



Chronicle: The Caucasus in the Year 2016

January	
2 January 2016	The Georgian Interior Ministry says that visits to Georgia by foreign citizens reached 5.89 million in 2015, a 6.9 percent increase from the previous year
4 January 2016	The Georgian Ministry of Energy says that talks have been initiated with Iran over possible gas supplies via Armenia, but there is no concrete agreement yet
8 January 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili signs a bill on the redistricting of single-mandate constituencies into law
11 January 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze says that ongoing talks with Russian gas company Gazprom focus on the monetization of transit fees that Georgia receives on Russian gas being imported to Armenia via Georgian territory
13 January 2016	Scores of demonstrators are detained in Azerbaijan amid countrywide protests over worsening economic conditions in the country, including price hikes on flour and bread
13 January 2016	President of the Azerbaijani state energy company SOCAR, Rovnag Abdullayev, holds talks with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze in Tbilisi to discuss gas supplies from Azerbaijan to Georgia amid ongoing talks between Georgia and Russian state company Gazprom
14 January 2016	Azerbaijani authorities withdraw licenses from independent currency exchange booths
15 January 2016	The National Bank of Georgia releases figures showing a decline of 25% in remittances to Georgia, mainly due to a sharp drop in transfers from Russia
19 January 2016	The Azerbaijani parliament approves a package of measures aimed at addressing the economic and financial crisis in the country caused by low oil prices
20 January 2016	Azerbaijan commemorates “Black January” when 137 anti-Kremlin protesters were killed in Baku and several more wounded and arrested during a crackdown by Soviet troops on 20 January 1990
22 January 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze says that no deal has been reached yet on transit terms of Russian gas following a meeting with Russian company Gazprom’s executives in Vienna on 20 January
26 January 2016	Georgian state arms manufacturer Delta says that it has won a contract to supply armored vehicles to Saudi Arabia
27 January 2016	The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank discuss a possible emergency loan package to Azerbaijan to alleviate the country’s economic hardships as a result of a steep drop in oil prices
29 January 2016	The credit rating agency Standard and Poor’s downgrades Azerbaijan’s debt rating to “junk”, making it more expensive for the government to borrow funds by issuing government bonds
30 January 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili visits Pankisi gorge, together with the U.S. and EU ambassadors to Georgia, and meets with local residents of the village of Duisi
February	

1 February 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli meets with her Armenian counterpart Seyran Ohanyan during a visit to Yerevan and stresses that Georgia's goal is to contribute to peace and security in the Caucasus region
5 February 2016	Amnesty International says that a bill currently discussed by the Georgian Parliament which makes "insulting religious feelings" an administrative offense undermines freedom of expression
9 February 2016	The Georgian Foreign Ministry says that Georgia will reintroduce 45-day visa-free travel for Iranian citizens starting from 15 February
12 February 2016	Georgian Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze meets with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif on the sidelines of the Munich security conference to discuss Georgia's transit potential and other opportunities for further cooperation between the two countries
15 February 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze starts a visit to Iran to discuss possibilities for importing Iranian gas to Georgia as well as other energy projects
16 February 2016	Low-cost airline Wizz Air says that it will open a new base at Kutaisi airport, a large town in Western Georgia
19 February 2016	Moscow grants Armenia a 200 million US dollars loan for the purchase of Russian arms
19 February 2016	Leader of Georgian opposition party Democratic Movement party, Nino Burjanadze, meets with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin in Moscow
22 February 2016	Officials from the Georgian Economy Ministry and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce held a first round of talks on a free trade agreement between the two countries in Tbilisi
23 February 2016	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev meets with his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rohani in Tehran and sign cooperation documents on energy trade and transportation
25 February 2016	Georgia officially marks the Day of Soviet Occupation when the Red Army took over Tbilisi 95 years ago
25 February 2016	Georgian Deputy Energy Minister Mariam Valishvili, says that Georgia is importing electricity from Russia to supply to the breakaway region of Abkhazia at a "very preferential price" and as a short-term solution to prevent a power outage
26 February 2016	Alexi Petriashvili, leader of opposition party Free Democrats (FD) and former Georgian state minister for European integration, is shot and wounded in Tbilisi
28 February 2016	Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo visits Tbilisi and reiterates Spain's "full support" to Georgia's territorial integrity
March	
1 March 2016	Coal miners in the Georgian town of Tkibuli end a strike of two weeks following an agreement with a coal mining company on a gradual pay rise
3 March 2016	The European Commission approves the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) that will transport Azerbaijani natural gas to Italy via Greece
4 March 2016	Georgia's Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze says that a new deal with Azerbaijan to supply an additional 500 million cubic meters of gas removes the need for Georgia to receive additional gas through Russian energy company Gazprom
6 March 2016	Several thousand people form a human chain in Tbilisi in a protest organized by the opposition party United National Movement against talks between the Georgian government and Russian energy company Gazprom
7 March 2016	Turkey and Azerbaijan start joint military exercises in the Turkish city of Konya

