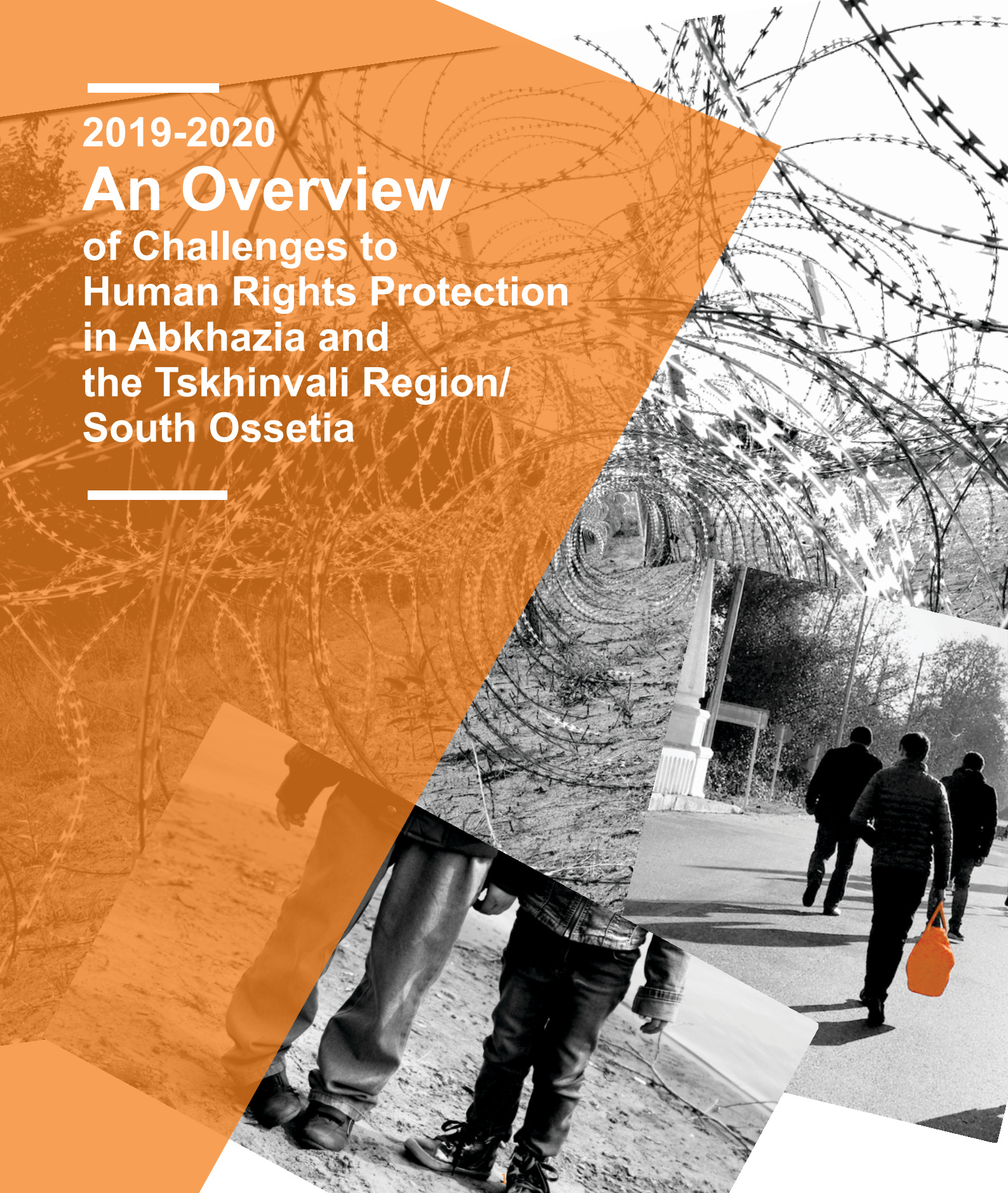


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2019-2020

# An Overview of Challenges to Human Rights Protection in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/ South Ossetia

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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the position of the EED.





