

## Wildfires in Georgia 2017

### Fire devastates mountain overlooking Tbilisi

09 August 2017

by DFWATCH STAFF

A massive fire spread on the slopes of Mtatsminda, a mountain overlooking Tbilisi on Tuesday late evening. No casualties have been reported so far.

By midnight firefighters' squads reported that all hotbeds had been 'localized' and the threat of the fire spreading on Tbilisi neighborhoods or villages over hill had been prevented.

The fire mainly spread over the pine groves and shrubbery that cover Mtatsminda slopes and hasn't touched neighborhoods. Altogether the fire was estimated to be about two hectares.

Over 70 fire-fighters have been rushed to the scene. Dozens of locals joined them in an effort to prevent fire to spread on their neighborhoods. Mtatsminda Entertainment Park, a major tourist destination of Georgia's capital, hasn't been damaged.

The police have launched formal investigation into the case, yet it is still unclear whether the fire had been caused by arson.



Source: <http://dfwatch.net/fire-devastates-mountain-overlooking-tbilisi-49034>

## **Forest Blaze on Mtatsminda Mount, Tbilisi**

09 August 2017

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Kvirikashvili has released a statement and thanked the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and the Emergency Situations Management Agency for their hard and operational work while extinguishing fire at Mtatsminda district.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the MIA Emergency Management Agency, firefighters and rescuers for very operative work. They managed to localize and then extinguish the fire in the Mtatsminda district, which has very difficult landscape, in the shortest period of time," the statement reads.

The PM added that relevant services remained mobilized during the whole night and were taking preventive measures.

"An investigation has begun into the fact. I would like to once again thank all those who risked their own lives to extinguish the fire and protect the population," reads the statement.

The investigation is underway under second part of article 188 of the Criminal Code of Georgia, which pertains to the negligence that damaged or destroyed someone's property.

A fire broke out near the territory of the Bombora Mtatsminda theme park in Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi at 10pm this evening and spread down towards the upper Vera cemetery, damaging an area (approximately 2 hectares) of pine forest. The nearby residential area was evacuated while 70 firefighters fought to control the blaze. Emergency services are on hand but no casualties have been reported.

"Due to the difficult relief location, fire-rescue equipment was difficult to place, but as a result of effective firefighter operations, there is no danger of the fire spreading further at this stage," the Ministry of Internal Affairs reported half an hour before we went to press.

"The fire is under control. The cause of the fire is still unknown and will be investigated," said Tbilisi Mayor David Narmania at the scene, going on to commend and thank the firefighters and to say that "helicopters were not considered necessary in putting out the blaze".

Mayor Narmania has announced that the firefighters will remain on the scene to ensure the fire does not reignite.

Katie Ruth Davies

Photo source: imedinews

Source : <http://georgiatoday.ge/news/7236/Forest-Blaze-on-Mtatsminda-Mount%2C-Tbilisi>

## Massive wildfire in Georgia's Borjomi National Park

22 August 2017

by DFWATCH STAFF



(1tv.ge)

TBILISI, DFWatch—A massive wildfire was raging on Monday in Borjomi, a forested nature park and important tourist destination in Georgia.

The fire started Sunday in Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park but intensified Monday evening when it spread to over 6 hectares in the hills above the villages Tsaghveri, Sadgeri and Daba. It is about five km south-east of the town Borjomi, a popular mountain resort.

No casualties have been reported so far. However, residents of nearby villages feel uneasy and stay outdoors expecting evacuation if the fire further intensifies.

Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili visited the site and established a makeshift headquarters in the village Daba. He assured residents late at night that there was no necessity to evacuate.

About 270 firefighters and rescue workers have been mobilized, along with an unidentified number of volunteers, many of whom had driven in from other parts of the country.

The government has been criticized online in social media for its inability to put out the fire and for lacking much needed equipment, such as firefighting helicopters and planes.

PM Giorgi Kvirikashvili said Azerbaijan and Turkey will send the required helicopters.

The fire broke out in the same location as the 2008 Borjomi wildfire, which was caused by incendiary devices used by Russian military jets during August War. Russia has denied involvement.

Also in August, 2012 there was a forest fire here.

Source: <http://dfwatch.net/massive-wildfire-georgias-borjomi-national-park-49073>

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## **Natural disaster in Borjomi – Opposition criticizes government for delayed response**

The opposition criticizes the government for delayed reaction to the natural disaster in the Borjomi Gorge.

Representatives of the opposition point to the inefficiency of the Crisis Management Board. According to them, despite spending a million GEL from the budget, this body is not effective.

