

# Covcas Bulletin

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## SUMMARY NOTES

### GEORGIA

Since the beginning of July, disagreements around the electoral law have intensified, and the approaching legislative election provoked a serious political deadlock. In an attempt to remedy it, a group of ambassadors stationed in Tbilisi tried to foster mediation between the different parliamentary groups. Similarly, former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker presented a model for the composition of a Central Electoral Commission. Approved by Georgia's president, the model recommended the nomination of 5 members of the Commission by the President of the Republic, and of the 7 remaining members by the opposition, and it allowed the OSCE to choose the president of the Commission. At this stage, a lively debate ensued between the opposition parties regarding the sharing of the 7 seats in question--the "Renaissance Union" and the "Union of Industrials" demanding 3 and 2 seats respectively, and the National Movement of Mikhail Saakashvili asking for a seat for each of major parties of the Georgian political landscape. On July 24 the new electoral law was finally adopted based on the Baker model, but the "Renaissance Union" and the "Union of Industrials" threatened to boycott elections as a result of Parliament's dismissal of their alternative proposal for a commission of 17 members. Amendments to the law were finally adopted by the Parliament on August 15; the new

law recommends a 5 to 9 proportion of members of the Central Electoral Commission, respectively nominated by the pro-government and opposition parties.

### SOUTH OSSETIA

President Eduard Kokoyty conducted an in-depth reorganization of his cabinet at the beginning July. Explaining to the Parliament on July 2 the reasons for the forced resignation of the ministers of the Interior, Defense, Security, Justice, and the chief of the National Council of Security and other officials, the President declared that several ministers were implicated in criminal activities, and that several people had been killed and others wounded two days before, during shootings between troops of the Interior Ministry and the National Security Ministry at Tskhinvali, the capital of the secessionist Republic. These resignations were followed by the complete dissolution of the ministerial cabinet on August 14, 2003.

Just last September 17, the Parliament had approved the nomination of Igor Sanakoev, a businessman from North Ossetia and a citizen of the Russia Federation, as Prime minister.

This nomination of a Russian citizen to the post of Prime minister was not unusual for the secessionist republic--according to his recent declarations, President Kokoyty recently asked President Putin to admit his republic to the Russian Federation. As early as 1992, the population of South Ossetia had voted in favour of the accession of the region to Russia, and many

South Ossetians have a Russian passport today.

Regarding the relations of South Ossetia with the Georgian authorities, discussions between the two are still blocked. The Georgian delegation, the North – South Ossetian delegations, and the Russian representatives met OSCE experts on July 15-17 at Tskhinvali. The climate of suspicion and hostility prevented the parties from achieving common ground. Additional discussions are expected in October 2003.

## AZERBAIJAN

July was marked by the question of political prisoners raised both during the visit to Baku by the Council of Europe AGO group and on the occasion of the publication of the political prisoners report by the Belgian senator Georges Clerfayt, of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (CoE). This report presented to the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly was the subject of attacks by the chief of the Azeri delegation, Ilham Aliiev, who denied the political nature of many prisoners, which he called terrorists and criminals. After the debate, the issue of political prisoners was postponed to the September session of the CoE.

During the visit of the CoE monitoring group, known as the AGO group, to Azerbaijan, a coalition of human rights NGOs presented a list of 22 names of political prisoners with fragile health, and an updated list of 168 political prisoners, some of whom had just been re-convicted, having their sentence extended by several years without having committed new violations. The case of the former Interior Minister, Iskandar Hamidov, was part of this list.

The nomination in August of Ilham Aliiev, the son of President Heidar Aliiev, to the position of Prime Minister shocked the Azeri public, particularly in the opposition circles. This step, in anticipation of a sudden death of the President father, has been criticized extensively as a manipulation of the ruling clan's power, which was

aimed, just before the presidential elections of October 2003, at maintaining the power in the Aliiev family.

Finally, the destruction of the Armenian religious monuments continues in Azerbaijan. Following the desecration of thousands of "khatchkars" (crosses made of sculpted stone) in the Armenian Cemetery of Djoulfa, (in Nakhitchevan), the XIth century church, St. Sarkis of Kazakh has been destroyed. Questioned on the reasons for this destruction, the Azerbaijani authorities have consistently responded by denying that these monuments belong to the Armenian heritage, assigning these vestiges to the culture of "Albanians" of the Caucasus, supposed to be ancestors of the Azerbaijani.

## RESUMES

### GEORGIE

Dès le début juillet les désaccords autour de la loi électorale se sont accentués, et l'approche des élections législatives a provoqué à une impasse politique grave. Afin d'y remédier, un collectif d'ambassadeurs en poste à Tbilissi a tenté de faire la médiation entre les différents groupes parlementaires. De même, l'ex - secrétaire d'état américain, James Baker, a présenté un modèle de composition de la Commission Electorale Centrale. Approuvé par le président, le modèle préconise la nomination de 5 membres de la Commission par le Président de la République, et des 7 restants par l'opposition, laissant le choix du président de la Commission aux soins de l'OSCE. A ce stade, un vif débat s'est engagé entre les partis d'opposition pour le partage des 7 sièges en question, l'«union Renaissance» et l'«union des industriels» exigeant respectivement 3 et 2 sièges, et le Mouvement National de Mikhaïl Saakashvili demandant un siège pour chacun des partis importants

du paysage politique géorgien. Le 24 juillet la nouvelle loi électorale a finalement été adoptée sur le modèle Baker, mais l'«Union Renaissance» et l'«Union des Industriels» ont menacé de boycotter les élections à la suite du rejet par le Parlement de leur proposition alternative pour une commission de 17 membres. Les amendements à la loi ont finalement été adoptés par le Parlement le 15 août dernier; la nouvelle loi préconise la proportion 5 / 9 des membres de la CEC, désignés respectivement par les partis pro- gouvernementaux et d'opposition.

### OSSETIE DU SUD

Le Président Eduard Kokoyty a procédé à un remaniement ministériel en profondeur de son gouvernement début juillet. Expliquant au Parlement le 2 juillet les raisons de la démission forcée des ministres de l'intérieur, de la défense, de la sécurité, de la justice, du chef du Conseil National de Sécurité et d'autres officiels encore, le président a rappelé que plusieurs ministres étaient impliqués dans des activités criminelles, et que plusieurs personnes avaient été tuées et d'autres blessées deux jours auparavant lors des échanges de tirs entre les troupes du ministère de l'Intérieur et celui de la sécurité d'état à Tskhinvali, la capitale de la République sécessionniste. Ces démissions ont été suivies de la dissolution complète, le 14 août 2003, du cabinet ministériel; ce n'est que le 17 septembre dernier que le Parlement devait approuver la nomination d'Igor Sanakoev, un homme d'affaires d'Ossétie du Nord et néanmoins citoyen de la Fédération de Russie, comme Premier Ministre.

Bien entendu, cette nomination d'un citoyen russe au poste de Premier Ministre n'est pas étrangère à l'orientation politique de la république sécessionniste: le Président Kokoyty avait, selon ses récentes déclarations, demandé récemment encore au Président Putin, d'admettre sa république au sein de la Fédération de Russie. En 1992 déjà, la population de

l'Ossétie du Sud avait voté en faveur de l'accession de la région à la Russie, et un grand nombre d'Ossètes du Sud possèdent aujourd'hui un passeport russe.

Sur le plan des relations de l'Ossétie du Sud avec les autorités géorgiennes, les discussions sont toujours bloquées. Les délégations géorgienne, Ossètes du Nord - du Sud et les représentants russes, rencontraient les experts de l'OSCE les 15-16- 17 juillet à Tskhinvali. Le climat de suspicion et d'hostilité a empêché les parties d'aboutir à un terrain d'entente. D'autres discussions sont prévues en octobre 2003.

## AZERBAÏDJAN

**J**uillet a été marqué par la question des prisonniers politiques soulevée à la fois lors de la visite à Bakou du groupe AGO du Conseil de l'Europe et à l'occasion de la publication du rapport sur les prisonniers politiques par le sénateur belge Georges Clerfayt, de l'Assemblée Parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe. Ce rapport présenté à la session d'été de l'Assemblée Parlementaire a fait l'objet d'une offensive de la part du chef de la délégation azérie, Ilham Aliev, qui a nié le caractère politique de nombreux prisonniers qualifiés de terroristes et de criminels par le fils du Président. A la suite des discussions, le débat sur les prisonniers politiques a été remis à la session de Septembre du CoE.

C'est lors de la visite en Azerbaïdjan du groupe de surveillance du CoE, dit groupe Ago, qu'un collectif d'ONG de défense des Droits de l'Homme lui a soumis une liste de 22 noms de prisonniers politiques à la santé fragile, et une liste réactualisée de 168 prisonniers politiques, dont certains venaient d'être jugés de nouveau, voyant ainsi leur peine prolongée de plusieurs années sans avoir commis de nouvelles infractions. Le cas de l'ancien Ministre de l'Intérieur, Iskandar Hamidov, fait partie de cette liste.

La nomination, début août, du fils du Président Aliev, Ilham, au poste de Premier Ministre a choqué l'opinion en Azerbaïdjan, notamment dans les milieux de l'opposition ; cette mesure, en

prévision d'un décès subit du Président père a été largement critiquée comme une manipulation du clan au pouvoir visant, à la veille des élections présidentielles d'octobre 2003, à maintenir le pouvoir dans la famille Aliev.

Enfin, la destruction des monuments religieux arméniens se poursuit en Azerbaïdjan : après l'anéantissement des milliers de « khatchkars », croix en pierre sculptées, du Cimetière arménien de Djoulfa, au ( Nakhitchevan), c'est l'église du XIème siècle, Saint Sargis de Kazakh qui a vient d'être détruite. Interrogés sur les raisons de ces destructions, en guise de réponse, les autorités azerbaïdjanaises ont pris l'habitude de nier l'appartenance de ces monuments au patrimoine arménien, attribuant ces vestiges à la culture des « Albanais » du Caucase, supposés être les ancêtres des Azerbaïdjanais.

### DEVELOPPING EVENTS / REVUE DE PRESSE

## AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAIDJAN

**06/30/03 - Refugees from Armenia and forced migrants are provided with new dwelling houses in Azerbaijan - Our Century**

Within the framework of execution of the President of Azerbaijan Edict dated May 13, 2002 "On solving of social problems of refugees and forced migrants, settled in tent camps of Bilasuvar Region" 500 families have been provided with dwelling houses in settlements of Agdam Region.

As the Chief of the State Committee of Azerbaijan on Refugees and Forced Migrants, Mr. Ali Hasanov has declared at the present, 800 houses have been built in Phizuly Region, and resettlement of families from tent camp of Bilasuvar will start the next week. 2500 persons more will be settled in Bilasuvar Region. They are refugees from Djabrayil Region, who expressed their intention to settle in Bilasuvar Region. Commonly, 19 well-equipped settlements will be

built within the Edict. As to refugees from Armenia, 350 houses have been built for them in Geranboy Region, and 200 houses more for them are built in Baku settlements Ramana and Mekhtiabad, 126 houses in Shamkir Region, 17 houses in Agstafa Rehion, 45 houses in Ismailli, and 51 houses in Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

**07/01/03 - Opposition representatives debate on Presidential campaign and manners in milli Majlis at PA CE session - Azerbaijan News Service ANS**

Azerbaijan doesn't settle political prisoners issue until September 1st, delegation of Azerbaijan to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe could be deprived from its authorities in that institutions. Qulamhuseyn Alibayli and Asim Mollazadeh, oppositional representatives of Azeri delegation to PA CE said that demand was shown in the report of George Clerfayt. Its should be noted that, there were disputes among ruling party deputies and oppositional representatives of Azerbaijan while discussing the issue of political prisoners at the Assembly. Asim Mollazadeh said the sanction against Armenia is also agenda of PACE against Armenia due to the recent presidential elections. (...)

**07/01/03 - Police Stop ADP Protest in Town Center - RFE/RL**

On 29 June the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) tried to hold an unsanctioned protest in front of the Narimanov Cinema to demand that equal conditions be created for all presidential candidates, and the party's chairman, Rasul Guliev, be allowed to return to contest the presidential elections scheduled for 15 October. Guliev, a former parliament speaker, currently lives in the United States and is wanted in Baku on embezzlement charges. Police blocked protesters, who attempted to reach the cinema, forcing them to turn back and disperse. But some time later a group of protesters clashed with police about 300-400 meters away from the cinema. (...)



**07/02/03 – Azerbaijan again rules out talks with Karabakh officials - RFE/RL**

Arkadii Ghukasian, president of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), told journalists in Stepanakert that his republic should participate in talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan on how the Karabakh conflict should be resolved, Interfax reported on 1 July. Ghukasian said that if talks under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group on how to resolve the conflict resume, the NKR should be included.

But Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliev told Interfax the same day that Azerbaijan does not consider Nagorno-Karabakh a party to the Karabakh conflict and consequently will not conduct negotiations with its leaders. He said the core of the conflict is Armenia's territorial claims on Azerbaijan, and that a solution to the conflict must preserve Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

**07/02/03 – Council of Europe gives Azerbaijan a last chance - CENTRAL ASIA - CAUCASUS ANALYST**

Azerbaijan's relations with the Council of Europe experienced another test last week. The summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) included the situation of the political prisoners in Azerbaijan into its agenda. This created the possibility of sanctions for official Baku. The report prepared on this issue by Belgian PACE member Georges Clerfayt did not praise the work of the Azerbaijani government. The report stated that Azerbaijani government continues to hold 'political prisoners' and does not show enough political will to solve this problem.

Azerbaijan has accepted the obligation in front of the Council of Europe to release or re-consider the cases of political prisoners in the country. Yet almost three years have passed since Azerbaijan became a member of the organization, and many of the persons listed by the Council of Europe and local human rights organizations as 'political prisoners' are still not free. Two of the top people in the list are former Defense Minister Rahim Gaziyeu and leader

of Talysh-Mugan separatist movement in the south Aliakram Humbatov.

The Azerbaijani delegation, headed by Ilham Aliyev, the President's son and deputy chairman of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, immediately attacked the report, describing it as incomplete. Ilham Aliyev specifically referred to the amnesty act signed by President Aliyev a week before the summer session of PACE started, which granted freedom to dozens of prisoners. In addition to this, Ilham Aliyev claimed that many of the persons in Cleyfart's list are not political prisoners, but rather terrorists and criminals, who 'if freed, would commit acts of crime against civilians in the country.' In total, the Azerbaijani delegation gave 40 recommendations to the report. Considering these remarks, Aliyev proposed to put off the discussion of the issue till January 2004, the winter session of PACE.

The subcommittee of PACE rejected this suggestion, and the bill was included into the general session's agenda. Aliyev accused the Council of Europe of double standards, because last year when Armenia was ahead of elections, the Council of Europe put off the discussion of the death penalty issue in Armenia for the post-election period. The Azerbaijani delegation argued that discussion of the political prisoners case prior to the upcoming presidential elections would alter the political balance in the country.

After heated debates, the author of the report, Cleyfart, decided to take it back and submit it back for consideration in September. 'We have information that the head of Azerbaijani delegation to PACE has made a gentlemen's agreement with the leadership of PACE that all political prisoners will be released by September' said Gulamhusseyn Alibeyli, an opposition Popular Front Party member of the Azerbaijani delegation. He also added that he was not sure if the Azerbaijani delegation would keep this promise, because it did not fulfill the official obligation it has taken in front of this organization. 'But I hope that this issue will be solved somehow', he concluded. Another member from the Popular Front, Asim Mollazade, said that he did not agree that some terrorists were included into the list, because it hurts the image of the Council of Europe.

Thus Azerbaijan received a last chance from the Council of Europe to fix the problem. Although the Azerbaijani government claims that many of the people in the list are not political prisoners, talks on the criteria for determining who is a real political prisoner and who is not have run out of time. Should the Azerbaijani government not release these prisoners, it might face serious sanctions from the Council of Europe, including the loss of the Azerbaijani delegation's voting rights in PACE.

Meanwhile, on July 2, an Azerbaijani court completed finished the reconsideration of former Interior Minister Iskender Hamidov's case, and has re-sentenced him to 11 years in prison. Hamidov has already served 8 years and is considered to be on the top of the so called 'political prisoners' list. Speaking at the trial, Ali Kerimli, the chairman of the opposition Popular Front party, said that this court decision once again showed that the Azerbaijani government violated its obligations in front of international organizations.

Many local observers believe that the Council of Europe will be hesitant to discuss this issue in September, just one month prior to the elections. Some of the prisoners may have to wait for a long time.

**07/05/03 – Some Azeris march to historic fort in Iran, Azeri daily says - Ekho**

About people took part in a march to Fort Bazz (Babak) in southern Azerbaijan (northern Iran), Ekho has learnt from the head of the Baku office of the National Revival Movement of Southern Azerbaijan (NRMSA), Huseyn Turkelli.

"Despite counteraction by the Iranian authorities, the march of Azerbaijanis on the occasion of (Azerbaijani hero) Babak's birthday did take place. The action started in the morning of 3 July and ended in the evening of 4 July. It proved to be more radical and politically saturated than previous ones," Turkelli said. He also said that for the first time the march had been held under Azerbaijani flags. "Over 300 flags were hoisted at the fort. In the evening of 3 July, police detained more than 50 standard-bearers but after our compatriots started the rally and took the military checkpoint under their



control they were released," the NRMSA official said. Turkelli also noted that the Islamic revolutionary guards conducted military manoeuvres trying to frighten the activists, but they failed to do so.

"This march was a demonstration of the strength of our people and the NRMSA in particular. We saw for ourselves that we are far stronger than the accomplices of the regime. The action was held under the slogans Long live Azerbaijan!', Long live Cohraçanlı!', Azerbaijan is with Cohraçanlı!', Karabakh or death', Down with Armenia!', Down with chauvinism!', etc., he said. (Iranian citizen Mahmudali Cohraçanlı (Chehragani) is leader of the NRMSA.) (...)

**07/05/03 – Azeri expert says emigration to increase due to economic instability - Ekho**

The US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has published data for 2002.

According to the INS report, 58400 people asked for political asylum in the USA (in 2002). The applications of 18900 of them were approved and about 1,600 were rejected. Officials did not have enough time to consider the rest of the cases. Armenian citizens applied for political asylum in the USA more often than others. They submitted 1389 applications (959 were approved, 53 were rejected and the rest of them have not been considered yet). A total of 312 Azerbaijani citizens applied to the US authorities for political asylum (252 applications were approved and three were rejected).

Commenting on the INS report in a conversation with Ekho, the head of the Centre for Legal Assistance to Migrants (CLAM), Alovzat Aliyev, expressed his confidence that the flow of emigrants from Azerbaijan to the USA would increase. Aliyev maintains that mixed families abandon Azerbaijan and go to the USA. "It is worth recalling that in the USSR, Azerbaijan was one of the leaders by its number of mixed marriages," the head of the centre said.

Moreover, Aliyev believes that political and economic instability in the country prompt many people to leave Azerbaijan.

The CLAM head also underlined that the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main oil export

pipeline and the payment of compensation to the residents of territories through which the pipeline will pass create another favourable condition for emigration from Azerbaijan.

"The companies implementing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project are planning to pay compensation to those residents. Once they get the money, they will try to take advantage of this opportunity and leave Azerbaijan. All these will speed up the process of emigration from our country to the USA and Western Europe," Aliyev said in conclusion.

**07/09/03 – Opposition Presidential candidates accuse Azerbaijani authorities of discrimination, harassment... - RFE/RL**

Seven opposition presidential candidates issued a statement on 8 July accusing the authorities of violating the commitments they have made to international organizations to ensure that the upcoming presidential ballot is democratic, Turan and zerkalo.az reported. The seven -- Ali Kerimov (Azerbaijan Popular Front Party-reformist wing), Isa Gambar (Musavat), Etibar Mamedov (Azerbaijan National Independence Party), Ilyas Ismailov (Adalet), Chingiz Demiroglu (Taraggi), and Lala Shovket Gadjiyeva (independent) -- specifically condemned the refusal by the Central Election Commission (CEC) to register former parliament speaker Rasul Guliev as a candidate. They noted that the CEC and lower-level election bodies are dominated by the authorities who, they added, are systematically hindering opposition candidates trying to collect the signatures needed to support their registration for the ballot.

**07/09/03 – Azeri separatists claim wide autonomy in Iran – PanArmenian News**

Leaders of Southern Azerbaijan National Renaissance Movement announced the other day about the intention of Iranian Azeris to transform Iran into a federal state. If Tehran uses weapons against the Azeri activists, "Novye Izvestiya" Russian newspaper writes, they will resort to armed struggle for

independence. The movement leaders intend to get countenance and moneyed assistance from the US where they have recently held a number of meetings with officials of different levels. Experts suppose that the Azeris' national liberation movement is the best way to bring Iran to collapse. In the opinion of the newspaper, Americans have already begun making use of the "Azeri factor" in Iran. Political organizations supporting the Azeri separatists in Iran such as, e.g., "Great Azerbaijan Union," are being legally formed in Baku funded by them. The separatist movement of Azeris in Iran is as well supported by the Azerbaijan's leading opposition parties, namely the National Front of Azerbaijan, Musavat and the others. Moreover, the newspaper writes, chairman of the Baku office of the initiative group of the parliament of Southern Azerbaijan Aslan Khalidi offers Azeris to entirely secede from Iran. Today the number of Azeris in Iran, according to various estimates, varies between 20 and 30 million.

They mainly reside in three large north-western provinces of Iran - Western Azerbaijan, Eastern Azerbaijan and Mugan. Feeling Azeri separatist becoming active, Teheran undertakes urgent measures.

Considerable contingents of "guards of the Islamic revolution" are already sent to Mugan province. But rumor that the US plans to place a 15-thousand contingent of its troops in Azerbaijan causes special concern of Tehran. There is no official proof of this hearsay yet, but there is such an opportunity. As supposed by the newspaper, it can be done on the plea of, for example, guarding the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline.

**07/15/03 - List Of Political Prisoners Submitted To Ago Group - RFE/RL**

The human rights organizations' monitoring group has submitted to the Council of Europe's so-called Ago Group, led by Piero Ercole Ago, a list of political prisoners that includes 22 names. These people, who the Council of Europe considers to be political prisoners, have serious health problems, according to the group. At a meeting with Ago Group members in Baku, heads of the organizations

united under the monitoring group -- Novella Jafarova, Arzu Abdullaeva, Saida Gojamanli, Saadet Beneryarli, and Chingiz Ganizade -- said that the Council of Europe must attempt to get the release of these 22 people soon. Otherwise, their lives could be in danger.

Moreover, the local monitoring group prepared a new, updated list of 168 people it considers to be political prisoners. Previously this list included 200 names, but after the release of 30 of them by the president's 17 June pardon, the human rights organizations had to reconsider their list.

Human rights activist Ganizade pointed out that although the government had taken certain steps toward the release of political prisoners, the number of those arrested on political grounds continues to rise.

During the meeting with the Ago Group, the representatives of the local human rights institutions touched on the retrial of a number of political prisoners, condemning the court ruling against former Interior Minister Iskander Hamidov and demanding his release.