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## INTRODUCTION

The present overview is a brief analysis of the challenges existing in terms of human rights protection in the occupied territories of Georgia. 2019-2020 is the reporting period. While the area of human rights, in accordance with international human rights standards, covers a wide range of our lives, the present report primarily focuses on the most acute issues that persisted in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia in the reporting period. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the following issues:

- The aggravated humanitarian situation caused by the so-called borderisation and setting up illegal border infrastructure. This mainly involves mass violations of the right to property and systemic restriction of economic activities within the occupied territories;
- Violation of the freedom of speech, thought and expression. This part of the report discusses incidents of persecution and harassment, often manifested in severe oppressive measures, of NGOs and civil activists operating in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia as well as incidents of purposeful obstruction of activities of individual journalists;
- Systemic practice of torture and inhuman treatment established in the penitentiary establishments and the so-called law-enforcement agencies and armed forces;
- The situation in terms of health care, including the situation in terms of public health care, accessibility of health-care services and the situation in terms of reproductive health of women; and
- The situation in terms of women's rights including domestic violence and discrimination against women.

The recommendations, given at the end of the report, point out the minimum measures that are necessary for improving the quality of human rights protection in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

## METHODOLOGY

Stemming from the systemic and complex nature of the problem, mixed research methodology was applied in the process of developing the report. In particular, at the first stage of the research, we analysed information available from open sources (after verifying the credibility of sources and establishing their validity) such as reports of international organisations, materials prepared by international experts and analytical centres as well as information covered by media.

Furthermore, public information was requested from state agencies; public strategy and policy documents were studied, and numerous information and analytical reports and surveys were analysed. During field visits to the villages across the administrative border, locals were also interviewed on the spot.

The gaps identified as a result of the analysis of open sources and public information were filled with in-depth interviews with contact persons living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. To ensure the safety of our contact persons, their identities and workplaces are kept confidential.

A particular challenge in the process of developing the report was the fact that the occupation forces of the Russian Federation make it impossible to move freely in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and study the situation in person. Because of the position taken by the Russian Federation, there are practically no international observation missions working in the occupied territories which also makes it difficult to obtain complete and exhaustive information about human rights.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EFFECTS RESULTING FROM THE SO-CALLED BORDERISATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ILLEGAL BORDER CHECKPOINTS

The ever-creeping occupation and the failure of the Russian Federation to honour the ceasefire agreement remain to be among the main challenges in terms of human rights protection in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. In the reporting period, the process of borderisation was carried out continuously in the villages of Kaspi, Gori, Kareli, Khashuri, Tsalenjikha, and Zugdidi municipalities. The process did not stop during the pandemic either.

According to the State Security Service, “such illegal activities damage considerably the local security environment and everyday lives of the local population.”<sup>1</sup>

As a result of the so-called borderisation, the local population living across the boundary line systematically loses its agricultural land. Since agriculture is the main source of income in these regions, losing land seriously affects the socio-economic situation of the residents living across the boundary line.

When discussing the social effects of the occupation, it is important to take into account the fact that residents of the regions across the boundary line are restricted not only in their right to property but also in their right to respect for private life. This is manifested in the locals not being able to visit the graves of their deceased family members and pay respect to their memory. Furthermore, they are deprived of the possibility to go on pilgrimages to the religious shrines located in the occupied territories. The frequent kidnappings of Georgian citizens by Russia’s occupation forces enhance the feeling of vulnerability among the population and clearly demonstrate the challenges in terms of safety.

The above-mentioned events are in gross violations of the right to liberty, security, property, right to labour, freedom of movement, right to respect for private life and right to religion as guaranteed by international instruments on human rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Occupation Forces Engaged in Illegal Borderisation along the Village of Takhtisdziri of Kareli Municipality, the First Channel, 17.04.2020, <https://1tv.ge/news/sus-qarelis-municipalitetis-sofel-takhtisdziris-mimdebared-saokupacio-dzalebma-ukanono-borderizacia-ganakhorceles/>, (accessed 6 June 2020).