Representatives of the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition address the authorities and asked the Georgian authorities to address its partners and neighboring countries for help. However, they say that the occupant country should not be asked for assistance .

Member of the Political Council of the United National Movement, Giorgi Baramidze, said that the delay was the fault of the Prime Minister himself.

Member of the European Parliament - Movement for Freedom, Irma Nadirashvili expressed support to all firefighters and policemen who are working at the moment, and called on the government to do everything to ensure that the population was not affected.

At the same time, as she said, the government had a belated response.

Former Minister of Environment Protection Irakli Gvaladze calls on the government to involve the army in the fight against the disaster. Gvaladze also points to late reaction.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations are talking about the inefficiency of the Crisis Management Council.

Source: <http://rustavi2.ge/en/news/83160>

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## **UPDATED: Forest fire in Borjomi Gorge now close to nearby settlement**

22 August 2017 - 17:56:0

A massive wildfire in Georgia's Borjomi Gorge has intensified due to windy weather and it is now threatening nearby settlements.

As of 5:30pm today, there are three main spots of fire that firefighters are currently unable to extinguish. These are the forests near:

The resort of Tsagveri  
The village of Daba  
The Tori Mount

All of these fires are intense but the most difficult one is the blaze near the village of Daba because it has almost reached the settlement. Reports say there is only about 100 metres left between the forest covered in fire and the central road of the village.



Photo: PM's press office.

Five fire engines have been sent to the village to fight the fire and make sure it does not reach homes.

Health Minister David Sergeenko said that in Daba there is a great deal of ashes in the air, posing hazards for those with respiratory system problems. He recommended locals to stay indoors or use masks.

Several helicopters are currently working to handle the fire while several others are expected to join them later from neighbouring countries. Georgia has asked for help from all of its neighbours as well as the European Union.

Experts say that wind is good as it cleans the air from ashes and smoke, but on the other hand, it makes the fire extinguishing efforts more difficult and makes fire spread to new locations. Weather specialists do not expect rain in the Gorge until tomorrow.



Photo: PM's press office.

Fire started in Borjomi forests three days ago. Since then hundreds of firefighters have been working on the ground but they could not approach the troubled locations before roads were paved in the forest.

Borjomi Gorge is home to a number of unique species of trees. Some of them are in Georgia's list of endangered species.

Resorts in Borjomi Gorge are Georgia's one of the most popular tourist destinations.

#### **FIRST UPDATED: 14:37**

Georgia has been offered more international help as a massive forest fire is still raging after it broke out three days ago in the country's central region.

Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili said a short time ago that several units of fire appliances are on their way to Georgia's Borjomi Gorge from Armenia.

Apart from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey are also helping the country fight the fire. Azerbaijan was the first to send a helicopter yesterday.

This afternoon Turkey also sent two helicopters and, upon a decision of the Turkish Prime Minister, a large Turkish firefighting aircraft will also arrive later today.

Georgia was offered help from Russia too, but Prime Minister Kvirikashvili said "what we have so far is enough". He hopes that no additional help will be needed.

Georgia has sent information about the massive wildfire to the European Union countries too. Agriculture Minister Levan Davitashvili said that all partner countries are ready to help, but authorities hope that the help only from neighbouring countries will be enough.

Windy weather and high temperature make it difficult for firefighters to handle the blaze.

Heavy machinery is working to pave roads in the forest so that firefighting units can easily approach the fire zones.

Temporary water pipes are being installed near the forest so that water supply is ensured for fire engines.

EARLIER: 11:26

It is the third day that a massive forest fire which broke out in the Borjomi Gorge is still raging in Central Georgia.

The latest estimations say that tens of hectares of forestland is on fire.

Late last night, Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili travelled to Borjomi. On his order, a special headquarters has been set up that unites authorities from all relevant state agencies to draw up strategies for handling the fire.



Prime Minister Kvirikashvili has been in Borjomi Gorge since last night.  
Photo: PM's press office.

Kvirikashvili said that this morning the situation is "better than last night", but there still is a threat of the blaze spreading because the weather is windy in Borjomi.

Currently, three helicopters are trying to extinguish the fire from the sky. Two of these were sent to the danger zone from Tbilisi while one was sent from Azerbaijan upon an order of President Ilham Aliyev.



Two Georgian and one Azerbaijani helicopters will be joined by two Turkish helicopters later this afternoon. Photo: PM's press office.

