
**OSCE GROUP OF FRIENDS OF GEORGIA CONDEMN RUSSIAN AGGRESSION, DEMAND
RELEASE OF ABDUCTED DOCTOR**

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06.12.2019

Agenda.ge (06 December 2019)

The group of friends of Georgia in the OSCE has delivered a joint statement to reaffirm their firm support for Georgias sovereignty and territorial integrity, condemn the Russian aggression and demand the release of a well-known Georgian doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili who has been in illegal detention in Georgias Russian-controlled Tskhinvali region for about a month.

The statement which was presented during the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava, was delivered on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

11 years since the Russian military invasion of Georgia, we remain deeply concerned over the continued occupation of the territory of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and international law, reads the statement.

The signatories called upon Russia to fulfill immediately its clear obligations under the European Union-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, including the withdrawal of its forces to its positions prior to the outbreak of hostilities.

We are concerned by the intensified provocations by Russia and the regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, including the attempted expansion of the occupied area and the building of posts by the so-called security forces of South Ossetia region close to Chorchana village on territory controlled by the Georgian Government.

The countries say that they also remain concerned over the installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the occupation line in the villages of Atotsi and Gugutiantkari, and lengthy closures of so-called crossing points in Georgias South Ossetia region.

These actions have destabilized the situation on the ground and severely impacted the security, safety, well-being, and humanitarian conditions of people in conflict-affected areas. The recent death of Margo Martiashvili from Akhalkgori district, who was deprived of the possibility to get prompt and adequate medical care, due to the closure of the so-called crossing points, is another tragic illustration of grave consequences of the continuing restrictions on the freedom of movement for the local population. We are gravely concerned by the detention of Georgian Dr

Vazha Gaprindashvili in the region of South Ossetia and call for his immediate release.

The statement has expressed a deep concern over the increased Russian military exercises in, and militarization of Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

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Kaynak/Source: