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## Human Rights Council

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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for  
Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner  
and the Secretary-General**

**Technical assistance and capacity-building**

## Cooperation with Georgia

### Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/29, outlines the technical assistance provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights between 1 January and 31 December 2025 to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in Georgia. The report highlights human rights developments during the period and the challenges to be addressed. It also provides an update on the main human rights issues in Abkhazia, Georgia, the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, and adjacent areas in Tbilisi-controlled territory.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/29, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to present an oral update at its sixty-first session on follow-up to the resolution and a written report at its sixty-second session on developments relating to the resolution and on its implementation. The Council also requested the High Commissioner to continue to provide technical assistance through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presence in Tbilisi and demanded that immediate and unimpeded access be given to OHCHR and other international and regional human rights mechanisms to Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.<sup>1</sup>
2. Pursuant to resolution 60/29, the present report provides an update on the technical assistance provided by OHCHR in Georgia and on key human rights developments during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2025. Guided by the preamble to the resolution, the report also describes the main human rights issues in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and in adjacent areas.
3. In preparing the report, in October 2025, OHCHR issued a public call for written submissions<sup>2</sup> pursuant to resolution 60/29 to seek contributions from the Government of Georgia and various stakeholders to inform the oral update and the report of the High Commissioner.
4. The present report draws on the submissions received pursuant to this call. This includes information provided by the Government of Georgia, the Office of the Public Defender of Georgia (a national human rights institution awarded A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions), international and regional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The report also draws on information in credible publicly available documents. OHCHR has continued to exercise due diligence to corroborate, to the extent possible, the validity of the information received, within the constraints of limited resources and the continuing lack of access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The present report therefore highlights key human rights issues and developments on the basis of information received by OHCHR but does not seek to present a comprehensive account of all human rights issues.

## II. Context

5. The ruling Georgian Dream party was the only political party engaged in lawmaking for most of 2025. Three of the four opposition political parties elected to Parliament in October 2024 did not take up their seats in 2025, and 11 Members of Parliament from the opposition For Georgia party began participating in parliamentary work only at the end of October 2025.
6. Protests continued to take place in the vicinity of the Parliament building and in other central locations of Tbilisi throughout 2025. In October 2025, Georgian Dream applied to the Constitutional Court seeking to ban the three political parties that were boycotting the Parliament, citing their refusal to recognize the Government of Georgia. The case remains pending. In November 2025, seven prominent opposition politicians, including one woman, were charged with sabotage. In addition, three of them were charged with “assistance to a foreign country, foreign organization or an organization controlled by a foreign State in hostile activities”.

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<sup>1</sup> Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, are hereinafter referred to as Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2026/2026-call-inputs-pursuant-human-rights-council-resolution-6029-cooperation>.

7. The November 2024 decision by the Government of Georgia to suspend accession talks with the European Union until 2028 remained in effect. In its 2025 communication on European Union enlargement policy, issued in November 2025, the European Commission stated that the country's European Union "accession process has effectively come to a standstill".<sup>3</sup>

### **III. Technical assistance by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and human rights developments**

8. An OHCHR Senior Human Rights Adviser has been posted in Tbilisi since 2007. The Adviser enjoys full cooperation from the Government of Georgia and is supported by national staff. Working closely with the United Nations country team, the Adviser has continued to provide advice and technical assistance to the Government and institutions of Georgia, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. The Adviser has also remained actively engaged in United Nations country team advocacy efforts on a range of human rights issues.

9. During the reporting period, OHCHR conducted 31 capacity-building events in Georgia for 920 participants, of whom 593 were women. Participants in OHCHR-sponsored programmes and events included members of the Georgian Bar Association, representatives of youth groups, including national and religious minority youth groups, persons with disabilities, and representatives of civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities.

#### **A. Human rights challenges related to civic space and the freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly**

10. OHCHR has previously reported concerns regarding the introduction of legislation in Georgia negatively impacting civic space and the freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly.<sup>4</sup> These trends continued in 2025, including the adoption of the Foreign Agents Registration Act and amendments to the Grants Law, the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations, the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code.<sup>5</sup>

11. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, any restriction on the freedoms of association, expression or assembly must be provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim, and be necessary and proportionate.<sup>6</sup> The explanatory statements to the amendments referenced above underline the need to prevent "socially dangerous actions directed against public order and the rule of law".<sup>7</sup> With regard to the Foreign Agents Registration Act and amendments to the Law on Grants, the need for increased transparency of civil society organizations has been cited. However, OHCHR is concerned that many of the provisions introduced may be overly broad, create legal uncertainty and be open to arbitrary interpretation by relevant authorities. OHCHR understands that some civil society organizations have reduced their activities due to fears of being in violation of the new legislative amendments. OHCHR has also received reports of intimidation, hostile rhetoric and threats against certain civil society actors and other voices critical of the Government and the ruling party, including by prominent members of the ruling party. In an October 2025

<sup>3</sup> See [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/eb69a890-40d6-4696-801e-612d51709fdd\\_en?filename=2025%20Communication%20on%20EU%20Enlargement%20Policy.pdf](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/eb69a890-40d6-4696-801e-612d51709fdd_en?filename=2025%20Communication%20on%20EU%20Enlargement%20Policy.pdf), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> See [A/HRC/59/66](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/59/66).