The situation is particularly serious in Abkhazia where the actions of the Russian Federation assumed the form of express annexation in certain cases. In particular, a Russian registry office assigned the village of Aibga of Gagra District to Krasnodar Krai.<sup>2</sup>

In the reporting period, under a decision taken by the *de facto* authorities of so-called South Ossetia, all the checkpoints connecting the region with the rest of Georgia were permanently closed. The closure of the so-called Razdakhan checkpoint connecting with Akhagori District caused a humanitarian crisis in the region. Notably, it became impossible to provide the region with primary consumer products and the population was left without vital social and medical services.



## CHAPTER 2

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In the reporting period, several incidents of systemic violation of the freedom of expression were identified in the territory of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Among them, the case of Tamar Mearakishvili, an ethnic Georgian and a civil activist from Akhagori, is particularly noteworthy. Defamation proceedings have been pending against her for more than three years in a court. Even though Tamar Mearakishvili was fully acquitted of the charges brought against her at two levels of jurisdiction in South-Ossetia, the prosecutor's office appealed all the decisions and fresh investigations into her case were instituted in 2020. On 17 January 2020, the *de facto* supreme court of Tskhinvali partially upheld the sentence adopted by the Tskhinvali City Court and acquitted Mearakishvili of the charges of defamation against a regional branch of the ruling party, Edinaia Ossetia. Two criminal cases, however, involving the illegal acquisition of the so-called citizenship of South Ossetia, holding Georgian citizenship in parallel and using a forged passport were upheld. The cases were remanded to the trial court for

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<sup>2</sup> Creeping Occupation in Abkhazia: RosReestr Registered Another Large Portion of the Village of Aibga of Gagra District as a Territory of the City of Sochi (оккупация и в Абхазии: Росреестр оформил еще один большой участок села Аибга Гагринского района как территорию г. Сочи), 4.17.2020, [http://www.cyxymu.info/2020/04/plzuchaya-okkupacia-aibga.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR1-7-PCc9jPCBoaXtN\\_JGFVmbkvtEFV1FMPlgZ\\_ZeiOd8C\\_bnPrIneGquo](http://www.cyxymu.info/2020/04/plzuchaya-okkupacia-aibga.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR1-7-PCc9jPCBoaXtN_JGFVmbkvtEFV1FMPlgZ_ZeiOd8C_bnPrIneGquo).

adjudication *ab novo*.<sup>3</sup> Throughout this period, Mearakishvili was restricted in her freedom of movement.

In the reporting period, Irina Kelekhsayeva, an ethnic Ossetian and a journalist from Tskhinvali at *Ekho Kavkaza*, was persecuted for an article criticizing a prison riot.<sup>4</sup> The *de facto* minister of justice requested the institution of a criminal case against her and the imposition of a fine of 500,000 Russian roubles for defamation.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, there is a trend emerging under which the *de facto* authorities actively use the charges of defamation not to allow critical opinions into the local and international information domain.



### CIVIL SOCIETY (NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS, MEDIA)

On 14 May 2014, the *de facto* government of South Ossetia, following in the footsteps of Russia, adopted the Law on Non-Commercial Organisations,<sup>6</sup> which the general public knows as “A Foreign Country’s Agent Law”.<sup>7</sup> This law makes it obligatory for local NGOs to register themselves as agents of foreign countries if they cooperated with Western foundations and allows a broad leeway to the so-called South Ossetian government to interfere in their activities. This measure virtually prohibited the functioning of CSOs (civil society organisations) in the region. All non-entrepreneurial and non-commercial legal entities became affiliated with the grants allocated by

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<sup>3</sup> DRI: Tamar Mearakishvili’s Case Should Be Put on the Agenda with All the Parties of the conflict, 24.01.2020, <http://www.democracypolicy.org/geo/199>, (accessed 6 June 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Court Proceedings in Tskhinvali: the Minister of Justice against a Journalist, Jam News, 20.02.2020, <http://bit.do/ffSWX>, (accessed 6 June 2020).

