meetings with Oleg Bartsits of Abkhazia and Akhsar Dzhioev of the Tskhinvali region, followed by a trilateral session. At the conclusion, Bartsits and Lavrov signed a *Plan of Consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for 2026–2027*. Dzhioev and Lavrov signed a similar plan.

The consultation plan includes discussions of current issues in bilateral relations; the development of a bilateral legal and contractual framework; the exchange of information on the foreign policy activities of both parties; the organization of joint scientific and practical seminars, conferences, and roundtables; and support for cultural and sports events.



Meeting of Oleg Bartsits with Sergey Lavrov, October 1, 2025.
Source: mfaapsny.org

Lavrov met with Bartsits in Moscow on June 6, marking Bartsits's first visit to Russia as minister. Appointed in April 2025, he succeeded Sergei Shamba, a veteran of Abkhaz politics. The meeting addressed bilateral relations, and Bartsits described it as both fruitful and useful.

In addition to frequent meetings at the "ministerial" level, deputy-level contacts are also common. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin regularly meets with his Abkhazian and Ossetian "counterparts." Galuzin oversees relations with post-Soviet countries in the Foreign Ministry and manages ties with the occupied regions.

The "Foreign Affairs" Activities of Occupied Abkhazia

2025 presented both challenges and new opportunities for Abkhazian "diplomacy." Beyond traditional partners that recognize Abkhazia's independence, meetings also took place in countries where such strong ties had not previously been observed. Abkhazian diplomatic efforts focused on Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, with particular emphasis on Latin America. According to Sokhumi, following the recognition of Abkhazia's independence by Venezuela and Nicaragua, there is potential for other Latin American countries to also recognize the independence of the occupied regions. Moscow supported Sokhumi in its efforts to build international relations in this direction.

Abkhazia's independence is recognized by four UN member states aside from Russia: Nicaragua, Venezuela, Syria, and Nauru. In 2025, Abkhazia maintained especially close relations with Syria and Nicaragua. Alongside regular visits by the de facto foreign minister, "ambassadors" to these countries actively participated in local events, using these occasions to build international connections.

Relations With Syria

Sokhumi places particular importance on its relationship with Syria, especially since the change of government in December 2024, which raised concerns that Damascus might revoke its recognition of the independence of occupied Abkhazia. (Syria recognized Abkhazia's independence on May 29, 2018. In October 2020, an Abkhazian "embassy" opened in Damascus, with Bagrat Khutaba appointed as the first "ambassador," later succeeded by Muhammad Ali). So far, the new Syrian administration has stated no such intention. In 2025, de facto Foreign Minister Oleg Bartsits visited Syria twice, and received congratulations from his Syrian counterpart on his appointment. Abkhazian delegations continued to visit Syria throughout the year, and the intergovernmental commission on bilateral relations remains active.

Shortly after the overthrow of the Assad regime, then de facto Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba stated, "The Abkhazian embassy in Syria continues to operate under the same arrangements, now with the new Syrian leadership. There are no problems in this regard; the new leadership will ensure the protection of the embassy." The "embassy" operated throughout 2025, with the Abkhazian "ambassador" reportedly meeting members of the Syrian government.

Bartsits arrived in Syria on June 25, marking the first visit by a representative of the occupied region since the Assad regime's ousting in December 2024, giving the trip particular significance. In Damascus, Bartsits met with Foreign Minister Asad Hassan al-Shaibani. Notably, no footage of this meeting was released by the Abkhazian side. During his visit, Bartsits paid respects at the grave of the Syrian writer Fadil Aryuta, who was of Abkhaz origin, met with representatives of the Abkhazian-Adyghe and Circassian diasporas, and held discussions with the Abkhazian "embassy" staff.



Oleg Bartsits visits the grave of a writer of Abkhaz origin.
Source: mfaapsny.org

In the context of Bartsits's visit, it is notable that on June 18, news emerged regarding a Georgian parliamentary delegation's visit to Turkey. During this visit, Nikoloz Samkharadze, chair of the Georgian Foreign Relations Committee, met with his Turkish counterpart, Fuat Oktay. According to the Georgian parliament, Samkharadze requested that Oktay urge the new Syrian government to withdraw its recognition of the so-called independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Samkharadze explained, "We do not have diplomatic relations with Syria as the Assad regime recognized the so-called independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. We asked the Turkish side to intercede with the new Syrian government so that this recognition is withdrawn, after which we would be ready to restore diplomatic relations with Syria."

A month earlier, on May 17, U.S. Congressman Joe Wilson announced that he had urged the Syrian foreign minister to revoke Syria's recognition of the "independence" of Georgian territories occupied by Russia. Previously, on January 31, four opposition political parties had addressed a similar appeal to Syria's transitional government, formed after the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad. Despite these efforts, Syria's official position remains unknown and the recognition still stands.

Bartsits made a second visit to Syria on August 26, accompanied by the so-called ministers of culture and economy. During this trip, he participated in the 62nd International Trade and Industrial Fair in Damascus, which opened on August 27. The Abkhazian pavilion at the fair highlighted the region's agricultural and tourism potential, as well as a project for the newly restored Sokhumi Airport.

During the visit, Bartsits met with Russian ambassador Alexander Efimov, representatives of the international organization "Adyghe Khase," and staff of the Abkhazian "embassy" in Syria. The delegation also held meetings with Syria's ministers of culture and tourism, and with Minister of Agriculture Amjad Badr at the Ministry of Agriculture.

In an interview with Iravunk media on August 22, Bartsits confirmed that, during his June meeting with the Syrian foreign minister, the new Syrian leadership expressed its intention to develop and strengthen relations with Abkhazia.

Throughout 2025, a number of other developments took place in Abkhazian–Syrian relations:

- On May 12, Muhammad Ali, the so-called ambassador of occupied Abkhazia to Syria, met with Marwan al-Khalabi, Syria's minister of higher education and scientific research. The meeting addressed potential scientific research cooperation and emphasized the importance of establishing a formal agreement between the University of Damascus and the so-called State University of Abkhazia.
- On May 16 and 17, representatives of the Abkhazian "embassy" in Syria took part in a diplomatic table tennis tournament held in Damascus.
- On September 22, a meeting with Syrian students took place at the Abkhazian "embassy" in Syria. These students will enroll in preparatory Russian-language courses at the "Abkhazian State University," with the intention of pursuing further studies at the institution.
- In a September 23 interview with TASS, de facto Minister of Economy Teimuraz Mikvabia indicated that discussions regarding direct access to Syrian ports were ongoing. He noted that transport and logistics links were currently under exploration. Although Sokhumi has expressed interest, the short-term prospects for establishing a maritime connection remain uncertain.

Concerns in the occupied regions about a potential reassessment of relations with Syria in 2025 have proven unfounded. The new Syrian government, influenced by its relationship with Russia, appears to see no urgent need to reconsider the Assad regime's decision to recognize the occupied regions. Meanwhile, Western countries, who have traditionally been Georgia's primary supporters in its non-recognition policy, have seen relations with the "Georgian Dream" government deteriorate significantly over the past year. Consequently, Tbilisi's capacity to advocate for non-recognition in Western capitals has diminished.

Relations With Nicaragua

Among the United Nations member states that recognize Abkhazia's independence, relations with Nicaragua and Syria have been the most extensive. Nicaragua remains a primary focus of Abkhazian diplomatic efforts, with anniversaries of the Sandinista Revolution providing opportunities for official visits. Supported by Russia, Abkhazia's de facto leaders regularly visit Nicaragua and pursue closer relations with additional Latin American countries.

On July 18, 2025, Bartsits arrived in Nicaragua to participate in events commemorating the 46th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution. In contrast, Akhsar Dzhioev, the de facto foreign

minister of the occupied Tskhinvali region, attended the celebrations only at the Nicaraguan Embassy in Moscow. Bartsits's visit to Nicaragua spanned several days. On July 19, although no direct meeting took place, Bartsits conveyed the congratulations of Abkhazia's de facto President, Badra Gunba, to the president of the Telesur media holding during the celebrations. On the same day, he also met with Patricia Villega, President of Telesur. On July 21, Bartsits met with Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Waldrack Jaentschke and Presidential Adviser for Investment Promotion, Trade, and International Cooperation Laureano Ortega Murillo. The Abkhazian delegation also held meetings with the Central Bank of Nicaragua's chair, representatives of the Ministry of Finance, and several commercial banks. At the conclusion of the visit, Bartsits conducted a press conference with local media.

Support For Venezuela

In response to heightened pressure on Venezuela from the United States, the authorities in Georgia's occupied regions publicly showed support for the Venezuelan government. On October 24, 2025, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of occupied Abkhazia issued a note expressing solidarity and unconditional support for Venezuela, as did the de facto foreign ministry of the occupied Tskhinvali region. Venezuela is among the United Nations member states that recognize the independence of these occupied regions.

On July 19, 2025, during ceremonial events following his visit to Nicaragua, Bartsits engaged in a "friendly conversation" with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Iván Gil Pinto.

Relations With Belarus

In 2025, relations between the occupied regions and Belarus did not progress, while, in contrast, ties between Minsk and Tbilisi strengthened. On March 11, President Alexander Lukashenko received Georgian Ambassador Giorgi Saganelidze in Minsk and expressed Belarus's strong support for Georgia's statehood and sovereignty. Lukashenko emphasized that Belarus has no issues with Georgia, and highlighted the longstanding friendship and mutual respect between the two countries as a basis for renewed cooperation. He stated, "We highly appreciate and support Georgia's steps to protect its statehood and sovereignty. This is consistent with our approaches. You in Georgia should do everything in the interests of the Georgian people. The traditions of friendship and mutual respect between Belarusians and Georgians, as well as shared historical experiences, provide a solid foundation for the resumption of comprehensive, full-fledged cooperation between our countries. You know very well that our door is always open to you. We have no problems in our relations with Georgia." Lukashenko was among the few leaders to congratulate Mikheil Kavelashvili on his election as president, and Kavelashvili reciprocated upon the beginning of Lukashenko's seventh presidential term, with his letter published by Lukashenko's administration. On October 13, the Georgian government received the newly appointed Belarusian ambassador, Nikolai Rogashchuk.



The Georgian Ambassador presents his credentials to the Belarusian President.
Source: president.gov.by

Lukashenko has recently made frequent comments about Georgia. In an April 2025 interview with Mir 24 TV and radio, he predicted that, over time, Ukraine - like Georgia - would come to cooperate with the CIS and the Eurasian Economic Union. He noted that, despite sanctions, some republics have drawn even closer to the Eurasian Economic Union. “Look at Georgia, what happened? Today, they sell not only wine on our market, but also other products that they cannot sell elsewhere. Neither the European Union nor the United States are purchasing them; they have enough of their own products. Where did they go? To us, to Russia… But we have cooperated with Georgia before. This is the path that Ukraine will also follow,” Lukashenko said.

The dynamics of Minsk-Tbilisi relations stand out in the broader context of Belarus’s ties to the occupied regions. In September 2022, Lukashenko visited Bichvinta to meet de facto President Aslan Bzhania. In February 2023, he hosted Bzhania in Minsk. These visits fueled speculation that Belarus might recognize the occupied regions. However, in 2024 and 2025, there was no progress in relations between Belarus and Abkhazia. Lukashenko’s meeting with the Georgian ambassador and his public statements show that, at this stage, Minsk does not intend to recognize the occupied regions, and instead seeks to emphasize friendly relations with Georgia.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Turkey

Turkey does not recognize the independence of Abkhazia; however, because of the Abkhazian diaspora in Turkey, the Abkhazian side regularly organizes meetings on Turkish territory:

- On August 15, 2025, Abkhazia's representative in Turkey, Ibrahim Avidzba, met with the Russian Consul General in Istanbul, Andrei Buravov.
- On August 19, the so-called Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Abkhazia signed a cooperation agreement with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Turkey's Amasya Province. On the Abkhaz side, the agreement was signed by Tamila Mertskhulava, head of the so-called Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- On August 31, in Istanbul, after his visit to Syria, de facto Foreign Minister Oleg Bartsits met with the so-called representative of Abkhazia in Turkey, Ibrahim Avidzba.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Iran

The XXII session of the International Business Cooperation Council of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Caspian Region Countries, known as "Business Caspian," took place in Tehran on October 20–21, 2025. For the first time, representatives from occupied Abkhazia participated in the event in Iran. The so-called Chamber of Commerce and Industry of occupied Abkhazia was represented by Adgur Lushba, a member of the Governing Council, and Naali Basaria, head of the Department of Foreign Relations and Investments. They met with leaders of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, and the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce. The Abkhazian delegation also met with Iranian entrepreneurs and members of the Russia–Iran Business Council. Iranian government officials attended the forum's closing event. The International Council serves as an advisory body to promote economic cooperation and business development among the countries of the Caspian region. The XXI session was held in Astrakhan, Russia, in 2024.

In the context of Iran's relations with the region, it is noteworthy that, in 2024, Seyed Mahmoud Reza Sajjadi, the general director of the Iranian Charitable Association for the Development of Science and Technology, visited Tskhinvali, where he was received by de facto President Alan Gagloev. Sajjadi, who previously served as Iran's ambassador to Russia (2009-2013), was accompanied by Ossetian businessman Albert Jusoev, who works in Russia. During the trip, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Iranian organization and the de facto Ministry of Economic Development. Sajjadi's visit was especially significant, marking the first time an Iranian official of such high rank had visited the occupied region. While the visit did not result in concrete follow-up, the presence of such a figure in Tskhinvali, along with the participation of representatives from occupied Abkhazia at an official event in Tehran, may signal emerging shifts in Tehran's policy toward Georgia's occupied regions.

Meeting With the Palestinian Ambassador

On October 31, 2025, the Palestinian ambassador to Nicaragua, Majid Zaki Abu al-Khawa, met with Inar Ladaria, the "ambassador" of occupied Abkhazia. According to the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they discussed key issues in international politics. Later, on November 28, Ladaria attended a special session of the Nicaraguan parliament marking the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People." Participation in these meetings and events offers occupied Abkhazia opportunities to establish new contacts.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward China

In 2025, China remained a focus of Abkhazian "diplomacy." On February 28, the Abkhazian honorary consul, Ke Chili, met with the de facto Deputy Foreign Minister, Odyssey Bigvava, in Moscow. In 2024, Chili visited Abkhazia several times, meeting with the de facto Foreign Minister, Inal Ardzinba, on March 12, and with Bigvava on November 7. Chili regularly visits Abkhazia, and lobbies on behalf of Abkhazian interests in China.

A delegation from the so-called Chamber of Commerce and Industry of occupied Abkhazia participated in the Food2China Expo 2025 in Guangzhou, China. Abkhazian entrepreneurs presented products such as wine, beer, mineral water, lemonade, and adjika (spicy sauce). The delegation also met with representatives of the Guangdong Provincial Chamber of Commerce and signed a protocol of intent to pursue further cooperation.

According to the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia Bojgua, an athlete from the Rhythmic Gymnastics Federation of occupied Abkhazia, participated in the international tournaments Heavenly Grace and Beijing Top Open 2025, held in Beijing on November 12-14. She competed under neutral status, flying the Heavenly Grace flag. All expenses for her participation were covered by Alina Kabaeva, the head of the Heavenly Grace Academy and a close associate of Vladimir Putin. Bojgua's appearance in China received extensive coverage in the occupied region, and she was welcomed by the de facto deputy foreign minister.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward South Korea

The first documented engagement by occupied Abkhazia with South Korea occurred on September 23, 2025, when the Abkhazian-Korean Cultural Center opened in Seoul. The ceremony at the National Assembly building was attended by the de facto Minister of Culture, Daur Kove, South Korean members of parliament, and approximately 50 representatives from businesses, tourism companies, and other stakeholders.

South Korean parliamentarian Ahn Ho-yong, a three-term member of the ruling Democratic Party of Korea, opened the event. He currently serves on the Environment and Labor Committee, and has previously focused on agriculture and environmental protection.

The event received limited coverage in South Korean media. One Korean source reported that the ceremony, organized in collaboration with the Russian Far East Nature Conservation Commission, included initiatives to facilitate South Korean companies' entry into Russian and

Eurasian markets. The article described Abkhazia as a “duty-free trade zone” on the Black Sea coast, and emphasized its strategic export value due to reduced customs barriers.

The South Korean Embassy in Georgia told Netgazeti that the hosting of representatives of Abkhazia's de facto authorities in the parliament building, and the presentation of the Abkhazian Cultural Center, did not reflect the position of the Government of the Republic of Korea. “The Korean government does not recognize Abkhazia as an independent state. Korea is a presidential system in which the parliament and the executive branch (government) are separate. The actions of a parliamentarian do not always coincide with or reflect the government's position. This is exactly the case we are dealing with,” the Embassy told *Netgazeti*.