#### **07/15/03 - Refugees Face Problems In Election Process - RFE/RL**

On 11 July, the Karabakh Freedom Organization (QAT) appealed to the Central Election Commission, claiming that government representatives are restricting refugees' voting rights. According to QAT Chairman Akif Nagi, observers and media representatives are refused entry to refugee camps without permission and police posts are placed at entrances and exits.

In an interview with RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service, Nagi pointed out that one of the obstacles to refugees' participation in the presidential elections is the difference between the address where they are registered and where they in fact live. At present most refugees don't live in the camps where they are registered, but in the country's various regions, mainly in Baku. Because of financial difficulties refugees cannot come back and vote in the places where they are registered.

"At present most refugees have come to Baku in the hope of earning their living," Nagi said. "But most of them have been registered in

refugee camps in various districts. Since their financial resources are limited, refugees cannot return to their camps to participate in elections. The Central Election Commission must create conditions for such citizens to vote."

Asef Aliev, a member of the Central Election Commission, acknowledged the problems and admitted that, as yet, the commission does not know how and where refugees will vote. "At present I am working on the problem. I hope that our directions will be adopted in the Central Election Commission before the elections."

#### **07/22/03 - Azeris keep destroying Armenian culture vestiges in their territory - PanArmenian News**

Armenian frontier troops watched Azeris destroying Armenian temple of St. Sargis situated in Kazakh region of Azerbaijan. As reported by "Azg" newspaper, in the words of Samvel Karapetian, chief of a non-governmental organization for study of the Armenian architecture, the temple history goes back to 1163, and the temple unique frescos, being of high historical value, are mentioned for the first time in XIII century. "Now Azeris set about destroying Armenian historical monuments, which they had called "Agvan," S. Karapetian said.

#### **07/24/03 - Azerbaijani official rejects accusations of media crackdown - RFE/RL**

Claims by Ambassador Peter Burkhard, who heads the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Baku office, that there has been a recent upsurge in intimidation of and violence against journalists are untrue, presidential administration official Ali Gasanov told Interfax on 22 July. Nor do the police resort to violence against journalists observing unauthorized demonstrations, provided they do not participate in those demonstrations, Gasanov said. In a statement released earlier on 22 July and posted on the OSCE website ([http://www.osce.org/news/how\\_news.php?id=3438](http://www.osce.org/news/how_news.php?id=3438)), Burkhard expressed concern that Azerbaijani journalists are being increasingly subjected to violence, especially during unsanctioned meetings and

demonstrations. He said the role of the media is all the more important in the run-up to the October presidential elections. "In the absence of free media it is not possible to conduct democratic elections," Burkhard said. "Having free and fair elections is not only about casting votes in proper conditions, but also about having adequate information about parties, policies, candidates, and the election process itself so that voters can make an informed choice."

#### **07/27/03 - U.S. Again Warns Azerbaijan over Harassment of Candidates - RFE/RL**

The U.S. State Department has expressed once again concern about the course of the election process in Azerbaijan. "[The U.S. government] are troubled by recent events, such as the denial of candidates' registrations and the arrests of individuals associated with certain candidates. Both seem to be driven by a desire to harass opposition candidates," said State Department spokeswoman Joanne Prokopowicz.

Commenting on the U.S. State Department's latest statement, parliament deputy Aidin Mirzazade, a member of the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) Political Council, said that the United States' attention to the processes taking place in an allied country is a "welcome case, but unfortunately, this attention is often based on incorrect information." Mirzazade noted that the refusal to register Ayaz Mutallibov, Rasul Guliev and others as presidential candidates resulted not from the government's "proposal" to the Central Election Commission, but from the demands of the law. He recalled that the Central Election Commission has registered such opposition leaders as Isa Gambar and Ali Kerimli. If the government had discriminated against the opposition, then these leaders would also have been barred from the election process(...)

#### **07/28/03 - Azeri prosecutor threatens to take "serious measures" against opposition - Turan news agency**

In a conversation with journalists last Saturday [26 July], Azerbaijani Prosecutor-General Zakir Qaralov

backed a statement by the Justice Ministry addressed to the opposition press which demanded that the publication of "libelous materials" about President Heydar Aliyev be stopped.

"If opposition media outlets do not give it up, the most serious measures will be taken against them," Qaralov said.

Commenting on the detention of editors and leaders of journalists' organizations by police, Qaralov said that journalists themselves had provoked it.

"By doing so and by means of pro-Armenian international organizations they are trying to gain themselves the image of sufferers and show to the international community that pressure is being exerted on the opposition in the run-up to elections in Azerbaijan. By this, they are trying to gain political dividends," Qaralov said.

**07/28/03 – Azeri Minister says west has erroneous idea of regional conflicts - ANS TV**

(Presenter) A proposal made by US Vice-President Dick Cheney at a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to open borders with Armenia is the outcome of an erroneous idea of the conflict in the West, the Azerbaijani foreign minister said commenting on this proposal.

(Correspondent over video of Quliyev) The West's understanding of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict does not reflect the reality, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Quliyev said commenting on Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul's negotiations with US officials. Although US Vice-President Dick Cheney raised the issue of opening the Turkish-Armenian border for the sake of development of the Caucasus, he failed to speak on regional conflicts. Quliyev believes that although the West wants peace and stability in the region, it has a completely different idea of achieving this.

(Quliyev) Different international organizations and leading countries have spoken more than once about the necessity of economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Armenia. However, our opinion is that first a fair solution to the conflict should be found, the occupied lands should be freed, Armenia should recognize

Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and diplomatic relations should be established between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

(Correspondent) Quliyev said that economic cooperation was out of the question until regional conflicts had been resolved.

**07/29/03 - Azeri paper warns authorities to tread fine line in relations with world bodies - Zerkalo**

A recent report by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights could cost Azerbaijan harsh sanctions, Azerbaijani daily Zerkalo has said. Azerbaijan could be denied the voting right or even expelled from international organizations. The paper warned about double standards applied by international organizations and said that therefore Azerbaijan has to "tread a fine line". The following is text of Mirqadirov report by Zerkalo on 29 July entitled "The Baku government is asking for serious trouble. International organizations could refuse to monitor the upcoming presidential elections"; subheading have been inserted editorially:

The OSCE's Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights issued a report on 24 July about the results of its visit to Azerbaijan between 9-12 July. The pre-election situation in Azerbaijan is cause for "concern and fears" related to violation of rights and persecution of the opposition's presidential contenders.

**Human rights and media - Zerkalo**

The 2003 presidential elections are of vital importance to Azerbaijan since the 1998 elections "did not meet international standards", the report said. The authorities have heeded only a small portion of the OSCE's recommendations given in the aftermath of the 1998 elections.

There is evidence that fundamental rights of citizens are being infringed in Azerbaijan, which is bound to negatively affect the situation ahead of the elections. The report cites the Central Electoral Commission's CEC refusal to register Democratic Party leader Rasul Quliyev as a candidate. The CEC's reasoning "was not compelling", it said.

The report said that Azerbaijan's Electoral Code could provide for fair and honest elections if all its stipulations and regulations were observed. However, the authorities have two thirds of the vote in the CEC and can take any decision. This casts doubt over the CEC's objectivity and fairness of its decisions.

The report noted the unacceptably high level of the executive authorities' interference in the previous elections. In order for this not to happen, the government has to give up such a practice and the CEC's activity has to be neutral and transparent.

The report also said that the authorities retained their control over the state television, the main source of information for Azerbaijanis. The authorities have yet to fulfil their obligation to transform the state TV into a public broadcasting service. As for other TV channels and radios, they are all pro-government and do not adequately represent the plurality of political views. Opposition parties have no access to the state TV, and during the past elections the state TV was not neutral and balanced. As to the newspapers, most opposition newspapers are being persecuted by the authorities.

The law prohibits NGOs receiving more than 30 per cent of their funding from abroad from monitoring elections. This restriction is not in line with best international practice. If the legal restriction is not lifted, it will reduce the transparency of, and public confidence in, the elections.

The restriction is contrary to Azerbaijan's commitments to the OSCE and reflects a failure to implement the OSCE's recommendations from previous elections.

**Possible sanctions against Azerbaijan**

Should it continue this way, then international organizations' assessment of presidential elections in Azerbaijan will be much more negative than in Armenia. However, the trouble may start well before the presidential elections. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe PACE will gather for a session in September. It is very likely - unless the situation in Azerbaijan improves by then - that



PACE will discuss the situation in Azerbaijan and impose quite harsh sanctions. For a start, the Azerbaijani delegation to PACE could lose its right to vote.

It could go further. Following the elections, Azerbaijan will still have to report to PACE about meeting its commitments. Considering that these commitments will be discussed together with the results of the presidential elections, which could be assessed negatively, then PACE could advise the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to exclude Azerbaijan from this international organization.

But this is not the worst thing that could happen. If no special measures are taken, the situation may get out of control. If the situation in Azerbaijan ahead of the elections does not improve, then the OSCE and the Council of Europe might refuse to monitor the 2003 elections altogether, Zerkalo newspaper has learnt from informed diplomatic sources. Such an event, should it happen, would be tantamount to international condemnation of Azerbaijan. It will take a lot of time then to get rid of the dirt and restore Azerbaijan's already rather tarnished international image.

#### International organizations' double standards

Moreover, such a scenario - the worst one for Azerbaijan - would see an increase in pressure on the Baku government in other issues of no lesser importance, like the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. We have already got used to different reactions from international organizations to events of similar nature in Azerbaijan and Armenia. We call it double standards. The existence of double standards within international organizations vis-a-vis Azerbaijan and Armenia is likely, but Azerbaijan does not have a choice, does it? Yes, actually it does. We can isolate ourselves from the West, say that we are an Asian, Eastern country with all ensuing consequences. However, it is clear even for a person with little knowledge of international politics that this is beyond our capabilities and runs counter to Azerbaijan's interests. Turkey's experience of relations with international organizations is very remarkable in this regard. Despite an often

prejudiced attitude of the West towards Turkey, Ankara intensively cooperates with international organizations, does its best to become part of the united Europe and sometimes makes serious concessions in problems related to human rights.

Ankara acknowledges that Turkey's prosperity and its prospects for remaining a regional heavyweight able to influence geopolitical disputes depend wholly on the continuation of this policy. Azerbaijan, which in addition has the unresolved Karabakh conflict, should tread a fine line in relations with international organizations, instead of prompting them to take measures against Azerbaijan.

#### 07/30/03 - Concern expressed over reprisals against Azerbaijani media - RFE/RL

Reporters Without Borders Secretary-General Robert Menard has written to Azerbaijani Interior Minister Ramil Usubov expressing "shock" at the increasing legal and physical pressure being brought to bear on opposition journalists in Azerbaijan, Turan reported on 29 July. Also on 29 July, Ambassador Peter Burkhard, who heads the OSCE Office in Baku, similarly expressed concern over the confrontation between opposition and government media, Turan reported. Azerbaijan's Press Council issued an appeal the same day to both government-controlled and opposition media to desist from mutual accusations and insults.

#### 07/31/03 - Azerbaijani road police target another opposition party leader - RFE/RL

Traffic police halted a car escorting Azerbaijan National Independence Party Chairman Etibar Mamedov in Baku on 30 July and detained the driver and three passengers, Turan reported. Cars escorting AHCP leader Ali Kerimli and Musavat Party Chairman Isa Gambar have also been halted on several occasions in recent weeks for allegedly violating traffic regulations.

#### 08/04/03 - Five Azerbaijani Presidential candidates formally confirmed - RFE/RL

Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission on 1 August confirmed Ilham Aliev's registration as a candidate for the 15 October presidential election, Turan reported. Two days later, the commission likewise confirmed the registration of opposition Musavat Party Chairman Isa Gambar; pro-presidential Alliance for Azerbaijan Chairman Abutalib Samedov; and Gudrat Gasankuliev, who heads a pro-presidential splinter group that broke away from the opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front Party. Five of a total of 19 registered candidates have now been confirmed. The first to be formally confirmed was President Aliev. On 2 August, some 25,000 people participated in a demonstration in Baku convened by the Opposition Coordinating Council, Turan reported. Participants demanded that the authorities release information on the president's health and his ability to discharge his official functions. They also demanded an end to the harassment of opposition politicians and the registration as presidential candidates of Democratic Party Chairman Rasul Guliev, former President Ayaz Mutalibov, and former presidential adviser Eldar Namazov, all of whose applications to register for the ballot were refused.

#### 08/05/03 - Terrorists trained in Azerbaijan arrested in Morocco - PanArmenian

Terrorists trained in Azerbaijan were arrested in Morocco. As reported by "Arminfo" agency referring to "Associated Press," they are suspected of being concerned with "Salafiya Jihadia" Islamic extremist organization. According to the source, two out of those arrested are accused of organizing an act of terrorism in Casablanca. They are also suspected of close contacts with "Al-Qaeda." In the words of one of them - Anthony Perry Yensen, 37-year-old British citizen, who had accepted Islam, he was in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve his preparedness.

#### 08/05/03 - Azerbaijani : succession difficile en vue à Bakou - Le Figaro

(...)

Comme en Arménie et en Géorgie voisines, dominées elles aussi par des hommes forts ayant marginalisé leurs concurrents potentiels, la succession Aliev s'annonce périlleuse. De quoi procurer des maux de tête aux dirigeants des grandes compagnies pétrolières occidentales qui ont décidé d'investir des milliards en Azerbaïdjan pour exploiter le pétrole de la Caspienne, et pour l'acheminer en Turquie, via un oléoduc toujours en construction.

Pour l'instant, à Bakou, les autorités préfèrent multiplier les communiqués rassurants, affirmant «qu'Aliev ne tardera pas à rentrer au pays». Mais, l'opposition et la presse indépendante le donnent déjà «mort» ou «moribond». Selon eux, la subite convocation, hier, d'une réunion extraordinaire du Parlement qui a confirmé la nomination du fils d'Aliev, Ilham, au poste de premier ministre – un poste qui fait automatiquement de lui le président par intérim du pays en cas d'incapacité de son père à gouverner – montre que la transition a déjà commencé.(...)

Pour l'opposition, la mise en avant d'Ilham vise à préserver les intérêts du clan Aliev qui domine la politique azérie depuis trois décennies. «Nous croyons que c'est une tentative d'implanter un scénario néomonarchique pour s'emparer du pouvoir en Azerbaïdjan... Nous voulons organiser la résistance à cette tentative...», a déclaré Isa Gambar, chef de file du parti Musavat, ancien président du Parlement et l'un des principaux candidats d'opposition. (...)

Mais les critiques du régime accusent Gueïdar Aliev d'avoir verrouillé politiquement le pays, en tolérant des abus aux droits de l'homme et une corruption galopante. Ils soutiennent également que sa famille est la seule à avoir bénéficié des revenus du pétrole au pays limitrophe de la mer Caspienne. «Le clan du pouvoir est prêt à tout pour garder la main, car ils savent que le peuple ne veut pas d'Ilham Aliev», affirme le journaliste d'opposition Fazid Aleskeroglo.

Ce dernier ne serait pas étonné que le conflit avec l'Arménie – toujours non réglé – soit subrepticement réactivé pour pouvoir justifier une reprise en main musclée. «Nous observons avec inquiétude des échauffourées

régulières sur la ligne de front depuis une quinzaine de jours», avance-t-il, n'excluant pas non plus des mouvements de colère contre le pouvoir de la part d'une population paupérisée et frustrée par l'enrichissement d'une petite caste pétrolière.(...)

#### **08/06/03 – Azerbaijani opposition questions legality of Prime Minister's appointment - RFE/RL**

Meeting in Baku on 5 August, the nine Azerbaijani opposition parties aligned in the Opposition Coordinating Center (MKM) addressed a demand to the Central Election Commission (CEC) to annul the registration as a candidate in the presidential elections scheduled for 15 October of President Aliev's son Ilham, who was appointed prime minister the previous day, zerkalo.az reported on 6 August. The letter pointed out that Article 69.2 of the Election Code precludes the participation of the prime minister and other senior officials in the ballot. The MKM also wrote to the Azerbaijani parliament protesting that Ilham Aliev's appointment as premier was illegal and warning that it intends to ask the Constitutional Court to verify the authenticity of President Aliev's signature on the relevant decree. ITAR-TASS on 5 August quoted CEC secretary Ingalb Nasirov as saying that Ilham Aliev will suspend execution of his duties as premier for the duration of the election campaign in accordance with the requirements of the Election Code.

#### **09/02/03 – Azerbaijan condemns OSCE reaction to cease-fire violation - RFE/RL**

Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry has lodged a formal complaint with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in connection with shots fired along the Line of Contact separating Azerbaijani and Armenian forces during routine OSCE monitoring on 19 August, according to ANS TV on 29 August, as cited by Groong Andrzej Kasprzyk, who is the special representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office, halted the monitoring immediately and traveled to Yerevan on 21 August to discuss the incident with Armenian officials. He subsequently issued a

statement saying it was impossible to determine which side opened fire. The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry criticized Kasprzyk for failing to blame Armenia for the incident. In a 29 August interview with Turan, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Vilayat Guliev criticized his counterpart from the Netherlands, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who is OSCE chairman-in-office, for failing to visit the South Caucasus. Guliev implied that failure reflects the OSCE's dwindling interest in resolving the Karabakh conflict.

#### **09/04/03 - OSCE Office coordinates international community support for electoral process in Azerbaijan - OSCE**

Six weeks before the presidential election in Azerbaijan, international community representatives stressed the importance of full implementation of the basic principles of an open and equitable election process.

"These elections are vitally important for Azerbaijan and the entire region," said the Acting Head of the OSCE Office in Baku, Robin Seaward.

"This is an opportunity for Azerbaijan to take a major step forward on the path to democracy. The Electoral Law should scrupulously be observed."

Seaward made these remarks on the occasion of the weekly meeting of international representatives in Baku to discuss all aspects of the electoral process.

The Tuesday meetings, launched by the OSCE Office, will bring together representatives of the Council of Europe and bilateral embassies of OSCE participating States in Baku. They decided to co-ordinate their support for the Azerbaijani authorities in promotion of the conditions necessary for an election that meets international standards of transparency, fairness and integrity.

During the first meeting Seaward expressed concern about reports by some Azerbaijani citizens on difficulties they have encountered in registering with the Central Election Commission as observers for the 15 October election.

"It is extremely important to ensure that all candidates can organize themselves to campaign for votes, to provide equal access to the media and to create conditions for

the electorate to make its free and informed choice on election day," he said.

**09/04/03 - Karabakh Liberation Organization Pickets American Embassy Members of Karabakh Liberation Organization held a picket in front of the embassy of USA to Azerbaijan protesting passive position of this country at solution of Karabakh conflict - BakuToday**

Picketers objected visit of several congressmen to Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and their meeting with members of Armenian community of Karabakh. The pickets carried the following slogans: "Freedom to Karabakh," "No Armenian Terrorism," "U.S. Must Recognize Aggressors," "No Azerbaijan Without Karabakh" and "Shame on U.S. Congressmen." Picketers demanded United States to increase efforts for solution of Karabakh conflict, to recognize Armenia as aggressor and to use sanctions against Armenia, as a co-chairman of OSCE Minsk group and one of the strongest states of the world. The resolution of the picket also demands to put an end to cooperation "with corrupt and authoritarian regime of Heydar Aliyev" and U.S. pro-Armenian policy.

The resolution also noted that if the following demands are not met, there is no need in U.S. co-chairmanship in OSCE MG

**09/04/03 - "Azerbaijani community embarrassed by activity of OSCE minsk group" Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev - Azerbaijan News Service**

Prime minister of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received Yuri Merzlyakov Russian co-chairman to OSCE Minsk group. Ilham Aliyev expressed his concern of inactivity of Minsk group in settlement of Daqliq Qarabaq conflict and said Azerbaijani leadership and community is embarrassed by absence of any further steps by OSCE. Prime Minister expressed his hope that OSCE Minsk group will step up its activity in this direction. Ilham Aliyev excluded possibility of any economic relations with Armenia until release of occupied Azerbaijani territories.

Occupation fact of Azerbaijan's territory by Armenia as a member of Council of Europe and other international organizations is incompatible with any international norm. OSCE Minsk group co-chairs are reported to gather in Vienna September 15 to discuss new proposals concerning peaceful solution to the conflict. Yuri Mirzlyakov informed Ilham Aliyev about the meeting. In his turn Ilham Aliyev reminded of positive relations between Russia and Azerbaijan and said it would be also reflected in increase of peaceful efforts by Russia as a member of Minsk group.

**09/05/03 - Armenian spy is arrested in Baku - Azerbaijan News Service**

As the result of joint operation the Ministry of National security and Baku police department arrested Asiryan Lev Pashayevich, Armenian man who came to Baku as spy. Asiryan was born in Agdere region of Azerbaijan in 1965 and left Azerbaijan in 1988. But he came back to Baku on January of 2003 year and lived here with forged documents. According to his words he came to Baku to deal with flower business. But Mehebbet Huseynov, chief of the investigation department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs refutes his words. Police department investigates how he passed to Azerbaijan. There was opened criminal case according to items 321 and 228.1 of the criminal code of Azerbaijan Republic. The Armenian man is imprisoned for 7 years and now is in the 1st prison in Bayil. The Russian Federation, citizen of which is Lev Asiryan, didn't answer to inquiry of Azerbaijan side about transforming of Asiryan to Russia. Besides it Mehebbet Huseynov asks people to be careful and to inform the Ministry of National Security and Police Departments about dubious persons.

**09/08/03 - Former first Deputy Baku Mayor convicted of embezzlement - RFE/RL Newline**

Former First Deputy Mayor Eldaniz Lahijev and four other municipal officials were found guilty by a Baku court on 5 September of embezzling some \$510,000 in funds from the U.S. Embassy in Baku, AP

reported. The funds were to be used to expand the embassy compound and improve security. In 1999, the embassy transferred \$4.68 million to the Baku mayor's office for a 99-year lease on property adjoining the embassy, allocating \$2.6 million of that amount for compensation for residents of apartment buildings on the adjoining land. Lahijev was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, and the four others received prison sentences ranging from four to eight years.

**09/09/03 - Azerbaijani debate ends abruptly after brawl - RFE/RL Newline**

A debate between representatives of the opposition Azerbaijani Popular Front party and a pro-government party ended abruptly on 6 September after a brawl broke out between the participants, Reuters reported. The debate, televised live before a national audience, was ended after Fuad Mustafayev, debating on behalf of the Popular Front's presidential candidate, insulted pro-government Modern Musavat Party contender Hafiz Hadjiyev and a brawl erupted after the two hurled water at one another. Television officials immediately cut the live coverage of the debate.

**09/10/03 - OSCE media watchdog, Council of Europe voice concern on media in Azerbaijan - OSCE**

Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Freimut Duve, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, today made the following joint statement regarding the media situation in Azerbaijan.

"We are deeply concerned by the continuous reports regarding harassment of the media and intimidation of journalists in Azerbaijan.