The Georgian side held negotiations with another neighbouring country last night and it was decided that Turkey will send two additional helicopters to help Georgia fight the fire.

Prime Minister Kvirikashvili said the Turkish helicopters are already on their way. They will fill their cisterns in Batumi and will join the other three helicopters that are already working in about two hours.

Apart from helicopter efforts, up to 500 firefighters, rescuers and rangers have been fighting the fire since last night.



Firefighters have been trying to handle the blaze since Sunday. Photo: PM's press office.

Volunteers also appeared in Borjomi – some travelled from Tbilisi to the troubled region – and are ready to help professionals fight the fire but they were asked not to take any actions yet because it might come in the way of firefighters' work. Besides, the special headquarters said in a statement that it is dangerous for non-professionals to approach the fire with no special equipment.

Head of the Georgian State Security Service Vakhtang Gomelauri, who also has been in Borjomi since last night, said that the army will also join firefighters if there is a need for this.

Currently, two main spots of fire remains in Borjomi Gorge: one is near the village of Tsagveri and the other is close to the town of Borjomi. Authorities said that so far there is no danger that the fire will reach the settlements, but they have a plan of evacuation ready just in case.

Source: <http://agenda.ge/news/85732/eng>



## Georgian leader thanks Baku for assistance in extinguishing forest fire

22 August 2017



By Laman Ismayilova

Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili has expressed his gratitude to Azerbaijan and Turkey for their help to extinguish forest fires in the country.

The Georgian president told a briefing that Georgia mobilized all resources to eliminate the natural disaster, Azertac reported.

“The Georgian government also expresses its gratitude to Azerbaijan. The government of Georgia thanks the Azerbaijani side, particularly President Ilham Aliyev, for help,” Azertac reported citing the Georgian Interior Ministry’s press service.

Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Emergency Situations sent a helicopter to Georgia on August 21 to help extinguish forest fires in Borjomi-Kharagauli Reserve under directions of President Aliyev.

The Ka-32A firefighting helicopter started exploration flights in Samtskhe-Javakheti region and joined the operation to tackle the fire at 06:40 local time on August 22.

Georgian firefighters are battling a forest fire spread across up to 500-hectares in the Adigeni district of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, southern Georgia.

The fire broke out in the vicinity of the resort town of Abastumani in the Adigeni district overnight on August 15.

Source: <https://www.azernews.az/nation/117967.html>

<http://agenda.ge/news/85837/eng>

## **Forest fire in Borjomi Gorge: Updates for August 24**

24 Aug 2017 - 12:04:00



Up to 1,500 firefighters, rescuers and rangers, six helicopters and one firefighting aircraft are currently working to handle the fire. Photo: PM's press office.

Up to 1,500 firefighters, rescuers and rangers, six helicopters and one firefighting aircraft are currently working to handle the fire. Photo: PM's press office.

Agenda.ge, 24 Aug 2017 - 12:04, Tbilisi, Georgia

As of now, all the main fire spots have been localised, but there are areas where the threat of fire spreading has not been removed, Georgia's Environment Ministry said this morning. It is the fifth day that a massive forest fire is still raging in Borjomi Gorge in South-Central Georgia.

Up to 1,500 firefighters, rescuers and rangers, six helicopters and one firefighting aircraft are currently working to handle the fire.



Photo: PM's press office.

Last night an additional 3 km road was paved into the forest in an attempt to split the burnt trees from healthy forest and prevent the fire from spreading.

"Last night was a very hard night. During the night an additional 3 km road was paved. In total, up to 12km road has been paved in mountains during the past several days", Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili said in the morning.

"We have divided active fire spots and healthy forestlands. We can say that the fire areas are demarcated and the situation is under control", he added.

Kvirikashvili thanked Azerbaijan, Turkey, Armenia and Belarus for being involved in the fire extinguishing efforts by contributing either human force or machinery. He added that several other countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Israel, Greece, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Iran have also expressed their readiness to help Georgia fight the fire.

The National Forest Agency estimated that dozens of hectares of unique forests burnt during the fire in Borjomi Gorge.



Photo: PM's press office.

The cause of the fire is still unknown. Last night a citizen found shatters of a bottle in the forest that he claimed smelled like petrol. Earlier, a 20-litre canister full of petrol [was found](#) in the forest. Police said all of these details will be investigated.

Meanwhile last night, several other locations too across Georgia were on fire. A fire broke out in the historic Pshav-Khevsureti province, also in Tserovani, Dusheti, Lagodekhi and Dedoplistskaro. The scale of these fires were much smaller than Borjomi Gorge fire and they were all handled. In total, more than 30 hectares of grass and wildland was burnt as a result. No connection have been proved between the fires across Georgia so far.

