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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN GEORGIA  
FOR THE 51<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE  
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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## **Status of Human Rights in Georgia for the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the Universal Periodic Review**

### **Introduction**

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an international, non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in Georgia for the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

### **Background**

2. Georgia is a country that borders the Black Sea and has a population of approximately 3.6 million people.<sup>1</sup> The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 83.4% identifying as Orthodox Christian, 10.7% as Muslim, 2.9% as Armenian Apostolic, 0.5% as Roman Catholic, and 0.5% as having no religious identification.<sup>2</sup>

3. Georgia's last review was held on January 26, 2020.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the review, Georgia received 285 recommendations, 257 of which it accepted.<sup>4</sup> It was recommended by Belarus, and supported by Georgia, that the government "[s]tep up efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including by improving law enforcement practices with a view to bringing to justice and punishing the perpetrators, as well as providing victims of trafficking with comprehensive protection and rehabilitation."<sup>5</sup> No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom. In our 2010 UPR for Georgia, we commended Georgia's work on improving religious freedom in the country and stopping incidents of violence against religious minorities.

### **Legal Framework**

4. Under Article 1431 of the Criminal Code of Georgia:

Buying or selling or serious violations of human rights by means of the threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deceit, abuse of authority, power or of a position of vulnerability, or giving and receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or subsequent reception of a person for the purpose of exploitation – shall be punishable with deprivation of liberty from

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<sup>1</sup> David Marshall Lang & Mikhail Leonidovich Djibladze, *Georgia*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Georgia> (last updated July 11, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Universal Periodic Review – Georgia*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ge-index> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> *Infographic – Georgia*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/GE/Infographic.pdf> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR, UPR of Georgia (3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle – 37<sup>th</sup> Session): Thematic List of Recommendations, [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/GE/UPR37\\_Georgia\\_Thematic\\_List\\_of\\_Recommendations.docx](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session37/GE/UPR37_Georgia_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx) (last visited July 14, 2025).

seven to twelve years or temporary disqualification from an official position or practice of commercial activities for one year.<sup>6</sup>

5. Additionally, Georgia is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).<sup>7</sup> Article 8 of the ICCPR states that “[n]o one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held in servitude.”<sup>8</sup>

6. Further, Georgia is a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.<sup>9</sup> Under Article 9 sec. 1 of this Protocol:

1. States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures:

(a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons; especially women and children, from revictimization.<sup>10</sup>

## Human Trafficking

7. Globally, trafficking for sexual exploitation accounts for approximately 36% of human trafficking victims.<sup>11</sup> Within this, approximately 90% of victims who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are women and girls.<sup>12</sup> Even though many countries, like Georgia, have a legal framework criminalizing human trafficking, millions of people are trafficked all around the world every year.<sup>13</sup> Tragically, human trafficking around the world has been increasing. Since 2019, there has been a 25% increase in the number of human trafficking cases.<sup>14</sup>

8. In Georgia, human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation is the predominant form of human trafficking, while trafficking for forced labor also exists.<sup>15</sup> Traffickers often

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<sup>6</sup> Criminal Code of Georgia art. 1431, ANTISLAVERY IN DOMESTIC LEGISLATION <https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/country/georgia/?dataset=adld> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> *Ratification Status for Georgia*, OHCHR, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/treaty.aspx](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/treaty.aspx) (last visited June 23, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 8, *adopted* Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

<sup>9</sup> *Chapter XVIII Penal Matters: 12. a Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, UNITED NATIONS TREATY COLLECTION, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18) (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime art. 9 § 1, *adopted* Nov. 15, 2000, 2237 U.N.T.S. 319, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

<sup>11</sup> *Understanding Human Trafficking*, UN, <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/understanding-human-trafficking> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> *Georgia*, GLOBAL ORGANIZED INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/2021/country/georgia> (last visited June 24, 2025).

target individuals with false promises of well-paying jobs working in processing plants, salons, restaurants, hospitals, and hotels.<sup>16</sup> Women, in particular, are targeted for sex trafficking both in Georgia and abroad.<sup>17</sup> In Georgia, these women are often exploited in the tourist areas like the Adjara region and in cities like Tbilisi and Batumi.<sup>18</sup> While the exact number of human trafficking victims in Georgia is unknown due to its clandestine nature, it is estimated that there are as many as 31,000 people (almost 1% of Georgia's population) living under modern slavery in Georgia.<sup>19</sup>

9. Georgia has implemented numerous measures to combat human trafficking. For example, the government has financed two shelters,<sup>20</sup> increased the number of labor inspectors, and created a mobile group to identify potential victims of human trafficking.<sup>21</sup> Further, the government amended its penal code to allow the Ministry of Internal Affairs to provide human trafficking victims with victim-witness coordinators.<sup>22</sup> However, despite these improvements, the government has been unable to effectively investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking.<sup>23</sup> In 2022, the government initiated criminal proceedings for only four cases.<sup>24</sup> In 2024, the government only registered three cases of human trafficking.<sup>25</sup>

10. There are numerous reasons why Georgia has been unable to effectively combat human trafficking. For example, while police have conducted some raids on potential commercial sex establishments, authorities have lacked procedures to identify human trafficking victims.<sup>26</sup> Law enforcement agencies are also understaffed and lack the experience to investigate organized crime threats, like human trafficking. Further, authorities have not been adequately trained to investigate and collect evidence in cases of human trafficking.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, foreign victims of human trafficking are required to remain in Georgia through the end of the trial, which hinders victim cooperation because the victims desire to return home and begin healing from their traumatic experiences.<sup>28</sup> All of these factors have contributed to Georgia's declining rates of human trafficking convictions.

