

UPR Pre-Session Statement

My name is Tamar Abazadze and I will deliver this statement on behalf of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia. This Statement will address the status of implementation of recommendations received by Georgia during the previous UPR cycle, in particular the situation of social and economic rights and rights of the child in the country.

As regards the protection of the rights of the child, under the inefficient system of social protection child poverty and inadequate standard of living persists as a problem. There were approximately 150 000 minors who were recipients of living wages in 2019 and 18 percent of children were placed in state care on the ground of poverty and inadequate standard of living.

Lack of sufficient numbers of social workers and psychologists negatively affect the level of protection from violence and abuse, including sexual abuse of children, particularly of minors in the state care. Rehabilitation of children placed in state care remain problematic.

There is an increase in the number of suicides and attempted suicides committed by juveniles in Georgia. The child suicide prevention strategy has not been elaborated to this day. The indicator of leaving schools is high; children living and working in streets and involved in manual labour are particularly vulnerable.

It is noteworthy, that while the registration of marriage of under-18 persons is not carried out anymore, early marriage and the practice of engagement still remains one of the most important challenges. The analysis of cases studied by the Office of Public Defender shows a weak coordination among general educational institutions, law enforcement agencies and the Social Service Agency on cases of early marriage.

Fulfilment of the right to quality inclusive education still remains a serious challenge at all levels of education. Statistical data on children with disabilities engaged in preschool and general education is still unavailable.

Similar to the previous years, implementation of economic and social rights in the country, remains as one of the main challenges.

There are approximately 3 200 internally displaced families registered who live under conditions that pose threat to life and health. Public defender identified that there are no formalized procedures for the resettlement of IDPs from buildings that pose increased threat to life and health.

Similar to the previous years, there is still no governmental strategy or a corresponding action plan for homeless persons; comprehensive legislative definition of a homeless person and regulatory framework necessary for the realisation of the right to adequate housing.

An amendment to the Law of Georgia on Occupational Safety as a result of which the Law now covers all spheres of economic activities and allows labor inspectors to access workplaces without undue restrictions, as well as new regulations adopted in September 2020 which allows labor inspectors to oversee the protection of the labour law, including by effectively responding to the violations of labour rights, is particularly worth noting. At the same time, the Public Defender's proposal to introduce a mechanism of referring individual cases of alleged discrimination to the Public Defender has not been taken into account. The issue of occupational safety also remains highly problematic.

Suggested recommendations for Georgia:

- Form a special group under the Interagency Commission for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that will work on preparation of necessary measures, strategic vision and action plan for prevention of suicide;
- Revise state policy to fight against the child poverty and inadequate standard of living, so that the present social programs are evaluated and in view of the identified needs, plan the efficient services aimed at prevention of poverty
- Adopt normative acts to ensure the minimum safety and health requirements for the workplace.

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