



Democracy Research Institute (DRI)

Democracy Research Institute is a public policy think tank that aims at promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; establishment of the transparent and accountable governance system based on the rule of law and human rights; support to the establishment of free and fair society; support to the protection of human rights in conflict-affected regions; restoration of trust among parties and promotion of integration policy and support to the European integration.

January Activities

DRI elected a new Director

Conflicts2

The isolation policy of de facto Tskhinvali claims lives of two more people.....2

What does the fight against criminals mean in Abkhazia?.....3

Security.....3

Evaluation of draft Counter-Terrorism Strategy...3

DRI echoes police violence against teenager.....3

Far-Right Extremism

Overview of Far-Right Media Outlets by DRI.....4

Anti-Vaccination and Anti-West Rhetoric of Far-Right Groups4

DRI elected a new Director



Tamar Khidasheli is a new Director of the Democracy Research Institute.

Tamar is a human rights specialist and has a long experience of working at non-governmental and international organizations in Georgia. In 2015-2016 she has been a member of the Parliament of Georgia. In 2008-2010 she has served as a chairperson of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association. In 2011-2015 Tamar Khidasheli coordinated UNDP Programme and has been a team leader of the EU funded projects.

At different times she has acted as OSCE, Open Society Georgia Foundation and UNDP expert on human rights and democratization issues. Tamar Khidasheli has been one of the founders and the first national coordinator of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum's National Platform and member of the Pardon Commission of the President of Georgia (2013-2015).

Tamar Khidasheli is one of the founders of the Democracy Research Institute and served as a Deputy Director of the organization in 2020-2021.

The isolation policy of de facto Tskhinvali claims lives of two more people

Democracy research Institute actively works on the problems, needs and integration of people living in the occupied territories.

In January alone, according to the information at DRI's disposal, Tskhinvali's isolation policy claimed the lives of two people. On the basis of the order of the chief doctor of Akhlagori, patients are transferred only to Tskhinvali for treatment, although the road connecting Akhlagori and Tskhinvali is especially difficult for patients due to its difficult landscape. Because of this, condition of several patients became critical and fatally ended in two cases.

According to DRI, the ban on free movement of Akhlagori residents violates fundamental human rights, for which the Russian Federation and the de facto Tskhinvali regime bear full responsibility. However, this does not exempt the Georgian Government from its obligation to take care of its own citizens living in the occupied territories. Democracy Research Institute called on the Georgian authorities to use all formats and opportunities to protect the rights of people living in the occupied territories.

What does the fight against criminals mean in Abkhazia?

DRI published its reflection on this question. After defusing the internal unrest in Abkhazia in December 2021, the de facto government of Aslan Bzhania looks and acts more confidently. It seems that demonstrating the legitimate use of force and the principles of the rule of law is becoming a priority for him.

It seems that Abkhazian society is, to some extent, adapting to Bzhania's policy. Demand for order and stability is growing and resistance to the regime is virtually no longer large-scale. This trend was evident earlier this year too, when the de facto government of Abkhazia opposed the burial of a criminal authority, the body of which was transferred from Greece, in Gali. Clearly, it is difficult to say unequivocally that this incident was part of a general policy of fight against criminals, as the reason for the above might merely be the Georgian ethnicity of the deceased criminal.

Evaluation of draft Counter-Terrorism Strategy

DRI sent its opinions and recommendations on the draft Counter-Terrorism Strategy for 2022-2026 to the State Security Service and the Government of Georgia before its approval. The draft strategy does not adequately address the important aspects of the threats and challenges facing the State. The draft strategy ignores and does not address the major causes of radicalization in Georgia; In particular, it does not assess the risks of radicalization that accompany the marginalization of specific minorities, weak governance, systematic human rights abuses or violations of the rule of law. The desire of the State Security Service to establish a different standard of admissibility of evidence in court in relation to terrorism is concerning.

The action plan prepared (or under preparation) based on the draft strategy will again be a confidential document, which is inconsistent with the Law on State Secrets.

DRI echoes police violence against teenager

The video released on January 24, clearly showed that the police officer subjected a 17-year-old minor with disabilities to violence. In DRI's opinion, the policemen carried out degrading and inhuman treatment prohibited by the Criminal Code.

Protecting and supporting the child is the responsibility of every employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. However, the released footage made it clear that the police system does not protect the interests of the child

and the violence by the police have become systematic. DRI addressed the State Inspector's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Parliament and the Government of Georgia with the recommendations to take necessary measures for ending physical and psychological violence by the law enforcement officers.

Overview of Far-Right Media Outlets by DRI

Democracy Research Institute has published an overview of the owners and most frequent respondents of online and mainstream media platforms characterized by far-right rhetoric and hate speech.

Out of six media platforms reviewed by DRI, two - „Alt-Info“ and „ObiekTV“ - hold television broadcasting licenses and are directly linked to far-right political parties.

All six media platforms have editorial policies characterized by propaganda, disinformation, and pro-Russian rhetoric. In the hands of far-right political actors, they are important tools for mobilizing voters and spreading their political agenda.

Anti-Vaccination and Anti-West Rhetoric of Far-Right Groups

DRI continues monitoring of the far-right group ideological propaganda and political discourse. In total, during the reporting period of September-December 2021, DRI uncovered 865 manipulative and misinformative narratives spread on various online platforms.

Local elections were the main focus of the far-right leaders during this period. Their rhetoric, aimed to discredit the “National Movement”, revealed messages of support for the ruling party both in covert and direct ways.

Anti-Western and anti-liberal discourses was particularly strong in the far-right groups during the reporting period. The US Ambassador Kelly Degnan, the EU Ambassador to Georgia Carl Hartzel and the Public Defender Nino Lomjaria were targeted by especially aggressive rhetoric.

Contact

Address

Third floor, 2 a Kazbegi Ave. Tbilisi 0160, Georgia

Telephone

(+995) 32 237 52 28

Web

www.democracyresearch.org

E-mail

info@democracyresearch.org