We are in particular alarmed by the fate of the newspaper Yeni Musavat, which has been sentenced to three fines amounting in total to 100,000 US Dollars and whose bank account has been frozen. Without commenting on the substance of the law suits, it seems clear that such a high fine is disproportionate and might undermine the financial viability of this newspaper. We are all the more worried that this may discourage critical reporting at a time when



media pluralism and the full and unhindered exercise of press freedoms will be essential in the run up to the forthcoming presidential elections.

We trust that the Azerbaijani authorities will take all necessary steps in order to ensure that such obstruction does not take place in Azerbaijan and to guarantee respect for freedom of the media in accordance with the pertinent international standards, as enshrined in particular in Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Azerbaijan is a Party.

We call on the Azerbaijani authorities to review the provisions concerning libel contained in the Azerbaijani Law in the light of the above standards taking all appropriate measures to align these provisions and their implementation with these standards.

We are also extremely concerned about the attack against several journalists outside the main Baku Police Station that took place on 8 September 2003. As a result, ten journalists have been injured. We expect the authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of this assault against media representatives as soon as possible and to inform our respective organisations of its results, and we expect the Government of Azerbaijan to ensure that a free and open media landscape prevails in their country."

**09/11/03 - OSCE/ODIHR deploys observers to monitor presidential election in Azerbaijan - OSCE**

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has begun its Election Observation Mission to monitor the presidential election in the Republic of Azerbaijan, scheduled for 15 October, with the deployment of 30 international election experts from 18 OSCE participating States. The experts are based at Mission headquarters in Baku and in regions throughout the country.

At the invitation of the Azeri Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Observation Mission will monitor the election campaign, including the media, the legal framework, the work of the election administration, and the resolution of election disputes. The Mission will also assess the election process against national legislation

and international election commitments agreed to by all OSCE participating States.

"This election is a critical test for democracy in Azerbaijan", said Peter Eicher, Head of the Observation Mission. "Azerbaijan deserves a free and fair election. We are counting on the authorities to deliver one."

The ODIHR intends to deploy some 500 short-term observers throughout the country shortly before election day, who, together with parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, will monitor voting, counting of ballots, and vote tabulation.

On the day after the election, the Observation Mission will issue a statement of preliminary findings and conclusions. A comprehensive final report will be released one month after the completion of the election process.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission and the OSCE Office in Baku operate separately under their specific mandates.

**09/11/03 - Pakistani military delegation visits Azerbaijan - RFE/RL Newsline**

A Pakistani military delegation led by Admiral Shahid Karimullah, the chief of the country's Naval Staff, met with Azerbaijani Defense Minister Colonel General Safar Abiev on 10 September during a visit to Baku, ANS reported. The Pakistani delegation discussed plans to expand bilateral cooperation and agreed to boost the number of Azerbaijani Army and Air Force officers studying at Pakistani military academies. Pakistan is second only to Turkey in providing military training and assistance to Azerbaijan.

**09/12/03 - Azerbaijani Premier adopts hard-line rhetoric on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict - RFE/RL Newsline**

Azerbaijani Prime Minister and presidential candidate Ilham Aliiev warned in a nationally televised campaign address on 10 September that Azerbaijan will not establish economic relations with Armenia until the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is resolved and reiterated a threat to "use whatever means at its disposal to liberate its lands," Interfax and

AP reported. Aliiev vowed that there can be no peace in the region until "Azerbaijan's territorial integrity is restored, Armenia withdraws from occupied Azerbaijani lands, and displaced people are returned to their homes." The premier added that although he hopes the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will step up its activities to broker a resolution to the conflict, "the Azerbaijani nation's patience is running out." He also issued a call for "nongovernmental organizations to end relations with Armenia" and criticized several leading opposition presidential candidates for their recent statements promising "to liberate Nagorno-Karabakh within six months after they take office," adding that the country has already got rid of them once and their return is out of the question."

**09/13/03 - Azeri President implicated in bribery probe**

The president of Azerbaijan and his son have been implicated in a bribery investigation focusing on the halted privatisation of the Central Asian republic's state-owned oil company.

Their alleged role in the scandal was detailed in a criminal indictment against a Swiss banker unsealed in a New York court this week. A prominent Wall Street hedge fund, Omega Advisors, was also implicated. [...] A spokesman for the Azeri embassy said that any claims of illegal activity against the President or prime minister were "groundless", and an attempt to tarnish the country's reputation. According to the indictment, Hans Bodmer, a Swiss lawyer, paid millions of dollars in bribes beginning in 1997 to four senior Azeri officials to influence the planned privatisation of Azerbaijan's state-owned oil company, SOCAR, for the benefit of a group of foreign investors.

None of the Azeri officials was named. But one was referred to by prosecutors as a "a senior Azeri official" who was "the ultimate decision maker with all respect to all significant aspects of privatisation". Another was identified as a "senior SOCAR official". Those figures were Mr Aliyev and his son, who was the former SOCAR head, according to several people familiar with the investigation.

The case revolves around the expected privatisation of SOCAR in the late 1990s - an event which failed to materialise. The indictment mentions two investment vehicles, Oily Rock and Minaret, established in 1997 by Viktor Kozheny, a Czech investor, to purchase Azeri privatisation vouchers in a bid to eventually take control of SOCAR. [...]

Prosecutors alleged that Mr Bodmer transferred tens of millions of dollars through Swiss accounts as part of the scheme, and caused chartered jets deliver millions of dollars in cash from Zurich to Baku. The indictment stated that Omega and another fund, Pharos, were led to invest "based on their understanding that persons associated with Oily Rock . . . paid bribes to the Azeri officials." Mr Bodmer and Omega could not be reached for comment. The Justice Department declined to comment.

**09/16/03 - Thousands rally in support of Azerbaijani opposition candidate - RFE/RL Newsline**

Some 10,000 people attended a rally on 14 September in the town of Yevlakh, 300 kilometers north of Baku, in support of AMIP Chairman Mamedov, Turan and zerkalo.az reported on 15 and 16 September, respectively. Mamedov pledged that if elected president, he will launch a state program to develop the region's economy. The local authorities made every effort to prevent voters from attending the rally, closing the two main streets leading to the town's central square where it was to take place, declaring 14 September (a Sunday) a working day, halting buses bringing voters to the rally from neighboring raions, and threatening the inhabitants of outlying villages that they would be stripped of their Azerbaijani citizenship if they attended the rally. On 15 September, Ramiz Orudjev, who heads AMIP's Gyanja branch, was summoned to police for questioning about the previous day's rally and subsequently charged with injuring a pedestrian in a traffic accident one week earlier, Turan reported.

**09/18/03 - Two Azerbaijani opposition leaders sign coalition agreement - RFE/RL Newsline**

As widely anticipated, the leaders of the Azerbaijan National Independence Party (AMIP) and the progressive wing of the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (AHCP), Etibar Mamedov and Ali Kerimli, signed a formal agreement in Baku on 17 September under which Kerimli will withdraw his candidacy in the 15 October presidential election in favor of Mamedov, Turan reported. Reuters on 17 September quoted Mamedov as saying that "the overall goal of the coalition is to strengthen integration among democratic rightist forces in the fight against the governing regime." Should Mamedov be elected president, the AHCP will participate on a parity basis in forming the new government and will nominate the prime minister. If Mamedov is not elected, the agreement becomes void after 15 October.

**09/19/03 - Baku asks Yerevan not to intervene in the Karabakh conflict - WPS Agency**

Vilayat Guliyev, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, stated on September 15 that Baku is prepared to start negotiations with representatives of the Nagorno-Karabakhskaya republic on condition that Armenia considers the conflict as Azerbaijan's interior affair.

Vilayat Guliyev stated: "Armenia must withdraw from negotiations. Azerbaijan and Karabakh may start negotiations." Previously the Armenian media, which referred to Yury Merzlyakov (Russian co-chairman of the Minsk OSCE group), stated that Karabakh would probably join negotiations over the conflict held by Baku and Yerevan. (...)

**09/19/03 - Azerbaijani opposition leader kicks off election campaign - RFE/RL Newsline**

Musavat party Chairman Isa Gambar held his first presidential-campaign rally on 18 September in Ismailly Raion, 180 kilometers west of Baku, Turan and zerkalo.az reported. The online newspaper estimated attendance at 1,500-2,000 people, while Turan gave a figure of 3,000, which is far fewer than the estimated 10,000 who turned out in Yevlakh in support of Gambar's opposition rival Etibar

Mamedov of the Azerbaijan National Independence Party (AMIP) on 14 September. Police initially failed to intervene when two elderly people attempted to disrupt the proceedings. Gambar expressed confidence that he will be elected president on 15 October. Noting that none of the raion's 12 factories is currently functioning, he pledged to create thousands of new jobs. He also promised to raise salaries by 300 percent and create a strong economy and a strong army.

**Another party joins Azerbaijani election coalition**

The Political Council of the opposition Yurddash party decided on 17 September to join the Azerbaijan Popular Front Party-AMIP coalition that supports AMIP Chairman Mamedov's candidacy in the 15 October presidential election, Turan reported on 18 September.

**22/09/03 - Plusieurs journalistes agressés et interpellés lors de meetings électoraux de l'opposition - Reporters sans frontières**

Le 21 septembre 2003, au moins cinq journalistes indépendants ou d'opposition ont été agressés par les forces de l'ordre, et deux autres interpellés, alors qu'ils couvraient les meetings de deux candidats d'opposition à l'élection présidentielle du 15 octobre dans les villes de Masaly et Lenkoran. Reporters sans frontières est très inquiète des pressions qui s'exercent contre la presse indépendante dans le cadre de l'élection présidentielle. Elle demande au ministère de l'Intérieur et à la Commission électorale de veiller à ce que la couverture de la période préélectorale et du scrutin lui-même par les médias indépendants ne soit pas entravée. Elle demande également qu'une enquête soit menée afin d'établir les circonstances de l'agression de ces journalistes.

En début d'après-midi, à Masaly (sud de Bakou), Irada Nureddingyzy, correspondante du quotidien d'opposition Milliyet, Nigyar Almangyzy, du quotidien Express, Samira Zamanly, du quotidien d'opposition Khurriyet, Taptig Farhadoglu, correspondant de l'agence de presse Turan, et Zaur Rasulzade, du quotidien

russophone Novoye Vremya, ont été frappés à coups de matraques et de pierres par des policiers et des personnes en civil, lors d'un meeting des deux candidats d'opposition Etibar Mamedov (Parti de l'indépendance nationale) et de Ali Kerimly (Parti du front populaire) que les forces de l'ordre tentaient de disperser. Au cours de l'incident, Samira Zamanly, qui a été touchée à la tête par un jet de pierre, a perdu connaissance.

En fin d'après-midi, Rial Jafarli, du quotidien Azadliq, et Ali Orujev, du quotidien d'opposition Milliyyet, ont été interpellés alors qu'ils couvraient un autre meeting des deux mêmes candidats, dans la ville de Lenkoran. Le premier a été relâché cinq heures plus tard, et le second, inculpé pour "hooliganisme", était toujours détenu le lendemain des faits. Ali Orujev est accusé d'avoir mordu le doigt d'un fonctionnaire local. Les journalistes témoins de la scène affirment que ce dernier s'est blessé en arrachant le dictaphone du journaliste.

**09/22/03 – Armenian military men released Alisafa Abdulkerimov after 6 days hostage - Azerbaijan News Service**

At last Armenian military men released Azerbaijani resident Alisafa Abdulkerimov who has been kept as captured for 6 days in occupied territory of Daqliq Qarabaq. Alisafa Abdulkerimov, 22 resident of Berde region of Azerbaijan was taken by Armenians as a hostage in the territory of Daqliq Qarabaq occupied by Armenian military forces. Alisafa passed to the occupied territories on September 13, when he was pasturing sheep in the territory of Goranboy region. (...)

**09/23/03 – Azerbaijani opposition leader warns authorities against "playing with fire" - RFE/RL Newsline**

Opposition Musavat Party Chairman Isa Gambar said at a 22 September press conference in Baku that the use of violence by the authorities against the population is tantamount to "playing with fire," and "could lead to unpredictable, serious consequences," Turan reported. Gambar was referring to alleged police brutality on 20 September against hundreds of people who tried to congregate at

two locations in Baku to attend his campaign rallies. Gambar laid the blame for the violence on Prime Minister Ilham Aliiev, presidential administration head Ramiz Mekhtiev, Interior Minister Ramil Usubov, and Baku police chief Magerram Aliiev. Also on 22 September, Azerbaijan National Independence Party Chairman Etibar Mamedov said in Baku he views as an attempt on his life efforts by police in the southern raions of Masally and Lenkoran to prevent voters attending his election rallies, Turan reported. According to zerkalo.az on 23 September, the measures taken by police in those two towns resulted in at least one fatality. A resident of Masally died of injuries suffered while falling into a trench dug by police to hinder access to the main square.

Azerbaijani President to return home, tour country

President Heidar Aliiev is the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party's sole candidate for the 15 October presidential election, Interfax on 22 September quoted presidential administration head Mekhtiev as telling journalists in Baku. Mekhtiev said doctors are optimistic that the octogenarian president, who is undergoing medical treatment at the Cleveland Clinic in the U.S. state of Ohio, will be fit to return to Baku by the end of this month. He said that after his return, Aliiev will undertake an election-campaign tour of Azerbaijan.

**09/24/03 - Azerbaijanis vandalise UK war memorial - Daily Telegraph - UK**

A memorial to 47 British servicemen killed defending Azerbaijan's oil fields on the Caspian Sea has been splattered with crude oil a week after its erection, the British embassy said yesterday.

Local radical groups object to the force being honoured because it fought on the side of Armenians during ethnic rivalries of 1918-22. The memorial will be repaired.

**09/30/03 – Former Azerbaijani President slams "dirty" election campaign - RFE/RL Newsline**

In a 29 September interview with Turan, former President Ayaz Motalibov characterized the ongoing presidential-election campaign as

"amoral, dirty, and dissolute." He said the authorities and the state-controlled media are "slinging mud" at opposition presidential candidates. He added that police reprisals on 21 September against supporters of opposition candidates in Baku, Lenkoran, and Masally show that "the authorities are unable to hold democratic elections," and are preparing to falsify the outcome of the 15 October ballot. The Central Election Commission rejected an application by Motalibov, who fled Baku in May 1992 following an abortive comeback attempt and has since lived in Moscow, to register as a presidential candidate.

**"Islamist" sentenced in Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan's Court for Military Felonies handed down prison terms of three and four years on 29 September to two residents of the city of Gyanja convicted of plotting a coup d'etat, Turan and zerkalo.az reported on 29 and 30 September respectively. The two men, both members of the congregation of Gyanja's Djuma mosque, were also found guilty of disseminating religious propaganda and of seeking to recruit an armed band of some 400-500 young men. One of the two men, Rasim Abbasov, told the court last month that his preliminary testimony was extracted under threat of torture.

**ARMENIA / ARMENIE**

**07/03/03 – Concerns over conduct of Armenian elections - Europe Information Service**

The EU has expressed concerns about the conduct of the May 25 parliamentary elections in Armenia. It has said that the process did not meet international standards, pointing to problems such as apparent ballot-rigging. The comments came in a declaration issued on behalf of the EU on June 27 by the Greek EU Presidency. The ten acceding countries, the three candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey) and the three EEA-EFTA states (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) aligned



themselves with the declaration. The statement said that: "The EU has taken note of the preliminary findings of the International Election Observation Mission at the recent parliamentary elections in Armenia. The EU is pleased to see that a large number of international and domestic observers, including observers of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, have monitored the elections.

Although some progress has been made since the last presidential elections on 5 March 2003, especially regarding the technical preparations, the pre-election campaign and the media coverage of the pre-electoral campaign, the EU regrets that the overall election process did not meet the international standards in a number of key aspects, whereas the Armenian authorities promised substantive improvements after the Presidential elections of 19 February 2003.

(...)

**07/11/03 – Global human development report 2003 launched at UNDP Armenia : Armenia maintains steady improvement - UN Development Programme Country Office in Armenia**

On 11 July 2003, the Global Human Development Report (HDR) 2003 was launched at the United Nations House in Yerevan, Armenia. The theme of this year HDR is 'Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty.' Ms. Lise Grande, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, representatives of the Government, international and local organisations, as well as the mass media were present at the event.(...) Despite an initial decline between 1990 and 1995, when many Central and Eastern European and CIS countries experienced setbacks, the HDI for Armenia has increased steadily since 1995 (from 0.709 in 1995 to 0.749 in 2001). Armenia ranks 87 on this index, and falls in the category of middle development. Initially, the 2003 Report placed Armenia in the 100th position. There was a statistical error, which led to an incorrect Human Development Index for Armenia. Through the efforts of the UNDP

Armenia office, UN Headquarters and UNESCO's Institute of Statistics, the problem has been solved. (...)

**07/19/03 – Holding school competition of essays denying Armenian Genocide violates international agreements - PanArmenian News**

By issuing a decree on holding a competition of essays on the topic of denial of the Armenian Genocide in education institutions (including Armenian schools) of Turkey the Turkish government has violated a number of international agreements, which it had joint in its time. As reported by "Akos" Armenian newspaper being issued in Turkey, Human Rights Istanbul Union stated. The matter concerns the UNESCO and UN documents on eliminating discrimination in curriculums and respecting the rights of national and religious minorities, as well as the European Convention of Human Rights among others. To appeal against the issue, the Human Rights Istanbul Union has addressed Turkish judicial bodies.

**07/29/03 - Coalition Urges EU to Suspend Education Aid to Turkey – Asbarez online**

In a letter to senior European Union (EU) officials, the European Coalition Against the Policy of Denial in Turkish Schools has urged the EU to not only condemn the recent Turkish Ministry campaign mandating the instruction of the denial of the Armenian Genocide as a part of Turkey's national curriculum, but to also suspend education assistance to Turkey, reported the European Armenian Federation (formerly known as ANC Europe).

The Coalition is formed by 160 international organizations and associations from Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and United Kingdom, and includes a number of well-known scholars in the fields of international law, education and politics.

(...)

The letter informs the EU of the directive published by the Turkish Ministry of Education requiring headmasters and teachers to organize conferences and

"testimonies" on "fighting against the allegations of genocide," and of the severe punishment reserved for Turkish teachers who ask for clarification about directive. It also urges the EU "to raise this matter in forthcoming meetings about or with Turkey."

The Coalition also asks for the reaffirmation of European Parliament's 1987 resolution "On a political solution to the Armenian question." Finally, it calls for the suspension of European financial aid, amounting to hundreds of millions of euros annually, to the Turkish education system as long as this directive is in effect.

"We call on the officials of the three EU authorities-the Parliament, the Commission and the Council-to take seriously the consequences of the Turkish government's education directive. European aid must not finance the Turkish education system as long as it disseminates in its schools values that oppose the principles upheld by Europe, just as we would not finance teaching the denial of the Jewish genocide or justification of apartheid in South Africa," said the Chairperson of the European Armenian Federation Hilda Tchoboian.

(...)

**08/02/03 - Council of Europe welcomes the commuting of 42 death sentences in Armenia - Council of Europe Press Release**

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter Schwimmer, has warmly welcomed the decision of Armenian President Robert Kocharyan to commute all outstanding death sentences to life imprisonment.

President Kocharyan reportedly cited Armenia's obligations as a Council of Europe member state as the reason for reducing the sentences of the 42 prisoners involved.

Mr Schwimmer said: "I am delighted that President Kocharyan has taken such a positive and commendable step forward. The death penalty is an affront to all notions of dignity and human rights, and has no place in the Europe of today.

"This decision is a clear sign that Armenia is determined to honour its commitments to the Council of Europe, and wants to become fully integrated within the European family of nations," he added.

**08/04/03 – OSCE issues final report on Armenian elections - RFE/RL**

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights released on 1 August its final report on the conduct of the 25 May Armenian parliamentary elections. The report said the ballot "marked an improvement" over the presidential elections earlier this year, but that the ballot "fell short of international standards for democratic elections in a number of key respects, in particular the counting and tabulation of votes." It further acknowledged that "the political leadership...made efforts to discourage violations, but perpetrators were again not held accountable." It concluded that the authorities "must end this atmosphere of impunity to give a clear sign of determination to meet their international commitments for democratic elections."

**08/05/03 – US stands for opening of Turkish-Armenian borders - ArmenPress**

A senior US diplomat reconfirmed today the US administration's support to efforts seeking to reopen the closed Armenian-Armenian border. The US ambassador to Yerevan, John Ordway, told a news conference today that "we have voiced openly our position on the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations. The US stands firmly for improvement of relations between the two nations and this issue remains on the US foreign policy agenda."

Ordway said this issue had been one of the topics discussed recently by Turkish and US top government officials. "We continue discussing it with Turkish officials and we regret that it has not been resolved but we hope that the Turkish-Armenian border will open in future," he said. [...]

**08/06/03 - Armenia to boost military cooperation with US this year - Caspian News Agency**

The military cooperation between Armenia and US is to enter a new stage of its development this year,

the US Ambassador to Armenia John Ordway told at the briefing. According to the US diplomat this year representatives of the US and Armenian armed forces have already had a number of mutual visits, and several visits are planned as well.

At present, the both sides are preparing a visit of the American military staff arrival to Armenia within the frames of the program for mine cleaning. In their turn representatives of the Armenian armed forces will visit the US and the national service representatives of the State of Kansas will come to Armenia.

**08/29/03 - Armenia may get US resettlement aid - PRAVDA**

The United States may help Armenia with its refugee problem. As Rosbalt has learned from the press service of the Armenian National Assembly, the matter was discussed at a meeting between the speaker of the National Assembly, Artur Bagdasaryan, and the chief of the Armenian office of the US Agency for International Development (AID), Kit Simons. Bagdasaryan asked Simons to add help for 4,000 refugees from Azerbaijan, currently living in temporary shelters, to the AID program for Armenia. Simons promised the speaker that he would seek approval of financing to help provide the necessary apartments. It may be remembered that, during the war in Karabakh in 1988-1991, more than 300,000 people fled into Armenia from Azerbaijan. Many of them remain without permanent housing.

**09/01/03 – French teacher faces problems in teaching Armenian Genocide - ArmenPress**

A teacher of a Paris-based school complained recently that she faces tremendous difficulties when telling about the Armenian genocide, committed by the government of Turkey in 1915. She said that several students of Turkish descent hinder her class.

The teacher complained during a discussion of the latest issue of Shoah History Magazine, run by the Modern Jewish Documentary Center that was completely dedicated to Armenian genocide.

The discussion of a 600-page work was attended by Jews and Armenian experts. The magazine's chief editor George Bensusan told in an interview with Paris-based Armenian language weekly Haraj that both the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide were crimes against humanity. He said the struggle for international recognition of the genocide must go on with the same speed.

Helen Strapelias, one of the contributors to the magazine, was quoted as saying that history textbooks of first and third grade of French schoolchildren will contain more information on the Armenian genocide.

