



**Socio-Economic Problems and Needs Assessment
in the Villages Adjacent to the Occupation Line of
Tskhinvali Region**

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER



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Human Rights Center (HRC) was established on December 10, 1996, in Tbilisi. The objectives of HRC are to strengthen the respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms and to promote peace processes in Georgia. In order to achieve the above objectives, it is of utmost importance that the awareness of the public is raised, and human rights are observed, further the government respects the rule of law and principles of transparency and distribution of power and ensures the elimination of discrimination at all levels.

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The Report below reviews the human rights situation in the villages adjacent to the occupation line between the occupied territory of Tskhinvali region and Georgia controlled territory in the period of April 2024 to October 2024. The document analyzes illegal borderization, restricted access to natural resources for locals, violation of property rights and deteriorated socio-economic situation caused by the occupation.

In the frame of the project, HRC representatives visited 14 villages adjacent to the occupation line.

THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED DURING FIELD VISITS

In the frame of the project, the HRC representatives visited the conflict-affected villages, where they met local people and heard the problems of the people living near the division line.

In the reporting period, they visited **the following villages in Dusheti, Kareli and Kaspi municipalities: Gremiskhevi, Petriani, Mikeliani, Karkushaani, Tsikhisubani, Dirbi, Takhtisdziri, Dvani, Kvemo Tchala, Pantiani, Sakorintlo, Tvaurebi and Odzisi.** The HRC representatives met local population and visited the places where their entry was safe.

After meeting local people, Human Rights Center petitioned the local and central authorities to advocate resolution of the problems identified during the visits. The organization multiple times requested public information from respective state agencies.

In addition to the security problems caused by the occupation, the locals complained about socio-economic hardship.

Some young people, still living in the villages, refrained from speaking with the HRC representatives. However, part of the young people noted in their conversation that they will think of going abroad if no working places are created in the area. The main source of income for the people in the above-listed villages is agriculture and livestock farming. The locals, who are farming in the villages, face many problems because of occupation. Locals have limited access to the small part of agricultural land, which is on the Georgia-controlled territory, because it is dangerous to cultivate plots near the occupation line. Additionally, absence of irrigation water creates problems to cultivate lands.

During the field visits, the HRC representatives identified infrastructural problems too, which are serious burden for the people living adjacent to the occupation line and need to be resolved timely. Inhabitants of some villages complained that their villages do not have status of mountainous settlement. The population does not know what the criteria for

granting the status to the villages are and why they cannot enjoy the benefits like other inhabitants of mountainous settlements.

To resolve the problems identified during the reporting period, it is critically important that local and central governments worked in coordination and proactively. They must have close communication with the population and conduct frequent meetings with them. Due to the creeping occupation, when there is increased threat, the problems of the people living in these villages must be priority.

VISIT IN THE VILLAGES OF DUSHETI MUNICIPALITY

On July 12, 2024, HRC representatives visited the following villages alongside the occupation line in Dusheti municipality – **Gremiskhevi, Petriani, Mikeliani, Karkushaani and Tsikhisubani**. In these villages, people cope with the hard socio-economic hardship alongside the problems caused by the occupation.

It is worth to mentioned that the central road connecting these villages with the community center is repaired and it shall be positively evaluated. The abovementioned **villages have the status of mountainous settlement, that is significant benefit for the local population.**

HRC representatives had visited these villages in 2021 too.¹ The problems which the locals had then, were partly resolved by July 12, 2024. Unlike previous visits, there were outdoor lightnings in the villages. Also, there were banners indicating the names of settlements. Regardless the partly resolved problems, critically urgent problem of the villagers is still lack of communal services or/and inadequate service. In particular, the natural gas is not supplied to the mentioned villages. As for electricity, due to the poor conditions of the network, electricity is often cut when the weather deteriorates. The problems related with the irrigation water negatively affect the economic state of the locals. As the occupation limited the locals' access to the forest and agricultural plots nearby, due to the lack of irrigation system, the population is incapable to use these small parts of land. There were cases when locals failed to take the yields for the entire year due to this problem.

Inhabitants of Mikelliani clarified that they have neither natural gas supply nor water. Although the water system is built and the network pipes reached each family, the water supply is still problem for unknown reasons.

In Tsikhisubani, the locals complained about the transportation and said that it is not enough when transport runs only 3 days a week. They asked to add transport runs in the village.

¹ See. Report – Human Rights Situation in the Villages Adjacent to the Occupation Line of Tskhinvali Region, 2022, www.hrc.ge/files/reports/240saokupacio%20xaxis%20sofflebi-eng.pdf

On July 17, 2024, HRC petitioned the Dusheti municipality city hall and requested information whether the municipality city hall had planned respective projects and programs in Gremiskhevi, Petriani, Mikeliani, Karkushaani and Tsikhisubani to fully rehabilitate the supply of natural gas and water to the local populations, to arrange irrigation system, to resolve the problems related with the electricity supply and regular public transport.