9 March 2016	Georgian Energy Minister Kakha Kaladze tells Georgian lawmakers that Georgia has completely secured its gas supplies in a new deal with Azerbaijani state company SOCAR
11 March 2016	The Court of Appeals in Baku rules that human rights activists Leyla Yunus and her husband, Arif Yunus, are not allowed to leave Azerbaijan to seek medical treatment in Germany
11 March 2016	Georgia releases four South Ossetian prisoners in exchange for twelve prisoners handed over by the Abkhaz and South Ossetian breakaway regions in a rare tripartite deal
13 March 2016	Azerbaijan says that its border guards have shot five armed Bangladeshi and Azerbaijani citizens who were crossing illegally into Iran
15 March 2016	The Prosecutor's Office in Georgia says that five persons have been charged with the unlawful possession of videos of private lives in a case predating the recent release of sex tapes, purportedly showing Georgian politicians
17 March 2016	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signs an amnesty decree for 148 prisoners, including opposition activists and politicians, but not prominent investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova
18 March 2016	The Georgian Parliament launches formal procedures for a proposed draft by the ruling Georgian Dream coalition aiming to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman in the Georgian constitution
19 March 2016	A rally is organized in the center of Tbilisi to protest against the infringement of privacy rights following the release of sex tapes, purportedly showing Georgian politicians
22 March 2016	The Speaker of the Georgian Parliament Davit Usupashvili meets King Salman of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, stating that it is important that an influential country like Saudi Arabia is interested in close ties with Georgia
22 March 2016	The Georgian authorities announce that security measures have been reinforced at airports in Georgia in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Brussels
25 March 2016	Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian states after a meeting with his Georgian counterpart Mikheil Janelidze in Yerevan that there are "no problems" in the relationship between the two Caucasus countries
29 March 2016	The Deputy Head of the Georgian State Security Service, Levan Izoria, says that the outflow of Georgian citizens heading to join the Islamic State in Syria has sharply declined
31 March 2016	US Secretary of State John Kerry calls for an "ultimate resolution" of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Washington
31 March 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili announces that member parties of the Georgian Dream ruling coalition will participate separately in the upcoming parliamentary elections
April	
2 April 2016	The EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, visits Tbilisi and expresses hopes that a proposal on visa liberalization with Georgia will be adopted very soon
3 April 2016	Heavy fighting in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh is reported with Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian saying that 18 ethnic Armenian soldiers were killed and 35 others wounded and the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry reporting the death of 12 Azerbaijani soldiers
3 April 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili expresses concern over heavy fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and convenes a meeting of security, senior government and parliamentary officials to discuss the situation