**09/03/03 – Armenian NGOs call for amendments to bill on Ombudsman - RFE/RL**

More than a dozen Armenian NGOs urged parliament on 2 September not to pass in its current version a government-backed bill creating the post of ombudsman responsible for human rights, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported. The NGOs objected that the bill, approved by parliament in the first reading earlier this year, empowers the president to name the ombudsman. They argued that parliament should do so. The Armenian constitution, however, does not grant the parliament that prerogative. But parliament deputy speaker Tigran Torosian proposed on 2 September that under a new version of the bill the ombudsman named by the president would be required to resign, after which the legislature would select a replacement. Creation of the ombudsman's post was one of the commitments Armenia made on acceptance in January 2001 into full membership of the Council of Europe.

**09/05/03 – The offer to Armenian people to return to its historical motherland may become positive step for Turkish government-UN expert - ARKA News Agency**

It would be a very positive gesture for the Turkish Government to offer a possibility of return to the Armenian people, a return to their territories, their thousand-year old, two-thousand year-old homeland in Turkey, International law expert, historian and former United Nations official on human rights Dr. Alfred

De Zayas elaborated, at a public gathering, on his recent legal memorandum about Turkey's responsibility for the Genocide against the Armenians and about reparations to Armenians. "This right to return has been recognized in the context of Yugoslavia wars. The Dayton Accords of Dec. 1995, recognized the right of the Bosnian Muslims to return in dignity and safety to their homes in Bosnia and Hertsegovina", he said. Addressing the Aug. 27 meeting, which was organized by The Armenian National Committees of Canada and of Toronto, Dr. De Zayas said that the 1948 UN Genocide Convention fully applies to the 1915-1923 Genocide against the Armenians.

In his remarks Dr. De Zayas stated that the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention fully applies to the 1915-1923 genocide against the Armenians. "Going back to the argument of the Turkish Government that the Genocide Convention of 1948 has no applicability to the genocide against the Armenians, now the fact is that the Genocide Convention its object and its purpose is to prevent and to suppress genocide. Because its object and purpose is double--to prevent and to suppress, you have the element of deterrents. It is necessary to deter future genocides by punishment and by restitution. It is imperative that the thief does not keep the booty; the thief does not keep the fruit of his crime", Zayas stated.

**09/05-11/03 – Group Ago insists on granting frequencies to “A1+” and “Noyan Tapan” and on the need to decriminalize libel and insult – Yerevan Press Club weekly newsletter**

On September 8 the Progress Report of the Monitoring Group (Group Ago) on the honoring of commitments to the Council of Europe by Armenia and Azerbaijan was published. The Report was submitted to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The official visit of the representatives of the CE Committee of Ministers to Armenia had been made on July 6-8.

In its conclusion on Armenia and Azerbaijan Group Ago expresses concern over the lack of progress on a number of sensitive issues,

which raises a serious problem with regard to honoring of commitments to the CE by the two countries. In the opinion of the representatives of the CE Committee of Ministers, "independence of the legislative, the judiciary and the media appears to be perceived as threat to power which lies mainly - in the both countries - in the hands of respective presidents". This is borne out by the fact that in these fundamental fields legislation has either not been adopted, or has been amended prior to being passed, with the result that the Council of Europe's recommendations on sensitive points were not taken into account.

In the Armenia section of the Report the importance of finding some pragmatic solutions in respect of several commitments where progress was delayed pending the referendum on constitutional amendments is noted. These are in particular the adoption of law on mass communication and of amendments in the RA Law "On Television and Radio". The discontent of Group Ago is caused by the provisions for membership of the radio and television supervisory boards. Both the draft law on mass communication and the draft amendments to the broadcast law, as Monitoring Group believes, must be sent to the Council of Europe for an expert opinion and once again interim measures must be put in place.(...)

**09/10/03 - Council of Europe welcomes abolition of death penalty in Armenia - Council of Europe Press Release**

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President Peter Schieder and the Secretary General of the Organisation, Walter Schwimmer, today welcomed the decision by the National Assembly of Armenia to abolish the death penalty and to ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights.

"This important step brings Europe closer to total abolition of the death penalty, which is one of our Organisation's priorities. We strongly encourage the Armenian authorities to continue fulfilling the commitments made by the country when it joined the Council of Europe", they stressed.

The Armenian Parliament yesterday voted, 92 to 1, in favour of the abolition of the death penalty and to ratify Protocol No. 6 to the Human Rights Convention abolishing capital punishment.

To date, 41 countries of the 45 Council of Europe member states have ratified or signed this protocol.

**09/11/03 – Armenian in Iraq fear to be forced to leave country - AZG Armenian Daily**

#### **Diaspora**

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq the Christian community of Iraq has become the frequent target of Muslim fundamentalists. The Armenian Catholic Church in Baghdad has become one of few locations to provide safe shelter to Armenians who are arriving in hundreds from all corners of the country, Armenpress reported.

In a letter to president Bush last month leading Armenian-American groups wrote to alert him of the humanitarian crisis that Iraqi Armenians are facing and to call on him to provide meaningful assistance, as part of the current emergency phase of the US aid package, to alleviate the community's suffering. "The community of more than 30,000 suffered terribly during the war and now, months after the end of major hostilities, remains in a state of crisis,» it said.

Due to endless explosions and shootings and the curfew introduced by US troops one of Armenian churches in Baghdad has stopped serving evening liturgies. Newborns have to wait for a more or less safe day to be baptized.

**09/11/03 – Bill on Human Rights protector passed in second and final reading - ArmenPress**

By a vote of 97 to 14 the Armenian parliament has passed today in the second and final reading the bill on Ombudsman (human rights protector). The bill was voted against by members of the major opposition Ardarutyun (Justice) alliance.

Introduction of the post of a human rights ombudsman is one of the commitments Armenia assumed when it joined the Council of Europe in 2001.



Under the bill the first Armenian ombudsman will be appointed by president Kocharian after reconciling his or her candidacy with parliament-represented factions and groups.

Under the draft law the president-appointed ombudsman will have to resign within 30 days after constitutional changes are approved and give way to a new one to be nominated by lawmakers. Opposition lawmakers insisted that the candidacy of parliament-appointed ombudsman must be approved by at least 60 percent of all deputies and this demand was incorporated in the final version. The ombudsman will serve 6 years. Though the bill does not entitle the ombudsman to interfere into legal proceedings, but he will have the right to demand information on any case conducted by any court and offer proposals and suggestions to guarantee fair legal proceedings for every citizen in line with Constitution and international laws.

**09/17/03 - Russian electricity company takes over financial control of Armenia's only nuclear plant - Associated Press Worldstream**

The Armenian government on Wednesday decided to hand financial control of the country's only nuclear power plant to Russia's electricity monopoly for a period of five years.

Russia's Unified Energy Systems, or UES, will take over financial control of the cash-strapped Medzamor plant when the government signs a corresponding agreement on Thursday, the government press service said. Under the new agreement, UES will oversee all payments made between Armenian electricity consumers and the power plant and will be responsible for paying Russian fuel suppliers.

**09/19/03 - Politics - Yerkir weekly online**

**Armenia avoids presenting its concerns over destroying cultural values**

An Armenian delegation led by Culture Minister Tamara Poghosian will participate in a project titled "Culture Policy in Transition Period:

Dialogue and New Cooperation," to take place September 18-20, in Turkey.

The Armenian delegation, however, will not voice Armenia's concern over destroying the Armenian cultural monuments in Turkey and Nakhijevan, according to Deputy Culture Minister Karen Aristakesian, who told Yerkir that Armenia should "approach the issue diplomatically." The project has been initiated by the Turkish government. "The issue of preserving cultural heritage has been included in the agenda, and the culture ministers will make regular reports within a year on preserving cultural values," the deputy minister added.

**09/24/03 - Swiss canton of Vaud recognized Armenian Genocide - PanArmenian**

September 23 Swiss Democratic Republic canton of Vaud recognized the Armenian Genocide of 1915 in Ottoman Turkey. With 74 votes for, 64 against and 9 abstentions, the canton parliament approved Massimo-Sandri's postulate project urging the canton government to recognize the Armenian Genocide. As reported by Armenian MFA press service, the fact of the resolution being adopted in Lausanne, where a treaty "obliterating Armenian from the world map" was concluded between the Allies and Turkey, is considered as symbolical in the document. Adopting this paper the canton of Vaud will contribute to establishing just and long-term peace between Armenians and Turks, the principal border for it being "denial", what aggravates the pain and destiny of a whole nation, the postulate runs. To note, the Armenian Genocide was recognized by Geneva canton parliament in 1998 and by its government in 2001.

**09/24/03 - Bill on mass media adopted by Armenian parliament first reading - PanArmenian**

With 69 votes for and 10 against Armenian parliament approved the bill "On Mass media" after it was given its first reading. Due to the bill, the mass media activity can be restricted in case of revealing a State secret and fomenting aggression among the masses during the war or in the state of emergency. The bill also provides

for criminal penalty for libelling for the mass media employees. "Justice" opposition faction voted against the present bill, as in their opinion, the authorities, under the pretence of law, aim at creating the opportunity of persecuting press. "Adoption of the bill will inevitably lead to forbidding a number of editions", - the "Justice" representative stated. To note, adoption of bill "On mass media" is one of Armenia's obligations to the Council of Europe.

**09/25/03 - RA foreign Minister signs two optional protocols of UN convention on the rights of the child - ARKA News Agency**

Vardan Oskanian, RA Foreign Minister, signed two optional protocols of the UN Convention of Human Rights at the 58 sitting of the UN General Assembly in New York. RA Foreign Ministry OR Dept told ARKA, particularly, these are the protocols of the Convention about the involvement of children in armed conflicts, as well as kid trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography. Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted and opened for signature. The entry into force was on Nov 20 1989. 61 countries signed the document. The protocol of the Convention on the Right of the Child prohibiting involvement of children in armed conflicts and adopted in May 2000 prohibits countries involved in armed conflicts to send children to fight unless they are 18 and to enlist them unless they are 16.(...)

**09/29/03 - US Ambassador To Turkey Urges Official Ankara To Open Borders With Armenia - ArmInfo News**

US Ambassador to Turkey Eric Edelman said that they wanted Turkey to open its Armenian border as soon as possible and called Armenia to recognize Turkey. According to Anadolu agency, delivering a speech in the symposium, Edelman said Turkey was very important for the United States, stressing that a strong Turkey was important for the region. He said they wanted to support Turkey to fulfill its targets, and noted that this was important for the interests of United States.

Edelman said U.S. was ready to cooperate with all the countries in the world to fight against terrorism after September 11 terrorist attacks, stating that September 11 attacks changed point of view of the United States against the world. He said their target was to cooperate with the whole world on this issue.

**09/29/03 – “Sad events of the past” must be reviewed by historians... Nations should look forward says Erdogan – Asbarez Online**

**2) Patriarch Mutafian Discusses Rights with Turkey's Prime Minister**

Turkey's Armenian Patriarch Mesrob Mutafian II met with Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to discuss the difficulties of the Armenian community in Turkey, particularly related to land ownership rights.

According to the Istanbul-based Armenian language daily Marmara, the Patriarch stressed that Turkey's Armenian Patriarchate has governed the religious and cultural life of the community since the 15th century; as a result outdated [property] laws are applied that do not correspond with the changing legislation of the modern Turkish republic.

Erdogan reacted by advising those attorneys who represent the Armenian community to contact relevant bodies to work out legislative changes, to make them conform to acting laws.

The Patriarch also expressed concerns about anti-Armenian passages that have been included in Turkish history textbooks, calling "unacceptable" to make children and youth tools for political propaganda. Erdogan reportedly promised to order a review of textbooks within a twelve month-period.

Erdogan argued that Turkey builds relations with its neighbors on the basis of friendship, but "as Armenia refuses to recognize the territorial integrity of Turkey, it cannot build such relations with Armenia, and open its borders." He added that "the sad events of the past must be given to historians and both nations should look forward."(...)

**GEORGIA / GEORGIE**

**07/01/03 - ...Western ambassadors urge Georgia to adopt new election code - RFE/RL**

The ambassadors in Tbilisi of the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, the EU, and the OSCE and a senior UN representative met for three hours on 30 June with the heads of the Georgian parliamentary factions to discuss the impasse over the election law, Caucasus Press reported. They also issued an eight-point statement listing recommendations for ensuring that the upcoming ballot is transparent and fair. Caucasus Press quoted UN representative Lance Clark as saying that international aid to Georgia might be reduced if the elections are undemocratic.

**07/02/03 – South Ossetian leader sacks power Ministers - RFE/RL**

Eduard Kokoyty, president of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, fired his defense, interior, security, and justice ministers on 1 July, as well as the head of the National Security Council and the head of the Customs Service, Caucasus Press and rustavi2.com reported. Parliament deputy Bala Bestaev has been named defense minister, and Oleg Alborov state security minister. South Ossetian Foreign Minister Murad Dzhioev told Interfax the personnel changes are intended to make the work of the respective ministries and other government bodies more efficient. Dzhioev denied Georgian media reports, including one by rustavi2.com, that police tried unsuccessfully to arrest Security Minister Robert Taboev and Security Council head Albert Tedeev, and that the commanders of the Defense Ministry and Security Ministry troops were injured in shootouts in Tskhinvali, the capital of the unrecognized republic. Local Georgian police chief Aleko Sukhitashvili confirmed to Caucasus Press on 1 July that shooting was heard in Tskhinvali that morning, but added that the Georgian Interior Ministry will not send additional troops to the disputed region. In Tbilisi, Georgian

Interior Minister Koba Narchemashvili welcomed the dismissals as "the beginning of a wholesome process," Caucasus Press reported on 2 July. He claimed that Albert Tedeev and his brother Valerii (the dismissed South Ossetian defense minister) were involved in criminal activities.

**07/02/03 - Georgian President abjures new war - RFE/RL**

Addressing the constituent assembly in Tbilisi of the Organization of Fugitives from South Ossetia, President Shevardnadze said on 1 July that "as long as I am president of Georgia, I will not allow the use of arms against Abkhazia or South Ossetia," ITAR-TASS and Caucasus Press reported.

Shevardnadze said calls by some Georgian politicians for a new military campaign to restore Georgian control over those unrecognized republics are "unacceptable," and that both conflicts can be resolved peacefully. He singled out as the most difficult problem with regard to South Ossetia reaching agreement with that republic's leadership on the region's political status within Georgia in order to permit Georgians who fled South Ossetia in 1991-92 to return to their homes, Interfax reported.

**07/09/03 – Georgian President, opposition discuss “Baker principles” - RFE/RL**

Eduard Shevardnadze met in Tbilisi on 8 July with opposition party leaders to discuss the proposal unveiled two days earlier by former U.S.

Secretary of State James Baker for the composition of the new Central Election Commission (CEC), Caucasus Press and Interfax reported. The Revival Union and the Labor Party did not send representatives to the meeting. Shevardnadze has stated his readiness to endorse the "Baker model," under which the authorities would nominate five commission members and opposition parties nine, while the OSCE would select the CEC chairman. But opposition parties are already at loggerheads over how many candidates each would be entitled to nominate. The

Revival Union and the Union of Industrialists -- which were the only two parties besides the ruling Union of Citizens of Georgia to surpass the 7 percent threshold for parliamentary representation in the 1999 elections -- are demanding three and two seats, respectively. But Mikhail Saakashvili, head of the National Movement (EM), which currently tops opinion polls together with the Labor Party, told Caucasus Press on 8 July that all the strongest parties, including the EM, should have one seat each.

**07/09/03 - Georgian parliament calls for speeding up border delimitation - RFE/RL**

In a statement published on 8 July, the Georgian parliament calls on Georgia's neighbors to speed up the process of delimiting their borders with Georgia, noting that doing so is important to their national interests, Caucasus Press and Interfax reported. Interfax quoted Zaza Kandelaki, who heads the Georgian State Commission on Border Issues, as saying that only Georgia's 295-kilometer border with Turkey has been delimited. Approximately one-third of the Georgian borders with Russia and Azerbaijan have still not been delimited, whereas the process of delimiting the border with Armenia has not yet begun.

**07/11/03 - Abkhaz parliament in exile threatens to join Georgian opposition - RFE/RL**

The Tbilisi-based Abkhaz parliament-in-exile, which comprises the Georgian deputies to the Abkhaz parliament elected in late 1991, adopted a resolution on 10 July condemning the Georgian government's Abkhaz policy, Caucasus Press, ITAR-TASS and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. Council Chairman Tamaz Nadareishvili told journalists after the session that the council is convinced that there is no longer any hope of resolving the Abkhaz conflict peacefully, and that the Georgian government should therefore resort to military action against the breakaway republic. He implied that if the Georgian government fails to do so, the council will withdraw its support for the pro-presidential For a New

Georgia bloc. As he has done on numerous previous occasions, Nadareishvili also demanded the withdrawal of the Russian peacekeeping force deployed in the Abkhaz conflict zone, and a UN "Peace Enforcement" operation to bring Abkhazia back under Georgia's control.

**07/22/03 - Russian parliamentarians deplore Georgian request for UN intervention - RFE/RL**

Members of a Russian State Duma delegation currently visiting Georgia have criticized as inappropriate a Georgian parliament resolution calling on the government to demand that the UN launch a peace-enforcement operation in Abkhazia, Caucasus Press reported. Duma Deputy Speaker Vladimir Lukin (Yabloko) said that demand is at odds with the agreement reached in Sochi in March between Putin and Shevardnadze on ways to promote a peaceful solution of the Abkhaz conflict, Caucasus Press reported on 19 July.

**07/24/03 - Georgian parliament adopts new election code in first reading - RFE/RL**

After a seven-hour debate, all 123 parliament deputies present at the session voted in the small hours of 24 July to adopt the new Election Code in its first reading, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. They also endorsed former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's proposal for the allocation of seats on the new Central Election Commission. Elgudja Medzmariashvili of the former majority Union of Citizens of Georgia (SMK) that supports President Eduard Shevardnadze, admitted that some pro-government deputies were reluctant to endorse the "Baker model" and did so only under pressure from the president, Caucasus Press reported. Deputies from the Revival Union and Industrialists factions walked out of the session earlier after deputies voted down their alternative proposal for a 17-seat CEC, on which those two parties and the SMK would each have three seats. Revival and the Industrialists have threatened to boycott the 2 November parliamentary election if

the CEC is formed on the model Baker suggested.

**07/31/03 - Georgian opposition accuses President over privatization deal - RFE/RL**

The opposition National Movement has brought a lawsuit against President Shevardnadze in a Tbilisi district court, accusing him of condoning legal irregularities during the sale to an Austrian investor of the Zestafon Ferrous Alloys Plant, Caucasus Press reported. The opposition party claims that Shevardnadze's daughter Manana and his nephew Nugzar Shevardnadze lobbied the sale on behalf of Austria's DK Ferro AG, which has acquired a 51 percent stake in the Zestafon plant for \$7.1 million, according to Caucasus Press on 1 July.

**08/04/03 - Georgia, Russia discuss repatriation to Abkhazia - RFE/RL**

Russian and Georgian government working groups met in Tbilisi on 31 July to discuss measures to expedite the return of Georgian displaced persons to Abkhazia in line with an agreement reached during talks in Sochi in March between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Georgian counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze, Caucasus Press reported. The Georgian delegation again called for the creation of a temporary international administration under UN auspices in Gali Raion, the pre-war population of which was predominantly Georgian. In Sukhum, Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba proposed on 1 August compiling a precise register of the Georgians eligible for repatriation, rejecting as "fantasy" Georgian claims that the displaced persons number 300,000, Caucasus Press reported. Shamba also argued that in order to stabilize the situation in Gali, Tbilisi should take action to neutralize Georgian guerrilla formations operating in the district who, Shamba argued, pose a threat to the safety of Georgians who wish to return there.



**08/08/03 – Police begin confiscating weapons in western Georgia - RFE/RL**

Police in the west Georgian region of Mingrelia said on 8 August they have launched an operation to confiscate illegal weaponry from the population, Caucasus Press reported. Over an unspecified time period, they have collected 68 Russian-manufactured submachine guns, 100 grenades, 12 pistols, and 33 rifles. It is not clear whether the go-ahead for the weapons-confiscation program was given by Georgian Interior Minister Koba Narchemashvili, who met with local police chiefs while visiting the region several days earlier, according to Caucasus Press on 5 August. Narchemashvili said during that visit he sees no need for a comprehensive anticrime operation in Mingrelia. In late July, Djemal Gamakharia of the opposition XX1st Century parliament faction alleged that police were preparing to launch a "punitive operation" in Mingrelia with the aim of rounding up members of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's personal guard, who took refuge the region's forests following his death in late 1993. Narchemashvili on 31 July denied any such operation is planned.

**08/15/03 – Georgian Parliament finally passes election law amendments... - RFE/RL**

Deputies approved the bill on amendments to the election code in the third and final reading on 14 August by 155 votes in favor, Caucasus Press reported. The amendments include the "Baker model" for selecting members of the Central Election Commission, under which pro-presidential parliament factions will nominate five candidates and opposition parties nine, with the chairman being proposed by the OSCE and approved by President Eduard Shevardnadze. The amendments also provide for posting comprehensive lists of eligible voters on the Internet, for ensuring that all candidates and parties have equal access to state-controlled media, and for the parallel counting of votes. As of 1 January 2005, all presidential and parliamentary candidates must speak fluent Georgian, a requirement that may

exclude many Armenians living in southern Georgia.

**08/15/03 – Georgia denies Russian reports of fighting in Pankisi - RFE/RL**

Georgian State Security Minister Valeri Khaburzania told journalists in Tbilisi on 14 August that reports of fighting in the Pankisi Gorge between local residents and Chechen guerrillas were exaggerated, Caucasus Press reported. He admitted that a fistfight over "social problems" took place recently, but denied reports of an exchange of gunfire. The Georgian newspaper "24 saati" reported on 14 August that local residents set upon Salman Gelaev, who is the brother of a Chechen field commander who reportedly used Pankisi as his base in 2000-2001.

**08/18/03 – Georgian parliament speaker says she will not resign - RFE/RL**

Parliament speaker Burdjanadze told a press conference in Tbilisi on 15 August that she will not quit her post despite damaging allegations levelled against her and her father, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. On 13 August, she had rejected as "absurd" allegations that she and her father, Anzor Burdjanadze, had tried to purchase for the knock-down price of 4 million laris (\$1.85 million) four hydroelectric plants in the west Georgian region of Imereti. At the 15 August press conference, Burdjanadze reaffirmed her earlier appeal to opposition parties to unite around a common platform.

**08/21/03 – Georgian President threatens to block Russia's accession to WTO... - RFE/RL**

Addressing a government session in 20 August, Eduard Shevardnadze noted that Russia will need Tbilisi's support for its bid to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), and should therefore resolve its problems in bilateral relations with Georgia, Interfax reported. Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Tamar Beruchashvili listed among those problems Russia's economic ties with the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia and its failure to prevent

the smuggling of contraband into Georgia from North Ossetia.

**08/21/03 - ...Says abolition of death penalty was premature... - RFE/RL**

Shevardnadze expressed regret at the 20 August government session that Georgia had abolished the death penalty prematurely under pressure from the Council of Europe, Caucasus Press and the web page of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. Shevardnadze lamented that criminals no longer fear retribution, and the crime rate has skyrocketed as a result. On 21 August, parliament speaker Nino Burdjanadze criticized Shevardnadze's statement as incompatible with the democratic principles of a free country, Caucasus Press reported.