<sup>5</sup> See [https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads\\_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf](https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/HUMAN%20RIGHTS%20SITUATION%20IN%20GEORGIA%202025.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 19 (3), 21 and 22 (2); and Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 34 (2011), paras. 22–36; general comment No. 37 (2020), paras. 40–44; and general comment No. 31 (2004), para. 6.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://cdn.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/1/601503.pdf>.

amicus curiae brief, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of the Council of Europe assessed that the legislative measures being put in place in Georgia for the regulation of foreign influence “impose extensive and overlapping obligations combined with harsh liability provisions that disproportionately burden and subject to control those engaged in democratic oversight and rights advocacy”.<sup>8</sup> United Nations special procedure mandate holders have also raised concerns about the legislative reforms undertaken during the reporting period.<sup>9</sup>

12. Legislative changes in 2025 have also affected media companies and journalists. In April 2025, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on Broadcasting, introducing restrictions on broadcasters receiving direct or indirect funding from foreign actors. The restrictions apply to various forms of support, including direct financial assistance, but also equipment transfers, personnel training and media development programmes. The only exceptions are funds received through commercial advertising, teleshopping, sponsorship, and product or service placement within programmes. Broad restrictions on non-commercial foreign funding risk significantly weakening and shrinking the media landscape of Georgia due to the lack of alternative sources of funding. In its submission to OHCHR for the present report, the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association expressed concern about newly adopted article 173.16 of the Code of Administrative Offences, which establishes administrative sanctions for speech deemed “offensive” towards public officials. In addition, the Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association has assessed that amendments to the Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression concerning the adjudication of civil defamation disputes remove important safeguards for journalistic sources and increase the risk of strategic litigation against public participation lawsuits.<sup>10</sup> According to the Government of Georgia, the purpose of the legislative regulation is to provide a legal framework for funding received by broadcasters from foreign Powers, in order to prevent external actors from influencing the formation of public opinion.

13. In 2025, the legal framework governing protests and assembly underwent several rounds of legislative amendments. The changes significantly increased sanctions for protest-related offences, including quadrupling the maximum term of administrative detention, from 15 to 60 days, and rendering administrative detention the sole penalty for non-violent offences, such as covering one’s face during an assembly or blocking the sidewalk. OHCHR is concerned that the application of such penalties may constitute an arbitrary deprivation of liberty in some circumstances.<sup>11</sup> An October 2025 assessment of these legislative amendments carried out by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at the request of the Public Defender of Georgia also concluded that introducing deprivation of liberty for non-violent conduct in the absence of evidence of harm or intent to harm amounted to a criminalization of conduct protected by international human rights law. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights further stressed that disproportionate sanctions, in themselves, violated the rights to freedom of assembly and expression.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, amendments to the Criminal Code criminalized repeat conduct previously sanctioned only under administrative law, while new notification requirements for holding an assembly effectively amount to prior authorization.<sup>13</sup>

## **B. Use of force by law enforcement and accountability**

14. OHCHR has previously reported on the demonstrations that took place in Georgia in 2024 and 2025, including allegations of unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by law

<sup>8</sup> See [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)035-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)035-e).

<sup>9</sup> See communication GEO 2/2025, available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29783>.

<sup>10</sup> See [https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads\\_script/publications/pdf/LAWS%20AGAINST%20SPEECH.pdf](https://admin.gyla.ge/uploads_script/publications/pdf/LAWS%20AGAINST%20SPEECH.pdf), pp. 17–20.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 17.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://www.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/4/1/601503.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 37 (2020), paras. 70 ff; and the amendments to article 347 of the Criminal Code.

enforcement, as well as of arbitrary arrests and detentions, also involving journalists and media workers.<sup>14</sup> In its submission, the Public Defender's Office noted the Government's own data indicating that multiple large-scale criminal investigations have been initiated into allegations of police violence. These investigations reportedly involve hundreds of alleged victims, more than 900 witnesses, thousands of hours of video footage, and extensive forensic examinations. However, to date, no police officer has been charged, suspended or otherwise held accountable, including in cases where officers were not wearing protective gear and could be easily identified. According to the Government of Georgia, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia prosecuted 12 persons for crimes committed against journalists, and 38 media workers were granted victim status. While welcoming the investigations being carried out, OHCHR notes the need for such investigations to be prompt, independent, impartial, thorough and effective, and capable of leading to accountability.

15. In June 2025, the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia absorbed the Special Investigation Service and its functions. The Service was established in 2022 as an independent institution to investigate allegations of violence and ill-treatment committed by law enforcement officers. It will be important to ensure that the subsuming of the Service and its functions into the Prosecutor's Office of Georgia does not undermine the effectiveness or the real or perceived independence of investigations into alleged human rights violations by the police, particularly in the context of policing assemblies and protests. In its submission, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association also reported that individuals detained under both administrative and criminal law frameworks had been forcibly and fully undressed after detention under the guise of a personal search or examination.<sup>15</sup> This practice may amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.<sup>16</sup> According to the Government of Georgia, in 2025, criminal proceedings were initiated against 6 police officers under the Criminal Code article on "exceeding official powers", and 74 individuals were recognized as victims of ill-treatment.