31.8.2017

### World Bank Offers Financial and Technical Assistance to Georgia

Source: cbw.ge, 2017-08-25

The World Bank (WB) offers financial and technical assistance to Georgia to overcome outcomes of the recent conflagration in Borjomi Gorge, WB regional director Mercy Tembon noted after her meeting with Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili in Borjomi.

“I would like to express support to Georgia on behalf of World Bank, especially to the population in Borjomi Gorge. Immediate reaction and involvement by Government of Georgia, firefighters and friendly nations should be stressed.

World Bank is ready to provide comprehensive support, first of all, to evaluate losses. Environment specialists will arrive to work on these issues. We will also provide financial-technical and other types of assistance”, the WB regional representative noted.

WB has developed a special program for environment and woodlands protection, she pointed out.

Source: [http://bulletin.cenn.org/digest\\_eng.php?ca=Georgia&langu=English#811308](http://bulletin.cenn.org/digest_eng.php?ca=Georgia&langu=English#811308)

31.8.2017

### Georgian Government to Launch Electronic Platform for Borjomi Forest Restoration

Source: georgiatoday.ge 2017-08-28

As the business, banking and public sectors unite to restore the burned Borjomi Forest, the Georgian government has decided to create an electronic platform to bring together funds and donations allocated for the Borjomi Forest restoration campaign. The electronic platform will also aim to consolidate all the activities and initiatives undertaken within the Borjomi forest restoration program.

In addition, a special account both in national and international currencies has been opened at the Treasury Service of the Ministry of Finance of Georgia to collect donations for the restoration from all corners of the world.

“All transactions and amounts spent on the forest restoration will be open and transparent, allowing those interested to know clearly where their donations are going,” the Ministry of Finance claims.

Source: [http://bulletin.cenn.org/digest\\_eng.php?ca=Georgia&langu=English#811309](http://bulletin.cenn.org/digest_eng.php?ca=Georgia&langu=English#811309)

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_147116.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_147116.htm?selectedLocale=en)

## **NATO Allies and partners help Georgia fight major forest fire**

23 / 28 Sep. 2017

NATO Allies and partners have helped Georgia contain a major forest fire in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. Georgia approached NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) for assistance on 23 September 2017, and the request was immediately circulated to NATO Allies and partners. On Sunday, Turkey deployed two firefighting helicopters and Azerbaijan also provided a firefighting helicopter. Today, the fire has been contained.



This assistance follows two similar Georgian requests to the EADRCC in August. By 28 August, two NATO Allies (Turkey and the United States) and three partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus) helped bring forest fires under control near Georgia's Borjomi Municipality.

The EADRCC is NATO's principal civil emergency response mechanism in the Euro-Atlantic area. It is active all year round, operational on a 24/7 basis, and involves NATO's 29 Allies and all partner countries. The Centre coordinates both requests and offers of assistance mainly in case of natural and man-made disasters. More information is available here:

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52057.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52057.htm).

<http://agenda.ge/news/94864/eng>

## **Belarusian rescuers awarded for helping extinguish forest fires in Borjomi, Georgia**

31 Jan 2018 - 18:41:00



10 rescuers received different medals from the Georgia's Minister of Finance. Photo from Georgia's Finance Ministry.

Agenda.ge,31 Jan 2018 - 18:41, Tbilisi,Georgia

Ten Belarusian rescuers who helped extinguish forest fires in Borjomi Gorge in South-Central Georgia have received awards from Georgia's Finance Minister Dimitry Kumsishvili.

During his official visit to Belarus, Kumsishvili participated in the awarding ceremony of Belarusian rescuers who were involved in the fire extinguishing efforts by contributing either manpower or machinery in Borjomi, in August 2017.

Today, Kumsishvili awarded the Minister of Emergency Situations of Belarus Vladimir Vashchenko with the first decree medal for "Special Merits".

Also, 10 rescuers received different medals from the Georgian minister.

Belarus sent a Mi-26 helicopter to extinguish fires in Georgia in August last year. Belarusian rescuers dropped more than a thousand tons of water over the fire.

Several meetings and activities are planned within his visit to Belarus, such as a meeting with the Prime Minister of Belarus and other officials from the government.

Also, a Georgia-Belarus intergovernmental economic commission meeting is on the agenda for Kumsishvili's visit to Belarus.