**08/21/03 – Georgian State security Minister denies Chechen suicide bombers trained in Georgia... - RFE/RL**

Valeri Khaburzania dismissed on 20 August as "not serious" a claim made earlier that day by Colonel Ilya Shabalkin, spokesman for the Joint Group of Russian Forces in Chechnya, that Chechen women are preparing for further suicide-bombing missions against Russian targets at a camp located on the territory of "a neighboring state," clearly meaning Georgia, Caucasus Press reported. Khaburzania recalled that Russian claims that one of the two female suicide bombers who struck a rock concert in Moscow on 5 July had traveled to Moscow from Georgia have been proven untrue.

**08/21/03 – US Human trafficking report faults Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan - Eurasianet Organization**

An annual report on human trafficking issued by the US State Department identifies Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan as among the worst nations in the world in preventing forced prostitution and slave labor. Overall, 15 nations were designated as "Tier 3" countries in the State

Department's Trafficking in Persons report, released in June.

According to the State Department, nations in the Tier 3 category failed to meet minimum standards outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, passed by the US Congress in 2000. In addition, Tier 3 states are "not making significant efforts to eliminate human trafficking and bondage," the report said.

Concerning Georgia, the report said the country is "a source country for women trafficked primarily to Turkey, Greece, and the UAE, with smaller numbers trafficked to Israel, Spain, Portugal and the United States for purposes of sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and forced labor." It expressed special concern that "thousands of children living in the streets and in orphanages" were vulnerable to trafficking. [...]

**08/25/03 – War veterans demand resignation of Abkhaz government in exile - RFE/RL**

Five Georgian veterans of the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia who began an open-ended hunger strike on 21 August to demand the resignation of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government in exile said on 25 August that they will no longer consume even fluids, Caucasus Press reported.

They argued that Londer Tsaava, who heads the exile government, is incapable of resolving the problems of the Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during that conflict. They appealed for support to Tamaz Nadareishvili, chairman of the Abkhaz parliament in exile, but Nadareishvili, whose 24-year-old son, Vladimir, was recently named justice minister in the exile government, refused.

**09/02/03 – Georgian President selects election commission head...- RFE/RL**

Eduard Shevardnadze on 31 August proposed ombudsman Nana Devdariani as chairwoman of the new Central Election Commission, Georgian agencies reported. Devdariani was one of three candidates selected by OSCE representatives from a total of 26. The website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 on 1

September quoted Shevardnadze as describing Devdariani as "the most appropriate candidate." But two days earlier, on 29 August, the same website quoted Shevardnadze as saying that he favors another of the three candidates on the short list, Deputy National Security Council Secretary Rusudan Beridze, whom he reportedly described as "a very good candidate for the post."

**09/04/03 – Georgian, Russian military experts resume negotiations - RFE/RL**

Georgian and Russian military experts met in Tbilisi on 3 September to resume negotiations over the withdrawal of Russian military forces and the closure of military bases on Georgian territory, according to "The Georgian Times." The two sides reached an agreement on the disposition of an ammunition depot in Sagaredzho but failed to make any progress over the status of the Russian military bases at Akhalkalaki and Batumi. The talks remain hampered by the Russian insistence on an 11-year timetable for the withdrawal of their forces, which Georgia views as unacceptable. Under the terms of an agreement reached at a 1999 OSCE summit in Istanbul, Russia pledged to close all of its military bases in Georgia.

**09/09/03 – Multinational military exercises under way in Georgia - RFE/RL**

A two-week multinational military exercise opened in Georgia on 8 September, "The Georgian Times" and Civil Georgia reported. Georgian Defense Minister Davit Tevzadze, U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles, and NATO officials opened the Rescuer/Mediceur 2003 NATO Partnership for Peace program exercise at the Vaziani military base outside of Tbilisi. The exercise involves medical training and military search-and-rescue tactical operations for more than 700 troops from Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United States. Military planners will form a multinational task force of participating troops to respond to a simulated disaster and seek to improve military interoperability

through combined humanitarian and disaster-relief operations.

**09/11/03 – OSCE opens mission to monitor Georgian elections - RFE/RL**

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on 9 September officially opened its Election Observation Mission to monitor the 2 November Georgian parliamentary elections, Civil Georgia reported. The head of the OSCE mission, Julian Peel Yates, explained that "the forthcoming elections are crucial for the future democratic development of Georgia." He stressed that the mission's "role is to observe and monitor...not to supervise or manage" the election, and stated that "we will not interfere in the election process." The ODIHR mission is one of the longest-running and largest observation missions ever deployed to an OSCE country, with 10 election experts based at its Tbilisi headquarters and 21 observers deployed in several regions. These observers will monitor the electoral process, including campaigning by political parties, and will oversee the work of the local and district election officials. An additional 400 observers will join parliamentarians from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the European Parliament shortly before election day to monitor the voting, the vote count, and the tabulation of results.

**09/12/03 – President orders investigation of mass escape from Georgian prison - RFE/RL**

President Eduard Shevardnadze on 11 September ordered an immediate investigation by national security officials into the mass escape of some 138 prisoners from the Rustavi penal facility, 24 kilometers south of Tbilisi, Reuters and the "Georgian Times" reported. One hundred prisoners remain at large after the 10 September escape, which was reportedly carried out with the assistance of armed accomplices who entered the prison facility and provided transportation for the escapees. With a mere handful of guards responsible for overseeing more than 1,000 prisoners, this is the

third successful escape from the Rustavi prison. Justice Minister Roland Giligashvili, widely believed to be in danger of being dismissed for the incident, explained that the repeated escapes are "largely due to the scarcity of finances," and warned that escapes "might recur in the penitentiary system of Georgia."

**09/15/03 - U.S launches final phase of training for Georgian military - RFE/RL**

The fourth and final phase of the U.S.-funded "Train and Equip" program for the Georgian armed forces was inaugurated at the Krtsanisi training ground near Tbilisi on 13 September in the presence of President Eduard Shevardnadze, Defense Minister Lieutenant General Davit Tevzadze, and U.S. Ambassador Richard Miles, Caucasus Press reported. Caucasus Press on 12 September quoted Miles as saying a decision will be made next month on whether to prolong the two-year program, which expires next spring. But Shevardnadze said the previous day that the program will continue until Georgia is accepted into NATO membership.

**09/17/03 - Fugitive Georgian ex-Minister registered as parliamentary candidate - RFE/RL**

Former State Security Minister Igor Giorgadze has been registered as a candidate to contest the 2 November parliamentary election in a constituency in Samtredia, western Georgia, according to "Mtavari gazeti" on 17 September, as quoted by Caucasus Press. Giorgadze fled Georgia in the fall of 1995 after being accused of masterminding the car-bomb attack on then-parliament Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze. Although Interpol has issued a warrant for his arrest, he has given numerous interviews to Russian media outlets, in which he claims to enjoy popular support in Georgia. The Central Election Commission has asked the Interior Ministry to clarify whether Giorgadze has been resident in Georgia for the past two years, as required by the Election Law, Caucasus Press reported. Giorgadze was denied registration as a candidate in the 1999 parliamentary and 2000 presidential

elections because he did not meet that residence requirement.

**09/20/03 - Vatican's emissary ends visit to Georgia, goes to Armenia - ITAR-TASS News Agency**

Following a three-day stay in Tbilisi, Vatican's Foreign Minister, Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, left Georgia by car and went to Armenia.

His prearranged meetings with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and State Minister Avtandil Dzhorbenadze were cancelled, and the emissary of the Holy See had an opportunity to meet with a deputy state minister and a deputy foreign minister only. Archbishop Tauran's visit provoked an unexpectedly angry public reaction, as he and Georgian officials had planned to sign a Georgia-Vatican agreement, under which the Roman Catholic Church would have gotten the same status as the traditional Georgian Eastern Orthodox Church.

Patriarch of Georgia Elijah II said the government had not only ignored consultations with the Georgian Church on the issue, but it had not even informed the Georgian clerics that an agreement with the Vatican was in the offing.

His Holiness Elijah II called an equal status for the Roman Catholic Church in Georgia unacceptable. Alongside with the Orthodox Churches of Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Antioch, Jerusalem and some smaller denominations, the Georgian Eastern Orthodoxy is one of the branch-outs of the former Byzantine Orthodox Church.

Orthodoxy came to Georgia more than a thousand years ago. It has evolved into an authentic clerical tradition, philosophy, and refined culture boasting exquisite literature, the arts, and music.

Most ethnic Georgians are followers of the Orthodox tradition.

Thousands of students gathered for a manifestation opposite the Parliament building Friday, waving demands to renounce the agreement with the Vatican.

In the light of the protest, President Shevardnadze decided to refrain from signing the agreement.

**09/22/03 - Georgian President accepts justice Minister's resignation - RFE/RL**

President Shevardnadze accepted on 18 September the resignation, offered three days earlier, of Justice Minister Roland Giligashvili, Caucasus Press reported on 19 September.

Giligashvili protested that the Georgian leadership failed to act on his earlier warnings that prison security is ineffective. On 10 September, 128 prisoners escaped from a jail in Rustavi, most of whom have since been recaptured.

**09/23/03 - Explosion at Georgian opposition party headquarters - RFE/RL**

A hand grenade exploded outside the Tbilisi office of the opposition Revival Union early in the morning of 23 September, causing damage to the building but no injuries, Caucasus Press reported. Tsotne Bakuria, who heads the party's Tbilisi branch, linked the incident to the ongoing campaign for the 2 November parliamentary elections.

**09/25/03 - U.S. to Cut Aid to Georgia - Yerkir online**

Thomas C. Adams, Acting Coordinator of U.S.

Assistance to Europe and Eurasia in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, met with Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze late on September 24. Thomas Adams said at a news briefing after the meeting with Shevardnadze that the issue of the U.S. assistance to Georgia was discussed. He said that the U.S. will reduce financial aid for Georgia from 2004, because of Georgia's failure to implement economic projects considered in frames of the financial assistance.

U.S. Department of State official also said that the financial aid will be cut mainly for the country's energy sector.

**09/26/03 - Georgian parliamentary election campaign turns violent - RFE/RL**

A 26 September campaign visit by opposition Georgian National Movement (EM) leader Mikhail



Saakashvili to the southeastern district of Bolnisi was disrupted by repeated clashes between Saakashvili's supporters and armed supporters of former regional Governor Levan Mamaladze, who plans to run for parliament from a Bolnisi constituency, Caucasus Press reported. Late on 24 September, Georgian police stopped the car of Kamal Muratkhanov, the EM's election candidate, arrested him and confiscated 385 passports belonging to his supporters. Mamaladze on 25 September claimed that some of those passports belonged to people who are deceased, and accused the EM of planning to rig the ballot. Police sent the passports back to Bolnisi on 25 September to be restored to their owners if possible, Caucasus Press reported.

**09/29/03 - CIS peacekeeper abducted in western Georgia - RFE/RL**

Grigorii Derevyannykh, a member of the Russian peacekeeping force deployed since mid-1994 under the CIS aegis in the Abkhaz conflict zone, was abducted on 27 September in the west Georgian town of Zugdidi while his superior officer was buying food at a local market, Russian media reported. Derevyannykh telephoned the peacekeeping command the following day to report he was unharmed and is being treated "normally" by his unidentified captors.

**DAGHESTAN /  
DAGHESTAN**

**07/28/03 - Daghestan's new constitution takes effect - RFE/RL**

The new constitution adopted by Daghestan's Constitutional Assembly on 10 July took effect on 26 July. Under the new constitution, the existing collective presidency is replaced by a universally elected president, and the number of parliament deputies is reduced from 121 to 72.

**08/28/03 - Daghestan's nationalities Minister killed by car bomb - RFE/RL**

Magomedsalikh Gusaev was killed on 27 August by a magnetic bomb that two unidentified attackers placed on the roof of his car as he was traveling to work, Russian media reported. The perpetrators escaped. Gusaev, who was 52, was injured in an assassination attempt two years earlier. Politicians in Makhachkala and Moscow lauded Gusaev's work during his 10-year stint as minister to maintain interethnic harmony in Daghestan and to crack down on Islamic fundamentalism. Federation Council member Ramazan Abdulatipov praised him as "a man of courage and principle" and "a real statesman." Officials in Daghestan believe radical Islamists were responsible for the murder, as Gusaev was the author of a program of measures to eradicate wahhabism in the wake of the August 1999 Chechen incursion into Daghestan, according to "Kommersant-Daily" on 28 August.

**ABKHAZIA / ABKHAZIE**

**07/08/03 - Abkhaz President rejects calls for his resignation - RFE/RL**

Vladislav Ardzinba, who is undergoing a further course of treatment in Moscow for an undisclosed illness, has told Russian journalists that he will not step down before his presidential term expires in October 2004, Caucasus Press reported on 8 July. Ardzinba said he is the guarantor of political stability in the unrecognized republic. Amsakhara, the Abkhaz opposition movement of which veterans of the 1992-93 war with Georgia form the nucleus, plans to demand Ardzinba's resignation at its upcoming congress on 10 July, Caucasus Press reported on 7 July quoting Garri Samanba, one of the movement's leaders. Samanba argued that a power vacuum has emerged during the past three years as a result of Ardzinba's incapacitation.

**07/17/03 - Abkhazia registers increase in violent crime - RFE/RL**

Meeting on 16 July, the Abkhaz Interior Ministry board reviewed the crime situation during the first half of the year, and registered a 3 percent increase in violent crime, Apsnipress reported on 17 July. The largest number of murders was reportedly committed in Sukhum, while the majority of killings in Gali Raion were blamed on Georgian guerrilla forces operating there. Prime Minister Khadjimba rejected the board's overall positive assessment of the crime situation and demanded more effective measures to crack down on drug trafficking and to raise the professional expertise of the police force. Deputy Prime Minister Astamur Tania proposed sending the best police officers to Russia to acquire additional skills.

**07/22/03 - Abkhazia asks Russia to protect its airspace... - RFE/RL**

Abkaz First Deputy Premier Astamur Tarba told journalists on 18 July that the Abkhaz government hopes for Russian help in establishing an air-defense system, Apsnipress reported. Caucasus Press on 21 July said the Abkhaz request was prompted by recent overflights of Georgian territory by U.S. AWACS surveillance aircraft. The Georgian Defense Ministry denied on 19 July that further such flights are planned, according to the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2. On 21 July, Interfax quoted Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Colonel Nikolai Deryabin as denying Russian press reports that Russia plans to deploy S-300 surface-to-air missile systems in Abkhazia to discourage such reconnaissance flights.

**07/22/03 - ... And mobilize police to protect Russian tourists - RFE/RL**

The Abkhaz authorities have placed police on the alert, anticipating possible acts of violence against visiting Russian tourists, Caucasus Press reported on 21 July. On 11 July, the Georgian Interior Ministry and the Georgian Embassy in Moscow issued separate statements warning Russian tourists not to

travel to Abkhazia in the light of rising crime and political tensions there. Tourism is one of Abkhazia's most important sources of income.

**07/23/03 – Ambassadors discuss repatriation of Georgians to Abkhazia - RFE/RL**

Meeting in Geneva on 21-22 July, the members of the Friends of the UN Secretary-General for Georgia group of countries -- the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia -- agreed to recommend that the UN Security Council recruit 20 international specialists to train local police personnel in Abkhazia to protect Georgian displaced persons who return to the homes they abandoned during the 1992-93 war, Caucasus Press reported. Georgian and Abkhaz government delegations participated in the talks for the first time.

**07/30/03 – Georgia, Abkhazia both claim to control Abkhaz territorial waters - RFE/RL**

Valeri Chkheidze, director of Georgia's State Border Guard Service, told Caucasus Press on 29 July that his men fully control the territorial waters of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia. But Abkhaz Defense Minister Vyacheslav Eshba told journalists in Sukhum the same day that Abkhaz frontier guards control Abkhazia's territorial waters, Caucasus Press reported. Also on 29 July, the Georgian Foreign Ministry delivered a formal protest note to the Russian Embassy in Tbilisi in connection with the resumption of a ferry service between the Russian Black Sea port of Sochi and the Abkhaz capital, Sukhum, Caucasus Press reported. The note called for "drastic measures to prevent illegal marine communication" between the two ports. On 30 July, Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili termed the resumption of ferry communication "an act of piracy," Caucasus Press reported.

**07/31/03 – UN extends mandate of its mission in Abkhazia - RFE/RL**

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution on 30 July prolonging

until January 2004 the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), Caucasus Press reported. The resolution hailed the agreements reached during talks in Sochi in March between the presidents of Georgia and Russia on expediting the return of Georgian displaced persons to Abkhazia, and endorsed UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's proposal to establish a group of 20 police officers to assist UNOMIG in providing security for those Georgian repatriates. The resolution condemned as unacceptable the failure to apprehend and bring to justice the individuals responsible for the abduction of several UNOMIG personnel in the Kodori Gorge last month. Echoing several earlier resolutions, the most recent one expressed regret at the Abkhaz refusal to discuss a UN-drafted document intended to serve as the basis of a political settlement of the conflict, and appealed to both sides to refrain from militant rhetoric or calls for a military solution to the conflict. It did not comment directly on the Georgian parliament's resolution calling on the government to demand that the UN launch a peace-enforcement operation in Abkhazia in accordance with Article 7 of the UN Charter.

**08/08/03 – Abkhazia accuses Georgia of "aggression" - RFE/RL**

At the regular weekly meeting between representatives of the Georgian and Abkhaz governments, the UN Observer Mission in Georgia and the Russian peacekeeping force deployed under the CIS aegis in the Abkhaz conflict zone, the Abkhaz representatives demanded on 7 August that the killing on 4 August of four Abkhaz customs officials be recognized as an act of aggression against their unrecognized republic, Caucasus Press reported. The other participants rejected that demand, but nonetheless agreed to form a quadripartite commission to investigate the shootings.

**08/12/03 – Abkhaz police free four Georgian hostages - RFE/RL**

Abkhaz police have succeeded in securing the release of four Georgians taken hostage on 7 August in the village of Chuburkhandji, the web page of the

independent television station Rustavi-2 reported on 12 August. Meanwhile, two further Georgians were abducted in Chuburkhandji on 10 August, Caucasus Press reported the following day.

**08/14/03 – Abkhaz foreign Minister rejects involvement of more countries in peace talks - RFE/RL**

Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba told journalists he considers inexpedient an 11 August proposal by Hamlet Chipashvili, a parliamentarian from Georgia's Adjara Autonomous Republic, that a neutral country such as Sweden or Switzerland be invited to mediate talks between Abkhazia and Georgia on resolving the conflict between them, Caucasus Press reported on 13 August. Shamba said Sukhum sees no point in changing the current format for negotiations unless some foreign country recognizes the Republic of Abkhazia as an independent entity and expresses support for the Abkhaz' right to self-determination.

**08/15/03 – Georgians accuse Abkhaz of murdering two hostages - RFE/RL**

At the regular Thursday meeting between representatives of the Georgian and Abkhaz governments, the UN Observer Mission in Georgia, and the Russian peacekeeping force deployed under the CIS aegis in the Abkhaz conflict zone, Georgian representatives on 14 August accused Abkhaz guerrillas of killing two Georgians taken hostage in the village of Chuburkhandji in southern Abkhazia, Caucasus Press reported. The two men were found dead on 11 August, and the Georgians accused the Abkhaz guerrillas of killing them in revenge for the deaths of four Abkhaz customs officials killed one week earlier. The Abkhaz representatives walked out of the meeting to protest the Georgian accusation.

**09/18/03 – UN envoy, Abkhaz foreign Minister discuss police training - RFE/RL**

Heidi Tagliavini, who is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy for the Abkhaz

conflict, met in Sukhum on 17 September with Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba to discuss the Abkhaz-Georgian talks scheduled to take place in Tbilisi under the UN aegis on 23 September, Apsnypress reported. They also discussed the proposed 20-man UN-sponsored police force that is to be deployed in Gali to protect Georgian displaced persons who fled Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war who decide to return to their abandoned homes. Tagliavini told journalists that Abkhaz police might visit Bosnia and Kosova to familiarize themselves with similar UN policing operations.

Tagliavini dismissed as "a misunderstanding" media reports that Turkey has been invited to join the Friends of the UN Secretary-General group of states -- the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia -- engaged in trying to promote a solution to the Abkhaz conflict. Interfax on 17 September quoted Shamba as saying Sukhum would not accede to Georgia's proposal that Turkey join the Friends group.

**09/19/03 – Will Abkhaz President attend independence day celebrations ? - RFE/RL**

Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba, who traveled to Moscow in late June for further medical treatment, has still not returned to Sukhum. Vice President Valerii Arshba told journalists in the Abkhaz capital on 22 August that Ardzinba's health had improved and that he would return by the end of August. On 12 September, Ardzinba's aide Astamur Tania was quoted by the Georgian paper "Tribuna" as saying that Ardzinba will return to Sukhum "soon" and will participate in the 30 September celebrations, Caucasus Press reported. Meanwhile, Caucasus Press reported on 16 September that Abkhaz Prime Minister Raul Khadjimba is vacationing in Moscow. On 19 September, "Tribuna," as quoted by Caucasus Press, reported without disclosing its sources that Ardzinba will step down at the end of this month in return for an opposition pledge to support the presidential candidacy of Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba.

**09/22/03 – CIS Presidents sign statement on Abkhaz conflict - RFE/RL**

The CIS leaders who attended the CIS summit in Yalta on 18-19 September signed a statement on 19 September reaffirming their commitment to earlier statements upholding Georgia's sovereignty over the breakaway Republic of Abkhazia, Caucasus Press and Interfax reported. On 22 September, Georgian President Shevardnadze said during his regular Monday radio interview that Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov refused on 18 September to include the Abkhaz issue in the agenda for the CIS foreign ministers' meeting that day. Shevardnadze persuaded the presidents of Russia and Ukraine, Vladimir Putin and Leonid Kuchma, respectively, to include Abkhaz among the issues to be discussed by CIS presidents on 19 September. Shevardnadze added that Putin confirmed his support for Georgia's territorial integrity and for the repatriation to Abkhazia of Georgian displaced persons who fled the region during the 1992-93 war. Putin and Shevardnadze signed an agreement on the sidelines of a CIS summit in Sochi in March on repatriation and the restoration of rail communication between Russia and Georgia via Abkhazia.

**09/23/03 – Georgian-Abkhaz talks postponed - RFE/RL**

Talks in Tbilisi under the UN aegis between government delegations from Georgia and Abkhazia were postponed indefinitely on 23 September after the Abkhaz delegation failed to show up, according to Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2. Rustavi-2 quoted Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba, who was to have headed the Abkhaz delegation, as saying the delegation's absence to "technical problems," including the failure of the Abkhaz side to complete drafting a document intended for discussion at the talks in which Tbilisi would pledge to refrain from any aggression against Abkhazia during the planned celebrations on 27 September to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final withdrawal of Georgian troops from Abkhazia

at the end of the 1992-93 war. According to the Georgian paper "Tribuna" on 22 September, during talks in Sukhum last week with Heidi Tagliavini, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy for the Abkhaz conflict, Shamba raised the possibility of requiring Georgia to sign such a non-aggression pledge.