16. Reports of the firing of gas grenades and chemical agents by law enforcement officials directly at protesters during the November and December 2024 protests remain a serious concern, given the reported injuries and claims of long-term health effects.<sup>17</sup> Disclosure of the substances used is essential for proper medical treatment and transparency. OHCHR notes that the Government has strongly denied public reports of the use of "camite" (bromobenzyl cyanide), a toxic substance whose use has been phased out globally since the 1930s.<sup>18</sup> On 6 December 2025, the State Security Service opened an investigation, stating that it had found no evidence that "camite" had ever been procured, reporting instead that the crowd control agents used were "chlorobenzylidene malononitrile" dissolved in "propylene glycol", both of which, it said, were not prohibited. OHCHR also recalls that any use of force by law enforcement, including through chemical irritants, must comply with international human rights law, including proportionality, necessity and precaution. Methods that risk severe suffering must be avoided.<sup>19</sup> OHCHR is also concerned about reports of pressure on individuals who have provided information about the use of chemicals against protesters to media outlets, and urges the authorities to take steps to protect all those reporting alleged human rights violations from reprisals or intimidation.

<sup>14</sup> See [A/HRC/59/66](#).

<sup>15</sup> See <https://eurasia.amnesty.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/from-insults-to-assaults-police-violence-towards-women-protesters-in-georgia.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, art. 16; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 7; and United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), rules 50–52.

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czrk7g50e1po>.

<sup>18</sup> See <https://jam-news.net/this-is-not-%D0%BAamit-georgian-security-services-refute-bbc-claims-of-chemical-poisoning-of-protesters/>.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, para. 2.3.

### C. Equality and non-discrimination, including women's human rights and gender equality

17. In 2025, legislative amendments were enacted to more than 15 laws, with changes including replacing the terms “gender” and “gender equality” with “women and men” and “equality between women and men”, respectively.<sup>20</sup> Amendments to the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations included discriminatory restrictions based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and gender identity was removed from the list of prohibited grounds in various laws concerning discrimination, aggravating circumstances for hate crimes, and provisions related to incitement to hatred and violence.<sup>21</sup> The Parliamentary Gender Equality Council and municipal gender equality councils, among other key institutional mechanisms for gender equality, were replaced with a temporary commission on women's and children's issues and the municipal councils on women's and children's issues, respectively. This presents a risk to the achievements in the sphere of advancing gender equality and combating gender-based discrimination that Georgia has made in recent years and raises concerns of possible discrimination against transgender and non-binary persons.

18. In previous reports, OHCHR highlighted the situation of Muslims in the city of Batumi who have been unable to obtain a permit from the municipal authorities to construct a new mosque.<sup>22</sup> In July 2025, the Kutaisi Court of Appeal upheld an earlier decision denying authorization for the construction of the mosque. An appeal is currently pending before the Supreme Court of Georgia. According to information provided to OHCHR, the Government of Georgia noted that there are four functioning mosques in Batumi.

## IV. Situation of human rights in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

### A. Access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia

19. On 21 October 2025, OHCHR sent letters to the authorities in control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia seeking immediate and unimpeded access, in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 60/29, to gather factual and up-to-date information about the human rights situation in these areas. The authorities in control did not respond during the reporting period.

20. The authorities in control in Abkhazia maintained limited access for some United Nations development and humanitarian entities. During the reporting period, with the exception of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations and other international organizations were unable to access South Ossetia. This has been a long-standing pattern that has persisted across multiple reporting cycles.

### B. Main human rights issues in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

21. The authorities in control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia have the responsibility to respect and ensure the human rights of all people in areas under their control, including to uphold the right of victims of human rights violations to effective remedies. Applicable international human rights law and other bodies of international law have been set out in previous reports by OHCHR.<sup>23</sup> The territorial State also retains certain obligations to take appropriate measures, within its power, to seek to ensure protection of human rights in areas of its territory where it does not exercise effective control.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> For example, the Law on Gender Equality (renamed the Law on the Equality of Women and Men).

<sup>21</sup> For example, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (where “gender identity” was removed as a protected ground).

<sup>22</sup> [A/HRC/59/66](#), para. 23.

<sup>23</sup> [A/HRC/36/65](#), in particular paras. 46, 48, 51, 61, 66, 67, 71, 72 and 80.

<sup>24</sup> Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 31 (2004), para. 10; and [CCPR/C/GEO/CO/5](#), para. 6.