<sup>5</sup> DRI: Individuals with Critical Opinions Are Persecuted in Tskhinvali, <http://www.democracypolicy.org/geo/249>; South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region: Persecution of Journalists who Speak out, Amnesty International, 18 April 2020, [https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR5621122020ENGLISH.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2\\_jkDPxY2AcHqIs\\_V2p91OWFVksKEI6WEDuIRCdFfqD5NhwrFnJ29wYIk](https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR5621122020ENGLISH.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2_jkDPxY2AcHqIs_V2p91OWFVksKEI6WEDuIRCdFfqD5NhwrFnJ29wYIk).

<sup>6</sup> The Law of the Republic of South Ossetia on Non-Commercial Organisations, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/241580/>.

<sup>7</sup> Chosen out of Lesser Evils, Ekho Kavkaza, (Из двух зол выбрали наименьшее, Эхо кавказа), 14.05.2014, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/25384934.html>.



the local *de facto* authorities and the Russian Federation and thus came under the control of Moscow. In the reporting period, an office representing *Rusски Mir* was set up in South Ossetia; there is also the Centre of Russian Science and Culture functioning in the region.<sup>8</sup> Presently, even though no independent human rights organisations are functioning within the territory of South Ossetia, independent initiative groups and activists continue their activities. Despite the fear of reprisals from the authorities, they continue maintaining communication with the media and international and local organisations.

The situation is different in Abkhazia where non-governmental groups operate without registration problems or restrictive controls.<sup>9</sup>

There is virtually no free media in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Each local news outlet is under the direct control of the *de facto* authorities. The situation is different in Abkhazia where several news outlets are more or less independent.

Broadcast media are largely controlled by the Abkhazian government, which operates the Abkhaz State Television and Radio Company (AGTRK). Large Russian TV companies have been operating recently in Abkhazia. Local outlets find it difficult to compete with Russian media.<sup>10</sup> Only the residents of the Gali district have access to Georgian channels.

The local version of Russian news portal *Sputnik*, accessible in both Russian and Ossetian, recently became increasingly popular.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See <http://rso.rs.gov.ru/ru>.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hammarberg and Magdalena Grono, "Human Rights in Abkhazia Today", <https://www.palmecenter.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Human-Rights-in-Abkhazia-Today-report-by-Thomas-Hammarberg-and-Magdalena-Grono.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House Abkhazia. The report is available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/abkhazia/freedom-world/2019>.

<sup>11</sup> Freedom House South Ossetia. The report is available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/south-ossetia/freedom-world/2019>.

## THE SITUATION IN THE PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

In the reporting period, numerous incidents of systemic corruption and human rights violations were identified in the so-called penitentiary establishments of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Dranda Prison, located in the territory of Abkhazia, near Sokhumi, has a life of its own;<sup>12</sup> the prison has its “watchers” (members of the criminal underworld). Information about the number of prisoners is not available. However, according to unofficial data, as of 2017, there were 278 convicted persons and in detention isolators – 42 remand prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

According to the locals,<sup>14</sup> there are cases where, despite court judgments, convicted person do not serve their punishment in jail since, instead of law-enforcement agencies, convicts’ so-called protectors take decisions about their fate. Some privileged prisoners have different and better conditions in cells than other prisoners. They have more space and better furniture at their disposal. Non-privileged prisoners are placed in unhygienic and dire conditions; suicides are frequent.<sup>15</sup>

There is a former investigative isolator in South Ossetia which now serves as a correctional facility. It is divided into strict and common regime zones.<sup>16</sup> The capacity of this facility is 83 prisoners and, as of October 2019, there were 56 prisoners serving punishment there.<sup>17</sup> In the summer of 2019, these prisoners signed a petition to the parliament and complained about serious violations taking place in the prison. The prisoners complained about the poor quality of food, unsanitary conditions, damp cells and the lack of ventilation in some of the cells.<sup>18</sup> This letter was followed by a prison riot and the beating of prisoners. The footage was disseminated in the media.

On 5 June 2020, a raid on the Tskhinvali prison was conducted by the OMON – the special task force of militia. This operation was related to an altercation between a prisoner and a prison

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<sup>12</sup> This is an Abkhazian Prison, Ekho Kavkaza (Это абхазская тюрьма, Эхо Кавказа), 17.03.2015, <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/26906075.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hammarberg and Magdalena Grono, “Human Rights in Abkhazia Today”.