4 April 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli has a telephone conversation with her Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts to discuss heavy fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. She expresses hopes that a ceasefire will be achieved
5 April 2016	A ceasefire is announced in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh following heavy fighting and amid international calls for restraint
5 April 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili announces 8 October 2016 as the date for the next parliamentary elections in Georgia
6 April 2016	Iran's President Hassan Rohani offers to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia to help resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He has telephone conversations with his Armenian and Azerbaijani counterparts, Serzh Sarkisian and Ilham Aliyev
6 April 2016	Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Karim Masimov proposes Moscow as an alternative venue for the summit of the Eurasian Economic Union (EES) scheduled to take place in Armenia's capital Yerevan on 8 April
7 April 2016	Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev says his country is ready to help resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He expresses hopes that the ceasefire agreement will hold during his visit to Armenia
7 April 2016	Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov praises the ceasefire in the Nagorno-Karabakh region amid claims of breaches by Armenian-backed and Azerbaijani-backed forces
7 April 2016	The Georgian Energy Ministry announces that Georgia and the Russian gas company Gazprom have signed a deal to extend an agreement on the transit of gas from Russia to Armenia via Georgia
8 April 2016	The former deputy head of the Constitutional Security Department (CSD) under the Interior Ministry and four other former security officers are arrested in Georgia on charges of recording sex videos of politicians in 2012 which were posted on YouTube in March 2016
9 April 2016	The Vatican press office says that Pope Francis will visit Armenia in June 2016 and Georgia and Azerbaijan in September and October 2016
11 April 2016	Thousands of people march in Yerevan in commemoration of the deaths of ethnic Armenians as a result of fighting in the Nagorno-Karabakh region
13 April 2016	Hundreds of Armenians protest in the streets of Yerevan against Russian weapon sales to Azerbaijan
14 April 2016	Georgia's Constitutional Court rules that Georgian surveillance agencies' unrestricted access to telecom operators' networks is unconstitutional
18 April 2016	The head of Armenia's State Bailiffs Service resigns following reports of alleged links to offshore companies revealed in the Panama Papers
18 April 2016	Georgian authorities detain six Georgians and Armenians suspected of trying to sell uranium
19 April 2016	Two prominent Azerbaijani human rights activists, Leyla and Arif Yunus, arrive in the Netherlands after having been granted permission to leave the country
21 April 2016	Armenian activists protest against the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov by marching from Liberty Square to the Russian Embassy in Yerevan
21 April 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili meets with French President François Hollande during an official visit to Paris to discuss the implementation of Georgia's Association Agreement with the EU
23 April 2016	In Yerevan, thousands of Armenians commemorate the anniversary of the beginning of the mass killings of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey

26 April 2016	U.S. Vice President Joe Biden meets with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili at the White House and congratulates Georgia on the progress made over the 25 years since independence
27 April 2016	An ethnic Armenian from Kazakhstan is sentenced to jail in Russia for repeatedly trying to join Daesh (Islamic State) in Syria
May	
2 May 2016	Baku and Yerevan accuse each other of artillery attacks in the Nagorny Karabakh conflict
5 May 2016	The National Bank of Georgia (NBG) buys 20 million US dollars (USD) as the Georgian lari (GEL) continues to rise against the US dollar
6 May 2016	The Russian Foreign Ministry criticizes the upcoming joint military exercises between Georgia and the United States as a “provocative step”
10 May 2016	A Stalin bust is covered in pink paint by local activists in Georgia
11 May 2016	Joint military exercises of US, UK and Georgian troops named “Noble Partner 2016” begin near Tbilisi
15 May 2016	Defense Ministers of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey meet in the Azerbaijani city of Gabala and discuss holding military exercises in a trilateral framework
16 May 2016	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Vienna to discuss a possible settlement of the conflict over the disputed region of Nagorny Karabakh
16 May 2016	A Tbilisi city court sentences five former Defense Ministry officials to prison on charges of financial mismanagement
17 May 2016	The 10 th World Congress of Families bringing together Christians from around the world starts in Georgia’s capital Tbilisi
18 May 2016	Dozens of Georgian prisoners serving life sentences start a hunger strike to demand that the amnesty law be changed to have their sentences reduced
20 May 2016	The Azerbaijani parliament approves a proposal to grant amnesty to thousands of prisoners
22 May 2016	Several leading figures of the Georgian oppositional United National Movement party are beaten up close to a polling station in the village of Kortskheli in the Zugdidi municipality
25 May 2016	Azerbaijani journalist Khadija Ismayilova is released from prison and vows to continue her journalism work
26 May 2016	Thousands of people celebrate 25 years of Georgia’s independence in the capital Tbilisi
26 May 2016	The breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia postpones a referendum on joining the Russian Federation until after the presidential elections in the region next year
30 May 2016	Former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili says that he will start campaigning for the ruling Georgian Dream-Democratic Georgia (GDDG) party ahead of the October parliamentary elections
June	
2 June 2016	A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) orders Azerbaijan to pay compensations to the prominent human rights activists Leyla and Arif Yunus for “inadequate medical treatment”
2 June 2016	Germany’s Bundestag declares the mass killings of ethnic Armenians by Ottoman Turks in 1915 a genocide