22. In its submission to OHCHR for the present report, the European Union noted that the 2017 report<sup>25</sup> by the former Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Thomas Hammarberg, while no longer completely up to date, remains the most comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in Abkhazia. Its assessments and recommendations remain relevant, including those related to the “legal framework” and procedures, monitoring mechanisms, education, property rights, health, and the situation of women and persons in vulnerable situations (including older persons, persons with disabilities, and members of communities affected by inter-ethnic issues, notably ethnic Abkhaz, Armenians, Georgians and Russians in Abkhazia, including ethnic Georgians in the Gali district).

23. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to receive allegations of human rights violations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The reported violations predominantly affected ethnic Georgians in Gali and Akhagori districts, but also impacted those living in areas adjacent to the administrative boundary lines and displaced persons. The allegations include torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary detention; violations of housing, land and property and cultural rights; restrictions on education in the Georgian language; lack of access to livelihoods, healthcare and essential services; discrimination on ethnic grounds; restrictions on freedom of movement and the right to family life; and ongoing “borderization” practices.

24. The absence of effective accountability for alleged violations, including legal remedies, as well as independent monitoring and international access – particularly to South Ossetia – continued to impede the protection of human rights. Alongside stalled political solutions and limited confidence-building measures, these factors also further exacerbated socioeconomic isolation among people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

25. In its submission to OHCHR for the present report, the Government of Georgia stated that the security environment had significantly deteriorated during the reporting period, affecting people in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as along the administrative boundary lines. It further asserted that the Russian Federation had intensified political, military, economic and legal integration measures in these regions, undermining the sovereignty of Georgia and deepening the isolation of both regions and their residents.

26. In its submission, the Government of Georgia reiterated its commitment to a policy of peaceful conflict resolution and noted the continued implementation of its reconciliation and engagement policy towards people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It also stated that it had continued to advance its peace initiative, entitled “A Step to a Better Future”, along with the accompanying Peace Fund for a Better Future, both designed to create tangible opportunities and foster trust between divided communities.

## 1. Right to life

27. With regard to the cases highlighted in previous reports, no progress was recorded during the reporting period. Notably, no one has been held accountable for the deaths in Abkhazia and South Ossetia of David Basharuli (in 2014), Giga Otkhozoria (in 2016), Archil Tatumashvili (in 2018), Irakli Kvaratskhelia (in 2019) and Tamaz Ginturi (in 2023). According to the Government of Georgia, those responsible for the death of Vitali Karbaia were released after paying a fine.<sup>26</sup>

28. In its submission, the Public Defender’s Office of Georgia noted that persistent impunity and the failure of the authorities in control to conduct effective investigations into these cases had undermined the protection of the right to life.

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.palmecenter.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Human-Rights-in-Abkhazia-Today-report-by-Thomas-Hammarberg-and-Magdalena-Grono.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> A/HRC/36/65, paras. 46 and 47; A/HRC/39/44, paras. 54 and 55; A/HRC/42/34, paras. 47–49; A/HRC/45/54, para. 44; A/HRC/48/45, paras. 40 and 41; A/HRC/51/64, para. 39; and A/HRC/59/66, para. 32.

## 2. Right to freedom of movement, documents and artificial barriers

29. Restrictions on freedom of movement remained a major concern, particularly along the administrative boundary line with South Ossetia and, to a lesser extent, the administrative boundary line with Abkhazia. This continued to negatively affect human rights, deepen the isolation of communities and limit access to education, healthcare, pensions, markets and other essential services.

30. During the reporting period, the administrative boundary line between Abkhazia and Tbilisi-controlled territory had two main operational crossing points: the main Enguri crossing point (vehicular and pedestrian) and the Saberio-Pakhulani crossing point (pedestrian only), with the latter mostly serving the needs of a small group of residents of adjacent villages. In its submission, the Government of Georgia stated that both crossing points were subject to arbitrary closures and additional restrictions by the authorities in control and that local residents were frequently compelled to pay unjustified fees for transporting goods or passengers across the Enguri Bridge. OHCHR understands that the four other crossing points in Abkhazia remained closed, significantly extending travel times for residents of adjacent villages, particularly affecting older persons and those requiring medical care.

31. The Government of Georgia has continued to report that, since 2016, ethnic Georgians residing in Gali district in Abkhazia have been forced to register as foreigners and obtain “foreign residence permits”. Those who lack these documents, including teachers and students, are barred from crossing the administrative boundary line, preventing them from accessing essential services and from participating in educational or social activities in Tbilisi-controlled territory. According to information available to OHCHR, amendments to the 2024 “Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens” improved access to “permanent residence permits” in Abkhazia, including by extending their validity from 5 to 10 years. However, procedural inefficiencies persist, with processing times ranging from approximately six to nine months. These delays impact both first-time applicants and those seeking to renew existing “permanent residence permits”. Proper documentation is essential for freedom of movement and access to services, and its absence negatively affects daily life and well-being, especially for older persons and other vulnerable groups, including those with physical, mental or chronic health conditions who require regular access to medical services. The Government of Georgia provided information indicating that, in some cases, ethnic Georgians residing in the Gali district have had to change their surnames to Abkhaz ones and register their ethnic identity as Abkhaz in order to enjoy the full range of their human rights.

