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## **GEORGIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH ADDRESSES PATRIARCH KIRILL OF MOSCOW**

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Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Ilia II sent a letter to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, expressing his concern over recent developments in Russia-occupied Tskhinvali region, continuous moving of the line of occupation and kidnappings of persons that have a permanent nature.

Everyone is concerned about the detention of renowned surgeon, Vazha Gaprindashvili in Tskhinvali detention facility. This situation causes fair discontent and protest in the society, Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch said in the letter.

Russia-backed Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia authorities detained Tbilisi-based doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili near the occupation line with Akhagori Municipality on November 9 and sentenced him to two-month pretrial custody on November 15, for illegally crossing the border.

Georgian Foreign Ministry claims that it spares no efforts for the doctors release, including through mobilization of international community. President Salome Zurbishvili also called on the heads of international organizations to use all available means to achieve the release of the Georgian doctor.

In the same letter, Ilia II slams the decision to send the graduates of theological academies as auxiliaries to Russian military units deployed in Abkhazia, Tskhinvali region, Kyrgyzstan and Arctic.

The Russian Orthodox Church has always recognized and still recognizes the jurisdiction of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Therefore, such decision is ambiguous to us and puts us in a difficult situation, Ilia II said.

He also underlined that sending of clerics of any orthodox church to our territory without our permission is unacceptable, adding that such action triggers tensions. I hope that you will take measures to normalize relations between our states, peoples and churches, Ilia II added.

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