3 June 2016	China's Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli meets with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili during an official visit to Georgia. Kvirikashvili declares that the deepening of ties with China is an "important priority" for Georgia
3 June 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili issues a decree confirming 08 October 2016 as date for Georgia's parliamentary elections
5 June 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli visits Georgian troops in Afghanistan in the third visit since taking her position as Minister
7 June 2016	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev says during a press conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin that the Nagorny Karabakh cease-fire "is not stable, it is fragile" and that he wants a peaceful solution to the conflict
8 June 2016	Czech President Milos Zeman says during a visit to Yerevan that he will ask the Czech parliament to adopt a resolution recognizing the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks as genocide
9 June 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili says that he hopes that the visa liberalization process will be finalized before Georgia's parliamentary elections in October 2016
10 June 2016	EU ministers discuss visa liberalization for Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey and Kosovo without reaching a decision at the meeting in Luxembourg
14 June 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli meets with her French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris to discuss military cooperation between the two countries and the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw
15 June 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili commences his visit to Germany and meets with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin; during the visit, he opens a Georgian-German business forum
16 June 2016	Russian state company Gazprom says it has signed a contract with the Georgian company Gasko+ on the sidelines of the Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum to supply gas from July 2016 until the end of 2016
20 June 2016	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Russian city of Saint Petersburg and pledge their readiness to reach a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
22 June 2016	The Georgian Parliament approves sending twenty Georgian soldiers to the Central African Republic as part of the EU's military training mission (EUTM RCA)
23 June 2016	Georgian Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze meets with the EU's foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini in Brussels to sign a Security of Information Agreement between the EU and Georgia
24 June 2016	During an official visit to Armenia, Pope Francis denounces the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman troops during World War I as "genocide"
26 June 2016	Pope Francis calls for closer ties between the Vatican and Armenia's Orthodox Church on the final day of his visit to the country
27 June 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili signs a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in Bern during an official visit to Switzerland lasting two days
27 June 2016	Georgian Prime Minister's special representative for relations with Russia, Zurab Abashidze, meets with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Grigory Karasin, in Prague as part of an informal dialogue launched between the two countries in 2012
29 June 2016	German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier warns about a possible escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, calls for a strengthening of the ceasefire during a visit to Armenia, and exhorts Armenia and Turkey to hold talks to resolve their differences