The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released information regarding the presentation of the so-called “Abkhazian Cultural Center” at the South Korean National Assembly on October 1. According to the Ministry, on September 30, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Aleksandre Khvtisiashvili met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Georgia, Hyundoo Kim. During the meeting, the event held by the so-called “Minister of Culture of Abkhazia” in the Parliament of the Republic of Korea, and the issue of the so-called “opening of the cultural center” were discussed. The Ambassador expressed regret over the incident, and explained that the position of the Republic of Korea regarding the territorial integrity of Georgia remains unchanged and firm: it does not recognize Abkhazia as an independent state and considers it an integral part of Georgia, a position that has been repeatedly confirmed by the Government of the Republic of Korea. Regarding the so-called “Cultural Center,” he noted that the Government of the Republic of Korea had not issued any permit for its opening or operation; therefore, under South Korean law, its operation is prohibited.



Opening of the Abkhazian-Korean Cultural Center.
Source: apsnypress.info

During his visit to South Korea, Daur Kove attended the international exhibition “Cheongju Craft Biennale 2025,” which featured ceramics, textiles, and metalwork.

Songjin Kim, the Korean representative to the Committee for Environmental Protection in the Far East and a resident of Russia for 30 years, commented on the opening of the “Abkhazian Cultural Center,” stating that he believes the center will promote cultural exchange between Korea and Abkhazia and support the growth of tourism and the economy.

This activity in South Korea may also be related to the 2025 inauguration of President Lee Jae-mung, who supports more pragmatic relations with China and Russia.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Italy

Vito Gritani, who claims the title of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for the de facto Foreign Ministry of Abkhazia, is active in Italy and seeks to develop relations through personal connections. Gritani serves as a lobbyist for occupied Abkhazia in Italy, where a representation office has operated since 2016. He frequently visits Abkhazia, including as an observer at elections not recognized as legitimate.

In 2025, relations with Trieste were particularly notable. On March 29, 2025, the Mayor of Trieste, Roberto Di Piazza, met with Gritani. During the meeting, Gritani presented the Cross of Peace project, which involved sending a wooden cross from Trieste to Russia as a symbol of peace and friendship. The meeting was organized by Municipal Councilor Ugo Rossi and Giorgio Deski, President of the OLT (Osservatorio Libero Trieste). Both individuals served as international observers at the 2025 presidential elections in Abkhazia, although those elections are not recognized as legitimate.



Vito Gritani's meeting with Mayor of Trieste Roberto Di Piazza.
Source: mfaapsny.org

Also on March 29, the Sokhumi City Council, the so-called diplomatic representation of Abkhazia in Italy, the political parties “Insieme Liberi” and “VITA,” and a deputy from the Municipal Council of Minorities of Trieste, signed an online memorandum of friendship and mutual understanding. The agreement establishes cultural exchanges between Trieste and Sokhumi.



Vito Gritani's award ceremony.
Source: mfaapsny.org

In Abkhazia, on September 30, during the “Day of Independence and Victory,” a chess tournament was held, with Italian chess players participating for the first time. Gritani helped organize the visit. The Italian delegation included Massimo Varini, President of the Trieste Chess Academy, who invited Abkhazian chess players to participate in a tournament in Trieste.

While this private visit does not represent a diplomatic breakthrough, Sokhumi claims such events as diplomatic achievements. On November 14, 2025, Gritani met with the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs, Oleg Bartsits, who awarded him the Medal of Merit for “strengthening the positive image of the Republic of Abkhazia in Italy.”

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Germany

In 2025, in Germany, Hibla Amichba, who claims to represent Abkhazia, and Wolfgang Matzke, who claims to be a trade representative, continued to be active. The German government does not recognize their official status, and they act as private individuals. Amichba and Matzke are the primary lobbyists for Abkhazia in Germany and regularly organize events.

On March 11, 2025, an event was held on Abkhazia in Potsdam, Germany. It was organized by the German organization Old Tablers, and Board of Governors member Jörg Baut. Amichba and Matzke participated in the event, which included a film about Abkhazia produced for the occasion.

On September 11, in Berlin, Hibla Amichba attended the conference "From Passive to Active Deterrence - Russia's New Security Policy and Geopolitics," organized by the Eurasian Society. He regularly participates in Eurasian Society events, which align with Russian interests.

On September 13, in Potsdam, an event was held in partnership with the East Brandenburg Economic Forum and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of occupied Abkhazia. The Askania watch factory hosted approximately 40 German business representatives. Matzke presented on Abkhazia's economic and investment potential.

On December 2, Amichba participated in the German-Kyrgyz Economic Forum, organized by the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Berlin.

On December 12, he attended the traditional Christmas reception in Berlin, hosted by Alexander Rahr, head of the Eurasian Union.



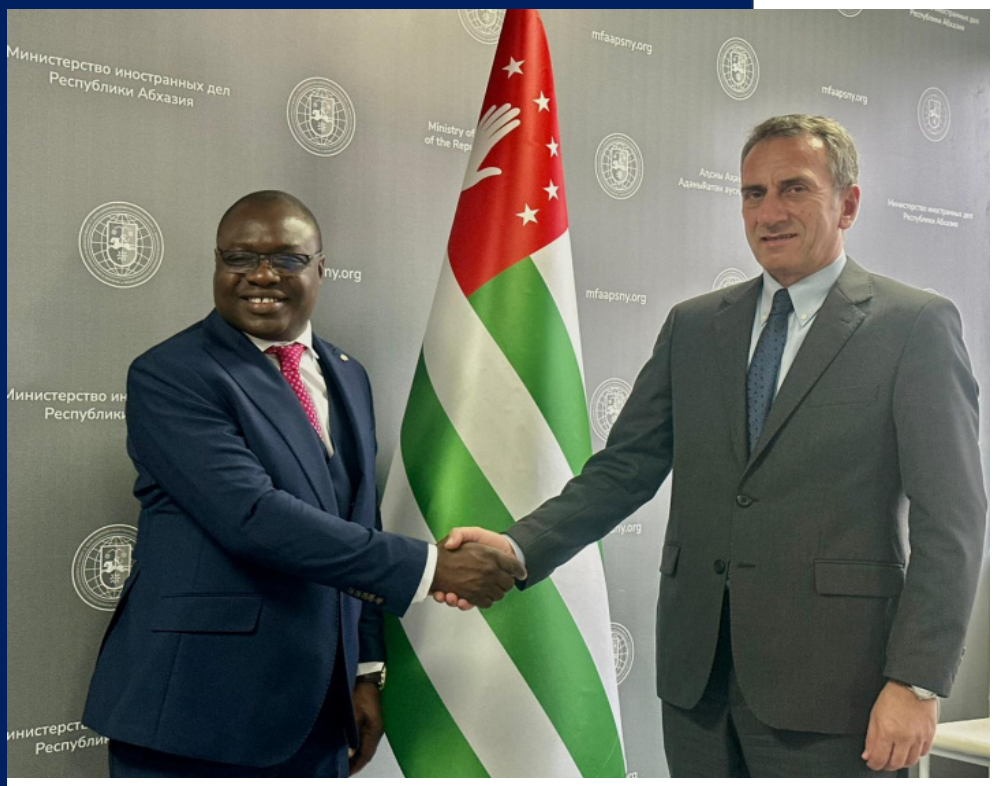
Khibla Amichba at the conference.
Source:mfaapsny.org



Meeting in Potsdam.
Source: mfaapsny.org

Representative In Africa

On October 20, 2025, the de facto Foreign Minister of occupied Abkhazia met with Isaac Kumesina, the so-called Ambassador-at-Large of the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was Kumesina's first official visit to Abkhazia in a role that sees him as responsible for promoting and protecting the interests of the occupied region in African countries. The meeting focused on developing a joint roadmap and identifying priority areas for Kumesina's work. Although Sokhumi seeks to expand international ties and gain broader recognition, its engagement with Africa has been limited. Kumesina, primarily active in Ghana, is a businessman with interests in several sectors.



Oleg Bartsits's meeting with Isaac Kumesina.
Source: mfaapsny.org

The "Foreign Affairs" Activities of the Tskhinvali Region

The Tskhinvali region is less active in "foreign policy" than Abkhazia, due to limited resources and modest ambitions. Its de facto leadership mainly engages with pro-Russian political figures and representatives of Russia's allies.

Relations With Syria

Syria recognizes the independence of the so-called Republic of South Ossetia (the Tskhinvali region), but due to limited resources, visits by representatives of the Tskhinvali region to Syria are rare. Most bilateral contacts take place in Moscow. For instance, on July 1, 2025, Znaur Gasiev, the "ambassador" of the occupied Tskhinvali region to Russia, met with the Syrian chargé d'affaires, Abdulrazak Ismail, in Moscow. These meetings typically yield no tangible results, and primarily serve to demonstrate diplomatic engagement.

Relations With Nicaragua

Nicaragua is another UN member state that recognizes the independence of the so-called Republic of South Ossetia, and is the most active partner of Tskhinvali in this regard. On September 19, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Waldrac Djentske Whitaker visited Tskhinvali, where the Nicaraguan delegation attended events marking the 35th anniversary of the proclamation of the "Republic of South Ossetia." In 2024, the de facto Foreign Minister, Akhsar Dzhioev, visited Nicaragua to mark the 45th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution. Despite these high-level contacts, no tangible progress has been observed in bilateral relations.

Tskhinvali's relations with the only other UN member states recognizing the region's independence, Venezuela and Nauru, remain largely inactive.



Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.
Source: mfa.rsogov.org

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Belarus

The occupied Tskhinvali region maintains limited engagement with Belarus, with almost no high-level contacts, and minimal interest from Belarus. The only notable exception was the "warm and friendly relations" reportedly shown between Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and the de facto leaders of the occupied Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, Alan Gagloev and Badra Gunba, during their meeting in the Kremlin on May 9, 2025. Gagloev's press service issued a similar statement.



Conversation with Alexander Lukashenko.
Source: presidentruo.org

In 2025, the Tskhinvali region primarily participated in non-political events in Belarus. On June 22, Belarus observed the *Day of Remembrance of Those Who Died in World War II* and the *Day of the Genocide of the Belarusian People*. The events, held in Brest, saw de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs Akhsar Dzhioev in attendance.

From June 24 to 28, Ossetian boxers competed in an international tournament in Belarus, winning two gold medals. The "South Ossetian" flag was raised at the tournament in Belarus for the first time.

On November 8, at the invitation of Sergey Sirankov, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Belarus, Znaur Gassiev, the ambassador of the occupied Tskhinvali region to Russia, attended ceremonial events in Belarus marking the 108th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Gassiev also met with Sirankov.

Meeting with the Secretary of State of the Union

On November 13, 2025, de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs Akhsar Dzhioev met with Sergey Glazyev, Secretary of State of the Russian-Belarusian Union State. They discussed cooperation with Union State structures in the occupied region, with a focus on humanitarian and cultural matters. Although relations between Tskhinvali and Minsk remain limited, such meetings with representatives of the Union State occur on a regular basis. Tskhinvali uses these engagements to demonstrate diplomatic activity and strengthen ties with Belarus.



Akhsar Dzhioev's meeting with Sergey Glazyev.
Source: mfa.rsogov.org

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward the Republic of Srpska



Alan Gagloev's meeting with Milorad Dodik.
Source: presidentruo.org

On May 10, 2025, during a visit to Moscow, de facto President Alan Gagloev met with Milorad Dodik, the pro-Russian President of Republika Srpska, who invited him to the First International Economic Forum in the Tskhinvali region. While the meeting highlighted Tskhinvali's diplomatic efforts, it yielded few concrete results because Dodik did not attend the September forum.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Italy

The occupied Tskhinvali region has maintained a representative in Italy for some time; however, this individual is a private citizen and lacks official recognition from the Italian government. The region's connections with Italy primarily depend on the activities of this individual, Mario Murja, who is referred to as the representative of the "Republic of South Ossetia" in Italy. Murja serves as a lobbyist for the occupied Tskhinvali region in Italy, and frequently visits the region.

On March 11, 2025, in Beslan (Russia), Alan Gabaraev, the so-called Mayor of Tskhinvali, met with Filippo Gasperi, the Mayor of Gradara, Italy. Gasperi collaborates with both Beslan and the "Mothers of Beslan" committee. Mario Murja was also present at the meeting. The cooperation agreement between Tskhinvali and Gradara was established in 2018. Gradara, a small town in central Italy, was previously visited by the de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dimitri Medoev.



Alan Gabaraev's meeting with Filippo Gasperi.
Source: mfa.rsogov.org

On August 29, de facto Foreign Minister Akhsar Dzhioev hosted Mario Murja and Palmarino Dzocateli, the head of the Veneto-Russia Association, in Tskhinvali. During the visit, Murja also

met with the heads of the so-called Tskhinvali Administration and delivered an invitation from the Administration of the Italian city of Gradara.

Murja stated that his objective is to secure international recognition for the region. He indicated that, initially, the number of countries recognizing its independence should increase to between 10 and 15. Murja did not disclose the countries involved in ongoing negotiations, explaining that this measure was intended to prevent interference from the Georgian side.

"Foreign Affairs" Activity Toward Austria

The occupied Tskhinvali region is represented in Austria by Patrick Popel, a pro-Russian expert and de facto representative of the Foreign Ministry. Popel acts in a private capacity and lacks official recognition from the Austrian government. He makes periodic visits to the occupied region, and his public statements consistently reflect Kremlin-aligned narratives. In 2018, Popel hosted Kremlin ideologue Alexander Dugin in Vienna. He visited Tskhinvali in 2025 and met on June 3 with the de facto Foreign Minister, Akhsar Dzhioev. During this visit, Popel also met with Vadim Tedeev, rector of "the South Ossetian State University", to whom he presented an Austrian coin from 1780. The visit concluded with a press conference held by Popel.



Meeting of Akhsar Dzhioev with Patrick Popel.
Source: mfa.rsogov.org

MEETINGS BETWEEN PUTIN AND DE FACTO LEADERS OF THE OCCUPIED REGIONS

In 2025, Moscow hosted ceremonies commemorating the 80th anniversary of the victory in World War II. Russian President Vladimir Putin invited leaders of the Allied powers and the de facto leaders of occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region to participate. On May 10, 2025, Putin formally received the leaders of both occupied regions at the Kremlin.

During his meeting with Alan Gagloev, the de facto leader of the Tskhinvali region, President Putin emphasized the number of regional fighters who had participated in World War II, and those who lost their lives during the conflict. Putin pledged support for the restoration of World War II monuments, and committed to provide assistance in the economic, social, healthcare, and education sectors. Gagloev reported that approximately 1,500 fighters from the region are currently involved in Russia's military operations against Ukraine. He also highlighted the pressing condition of the Transcaucasian Highway and the limited throughput capacity at the Nizhny Zaramag checkpoint.



Vladimir Putin's meeting with Alan Gagloev, May 10, 2025.
Source: kremlin.ru

Also on May 10, President Putin hosted Badra Gunba, the de facto leader of Abkhazia. During their meeting, Putin reiterated concerns regarding the number of fighters from the region who participated in World War II and those who lost their lives during the conflict. In addition to offering assistance across multiple sectors, Putin underscored the importance of supporting Abkhazian tourism, predicting that tourist flows would increase by at least 7% in 2025. Gunba extended an invitation to President Putin to visit Abkhazia, which Putin accepted. The two leaders had previously met on March 5, shortly after Gunba's victory in the contested presidential elections.



Vladimir Putin's meeting with Badra Gunba, May 10, 2025.
Source: kremlin.ru

Subsequent to these meetings, on May 17, Putin signed a decree titled "On Granting Citizenship of the Russian Federation to Citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia." This decree enables residents of the occupied regions to acquire Russian citizenship through a simplified procedure.

DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

UN Resolution: Supporters And Opponents

On June 3, 2025, in New York, the United Nations General Assembly, at its 79th session, adopted a resolution initiated by Georgia and 63 co-sponsoring countries from diverse regions, entitled "On the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia." The resolution received a record level of support, with 107 countries voting in favor, 9 against, and 49 abstaining.

The number of opposing votes remained consistent with the previous year. Russia, Belarus, Cuba, North Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Mali, Nicaragua, Sudan, and Zimbabwe opposed the resolution. Notably, in contrast to the prior year, Burundi and Syria did not vote against the resolution, while Equatorial Guinea and Sudan did. Syria had historically opposed the resolution; however, following the overthrow of the Assad regime in December 2024, this position appears to have shifted.

The number of supporters increased from 103 to 107. Four additional countries, namely Paraguay, South Korea, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone, joined the list of supporters.

China, having entered into a strategic partnership agreement with the Georgian government in 2024, abstained from voting.

The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement concerning the adoption of the resolution. Georgia has submitted this humanitarian resolution annually to the United Nations General Assembly since May 2008. The resolution condemns demographic changes imposed by force in the Russian-occupied regions of Georgia, affirms the right of displaced persons, regardless of ethnic affiliation, to return to their homes in dignity and safety, and underscores the necessity of respecting and protecting their property rights.

Beyond its humanitarian context, the resolution has practical significance by mandating that the UN Secretary-General prepare an annual report on its implementation. This requirement is especially critical in light of the severe human rights situation in Georgia's occupied regions and the lack of international monitoring mechanisms.