<sup>14</sup> An interview with an anonymous respondent.

<sup>15</sup> An interview with an anonymous respondent.

<sup>16</sup> What Are Prisoners Protesting in Tskhinvali? 02.10.2019, Radio Tavisupleba.

<sup>17</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>18</sup> Is it Allowed to Beat Prisoners? Tskhinvali’s Experience, Jam News, 24.09.2019, <http://bit.do/fFSWZ>.

officer.<sup>19</sup> The OMON removed four prisoners from the cell and subjected them to ill-treatment.<sup>20</sup> After this, about 20 prisoners inflicted self-harm and cut their wrists in protest.<sup>21</sup> According to one MP, up to 50 prisoners were injured. About 20 MPs applied to the speaker of the so-called parliament to hold an emergency sitting to respond to the incident. Anatoly Bibilov appeared at the emergency sitting with 200 officers of the OMON.<sup>22</sup> According to his statement, no investigation would be instituted against law-enforcement officers and nobody from the authorities would be punished because several attention-seeking prisoners simply had scratched their hands. According to a contact person,<sup>23</sup> incidents of ill-treatment against prisoners take place frequently and nothing has changed since the dissemination of the prison footage.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SITUATION IN THE SO-CALLED ARMED FORCES

On 24 January 2018, the State Duma of the Russian Federation,<sup>24</sup> by ratifying the agreement on integrating armed forces,<sup>25</sup> integrated the so-called independent army of South Ossetia into the Russian Army. As regards Abkhazia, in August 2019, the Russian Federation, in agreement with the *de facto* government of Abkhazia, took responsibility to fund the modernisation of the Abkhazian army.<sup>26</sup> These so-called international agreements concluded by the Russian Federation

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<sup>19</sup> A Week in South Ossetia: Prisoners at Knifepoint and MPs at Gunpoint (Югоосетинская неделя: арестантов под ножи, депутатов под стволы), <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30667721.html>.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>21</sup> Around 20 Prisoners Cutting Their Wrists in the Tskhinvali Prison, Jam News, 05.06.2020, <https://jam-news.net/ge/samkhret-oseti-cikhe-patimrebi/>, (accessed 6 June 2020).

<sup>22</sup> Anatoly Bibilov Took over the Parliament (Анатолий Бибилов высадился в парламенте), <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30661818.html>.

<sup>23</sup> An interview with an anonymous respondent.

<sup>24</sup> On Putin's Instructions, Modernisation of *De Facto* Abkhazia's Army will be Funded, <https://netgazeti.ge/news/393211/>, (accessed 14 August 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Tbilisi Considers Merger of Tskhinvali Army with the Russian Army as Another Provocation by Moscow, 26.01.2018, <http://bit.do/fFXH3>, (accessed 7 June 2020).

<sup>26</sup> Jojua about Russian Funding of Abkhazian Army: We Have to Respond to Modern Challenges (Джоджуа о финансировании Россией Абхазской армии: мы должны отвечать современным вызовам), 23.09.2019, <https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/radio/20190923/1028473870/Dzhodzhuia-o-finansirovanii-Rossiey-Abkhazskoy-armii-my-dolzhny-otvechat-sovremennym-vyzovam.html>.

virtually constitute steps towards the complete annexation of the regions at stake. The *de facto* authorities thus forfeited the monopoly of the power that they had been maintaining ostensibly.

In Abkhazia, military service is mandatory for every male Abkhazian citizen from the age of 18 to 27. The term of the military service is determined at 18 months (12 months if a conscript has higher education).<sup>27</sup> The military service consists of mandatory and contractual service.<sup>28</sup> The same requirements apply to the territory of South Ossetia with no other alternatives in place.

After finishing school, each youth is given the so-called South Ossetian passport. Some of them try to refuse to take the so-called South Ossetian citizenship to avoid conscription. There are frequent incidents of bullying and ill-treatment in the army and therefore many individuals attempt to avoid military service.<sup>29</sup>

The *de facto* authorities, especially in South Ossetia, force ethnic Georgians to work in the so-called armed forces. With such methods, the authorities of the region try to distance ethnic Georgians living in Akhagori from Georgia's central authorities.