**09/29/03 – Anniversary of end of Abkhaz war marked in Tbilisi... - RFE/RL**

Georgia observed one minute's silence at 12 p.m. local time on 27 September in remembrance of those killed during the 1992-93 war in Abkhazia, which effectively ended with the fall of Sukhum to Abkhaz forces on 27 September 1993, Georgian media reported. President Eduard Shevardnadze visited the grave in Tbilisi of his protege, Zhiuli Shartava, who was executed by the Abkhaz in the final days of the war. Some 1,000 Georgian veterans of the fighting held a march in Tbilisi to commemorate the anniversary.

**...And Sukhum**

Vladislav Ardzinba, president of the unrecognized republic of Abkhazia, returned to Sukhum on 25 September from Moscow, where he has been undergoing medical treatment, Caucasus Press reported. Ardzinba issued a decree amnestying some 70 prisoners and conferred awards, some posthumous, on Abkhaz participants in the war.

**09/30/03 – Abkhazia demands security guarantees for government delegation - RFE/RL**

The government of the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia has demanded security guarantees for the delegation it will send to Tbilisi in early October to participate in talks on preventing the resumption of hostilities, Astamur Tarba, who is an aide to Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba, told Interfax on 29 September. Tarba reasoned that "the hosting side is responsible for security, including moral responsibility." A delegation headed by Abkhaz Foreign Minister Sergei Shamba failed to travel to Georgia last week for UN-mediated talks after the head of the Tbilisi-based Abkhaz government in exile,



Tamaz Nadareishvili, said on Georgian television that Shamba could be arrested if he came to Tbilisi.

## ***SOUTH OSSETIA / OSSETIE DU SUD***

### **07/03/03 - Parliament backs South Ossetian President - RFE/RL**

Eduard Kokoyty, president of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, admitted in an address to parliament on 2 July that shooting took place in Tskhinvali, the unrecognized republic's capital, the previous day, Caucasus Press reported. Kokoyty said that former Defense Minister Valerii Tedeev and former State Security Minister Robert Taboev had engaged in criminal activities, as, he claimed, had Security Council Secretary Albert Tedeev, who has fled Tskhinvali. Kokoyty fired all three men the previous day. "Vremya novostei" reported on 2 July that an unspecified number of people were killed and wounded during the exchange of fire in Tskhinvali between Interior Ministry and State Security Ministry troops. Kokoyty also pledged that he has no intention of doing anything that would exacerbate relations with the Georgian leadership. Georgian State Security Minister Valerii Khaburzania and Major General Svyatoslav Nabdzorov, commander of the Russian peacekeeping force in South Ossetia, both assessed the situation in the region on 2 July as calm, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported.

### **07/07/03 - South Ossetia reaffirms desire to become part of Russia - RFE/RL**

Speaking at a press conference on 4 July in Nalchik, capital of Russia's Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, Eduard Kokoyty, president of Georgia's breakaway, unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, said he has written to Russian President Putin to ask that his republic be accepted as a subject of the Russian Federation, Caucasus

Press and Interfax reported. Kokoyty recalled that the population of South Ossetia voted in 1992 in favor of joining the Russian Federation. He said some 56 percent of the region's population already have Russian passports. But an unnamed source within the Russian presidential administration told ITAR-TASS on 6 July that the South Ossetian request violates the Georgian Constitution and is therefore illegal and will not be considered. Also on 6 July, the Georgian Foreign Ministry issued a statement similarly condemning Kokoyty's declared aspiration as encroaching on Georgia's territorial integrity.

### **07/10/03 - OSCE secretary-general visits South Ossetia - RFE/RL**

Jan Kubis met in Tskhinvali, the capital of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, on 9 July with President Eduard Kokoyty and Emergency Situations Minister Boris Chochiev, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported. Kokoyty said he fears Tbilisi is planning to deploy the crack forces trained by the United States within the parameters of the Train and Equip program against his breakaway republic. He also accused Georgia of failing to allocate \$800,000 it has pledged for the restoration of South Ossetia's economy. Meeting with Kubis in Tbilisi two days earlier, Georgian Minister for Special Assignments Malkhaz Kakabadze argued that the format for talks on resolving the conflict with South Ossetia should be simplified, but did not specify how, Caucasus Press reported. At present, Georgia, Russia, South Ossetia, and the Republic of North Ossetia -- which is a subject of the Russian Federation -- are participating in the conflict-resolution process.

### **07/14/03 - US trained Georgian battalion deployed in South Ossetia - RFE/RL**

A force of approximately 80 Georgian soldiers from a U.S.-trained battalion has been dispatched to join a peacekeeping battalion currently deployed in the unrecognized breakaway Republic

of South Ossetia on July 10, "The Georgian Times" and Civil Georgia reported. Since April 2002, the United States has been conducting a specialized program, known as the Train-and-Equip Program, designed to bolster the Georgian military's counterinsurgency capability. Officials of the Georgian Defense Ministry are cited as reporting that the commandos will be deployed at the checkpoints in Nikozi and Kurti and will conduct joint patrols together with the Russian and Ossetian peacekeepers currently in the area.

### **07/18/03 - No progress registered in south Ossetian talks - RFE/RL**

Government delegations from Georgia, Russia, the Republic of North Ossetia, and the breakaway Republic of South Ossetia met, together with OSCE experts, in Tskhinvali on 15-17 July but failed to reduce the mutual suspicion and hostility between the Georgian and South Ossetian authorities, Caucasus Press reported. The Georgian delegation blocked a request by South Ossetia for the dispatch of Russian police to help crack down on crime in South Ossetia, whose President Eduard Kokoyty recently fired his interior and security ministers for their imputed involvement in criminal activities. A further round of talks has been scheduled for October. In related news, Caucasus Press on 18 July quoted South Ossetian official Teimuraz Kusov as warning that a formal request by Georgia to the UN to launch a peace-enforcement operation against the unrecognized Republic of Abkhazia would only compound tensions in South Ossetia. The Georgian parliament voted on 16 July to ask the government to make such a formal request to the UN.

### **08/09/03 - Breakaway South Ossetia, Abkhazia ready to forge military ties - Gateway 2 Russia**

South Ossetian has reaffirmed its interest in forging military ties with the breakaway republic of Abkhazia. "Last year, Abkhazia and South Ossetia agreed on staging joint anti-terrorist exercises and these plans are still valid," South Ossetian Prime Minister Gerasim Khugayev told Interfax. The two unrecognized

republics "need allies to protect" their territories, Khugayev noted. "The state entities similar to South Ossetia, namely Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdnestria, are the most reliable allies," he said. "The unrecognized republics principally maintain socio-economic ties. If a military need arises, appropriate support will be extended," he said. South Ossetia is about to wrap up the establishment of its professional army, which includes 6,000 servicemen.

**08/14/03 - South Ossetian President dismisses cabinet - RFE/RL**

Eduard Kokoyty, president of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia, has dismissed the entire government, Caucasus Press and the website of the independent television station Rustavi-2 reported on 14 August. His reasons for doing so are not clear. In early July Kokoyty fired several "force" ministers on the grounds of their alleged links with organized crime.

**09/18/03 - Parliament approves new South Ossetian Premier - RFE/RL**

The parliament of the unrecognized Republic of South Ossetia has approved the nomination as prime minister of Igor Sanakoev, a businessman from North Ossetia and a citizen of the Russian Federation, Interfax and Caucasus Press reported on 17 September. Eduard Kokoyty, president of the unrecognized republic, sacked the entire government last month for failing to fulfill the budget.

**CHECHNYA /  
TCHETCHENIE**

**07/07/03 - Putin sets Chechen Presidential election date - RFE/RL**

After talks in Moscow on 4 July with Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov and with Hussein Isaev, head of the Chechen interim parliament, President Putin signed a decree scheduling the

elections for a new Chechen president for 5 October (...). Isaev had written to Putin 10 days ago asking him to schedule the ballot for October in order to accelerate the process of stabilizing the situation in Chechnya. Kadyrov on 4 July reaffirmed his intention to run for president, denying at the same time that he is motivated by love of power. He said he wants to finish the job he started, end the war, and eradicate the possibility of a new conflict between Chechnya and Russia

**07/07/03 - Putin hands control of Chechen operation to interior Ministry - RFE/RL**

President Putin on 4 July signed a decree ordering that as of 1 September operational command of the "antiterrorism operation" in the North Caucasus be transferred from the Federal Security Service (FSB) to the Interior Ministry (...). The FSB took over responsibility for operations in Chechnya from the Russian Defense Ministry in January 2001. According to the 4 July decree, overall command of the operation will fall to Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov, while the head of the Interior Ministry's Main Directorate in the Southern Federal District, Colonel General Mikhail Pankov, will be in operational command. Putin met in the Kremlin on 4 July with Chechen administration head Kadyrov and other regional leaders and urged them to strengthen the Chechen police force and to "expose the traitors" within its ranks. He also urged Kadyrov to be tolerant with former Chechen fighters who lay down their arms. "If a man's hands are not soiled with blood, one should not dwell upon his past," Putin said.

**07/11/03 - Human rights watchdog condemns use of torture in Chechnya - RFE/RL**

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), which is subordinate to the Council of Europe, issued a statement on 10 July condemning Russia's failure to take action to prevent the recurrence of torture and other mistreatment of Chechen detainees by Russian troops and Interior Ministry personnel. The CPT criticized and called for an end to

such mistreatment in a statement in 2001. The 10 July statement was based on information collected by CPT officials who visited Chechnya in 2002 and May 2003 and interviewed Chechens who had been detained. Meanwhile, Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov said in Grozny on 10 July that the human rights situation in Chechnya has improved considerably.

**07/16/03 - Chechnya gets a new senator - RFE/RL**

Legislators in Chechnya's State Council voted on 15 July to elect Adan Muzykaev as their representative to the Federation Council. Muzykaev is an adviser to State Duma Speaker Gennadii Seleznev and a former inspector with the Audit Chamber. The representative for Chechnya's presidential administration, Akhmar Zavgaev, was appointed in October 2000.

**07/17/03 - Defense Minister again rules out peace talks with Chechen President - RFE/RL**

Speaking to reporters following a meeting in Khankala with commanders from the North Caucasus Military District on 16 July, Sergei Ivanov said that any further large-scale fighting with Chechen fighters "is practically excluded," RIA-Novosti and RTR reported. He said, however, that he expects more explosions, ambushes, and suicide bombings. Ivanov added that there are about 1,200-1,300 Chechen fighters active in Chechnya "with whom it is impossible to negotiate and who must be liquidated." Ivanov again ruled out the possibility of peace talks with Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, commenting that Maskhadov is no more acceptable as a negotiating partner than Taliban spiritual leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Finally, Ivanov announced that all Russian servicemen attached to the federal forces in Chechnya will be contract volunteers by 2005.

**07/25/03 - Chechen businessman says he will run for President - RFE/RL**

Malik Saidullaev, who was elected in 1999 to head a Moscow-based

Chechen State Council told a 24 July press conference at Interfax headquarters in Moscow that he will travel to Chechnya on 25 July to submit to the Chechen Central Election Commission his application for registration as a candidate in the presidential elections scheduled for 5 October, Russian news agencies reported. Saidullaev, who was born in Chechnya in 1964, said his business associates in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Russia are prepared to invest between \$7 billion-\$8 billion in Chechnya. He added that he will also contribute from funds he has set aside "for a rainy day," hinting that his personal fortune exceeds \$500 million. Saidullaev said he has cooperated for some time with Aslanbek Aslakhonov, who represents Chechnya in the State Duma, and implied that he might withdraw his candidacy in favor of Aslakhonov or vice versa. Aslakhonov has not yet formally announced whether he will contest the ballot. An opinion poll conducted in Chechnya in late June, the results of which were summarized in "Izvestiya" on 22 July, ranked Saidullaev as the most popular potential presidential candidate with 20.1 percent support, followed by former Russian Supreme Soviet Speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov (19.2 percent), Aslakhonov (17.6 percent), and current Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov (12.5 percent). More than 60 percent of respondents said they will vote against Kadyrov.

**07/29/03 - Army officer sentenced for murder of Chechen woman - RFE/RL**

The North Caucasus Military District Court in Rostov-na-Donu handed down a 10-year prison sentence on 25 July to Colonel Yuri Budanov after convicting him of the March 2000 murder of an 18-year-old Chechen woman (...). In an earlier trial on the same charges, Budanov was acquitted on the grounds that he was temporarily insane at the time of the killing. The Russian Supreme Court overturned that verdict in February and ordered a retrial. Chechen Nationalities Minister Taus Dzhabrailov said the verdict shows that the human rights situation in Chechnya is improving, while Aslanbek Aslakhonov, Chechnya's deputy to the State

Duma, and Chechen Mufti Akhmed Shamaev both argued it is too lenient. In Moscow, Russian presidential aide Sergei Yastrzhembskii told Ekho Moskvy on 25 July that the verdict does credit to the Russian legal system and will not negatively affect the reputation of the Russian Army.

**08/11/03 - Border official denies Chechen militants entered Russia from Georgia - RFE/RL**

Georgian Border Troops Chief of Staff Colonel Korneli Salia denied on 7 August Russian military officials' claims that four Chechen fighters who entered Chechnya from Georgian territory were killed in a clash with Russian forces in Kurchaloi Raion, Caucasus Press reported. The Russian officials quoted a fifth Chechen who was reportedly wounded in the clash as saying that he and his companions bribed Georgian border guards to allow them to cross into Russia. Salia denied that there are any Chechen fighters still in the Pankisi Gorge, saying they were expelled during the police operation launched in the late summer of 2002.

**08/18/03 - Chechen officials deny displaced persons under pressure to return - RFE/RL**

Claims by a UNHCR official that Chechen displaced persons currently living in tent camps in neighboring Ingushetia are being pressured to return to Chechnya are untrue, Chechen Minister for Nationalities Affairs Taus Dzhabrailov told Interfax on 15 August. He added Chechens are returning from Ingushetia voluntarily. On 14 August, Interfax quoted Chechen Prime Minister Anatolii Popov as telling journalists in Moscow that all camps in Ingushetia for Chechen displaced persons will be closed by 1 October. He said housing will be made available in Grozny for those who wish to return, while accommodation will be found in Ingushetia for those who wish to remain there.

**08/21/03 - Registration deadline expires for Chechen Presidential Ballot - RFE/RL**

The deadline for submitting applications to register to contest the 5 October Chechen presidential election expired at 6 p.m. Moscow time on 20 August, Russian media reported. Of the 13 applicants, journalist Ruslan Zakriev and pensioner Zaindi Movlatov were found not to have submitted the required minimum 10,800 signatures in their support and were denied registration. Eleven other candidates have either submitted signatures or paid a deposit of 4.5 million rubles (\$150,000) or both. They are Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov; Moscow-based businessman Malik Saidullaev; Grozny University lecturer Avkhat Khanchukaev; poet Nikolai Paizullaev; Groznetgaz Deputy Director Kutuz Saduev; former Achkhoy-Martan Raion administrator Shamil Buraev; Chechen Deputy Military Commandant Colonel Said-Selim Tsuev; chief inspector for the Southern Russia Federal District Abdulla Bugaev; Aslanbek Aslakhonov, who represents Chechnya in the Russian State Duma; Khusein Dzhabrailov, deputy director of Moscow's Hotel Rossiya; and former Chechen Deputy Premier Khusein Bibilatov. "Gazeta" on 21 August quoted Aslakhonov as saying he has borrowed the deposit money rather than endanger the lives of his supporters, whom Kadyrov's armed thugs have reportedly threatened to kill, by collecting signatures.

**08/29/03 - "Counterterrorism operation" in Chechnya declared over - RFE/RL**

At a ceremony in Moscow on 28 August, Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Nikolai Patrushev announced that his service has ceded overall command of the "antiterrorism operation" in Chechnya to the Interior Ministry, Russian media reported. Interior Minister Boris Gryzlov will be in overall command. Patrushev said that since his agency took charge of the operation in 2001, "the situation in the republic has changed considerably for the better," RIA-Novosti reported on 28 August. He added that now FSB officers in



Chechnya will be able to devote more time to immediate operational tasks. Speaking at the ceremony, Gryzlov said that from now on the "counterterrorism operation" in Chechnya will be officially referred to as "an operation to protect law and constitutional order."

**09/02/03 - Russian, Chechen officials call for extension of Chechen amnesty - RFE/RL**

Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov has written to State Duma Speaker Gennadii Seleznev requesting that the Duma discuss at the earliest opportunity the possibility of extending for a further three months the amnesty for Chechen fighters that expired on 31 August, Interfax reported on 1 September. Deputy Prosecutor-General Sergei Fridinskii said the same day that some 145 Chechen fighters have been amnestied, of a total of 170 who requested amnesty. Some 226 servicemen and Interior Ministry personnel have also benefited.

Vladimir Zorin, who is Russian minister with responsibility for nationalities affairs, urged the Duma on 1 September to comply with Kadyrov's request. Describing the amnesty as "an important element of the post-conflict settlement," Zorin argued that extending it would help to ensure that the 5 October presidential election in Chechnya is not disrupted by violence.

**09/04/03 - Chechen press Minister dismissed - RFE/RL**

Acting Chechen pro-Kremlin administration head Anatolii Popov issued a decree on 3 September firing Beslan Gantamirov from his post as press minister, Russian media reported. Gantamirov had openly expressed his support for Moscow-based businessman Khusein Dzhabrailov in the 5 October presidential elections. Dzhabrailov withdrew from the race on 2 September. In an interview in December 2002, Gantamirov said that his control of the Chechen media would enable him to determine the outcome of the presidential ballot. Popov on 3 September also issued a decree abolishing both the Press Ministry and the Nationalities, Regional Policy, and External Communications Ministry, and

creating a new ministry to address all those functions. Former Nationalities Minister Taus Dzhabrailov (no relation to Khusein Dzhabrailov), who is running Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov's presidential-election campaign, was named to head the new combined ministry.

**09/04/03 - Chechen President implicated in Grozny bombing - RFE/RL**

The Prosecutor-General's Office has completed its investigation into a 27 December car-bomb attack on the government building in Grozny in which 72 people died, ITAR-TASS reported on 29 August. Three men have been charged with helping prepare the attack, in which three people drove two trucks loaded with explosives into the building.

"Kommersant-Daily" reported on 1 September, without identifying its sources, that the decision to launch the attack was made in August 2002 at a meeting near Shali of some 20 Chechen field commanders. The meeting was reportedly chaired by Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov and field commanders Abu Al-Walid and Shamil Basaev. Basaev proposed the operation and selected two of the perpetrators, the paper claimed. Basaev subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack.

**09/15/03 - Chechen parliament impeaches Maskhadov... - RFE/RL**

Deputies to the Chechen parliament elected in July 1997 voted on 5 September by 43 votes to 42 to remove Aslan Maskhadov from the post of Chechen president, acting Chechen parliament speaker Isa Temirov told journalists in Moscow on 12 September, Russian media reported. Temirov said Maskhadov violated the Chechen Constitution by introducing Shari'a law and had plunged Chechnya into war. He said the presidential powers now devolve upon Maskhadov's deputy, Vakha Arsanov. Russian presidential aide Sergei Yastrzhembskii characterized the Chechen deputies' move as "a political sensation" that demolishes the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's argument that Moscow should

embark on peace talks with Maskhadov as the legitimately elected Chechen leader, ITAR-TASS reported.

**09/15/03 - Thereby acknowledging he was elected legitimately - RFE/RL**

The pro-Maskhadov website chechenpress.com noted on 12 September that the Chechen deputies' statement constitutes formal recognition that Maskhadov was democratically elected. In a 12 September statement carried by chechenpress.com the following day, the Chechen Foreign Ministry said that Temirov was stripped of his parliament deputy's mandate in May 2003 for allegedly collaborating with the pro-Moscow Chechen authorities. According to that statement, following the murder in August 2000 of parliament speaker Ruslan Alikhadzhiev, deputy speaker Selim Beshaeu took over as acting parliament speaker.

**09/15/03 - Human rights official wants Chechen militia confined to barracks - RFE/RL**

Speaking at a press conference in Moscow on 11 September, Ella Pamfilova, who heads the Russian presidential commission for human rights, argued that the Chechen militia commanded by Ramzan Kadyrov, the son of Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, should be confined to barracks for the duration of the presidential election campaign, Interfax reported. Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov is the clear favorite among the eight remaining candidates for the 5 October Chechen presidential ballot. Pamfilova said either federal troops or Chechen police should guarantee order at polling stations, and that "people affiliated with [presidential] candidates" should not be in a position to influence the outcome of the vote. Pamfilova expressed regret at the decision of some Russian human rights activists not to participate in monitoring the 5 October ballot.

**09/19/03 – Spokesman denies Chechen resistance plans to launch attacks across Russia** - RFE/RL

Akhmed Zakaev, Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov's official spokesman, told grani.ru on 18 September that reports that Maskhadov has given the go-ahead to the fighters under his command to launch military attacks on targets across the Russian Federation are untrue, according to chechenpress.com. Zakaev admitted that the possibility of extending the war beyond the borders of Chechnya has been discussed several times at sessions of the Chechen Defense Committee, which Maskhadov chairs, but that no decision on doing so has yet been adopted. Deutsche Welle had quoted Zakaev as saying Chechen resistance fighters have been ordered to launch attacks elsewhere in Russia, but Interfax on 18 September quoted Zavaev as telling Ekho Moskvyy the German radio station misrepresented what he said.

**09/23/03 – Chechen parliament says former Deputies' not empowered to impeach President** - RFE/RL

In a statement dated 22 September and posted on chechenpress.com, the press service of the Chechen parliament elected in 1997 condemned as treachery former Deputy Isa Temirov's claim that the legislature voted in July by 43 votes to 42 to remove Aslan Maskhadov as Chechen president. The statement said Temirov was stripped of his mandate last year for failing to fulfill his duties.

**09/25/03 – Chechen foreign Minister calls on U.S to support international administration for Chechnya** - RFE/RL

Ilyas Akhmadov, who is Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov's foreign minister, appealed to the United States on 24 September to help install a temporary international administration in Chechnya, chechenpress.com reported. In a statement, Akhmadov stressed that over the past decade, 25 percent of the Chechen population has died in successive

wars with Russia. He further rejected as untrue Russian allegations that Chechen resistance fighters have links with Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, or deposed Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

**09/25/03 – Objective monitoring of Chechen elections increasingly unlikely** - RFE/RL

Russian human rights activists will not send observers to monitor the 5 October Chechen presidential election, Moscow Helsinki Group head Lyudmila Alekseeva told journalists in Moscow on 24 September, Russian media reported. Alekseeva dismissed the ballot, from which all three serious opposition challengers to Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov have withdrawn or been disqualified, as "a farce." She added that her group has decided not to invite foreign observers to monitor the ballot both for security reasons and because doing so could serve to legitimize the elections. Also on 24 September, TsIK Chairman Veshnyakov told journalists in Moscow that the OSCE will not send an election-observation mission to Chechnya "for organizational reasons," chechenpress.com reported. Veshnyakov added that the Council of Europe, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the League of Arab States have not yet responded to the TsIK's invitation to send election observers.

