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People still missing after landslide

By [Gvantsa Gabekhadze](#)

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Five people are still missing following a landslide on May 17 near Gveleti village, 20 km from the construction site of the Dariali hydropower plant in northern Georgia near the Russian border.

According to official information, the rescuers of the Emergency Situations

Management Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs have saved 12 Turkish citizens trapped in the tunnel of the power station as a result of the landslide and two truck drivers.

Rescuers also managed to evacuate employees of the Border Police, Patrol Police Department and the Ministry of Finance – 150 people in total.

The mountain collapse has damaged the north-south pipeline, suspending transit of Russian gas to Armenia via Georgia. A certain section of the road linking Georgia with Russia has been destroyed as well, causing suspension of traffic.

Georgian officials say that the damage will cost millions. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili said the situation is heavy and that they are doing as much as they can to improve the existing problems. The PM informed that an emergency staff has been formed by the government, chaired by the Interior Minister Aleksandre Tchikaidze.

"I was told that the landslide trapped 4 or 5 cars. We have to presume that at least 4-5 people are missing, not speaking about the passengers that they might have had," President Giorgi Margvelashvili said, stressing that it is important not to declare anyone dead until we know for sure. "Let us call them missing, for time being." He said.

Minister of Infrastructure Elguja Khokrishvili stated that the situation is currently under control. According to him, geologists and experts have been studying the area and they will draft a risk-management plan. "The plan is important for avoiding similar disasters in the future," Khokrishvili said.

Sulkhan Gabrichidze, manager of the HES that is being constructed there claims that the power station has no links with the landslide. He states that it was a pure natural disaster.

Head of Green Alternative Manana Kochladze opposes this version of the story, saying that the reason for the disaster might have been constructing the HES in an area that has always had a landslide risk. She stresses that the spot has not been studied appropriately prior to building activities.

The Minister of Energy Kakhi Kaladze denied this speculation. He emphasized that the reason of the landslide was the ice falling down from the glacier. Kaladze even mentioned that the existence of the HES tunnel prevented the area from a larger disaster.