There was no draft in Gali in 2020. Along with the spread of the Coronavirus, the incidents of stripping ethnic Georgians of the so-called Abkhazian citizenship in Gali District are considered to be the reason behind the suspension of draft. Frequent conflicts among soldiers that led to murders on several occasions are among the problems that the army faces. It has been reported that soldiers often desert their military base; their superiors often abuse their privileges and use soldiers' labour for personal gain, among others, construction of their private properties, cleaning and agricultural work.

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<sup>27</sup> Autumn Draft: Conscripts of Abkhazian Army took an oath (Осенний призыв: новобранцы Абхазской армии приняли присягу), <https://sputnik-abkhazia.ru/Abkhazia/20191130/1028915318/Osenniy-prizyv-novobrantsy-abkhazskoy-armii-prinyali-prisyagu.html>.

<sup>28</sup> The Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia about Integrating Certain Units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of South Ossetia in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (Соглашение между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Южная Осетия о порядке вхождения отдельных подразделений Вооруженных Сил Республики Южная Осетия в состав Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации), <http://alaniamil.org/130-soglashenie-mezhdu-rossiyskoy-federaciyey-i-respublikoy-yuzhnaya-oseiya-o-poryadke-vhozhdeniya-otdelnyh-podrazdeleniy-vooruzhennyh-sil-respubliki-yuzhnaya-oseiya-v-sostav-vooruzhennyh-sil-r.html>.

<sup>29</sup> An interview with an anonymous respondent.

## CHAPTER 6

### HEALTH CARE

In the reporting period, significant problems were identified in terms of health care in both regions. A significant part of the population has virtually no access to health-care services. The health-care sector in Abkhazia suffers from a significant lack of material and, to a lesser degree, human resources.<sup>30</sup> The health system has not been reformed since the Soviet period.<sup>31</sup> Health-care authorities cite blood-borne infectious diseases, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes as the greatest public health concerns. Modern diagnostic equipment is scarce, especially outside Sokhumi.<sup>32</sup>

The hospital in the Village of Saberio of Gali District faces particular challenges. The hospital does not even have the basic ultrasound or X-ray equipment to provide diagnostics or administer quality medical care for patients. The situation is aggravated by the fact that often medical personnel are delayed because of faulty emergency transport which can also lead to fatal outcomes in a number of cases.<sup>33</sup> The hospital constantly needs support in terms of supply of medicines, as Sokhumi does not do much about it. After closing down the checkpoints, as a result of introducing strict quarantine measures and imposing restrictions on movement, the postal supply of medicines by the central Georgian authorities from the territory under Georgia's control became difficult.

Considering the existing situation, the state programmes on health care and social security that are available in the territory under Georgia's control are vital for people living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. According to the information requested from the Ministry of Health and Social Security of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia,<sup>34</sup> from 1 January 2015 to 1 June 2020, within the programmes offered by the Ministry of Health and Social Security of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, medical care was provided for 1,094 Georgian citizens living in Abkhazia.

According to the same letter, there was a retraining programme for medical personnel in the past, which was as a component of the Social Security Programme of IDPs from Abkhazia. Within this

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Hammarberg and Magdalena Grono, "Human Rights in Abkhazia Today".

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> DRI: Under the Pandemic, Gali Population is Unable to Receive Even Medical Services, 11.05.2020, <http://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/298>, (accessed 11 May 2020).

<sup>34</sup> Letter no. 1701.

programme, which functioned actively, in 2017, 30 doctors (three groups, each consisting of ten participants) underwent a retraining course. There were 17 doctors from Abkhazia. In 2018, 20 nurses from Abkhazia benefited from this very programme.

The timely transportation of patients to the territories under Georgia's control remains a challenge for the medical personnel of Gali District. This issue often involves protracted multiple communication procedures, which negatively affects the health condition of patients.

