

Experts groups to meet on August 19-23 regarding Davit Gareji issue



The first working meeting between the groups of experts regarding the Davit Gareji issue will be held on August 19-23, Lasha Darsalia, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, told journalists.

He also talked about the current situation in the territory of Davit Gareji, on the conditional border between Georgia and Azerbaijan. According to the Deputy Minister, at this stage, the active negotiations are being held between state border agencies in order to completely ease the incident and return the situation back to normal.

“The first meeting of experts groups is scheduled for August 19-23. We once again point out the importance of discussing the border issues between the two countries in the commission format. All the issues, will it be a contextual, organizational or technical, should be discussed within the competence of the bilateral commission”, Lasha Darsalia noted.

On July 14, information was spread through social media that the incident occurred between Azerbaijani and Georgian border guards.

Namely, public activists said that Azerbaijani border guards took icons from the Monastery and handed them to Georgian guards, signifying that the territory no longer belongs to the Georgian side. Locals then forced the Azerbaijani border guards from the territory.

The situation at the Georgia-Azerbaijan border has been tense over the last several months.

On May 23, a local guide published photos in social media, saying that Azerbaijan side was constructing a road to the Chichkhituri Church at the David Gareji Monastery Complex.

The Georgian-Azerbaijan commission working on border issues met in Baku in May. The Foreign Ministry explained that works were definitely being conducted on the territory of Azerbaijan.

In May, Georgian clerics and public groups held a peaceful rally at the Davit Gareji Monastery Complex.

The rally came amid negotiations between Georgia and Azerbaijan on the border, which has not been agreed upon since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991.

The Georgian protestors claimed that the sixth-century Gareji monastery complex is the country's cultural heritage and the border issue must be settled so that the whole complex can be located within Georgia.

In April, Azerbaijani borders guards closed the road and did not allow visitors and clerics into the Monastery. However, the problem was resolved after negotiations.

Davit Gareji is a rock-hewn Georgian Orthodox monastery complex located in the Kakheti region of Eastern Georgia, on the half-desert slopes of Mount Gareja, some 60–70 km southeast of Georgia's capital Tbilisi. The complex includes hundreds of cells, churches, chapels, refectories and living quarters hollowed out of the rock

face.

Part of the complex is located in the Agstafa region of Azerbaijan and has become subject to a border dispute between Georgia and Azerbaijan.

– Source: georgiatoday.ge