

The Office of the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia

Speech delivered by Public Defender of Georgia, Mr. Levan Ioseliani

Mr. President, distinguished members of Council, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor to address you in the capacity of the Public Defender - A Status NHRI of Georgia_ regarding the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on cooperation with Georgia.

At the outset, I would like to highlight the stark human rights situation in the occupied territories of Georgia. **The right to life remains a severe challenge.** The cases of alleged torture and murders of Georgians in Abkhazia and Akhalkalaki still have not been properly investigated and no one has been punished. The sense of impunity in the occupied territories of Georgia adds to the fragile security situation on the ground, which is especially felt by the ethnic Georgians living on these territories.

Similar to previous years **the number of illegal detentions remains high.** As of May 31, 2023, 11 citizens of Georgia remained in illegal detention. The de facto regimes also arbitrarily limit freedom of movement through prohibitions or regulations imposed on the so-called crossing points. Such restrictions also hinder locals' access to health care. For example, there were several cases of death in both regions due to a lack of timely access to medical services in recent years.

Restrictions imposed on the right to get education in the native language in the Gali dramatically degraded the rights of ethnic

Georgians, their knowledge of the native language and the quality of education in general.

Finally, CSOs' work is also impeded as international NGO's and donors lack access to the occupied regions.

As a final remark let me underline that the Russian Federation, which maintains effective political, economic and military control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, is ultimately responsible for human rights violations committed on those territories.

Public defender of Georgia once again expresses deep concern over the existing situation and calls on international society to use all possible international formats to ensure that the Russian Federation government allows full and unrestricted access of international monitors to the occupied territories of Georgia.

I thank you.