

## **BGI Law Brief**

### **March 2020 - Georgia Responds to Covid-19 Pandemic**

#### **Georgia Declares State of Emergency**

On March 21, 2020, Georgia declared a state of emergency across its entire territory effective until April 21. According to the Presidential Decree, the Government of Georgia (GoG) shall be authorized to:

- Establish isolation and quarantine measures and, if necessary, transfer persons by force to an appropriate institution;
- Determine special procedures to deliver public services and engage in administrative proceedings;
- Restrict property rights for public health purposes and, if necessary, use private property for public good;
- Regulate prices for essential medicines, medical devices, services and primary commodities;
- Establish special rules and conditions for primary, secondary and higher education;
- Increase the maximum size of reserve funds up to 5% of total allocations from the State Budget for 2020;
- Submit an emergency budget to the Parliament.

Violations of the rules of state of emergency will result in administrative liability in the amount of GEL 3,000 for individuals and GEL 15,000 for legal entities. Repeated violation will result in imprisonment for up to 3 years.

#### **Government Adopts Measures for Prevention of Spreading COVID-19**

Following declaration of the state of emergency on March 23, GoG adopted comprehensive measures for the purposes of prevention of the spread of Covid-19, whereby:

- International travel by air, land and sea is prohibited;
- Public Transportation (including by trains, vans and buses) between the municipalities, as well as local flights is prohibited;
- Educational institutions will be closed until April 21. The institutions of secondary and higher education may remotely continue their educational activities;
- All kinds of cultural, sports, entertainment and recreational activities, whether indoors or outdoors, shall be prohibited;
- Social activities, manifestations and any types of gathering of more than 10 persons (including weddings, funerals and other rituals), indoors or outdoors, shall be prohibited, except for the gatherings in medical facilities, public institutions, defense forces and law-enforcement agencies as well as at construction and infrastructure sites.
- Gathering of more than 10 persons in the premises of the businesses which are not subject to lock down is allowed depending on the

specifics of the business in question (e.g. supermarkets). However, in such cases, social distancing measures should be implemented in compliance with the requirements determined by relevant health authorities;

- Provision of any goods and services, other than food, medication, other pharmaceutical products, electricity, natural gas, water, petroleum and press shall be suspended (save for the provision of goods or services with the use of online platforms or by the means of delivery, including by restaurants and cafes);
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development may request the relevant individuals or legal entities to transport cargo or any persons to or from the quarantine zones within the territory of Georgia, to conduct chartered flights in order to transport Georgian citizens and/or cargo to Georgia and finally, to allocate places at the hotels and other similar facilities in order to create a quarantine zones.
- Limit the activities of National Bureau of Enforcement and suspend filing and examining administrative claims.

Compliance with these measures will be strictly monitored by law-enforcement authorities. Governmental agencies and private parties shall have more flexibility to use electronic signatures and electronic documents.

In addition, GoG has announced certain measure to ease the burden on individuals and businesses. Specifically, on March 13,

2020, GoG announced that commercial banks would restructure loans of the businesses, which may face problems servicing their loans. Individuals wishing to postpone the payment of the loan would also be offered a 3-month grace period.

The National Bank of Georgia relaxed its regulations effective from April 15 to provide easier access to loans for individuals.

GoG will also defer property and income taxes to the companies engaged in tourism-related activities during the following 4 months (until 1 November). Such companies include hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transportation companies, *etc.* GoG will also double VAT rebates, returning GEL 1,200 million to the companies until the end of 2020.

### **Government Orders Lock Down of Marneuli and Bolnisi regions**

On March 22, Georgia placed Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities under lock down and declared these municipalities a quarantine zone as local woman tested positive for COVID-19 after being into contact with more than 80 people and spending several days in a local hospital. The lock down envisages the following restrictions:

- Entering and leaving of the said regions is prohibited, except for transit;
- All commercial facilities are shut down, except for grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential infrastructure facilities;
- Movement within the municipalities, including public transportation is prohibited, except for citizens leaving home for food, medication, or medical treatment;

- The hospital where patient zero was hospitalized is under quarantine.
- Healthcare authorities will make door-to-door visits and identify and test persons with fever and those posing possible risks, in order to ensure fast response to possible infections and provide medical treatment.

The Interior Ministry oversees public order and enforcement of the state of emergency in these municipalities.

### **Georgia Adopts Rules of Isolation and Quarantine**

On March 25, 2020, the Ministry of Healthcare enacted the Order on Rules of Isolation and Quarantine which applies to all individuals in Georgia, including those in isolation and quarantine at the time of its adoption.

Pursuant to the Order, during the state of emergency, Georgia may use quarantine and self-isolation as public health practices to prevent exposure to people who may have contracted virus. An individual may either be placed in a quarantine space provided by the state or choose self-isolation after approval of the private premises chosen by individual for self-isolation by the special state agency – the Emergency Coordination and Emergency Response Center of Georgia. An individual may opt for self-isolation by filling request form available at [www.moh.gov.ge](http://www.moh.gov.ge).

While being in quarantine or self-isolation, no visitors are allowed. Contact with persons living in the same space must be limited to 15 minutes and the distance of no less than 1 meter shall always be observed. Generally, any contact with other people is allowed only with protective equipment. Isolated persons may use telecommunication means

(including internet) without any restrictions. Food, personal items (such as, clothing) and medicines may be delivered to the people in isolation without direct contact. They must use separate dishes, towels, beds and disposable equipment. Tobacco and alcohol, as well as use of psychoactive substances without a doctor's prescription, are restricted. Health conditions of individuals in isolation are monitored periodically and in case of need for medical care, they are transported to a hospital in special transport.

The period of self- isolation /quarantine shall be 14 days. The police oversee compliance with the regulations. They are authorized to pay visits to isolated individuals and take other measures as may be required to ensure effective enforcement of the Order. Violation of isolation and quarantine regulations will result in the same fines as violation of the rules of the state of emergency (please see above).

\*\*\*\*\*

*This Law Brief is for general information purposes only. It does not constitute and is not intended to be relied upon as legal advice. BGI shall not be responsible for any loss in the event this update is relied upon without seeking our professional advice first.*

*Compiled and edited by Ani Khojelani. For any further questions or inquiries please contact:*

Sandro Bibilashvili, Partner; or  
[sandro.bibilashvili@bgi.ge](mailto:sandro.bibilashvili@bgi.ge)

Ani Khojelani, Associate  
[ani.khojelani@bgi.ge](mailto:ani.khojelani@bgi.ge)

© **BGI Advisory Services Georgia. 2020**

***Expertise. Experience. Efficiency.***