**09/26/03 – Russian supreme court upholds disqualification of Chechen Presidential candidate** - RFE/RL

The Russian Supreme Court on 25 September upheld the Chechen Supreme Court's 11 September ruling invalidating the registration as a candidate in the 5 October presidential election of Moscow-based Chechen businessman Malik Saidullaev, Russian media reported. The Chechen court ruled that more than half the signatures Saidullaev produced in support of his candidacy were invalid because the signatories had either not indicated their date of birth or had failed to include "Chechnya" as part of their home address. The Chechen Supreme Court also ruled that Saidullaev could not be registered as a candidate by virtue of having

paid the alternative 4.5 million rubles (\$147,444 ) deposit, as he did not submit a formal request to do so by the 1 September deadline.

**09/26/03 – Who vows to continue political activities** - RFE/RL

Speaking in Moscow on 25 September after the Russian Supreme Court ruling, Malik Saidullaev, one of three former presidential candidates once considered to pose a serious challenge to Chechen administration head Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, said he will continue to participate in political and economic processes in Chechnya in the hope of inducing Chechen intellectuals who fled their homeland during the early 1990s to return, ITAR-TASS reported. Saidullaev expressed the hope that democratization will get under way in Chechnya, and hinted that he will contest the next presidential election in 2008.

**09/26/03 – Chechens start receiving financial compensation** - RFE/RL

The first payments were made on 25 September to Chechen families whose homes and property were destroyed during the ongoing fighting, Reuters and Russian media reported. Those whose homes were destroyed will receive 300,000 rubles (\$10,000). Compensation for destroyed property is set at 50,000 rubles. Applications by some 400 families from a total of more than 39,000 who have requested compensation have already been approved, according to ITAR-TASS on 16 September. Moscow has allocated 14 billion rubles for compensation payments, of which the first installment of 350 million rubles was transferred to the Savings Bank of Chechnya earlier this month. Speaking in Moscow on 25 September, Russian Minister for Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov said every effort will be made to prevent "mismanagement," presumably meaning theft, embezzlement, or the payment of compensation to persons not entitled to it, Interfax reported.

**09/29/03 – Chechen Prime Minister hospitalized - RFE/RL**

Anatolii Popov was hospitalised in Grozny late on 27 September with acute poisoning and flown to Moscow for specialized treatment the following day, Russian media reported. Popov's aide said on 28 September that his condition is stable, but serious. Popov became unwell after eating lunch in Gudermes on 27 September following a ceremony to launch a new natural-gas pipeline. No other member of his entourage has fallen ill. It is unclear whether he succumbed to food poisoning or whether a deliberate attempt was made to poison him.

**09/29/03 – Pace will not monitor Chechen election - RFE/RL**

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Chairman Peter Schieder announced in Strasbourg on 26 September that the PACE's bureau has decided not to send observers to monitor the 5 October Chechen presidential election, ITAR-TASS reported. Also on 26 September, Ella Pamfilova, who heads the Russian presidential commission for human rights, characterized as "a serious mistake" a decision by Russian human rights activists not to send election observers to Chechnya, ITAR-TASS reported.

**09/30/03 – Medics say Chechen Prime Minister was not deliberately poisoned - RFE/RL**

Chechen Deputy Prime Minister Magomed Vakhaev and doctors in Moscow both told Interfax on 29 September that there are no indications that Chechen Prime Minister Anatolii Popov, who was hospitalized on 27 September with what seems to be acute food poisoning, was deliberately poisoned. Popov reportedly announced on 29 September that he was much better, and would return to Chechnya on 30 September. But ITAR-TASS reported early on 30 September that Popov's condition has deteriorated. According to ng.ru on 30 September, the toxin Popov ingested has a destructive effect on the liver.

**09/30/03 – Putin says Chechen election commission "needs support" - RFE/RL**

Meeting on 29 September with the staff of Russia's Central Election Commission (TsIK), President Putin stressed that that body's Chechen counterpart is working "in extremely complicated conditions," and therefore needs "support and professional assistance," ITAR-TASS reported. Chechen Election Commission Chairman Abdul-Kerim Arsakhanov told journalists in Moscow the same day that all organizational preparations for the ballot have been completed, and ballot papers and other printed matter have been distributed to polling stations, Interfax reported. He said there will be 425 polling stations in Chechnya and an additional one or two in Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya in neighboring Ingushetia for the benefit of Chechen displaced persons who fled to that republic during hostilities.

***NAGORNO KARABAKH / HAUT KARABAGH*****07/09/03 - Armenia, Azerbaijan agree to cool border tensions - Agence France Presse**

The defense ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan have agreed to reduce tension on their border amid reports of increased clashes in recent days, the Armenian defense ministry said Wednesday.

"The two sides agreed to take appropriate measures to stop the shootings and lower the tension that has been observed over the past few days on the front line between Azeri and Armenian forces," the ministry said in a statement.

Armenian Defense Minister Serzhik Sarkisyan met his Azeri counterpart Safar Abiyev Wednesday in the tense border town of Idzhevan-Kazakh, it said.

Azeri forces have been attempting to advance troops closer to the front line over the past week, according to military officials in Nagorno-Karabakh, which is under de facto Armenian control but formally a part of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan earlier this week accused Armenian forces of attacking an Azeri frontier post near the border with the enclave.(...)

The Armenian defense ministry also said it won a pledge from Abiyev to hand over an Armenian citizen who got lost in the woods of Nagorno Karabakh on June 29 and fell into the hands of Azeri forces.

**07/09/03 – EU nominates special representative for South Caucasus - RFE/RL**

The EU has appointed Finnish diplomat Heike Talvite as its special representative for the South Caucasus, according to a statement released in Brussels on 7 July and summarized by Armenpress the following day. (...) He was co-chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk Group in 1995-96.

His duties encompass assisting the countries of the South Caucasus in carrying out political and economic reforms; preventing and assisting in the resolution of conflicts; promoting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; engaging constructively with neighboring regional states; supporting intraregional cooperation; and ensuring the coordination, consistency, and effectiveness of the EU's activities in the South Caucasus.

**07/18/03 - OSCE Held Next Monitoring at Border of Armenian-Azeri Armed Forces - Economic News**

The representatives of the acting OSCE Chairman held the next monitoring at the border of Armenian and Azeri armed forces.

As Azerbaijan Ministry of Defense press-service informed, the mission visited the front line in accordance with the mandate of the acting OSCE Chairman personal representative. The monitoring was held near Mezemli village of Gazakh region in Azerbaijan.

Carol Kratki and Gennadiy Korch, field assistants of the present OSCE chairman representative, participated in the monitoring from Azerbaijan party. Personal representative of the present OSCE Chairman Anjey Kaspshik as well as his field assistants Kennet Pikles



and Yurgen Schmidt were present at the monitoring from Armenian party.

**08/08/03 - Karabakh leader pardons seven prisoners, Armenian report - Mediamax news agency**

The president of the Nagorny Karabakh Republic [NKR], Arkadiy Gukasyan, today signed a decree on pardoning seven prisoners.

Under the decree, the seven prisoners were pardoned, taking into account their first convictions and the fact that they had served most of their prison term and had been given positive references from prison, the NKR presidential press service told Mediamax. Sixteen prisoners were pardoned partly.

Nine prisoners were refused a pardon due to the nature and public danger of the crimes they had committed, due to the fact that they had been partly pardoned earlier, as well as due to negative references from prison.

**08/18/03 - USA Recognized Karabakh as Armenia's Part - Azat Artsakh**

The documents declassified recently by the USA Central Investigation Agency prove that the United States actually recognize Karabakh as part of Armenia. This information was provided by the office of Hay Dat in America. According to the declassified documents of the CIA, the US administration possessed three conclusions of the investigation: Nagorni Karabakh is historically Armenian land, Nagorni Karabakh always tried to unite with Armenia in legal ways, through legal methods, the reason of the hostility of the Azerbaijani toward Armenians in 1980 - 1990s was not protection of rights of Azerbaijan toward NK but its discontentment connected with the political, economic and demographic situation of Karabakh. In the CIA chronology referring the events in Nagorni Karabakh in August 1990 is mentioned that in the years 1921 - 1923 the soviet government made the historically Armenian territory of NKR an autonomous region in Azerbaijani SSR. In the 1988 CIA Caucasian survey the status of Nagorni Karabakh is defined as 'Armenian cultural and religious center'. In the survey it is specially mentioned that

in the course of centuries Karabakh remained as a semi-independent unit and was governed by the local princes, even when the rest of Armenia was under the domination of Turkey and Persia. The 1978 CIA records concerning the soviet ethnic minorities mention that one of the Caucasian regions, the NK Autonomous Region is able to present grounded arguments for becoming part of Armenia. NKAR remains in Azerbaijan although 80 % of the population are Armenian, and it borders with Armenia. In 1960s, according to the republic newspaper of Azerbaijan, the NKAR government was removed from office for having assisted to the movement for joining Armenia, say the records of the CIA.

**09/01/03 - Karabakh marks 12th independence anniversary - Mediamax news agency**

Festivities dedicated to the 12th anniversary of proclamation of independence of the Nagorny-Karabakh Republic (NKR) started in the NKR today.

A Mediamax special correspondent reported from the NKR capital Stepanakert that the first lesson in NKR's universities and schools was dedicated to the day of proclamation of the NKR.

According to the tradition, members of the Security Council, parliament and government took part in the events. The main part of festivities will be held on 2 September - the day of NKR's proclamation.

**09/02/03 - OSCE to activate mediation after election in Azerbaijan - PanArmenian News**

The OSCE will actively engage in the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh problem after the presidential election in Azerbaijan. Representative of the French parliament Ambroise Dupont stated in Baku yesterday at a meeting with Azeri prime minister Ilham Aliyev. As reported by "Interfax" agency, in his turn I. Aliyev said he would like "the OSCE Minsk group, of which France is one of the co-chairs, to activate its role in the Karabakh problem settlement."

A. Dupont also reported that the French parliament leader intended to visit the South Caucasian countries before the turn of the year.

**09/05/03 - Armenian interested in stability in Azerbaijan - PanArmenian News**

Armenia is interested in preservation of certain stability in Azerbaijan, as deputy to Armenian foreign minister Ruben Shugarian told journalists today. "Without stability in this country we cannot speak of stability in the South Caucasus and normal negotiation process on Karabakh issue", - he said. In this connection R. Shugarian expressed his hope for more or less minor upheavals in Azerbaijan as well as minor changes of status quo. "Only in this case it would be possible to consider further directions in the negotiation process on Nagorno Karabakh", - he said.

**09/10/03 - Armenian Church denies destruction of Azeri monuments in Karabakh - Mediamax news agency**

The press service of the Holy See of Echmiadzin denied today information that the Azerbaijani spiritual leader Haci Allahsukur Pasazada has asked Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II "to stop the destruction of Azerbaijani historical and religious monuments on territories controlled by the Armenians".

Mediamax news agency learnt from the press service of the Holy See of Echmiadzin that in reality the Azerbaijani spiritual leader's message was a reply to Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II's letter in which Garegin II called on Allahsukur Pasazada to stop "the barbaric destruction of thousands of Armenian khachkars [cross-stones] located at the Armenian Old Dzhuga cemetery (Naxcivan).

"In his message Allahsukur Pasazada said the Armenian khachkars belonged to the Albanian culture and as a counterargument spoke about the destruction and plunder of hundreds of Azerbaijani monuments in Nagorny Karabakh, in particular, in Susa and Zangilan," the press service of the Holy See of Echmiadzin reported to the Mediamax news agency.(...)

**09/10/03 - Armenian, Azeri defence ministries are in daily touch - Mediamax news agency**

Armenian Defence Minister Serzh Sarkisyan today said in Yerevan that the heads of the operational services of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Defence Ministries were exchanging information on the situation on various sections of the border on a daily basis.

Sarkisyan said that information was being exchanged according to agreements between the Armenian and Azerbaijani defence ministers. He said that "this approach will make it possible to quickly investigate any possible incidents".

**INGUSHETIA /  
INGOUCHIE**

**07/21/03 - Prominent Ingush journalist killed in Moscow - RFE/RL**

An unknown person killed Ingush journalist Alikhan Guliev on 18 July near his home in Moscow. Guliev, who worked for a regional television station in Ingushetia and as a stringer for TV-Tsentr and "Kommersant-Daily," was well known for his analytical reports about Chechnya and Ingushetia, gazeta.ru reported on 19 July. Guliev had also publicized critical materials about former Ingush Interior Minister Khamsat Gutseriev, RTR and NTV reported. In response to an appeal from Guliev, the Supreme Court of Ingushetia last year annulled the registration of Gutseriev as a candidate for republican president for violating campaign rules. Investigators are looking into possible political, personal, and ized critical materials about former.

**08/01/03 - Bomb kills five Russian troops in Ingushetia - RFE/RL**

Four Russian servicemen were killed outright and a fifth died later in hospital from injuries received when two KamAZ trucks hit a land mine near the village of Galashki, close to the border with Chechnya, in the evening of 29 July, Russian news agencies reported.

Ingushetia's President Murat Zyazikov told Interfax on 30 July he sees no need to deploy additional troops in Ingushetia in the wake of the blast. He said unnamed forces both in Chechnya and abroad would like to export the Chechen conflict to Ingushetia, but will not succeed in doing so.

**08/27/03 - Belarus signs cooperation accord with Ingushetia - RFE/RL**

Belarusian Acting Prime Minister Syarhey Sidorski and Murat Zyazikov, president of the Russian Federation's Republic of Ingushetia, signed in Minsk on 26 August an agreement on trade, economic, technical, scientific, and cultural cooperation, Belapan reported. "We are currently in need of road construction machinery, agricultural equipment, buses and tractors," Zyazikov said following his meeting with Belarusian President Alyksandr Lukashenka. "I believe you are interested in petrochemical products we have." According to official data, trade between Belarus and Ingushetia amounted to \$1.6 million in the first half of this year.

**08/29/03 - Conflicting reports of fighting in Ingushetia - RFE/RL**

Russian troops and police exchanged fire on 28 August with a group of some 10 Chechen fighters near the village of Galashki in Ingushetia, Interfax reported. Three Chechens were reported killed, and the Russian troops were reportedly in pursuit of the others. An army spokesman told Interfax the Chechens were first spotted close to the border between Georgia and Ingushetia and are believed to have entered Ingushetia from Georgia. But Ingushetia's First Deputy Interior Minister Abukar Kostoev denied on 28 August that any fighting had taken place in Galashki, Interfax reported. Caucasus Press similarly quoted a source in the Georgian Border Protection Service as denying that any Chechens had entered the Russian Federation from Georgian territory.

**09/15/03 - Explosion averted outside home of Ingushetian President - RFE/RL**

An explosive device consisting of two artillery shells was discovered and disabled on 12 September outside the residence of Ingushetia's President Murat Zyazikov, Interfax reported quoting the presidential press service.

**09/16/03 - Truck bomb kills three in Ingushetia - RFE/RL**

Three people were killed on 15 September and some 31 injured when two suicide bombers drove a truck loaded with explosive through the barriers surrounding the building in Magas, Ingushetia, where the local offices of the Federal Security Service (FSB) were located, Russian media reported. The deputy head of the FSB's Chechen branch, Mikhail Safonov, was among the injured.

At an emergency meeting on 16 September, Ingushetia's President Murat Zyazikov ordered police and security officials to intensify their search for those responsible for the bombing, ingushetia.ru reported.

**09/23/03 - Russian troops target Chechen displaced persons in Ingushetia - RFE/RL**

Russian forces are increasingly subjecting Chechen displaced persons in Ingushetia to arbitrary arrest or detention, ill-treatment, and looting, according to a Human Rights Watch report released on 23 September. The report details seven security operations against settlements for displaced persons conducted in June 2003. According to chechenpress.com on 18 and 20 September, the number of arbitrary detentions of Chechens in Ingushetia has increased since the 15 September truck bombing in Magas. On 17 September, Russian Minister for Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov told journalists in Moscow that all camps in Ingushetia for displaced persons from Chechnya will be closed before the onset of winter, ITAR-TASS reported. He said that the authorities are arranging transportation back to Chechnya for those displaced persons who wish to return.

## **SOUTH RUSSIA/ RUSSIE DU SUD**

### **07/16/03 – Krasnodar authorities want to close down advocacy group for Meskhetians - RFE/RL**

Krasnodar Krai authorities are reportedly seeking to close down a local human rights foundation based in Novorossiisk, polit.ru reported on 15 July. The organization, Shkola Mira, has defended the interests of immigrants and ethnic groups such as the Meskhetians. However, the group is reportedly not in compliance with a law that requires that all public organizations have three founders. It has only one. When the group queried Irina Kovaleva, a leading specialist at the department for public associations at the krai's Justice Ministry directorate, about introducing changes into their organizational charter, they were told that the Justice Ministry "is not interested in the continuation of the activities of the organization." According to the website, the directors of the foundation were told indirectly that if they bring pressure to bear on the international community to compel Georgia to agree to allow the Meskhetians to immigrate to that country, then they can count on the full support of the krai authorities. However, the foundation does not want to comply with this suggestion.

### **07/21/03 – New NGO to assist resettlement – Yerkir Online**

A new NGO, called Homeland's Call, was established on July 19, in the Kuban region of the Russian Federation, the newspaper Yerkramas, published in Krasnodar, reports. Doctor Roman Khanferian was elected the chairman of the organization. Most of the founders are Armenians moved to this region from Artsakh. Speaking on behalf of the Artsakh government, Ashot Ghulian, Nagorno-Katrabakh Republic Foreign Minister said, "One of the largest Armenian communities lives in this region, and Artsakh Armenians constitutes a big portion of it." He thanked the Kuban authorities for "continuing good traditions between the Armenian

and Russian peoples." According to a decision by the NKR authorities, families wishing to resettle in Artsakh will be entitled to a number of privileges; the Homeland's Call, in turn, is to advocate for resettlement and assist those seeking resettlement.

### **08/27/03 – Kuban rocked by explosions - RFE/RL**

Three explosions occurred in Krasnodar on 25 August, leaving three people dead and 20 injured, Krasnodar Krai Governor Aleksandr Tkachev told RTR that day. Tkachev added that his administration will give local law enforcement organs 3 million rubles (\$100,000) to investigate the crimes and find the bombers. According to "Kommersant-Daily" on 26 August, the homemade bombs detonated during the morning rush hour. Residents appeared to take the explosions calmly, and no panic ensued, polit.ru reported on 25 August, citing local media. The website concluded that "Russians are clearly starting to take explosions as some part of everyday life" and that "such an attitude can hardly stimulate authorities to more vigorous action." According to polit.ru, the local newspaper "Burevestnik Kubani" had reported recently that local media had been warning for several days that a terrorist act was in the works, but krai authorities brushed these reports aside, saying they were false.

### **08/28/03 – Kuban police detain suspects in recent bombings - RFE/RL**

Police in Krasnodar have detained an unspecified number of people on suspicion of involvement in three bomb explosions in central Krasnodar on 25 August, Russian media reported on 27 August. The detentions resulted partly from the numerous tips authorities received from the public via a special hotline. "The hope remains that those arrested were not simply snatched up randomly," polit.ru commented. "It is no secret that after a terrorist act, law enforcement officials frequently round up suspects in order to [publicize] their success. And only after that, when they are released, the real investigation begins."

### **09/02/03 – CIS air defense exercise begins in southern Russia - Xinhua News Agency**

A joint air defense drill conducted by Armenia, Belarus, Russia and Tajikistan began in southern Russia's Astrakhan region on Monday.

During the four-day joint exercise, airforce troops from the four member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will train in Ashuluk training grounds to act in anti-terror operations and local armed conflicts, said General Aitech Bizhev of the Russian Air Force and Deputy Commander in Chief for the CIS exercise.

The exercise is the final stage of the "Combat Commonwealth-2003" program, which was initially launched on June 15 in the Kaliningrad region, and then held in Kazakhstan. Anti-aircraft missile brigades and regiments, radio technical and other related airforce units dispatched by the four countries will use S-125, S-300PS and other types of anti-aircraft missiles, and Su-24, Su-25 and Mig-29 aircraft during the war games, Itar-Tass news agency reported.

Russian Air Force Commander in Chief Vladimir Mikhailov will take command of the operation, which is held under observation of CIS defense ministers. Enditem

### **09/02/03 – New Russian commander named in Chechnya - RFE/RL**

Colonel General Valerii Baranov has been named commander of the combined federal forces in the North Caucasus, Interfax reported on 29 August. Baranov has served before as commander or deputy commander of the Russian forces in Chechnya.

### **09/03/03 – New terrorist attack shakes Russia – Yerkir online**

At least five people were killed and 11 injured on Wednesday in an explosion on board a commuter train shuttling between Kislovodsk and Minvody in southern Russia. Two explosive devices were placed under the rails and went off at 7:30 a.m., causing a fire on several carriages of the train. The perpetrator of the attack was heavily



injured and could not escape the scene, he was later rushed to a nearby hospital.

Russian authorities have launched investigation under terrorism sections of the Criminal Code. Russian President Putin has instructed Emergency Minister Shoigu and Federal Security Service head Smirnov to take investigation under their personal control.

**09/03/03 – Commuter train bombed in Southern Russia - RFE/RL**

At least five people were killed and more than 20 wounded in southern Russia when two bombs blew up under a commuter train on 3 September, Russian and international media reported. The explosion occurred near Kislovodsk in Stavropol Krai, which borders Chechnya. ITAR-TASS reported that the homemade explosive devices were planted under the rails. One suspect was caught fleeing the scene and has been detained, RIA-Novosti reported, citing Interior Ministry sources. The unidentified suspect is unconscious and being held in the Kislovodsk Central City Hospital.

**09/30/03 – Attacks against ethnic Chechens on increase in southern regions - RFE/RL**

Instances of racially motivated attacks against Chechens in Russian cities outside of Chechnya are increasing, presidential envoy for human rights in Chechnya Abdul-Khakim Sultygov told a human rights conference in Moscow on 29 September, "Izvestiya" reported on 30 September. Anti-Chechen incidents have taken place most frequently in Krasnodar Krai and Kabardino-Balkaria. In Nalchik, assaults against Chechens on 15-17 September left one person dead and 54 injured.

Participants in the conference noted that there were no anti-Chechen incidents in Moscow after the October 2002 theater hostage drama, and blamed the policies of Krasnodar Krai Governor Aleksandr Tkachev and Kabardino-Balkaria President Valerii Kokov for the incidents in their Regions.

**JAVAKHK / DJAVAKHK**

**07/02/03 – Armenians harassed by Georgian officials - YERKIR Online**

The family of Nazaretians are among those few who continue to live in the village of Tsagver that is in the Borjom district of the Samtskhe-Javakhk region of Georgia. This family is continuously harassed by Georgian officials just for being Armenian.

Recently an employee of the Georgian Department of Land, Maskheshvili, has told this family he was going to take a piece of property, belonging to this family, to build a summer-house. The Nazaretians have told him they had been owning the property since 1946, to which the Georgian official has answered that "Armenians have no rights to own property in Georgia," according to the Nazaretians' attorney.