29 June 2016	Georgian Prime Minister's special envoy for relations with Russia, Zurab Abashidze, announces that a Georgian citizen jailed in Russia for spying has been released and handed over to Georgia on 28 June
30 June 2016	US Secretary of State John Kerry notes in separate phone calls to the presidents of Armenian and Azerbaijan that the Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire is holding and urges both countries to continue avoiding tensions
July	
1 July 2016	The Free Democrats (FD) opposition party in Georgia vows to significantly increase pensions and introduce a minimum wage if it secures a victory in the upcoming parliamentary elections in October
6 July 2016	US Secretary of State John Kerry signs a memorandum on "deepening the defense and security partnership" between the US and Georgia during an official visit to the Caucasus country
6 July 2016	The head of local government in the Georgian Adjara Autonomous Republic, Archil Khabadze, resigns ahead of elections
7 July 2016	Supporters of two jailed leaders of the Armenian nationalist opposition movement Founding Parliament march in the capital Yerevan to demand their release
7 July 2016	US Secretary of State John Kerry meets with leaders of opposition parties and Parliament Speaker Davit Usupashvili during a visit to Georgia
8 July 2016	During the NATO Summit in Warsaw Georgia and NATO agree on new steps to strengthen the country's defense capabilities, in particular air defense and air surveillance
11 July 2016	A referendum on early presidential elections in the breakaway region of Abkhazia is declared invalid due to low voter turnout
14 July 2016	European Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn says in the Georgian sea resort of Batumi that Georgian citizens will be granted visa-free travel to EU countries of the Schengen zone by October
16 July 2016	Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev holds talks with his Ukrainian counterpart, Petro Poroshenko, in Baku to sign bilateral agreements on political, economic, energy and transport issues
17–18 July 2016	A group of armed men belonging to Sasna Dzerer, the military wing of the nationalist opposition group Founding Parliament, storm a police headquarters in the Armenian capital of Yerevan, demanding the release of their leader, killing one police officer, and taking several hostages, who were later released. Police block access to the occupied premises. The incident causes mass riots outside the block police headquarters during the following days
19 July 2016	During a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Binali Yildirim in Ankara, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili expresses the hope that the launch of a High Level Strategic Cooperation Council between the two countries will contribute to the "institutionalization" of bilateral ties
20 July 2016	Hundreds of demonstrators, supporting an armed opposition group (belonging to Sasna Dzerer and linked to the opposition group Founding Parliament) holding hostages in a police station, clash with police in Yerevan resulting in 45 hospitalized people, including 25 police officers
21 July 2016	The Azerbaijani government takes control of a private university in Baku linked with Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen

22 July 2016	After a meeting with law enforcement officials, Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian calls on the armed group holding hostages in a Yerevan police station to release their hostages
23 July 2016	The four police officers, held hostage at a police station in Yerevan by an armed opposition group, are released
25 July 2016	Thousands of demonstrators march in Yerevan in support of the gunmen who have occupied a police building in the capital for more than a week
25 July 2016	The Azerbaijani highest court approves an initiative by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to extend the official presidential term to seven years, but says that the ratification will require a referendum and constitutional amendments
27 July 2016	Armenian Health Minister Armen Muradyan is blocked by police from entering a police station in Yerevan occupied by the armed group who have taken four health professionals hostage
29 July 2016	Demonstrators clash with riot police in Yerevan after they try to approach the police building where gunmen from an opposition group have barricaded themselves, resulting in 75 injured people
31 July 2016	Gunmen linked to an opposition group surrender to the police after occupying a police building in Yerevan for two weeks
August	
1 August 2016	In Georgia, Defense Minister Tina Khidasheli and State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality Paata Zakareishvili resign
3 August 2016	The head of Georgia's State Security Service, Vakhtang Gomelauri, meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during a visit to Baku to discuss bilateral cooperation between the two countries' security agencies and to sign a memorandum of cooperation
8 August 2016	The presidents of Azerbaijan, Iran and Russia meet in Baku, the first time in this format, to discuss new transport and energy projects in the Caspian Sea region
9 August 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili rejects a petition demanding a referendum to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman, saying that this is already defined in Georgian legislation
10 August 2016	Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow to discuss the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute following a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Iranian President Hassan Rohani in Baku regarding a Nagorno-Karabakh peace plan sponsored by the OSCE
15 August 2016	Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu meets with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Zakir Hasanov, in Baku to discuss military cooperation between the two countries
15 August 2016	The opposition Heritage party pulls out of local elections in Armenia following the arrests of three of its members on charges of organizing mass disturbances during a protest on 29 July
16 August 2016	A fringe pro-Russian party which pledged to "legalize" Russian military bases in Georgia on Georgian television is banned from running in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 8 October
17 August 2016	The leader of the Georgian opposition Democratic Movement party, Nino Burjanadze, meets with Russian State Duma speaker Sergey Naryshkin in Moscow to discuss prospects of bilateral relations between Georgia and Russia
17 August 2016	50 Turkish instructors are fired from the Caucasus University in Baku for alleged links to Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen

18 August 2016	The opposition party “The State for the People” says that it will form an election bloc with NPC-Girchi, New Georgia and New Rights parties for the 8 October parliamentary elections in Georgia
19 August 2016	Four men with links to Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen are arrested in Azerbaijan on charges of “abuse of power” for passing on private information while working for a mobile phone company
22 August 2016	The Georgian State Security Service says that a “terrorist act” targeting a gas pipeline running through Georgia to Armenia was prevented with five people arrested on 20 August
25 August 2016	Armenian Economy Minister Artsvik Minasyan says that Armenia is working with Iran to create a free economic zone in the border region of Meghri
27 August 2016	New Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria visits Afghanistan and meets with Georgian soldiers at Bagram Air Field in his first foreign trip since becoming Minister
31 August 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili meets with his Azerbaijani counterpart Artur Rasizade and President Ilham Aliyev in Baku to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries
September	
1 September 2016	Former Georgian Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili says that he expects the Georgian Dream ruling party to win around 100 seats (i.e., a two-thirds majority) in the upcoming parliamentary elections on 8 October
5 September 2016	About twenty Georgian civil society organizations launch a Coalition for Euro-Atlantic Georgia to support Georgia’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures
7 September 2016	During a meeting with NATO’s Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in Tbilisi, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili says that Georgia will continue its reforms and wait patiently to join NATO
9 September 2016	Azerbaijani authorities release an opposition activist from prison ahead of a controversial constitutional referendum scheduled on 26 September
10 September 2016	French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian meets with his counterpart Levan Izoria in Tbilisi and says that France will help Georgia strengthen its defense capabilities
13 September 2016	Karen Karapetian, a former executive at Russian gas company Gazprom, becomes Armenia’s Prime Minister
13 September 2016	Georgian Economy Minister Dimitri Kumsishvili says that Georgia and China have completed free trade negotiations and an agreement is expected to be signed before the end of 2016
18 September 2016	Hundreds of demonstrators rally in support of the Musavat opposition party in Baku to protest against a planned referendum that will strengthen Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev’s authority
21 September 2016	Armenia marks the 25th anniversary of the country’s independence with a military parade in the capital Yerevan
22 September 2016	Former Georgian Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili is found guilty of ordering the beating of a lawmaker and sentenced to 6,5 years in prison by the Tbilisi City Court
23 September 2016	Low-cost airline company Wizz Air opens a base at the airport of the Georgian town of Kutaisi and offers seven new routes
26 September 2016	Azerbaijan holds a referendum on 29 constitutional amendments. The most important of the proposed changes is an extension of the president’s term of office from five to seven years. The Central Election Commission announces that the turnout was over 63 percent. The following day the Commission declares that nearly 85 percent of voters supported the extension of the presidential term.

