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Turkish ships in occupied Abkhazia - what's happening?

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The de facto government does not deny the presence of Turkish fishing vessels in occupied Abkhazia.

Turkish ships, uncontrolled fishing, and a terrible smell that can be felt even in Sukhumi - these are the three things that the authors of videos from occupied Abkhazia have been complaining about in recent days. The de facto government does not deny the presence of Turkish fishing boats there either.

This is not the first time, nor is it the first year, that similar information has been disseminated from the territory of Georgia occupied by Russia.

Is the entry of Turkish ships into the waters of occupied Abkhazia agreed with Tbilisi or is the law on occupation being violated?

Ships and quotas

One of the videos circulating from Abkhazia shows a

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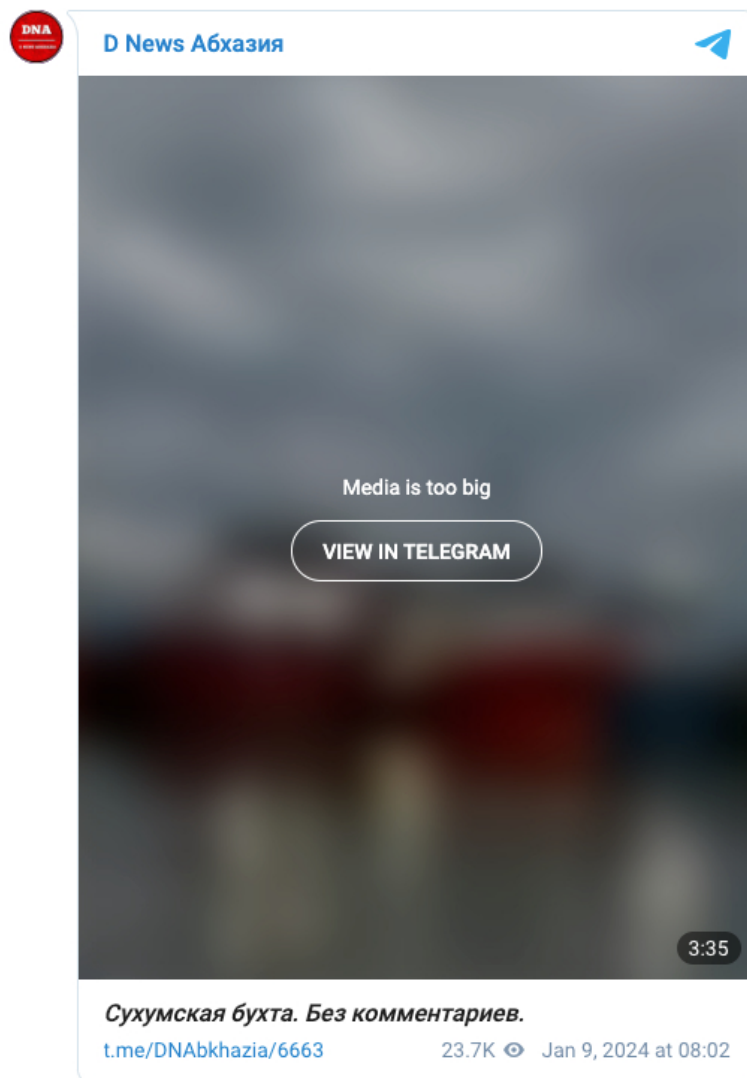
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group of colorful ships - the caption says it is taking place in the "Bay of Sukhumi."

A man's voice says that the "government" has let in a "Turkish flotilla," "poachers" are "killing everything they can in the Black Sea," and the locals are running out of fish.

The author of the video also says that the same number of Turkish ships are docked in Ochamchire; he describes that some of the ships are equipped with refrigerators and also expresses suspicion that the goal of the Turkish ships is not only to catch carp, but that they also catch more valuable species.



The sight of the grouped ships does not surprise Saveli Chitanava, who oversees ecological issues in the so-called State Committee of occupied Abkhazia. He says that such a picture is always possible when bad weather approaches, and emphasizes only that fishing does not

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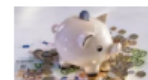
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take place close to the shore.

