



**Statement as delivered by the delegation of Georgia at the
2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 17, Fundamental Freedoms II, including:
Freedom of movement, migrant workers and the integration of
legal migrants
Warsaw, September 21, 2017**

Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Estonia on behalf of the EU and in addition, I would like to make following national statement.

The situation in the occupied territories of Georgia remains grave and is characterized by violations of a range of rights. Especially, restrictions on freedom movement undermine individuals' basic human rights and standard of living on the ground. Russian occupation and associated measures restrict freedom of movement and has significant negative impact on the residents living on the both sides of the occupational line.

Annually, in occupied Abkhazia, at least around 2000 people are being illegally detained by the Russian occupational forces for so-called illegal border crossing reason. The illegally detained people, residing on the territory controlled by Georgian central government are either forced to pay so called fines, which actually is a significant amount of money for the locals, or they are imprisoned. For instance, on April 5th, 2017 father and son Rogavas, residents of village Rike, Zugdidi Municipality, were illegally detained by the Russian FSB, while fishing in the river Enguri and were "sentenced" to two and two and a half years of "imprisonment" respectively. It is also noteworthy that, while the mentioned people are kept in so called prison, Mr. Rashid Kanji-Oghli, the brutal murderer of Georgian citizen Mr. Giga Otkhozoria has never spent a single day in "custody". Despite the fact, that Georgian Central Government had a perpetrator's identifying video evidence, recorded by the CCTV camera from the crime scene, de facto Abkhazian authorities let the criminal with impunity.

In regard with occupied Tskhinvali region, the illegal detention cases for so called illegal border crossing reasons are comparatively less than in Occupied Abkhazian region. During the last several years, the annual number of illegally detained persons has been varied from 100 to 180. Currently, 3 persons are illegally imprisoned in occupied Tskhinvali region. One of them is Giorgi Giunashvili, on June 8th, 2016 illegally detained

by FSB officers for so called illegal border crossing reason and later sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for the alleged crimes which were totally ungrounded and tailor made. It is noteworthy that on February 22, 2017 the de facto General Prosecutor, Mr. Uruzmag Jagaev, in one of his interviews stated that “they had detained a war criminal and sentenced him 20 years of imprisonment”. In our view above mentioned statement is a clear proof that, the tailor-made case of Mr. Giunashvili is groundless, highly politicized and has been directly aimed to blackmail Georgian central government.

Also, on June 2017, the de facto Tskhinvali authorities and Russian FSB representatives launched another phase of “Borderisation” process. The occupational forces started to create the so called anti-fire dividing lines along the ABL, which itself is a continuation of the “Borderisation” process and a key element in restriction of freedom of movement on the ground.

Another most vivid example of restriction of free movement across the occupation line is the decision made by the de facto Abkhaz authorities to shut down the so called crossing points on Enguri River. In 2016, 2 functional crossing points were abolished and later in 2017, the same happened with another 2 channels of communication, leaving the Enguri Bridge as the only one remaining crossing point connecting Georgian central government controlled area with the occupied Abkhazia region. We believe that the above mentioned decision was orchestrated by the Russian Federation and was targeted on full restriction of free movement between the two communities. All in all, on May 20th, as a result of newly established restrictive measures Mr. Otar Patsuria, the resident of occupied village Meore Otobaia, while trying to cross the ABL through River Enguri (as he physically could not reach Enguri crossing point) in order to receive his pension in Zugdidi district drowned in Enguri River.

Also, one of the main elements of the restriction to freedom of movement for the ethnic Georgians living in occupied Gali district was the so called residence permit enactment by the de facto Abkhazian authorities. According to new de facto regulations, locals without the up mentioned document in Gali district are not allowed to freely move neither outside of Gali district, nor cross the ABL.

Since 2016, also school children, living in the southern part of the occupied Gali district have been negatively affected by the closure of the checkpoints. They were unable to attend classes, as physically it became almost impossible to pass such long distance during the day. As a result of closure of crossing points, restriction of freedom of movement and other hampering regulations, some of the school children were forced to leave their permanent residence places and move to the relatives' houses located on the territory controlled by Georgian central government.

Overall, it is obvious that freedom of movement remains extremely problematic issue for the residents on both sides of the occupation line. The provided facts are extremely worrisome and need entire international community's attention and support.

Georgia calls upon the Russian Federation, as a power exercising effective control over occupied territories of Georgia, to stop its aggressive policy, restore respect for Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders and implement the August 12, 2008 6-point Cease-fire Agreement.