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Russian Troops Kill Georgian Man Near Breakaway Region

By AFP

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The de facto border between separatist South Ossetia and Tbilisi-controlled Georgia. **south-ossetia.info**

Updated with Borrel's, Peskov's remarks.

Georgia said Monday that Russian troops had killed a Georgian civilian near the breakaway region of South Ossetia, which has been under Moscow's effective control since the brief 2008 war between the two countries.

Detentions of Georgian villagers by Russian troops — who patrol the de facto border between the separatist region and Tbilisi-controlled Georgia — is a regular occurrence, but no deaths have ever been reported along the boundary line.

"A Georgian citizen died as a result of shooting by the Russian occupying forces near the village of Kirbali, Gori municipality," Georgia's state security service said in a statement released late Monday.

It added that "another Georgian citizen was illegally detained."

An EU monitoring mission, which was first deployed in the area during the 2008 war, confirmed that "an incident occurred at the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line, resulting in the tragic loss of a Georgian citizen's life."

The mission said in a statement that it condemned "in the strongest terms the use of force in any form," and expressed "concern over the deadly shooting incident."

Related article: At Georgia's Border With South Ossetia, Deepening Anxieties of Russian Aggression

Local residents told the Pirveli TV station that the victim was a 58-year-old man who was shot at by Russian soldiers when he, along with several other villagers, went to pray in a church that Russian soldiers had denied Georgians access to earlier this year.

Georgian President Salome Zurabishvili said she was "profoundly outraged by the Russian occupying forces' fatal shooting of a Georgian citizen during an unlawful arrest."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Tuesday condemned the killing and called for the immediate release of the second Georgian who was detained at the de facto border.

Asked about the incident, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Tuesday: "I do not have any information about that."

Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 after Tbilisi launched a large-scale military offensive against South Ossetian militia who were shelling Georgian villages.

Moscow at the time bombed targets across the South Caucasus nation and occupied swathes of the country's territory during the hostilities, which saw Georgia's small army routed in just five days.

Moscow then recognized the independence of South Ossetia — along with the separatist region of Abkhazia — and stationed permanent military bases there.

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