The Nazaretians have appealed to the law enforcement agencies, the staff of the Georgian President's representative in the Samtskhe-Javakhk region and international organizations operating in the region.

**07/04/03 – Georgian authorities to auction building that housed Armenian church - AZG Daily**

Georgian authorities have picked the building that currently houses the Georgian Officer's House in Akhaltskha, a region in the south, with predominantly Armenian population, and which was once an Armenian church of Savior, to put to an auction, a local A-Info news agency said.

According to reliable sources, the auctioning commission has received special instructions not to sell the building to ethnic Armenians or Armenian organizations for fear that the Armenian Apostolic Church may want to reverse the building into a church.

The building was transformed into an Officer's House in 1940 and it remained in that capacity after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The building now is owned by the Georgian Ministry of Defense.

**07/25/03 – Unsettled problems are increasing - Hayots Ashkharh**

It is no secret that the problems of the Armenians of Javakhk are always brought up in all official Armenian-Georgian meetings. It is announced at the highest level that these problems have a social and economic nature, but this does not ease the situation of the people.

One of the freshest realities is that Javakhk is almost completely deprived of electricity today, the region has been provided with electricity in a very irregular way for a month now. In Akhalkalaki, there are power supplies only 10-20 minutes a day. According to our information, about two weeks ago the leaders of Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda (Georgia) touched on this problem during a meeting with the Georgian president, and he promised to settle the problem. But they still have no power. The point is that in summer, Javakhk does not receive power from Armenia, as it was decided that in this period, power should be supplied from Georgia's domestic network. It should be noted in connection with this problem that the population of Javakhk owes Armenia 188,000 US dollars for electricity supplied in winter. But the funny thing in this situation is that the residents of Javakhk collected money and sent it to Tbilisi, but it was not transferred to Armenia. It is not clear why the Armenians of Javakhk should be suffering from this. Naturally, there is a question – why isn't the money immediately handed over to the supplier?

It has been clarified that Javakhk and other Georgian regions have not been given a licence to import electricity because supplies and the collection of payments should be centralized. As a result, there is the aforesaid debt. The next funny thing is that if the electricity payment index is 20-30 per cent in the whole of Georgia, in Javakhk it is almost 98-100 per cent. But there is no result. We do not want to see a tendency in all this, but it is not clear why there is such a problem. Javakhk is not short of real problems. The main problem of the region is the economy and its development.

Strange as it may seem, there is a serious potential for economic development, but there is no modern economy. Certainly, it is

clear that there are not enough prerequisites for this, potential alone is not enough. Recently at the highest level of Armenian-Georgian relations, attention was paid to the fact that in spite of friendly relations between the neighbouring countries, there is not a single joint-stock company. Moreover, the commodity turnover between Armenia and Georgia is about 10-15m US dollars at the moment. Armenia supplies mainly electricity, while Georgia - fertilizers, citrus plants etc. Experts say that the reason why there is no Armenian-Georgian joint-stock company is that economic integration in Armenian-Georgian relations is not being spoken about. In the event of such integration, this region would be seen as a serious investment zone, especially as the countries' leaders are saying all the time - we are friends, we seem to have no problem. But where are our relations? What measures have been taken to delineate at least the Armenian-Georgian border?

What has been done for setting up joint-stock companies? It is clear that in reality, only problems and obstacles were created. The two countries' customs legislation and road tax problems in Georgia and Armenia can be described as such. For example, a car that enters Armenia is charged 21,000 drams and a car that leaves it - 6,500 drams.

There are higher taxes on lorries - 150-300 US dollars. Armenia has adopted such a law as if we lived in France and those who come and go were Spaniards. We did not take into account that there is Javakhk and Armenian villages of Marneuli region on the other side of the border.

That means that there are no joint-stock companies because of legislation. But all this is not being seriously dealt with and no action is being taken in this direction. It is clear that there is no law and order in Georgia as a whole - just give money and go. But let us not accuse only the Georgians. After all, it is Armenians who live in Javakhk, and we should have an interest in them living there in the next five, ten and one hundred years.

**08/18/03 -US Embassy Delegation Visits Javakhk – Asbarez online**

The US Embassy in Georgia reported that an Embassy

delegation led by Deputy Chief of Mission Patricia Moller visited the Samtskhe-Javakheti Region of southwestern Georgia July 21-23. The Delegation was composed of DCM Moller, USAID Humanitarian Response Chief Kent Larson, Defense Attaché Mitchel Jackson, Assistant Public Affairs Officer Burke O'Connor, Political/Economic Affairs Assistants John Conlon and Mako Ghogheridze, Public Affairs Assistant Dali Homeriki, and USAID Humanitarian Affairs Assistant Pavle Basiladze.

On July 21, Moller and the delegation met with the President's Representative in the region Teimuraz Mosiashvili, and visited a USAID/Eurasia grantee Union of Democrat Meskhetians, the IFES Civic Education Project "Active Schools Bring Change," the Merci Corps community mobilization initiative to rehabilitate local irrigation and water distribution systems, a Democracy Commission grantee TV station Lomsia, and the Akhaltsikhe English Teachers Association of Georgia. The group met with the head of the Akhalkalak City Council on July 22, held a round table discussion with several community leaders, visited the Tbilisi Ombudsman's representative for the region, a Merci Corps-funded Center for Democratic Reforms and internet center, and Georgian Border Guards and Customs Offices on the Armenian border.

On July 23, Moller and the group visited a Merci Corps community mobilization initiative center for rehabilitating a local school in Akhalkalak and a volunteer community TV station whose reporters have received free training in news reporting and production from Internews.

**08/20/03 - OSCE Supreme commissar visits Samtske-Javakheti Region - Georgian Times**

The OSCE considers the participation of the representatives of the national minorities in the upcoming Parliamentary elections as one of the main components for holding democratic elections, the GT reports.

Mihai Gribincea, OSCE Supreme commissar for refugees met Akhaltsikhe Administration and representatives of the local Public Organizations in Samtske-Javakheti

Region. At the meeting was investigated participation of Armenian population of the region in elections.

**08/25/03 – Georgian President replaces his representative in Javakheti – ArmenPress**

Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze has replaced Teimuraz Mosiashvili, his personal representative in the southern province of Javakheti with predominant Armenian population, by Gela Gvaraskhelia, a parliament member.

Van Bayburdian, an Armenian member of Georgian parliament and chief editor of Vrastan (Georgia) Armenian language newspaper, published in the capital Tbilisi, expressed his satisfaction with the new appointment, especially Gvaraskhelia's negative position on allowing the return of Meskhetian Turks, deported to Siberia in 1943 by Joseph Stalin from southern Georgia. Bayburdian also praised the new representative for active participation in cultural and other events in Javakheti. Besides Gvaraskhelia, there were other candidates for the post, whose appointment would have been welcomed by local population. One of them was Vladimir Arielishvili, a native of the region, whose mother is an Armenian and who is fluent in Armenian. Bayburdian said the former representative, Teimuraz Mosiashvili, a well-educated man with a sweet temper, could not take the situation under his control in some issues and perhaps that prompted his replacement.

**09/08/03 - Bomb Blast in Javakhk – Asbarez online**

A bomb exploded at the entry to the residence of the Georgian president's representative in the Samtskhe-Javakhk district in Akhaltsikhe (with a predominantly Armenian population) at 8:00 PM on Friday. A member of the administration was wounded.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the bomb exploded several minutes after the presidential representative Gela Kvaratskhelia, who was appointed to the post two weeks ago, left the building, and that the attack may have been aimed at him.

**09/17/03 - Armenians unite before parliamentary elections in Georgia**

The Council of Armenian organizations of the Samtskhe Javakhk and Kvemo Kartli regions of Georgia has called on ethnic Armenians to unite in a joint front and cast their support in the November 2 parliamentary elections for the political force that would "raise and support" Armenian issues in Georgia's legislative body.

The Council will soon release a number of pre-election provisions that are expected to be addressed by the future parliamentarians.

**09/26/03 - Javakhk school ceiling collapses**

The ceiling of a school in the Turtskh village in southern region of Javakhk with a predominant Armenian population has collapsed. The incident happened late in the evening, and fortunately no one was injured. The school district authorities have cancelled the lessons and decided to provide the school with a temporary mobile building. They also have noted that other schools in the district are facing same danger.

**09/26/03 - Georgian MP suggests his ethnic Armenian colleague "thrown out" of parliament - Yerkir online**

Georgian Parliament Member Guram Sharadze suggested that ethnic Armenian MP Van Baiburadian "thrown out" of the parliament for his views. Sharadze, who is known for his extremist position, speaking to the Georgian newspaper Asavali-Dasavali Rao Rao (translated: "Up Down, What What"), accused Baiburadian of obstructing the passage of the bill on state language in the parliament in 2002. "Baiburadian has a bigger appetite now, and he is opposing the provision of the Election Code, adopted in 2002, that a candidate running for the parliament should have command of Georgian," Sharadze said, adding, "We are sick of Baiburadian's pretensions, he should be thrown out of the parliament."

It is noteworthy that Sharadze and Baiburadian are both in the Georgian President's New Georgia coalition.

As for Baiburadian's pretensions, he does not oppose the provision that candidates should speak Georgian. He suggests that the provision be implemented later "so that Armenians and Azerbaijanis could learn Georgian."

**09/30/03 - Javakhk Armenians Present Expectations from Georgia's Politicians - Asbarez online**

The Council of Armenian Organizations of Javakhk Announced conditions for endorsing candidates and parties in the upcoming parliamentary elections of Georgia.

Signed by the Akunk and A-Info unions of Akhalkalak, the Sports and Culture Union of Javakhk, the Lernashkhar Union of Ninotsminda, and the Charles Aznavour Culture Union of Akhaltskha, the statement, in part, states that "Ethnic Armenian citizens of Georgia have the right to live freely and fully on the entire territory of Georgia."

Noting that ethnic Armenian citizens should contribute unconditionally to the strengthening of Georgia, it calls on the Georgian government to, in turn, "honor the rights of all of its citizens, create favorable conditions for their political, educational, cultural, social, economic and other needs."

Other provisions include a higher level of self-governance in the regions populated by Armenians, and recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the government of Georgia.

On the economic front, they call for banks to be established in the predominantly Armenian-populated regions of Samtskhe-Javakhk and Kvemo-Kartli--in order to encourage industrial and agricultural development and spark establishment of small and medium-size businesses.

In education, they ask for an increase of teachers' salaries, instruction of Armenian history in schools, and the opening of a Yerevan State University branch in Akhalkalak. Stressing the necessity to preserve cultural values, the statement calls for Armenian youth to have the opportunity to receive proper education.

In the social sector, they emphasize the importance of increasing pensions and salaries,

and the gradual return of lost savings to the population.

**DOCUMENTS**

**07/25/03 - Constitutional reform in Daghestan : the end of ethnofederalism ? - RFE/RL Nikolai Petrov**

The Kremlin's campaign to bring regional legislation, in the first instance constitutions and statutes, into accordance with federal legislation is nearing its end. Within the parameters of this campaign, fundamental corrections were made on 10 July to the constitution of the Republic of Daghestan. Along with such purely cosmetic changes as the designation of Daghestan as a "sovereign republic" and the inclusion of a reference to citizenship, the entire system of power was modernized. As of 2006-2007, Daghestan will be transformed into a presidential republic with a compact unicameral parliament elected partly in single-mandate constituencies and partly from party lists. That radical transformation may trigger a struggle for power among Daghestan's various ethnic-based clans in the not too distant future.

Under the constitutional amendments, the post of an elected president will be introduced in 2006. The configuration of the parliament will be changed in 2007 when the powers of the present People's Assembly expire, and the number of deputies will be reduced from 121 to 72, of whom half will be elected on party lists and half in single mandate constituencies. The number of those constituencies will be cut by a factor of four.

Until now, a complex mix of new democratic and traditional ethno-clan-based norms obtained in Daghestan, which is the most diverse subject of the Russian Federation both in terms of its geographical relief and the ethnic composition of the population. According to the old system, supreme power belonged (at least formally) to a "collective presidency" in the form of the State Council, which comprised 14 members, one from each of the republic's 14 titular



nationalities. They are the Avars (28 percent of the total population), Dargins (15.5 percent), Kumyks (12.9 percent), Lezgins (11.5 percent), Russians, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, Rutuls, Laks, Tsakhurs, Tabasarans, Aguls, Nogais, and Tats. The 14 members of the State Council were elected by a specially convened 242-person Constitutional Assembly, of whom half were parliament deputies and half representatives of local government bodies.

One characteristic of Daghestan's collective leadership was that all deputies participated in the election of the 14 State Council members, rather than just deputies from the same ethnic group. This precluded the election to the State Council of the most powerful ethnic leaders and made the entire unwieldy structure easier to manipulate.

When the first State Council was elected in July 1994, it was intended that the chairmanship should rotate among the 14 nationalities. But in fact that post has been occupied by one and the same individual, Magomedali Magomedov, who is a Dargin. The constitution was amended in 1998 to abolish the restriction stipulating that a representative of one and the same nationality could not serve more than two consecutive terms as State Council chairman. Magomedov, who is now 72, was last re-elected State Council chairman in 2002.

Magomedov is one of the last remaining political figures in Daghestan to have risen to a position of authority during the Soviet era. While the Kremlin is under no illusions concerning the extent of the corruption he tolerates, it nonetheless continues to back Magomedov at times of crisis rather than risk political destabilization in a multiethnic republic that borders on Chechnya.

As for the deputies of the People's Assembly, ethnic quotas were in force until this year's elections that ensured that in constituencies where the ethnic composition of the population is mixed, only a representative of the largest ethnic group could be elected. This was a clear violation of the principle of equal rights for all voters proclaimed at the federal level, but

in Daghestan's unique conditions it helped to prevent interethnic standoffs during elections and to ensure the proportional representation in the legislature of all 14 titular nationalities. In the most recent elections, the ethnic quota system was superceded by multimandate constituencies, but the reduction in the number of deputies elected from such constituencies will necessitate abandoning that system.

It should be noted that legality of the process of bringing the federation subjects' legislation into conformity with federal legislation has been questioned. An expert assessment conducted by the Russian Ministry of Justice noted not only that "the content of the Constitution of the Republic of Daghestan contradicts federal legislation in 46 points," and that over 100 articles of Daghestan's Constitution needed to be brought into conformity with federal legislation, but also that "the legality of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Daghestan by the Constitutional Assembly and the existence of that assembly as a legislative organ" are open to question.

More to the point, there is considerable opposition to the introduction of the post of elected president. Three successive referenda have been held on the desirability of doing so, in 1992, 1993 and 1999, in which only 10.6 percent, 30.7 percent, and 23.7 percent of voters respectively expressed approval of that change. It is understandable that only representatives of the largest ethnic groups should favor direct presidential elections, in the first instance the Avars, who for the past decade have failed to occupy any of the most senior posts. In the Soviet era, the post of first secretary of the Daghestan Obkom of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was reserved for an Avar; now the highest position open to an Avar is speaker of the National Assembly. The numerically smaller nationalities, for their part, are more interested in preserving the ethnic balance within the power structure that has evolved over the decades. In other words, the new constitution does not correspond to the wishes of most of the republic's population.

Even though the adopted amendments remove the past discrepancies between the constitutions of Daghestan and the Russian Federation, implementing the proposed changes may not prove easy. In that respect, it is probably fortunate that the amendments will be put into effect only three years from now, which gives time for careful preparations.

But even if the approved system functions painlessly, the process of adopting the constitutional amendments highlights a number of troubling trends: the "one model fits all" approach favored by the federal center, which risks triggering interethnic conflicts; the Kremlin's chronic inability to comprehend the situation in the "ethnic republics" and its refusal to listen to the other side's arguments; and the weakness of local leaderships, most of which have proven unable to defend the interests of their regions in the protracted horse-trading that accompanied the process of amending their respective constitutions. (Nikolai Petrov)

#### **09/13/03 – Armenian population of Georgia declines by 180,000 - AZG Daily**

The overall Armenian population of Georgia has declined by 180,000 in the last 13 years. According to 1989 census, the number of Armenians in Georgia was 437,271 who made 8 percent of population. According to the results of 2002 January census, their number has shrunk to 248,929 or 5.7 percent. The number of Armenians in Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia is unknown, as the official Tbilisi could not conduct census there. Having in mind that there were 77,000 Armenians in Abkhazia according to 1989 census, it emerges that the number of Armenians in Georgia has declined by 101,000.

If the results of 2002 census, indicating reduction in the number of all national minorities living in Georgia are compared with the results of the 1989 census, it emerges that Georgia is gradually becoming a mono-ethnic state. According to 1989 census, Georgians constituted 68 percent of the overall population, today they (including also Megrelians and

Svans) make 84 percent. The 2002 census did not cover Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where approximately 230,000 people live.

The biggest outflow was among Russians. In 1989 there were 341,172 Russians, or 6 percent of overall population. Today there remain only 67,671 Russians, who make 1.5 percent of all population. Out of 102,324 Greeks there remain now 15,166 and out of 24,795 Jews there are now only 3,772.

The exodus of Azeris is comparatively low. In 1989 there were 307,566 Azeris or 6 percent, today their number is close to 285,000. Over the 13 years the overall population has reduced by 1.1 million. The number of Armenians in Abkhazia reduced by 10,000 and there are now believed to be 70,000, coming second after Abkhazians who are 90,000. Third and fourth come respectively Russians and Georgians.

Armenians live in 6 out of 7 regions in Abkhazia, except Gali region. The life is changing rapidly there and many things come to stand as they did before the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. Many Armenians who escaped from Abkhazia in the war years are now coming back and many of them are getting increasingly engaged in tourism industry. But unfortunately, Armenians are leaving Tbilisi and southern region of Javakheti. If this trend continues into future there will remain few Armenians in Georgia in 25-30 years.

By T. Hakobian

#### **09/25/03 – Georgian poll scramble begins - Caucasus Reporting Service**

A parliamentary election that may hasten the end of the Shevardnadze era is getting underway.

By Revaz Sakevarishvili in Tbilisi

Ahead of a crucial parliamentary poll in Georgia later this year, the opposition remains splintered and may have missed a chance to capitalise on the unpopularity of President Eduard Shevardnadze's governing administration.

The pro-presidential alliance, For a New Georgia, by contrast combines

nine different organisations and is competing as a united group.

On September 21, twenty-four electoral groupings were registered for the November 2 election, including nine political blocs and 15 individual parties.

They will be competing for 235 seats in parliament, 85 of them in individual constituencies, the rest apportioned out amongst parties, which get seven per cent or more of the vote.

The parliament in Georgia is more lively and powerful than in either of the two other south Caucasian countries and the results of the election are expected to determine the political future of Georgia ahead of presidential elections in 2005.

Shevardnadze is almost certain to step down then and the competition has already begun for his successor.

So this poll marks the beginning of the end of the Shevardnadze era, an almost unbroken period of 30 years in which he has been the dominant figure in first Soviet Georgia and then the independent state of Georgia.

Three groups are leading the field to win seats in parliament and set the agenda for the 2005 presidential election.

For a New Georgia has chosen a name which signals it wants to be seen as looking forward, not back. As well as government loyalists, it has attracted previous opposition figures to its ranks.

The central organisation in the bloc is the Citizens' Union of Georgia created by Shevardnadze in the early Nineties. It also contains the National Democratic Party, which was a fierce opponent of the CUG until earlier this year.

Irina Sarishvili-Chaturia, formerly one of the leaders of the opposition, is the bloc's main spokeswoman and can be relied upon to bring in many votes. The other members of the coalition are all linked in one way or another to the government and include socialists, former state minister Vazha Lordkipanidze and Tamaz Nadareishvili, the head of

Georgia's Abkhazian government-in-exile and the leading hardliner on the Abkhazia issue. Political analyst Nugzar Molodinashvili, who is sympathetic towards For a New Georgia, says it is bound to do well, partly due to the natural financial and administrative advantages of a governing party and in part because the opposition parties have seen a dip in their ratings as they squabble amongst themselves.

Furthermore, Molodinashvili said, many voters will support the bloc on the grounds that "the devil you know is better than the devil you don't".

The second prominent grouping is Mikhail Saakashvili's National Movement. Saakashvili, who is still only 35, has already served as the leader in parliament of Shevardnadze's Citizens' Union. In 2001 he resigned, making strong accusations of corruption against his fellow ministers, formed his own party and is now leader of the Tbilisi city council or sakrebulo.

Saakashvili uses his current position to launch savage attacks on Shevardnadze and does not disguise his own presidential ambitions. His poll rating, very high a year ago, has now fallen but he is expected to win a fair number of seats in parliament.

Saakashvili has already said that he will use the new parliament to seek either to limit the constitutional powers of Shevardnadze or to seek his early retirement.

The third main grouping is entitled Burjanadze-Democrats and is led by two other former Shevardnadze associates now in opposition, a former and current speaker of parliament, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze.

Zhvania, who stepped down as speaker in 2001, is the former leader of the United Democrats party and has only been saved from political oblivion by the rising popularity of his new ally, Burjanadze.

"Zhvania's knowledge of political technologies and Burjanadze's growing poll rating will help the party reach the seven per cent threshold," said Gochi Tskitishvili, head of the IPM Institute for

Sociological and Marketing Research.

A few other groups are expected to cross the threshold and gain representation in parliament. They include the Democratic Revival Union, party of the leader of Ajara Autonomous Republic Aslan Abashidze.

Abashidze governs Ajara as a fiefdom close to Russia and semi-independent of Tbilisi. Most experts agree that votes in Ajara alone will guarantee that his party will easily make the seven per cent mark. Abashidze has already announced that no foreign observers will be allowed to monitor the elections in his republic because "elections in Ajara always proceed in a democratic environment as it is".

Two other groups that may perform well are the New Rights party and the movement Industry Will Save Georgia, both of which have roots in business although their political orientation is very different.

According to political analyst Ramaz Sakvarelidze, "the New Rights favour a system typical for a post-industrial economy; they lean towards the West and try to use their contacts with US Republicans to former a party with a similar platform."

The industrialists draw their support from more traditional industry, oppose the influence of multinationals in Georgia and have good links with Russia.

Finally, the Labour Party of Georgia, which performed very strongly in last year's local elections, is also expected to do well.

Overall, the electoral registration process in Georgia went relatively smoothly. There was only one real scandal, which erupted in late August when former state security minister Igor Giorgadze attempted to join the race. The Georgian government has an arrest warrant out for Giorgadze, who has lived in exile since 1995, when he was accused of being behind the attempted assassination of Shevardnadze.

In his registration documents, Giorgadze claimed he had lived for the last two years on the territory of the breakaway republic of South Ossetia and thus fulfilled the right requirements to take part in the poll. Although Tbilisi has had no jurisdiction over South Ossetia for the past 12 years, it is still regarded as part of Georgia. It also turned out that there was no court decision confirming charges against Giorgadze.

In the end, however, the central electoral commission rejected his application, citing information from security agencies, which said he had never returned to Georgia since he fled the country.

Most experts anticipate that no one grouping will have a clear majority in the new parliament, meaning that November 2 will lead to a new scramble for power and influence inside the new assembly once the votes have been counted.

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