11. Below, we have highlighted a few of the cases of human trafficking that have been investigated since Georgia's last UPR. While we are thankful that in these cases the traffickers have been arrested, it is important to note that many cases go unreported. These horrifying stories illustrate why Georgia must take the issue of human trafficking seriously.

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<sup>16</sup> *Country Profiles: Georgia*, INTEGRAL HUMAN DEV., <https://migrants-refugees.va/country-profile/georgia/> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Global Slavery Index 2023*, WALK

FREE, <https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2023/05/17114737/Global-Slavery-Index-2023.pdf> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>20</sup> *Georgia*, *supra* note 15.

<sup>21</sup> *Georgia Demonstrates Serious Efforts to Eliminate Trafficking and Help Victims*, RUSTAVI 2 (July 20, 2022), <https://rustavi2.ge/en/news/234161>.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia*, OMBUDSMAN (2022), <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2023120411211781277.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> *Statistics of Registered Crime*, GEOSTAT, <https://www.geostat.ge/media/62820/Unified-Report-on-Criminal-Justice-Statistics-%28Mar%2C-2024%29.pdf> (last visited July 14, 2025).

<sup>26</sup> *Georgia Demonstrates Serious Efforts to Eliminate Trafficking and Help Victims*, *supra* note 21.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

12. In May 2025, authorities arrested and charged an individual for human trafficking.<sup>29</sup> The trafficker used threats of violence to sexually exploit his victim and forced her into providing sexual services to individuals for money in Georgia.<sup>30</sup>

13. In February 2025, authorities arrested two individuals in Georgia for trafficking a disabled person.<sup>31</sup> The traffickers used violence and psychological abuse to sexually exploit the victim for financial gain.<sup>32</sup>

14. On January 30, 2025, three women were returned to Thailand after they had been rescued from a human trafficking scheme in Georgia.<sup>33</sup> The three women were lured to Georgia after seeing ads offering \$12,000 - \$18,000 to be surrogates and also promised to pay for expenses such as housing.<sup>34</sup> However, soon after arriving in Georgia, their passports were confiscated and they were taken to an isolated residential complex.<sup>35</sup> Once there, the women were injected with hormone treatments to increase egg production and then their eggs were taken through an invasive medical procedure.<sup>36</sup>

15. In 2025, authorities extradited the leaders of a transnational organized crime group to France to face prosecution.<sup>37</sup> The transnational group trafficked at least seven individuals from Georgia to France and sexually exploited them.<sup>38</sup>

16. In June 2024, authorities arrested and charged four individuals in Georgia for human trafficking.<sup>39</sup> The four individuals developed a human trafficking scheme where they recruited and forced a disabled person to provide sexual services for money.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Police Arrest One Over Trafficking Charges*, GEORGIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTER (May 8, 2025), <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/one-arrested-over-trafficking-charges/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Id.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ministry of Internal Affairs Arrested Two Persons for Group Trafficking of a Person with Disabilities*, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFF. (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://police.ge/en/shinagan-saqmeta-saministrom-shshm-piris-mimart-djgufurad-gankhortsielebuli-trefikingis-faqtze-ori-piri-daakava/16557#:~:text=The%20employees%20of%20the%20Main,of%20a%20person%20with%20disabilities.>

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> Ellie Schroeder, *Investigators Examine Reports of “Human Egg Farm” in the Republic of Georgia*, RMU SENTRY MEDIA (Feb. 21, 2025), <https://www.rmusentrymedia.com/news/investigators-examine-reports-of-a-human-egg-farm-in-the-republic-of-georgia/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Georgia Hands Over Suspects in Transnational Trafficking Case to French Authorities*, CIVIL GEORGIA (May 20, 2025), <https://civil.ge/archives/682829#:~:text=Georgia%20Hands%20Over%20Suspects%20in%20Transnational%20Trafficking%20Case%20to%20French%20Authorities,-Civil.ge%20Send&text=Georgian%20authorities%20have%20extradited%20several,Georgia%20announced%20on%20May%2020.>

<sup>38</sup> *Id.*

<sup>39</sup> *The Ministry of Internal Affairs Arrested 4 People for the Fact of Non-Reporting a Particularly Grave Crime and Trafficking*, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFF. (June 21, 2024), <https://police.ge/en/shinagan-saqmeta-saministrom-trefikingis-da-gansakutrebti-mdzime-danashaulis-sheutkobineblobis-faqtze-4-piri-daakava/16317>.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

17. In April 2024, authorities arrested a human trafficker for trafficking four individuals and using them for forced labor.<sup>41</sup> The trafficker used threats of physical attacks to coerce four individuals and exploit them for labor on his farm.<sup>42</sup>

### **Recommendations**

18. While we commend Georgia's recent efforts to combat human trafficking by providing resources for victims of human trafficking, there is still much work to be done to combat human trafficking. Georgia's disturbing lack of human trafficking convictions in recent years shows that authorities are unable to investigate and prosecute cases of human traffickers, especially given the high estimated rates of trafficking victims.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ministry of Internal Affairs Arrested 1 Person on Charges of Trafficking*, RUSTAVI2 (Apr. 9, 2024), <https://rustavi2.ge/en/news/279532>.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*