32. In its submission, the Government of Georgia reiterated its concerns that the administrative boundary line between South Ossetia and Tbilisi-controlled territory had been closed since September 2019. The Government of Georgia asserted that the closure of the administrative boundary line in September 2019 by the authorities in control in South Ossetia following the opening of a police guard post in the village of Chorchana, located on Tbilisi-controlled territory, continued to represent a significant security concern, noting that the authorities in control had continued to link the reopening of crossing points to developments in this area. However, since August 2022, the administrative boundary line at the crossing points between South Ossetia and Tbilisi-controlled territory has been opened by the authorities in control in South Ossetia for crossing only during the last 11 days of each month. The Government of Georgia also reported on the continued impact of these restrictions, including the implementation of a restrictive “permit” system that significantly limits freedom of movement. In its submission, the European Union stated that the controlled crossing points along the South Ossetian administrative boundary line can only be used by a limited number of individuals who were able to obtain the required documentation. The Government of Georgia additionally reported that, due to the closure of the administrative boundary line in 2019, dozens of ethnic Georgian doctors and other medical staff had been left stranded in Tbilisi-controlled territory and had been unable to return to their homes and workplaces. They had subsequently been replaced by other personnel in South Ossetia, resulting in the permanent loss of their jobs and income and leaving entire families in a situation of increased vulnerability and economic hardship. According to the European Union, the average number of commuters across the administrative boundary line remains

below pre-2019 levels, reflecting the ongoing depopulation of the majority-ethnic Georgian Akhgori district in South Ossetia. In addition, OHCHR understands that the previous practice of allowing vehicle crossings and regulated trade between Tbilisi-controlled territory and South Ossetia has been discontinued, further contributing to these negative trends.

33. A continued process of “borderization” was enforced by the authorities in control along the administrative boundary lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2025, the Government of Georgia recorded 3 cases involving the installation of razor and barbed wire fences, as well as “border” signs, trenches and anti-fire dividing lines in Abkhazia and 55 such cases in South Ossetia. These activities have a continuing adverse impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in the two regions, including by restricting access to farmland, including grazing pastures, religious sites and cemeteries near the administrative boundary line. In its submission, the European Union underlined that concerns over the process of “borderization” had intensified following the November 2023 incident in which Georgian citizen Tamaz Ginturi<sup>27</sup> was fatally shot, reportedly by border guards of the Russian Federation, as he attempted to visit a church on the South Ossetian side of the administrative boundary line.

### **3. Deprivation of liberty and allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment**

34. OHCHR continued to receive allegations of arbitrary deprivation of liberty by the authorities in control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The allegations primarily involve ethnic Georgians, especially those residing along the administrative boundary lines, who are accused of so-called “illegal crossings”. Reports also implicate Russian Federation border guards in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia in similar practices. Such actions contribute to an environment of sustained insecurity and undermine trust within affected communities.

35. According to the Government of Georgia, a total of 74 people were detained in 2025: 40 in Abkhazia and 34 in South Ossetia. The European Union recorded 52 new detention cases in 2025, comprising 19 in Abkhazia (including 6 foreign nationals) and 33 in South Ossetia (including 1 foreign national). The Public Defender’s Office of Georgia reported the detention of 40 people in Abkhazia (35 men, 3 women and 2 minors) and 32 in South Ossetia (25 men, 3 women and 4 minors). At the end of 2025, the Government of Georgia stated that 20 individuals remained deprived of their liberty (7 in Abkhazia and 13 in South Ossetia), while the Public Defender’s Office of Georgia reported 15 people still detained (4 in Abkhazia and 11 in South Ossetia). The European Union similarly reported that, as at 31 December 2025, 15 individuals remained detained: 4 in Abkhazia (1 woman and 3 men) and 11 in South Ossetia (all men, including 1 foreign national).

36. The Government of Georgia submitted that prolonged detention remained a serious concern in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, particularly for individuals with health conditions. It cited, as an example, the case of Irakli Bebu,<sup>28</sup> who was released on 30 March 2025 and subsequently transferred to Tbilisi-controlled territory after having been deprived of his liberty for four years and six months in Abkhazia. The Government of Georgia also alleged that detainees, including vulnerable individuals, such as women, children, older persons and foreigners, frequently faced physical abuse. The European Union expressed concern that ethnic Georgian detainees in the two regions were increasingly subjected to charges, such as “drug possession or smuggling”, which Georgian authorities claim are often fabricated. According to the Public Defender’s Office of Georgia, these practices by the authorities in control continue to violate the rights of affected communities, highlighting the need for international human rights monitoring access. Information available to OHCHR suggests a noticeable increase in the detention of foreign nationals in Abkhazia, especially individuals from countries in the Middle East, as well as a significant number of nationals of Cuba.

### **4. Right to health**

37. According to information available to OHCHR, access to primary healthcare for residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains of serious concern. Key issues affecting the

<sup>27</sup> A/HRC/59/66, para. 32.