The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the occupied Tskhinvali region issued a statement regarding the UN resolution. The ministry characterized the resolution as biased and lacking objectivity, further asserting that the terms "occupation" and "occupied territory" are entirely unjustified.

Resolution support in other years:

- 2022: In favor: 95; Against: 12, Abstentions: 56.
- 2023: In favor: 100; Against: 9; Abstentions: 59.
- 2024: In favor: 103, Against: 9, Abstentions: 52.

The 31st Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe: "The Conflict in Georgia"

In its decision of 30 April 2025 regarding the conflict in Georgia, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe reaffirmed its strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Committee also condemned the ongoing occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region by the Russian Federation. Furthermore, it called on Russia to fully and unconditionally withdraw its military forces from Georgian territory and to comply with its international obligations, including the 2008 ceasefire agreement brokered by the European Union.

The decision underscores several judgments by the European Court of Human Rights that have found the Russian Federation, as a state exercising effective control over the occupied territories, responsible for serious violations such as arbitrary detention, killings, torture, and the deportation of ethnic Georgians. The Council also welcomed the 2023 judgment requiring Russia to pay €130 million to thousands of Georgian citizens affected by the 2008 war.

The report also identified several humanitarian concerns, such as restrictions on freedom of movement, prohibitions on medical evacuations, the demolition of residences, and systematic discrimination against ethnic Georgians, especially in the Gali and Akhalgori regions.

The Council issued a strong condemnation of the unlawful detention of Georgian citizens and expressed concern regarding the destruction of Georgian cultural heritage in the occupied regions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia disseminated information regarding the discussion on the 31st consolidated report of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, titled "The Conflict in Georgia". On May 2, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Occupied Tskhinvali region also released information regarding the 31st consolidated report of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

The OSCE Resolution

On July 3, 2025, during its 32nd annual session, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted the Porto Declaration and an accompanying resolution. These documents reference Georgia and specifically address several articles concerning the occupied regions.

The Assembly expresses serious concern regarding the Russian occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, urges the withdrawal of Russian troops, and affirms support for the safe return of displaced persons. Furthermore, the Assembly rejects any efforts to legitimize elections conducted in the occupied regions of Georgia under Russian Federation control.

The declaration calls on the Syrian government to withdraw its recognition of the "independence" of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali in Georgia, as well as Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine, and to affirm the territorial integrity of both countries.

"I am pleased that the Assembly has supported my amendment to the Porto Declaration. It calls on the Syrian government to revoke its recognition of the 'independence' of the Abkhazian and

Tskhinvali regions and the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and to recognize the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine," Nikoloz Samkharadze, head of the Georgian delegation, wrote on X. Samkharadze had previously criticized amendments to the Parliamentary Assembly's annual report on Georgia.

The authorities in the occupied Tskhinvali region responded to the appeal addressed to Syria in the declaration. According to the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "We regret to note that Georgia is not ready to accept the current political reality in the Transcaucasus. We view such inappropriate appeals as a provocative attempt by official Tbilisi aimed at isolating Abkhazia."

The UN Security Council Statement

On August 18, the UN Security Council held a closed-door meeting to address the Russia-Georgia conflict and the situation in the occupied territories, marking the war's 17th anniversary. Afterward, the United Kingdom, France, Slovenia, Denmark, Greece, and future Council member Latvia issued a joint statement in support of Georgia.

"Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 marked the beginning of Russia's increasingly aggressive policy toward its neighbors. Russia continues on this path with its unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine," the statement said, reaffirming support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and condemning Russia's actions.

The United States, which has previously joined statements marking the Russia-Georgia war anniversary, did not participate this year. Under the Trump administration, the United States has shifted its rhetoric on conflict issues, citing a commitment to peace. It no longer supports UN General Assembly resolutions referencing Russian aggression in Ukraine, and has introduced more lenient alternatives.

Russia's acting UN ambassador, Dmitry Polyansky, commended the Georgian Dream government for its "wisdom," and criticized the European Security Council members who supported Georgia on the war's 17th anniversary.

Officials in the occupied regions also responded to the Security Council's statement. The so-called Abkhaz Deputy Foreign Minister, Irakli Tuzhba, described such statements as routine, disconnected from reality, openly anti-Russian, and intended to maintain regional tensions. Regarding the US position, Tuzhba expressed hope that it would prompt a shift in US policy toward what he termed "Georgia's unfounded territorial claims."

The so-called Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Tskhinvali region described the Security Council statement as "a ritual."

The UN Human Rights Council Resolution

On October 8, 2025, in Geneva, the UN Human Rights Council adopted the resolution "Cooperation with Georgia" concerning the occupied territories. Submitted annually by Georgia since 2017, the resolution focuses on human rights in these regions, and was adopted by consensus for the first time.

In its resolution, the Human Rights Council once again reaffirms its support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

The resolution expresses serious concern about discrimination and human rights violations by Russia against ethnic Georgians in the occupied regions.

The Council highlights the importance of the Geneva International Discussions, established under the August 12, 2008 ceasefire agreement.

As in previous years, the document records Russia's occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region and references European Court of Human Rights decisions from 2021 to 2024.

The Council is concerned that international and regional human rights monitors are denied access to the occupied territories. It calls for immediate and unrestricted access for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other monitoring mechanisms to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.

According to the representative of the United Kingdom, "For 17 years, Russia's illegal military control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been contrary to international law and has deprived ethnic Georgians of their fundamental human rights. This occupation must end."

The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of occupied Abkhazia described the resolution and the UK representative's statement as a political spectacle intended to discredit Abkhazia and the Russian Federation. The ministry also criticized the terms "occupation" and "illegal military control," claiming they "have nothing to do with reality and grossly distort the historical and political-legal situation."

Officials in the occupied Tskhinvali region also described the UN's adoption of the resolution as "political myopia."

Decision of the European Court of Human Rights

In 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Russia must pay Georgia over €253 million for human rights violations related to tightened administrative boundary lines after the 2008 war. In its October 14 judgment in Georgia v. Russia, the Court unanimously ordered Russia to pay €253,018,000 in compensation for non-pecuniary damage to more than 29,000 victims.

The case addressed the "borderization" process that began after the 2008 war, which restricted free movement across administrative boundary lines between Tbilisi-controlled territory and the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region.

The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the occupied Tskhinvali region described the Court's decision as "another committed step." "This is an extremely biased and politicized decision that fully reflects the 'level of justice' of this organization, presenting the true face of Europe in the best possible way," the de facto body said in a statement.

The 32nd Consolidated Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe - "The Conflict in Georgia"

On November 18, 2025, the 1543rd meeting of the Committee of Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe reviewed the 32nd Consolidated Report of the Secretary General, titled "The Conflict in Georgia." The report outlines the serious security, human rights, and humanitarian conditions in the Georgian regions occupied by Russia and along the occupation line. Issued twice a year, the report covers developments in the occupied territories from April to September 2025.

Secretary General Alain Berset presented the 32nd Consolidated Report. He reaffirmed strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and confirmed that the Council of Europe will continue its activities, including the adoption of consolidated reports, within its mandate.

The de facto Deputy Foreign Minister of occupied Abkhazia, Odyssey Bigvava, stated that "the Republic of Abkhazia is not a member of the Council of Europe and, accordingly, does not comment on its internal documents." He also criticized the use of the term "occupied territories," arguing it does not reflect reality. Bigvava added, "Georgia continues the course of international isolation of the Abkhazian people." The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the occupied Tskhinvali region issued a similar statement.

MEETINGS IN GENEVA

In 2025, the format of negotiations between Tbilisi and Sokhumi, and between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, remained unchanged. Meetings continued to be held in Geneva within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions, and in Ergneti under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow has increasingly questioned Geneva as the venue for talks, a view shared by Sokhumi and Tskhinvali. Russia claims Switzerland lost its neutral status after joining the EU's restrictive measures against Russia and expressing full solidarity with Kyiv. Supported by its Abkhaz and Ossetian allies, Moscow has sought consensus on relocating the negotiations. Sokhumi and Tskhinvali also cite stricter visa policies that restrict their travel within the Schengen area, including Switzerland. Proposed alternative venues include Belarus and Serbia, but any change would require Tbilisi's consent.

In 2022, only one meeting took place in the Geneva format. In 2023, 2024, and 2025, three meetings were held each year. Before 2022, four rounds of negotiations were typically held annually.

Three rounds of international negotiations were held in Geneva in 2025:

- Round 63 - March 4-5
- Round 64 - June 25-26
- Round 65 - November 11-12



Delegation of occupied Abkhazia in Geneva, 65th round.
Source: mfaapsny.org

In Geneva, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali reiterated demands made in previous years:

- The signing of a legally binding agreement on the non-use of force;
- The delimitation and demarcation of the disputed border, referred to as the “occupation” line.
- An end to alleged violations of the state border regime and provocations attributed to the Georgian side.
- The granting of freedom of movement to residents of the occupied regions who hold national passports. Due to restrictions on Russian passports issued in these regions, residents face travel limitations, especially to European countries.
- The resumption of meetings in Gali within the framework of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.
- The Ossetian side periodically alleges gross violations of the rights of Ossetians born in the Truso Gorge of the Kazbegi municipality. According to Tskhinvali, the Georgian government has refused to allow the return of these “native” villages for several years. The Kazbegi municipality is under the control of the central government of Georgia and borders Russia and the occupied region.
- The Okoni Triptych, which disappeared from Tskhinvali in the early 1990s during the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, is currently held at the Georgian National Museum in Tbilisi. Tskhinvali demands the return of the icon.

The Geneva International Discussions

After the August 2008 Russo-Georgian War, Georgia and Russia established the Geneva International Discussions in line with the August 12, 2008, ceasefire agreement.

In addition to Georgia and Russia, the discussions include representatives from the United States and co-chairs from the OSCE, the European Union, and the United Nations. Representatives from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi also participate. The Chair of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and the Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region take part in the Geneva talks. All participants are represented in their individual capacity. (Note: By decision of the Parliament of Georgia, the temporary administrative-territorial unit in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region was abolished as of January 1, 2026.)

The Geneva International Discussions take place in two parallel working groups. The first group addresses security issues, including agreements between Russia and Georgia on the non-use of force and on the creation of international security mechanisms in Georgia's occupied regions. The second group focuses on the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as other humanitarian concerns, including native-language education, the protection of cultural heritage, and freedom of movement across the occupation line.

MEETINGS IN ERGNETI

In 2025, meetings continued in Ergneti with representatives of the occupied Tskhinvali region as part of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). This format was established during the 6th round of the Geneva discussions on February 18-19, 2009. The IPRM aims to address incidents on the ground and ensure prompt, effective responses. A hotline within the IPRM enables rapid responses to specific incidents and supports their resolution. IPRM meetings are co-chaired by the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and representatives from the UN and the OSCE.

Seven Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings were held in Ergneti in 2025, six in 2024, and seven in 2023. The first IPRM meeting in Ergneti took place on April 23, 2009.

Seven meetings were held in Ergneti in 2025:

- 123rd meeting – February 14
- 124th meeting – April 3
- 125th meeting – June 11
- 126th meeting – July 21
- 127th meeting - September 28
- 128th meeting - November 18
- 129th meeting - December 22



The 128th Meeting in Ergneti.
Source: eumm.eu

The Ergneti meetings focus on issues important to both the Georgian and Ossetian sides. Most topics discussed in 2025 were also raised in 2024, with no significant changes or new developments.

Issues raised by the Georgian side:

- An end to the illegal detention of Georgian citizens and the release all unlawfully detained individuals;
- A stop to the illegal process of “borderization”;
- The bringing to justice of those responsible for the killing of Tamaz Ginturi, who was shot and killed by Russian occupation forces on November 6, 2023.

Issues raised by the Ossetian side:

- Delimitation and demarcation of the so-called “state border” (occupation line), prevention of alleged “border violations”;
- Incidents involving unmanned aerial vehicles near the occupation line, as well as the dissemination of photos and videos on Georgian social media depicting the territory;
- Closure of the Georgian police checkpoint that was opened in the village of Chorchana in 2019. In this context, during the 127th meeting held in the Tskhinvali region, it became apparent that the Georgian side would soon decide to close the checkpoint. These expectations were linked to statements made by the Georgian authorities acknowledging that the establishment of the post was a mistake. Following the 128th meeting, the “South Ossetian side” emphasized that if the Georgian leadership admits the mistake of opening the post, a logical step would be to remove it from the territory of the “Republic of South Ossetia.” The change in Tbilisi’s position regarding the placement of the police checkpoint in Chorchana is linked to an investigation launched into former Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs and Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia concerning the checkpoint's opening;
- Alleged violations of the so-called state border (occupation line) by Georgian police officers. Recent meetings noted “the situation has improved”;
- Alleged violations of the so-called state border (occupation line) by representatives of the European Union Monitoring Mission.

A key outcome of the Ergneti meetings is the agreement to operate the Tiriponi Canal, which is vital for residents in both the occupied territories and areas under Georgia’s central government. The Tiriponi Canal, an irrigation system serving Georgian and Ossetian villages along the occupation line, stopped functioning in 2008. Cooperation on this issue continues, and meeting participants view the canal’s rehabilitation and ongoing operation as positive progress. In 2025, despite technical challenges, irrigation water was largely supplied to villages on both sides.

NEW CURATORS AND A NEW DEPARTMENT

In 2025, the Russian government made significant changes to the oversight of the occupied regions. Early in the year, the curator for these regions within the Presidential Administration was replaced. Additional structural and personnel changes followed in the second half of the year. Since then, Sergey Kiriyenko, First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, has been the most influential figure responsible for the occupied regions. He also oversees relations with Moldova and Armenia.

New Curator - Sergey Kiriyenko

Sergey Kiriyenko became the youngest prime minister in Russian history. During his 1998 premiership, Russia declared its first sovereign default. On October 5, 2016, he was appointed First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration, taking responsibility for the Kremlin's domestic policy. Since February 2022, after Russia began its full-scale military aggression against Ukraine, he has also overseen the Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine.



Sergey Kiriyenko.
Source: wikipedia

Since January 2025, Kiriyenko has served as curator of the occupied regions, succeeding Dmitry Kozak, who held the position from 2020 until his dismissal on September 18. Kozak, a long-standing member of Vladimir Putin's political team, was widely believed to oppose Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine.

Born in Sokhumi in 1962, Kiriyenko has taken an active role in the internal affairs of the occupied regions, in contrast to Kozak, who mainly met with their de facto leaders in Moscow. Kiriyenko is the first curator to be so directly involved, and he frequently visits both regions. He oversaw the Kremlin's preferred candidate, Badra Gunba, in the early illegitimate presidential elections in occupied Abkhazia on February 15 and March 1, 2025. Although the Kremlin has previously interfered in illegitimate elections in the occupied regions, this was the first time the involvement was so overt.

A New Department for Strategic Partnership and Cooperation

Sergey Kiriyenko is closely associated with major structural and personnel changes within the Presidential Administration. On August 29, 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued Decree No. 607, establishing the Department for Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. This department manages relations with neighboring countries and select states in the "Global South." Reports indicate its focus will be on "humanitarian cooperation" and "soft power." Kiriyenko will oversee the department.

The decree also dissolved the departments for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries and Cross-Border Cooperation, both of which had long addressed issues in the occupied regions. On October 20, by presidential order, Igor Maslov, head of the Department of Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, was dismissed. On October 27, Putin also dismissed Alexei Filatov, head of the Cross-Border Cooperation Department. Both officials were among the most experienced in this field.

On October 24, by presidential order, Vadim Titov was appointed head of the Department for Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. Titov previously worked at Rosatom under Kiriyenko, and is considered part of his team. He lacks experience with issues related to the occupied regions.



Vadim Titov.
Source: usolie-citi.ru

Who Will the New Curator at the Ministry of Economic Development Be?

On July 7, 2025, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin appointed Deputy Minister of Economic Development Dmitry Volvach as head of the Federal Accreditation Service. From 2021, Volvach served as curator of the occupied regions, and was regarded as a leading expert in the field. He regularly visited the regions and managed Russian-funded projects there. At this time, Second Deputy Minister Sergey Nazarov has replaced Volvach, and it is unclear if Nazarov will continue as curator for Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Nazarov has prior experience with the occupied regions, both as deputy minister and as a former curator.

New Curator at The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mikhail Kalugin has been appointed Director of the Fourth Department for CIS Countries at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This department manages relations with Georgia and the Russian-occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Kalugin began his diplomatic career in 2002, and has served at both the ministry's central office and in foreign missions. Open sources indicate his name has appeared in discussions about possible Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. From 2020 to 2025, he was Deputy Director of the Fourth Department for CIS Countries. On August 1, 2025, Kalugin succeeded Denis Gonchar, who served as Director from 2019 to 2025.



Mikhail Kalugin.
Source: mid.ru

Who Will Draw the "Border" Lines?

On October 22, 2025, Nikolai Udovichenko was appointed by presidential decree as Special Representative for the delimitation and demarcation of Russia's state border with neighboring members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. He is to oversee border matters with Georgia and the occupied regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. Udovichenko was also named Head of the Russian Delegation to the Multilateral Negotiations on the Caspian Sea issue. In both roles, he succeeds Mikhail Petrakov, who became Ambassador to Australia on August 21, 2025.