On August 13, 2024, the organization received written answer that in the frame of the village support program in 2024 the following projects were financed: arrangement of a square in Mikeliani village, arrangement of a well in Karkushaani village, rehabilitation of the water system in Petriani and rehabilitation of the road in Tsikhisubani.²

VISIT IN THE VILLAGES OF KARELI MUNICIPALITY

On July 19, 2024, HRC representatives visited the following villages adjacent to the occupation line in Kareli municipality – **Dirbi, Takhtisdziri and Dvani**.

In the village Dirbi, the locals were happy that the drinking water problem was resolved in the village. They receive other necessary communal services too.

In accordance with the information provided by locals, their main concern was lack of the status of mountainous settlement. Additionally, they complained about the miscarriages in the systemic registration process of plots. As they said, all plots were not measured in the village, and nobody knows when the registration process will resume or will continue at all or not.

In the village of Takhtisdziri, where part of the local population lost access to their agricultural lands because of illegal borderization by the Russian occupation forces, people have not received alternative lands or compensations from the state. The locals mostly complained about the lack of the status of mountainous settlement while the neighboring village of Dvani has the status. They are not aware why their village was left without status. The residents of Takhtisdziri added that systemic registration process of lands is suspended in the village and do not know when it will be resumed or will be resumed at all or not. The locals were particularly concerned about the compensation of the harm they received as a result of hail in June 2024. As the villagers said they were promised to repair the damaged roofs of the houses, but nobody promised them to help with the lost harvest. Additionally, the villagers mentioned the problem of transport. They said the available transport schedule is not enough and they asked for additional runs particularly in the evenings so that people could return to the villages from the municipal center.

² Letter of the Dusheti Municipality City Hall, August 13, 2024

In the village of Dvani, like in Takhtisdziri, part of the local population lost access to their agricultural plots because of the illegal borderization by the Russian occupation forces and neither they received alternative lands or compensations from the state. The hail in June 2024 damaged people in Dvani too. They also complained about the reimbursement of the harm. The locals complained about the irrigation and drinking water systems. They said the village has the drinking water system but not every settlement is supplied with it. Dvani village, unlike Takhtisdziri village, has the status of mountainous area that is positive fact.

On July 22, 2024, Human Rights Center petitioned the Kareli municipality city hall, Ministry of Justice of Georgia, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, and the National Council on Mountain Development. The organization requested information whether the institutions planned any activities to resolve the abovementioned problems in the listed villages.

On July 29, 2024, the organization received a letter from the Kareli municipality city hall. According to the provided information, the respective service unit of the municipality city hall had studied the conditions of all residential buildings damaged during the hail in June 2024 in Dvani and Takhtisdziri villages and in order to take the liquidation measures of the results of natural disaster, they will assist the victimized families with the funds allocated based on the resolution No 956 of the Government of Georgia, dated by July 8, 2024.

As for the public transportation problem, the organization was informed that the municipality city hall has not discussed the issue of public transport in the villages of Dvani and Takhtisdziri yet. If the inhabitants of these villages will raise this problem in front of the municipality city hall, they will discuss it and mediate the population with the local transportation company. Also, they wrote that, the people of Dvani village have never complained about the drinking water and if it will be raised, the Kareli municipality city hall is ready to resolve it within its capacity.

As for the systemic registration of lands, the representatives of the National Agency of Public Registration at the Ministry of Justice implement the systemic registration process in Kareli municipality, among them in the villages of Dirbi, Dvani and Takhtisdziri. This process is carried out with active engagement of the Kareli municipality city hall and any citizen, who does not yet have his territory registered and wishes to measure the land, shall individually appeal the NAPR.³

³ Letter of the Kareli Municipality City Hall, July 26, 2024

VISIT IN THE VILLAGES OF KASPI AND DUSHETI MUNICIPALITIES

On July 14, 2024, HRC representatives visited the village of Tvaurebi adjacent the occupation line in Kaspi municipality and Odzisi village alongside the occupation line in Dusheti municipality.

HRC representatives visited Tvaurebi village first on April 27, 2021.⁴ It is worth to note that unlike previous visit, there were outdoor lights installed from the block post until the exit of the village (in the direction of the occupation line) but the road still needs repair. The issue related with the irrigation channel nearby the so-called ceremony hall and outpatient facility was partly resolved.