"There are fish this year. They catch 3-year-old kapshiya, and if they don't catch them now, the kapshiya will die in the fourth year. Fishing is carried out in strict accordance with the quotas approved by the government," says

Chitanava, explaining that the terrible smell, which is also complained about in Sukhumi, is due to the large volume of fishing and improper technological equipment.

Murman Solomko, deputy chairman of the so-called State Committee responsible for ecology issues, told Echo of the Caucasus that there are currently 9 factories operating in Abkhazia that produce fish meal and oil.

Information is circulating on social networks that a thick layer of fish oil has accumulated on the coasts of Abkhazia, and they are only glad that the Kapshia fishing takes place in winter and not in summer, during the sea season.

The fishing season in Abkhazia runs from December 1 to March 31.

A correspondent from Abkhazia for Radio Liberty's Russian-language program "Echo of the Caucasus" reports that last year's fishing season failed due to unsuitable water temperatures, and the quota allocated for kapshi - 30 thousand tons - was not used; and on December 1, 2023, the de facto government settled on a forecast of 90 thousand tons.

The quotas also apply to Turkish ships.

In recent years, Russian-language sources have reported that Turkish vessels were also engaged in illegal fishing in Abkhazian waters, and with Russia's help, many of them were fined.



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There was noise in 2020 too

Abkhaz activists even then claimed that fishing in

Abkhaz waters was being carried out with gross violations. Fishing nets were stretched in Bichvinta, near the so-called state cottages, and they were even surprised why no one was speaking out.

The territory of the "Sakheltsip Agaraki" is now completely under Russian control - the buildings, the land, and this section of the sea. The opposition and activists have protested, but they have been powerless in the face of Russia's appetite.



Footage released in 2020 clearly showed several seiners moving quite close to the coast of Abkhazia, one of which bore the Turkish inscription "Şahin Balıkçılık." This is the name of *a Turkish company engaged in the full cycle of the seafood business*.

How did Turkish ships get into Abkhazian waters? Do Turkish companies have licenses? Has this been agreed with Tbilisi?

The Georgian Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture, which issues the necessary licenses for fishing, told RFE/RL that "no licenses have been issued to Turkish companies" and that only five Georgian companies currently hold fishing licenses, and they, in turn, "rent Turkish vessels."

The agency cannot answer our question - is it possible that the same Turkish ships *were catching* fish in the waters of occupied Abkhazia, like in other parts of Georgian waters?

According to unconfirmed reports from Adjara, the same

Turkish ships are sailing to catch fish in the occupied and unoccupied parts of Georgia.

An Echo of the Caucasus correspondent notes that Turkish ships are being rented locally by Abkhazian companies.

A journalistic investigation prepared by Freedom Monitor in February 2023 highlights violations that were identified in the process of extending fishing licenses in the Black Sea until 2036.

We are talking about the large-scale damage that the government's decision, made without consulting experts, has caused to the country's economy and budget. The journalistic investigation can be viewed [here](#).



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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has not yet responded to Radio Liberty's questions.

Conflictologist Paata Zakareishvili says that Turkish companies were involved in the fish processing process in Abkhazian waters during his tenure as State Minister.

"There are both prohibitions and exceptions in the law on occupation. I am deeply convinced that these Turkish companies have received certain permission from the Georgian authorities to carry out this activity. They are engaged in fishing not in Abkhazian, but in Georgian waters," -

Paata Zakareishvili also suggests that, within the framework of the agreement with Tbilisi, these Turkish companies will then "find common ground in Sokhumi and perhaps with Russia as well, if they are allowed to stay there."



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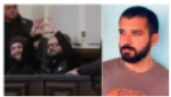


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Journalist at Radio Liberty. He mainly works on domestic and foreign policy issues, as well as covering economic and human rights topics. He worked at the headquarters of Radio Liberty in Prague. He hosted programs at various times. He has received the European Union Prize for Journalism for the documentary "**The Stigma of Pankisi**". He has been working at Radio Liberty since 2000.

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