As regards the situation in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, creating artificial barriers for the local population against benefiting from medical services from the territory under the control of Georgia's central authorities remains to be particularly problematic. Transportation of patients is often impeded or extremely delayed which was resulted in fatalities on several occasions. In the reporting period, several persons died as a result of unqualified medical care administered in Akhagori. According to locals, this was due to negligence on the part of medical personnel of Akhagori hospital, absence of medical equipment and supplies necessary for qualified medical care.<sup>35</sup>

Issues pertaining to reproductive health should also be pointed out as another problem of health care. Since the introduction of a ban on abortions,<sup>36</sup> there has been an increase in the number of illegal abortions. This has direct implication for the death-rate of women who already are one of the most vulnerable segments of the society in both regions.

Women often fall victim to violence. As a rule, the local society is more lenient towards the abuser. The local retrograde traditions compel women to be silent instead of fighting.<sup>37</sup> Incidents of various nervous and emotional disorders among women are increasing.

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<sup>35</sup> DRI: How did the Life in Akhagori Change after the Pandemic?  
<http://www.democracyresearch.org/geo/279>.

<sup>36</sup> Ban on Abortion – Discussion in Abkhazia, [https://netgazeti.ge/south\\_caucasus/95055/](https://netgazeti.ge/south_caucasus/95055/).

<sup>37</sup> An interview with an anonymous respondent.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The facts presented in the document demonstrate that Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, due to their dire situation in terms of protection of human rights, need particular attention from the international community. The worsening of humanitarian situation negatively affects the quality and standard of life of not only Georgian but also South Ossetian and Abkhazian populations. However, the Russian Federation, the only subject wielding effective control over Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, does not have any interest to ensure basic conditions for a dignified human life or development or make steps towards the protection of fundamental human rights in the regions occupied by it.

The efforts made by the Georgian central authorities and the international community in this regard are not enough. This enables the Russian Federation to continue ignoring completely incidents of human rights violations.

Stemming from the above-mentioned, it is advisable to take into account the following recommendations:

### TO THE GEORGIAN AUTHORITIES

- To take more active diplomatic efforts to inform proactively the international community about systemic violations of human rights in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia;
- To put on the agenda of international negotiations the issue of international responsibility, including the imposition of international sanctions on the party (the Russian Federation) exercising effective control in the region;
- With the view of putting an end to the continuous breach of human rights of the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, to consider legal mechanisms, among others, lodging an inter-state application against the Russian Federation with the European Court of Human Rights;
- To enhance diplomatic efforts to broaden the mandate of the international observation mission;
- To boost security measures in the villages across the administrative border for preventing the incidents of kidnapping of Georgian citizens;
- Due to the difficult situation of human rights protection in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, it is necessary that the Georgian authorities' efforts became more proactive; action plans should be developed to respond to major risks, among others, for reducing the damage caused by closing the checkpoints;

- For providing timely and quality access to health care for the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, to develop a mechanism which, stemming from humanitarian interests, will ensure the transportation of patients at any time of the day to the territories under Georgia's control;
- The issue of timely transportation of patients to the territory under Georgia's control, with the assistance of international organisations, should be agreed upon within the negotiations with all the parties of the conflict;
- To develop and implement advanced retraining programmes for doctors working in emergency medical care in Akhagori and Gali districts. To take steps to provide the medical establishments of Gali District with appropriate medical equipment;
- To use all international mechanisms for redeeming the Akhagori humanitarian crisis, to ensure that the practice of isolating the region by occupational forces is not established as an acceptable norm; and
- Along with the available educational and health care programmes, to create special support mechanisms to help the populations living in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and across the boundary line.

#### TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- It is necessary to monitor systematically the situation in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, to develop corresponding reports and ensure their transparency to enable all the parties of the conflict and the public as well to evaluate problems as seen by an objective observer and to discuss them;
- To enhance efforts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia by supporting those programmes/initiatives that serve the protection of fundamental human rights within these territories;
- To continue active cooperation with Georgian authorities towards setting up effective remedies aimed at mitigating the existing risks; and
- To continue exerting diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation, including by international sanctions, so that Russia discontinued blocking international observation missions in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and ensure free movement of the populations living in the occupied regions.