Nikolay Udovichenko.
Source: sputnik-abkhazia.ru

Personnel Changes in the Southern Military District

On November 8, 2025, the President of the Russian Federation appointed Alexander Sanchik, Commander of the Southern Military District, as Deputy Minister of Defense. The Southern Military District comprises military bases in the occupied regions, including the 7th Military Base in Abkhazia and the 4th Military Base in the Tskhinvali region. Sanchik had served as district commander since November 2024.

ILLEGITIMATE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: KREMLIN-BACKED CANDIDATE WINS

In 2025, Badra Gunba was declared the winner of the disputed presidential elections in Russian-occupied Abkhazia. Since the end of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict in 1993, nine illegitimate presidential elections have taken place: one indirect and eight direct. Gunba is the sixth consecutive de facto president and the first to have not participated in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, signaling the rise of a new generation in Abkhazian politics.



Badra Gunba's inauguration.
Source: presidentofabkhazia.org

Why Were Early "Presidential Elections" Held?

Badra Gunba became the next "president" of occupied Abkhazia following early, illegitimate presidential elections called during a prolonged political crisis. Key issues fueling opposition and public discontent included the transfer of the "Bichvinta state dacha" to Russia, proposed draft laws on foreign agents and apartments, and the ratification of an investment agreement with

Russia. The investment agreement ultimately triggered Moscow's intervention, as Russia had tolerated the "disobedience" of its "strategic ally" for some time. To expedite resolution, Russia pressured occupied Abkhazia by partially cutting funding, disrupting salary payments, and withholding assistance to Sokhumi during its energy crisis. Under Kremlin pressure, de facto President Aslan Bzhania attempted to ratify the investment agreement on November 15, 2024. Facing strong resistance, he resigned on November 19 and called early "presidential elections."

The First Round

The first round of the unrecognized presidential elections took place on February 15, 2025. According to the so-called Central Election Commission, 98,790 people participated. The vote breakdown was as follows:

- **Badra Gunba**, “Vice President” during Aslan Bzhania’s “presidency”: 45,817 votes (46.38%).
- **Adgur Ardzinba**, “Minister of Economy” and “Vice Prime Minister” during Raul Khajimba’s “presidency” (2015-2020), leader of the opposition “People’s Movement of Abkhazia”: 36,476 (36.92%).
- **Robert Arshba**, former head of the so-called Chamber of Control: 7,434 (7.53%).
- **Oleg Bartsits**, former so-called trade representative of Abkhazia in Russia: 3,988 (4.04%).
- **Adgur Khurkhumali**, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Black Sea Development Bank: 896 (0.91%).

A total of 1,381 voters cast ballots against all candidates. 2,798 ballots were deemed invalid.

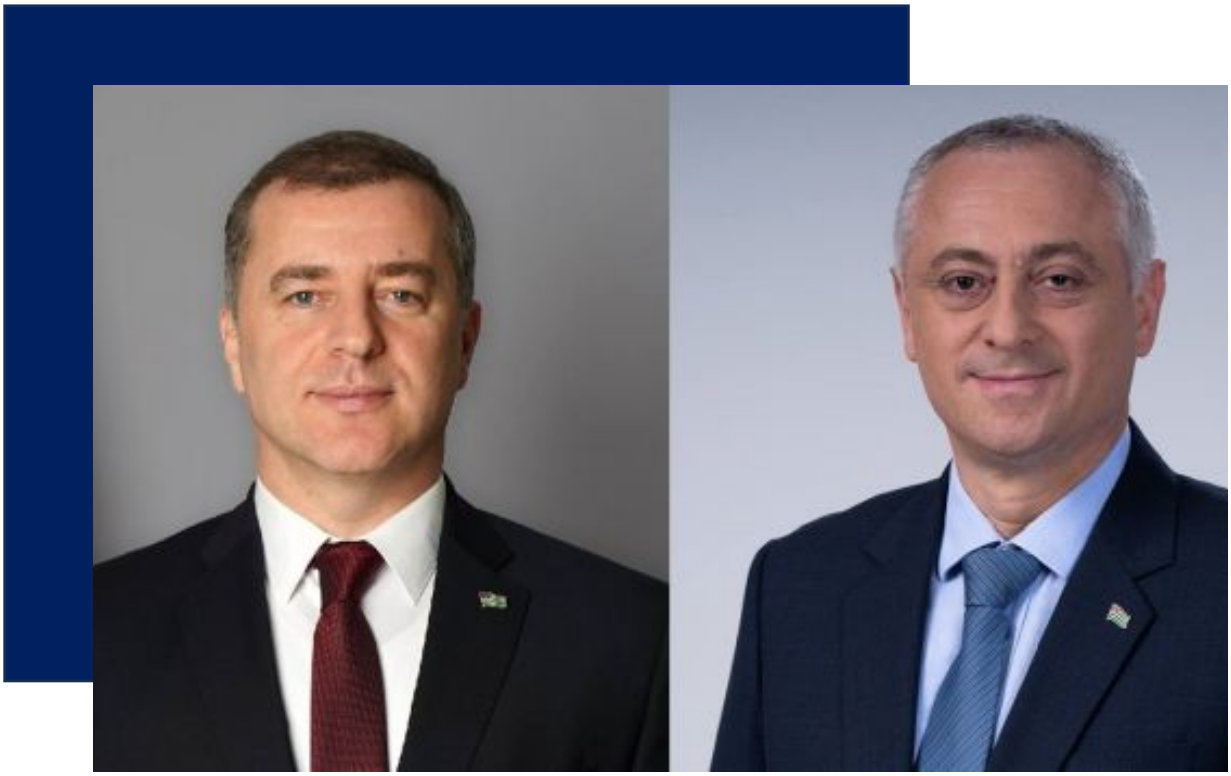
The “elections” took place at 152 polling stations in Abkhazia and at two in Russia: Moscow and Cherkessk. Notably, no polling stations were opened in Turkey, not even in Sakarya Province, home to many descendants of Abkhazian Muhajirs. According to the so-called Central Election Commission, Turkish authorities prevented voting from being organized there.

The Second Round

According to the so-called Central Election Commission, 70% of “voters” participated in the second round, totaling 100,412 people, over 1,000 more than in the first round. Of these, 2,065 voted against all candidates, and 1,687 ballots were declared invalid. The votes were distributed as follows:

- **Badra Gunba:** 54,954 votes (54.73%)
- **Adgur Ardzinba:** 41,708 votes (41.54%)

If votes cast “against all” and invalid ballots are excluded, Gunba received 57% of the vote, while Ardzinba received 43%.



Adgur Ardzinba and Badra Gunba.
Source: eadaily.com

How Was the Election Campaign Conducted?

Russia had interfered in “presidential elections” in the occupied regions before, but, for the first time, the Kremlin openly supported its preferred candidate, Badra Gunba, and mobilized the entire Russian state apparatus and propaganda machine in his favor.

Pro-Russian vs anti-Russian candidates: For the first time, the main candidates were explicitly labeled as pro-Russian and anti-Russian. Kremlin favorite Badra Gunba was portrayed as pro-Russian, while his main opponent, Adgur Ardzinba, was framed in Russian media as anti-Russian.

“Pro-Turkish” narrative: Ardzinba was depicted as anti-Russian and also labeled pro-Turkish, accused of promoting Turkish interests.

Armenian electorate: In these “elections,” the overwhelming majority of the Armenian population supported Gunba. Ardzinba’s supporters claimed this was due to pressure on the Armenian community and its leaders. Ardzinba, in turn, was accused of harboring anti-Armenian sentiments on the basis of his statements and actions.

Election technologies and “black PR”: The involvement of Russian political technologists was noticeable. Both sides actively used so-called “black PR” techniques against each other during the campaign.

Open support from Moscow: While Russia has backed specific "presidential" candidates in the past, the scale and openness of support for Gunba were unprecedented. This was demonstrated by the visit to Abkhazia of Sergey Kiriyenko, the curator of the occupied regions and First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration. The Kremlin's backing was further underscored by Gunba's visit to Moscow and his high-level meetings with Russian government officials.

Use of administrative resources: Following Aslan Bzhania's resignation, members of the de facto government retained their positions until a new "president" was elected, in line with the agreement to resolve the political crisis. This enabled the extensive use of administrative resources in Gunba's favor.

Who Is Badra Gunba?

Badra Gunba, born in 1981, is the first "president" of Abkhazia to have not participated in the 1992–1993 Abkhazian War, due to age restrictions. Previously, participation in the war was considered a "mandatory" credential for Abkhazian political figures. Gunba graduated from Saratov State Agrarian University in 2003, with a degree in accounting and auditing. In 2007, he earned the academic title of Candidate of Economic Sciences. Between 2003 and 2007, he held various positions in the Saratov administration. In 2007, Gunba began working in Abkhazia as a legal affairs officer in the de facto government, a role he held until 2009. He then served as "Deputy Minister of Culture" from 2009 to 2011, and as "Minister of Culture" from 2011 to 2014 during Alexander Ankvab's "presidency." After Ankvab's resignation in 2014, Gunba pursued entrepreneurial activities. In 2020, following Aslan Bzhania's victory, he was appointed "Vice President." Gunba's "vice-president" is Beslan Bigvava, former head of the Ochamchire district.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT "ELECTIONS" AND THE RUSSIAN POLITICAL TECHNOLOGISTS

On November 8, 2025, illegitimate local self-government "elections" were held in occupied Abkhazia. De facto President Badra Gunba issued a decree calling the "elections" on August 27. Since the end of the Georgian–Abkhazian conflict in 1993, a total of eight local self-government "elections" have been held, the first in 1998. Notably, no local self-government "elections" are held in the occupied Tskhinvali region.

The date of the "elections" was initially uncertain due to repeated postponements, as they overlapped with the illegitimate presidential elections. The "elections" were originally scheduled for April 6, but on February 19, the decision was revoked. The term of local self-government "deputies" was then extended, first to June 7 and later to November 8.

Under the existing rules, a person aged 18 or older has the right to participate in the "elections," while a person aged 25 or older may be elected.

On July 30, 2025, the "parliament" amended the relevant "law," increasing the term of office of local self-government "deputies" from four to five years.

The Results

A total of 288 individuals, both members of political parties and independent candidates, competed for the "deputy" seat. 161 "deputies" were elected in the district assemblies:

- Sokhumi City Assembly - 19
- Gagra District Assembly - 25
- Gudauta District Assembly - 29
- Sokhumi District Assembly - 15
- Gulripshi District Assembly - 15
- Ochamchire District Assembly - 32
- Tkvarcheli District Assembly - 15
- Gali District Assembly - 11

"Deputies" were elected to the Bichvinta and Akhali Athoni city assemblies, as well as to village and township local self-government bodies.

According to media reports, supporters of the de facto government secured more than 75% of the mandates.

The Russian Political Technologists

The de facto government participated in these "elections" as the "Abkhazian Team," launching an extensive information campaign. Posters bearing the inscription "Abkhazian Team - President's Team" appeared throughout the region, signaling support from the de facto president, Badra Gunba. As in previous "presidential elections," Russian political and technological interference was evident, leading to a scandal. Opposition "MP" and Aidgilara leader Kan Kvarchia, whose Russian citizenship was revoked in 2024, reported that three Russian

specialists (Ivan Reva, Pavel Timofeev, and Dmitry Budykin) were present in a Sokhumi building, working for the pro-government newspaper Abkhazskiy Vestnik and campaigning for pro-government candidates. One was reportedly seen inside the "Election Commission" building. The Russian political technologists were detained and questioned, after which a video was released in which they admitted to working for the de facto president's administration. They soon left Abkhazia and later claimed they had been physically assaulted and threatened with weapons.

The incident prompted a strong response from Russia. On November 24, the Sochi Department of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Krasnodar Territory opened a criminal case against Kan Kvarchia, former Deputy Prosecutor General Eshsou Kakalia, and Khina Dumaa, a member of the Supreme Council of the veterans' organization Aruaa. They were charged with armed assault on Russian citizens, declared wanted at the federal level, and the alleged damages were estimated at up to 2 million rubles. A representative of the so-called Prosecutor General's Office stated, "under Abkhazian legislation, the extradition of Abkhazian citizens to Russia is not permitted," a position later confirmed by the de facto president.

The First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, Sergey Kiriyenko, commented in an interview with Abkhazian television that the Russian political technologists had violated the law and local moral and ethical norms, but condemned the use of violence against them. Kiriyenko's remarks reflected a strong public reaction in Abkhazia, where Russian involvement was widely seen as interference in internal affairs.

To address domestic discontent, the de facto Prosecutor General's Office opened an administrative case against Ivan Reva on December 4 for involving an unauthorized individual in election campaigning. On December 16, the Sokhumi City Court found Reva guilty of an administrative offense and fined him 1,800 rubles. However, on December 22, the Prosecutor General's Office, apparently under Russian pressure, also initiated a criminal case related to alleged death threats against Russian citizens, violations of correspondence secrecy, and embezzlement of financial resources.

THE NEW "GOVERNMENT" OF OCCUPIED ABKHAZIA

On April 3, 2025, the new "president" of occupied Abkhazia, Badra Gunba, dismissed the de facto "government" and appointed Vladimir Delba as "prime minister." Delba, considered more of a technocrat than a political figure, has served in public roles since 1996, mainly within the de facto "Ministry of Finance." He was "vice prime minister" and "minister of finance" during Alexander Ankvab's "presidency" from 2011 to 2015, and returned to the same post in 2020 after Aslan Bzhania became "president." This has ensured continuity in Abkhazia's financial management.



Vladimir Delba.
Source: apsnypress.info

The new "government" structure was approved by Gunba on April 18, 2025. Under the new structure, the number of "vice prime ministers" increased from three to five, the number of "ministries" increased to 15, and nine "state committees" were also established within the "government." In total, the "government" structure comprises 33 units, including "ministries," "committees," and "services" or "departments."

With these changes, the “Ministry of Energy and Transport” was transformed into the “Ministry of Energy,” while transport-related functions were transferred to the “Ministry of Economy.” The “ministerial” posts were distributed as follows:

- “Minister of Foreign Affairs” - Oleg Bartsits. He previously served as Abkhazia's so-called trade representative in Russia and was Gunba’s competitor in the illegitimate presidential elections. Bartsits was once considered an Ankvab cadre. He replaced Sergei Shamba, a veteran of Abkhaz politics, in this post.
- “Minister of Economy” - Teimuraz Mikvabia. He previously served as “deputy minister.”
- “Minister of Culture” - Daur Kove. He previously served as “Minister of Foreign Affairs” during Raul Khajimba’s “presidency,” and as “Minister of Culture” during Aslan Bzhania’s “presidency.” Most recently, he served as deputy head of the so-called Gali District Administration.
- “Minister of Finance” - Said Gubaz. He previously headed the treasury department within the same “ministry.”
- “Minister of Taxes and Fees” - Edgar Benia. He previously headed the regional division of the same “ministry.”
- “Minister of Energy” - Batal Mushba. He participated in the Sokhumi Airport rehabilitation project and is a member of the “Abkhazian Team” competition.
- “Minister of Social Security and Demographic Policy” - Ruslan Azhba. He was the only “minister” who lost his position in 2025. Azhba was dismissed on October 13, 2025. He had held this position since 2016.
- “Minister of Education” - Khana Gunba. He was previously a schoolteacher and deputy head of the so-called administration of the Gagra district.
- “Minister of Tourism” - Astamur Logua. He served as a member of the “parliament” from 2017 to 2022.

There are five “vice prime ministers” in the new “government.” At this stage, one position remains vacant.

- “Vice Prime Minister” - Robert Kiut. He retained the position of “Minister of Internal Affairs.”
- The position of “vice prime minister” was retained by Jansugh Nanba, who also served as “vice prime minister” and “minister of finance” during Khajimba’s tenure in 2018–2020. He also held these positions under Aslan Bzhania and, since 2024, has headed the newly created “Ministry of Transport and Energy.”
- “Vice Prime Minister” - Taras Khagba. He organized the “Team Abkhazia” competition. Khagba oversees youth policy.
- “Vice Prime Minister” - Varazdat Minosyan. He was a representative of the Armenian community in the so-called Public Chamber, and campaigned in favor of Gunba.

The following positions were retained:

- “Minister of Defense” - Vladimir Anua.
- “Minister of Emergency Situations” - Lev Kvitsinya.
- “Minister of Justice” - Henri Bartsits.
- “Minister of Health” - Eduard Butba.
- “Minister of Agriculture” - Beslan Jopua.

IMPORTANT PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE OCCUPIED TSKHINVALI REGION

In 2025, significant personnel changes occurred in the occupied Tskhinvali region. While some ministers were replaced, the most notable changes affected law enforcement agencies.