<sup>28</sup> A/HRC/51/64, para. 49.

enjoyment of the right to health identified in previous OHCHR reports continue to be relevant in both regions,<sup>29</sup> including poor medical services, inadequate infrastructure and shortages of qualified staff. The European Union submitted that the Government of Georgia continued to offer free medical assistance at and ambulance transportation to hospitals in Tbilisi-controlled territory for residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia through its State referral programme, with the number of beneficiaries remaining similar to previous years. The Public Defender's Office also emphasized that the referral programme in Tbilisi-controlled territory continued to play a crucial role in ensuring access to essential healthcare for residents of these areas. In 2025, the programme provided State-funded medical support to 1,406 patients, including 1,131 from Abkhazia and 260 from South Ossetia.

38. According to information available to OHCHR, the quality of health services in Gali and adjacent districts in Abkhazia remains poor, with conditions largely unchanged since the previous OHCHR report.<sup>30</sup> The European Union noted that international organizations, together with the Georgian authorities, continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Abkhazia, including measures aimed at addressing deficiencies in the health sector.

39. In its submission, the Democracy Research Institute also highlighted shortcomings in the healthcare system in South Ossetia, noting that the hospital in Akhgori had lacked a permanent doctor for over a year in 2025. As a result, residents were compelled to seek emergency treatment outside the district, in Tskhinvali or Tbilisi. Concerns persist, however, over the negative impact of restrictions on freedom of movement across the administrative boundary line between South Ossetia and Tbilisi-controlled territory on access to healthcare, critical services and urgent medical evacuations. The Government of Georgia reported that the authorities in control denied medical evacuations on the basis of ethnicity, which in some instances has reportedly contributed to deaths resulting from delayed access to medical care.

## 5. Education in the Georgian language

40. According to the European Union, the phased replacement of Georgian with Russian as the language of instruction in schools in the Gali district of Abkhazia, which was completed in 2021, has now been replicated in the Akhgori district of South Ossetia. This has resulted in the systematic elimination of Georgian language education in both regions.<sup>31</sup> The Government of Georgia reiterated in its submission that Georgian had been fully replaced by Russian as the language of instruction in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a result, the Government of Georgia asserted that more than 4,000 schoolchildren and approximately 600 kindergarten-aged children were forced to study in Russian, as Georgian had been entirely removed as language of instruction.

41. In its submission, the Government of Georgia outlined the detrimental impact of the replacement of Georgian by Russian as the language of instruction in Abkhazia,<sup>32</sup> particularly in the Gali district, where socioeconomic pressures have compelled hundreds of families to leave their homes. According to the Government of Georgia, around 200 schoolchildren permanently left the Gali district at the end of the 2023/24 school year. According to the Public Defender's Office of Georgia, in the 2024/25 academic year, 30 general education schools, 9 preschool institutions and 5 art schools were operating in the Gali district, with 3,169 students enrolled and 963 teachers employed. This represents a decline from 3,348 in the 2023/24 academic year. The Government of Georgia further reported that ethnic Georgian teachers faced increasing pressure, including threats, dismissals and replacement by teachers educated in Abkhazia or in the Russian Federation. The Government of Georgia stated that, in at least nine schools in the Gali district, ethnic Georgian principals had already been replaced, with some reportedly resigning following threats of being accused of "treason". The European Union reported that a Georgian teacher in the Gali district had been deprived of his liberty in October 2025 on alleged espionage charges.

42. The Government of Georgia submitted that schools in South Ossetia prohibited school materials displaying the Georgian flag and presented historical narratives portraying Georgia

<sup>29</sup> A/HRC/59/66, paras. 45–48.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 46.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 49–52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 51.

as an “enemy”. The Government of Georgia reported that schools in the depopulated villages of Didmukha, Muguti, Dvani, Tiliani and Tcholibauri in South Ossetia had been forced to close entirely. According to the Public Defender’s Office, only five schools remain open in the Akhgori district of South Ossetia, none of which offers education in the Georgian language. Georgian is taught only as a subject in the eleventh grade in four schools. In 2025, a total of 38 students were enrolled in these schools, with 80 teachers employed. According to the Government of Georgia, children in Akhgori district are reportedly required to take part in anti-Georgian propagandistic events, with disciplinary measures imposed in cases of refusal.

## **6. Housing, land and property, and economic, social and cultural rights**

43. According to information received by OHCHR, residents of Gali district in Abkhazia face obstacles in registering property if they decline to relinquish their Georgian citizenship. In addition, the Democracy Research Institute submitted that pension benefits of ethnic Georgian residents of Gali district were significantly lower than those received by individuals holding Russian or other locally recognized documentation. The Democracy Research Institute further reported that new pension regulations, requiring permanent residence and monthly in-person collection, had been used to exert pressure on the population to reduce movement or connection to areas under the Tbilisi-controlled territory. These rules disproportionately affect ethnic Georgians with ties to Tbilisi-controlled territory, leaving many unable to access their social security benefits. According to the European Union, the Abkhaz “social services” have reportedly doubled the monthly poverty allowance. Despite this, the Gali ethnic Georgian population largely consists of older persons who are impoverished, and outward migration to Tbilisi-controlled territory continues due to difficult living conditions. In 2025, livelihoods in the Gali district were further affected by repeated disruptions to the water supply.

