



Country Report: Georgia October 2022

Georgia declared its independence in 1991 as the former USSR (now Russia) collapsed. Since then, it has been beset by disputed territories seeking secession. With support from the Russian government, South Ossetian separatists attempted to break away from Georgia in 1991, as did ethnic Abkhaz in Abkhazia in 1992. The two territories finally seceded in 2008.

During the conflicts in these breakaway regions, all parties have been documented committing war crimes. However, most significantly, Abkhaz troops supplied by Russia violated the ceasefire of September 1992 and forcibly [expelled](#) 250,000 Georgians from Abkhazia. In towns such as Sukhumi and [Akhaldaba](#), Russian and Abkhazian soldiers massacred 5,000 ethnic Georgians, and tortured and raped many others. These crimes lack international recognition despite clearly being genocidal. As a result of the conflict, Abkhazia and South Ossetia became de-facto independent territories with close ties to Russia. The United Nations (UN) established the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in 1993, but Russia vetoed an extension of the mission in 2009, forcing the UN observers to withdraw.

Preceding the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, tensions between the two countries steadily increased and were exacerbated by troop buildups, military exercises, and the 2006 [deportations](#) or imprisonment of several thousand ethnic Georgians from Russia. A Russian artillery bombardment on Georgian positions on August 1st, 2008 sparked the subsequent twelve-day conflict. Russia believed controlling South Ossetia and removing any Georgian military presence from the region would prevent Georgia from obtaining [NATO](#) membership.

Georgia has accused Russia of war crimes including the [forced removal](#) of ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia, surrounding and [burning Georgian villages](#), summary executions, and at least 100 documented instances of targeted rocket and artillery strikes on civilian areas. The Russian military used banned [cluster munitions](#) as well as minefields, both of which disproportionately killed non-combatants. In the city of Gori, President Putin [ordered](#) all ethnic Georgians to leave or be shot. Russian state television claimed that Georgia was carrying out a genocide in South Ossetia. These false claims were genocidal "mirroring". They were followed by the looting and burning of ethnic Georgian towns.

The [ceasefire agreement](#) of the 12th of August 2008 permitted the withdrawal of both sides to pre-war borders but more firmly established the separatist regions and left Georgia with drastically reduced military capabilities. South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not recognized as independent states by the UN. Western states consider them occupied by the Russian military. Georgian minorities still living in the separatist regions face the [eradication](#) of their culture, the removal of the Georgian language from schools, and the denial of [citizenship](#), which is only granted to ethnic Abkhazians. As a result, they cannot graduate from high school or buy and sell property without renouncing their [Georgian identity](#).

In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights ([ECHR](#)) ruled that Russia committed human rights violations, including torture, murder of civilians, and the burning of houses during the 2008 war. The International Criminal Court also issued [arrest warrants](#) for three South Ossetian officials deemed responsible for atrocities committed against ethnic Georgians.

Recently, the Georgian Dream (GD) party, which holds power in the country, has been accused of creating a single-party state and committing human rights violations against civilian protestors and political opponents. Opposition leader and former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili was arrested and [imprisoned](#) in January 2021. [Law enforcement abuses](#) against protestors and members of the LGBT+ community have also drastically increased.

Due to Russia's current military domination of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the denial of the brutalities committed against ethnic Georgians in these areas, and the erosion of political and cultural freedoms at the hands of the Abkhazian, South Ossetian, and Georgian authorities, Genocide Watch recognizes Georgia to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination**, **Stage 5: Organization**, **Stage 8: Persecution**, and **Stage 10: Denial**.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- The US and other nations should recognize the expulsion and mass murder of ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia as forced deportation and genocide.
- Authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia should protect the rights and culture of Georgian citizens, including the right to obtain citizenship without renouncing their ethnic heritage.
- Russia should remove its forces from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
- The Georgian government should cease crackdowns on protests and build a multi-party democracy.