New "Defense Minister"

On June 2, 2025, de facto President Alan Gagloev appointed Lieutenant General Yuri Yarovetsky as the new "Minister of Defense" of the Tskhinvali region, a role traditionally held by an ethnic Russian military officer. Yarovetsky, the highest-ranking officer to assume this position, was born in 1965 in the Uzbek SSR, and graduated from the Higher Tank Command School. His career includes service in Chechnya in the 1990s, as first deputy commander of the 1st Tank Army of the Russian Western Military District from 2016 to 2020, and participation in the Russian military campaign in Syria. He also has advisory experience in Nicaragua, which recognizes the so-called independence of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The position of "Minister of Defense" had been vacant since April 18, 2024, following the resignation of Russian Major General Marat Pavlov.



Yuri Yarovetsky.
Source: presidentruo.org

The New "Minister of Internal Affairs"

On June 9, 2025, Gagloev dismissed the "Minister of Internal Affairs," Alan Guchmazov, and appointed Erislav Mamiev, who had served as Guchmazov's deputy. Several other personnel changes were also made within the "ministry." Mamiev had previously been the "first deputy minister" and head of the criminal militia. According to reports, his appointment was met with concern due to perceived deficiencies in his personal qualities.

New Head of "Security Service"

On June 10, 2025, Gagloev dismissed Oleg Shiran, head of the so-called State Security Committee. Shiran, a Russian national, had served since 2019. The official reason for his dismissal was not disclosed. However, regional rumors suggest Shiran suspended his first deputy, Alexander Tuaev, on May 9 for alleged commercial activities. Tuaev, a friend of Gagloev, may have influenced Gagloev's decision.



Yuri Kadiy, Chairman of the so-called State Security Committee.
Source: cominf.org

On July 21, Gagloev appointed Colonel Yuri Kadiy as the new chairman of the so-called State Security Committee. Kadiy, born July 11, 1973, graduated from the Academy of the Federal Security Service of Russia in 1998. He held various roles in Russian special services from 1998 to 2015. For nearly 10 years, until April 2025, he was deputy head of the so-called State Security Service in occupied Abkhazia. He is a veteran of counterterrorist operations in the North Caucasus.

The appointment of Russian citizens as heads of the "Security Service" and the "Ministry of Defense" in the Tskhinvali region is a long-established tradition.

New head of the "Foreign Intelligence Service"

On September 1, 2025, Gagloev appointed Alexander Gabuev as head of the so-called Foreign Intelligence Service. Born in 1969 in Tskhinvali, Gabuev has held various roles in the Russian Federal Security Service since 1995. He succeeded Alexei Varziev, who was dismissed on March 1, 2024, having served since 2017. During the interim, Varziev's deputy temporarily led the service.



Alexander Gabuev, head of the "Foreign Intelligence Service."
Source: cominf.org

WHAT IS BEING BUILT AT THE OCHAMCHIRE PORT?

On October 4, 2023, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Aslan Bzhania, the de facto president of the occupied territory of Abkhazia, in Sochi. Following the meeting, Izvestia published an interview with Bzhania summarizing their discussions. The most contentious issue was the proposed establishment of a permanent Russian Navy base in Ochamchire. As of 2025, some development is underway at the port and in the surrounding area, but the majority of the new infrastructure serves economic rather than military purposes.

What Changes Were Made in 2025?

Container Terminal

In early 2025, an intermodal container terminal was completed approximately 0.5 km from the port of Ochamchire. The project, supported by Russia through a soft loan scheme, cost 800 million rubles, of which 740 million were provided as loans. The terminal is designed to facilitate efficient cargo delivery between Russia and third countries for both exports and imports.

The terminal measures 250 meters by 500 meters, and covers 1.5 hectares. It is connected to three railway lines totaling 550 meters, with platforms for unloading railcars. The facility can store up to 1,200 containers simultaneously. A Chinese-made Zoomlion self-propelled crane, with a 450-ton lifting capacity, was acquired to enable container loading onto ships.

Oktay Khazirishi, Deputy General Director of Transecosystem, stated that the terminal aims to ensure rapid cargo delivery between Russia and third countries. He expressed hope that the port of Ochamchire will become a key link in international transport routes, and noted strong interest from container shipping companies.

Khazirishi reported that the terminal has already received its first shipment from Russia, consisting of 46 railcars, and that foreign companies are placing orders. He highlighted the port's advantages over Russian ports, including fewer stormy days compared to Novorossiysk, and lower transportation costs to Turkish ports. In July 2025, the terminal received eight containers of factory equipment intended for shipment from Turkey to Russia.

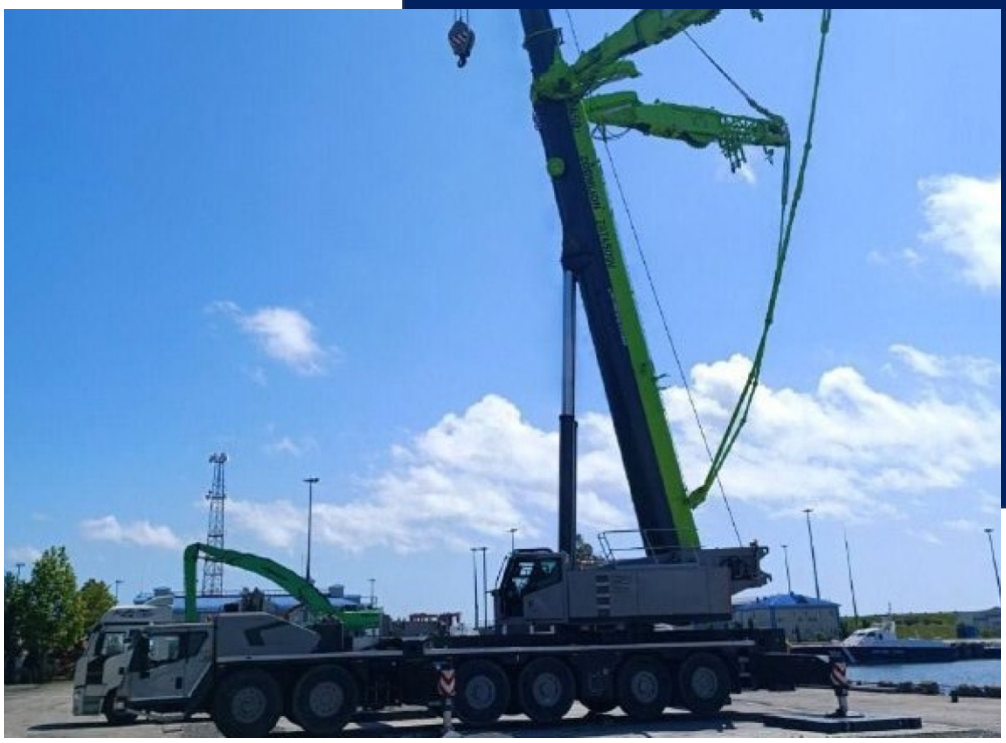
The construction of the container terminal, along with the increased revenues of the Abkhazian Railway in recent years (586 million rubles in 2024; 504 million in 2023; 250 million in 2022; 175 million in 2021; and 68 million in 2020), indicates that the port of Ochamchire is actively used for cargo transportation, particularly between Russia and Turkey. Although Turkey recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity, vessels owned by Turkish companies are engaged in cargo transport and fishing in the waters of occupied Abkhazia. In turn, Russia, under Western sanctions, uses Abkhazian infrastructure to facilitate illegal trade and circumvent them.



The container terminal in Ochamchire.
Source: sputnik-abkhazia.ru

The New Platform

In July 2025, construction of a new platform at the eastern berth of Ochamchire port was completed. According to the so-called Abkhaz Maritime Administration, the platform is designed to accommodate large-tonnage mechanization facilities, thereby significantly increasing the port's capacity. In June, a cargo crane was installed to improve the efficient handling of sea containers.



The new platform at the port of Ochamchire.
Source: apsnypress.info

Will a Military Base Be Opened in Ochamchire? Badra Gunba's Comment

De facto President Badra Gunba addressed the planned establishment of a Russian facility in Ochamchire. On May 31, 2025, he told TASS that a material and technical base for the Russian Black Sea Fleet would be constructed in the Ochamchire region. When asked if this would be a military and naval base, Gunba stated, "No, it would not be a military and naval base as such, but rather a material and technical base built specifically for the Black Sea Fleet." To date, no action has been taken on this initiative.

For more details on the ongoing works at the Ochamchire port, see: Russia Permanent Naval Base in Occupied Abkhazia-What to Know about the Work Underway at the Port of Ochamchire

SOKHUMI AIRPORT: FIRST CIVILIAN FLIGHTS IN 32 YEARS

On May 1, 2025, civilian flights to Sokhumi resumed after a 32-year suspension following the 1992-1993 Abkhazian War. In 2025, only Western-sanctioned airlines from Russian cities operated these flights.

When Was the Decision Made to Rebuild the Airport?

On July 26, 2019, the Russian government assigned the international code URAS to Sokhumi Airport and recognized it as part of the Rostov-on-Don airspace, despite this decision contradicting international norms.

Restoring Sokhumi Airport has long been a priority for the de facto authorities of occupied Abkhazia. The project holds symbolic significance in the region, as the airport is seen as an attribute of "statehood." Substantive discussions began in 2023, when Russian investors showed interest in the restoration. On June 16, 2023, during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov and the "Minister of Economy" of the occupied region, Kristina Ozgan, signed an agreement to restore the "Ardzinba Sokhumi International Airport." The Russian investor received a 49-year lease and will receive tax incentives for 25 years. The agreement requires the Russian side to implement the investment project, while the Abkhazian side guarantees property rights, tax benefits, and the transfer of the land plot.

Under the agreement with Russia, the aerodrome and its infrastructure will remain "state" property, while the investor will have the right to use them. The airport will have dual-use status, and the deployment of aircraft belonging to the de facto Ministry of Defense of occupied Abkhazia will continue.



Maxim Reshetnikov and Kristina Ozgan signing the agreement. *Source: mineconom-ra.org*

Who Built Sokhumi Airport?

On October 27, 2023, the de facto government signed an agreement with the Russian company *Infrastructure Development* for the comprehensive reconstruction of the V. G. Ardzinba Sokhumi International Airport. The company is owned by Rashid Nurgaliev, son of Rashid Nurgaliev, Deputy Secretary of the Russian Security Council and curator of the occupied regions. The Abkhazian side aims to encourage tourism by reopening the airport, while Russia expects the airport to ease congestion at Sochi Airport and the Adler automobile checkpoint. Russia's interest in the project is also driven by international sanctions, which have restricted Russian flights to several destinations.

The Airport Project

The project included the reconstruction of a 3,500-meter-long, 52-meter-wide runway, enabling the airport to receive both Russian and foreign aircraft. The airport's infrastructure was also renovated and expanded, with a new passenger terminal constructed. The airport can accommodate a range of passenger and cargo aircraft, such as the Superjet-100, Tu-214, MC-21, Airbus A320, Airbus A330, and Boeing 737. Construction of the historically significant terminal is ongoing. Upon completion, the airport will have a throughput capacity of 400 passengers per hour.

Who Can(Not) Fly to Sokhumi?

In 2006, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) revoked Sokhumi Airport's code, and no longer recognizes it as an international airport, meaning that international flights cannot operate from it. Further, no airline may conduct international flights until Georgia makes a relevant decision and provides oversight of flight safety. Currently, only Russian companies operating solely within Russia can use the airport.

The Georgian Civil Aviation Agency's statement that flights from Russia to Sokhumi Airport are illegal prompted discontent in Abkhazia. In response, the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs again urged Tbilisi to sign a non-use-of-force agreement and to stop what it called "confrontational rhetoric." On March 14, 2025, the Civil Aviation Agency of Georgia reiterated that operating Sokhumi Airport is illegal and violates international norms, and stated it remains in ongoing coordination with ICAO to prohibit international flights from the airport.

The Director of the Civil Aviation Agency, Givi Davitashvili, made a similar statement at the 42nd ICAO Assembly, presenting Georgia's position on the illegal flights that began in occupied Abkhazia in May 2025. According to Davitashvili, Sokhumi Airport lacks an ICAO code because the occupation prevents Georgia from exercising jurisdiction over Abkhazia and from ensuring aviation safety and security oversight.

When Did Flights Start?

The first test flight took place on February 7, 2025. In March, Sokhumi Airport completed its certification, enabling full operations. The airport passed inspections for flight safety, regulatory compliance, and international civil aviation standards. It employs 319 people, including 270 local residents.

Rosaviatsia authorized several Western-sanctioned airlines to operate flights from Russian cities to Sokhumi. However, between May 1 and October 25, 2025, flights departed from only four cities:

- **Moscow - Sokhumi:** On May 1, Sokhumi Airport received its first flight from Moscow's Vnukovo Airport. The Russian airline YuVT Aero, registered in the Republic of Tatarstan, operated the flight with a 50-seat Bombardier CRJ-200 aircraft. The arrival was marked by a ceremonial atmosphere. De facto President Badra Gunba and First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration Sergey Kiriyenko attended the event. According

to Kiriyenko, the airport's operation creates opportunities for tourism development in eastern Abkhazia. The Secretary of the de facto Security Council, Raul Lolua, said Georgia should "get used to the Sokhumi Airport." On June 12, Sokhumi Airport received its first wide-body aircraft, an Airbus A330-200. Three hundred and fifty passengers flew from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to Sokhumi. The airline iFly operated the flight, which was organized by the Russian travel company Biblio-Globus, which also organizes tourist trips to the territory under the control of Georgia's central government.

- **Nizhny Novgorod-Sokhumi:** The first flight from Nizhny Novgorod arrived in Sokhumi on May 13. The flight, a 100-seat Embraer 190 aircraft, was operated by Ikar Airlines.
- **Khanty-Mansiysk-Sokhumi:** The first flight from Khanty-Mansiysk took place on June 28. It was operated by the Russian airline RusLine using a 50-seat Bombardier CRJ100/200, and included a technical stop in Saratov.
- **St. Petersburg-Sokhumi:** The first flight departed from St. Petersburg on August 14. The flights were operated twice a week by the company iFly with Airbus 330 aircraft.



The first wide-body aircraft flight from Moscow to Sokhumi. *Source: apsnypress.info*

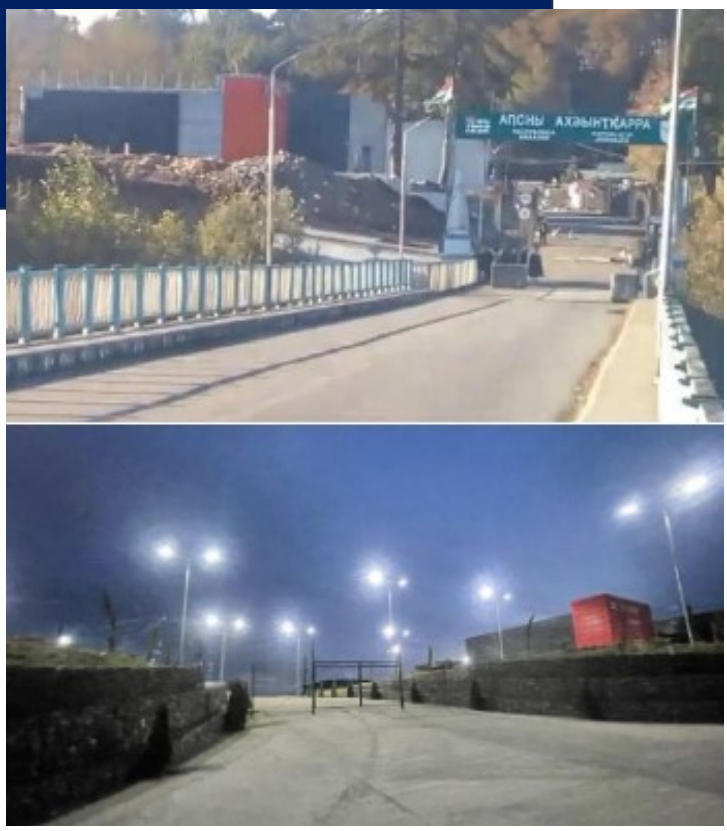
The summer season at Sokhumi Airport ended on October 25. To encourage flights, all routes except the Moscow flight were subsidized. With the tourist season over, regular flights were suspended and winter flight frequency was reduced. Starting November 1, 2025, only the Sokhumi-Moscow (Vnukovo Airport) flight operated twice a week. These flights were operated by the Russian airline RusLine using a Canadian-made 50-seat Bombardier CRJ100/200.

Sokhumi Airport Statistics

From May 1 to October 25, 2025, more than 520 flights were operated at Sokhumi Airport. During this period, the airport served approximately 120,000 passengers and transported 887 tons of baggage.

Webpage of Sokhumi Airport.

LOGISTICS-TRANSIT HUB IN THE OCCUPIED GALI DISTRICT



The cargo terminal, photo circulated on Abkhazian Telegram channels in October 2025.

On December 7, 2025, it was reported that construction of a transit and logistics hub (also referred to as a cargo terminal) at the Enguri checkpoint in the Gali district of occupied Abkhazia was in its final stage. Abkhazian and Georgian media had periodically reported on the construction of new infrastructure at the Enguri Bridge; however, the first public statement on this issue was made by the Abkhazian side only on December 7, catching the general public by surprise. The construction of new infrastructure at the so-called Enguri checkpoint was confirmed in an interview with the General Director of the transit and logistics company, Astamur Akhsalba; however, even after his interview, ambiguity persists, and several questions remain.

