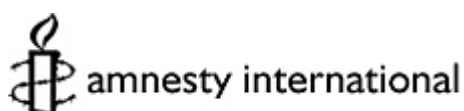


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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Georgia

Head of state: **Mikheil Saakashvili**
Head of government: **Nikoloz Gilauri**
Death penalty: **abolitionist for all crimes**
Population: **4.2 million**
Life expectancy: **72 years**
Under-5 mortality (m/f): **39/33 per 1,000**
Adult literacy: **99.7 per cent**

Concerns continued over the progress of investigations into crimes under international law during the war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008 and in its immediate aftermath. Despite some progress, solutions for the housing and integration of internally displaced people remained insufficient.

Background

The May municipal elections, while assessed favourably by international observers, were accompanied by reports of harassment and intimidation of some opposition candidates. In October, amendments to the Constitution due to enter into force in 2013 were made which will significantly reduce the presidential powers, and increase the powers of the Prime Minister and the government.

The situation remained tense in and around Abkhazia and South Ossetia, regions of Georgia which had declared themselves independent in 2008 following the war between Russia and Georgia. Discussions in Geneva which began that year as part of the ceasefire agreement remained largely deadlocked.

Civilians also continued to suffer from harassment and insecurity in the Gali region of Abkhazia, where shoot-outs, killings and acts of arson were reported in June.

Aftermath of armed conflict

There was no significant progress in investigating violations of international human rights and humanitarian law during the war in August 2008 and in its immediate aftermath, or in bringing the perpetrators to justice. In September the Council of Europe (CoE) Human Rights Commissioner reported "serious shortcomings" by all sides in the process of clarifying the fate of people missing since the war. The report also criticized the Georgian authorities' apparent failure to effectively investigate the fate of three

Ossetian men who allegedly disappeared in Georgian-controlled territory in October 2008.

- Six Ossetian men, held by the Georgian authorities following the war, were released in March, followed by the release of six people by the de facto authorities in South Ossetia in May. The CoE Human Rights Commissioner called for the release of the remaining people detained in Tskhinvali during and after the conflict in South Ossetia as their health was reportedly deteriorating.
- On 26 July, prominent journalist and civil society activist Timur Tskhovrebov was attacked in Tskhinvali, South Ossetia, by a group of up to 10 people, leaving him with a knife wound to the neck, a broken finger and other injuries to his face and body. Four days earlier, Boris Chochiev, a senior official in the de facto South Ossetian administration, had condemned the Georgian-Ossetian Civic Forum in the Netherlands, which Timur Tskhovrebov attended, as traitorous and harmful to South Ossetian interests. By the end of the year, no effective investigation had been carried out into the attack.
- Civilians continued to be detained and arrested in Georgia and South Ossetia for "illegal crossing" of the Administrative Boundary Line (the de facto border between Georgia and South Ossetia created as a result of the war). Incidents of prolonged detention became less frequent during the second part of the year.

The EU Monitoring Mission, the only international monitor with a conflict-related mandate, was denied access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the de facto authorities.

Internally displaced people

The government took steps to improve the living conditions of displaced people, for example by renovating some of the poorest accommodation and transferring the ownership to displaced people. However, some of the refurbished collective centres and newly built settlements did not meet international standards of adequate housing, due to insufficient access to water, sanitation and other essential services. Integration of displaced people remained slow; many continue to face obstacles in accessing employment, health care and social security.

Around 500 displaced people in Tbilisi faced forced evictions in June, July and August. The evictions breached international standards, and in several instances the authorities failed to provide people with any alternative shelter or compensation. In August, the government halted all further evictions pending the adoption of new guidelines on housing which were finalized in October.

Police and security forces

In September, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture reported some progress in preventing ill-treatment of people by police during pre-trial detention, but concerns remained regarding ill-treatment on arrest and in police stations.

New stop-and-search powers for the police were adopted on 24 September. Several local human rights organizations expressed concerns as the law failed to specify either the exact circumstances in which the police could use these powers, or the length of the time a person could be held under them.

Investigations stalled on the reported incidents of harassment, intimidation and beating of protesters by police and unknown masked men during demonstrations against the President between April and July 2009.

- The government failed to effectively investigate and bring to justice police officers who had, according to reports, recklessly fired impact projectiles at demonstrators on 6 May 2009, injuring several people.

- Details of an internal investigation by the Ministry of Interior into the alleged excessive use of force by police officers during the dispersal of peaceful demonstrators outside the Tbilisi police headquarters on 15 June 2009 were not publicly disclosed.

Violence against women and girls

The first state-funded shelters for victims of domestic violence were opened in Tbilisi and Gori. In March 2010, the Parliament adopted the "Law on Gender Equality", to address discrimination in employment, education, health and social services and family relations.

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