44. According to information available to OHCHR, the title of an estimated 40 to 50 per cent of all real estate in Abkhazia is not properly documented. Many residents, including both holders of “Abkhaz passports” and individuals with “permanent residence permits”, do not possess legally recognized ownership titles and must undertake costly and time-consuming “court” procedures to formalize property rights, particularly in cases where the most recent properly registered owner passed away decades earlier. Living in undocumented properties exposes residents to eviction, secondary occupation and protracted legal disputes. According to information available to OHCHR, amendments to the “Civil Code” in Abkhazia, adopted on 9 July 2025, expanded existing restrictions on inheritance rights. Previously, only individuals directly involved in actions deemed to undermine the claimed “sovereignty” of Abkhazia, such as participation in the 1992–1993 conflict, were barred from inheriting property. The revised provisions now extend these restrictions to the family members of such individuals, regardless of nationality or legal status. OHCHR understands there have been many instances where legitimate owners were unable to transfer property rights prior to their death, and their heirs are now unable to return or initiate inheritance procedures.

45. The Government of Georgia reiterated its concerns that monuments of Georgian cultural, historical and religious heritage located in Abkhazia and South Ossetia continued to deteriorate. It stated that numerous monuments had been deliberately damaged, altered or misrepresented, aimed at erasing their Georgian origins. The Bedia Monastery (tenth century) and the Mother of God Monastery in Thiri (sixteenth century) remained of specific concern in this regard.

## **7. Gender equality and gender-based discrimination and violence**

46. In its submission, the European Union indicated that women and girls in Abkhazia and South Ossetia experienced significant levels of gender-based violence, exacerbated by a lack of functional protection mechanisms and access to psychosocial rehabilitation services. Instances of domestic violence and femicide are reportedly numerous and often go uninvestigated and unprosecuted. Many women living along the administrative boundary lines, including those in the Gali district and in Akhgori, lack access to essential social services, including sexual and reproductive health services. Owing to the total ban on

abortion in Abkhazia, women are compelled to travel to Georgia or the Russian Federation to access appropriate care, which can be dangerous or, in some cases, impossible. Women's opportunities to engage in public life in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia is reportedly very limited, reflecting persistent gender inequality.

## 8. Civil society

47. Observations highlighted in previous OHCHR reports regarding restrictions on civil society continue to warrant close attention.<sup>33</sup> According to information received by OHCHR, consideration of the draft proposal on "foreign agents" in Abkhazia, introduced in February 2024 and strongly opposed by civil society, has been postponed, and no subsequent attempts to reintroduce such a framework have been reported. The proposal risked significantly restricting the activities of both international and local organizations operating in Abkhazia, particularly those engaged in trust-building, education and conflict transformation initiatives. The European Union noted that the Russian Federation had launched a €5.5 million grant scheme aimed at supporting Abkhaz civil society organizations. As alternative sources of funding continue to diminish, many NGOs have reportedly begun applying for support under this scheme.

48. According to information received by OHCHR, several civil society organizations working on conflict-related issues have been affected by newly introduced restrictive legislation in Georgia.<sup>34</sup> This may impact confidence-building projects across the conflict divides. The European Union further observed that the exemptions introduced by the Georgian authorities in July 2025 for activities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia under the Law on Grants did not fully mitigate concerns that the broader restrictive framework for civil society now in place in Georgia might impede the work of NGOs engaged in confidence-building initiatives in the two regions. According to the Government of Georgia, international organization projects, including civil society's confidence-building initiatives, continue without impediment.

49. The Democracy Research Institute reported that activists and individuals in South Ossetia advocating for minority rights faced threats. Tamar Mearakishvili,<sup>35</sup> who had been detained by the authorities in control in South Ossetia on 22 December 2025 on charges of "espionage", began a hunger strike and was hospitalized on 30 December 2025 due to her deteriorating health. The European Union noted that her hunger strike had been a protest against her arbitrary detention and that she had subsequently been subjected to forced feeding via perfusion. According to available information, Ms. Mearakishvili was released and expelled to Tbilisi-controlled territory on 31 December 2025.

## 9. Accountability

50. On 30 June 2022, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for three individuals from South Ossetia for alleged crimes committed between 1 July and 10 October 2008 in the context of an international armed conflict in and around South Ossetia. As of the time of reporting, the warrants remain active, and the individuals concerned remain at large.<sup>36</sup>

51. In addition to the previously reported cases,<sup>37</sup> in October 2025, in the case of *Georgia v. Russia (IV)*, the European Court of Human Rights issued its ruling on the question of the just satisfaction to be awarded in respect of non-pecuniary damage,<sup>38</sup> following the Court's judgment of 9 April 2024 in the same case.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> A/HRC/51/64, paras. 63 and 64; and A/HRC/59/66, paras. 56–58.

<sup>34</sup> See para. 10 above.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. Mearakishvili is an ethnic Georgian civil society activist in Akhlagori district who had been cooperating with the international community and reporting allegations of human rights violations. Her case has been mentioned in previous reports (e.g. A/HRC/59/66, para. 58).