What Was Built?

On December 7, 2025, Astamur Akhsalba, General Director of the transit and logistics company, said in an interview with Russian state media Sputnik that construction of a joint Abkhazian-Russian transit hub in the Gali district is nearly complete. He said the project is 80% finished and the cargo terminal is now being installed with new equipment, including scanners, X-ray machines, and inspection pits. He explained that transit involves moving cargo, which must be thoroughly checked for security. At the initial stage, Abkhazia will receive an annual income of 300-600 million rubles from transit services.



Model of the cargo terminal.
Image from an Abkhazian television report.

According to Akhsalba, the project's implementation is linked to an agreement signed between the customs services of Russia and Abkhazia in 2010-2011 that permits transit shipments. In October 2010, Moscow and Sokhumi signed an agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters. The document facilitates the movement of goods and vehicles, provides for the mutual recognition of customs documents, seals, and stamps, and permits the establishment of a specialized customs body on the other party's territory.

Who Will Use the Transit Route?

According to Akhsalba, the new cargo terminal is expected to serve as an alternative to the Larsi border checkpoint (the only road route connecting Russia and Georgia), which is often closed due to adverse weather, and which is prone to traffic jams. Akhsalba claimed the terminal will facilitate cargo movement between Russia and third countries (including Iran, India, and Azerbaijan), and placed special emphasis on Iran.

How Will the Transit Corridor Work?

Due to the underdeveloped transport infrastructure in occupied Abkhazia, the transit scheme is expected to use both road and rail networks. Trucks will cross the Enguri Bridge along the occupation line and undergo inspection at the Enguri checkpoint's transit and logistics hub. Most trucks will proceed to the container terminal near the port of Ochamchire, where cargo will be transferred to railway wagons for transport to Russia. The railway has supported cargo transport in occupied Abkhazia for several years. In 2024, Abkhazian Railway revenue reached 586 million

rubles, a six-fold increase from 2019. During the first 11 months of 2025, the railway transported over 1 million tons of cargo, primarily coal.

This mechanism will also function in reverse, allowing cargo from Russia to transit through occupied Abkhazia by rail and road, cross the occupation line, and continue through Georgia to third countries. In some cases, sea transport via the port of Ochamchire will be possible.

Akhsalba stated that test shipments have already been conducted both to Russia and from Russia to Iran.

According to Akhsalba, Abkhazia will perform only a transit function and provide logistical services to transit participants. Drivers holding Georgian citizenship and vehicles with Georgian license plates are not permitted in Abkhazia. In these cases, cargo will be transferred to vehicles not subject to these restrictions. Akhsalba noted that this issue may be resolved in the future following an agreement between Tbilisi and Sokhumi on specific matters, such as Tbilisi's commitment to the non-use of force. He also stated that goods produced in Georgia will not transit through Abkhazia.

Who Implemented the Project?

Akhsalba notes that the idea for the transit hub had existed for some time, but following the start of the "special military operation" (Russia's military aggression against Ukraine) in February 2022, it became especially important for Russia. Due to the challenging geopolitical situation, the project remained confidential.

Akhsalba states that the container terminal in Ochamchire was funded by Russia, while the cargo terminal project relied on private investments from Abkhazian and Russian entrepreneurs.

Akhsalba identified Andrei Belyaninov as a supporter of the project. Belyaninov previously led the Federal Customs Service (2006-2016) and the Eurasian Development Bank (2017-2020). Since 2025, he has served as Secretary-General of the International Union of Non-Governmental Organizations, "Assembly of the World Peoples." Akhsalba leads the Assembly's Abkhazian representation. During the Soviet era, Belyaninov worked in the State Security Committee's First Main Directorate (Foreign Intelligence) and served at the Soviet Embassy in East Germany in the late 1980s. Russian media reports that he met Vladimir Putin while in the GDR.

What Do People in Abkhazia Think?

In October, before Akhsalba's statement, Abkhazian social media critical of the de facto government reported that construction of a cargo terminal at the so-called Enguri checkpoint was complete. Telegram users questioned the purpose of opening a terminal for communication with Georgians, who are officially considered adversaries. Some suggested the terminal would boost the checkpoint's throughput capacity. Pro-government Telegram channels claimed the terminal would "increase the attractiveness of the territory for international cooperation" and mark "an important step toward the region's integration into the global economic process."

Social media users also questioned potential fees, benefits for Abkhazia, the readiness of road infrastructure for increased traffic, and how cargo would be inspected at the terminal. There were also doubts that only Georgia or Russia would benefit from transit through Abkhazia, since the corridor would primarily serve sanctioned cargo.

Tbilisi's Response

Following Sputnik's report on December 7, 2025, about new infrastructure at the so-called Enguri checkpoint, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze responded on December 10. He clarified that Georgia is not involved in the process, reiterated that the government does not recognize the purported state border, and characterized the reports as speculation. Kobakhidze cited a prior agreement signed under the previous government, linked to Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization, that permitted the transit of goods through Swiss mediation.* However, he emphasized that progress on this front has been on hold for years, with no action having been taken from the Georgian side. Kobakhidze repeated that there is a general agreement in place, but no activity, and assured that any changes would be communicated publicly.

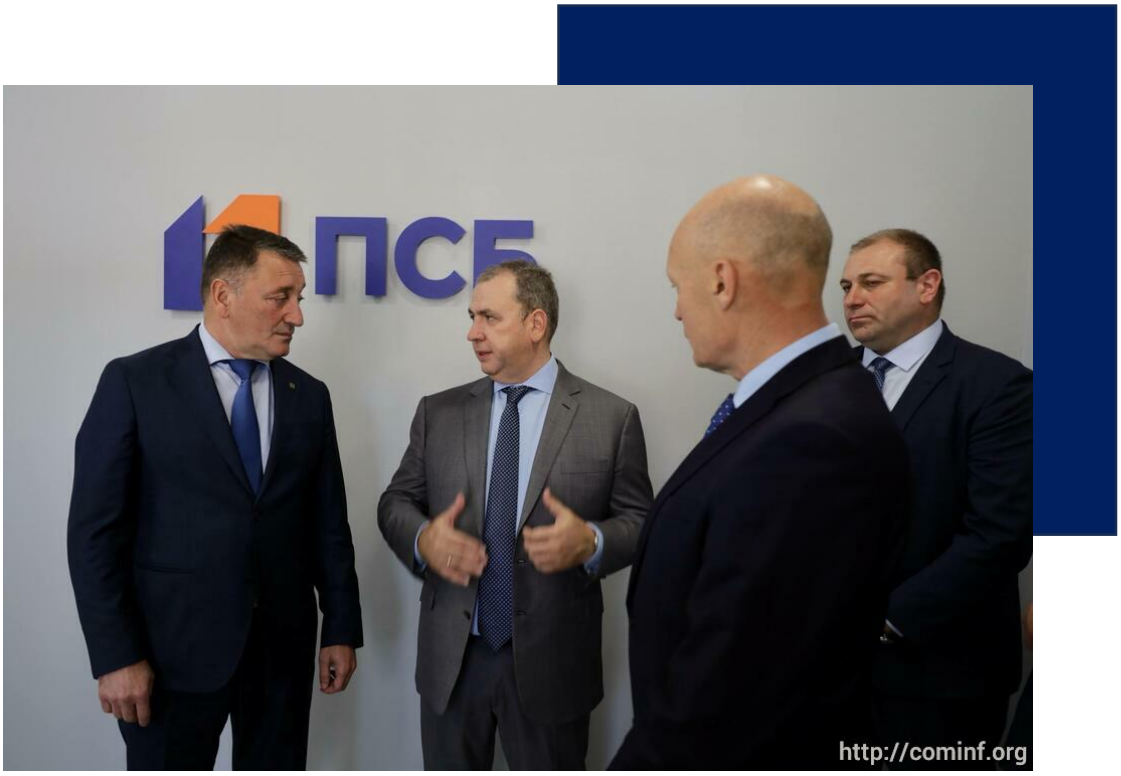
**The 2011 World Trade Organization agreement between Russia and Georgia called for a modern cargo tracking and auditing system, with a Swiss private company overseeing international trade monitoring. It also proposed three trade corridors, two of which pass through occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region. The agreement was not implemented.*

THE RUSSIAN BANK IN THE OCCUPIED REGIONS

In 2025, the Western-sanctioned Russian bank Promsvyazbank began operating in the occupied regions. By presidential decree, it has supported the defense-industrial complex since 2019. On April 1, 2025, the bank was renamed Bank PSB.

The bank's representative offices provide pensions to residents of the occupied regions who hold Russian citizenship. By presidential decree, pensioners in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region receive pensions through a simplified process, which led to the opening of representative offices in both regions.

Beginning April 18, 2025, the bank issued debit cards to pensioners in the occupied regions with Russian citizenship. On July 10, the bank opened a representative office in Sokhumi. The opening was attended by de facto President Badra Gunba and First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration Sergey Kiriyenko. The following day, a representative office opened in Tskhinvali.



Opening of a bank representative office in Tskhinvali.
Source: cominf.org

The Russian Social Fund transfers pensions and social assistance to cards. With the Russian bank now operating in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, pensioners no longer need to travel to Sochi or Vladikavkaz to complete documentation. They can also make commission-free transfers using the bank's mobile application.

Currently, there are no plans to install Russian bank ATMs or terminals in the occupied regions. However, cardholders can withdraw cash at any ATM.

The bank has expanded its activities beyond pension distribution. On September 19, 2025, it signed an agreement with the "Joint Stock Savings Bank of the Republic of South Ossetia," allowing the "Savings Bank" to open a correspondent account with the Russian bank.

A key goal of opening Russian bank representative offices in the occupied regions is to address shortcomings in the delivery of social assistance. Pension distribution has encountered issues, including payments to deceased persons' accounts. These offices will improve oversight of the social assistance system and further integrate the banking systems of the occupied regions, which are already dependent on the Russian banking sector.

About the Bank

Promsvyazbank (Промсвязьбанк) was founded in Moscow in the 1990s by brothers Dmitry and Alexei Ananyev, who owned the company Technoservice. The bank initially served Technoservice and other Russian IT companies. It expanded in the mid-2000s as a universal credit institution and, by 2005, it ranked among Russia's twenty largest banks.

In 2018, Russian authorities charged Alexei and Dmitry Ananyev with embezzlement amounting to more than 100 billion rubles. In May, the bank's shares were transferred to the Russian Treasury, making it fully state-owned. In October 2025, a Moscow court sentenced Alexey Ananyev in absentia to imprisonment for fraud.

The bank is now led by Pyotr Fradkov, son of former Russian Prime Minister and intelligence chief Mikhail Fradkov. Promsvyazbank is classified as a systemically important credit institution, and ranks among Russia's largest banks by assets.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the bank was sanctioned by the EU, the US, the UK, and others. In 2022, it opened branches in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine.

The bank has also been linked to Moldova. Pro-Russian groups reportedly used Promsvyazbank and the Mir payment card system to mobilize voters, fund anti-EU propaganda, and support opponents of EU integration during the 2024 referendum campaign. The bank was also allegedly used to buy votes for pro-Russian parties in the 2025 parliamentary elections.

ENERGY CHALLENGES IN OCCUPIED ABKHAZIA

In occupied Abkhazia, the year 2025 turned out to be less critical for the energy sector than previous years, although the challenges remained unchanged:

- Outdated infrastructure and network equipment are causing significant losses in electricity transmission;
- Difficulties in sourcing spare parts due to obsolete equipment;
- The need to install meters and modern information technology systems;
- Economically unjustified tariffs that do not account for the costs of infrastructure modernization and maintenance;
- Problems with the administration and collection of electricity bill payments;
- Illegal cryptocurrency mining.

Drawing on prior years' experience, the de facto authorities implemented measures to address these challenges, resulting in lower electricity consumption in the occupied region. Efforts to curb cryptocurrency mining were especially significant.

Although tariffs remain economically unjustified, electricity rates in Abkhazia were slightly increased on January 1, 2025: individuals pay 1.70–2.20 rubles; non-profit healthcare and education organizations, railway facilities, and the airport pay 2.20 rubles; legal entities and entrepreneurs pay 3.20 rubles; "state" organizations and Russian military facilities pay 3.10 rubles; and cryptocurrency producers pay 4.20 rubles. This increase follows a 2022 decision for gradual tariff hikes.

To prevent a major energy crisis, electricity supply restrictions were imposed at the start of 2025. Beginning August 1, Abkhazia started receiving commercial electricity from Russia to conserve the Enguri Hydropower Plant's water resources for autumn and winter use.

Electricity bill collection improved in 2025, with over 33,000 meters installed. In the first 11 months, the collection rate reached 53%, up 8% from the previous year, 80% for legal entities, and 37% for individuals. Better collection enabled Chernomorenergo, the main energy company, to cover the cost of commercial electricity from Russia (670 million rubles from August to December) using its own budget.

Even as the energy crisis eases, the de facto government acknowledges that modernizing infrastructure is impossible without external investment. Russia is the only potential investor, but it has long demanded control of the region's energy infrastructure in return. While the de facto government is willing to consider this transfer, the issue is highly sensitive in Abkhazia, where it is seen as a loss of "sovereignty."

CRACKDOWN ON KREMLIN CRITICS, AND THE "FOREIGN AGENTS LAW"

Efforts to suppress civil society and international organizations in occupied Abkhazia must be viewed within the larger framework of Russian-Abkhazian relations. Amid tensions with the West, Moscow has pressured Abkhazia's de facto authorities to restrict Western organizations and NGOs, demanding tighter oversight. In 2025, Russia applied its "foreign agents" law to Abkhazian "citizens" for the first time.

On February 7, 2024, de facto president Aslan Bzhania submitted a "draft law" on "foreign agents" to parliament, targeting non-profits and individuals. Despite promises since 2020, the law remains unadopted.

Nonetheless, pressure on civil society intensified in 2024. Journalists, activists, and critics of the de facto authorities were detained at the Russian-Abkhazian border and sometimes questioned about their views. Reports of physical violence against NGO representatives also increased.

In 2025, Russia began stripping Russian citizenship and labeling individuals as "foreign agents" in occupied Abkhazia, targeting those it deemed opponents of Kremlin policy. This practice escalated before the presidential "elections." "Deputy" Kan Kvarchia and businessman Levan Mikaa lost their citizenship, while musician Baras Kujba was barred from Russia.

On March 7, the Russian Ministry of Justice designated a "citizen" of Abkhazia, who also holds Russian citizenship, as a "foreign agent" for the first time. The individual was Inal Khashig, a well-known journalist and editor of *Chegemskaya Pravda*. According to the Ministry's annotation, Khashig was accused of spreading false information about decisions of the Russian government, and cooperating with foreign political figures. Shortly thereafter, on March 21, two more journalists, Izida Chania (Nuzhnaya Gazeta) and Nizfa Arshba (the Ayashara agency), were also designated as "foreign agents." Prior to these decisions, the Russian television channel NTV aired a report about Chania and Arshba, accusing them of spreading anti-Russian sentiments. Notably, Arshba holds only an Abkhazian "passport."

Many in Abkhazia believe that Moscow punished journalists and politicians for opposing the "investment agreement," which granted Russian businessmen significant advantages. The controversy triggered a political crisis in November 2024, prompting the president's resignation and early "elections."

This was the first time Russia revoked citizenship in Abkhazia for alleged anti-Russian activity. Similar measures had only previously occurred in the occupied Tskhinvali region. Assigning "foreign agent" status was also unprecedented in these areas. Together, these tools have become key instruments for silencing opponents in Russia.