The locals said the water supply system was not fully rehabilitated in the village – the water pipes have not reached every family yet. Therefore, part of the families has to fetch water from the taps installed in the village or from the neighbors' wells; another part of locals have their own wells. During the meeting, the villagers said that construction of the so-called ceremony hall was stopped, and they did not have information what the Kaspi municipality city hall was planning with the building. Although there is an outpatient in the village, it does not have adequate attention. There is an irrigation channel to the south of the outpatient facility, and it makes the basement moist all the time. Besides that, the drinking water tap outside the outpatient's office is damaged, water is flowing from it non-stop and watering the wall, floor and basement. As locals said, it has been damaged for a long time and nobody plans to repair it. As a result, the floor of the outpatient facility is absolutely damaged and it is dangerous to move there for the medical personnel and patients.

Inhabitants of the Odzisi village alongside the occupation line in Dusheti municipality say that the issue of drinking water is the main problem for them. According to their information, part of the village population is not supplied with the drinking water at all or is supplied in shifts. The locals wish the municipal government resolved this problem, at least by installing additional boring well in the village. Alongside the drinking water, people complained about the irrigation water too. They cannot clean the irrigation system and source reservoir with their own forces and need additional heavy-duty vehicles to clean the channels and let the irrigation water flow to the plots. Additionally, the locals named poor infrastructure of the internal roads as one of the significant problems. Although the central road to the village was repaired, the inner roads are ruined and need repair.

As for the systemic registration of the agricultural plots, the locals added that representatives of the NAPR have not measured all plots (mostly the pastures located nearby the village) and they do not know when the process will continue or will continue at all or not.

⁴ See. Report – Human Rights Situation in the Villages Adjacent to the Occupation Line of Tskhinvali Region, 2022, www.hrc.ge/files/reports/240saokupacio%20xaxis%20sofflebi-eng.pdf

On July 29, 2024, Human Rights Center petitioned the Kaspi and Dusheti municipality city halls and to the Ministry of IDPs, Labor, Healthcare and Social Welfare to request information whether they had planned to resolve the abovementioned problems in the villages. By the time the report was prepared, the municipality city hall had not answered the letter.

VISIT IN THE VILLAGES OF KASPI MUNICIPALITY

On September 4, 2024, HRC representatives visited the villages of Kvemo Tchala, Pantiani and Sakorintlo alongside the occupation line in Kaspi municipality. Besides the problems caused by the occupation, the locals complained about socio-economic issues, which in the end results into migration of people from the villages.

In Kvemo Tschala village the locals mostly complained about the lack of statuses of mountainous settlement and ABL village. Therefore, they cannot enjoy the benefits of either status while all other villages in their neighborhood have the status and benefits. The locals wished to have the benefits established for both mountainous settlements and ABL villages.

In Pantiani village HRC representatives identified the problem of the irrigation water. Local population use drinking water to irrigate their plots. As a result, there is a delay in the supply of drinking water in the village. As locals clarified, it is necessary to arrange irrigation channels, which will resolve the problem. There is not a banner indicating the name of the village in the entry. Youth does not have sport playground. A local said the inner roads need reconstruction in the so-called “resorts’ settlement.” It is necessary to bring heavy-duty vehicles to even and gravel the road.

In Sakorintlo village, before entering the village, the locals said that the HRC representatives were in **Akhalsheni village**, but they could not specify whether it was a separate village or was a part of another village (Kvemo Tchala or Sakorintlo). There was no banner at the entry to the village. The locals mostly complained about the lack of the status of mountainous settlement. They said while the population of Sakorintlo village enjoys the benefits under the status of mountainous settlement, they also wished to have the same status.

In Sakorintlo village lack of irrigation water was named as a main problem, as it hindered and finally stopped development of the leading agricultural direction in the village – viticulture because vineyards staled without water. The locals said the wine produced in Sakorintlo was famous with its tastes.

On September 12, 2024, Human Rights Center petitioned the Kaspi municipality city hall and requested information about the resolution of the mentioned problem in the village. By the time the report was prepared, the administrative agency had not answered the letter.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the social and human rights situation in the villages located between the occupied territory of Georgia and Georgia-controlled territories, it is necessary to fulfil the below presented recommendations.

To the Dusheti municipality city hall:

- To timely resolve the problem of natural gas and water supply for the inhabitants of Mikeliani village. Although the drinking water system is almost built and all families have the network pipes installed in their houses, they still have limited access to water.
- To timely resolve the issue of public transport for the residents of Tsikhisubani. Public transport running in the village only 3 days a week is not enough.
- To timely resolve the problem of the drinking water supply for the inhabitants of Odzisi village.

To the Kareli municipality city hall:

- To petition the National Council on Mountain Development to resolve the issue of granting the status of mountainous settlement to the villages of Dirbi and Takhtisdziri so that the inhabitants of these villages enjoyed the benefits under this status.
- To timely resolve the problem of supplying the population of Dvani village with drinking water.

To the Kaspi municipality city hall and the Ministry of Healthcare:

- To timely resolve the problem of installing drinking water pipes in Tvaurebi village.
- It is critically important to timely resolve the infrastructural and technical issues of the outpatient facility in Tvaurebi village.