<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.icc-cpi.int/georgia>. See also A/HRC/59/66, para. 59.

<sup>37</sup> A/HRC/59/66, para. 60.

<sup>38</sup> *Georgia v. Russia (IV)*, Application No. 39611/18, Judgment (Just satisfaction), 14 October 2025.

<sup>39</sup> Judgment (Merits), 9 April 2024.

## 10. Missing persons

52. ICRC reported on progress under its coordination mechanisms established to clarify the fate of persons missing in relation to the armed conflicts in the 1990s and in 2008 and in their aftermath. According to ICRC, as at December 2025, the remains of 323 persons have been recovered, identified and returned to families since the start of its work, and 1,848 persons remain unaccounted for.

## 11. Geneva International Discussions

53. The sixty-third to sixty-fifth rounds of the Geneva International Discussions, with participants meeting in two parallel working groups, were held during the reporting period, in March, June and November 2025. OHCHR regrets the continued suspension, since June 2018, of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali, which is essential for security and stability on the ground. During the reporting period, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Ergneti was convened seven times.

## C. Situation of internally displaced persons and refugees

54. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 78/283, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly, at its seventy-ninth session, a comprehensive annual report on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, covering the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.<sup>40</sup> The information contained therein remains relevant at the time of the finalization of the present report. According to available information, no progress was made with respect to the return of persons displaced internally as a result of the conflicts. The Government of Georgia asserts that displaced persons from Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained deprived of their fundamental right to a safe and dignified return and continued to face severe obstacles and discrimination by the authorities in control in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including violations of their housing, land and property rights. The European Union stated that the Government of Georgia continued to implement programmes aimed at providing sustainable housing for internally displaced persons who remained accommodated in temporary facilities.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

55. OHCHR recognizes the continued cooperation of the Government of Georgia, including by hosting an OHCHR presence in Tbilisi. OHCHR remains committed to supporting the Government and national stakeholders in addressing human rights issues, including those identified in the present report.

56. OHCHR recommends that the Government of Georgia:

(a) Introduce concrete measures to protect and promote the right to peaceful assembly and address the allegations of serious human rights violations outlined in the report of OHCHR covering the period from 1 June 2023 to 31 December 2024,<sup>41</sup> particularly those occurring in the context of public protests, including arbitrary arrests of demonstrators and the unnecessary or disproportionate use of force against journalists and media workers; and conduct prompt, independent and thorough investigations of such allegations, ensure accountability and guarantee full due process, fair trial safeguards and the possibility of judicial review;

(b) Review amendments made in 2025 to the Law on Broadcasting, the Criminal Code, the Grants Law, the Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations and the Code of Administrative Offences, to ensure that they are fully consistent with international human rights law, in particular articles 19, 20 and 21 of the International

<sup>40</sup> A/79/892.

<sup>41</sup> A/HRC/59/66.

**Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and ensure that all legislative processes are conducted with full transparency and meaningful public participation;**

(c) **Intensify efforts to combat gender-based discrimination and violence and advance gender equality in political representation in Georgia, including by reviewing the gender-related legislative amendments adopted in 2025;**

(d) **Restore an enabling environment for civil society by ensuring that any restrictions on the ability of NGOs and broadcasters to receive foreign support are strictly limited to what is necessary and proportionate and are compliant with international human rights obligations.**

57. **The continued lack of access for international and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms to Abkhazia and South Ossetia remains regrettable. OHCHR reiterates its call for immediate and unimpeded access for all relevant bodies, including OHCHR itself.**

58. **OHCHR continues to support efforts within the Geneva International Discussions to improve the human rights situation and emphasizes the urgent need to resume the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in the Gali district without delay or preconditions.**

59. **Concerning the situation of human rights in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, all actors involved are called upon to:**

(a) **Implement pending recommendations from previous OHCHR reports;**

(b) **Lift undue movement restrictions and fully reopen all crossing points along the administrative boundary lines to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights;**

(c) **Address ongoing allegations of human rights violations, particularly those affecting ethnic Georgians in Gali and Akhgori districts and adjacent areas and displaced persons, and ensure the full enjoyment of their rights;**

(d) **Advance confidence-building measures that are grounded in human rights, promote dialogue and enable civic space, and ensure that international organizations can operate freely without undue restrictions;**

(e) **Investigate all allegations of violations of the right to life and of torture or ill-treatment, ensure accountability for perpetrators, and provide appropriate redress for victims;**

(f) **End any arbitrary deprivation of liberty and address related concerns in full compliance with international human rights law;**

(g) **Take all measures necessary to lift existing restrictions on freedom of movement and to address the adverse effects of current practices, ensuring the equal enjoyment of all human rights;**

(h) **Combat gender-based discrimination and violence, and ensure that women and girls have safe, unhindered access to essential social and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, and meaningful opportunities for public participation;**

(i) **Ensure the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and access to quality education for all without discrimination, including the right to receive instruction in one's native language.**