THE "SPY WARS"

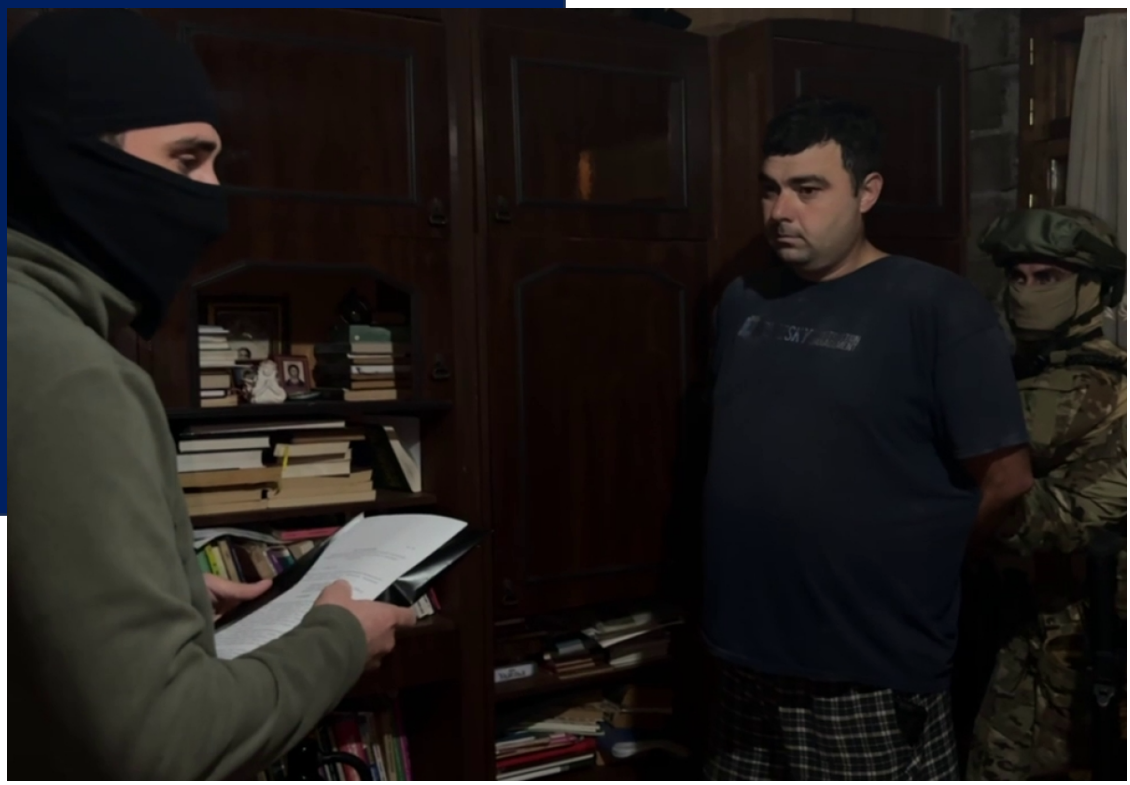
Allegations of “spies” working for Georgian special services have become a prominent issue in the occupied regions. Amid Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, concerns have grown that Georgian special services may increase their activities. The so-called “security services” in these regions have recently reported identifying several “spies,” who were allegedly gathering information for Georgia.

Trial of a “Spy”

On January 21, 2025, the so-called court of occupied Abkhazia delivered a guilty verdict against Kakha Muradov in a case of alleged high treason. According to the security service, Muradov attempted to involve residents of Abkhazia in activities supporting the restoration of Georgia’s territorial integrity, and to collect and transmit information to the special services of a hostile country, allegedly to the detriment of the interests of the “Republic of Abkhazia.” Muradov received a 15-year prison sentence. He was arrested in Gagra on April 24, 2024, and is described as a citizen of both Georgia and Abkhazia. The security service reports that Muradov was born in Abkhazia in 1977, worked for the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs from 1994 to 1999, and returned to Abkhazia in 1999. He was allegedly tasked with monitoring trains entering Abkhazia from Russia to determine whether they were transporting armored vehicles or other military equipment. The criminal case against Muradov was initiated on May 9, 2024.

Arrest of a "Spy" Teacher

On October 1, 2025, officers of the State Security Service of occupied Abkhazia arrested Shalva Khizanishvili, a 39-year-old Georgian citizen and local school teacher, in the village of Shashikvara, Gali District, on charges of espionage on behalf of Georgia. The “Service” reported that ammunition, Georgian documents, cash, plastic cards from Georgian banks, and explosives were seized from Khizanishvili’s residence and the surrounding area. He is accused of collaborating with Georgian special services and recording video footage of Russian Federal Security Service border posts in Abkhazia. A criminal case has been initiated against him.



The arrest of Shalva Khizanishvili.
Source: apsnypress.info

The arrest of Khizanishvili intensified a negative campaign targeting local teachers. Following this event, reports emerged alleging that teachers in the Gali district were being identified as "spies" and accused of providing information to the Georgian side. On October 9, the de facto Minister of Education of Abkhazia, Khana Gunba, issued a statement concerning the "arrest of a teacher working in the Gali district on suspicion of espionage, and the possible connections of the heads of some educational institutions with a hostile state." Additionally, information circulated on Abkhazian Telegram channels asserted that "colleagues have noticed that several directors and teachers in the Gali district regularly receive salaries from Georgia and submit reports to the Georgian authorities."

Arrest of a "Spy" in Java

On April 29, 2025, the so-called State Security Committee of the occupied Tskhinvali region announced that, in cooperation with the Russian Security Service and the so-called Foreign Intelligence Service, it had arrested a resident of Sinaguri village in the Java district. According to the "committee," the 51-year-old individual, employed at a "state" enterprise, allegedly provided Georgian special services with information regarding Russian military units, their deployment to Ukraine, and the internal political situation. A criminal case was initiated on April 21 on charges

of high treason. The committee stated that the detainee cooperated with the investigation. He was convicted of high treason on December 2 in a closed trial, sentenced to 12 years and 6 months in prison, and was fined 100,000 rubles. Five other individuals were identified as having provided non-classified information to Georgian special services and were issued warnings.



Interrogation of a person arrested on charges of "high treason."
Source: cominf.org

Tamar Mearakishvili's Case

On December 22, 2025, the Prosecutor General's Office of the occupied region initiated proceedings against a Georgian citizen under Article 276 of the Russian Criminal Code (espionage). The investigation alleges that "a Georgian citizen living in South Ossetia collected and transmitted information about strategically important objects in the republic, thereby posing a threat to the security of the country." Subsequently, the entity known as the "State Security Committee" released a statement that differed from the account provided by the "Prosecutor General's Office." This statement indicated that, in cooperation with the de facto Ministry of Internal Affairs, a Georgian citizen residing in Akhalgori had been detained on suspicion of "transmitting information to foreign media outlets affiliated with Georgian special services." The statement further claimed that "the media used the citizen in propaganda activities to promote the interests of Georgia and its Western partners."

On December 23, it was revealed that the detained individual was Tamar Mearakishvili, a prominent civil activist known for her criticism of the de facto government. Mearakishvili, originally from Akhalgori, had been living in Tskhinvali, where she operated a small business. Reports indicate that she was arrested during a special operation conducted in her rented apartment in Tskhinvali. Her rights have reportedly been violated over an extended period.

Previously, the de facto authorities initiated criminal cases against her, which were subsequently dropped. Additionally, her lack of an identity document has resulted in persistent challenges in her daily life.

Shortly before her arrest, Mearakishvili addressed Alan Margiev, chairman of the de facto parliament of the occupied region, through a Facebook post. She stated that she had numerous times publicly requested a meeting with him over the year, and had made repeated visits to the de facto parliament without success. In her post, she wrote that she was "forced to go on a hunger strike," and attributed this decision to "arbitrary actions of the authorities, complete disregard for the law on civil service, labor legislation, and the violation of my rights."

De facto President Alan Gagloev commented on Mearakishvili's arrest at a year-end meeting with journalists on December 25: "The situation surrounding Tamar Mearakishvili has gone beyond acceptable limits. No one has the right to publicly insult officials, use obscene language, and raise this publicly. Regarding the threat of a one-person picket, we will not allow anyone to disrupt our children's holiday. If someone wants to protest, let them go to a neighboring country [meaning Georgia]; to their historical homeland. This applies to Mearakishvili herself and to those who support her. The republic's authorities have been as tolerant as possible for an extended period. We have not imposed any restrictive measures, despite her resonant actions and, I will say it directly, her dubious connections with Georgian structures. We have documentary evidence that she receives foreign funding." Gagloev's remarks referred to Mearakishvili's collaboration with Georgian and international media outlets, which often led to the publication of interviews and articles critical of the de facto government.

Past Cases

On April 12, 2023, the so-called State Security Service released a video clip that, according to the agency, demonstrates that "Georgian special services continue to conduct intelligence activities on the territory of the republic." The agency further claimed that an employee of the Georgian special services attempted to recruit residents of the occupied region for intelligence purposes. The individuals identified were Jessica Shengelia, a Georgian citizen residing in Abkhazia, and Irma Khukhua, a resident of Sokhumi.

On May 5, 2023, Georgian citizen Kristine Takalandze was convicted of "espionage" and sentenced to 10 years and 6 months in prison. Takalandze had been arrested on July 20, 2022. According to the so-called Abkhazian State Security Service, "Takalandze, on behalf of the Georgian special services, received, collected, and transmitted information containing state, military, and other secrets protected by law to the Georgian special services."

AGAINST RUSSIAN TOURISTS

Tourism, particularly seaside tourism, constitutes the primary source of income for the population in occupied Abkhazia. Each year, the region receives more than 1 million tourists, most of whom arrive from Russia. In 2025, to further stimulate tourism, direct air flights from several Russian cities to Abkhazia commenced through the newly operational Sokhumi Airport, accompanied by expanded rail and sea connections.

Despite the region's heavy reliance on Russian tourism, a negative attitude toward Russian tourists persists in Abkhazia. This is associated with both the relatively low spending power of many Russian tourists, and perceptions of disrespect for local norms of behavior. A widespread view holds that Abkhazia is visited primarily by low-income Russian tourists who spend little. In response to such attitudes, on July 3, the Public Chamber issued a statement emphasizing that Russian tourists are a priority for Abkhazia and form the backbone of the tourism industry.

More severe criticisms have also been expressed publicly. The director of the so-called Cinema Fund, Alexander Basaria, claimed that "Russian tourists threaten the national security of Abkhazia." In response, on July 8, the de facto Ministry of Tourism issued a statement with a contrasting perspective, and Basaria subsequently released a public video apology.

Beyond negative perceptions, a series of fatal incidents involving Russian tourists has further adversely affected tourism in Abkhazia. Notable examples include the drowning of Grigory Stetsioura, a resident of Tolyatti, in Sokhumi on July 8, 2025; the death of Nikolai Pronin, a 46-year-old tourist from Moscow, who fell from a cliff near a waterfall in the Tkvarcheli district on July 26; and the fatal fall of 15-year-old Tikhon Kotyashov from Murmansk in the Gulripshi district on July 27. Additional incidents occurred on September 20, when Ulyana Konovalova, a 27-year-old from St. Petersburg, drowned in Bichvinta, and an unidentified male Russian tourist died in Gagra. On October 7, Dmitry Bukin, a Yaroslavl resident born in 1969, died while traveling in the mountains, and on October 9, a Russian female tourist died in a car accident in the Tkvarcheli district. In previous years, fatalities, primarily among tourists, resulted from swimming in the sea or rivers: four in 2020, twenty in 2021, thirteen in 2022, twelve in 2023, and seven in 2024.

Cases of violence against Russian tourists are also frequent. For example, on March 13, 2025, a Russian tourist, Konstantin Belozerov, was shot in Gagra. The Belozerov family had arrived from St. Petersburg. According to rumors, he violated local customs by walking around shirtless in a public place, for which he first received a verbal reprimand and was later shot in the leg. Since 2023, appearing in public places in swimwear or walking shirtless has been prohibited in Abkhazia, with violators subject to a fine of 6,000 rubles. This is not the first case of a Russian tourist being attacked in Abkhazia under the pretext of violating local traditions. The main suspect in the Belozerov case was the so-called head of the Gagra administration, Yuri Khagush, who had previously been involved in a similar scandal. Against the backdrop of the upcoming tourist season, the de facto government initially ignored the incident, and the so-called Ministry of Internal Affairs opened a criminal case only on March 28. The subsequent fate of this case remains unknown.

Local stakeholders in the tourism sector are further concerned by pressure from Moscow on the de facto authorities to permit Russian citizens to purchase real estate in Abkhazia. There is apprehension that such a policy would undermine local incomes, as wealthier Russian citizens could establish competing tourism infrastructure, disadvantaging local businesses. This issue precipitated a political crisis in 2024, resulting in the early resignation of the de facto president. Although the topic was not actively debated in 2025, widespread fears persist in Abkhazia that it may reemerge in a different form.

DETENTION AND RELEASE OF ETHNIC GEORGIANS

The Release of Irakli Bebua

On March 30, 2025, Irakli Bebua, who had been arrested on September 30, 2020, for burning the "Abkhazian flag," was released from prison in occupied Abkhazia. Although Bebua was sentenced to nine years in prison, his actual term was four years and six months. Bebua is a Georgian citizen residing in the Gali district.

The de facto court convicted Bebua on charges of "insulting state symbols," "intentional damage to another person's property," and "illegal storage of military equipment," sentencing him to nine years in prison on December 7, 2020. His early release was due to the penal system in occupied Abkhazia, which has only a detention center rather than prison colonies. Under local regulations, one day of imprisonment under the general regime counts as two days. On March 28, the de facto Minister of Internal Affairs, Robert Kiut, issued a statement regarding Bebua's release.



The release of Irakli Bebua.
Source: State Security Service Facebook page

Deportation of an Ethnic Georgian

On June 2, 2025, the so-called State Security Service of occupied Abkhazia deported Russian citizen Otar Kobakhidze, an ethnic Georgian. Kobakhidze had visited his former home in Sokhumi with his daughter and posted a video declaring that he had "returned to his homeland after 33 years." He had resided in the house prior to the 1992–1993 Abkhazian War and left after its conclusion.

The video provoked significant outrage in Abkhazia. The so-called State Security Service subsequently detained Kobakhidze, who then issued a public apology to Abkhazians, stating: "I didn't mean to post the video on the Internet." In Abkhazia, such videos are regarded as actions that "offend the patriotic feelings of Abkhazian citizens." To "avoid a conflict situation," authorities expelled Kobakhidze from Abkhazia and prohibited his re-entry.

Such incidents are viewed negatively in Abkhazia, as a portion of the current population resides in homes formerly owned by ethnic Georgians who became refugees during the conflict. These residents are concerned that they may lose real estate that belonged to Georgians prior to the war.



Otar Kobakhidze's interrogation.
Source: abkhazinform.com



The interrogation of Vladimir Shulaia.
Source: apsnypress.info

Detention of Georgian Citizens

On July 28, 2025, the so-called authorities reported the arrest of Vladimir Shulaia, a Georgian citizen born in 1978. The State Security Service indicated that Shulaia had been wanted for murder in Russia since 2002. The agency further stated that Shulaia was illegally present in Abkhazia, having entered the region using a forged pass for the Enguri Hydroelectric Power Plant. Subsequently, Shulaia was transferred to Russian custody.

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WHY ARE TURKISH CITIZENS BEING DETAINED?

In 2025, the number of Turkish citizens detained in the occupied territory of Abkhazia increased. According to the so-called State Security Service, most detainees are alleged to have ties to criminal networks and to be evading prosecution in Turkey. In many instances, these individuals enter Georgia legally and subsequently move into the occupied region of Abkhazia by circumventing the Enguri checkpoint. Typically, detained Turkish citizens are transferred to Russia, which maintains a legal framework with Turkey to facilitate their eventual extradition.

Facts about the detention of Turkish citizens:

- On May 29, authorities arrested two groups of foreign nationals in the Gali district on charges of illegally crossing the so-called state border. The first group comprised two Turkish citizens wanted in Turkey for criminal offenses, while the second group consisted of two Azerbaijani citizens who had sought refuge in Abkhazia after committing crimes in Georgia.
- On June 23, in Gagra, authorities arrested Turkish citizen Saldiz Metin, who was listed on the international wanted list.
- On July 8, Turkish citizen Ali Sayim Ozturk was arrested at the Eshera "state vehicle inspection post" on charges of illegally crossing the so-called state border. According to the so-called State Security Service, the detainee confessed to committing a murder in Turkey.
- On July 25, Turkish citizen Beyyur Aydır, who is wanted in Turkey for a serious crime, was arrested. He was expelled from Abkhazia on July 28.
- On July 30, a Turkish citizen born in 1972, wanted in Turkey for murder, was arrested. He had entered Abkhazia using the passport of a deceased repatriated Turkish citizen.
- On August 8, Demiroz Ughur, wanted in Turkey and identified as the leader of the criminal group Demiros, was arrested. He is charged with premeditated murder.
- On August 19, three Turkish citizens, Saldız Metin, Güren Selçuk, and Demiroz Ughur, were transferred to the Russian authorities.
- On October 16, in Sokhumi, the so-called State Security Service detained 35-year-old Turkish citizen Tokach Serjan, who is on the international wanted list. According to the "Service," Serjan is the leader of an organized crime group and has committed multiple crimes in Turkey, including contract murder and extortion. On October 24, Serjan was transferred to the Russian Federal Security Service at the so-called border.
- On December 17, the de facto Ministry of Internal Affairs transferred Hasan Sakhin, a Turkish citizen born in 2000 and wanted by Interpol for murder committed in Turkey, to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs. Sakhin had been arrested in occupied Abkhazia after entering from Georgian territory.



Beyyur Aydır's arrest.
Source: sgb.apsny.land

Alongside the Turkish citizens, Armenian national Gor Asatryan was apprehended in Abkhazia on November 4, 2025, while concealing his identity with forged documents. He faces charges of illegal trafficking of weapons and drugs in Armenia, and was listed as wanted by Interpol.