27 September 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili speaks of the necessity to “rebuild bridges” between Abkhazians and Georgians during a ceremony to mark the 23 rd anniversary of the “fall of Sukhumi”
30 September 2016	Pope Francis meets with Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili during his visit to Georgia and calls for the peaceful coexistence of peoples and states in the region
30 September 2016	The Azerbaijani Parliament votes to resume relations with the European Parliament that had been suspended following the EU’s criticism of human rights abuses in Azerbaijan.
October	
1 October 2016	Pope Francis holds a stadium mass in Tbilisi and preaches peace and religious tolerance during his visit to Georgia
2 October 2016	Pope Francis leads a Sunday mass in Baku and meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during his visit to Azerbaijan
4 October 2016	The car of Georgian opposition party member Givi Targamadze is destroyed by an explosion in a suspected bombing in Tbilisi
5 October 2016	EU ambassadors approve the start of negotiations on visa liberalization for Georgia between the European Council and the European Parliament
5 October 2016	Chinese Commerce Minister Gao Hucheng and Georgian Economy Minister Dimitri Kumsishvili sign a memorandum of understanding on concluding free trade negotiations in Tbilisi
7 October 2016	A court in Azerbaijan rejects an appeal by investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova to clear her record of charges of illegal entrepreneurship
8 October 2016	Georgia holds parliamentary elections with the Georgian Dream ruling coalition claiming to have won at least 58 percent of the vote
8 October 2016	Men attempting to storm a polling station in a village near Georgia’s capital of Tbilisi clash with police; the Georgian Interior Ministry blames the opposition party UNM for the violence
9 October 2016	The Central Election Commission announces the results of the proportional representation part of parliamentary elections in Georgia with close to 49 percent of the votes for the Georgian Dream party and about 27 percent for the United National Movement opposition party. 77 parliamentary seats are assigned on the basis of proportional representation. A further 73 deputies are elected through a two-round system in single-member constituencies with majority rule. The second round of voting will take place on 30 October
10 October 2016	The leader of the Georgian Free Democrats opposition party, Irakli Alasania, announces that he is quitting politics temporarily and withdraws from the race for a parliamentary seat for the town of Gori
11 October 2016	The United National Movement opposition party in Georgia votes against boycotting Parliament and in favor of contesting majoritarian MP seats in the second round of voting
13 October 2016	Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev meets with his Georgian counterpart Giorgi Margvelashvili in Tbilisi and reiterates his country’s support for Georgia’s territorial integrity
14 October 2016	Georgia signs an agreement in Sarajevo to join Europe’s Energy Community
14 October 2016	Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili visits a US warship making a port call in the Black Sea coast town of Batumi
17 October 2016	The French frigate Premier-Maître L’Her makes a port visit to Batumi, a coastal town on Georgia’s Black Sea Coast

19 October 2016	The Georgian Prime Minister’s special representative for relations with Russia, Zurab Abashidze, meets with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin in Prague as part of an informal bilateral dialogue between the two countries, which has been conducted since 2012
22 October 2016	Repeat elections are held in four precincts in Georgia, in which the results of the 8 October parliamentary elections were annulled
25 October 2016	A court in Baku (Azerbaijan) finds pro-democracy activist Qiyas Ibrahimov guilty of drug trafficking and sentences him to 10 years in prison
26 October 2016	In a letter to the Slovak EU Presidency, members of the European Parliament’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs call on the EU Council to start negotiations on visa exemption for Georgian citizens “without any further delay”
27 October 2016	Armenia marks the anniversary of the 1999 attack on the Armenian Parliament during which eight officials died
28 October 2016	The Azerbaijani government says that two “terrorists” have been killed in an operation conducted in several regions of the country against a “radical criminal group” identified as the Caucasian Jamaat
28 October 2016	The High Council of Justice in Georgia appoints twelve judges for a lifetime tenure to serve in the Tbilisi and Kutaisi city and appeals courts, as well as regional courts
31 October 2016	The ruling Georgian Dream—Democratic Georgia party wins 115 seats in the Georgian Parliament, giving it enough votes to change the constitution
31 October 2016	The United States welcomes the “successful completion” of parliamentary elections in Georgia, noting that they affirm Georgia’s position as a “leader of democratic reform in the region”
November	
2 November 2016	The Armenian Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure, and Natural Resources reports that a deal has been signed between Armenia’s Energaimpex company and the National Iranian Gas Export Company to increase gas imports from Iran
3 November 2016	The Georgian Foreign Ministry condemns as a “threat to the stability of the entire region” Russia’s parliamentary ratification of a treaty with the breakaway region of Abkhazia which will place Russian and Abkhaz military units under a unified command in order to establish a Combined Group of Forces
4 November 2016	On the sidelines of the ceremony marking the opening of the new Bagratasheni border-crossing point, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan meets with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and discusses the expansion of energy and transport cooperation between the two countries
6 November 2016	Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni meets with Georgian officials during his visit to Georgia and emphasizes the need to strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries
7 November 2016	Former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili resigns as governor of Ukraine’s Odessa region and accuses Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko of supporting “corrupt and criminal clans”
9 November 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili congratulates Donald Trump on his victory at the U.S. presidential elections and expresses his confidence that strong ties and long-lasting Georgian–American friendship will be enhanced further
11 November 2016	In a telephone call to Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier expresses his gratitude for the courage shown by Georgian troops in repelling an attack on the German Consulate General in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan

14 November 2016	During a meeting in Brussels, EU foreign ministers adopt a mandate for the European Commission and EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini to negotiate a new “comprehensive agreement” on closer ties between the EU and Azerbaijan
15 November 2016	The Russian Foreign Ministry criticizes the joint NATO–Georgia military exercises near Tbilisi, saying that they constitute a “threat to peace and stability in the region”
17 November 2016	The Armenian Parliament votes in favor of extending a bilateral agreement with the United States on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
21 November 2016	The Head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ilia II, visits Moscow to celebrate the 70 th birthday of Russian Patriarch Kirill
22 November 2016	The United States says that it “strongly opposes” the decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin to sign the ratification law for the treaty on a Combined Group of Forces with the breakaway region of Abkhazia
26 November 2016	The Georgian Parliament confirms the new Georgian government led by Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and its program
28 November 2016	Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka arrives in Baku and meets with Azerbaijani officials to discuss bilateral economic and trade cooperation
30 November 2016	The UNESCO takes the decision to include the three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet in its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
December	
1 December 2016	Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Abkhaz leader Raul Khajimba in Moscow and stresses the need for internal political stability in Abkhazia
2 December 2016	Following a meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili in Brussels, President of the European Council Donald Tusk welcomes the “strong relations” between the EU and Georgia and says that Georgia deserves a “positive finalization” of its visa liberalization process
3 December 2016	Azerbaijan’s security forces say that they have killed a reported suicide bomber near a shopping mall in Azerbaijan’s capital Baku
6 December 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Michael Carpenter sign a framework agreement on security cooperation for 2016–2019 to promote the further development of Georgia’s defense capabilities
7 December 2016	Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili visits France to take part in the 4 th Open Government Partnership Global Summit
8 December 2016	A court in Azerbaijan sentences opposition activist Bayram Mammadov to ten years in prison on drug trafficking charges
9 December 2016	Georgian Parliamentary Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze announces that the Parliament plans to set up a state commission to develop a package of constitutional amendments
12 December 2016	The European Union extends the mandate of the monitoring mission in Georgia (EUMM) for two more years that has been deployed following the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia
13 December 2016	Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during a visit to Baku to discuss bilateral ties, and meets with leaders of Azerbaijan’s Jewish community
15 December 2016	The Azerbaijani state oil company says that one person is dead and nine are missing after part of an offshore platform fell into the sea due to heavy winds
15 December 2016	The Georgian Parliament approves a new state constitutional commission, chaired by Parliamentary Speaker Irakli Kobakhidze, with the task to develop constitutional amendments before 1 April 2017

16 December 2016	Georgian Defense Minister Levan Izoria meets with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev during a visit to Baku and emphasizes the importance of having Azerbaijan as a “reliable neighbor” as well as the strategic partnership between the two countries
20 December 2016	The Council of the European Union confirms the agreement with the European Parliament on visa liberalization for Georgia
21 December 2016	Iranian President Hassan Rohani meets with Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian during a visit to Yerevan to discuss bilateral ties and attend an Armenian–Iranian business forum
21 December 2016	Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan visits Georgia and meets with his Georgian counterpart, Levan Izoria, to discuss defense cooperation and sign an agreement on bilateral military cooperation for 2017
26 December 2016	Three more parliamentary factions are established within the Georgian Dream—Democratic Georgia (GDDG) majority in the Georgian Parliament
27 December 2016	The Special Representative of Georgian Prime Minister for relations with Russia, Zurab Abashidze, declares that Georgia is ready to help Russia in the search for victims of a military plane crash on 25 December near the coast of Sochi and the break-away region of Abkhazia
29 December 2016	Officials say that four soldiers were killed and further soldiers wounded in an armed clash at the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan
30 December 2016	During a telephone conversation, Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko agree to intensify the political dialogue between the two countries and deepen bilateral cooperation

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