THE CASE OF INAL JABIYEV

The high-profile case involving Inal Jabiyev in the occupied Tskhinvali region has concluded. The defendants faced charges of intentionally inflicting serious harm to Jabiyev's health and exceeding their official authority. On October 2, 2025, the so-called Tskhinvali City Court delivered its final verdict against eight members of the criminal militia of the de facto Ministry of Internal Affairs. Jumber Bibilov received a five-year prison sentence; Andrei Dzhioev and Alan Bagaev each received a three-year and ten-month sentence; Sergey Kozonov and Irbeg Slanov received three-year sentences and were released due to time already served. Zaur Gogichaev and Marat Khugaev were each fined 100,000 rubles. In practice, most defendants did not serve prison terms or pay fines because the statute of limitations for criminal liability had expired. One defendant remains at large.

The case of Inal Jabiyev has remained significant since 2020. Jabiyev died on August 28, 2020, due to violence inflicted by law enforcement officials within the criminal militia building. He had been accused of attempting to assassinate the de facto Minister of Internal Affairs. The circumstances surrounding his death were not thoroughly investigated under former de facto President Anatoly Bibilov, which contributed to Bibilov's defeat in the 2022 "presidential elections."

Despite the change in leadership to Alan Gagloev, the case advanced slowly. In October 2022, the so-called Prosecutor General's Office resumed the investigation, completing the preliminary phase in March 2023. Following Gagloev's assumption of the presidency, all police officers implicated in the Jabiev case were arrested. Criminal proceedings were also initiated against former de facto Minister of Internal Affairs Igor Naniev, whom Jabiyev had allegedly attempted to attack, for abuse of power, and against former "Prosecutor General" Uruzmag Jagaev. Under Bibilov's administration, these high-ranking officials had remained beyond legal scrutiny.

Incidents of violence by law enforcement officials are frequent in the Tskhinvali region; however, the Jabiyev case attracted exceptional public attention. For several months, Jabiyev's wife and mother protested delays to the investigation in central Tskhinvali, and received support from local residents.

Both parties expressed dissatisfaction with the final verdict. The defendants' relatives maintained their innocence, while Jabiyev's family considered the sentences unduly lenient for murder. The lawyer representing Jabiyev's family characterized the "court's" decision as "particularly lenient." On December 22, the so-called Supreme Court issued its final decision, introducing only minor modifications to the City Court's ruling. Gagloev publicly stated that, had he been the judge, he would not have sentenced any participant to less than ten years. This statement appeared intended to redirect the dissatisfaction of Jabiyev's family toward the "court" and to mitigate negative public sentiment.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Abkhazia

Tragedy in Gali

On January 5, 2025, a fire broke out in the home of a grandmother and her five grandchildren in the village of Saberio, in the occupied Gali region. The incident resulted in the deaths of all five children from the Cholariya family, and left the grandmother injured. According to a statement from the so-called Emergency Situations Service, the fire was attributed to the grandmother's error, as she reportedly used gasoline instead of kerosene to light the stove. In response to the tragedy, January 6 was designated a day of mourning in occupied Abkhazia.

Arrest of the "Deputy"

On June 14, 2025, Adgur Kharazia, a former member of the de facto parliament, was arrested following a six-month period during which he was wanted by authorities. On December 19, 2024, within the de facto parliament building, Kharazia shot and killed "MP" Vakhtang Golandzia and injured another colleague, Kan Kvarchia. On May 20, 2025, Kharazia's authority as a "member of parliament" was officially terminated.

Arrest of Adgur Ardzinba

On June 22, 2025, Adgur Ardzinba was arrested in Sochi, Russia. This arrest followed the conclusion of an investigation into an incident that occurred in April at the Russian-Abkhazian border, which generated considerable public attention. Subsequent reports indicated that Ardzinba's Russian-issued driver's license had been confiscated for a traffic violation, resulting in a 15-day administrative detention sentence. Ardzinba is a prominent opposition leader and the principal rival of the Kremlin-backed candidate Badra Gunba in the most recent presidential elections. He has previously faced accusations of anti-Russian sentiment, and his arrest was widely interpreted as an act of intimidation. Ardzinba was released early, after several days in detention.

Restrictions on Inheritance

In July 2025, the de facto parliament of occupied Abkhazia enacted measures to restrict inheritance rights for individuals perceived as having opposed the region's independence. Amendments to the so-called Civil Code expanded the categories of persons whose inheritance rights may be limited by law or by will. The new law prohibits foreign citizens, stateless persons, and their family members from inheriting property if they are considered to have supported Georgian armed formations or assisted the occupational regime of the State Council of Georgia,

including during the 1992–1993 war. This measure primarily targets ethnic Georgians and their heirs who were forcibly displaced from Abkhazia following the 1992–1993 conflict.

Commemoration of Historical Dates

On September 27, 2025, the 32nd anniversary of the so-called "liberation of Sokhumi" was observed in occupied Abkhazia with a military parade. On September 27, 1993, Abkhaz separatist forces, supported by Russia, captured Sokhumi, prompting the withdrawal of the Georgian armed forces and the Georgian civilian population from Abkhazia. This date is commemorated in Abkhazia through various official events. September 30 is also observed as "Victory and Independence Day." Following the capture of Sokhumi on September 30, 1993, separatist forces gained control of territory up to the Enguri River, resulting in the complete withdrawal of Georgian armed forces from Abkhazia, except for the Kodori Gorge, which remained outside separatist control until August 2008. These dates are marked in occupied Abkhazia with mourning and ceremonial events, including military parades. Similar celebrations occur in the occupied Gali region, where the majority of the population is ethnic Georgian. The events commemorating September 30 were attended by Sergey Kiriyenko, First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration.

Criminal Case Over Insulting the "Passport" and "Coat of Arms"

On October 31, 2025, the so-called State Security Service of occupied Abkhazia opened a criminal case for "desecration of the passport and coat of arms of the Republic of Abkhazia." According to the "Service," on October 30, Akhra Khasaia, a former "citizen" born in 2008 and now living in France, deliberately burned an Abkhazian passport and defaced the coat of arms during a live Telegram broadcast. The "Service" said it held a preventive conversation with Khasaia's mother, Makvala Bzhalava, who reportedly condemned her son's actions and expressed regret.

This is not the first incident of its kind. On September 30, 2020, Irakli Bebua was arrested for burning the so-called Abkhazian flag. He was convicted by a de facto court of "insulting state symbols," "intentional damage to another's property," and "illegal storage of military equipment." On December 7, 2020, Bebua received a nine-year prison sentence. He was released from prison in occupied Abkhazia on December 30, 2025.

Violent Confrontation in Sokhumi

On November 11, 2025, a shooting broke out during the funeral of Gennady Adleiba, a prominent criminal figure known as the city's "overseer," in Sokhumi. Five people were wounded, including 59-year-old "thief in law" Raul Barzba, known as "Piza." Ruslan Adleiba, one of the injured, died two days later, and another victim, Almas Kvitsinia, succumbed to his injuries in a Moscow hospital on December 10.

Astamur Shinkuba and Sharat Jikirba were detained soon after the attack; a third suspect, Mkhaz Agrba, was arrested on November 24.

The main target was allegedly "Piza," with the shooting linked to his criminal activities. He had recently clashed with another "thief in law," Temur Kapba ("Guli"), who lost his status that summer. Media reports say that, in July, "Guli" appeared uninvited at a yacht meeting led by "Piza," head of the Gudauta clan. After a heated exchange, "Guli" was thrown overboard.

The rivalry between "Piza" and "Guli" has become one of Abkhazia's most prominent criminal disputes in recent years. The conflict is thought to stem from competition over financial control in Abkhazia and beyond. Tensions escalated in 2024, when "Guli" tried to regain influence.

A similar high-profile crime happened in Sokhumi in 2019, when two criminal figures were killed at the San Remo restaurant, a case that sparked a political crisis and resulted in the de facto president's resignation.

The Tskhinvali Region

Increased Tariffs

As of January 1, 2025, electricity and gas tariffs rose in the occupied Tskhinvali region. For households with gas, the electricity rate increased from 3.36 to 3.89 rubles; for those without gas, from 2.65 to 3.12 rubles. Other consumers now pay 4.73 rubles for electricity, up 50 *kopecks*. Gas tariffs for the population rose from 5.05 to 5.50 rubles per cubic meter, and for other consumers from 6.33 to 6.95 rubles per cubic meter. Water supply and sewerage rates remain unchanged: 2.75 rubles for the population and 9.74 and 13.90 rubles for other consumers. Previous tariff hikes occurred in March and July 2023.

Exploration of Oil Resources in the Tskhinvali Region

Oil exploration began in 2025 in the village of Ghromi, in the Tskhinvali region, near the occupation line. Felix Chochiev, General Director of Irneftegaz, announced the completion of the first stage of oil well drilling. He asserted that, given the discovery of oil in Ghromi, construction of an oil refinery in the Tskhinvali region can now proceed.

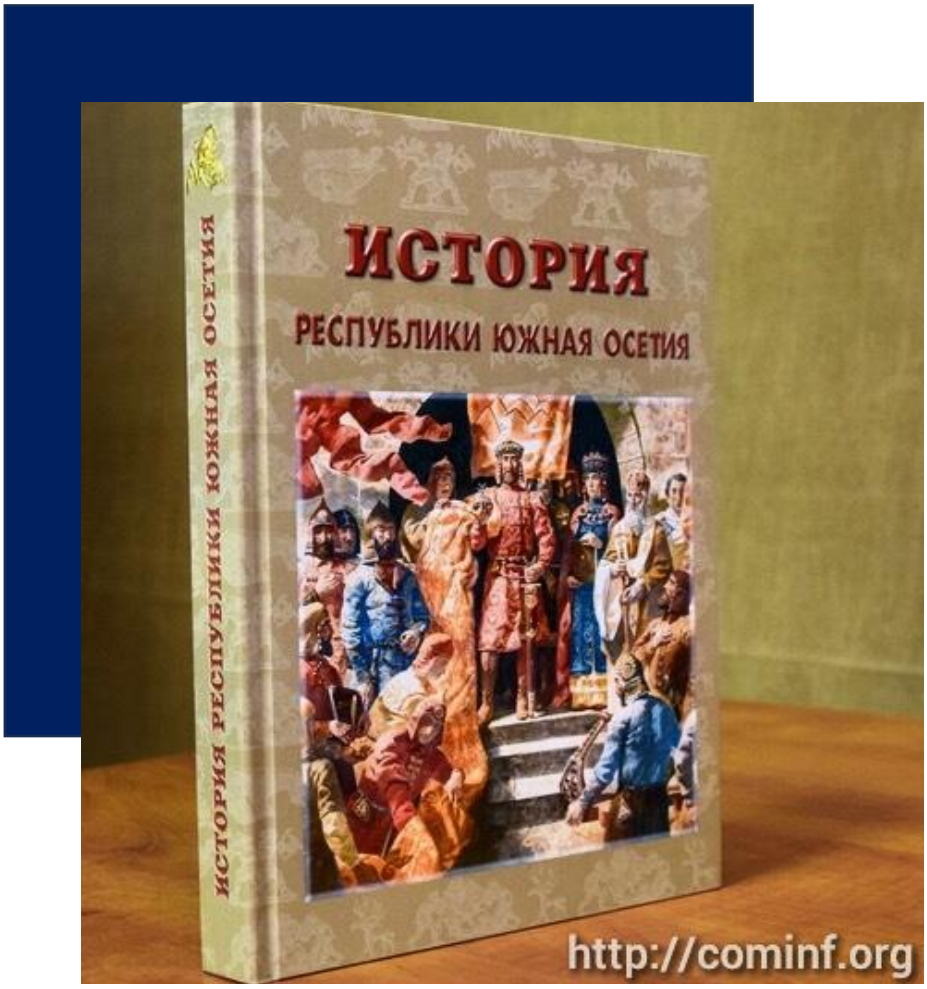


Oil well inspection.
Source: cominf.org

Although there was interest in this site during the Soviet era, and some preliminary work was undertaken, these efforts were discontinued. The project is financed by Albert Jusoev, a native of the Tskhinvali region currently residing in Russia, who arranged for the mobilization of equipment valued at 200 million rubles and the deployment of specialists from Western Siberia. On April 26, the de facto government and Rusneftegaz signed an agreement to conduct geo-reconnaissance activities.

New History Textbook

On February 7, 2025, a new textbook on the history of the so-called "Republic of South Ossetia" was presented in Tskhinvali. The volume, published in 1,400 copies, was authored by members of the South Ossetia Scientific Research Institute. As the first textbook of its kind addressing the region's history, its publication represents an effort by the de facto authorities in the Tskhinvali region to legitimize the existence of an "Ossetian state" through the construction and promotion of selective historical narratives.



A textbook on the history of the so-called "Republic of South Ossetia."
Source: cominf.org

17th Anniversary of the August War

In August, 2025, the occupied Tskhinvali region commemorated the 17th anniversary of the 2008 Russian-Georgian war. Various events took place, attended by the de facto authorities and the Russian "ambassador" to the region, Marat Kulakhmetov.

Another significant date was also observed in the occupied territories: on August 26, ceremonies marked Russia's 2008 recognition of the "independence" of Abkhazia and the so-called "Republic of South Ossetia."

Ceremonial Events in Tskhinvali

On September 20, 2025, Tskhinvali commemorated the 35th anniversary of the proclamation of the so-called "Republic of South Ossetia" through a series of ceremonial events, including a military parade. Notable attendees included the de facto President of occupied Abkhazia, Badra Gunba; First Deputy Head of the Russian Presidential Administration, Sergey Kiriyenko; Russian Minister of Economy, Maxim Reshetnikov; State Duma Committee Chair Yana Lantratova and a deputy chair, Konstantin Zatulin; the Head of North Ossetia, Sergey Menyailo; and representatives from several Russian regions.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, the First International Economic Forum was held from September 18 to 20. This forum represented the first event of such scale in Tskhinvali, with participants primarily from Russia.



Military parade, Tskhinvali, September 20, 2025.
Source: presidentruo.org

Abolition of the South Ossetian Administration - Tskhinvali's Response

By a decision of the Parliament of Georgia, two laws were repealed as of January 1, 2026: the Law on the Creation of Appropriate Conditions for the Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict in the Former South Ossetian Autonomous Region, and the Law on Property Restitution and Compensation for Those Affected by the Conflict in the Former South Ossetian Autonomous Region on the Territory of Georgia. The repeal of the first law has drawn significant attention because it results in the dissolution of the so-called Provisional Administration of South Ossetia.

On November 17, 2025, Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia Shalva Papuashvili stated that, in November 2006, the then-government of the United National Movement conducted unconstitutional elections in the Tskhinvali region. Consequently, a so-called President of South Ossetia was declared, and a so-called Alternative Government of South Ossetia was established. Papuashvili asserted that this action indirectly legitimized separatist processes and represented a significant betrayal of Georgia's state interests.

He further explained that several months later, a temporary administrative-territorial unit was established, also in violation of the Constitution, and based on the same unconstitutional "alternative government."

Papuashvili also observed that this decision artificially reinstated the administrative borders of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region, which had been abolished in 1990. He contended that this development later contributed to the 2008 Russian military aggression and the occupation of Georgia's historical region of Samachablo. In his view, these decisions were part of a broader geopolitical strategy by external actors that positioned Georgia as a "sacrificial pawn." Papuashvili further argued that the policies implemented by Mikheil Saakashvili heightened tensions and ultimately precipitated the war.

"There is no such entity as 'South Ossetia' in Georgia's legal or political space," Papuashvili stated. He further indicated that, following consultations with the government, a decision was reached to abolish the administration of the administrative-territorial unit established in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region. Meanwhile, the municipalities of Akhalgori, Kurta, Tighvi, and Eredvi, which were elected in full compliance with the Constitution in 2006, continue to operate. According to Papuashvili, these municipalities are the only legitimately elected and functioning authorities in the Tskhinvali region, and therefore represent the sole legitimate continuation of Georgia's legal and constitutional framework in the area.

The temporary administrative-territorial unit was established in 2007, and continued to operate during the Georgian Dream government's tenure.

In response, the de facto authorities of the occupied Tskhinvali region issued a statement criticizing the decision. The de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that, despite what it described as a somewhat conciliatory tone from Tbilisi, Georgian officials continue to employ what it termed "destructive terminology," including references to "Russian occupation," and evaluative language associated with the periods of Zviad Gamsakhurdia (President of Georgia in 1991-1992) and Mikheil Saakashvili (President of Georgia in 2004-2013). The de facto government argued that the decision reflects Georgia's acute internal political conflict and

reiterated its call for Georgian authorities to “realistically perceive the political reality that has developed since August 2008.”

How Many Have Violated the "State Border"?

In 2025, the so-called State Security Committee of the occupied Tskhinvali region reported that 297 individuals were recorded as having violated the so-called state border. Among these, 149 cases pertained to violations of the “state border regime,” 144 to violations of the “border regime,” and four to failure to comply with the lawful demands of “border authority representatives.” Criminal proceedings were initiated against 15 individuals, while administrative fines were imposed in most cases. The total amount of fines imposed reached 557,000 rubles. Law enforcement agencies of the occupied region, in cooperation with the Russian Border Service, which controls the occupation line, regularly detain residents from both sides of the line. While most detainees are released shortly after detention, a minority, primarily Georgian citizens, are serving sentences in Tskhinvali prison.