



კულტურული მემკვიდრეობა
ოკუპირებულ ცხინვალის რეგიონში
Cultural Heritage in Occupied Tskhinvali Region



**Report on the
Implementation of
International Humanitarian Law
with regards to
the Protection of Cultural Heritage
in the Occupied Tskhinvali Region, Georgia**



BLUE SHIELD
Georgia



Newcastle University
Cultural Property
Protection and Peace

**Report on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law with
regards to the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Occupied Tskhinvali
Region, Georgia**

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The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of views contained in this article and for opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organisation.

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Executive Summary

Aims

This report aims to capture and collate information relating to the current state of cultural heritage located in the occupied territories of Georgia, following two periods of conflict between Georgia, Russia, and the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the 1990s, and again in 2008. Damage to cultural heritage happened on both occasions and still continues. This report is authored by the NGO Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)²³ and the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace team at Newcastle University (UK), who were awarded a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)⁴ in 2018⁵ for the research.

The authors investigate the damage to cultural heritage in light of the primary international legislation designed to regulate the protection of cultural heritage in conflict - the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols (1954, 1999), applicable during situations of conflict and occupation. Both Russia and Georgia were party to the Convention during the fighting, and Georgia signed the Second Protocol shortly after. This report also discusses the 1977 Additional Protocol I (1977) to the 1949 Geneva Conventions: both Russia and Georgia were signatories during the 2008 fighting⁶, as well as key laws relating to the prevention of looting and illicit trafficking of artifacts. This report examines the obligations placed on each state before and during conflict, and during periods of occupation, relating to the protection of cultural heritage.

Although the report does not consider human rights laws and cultural rights in any detail, it does review damage and loss to intangible heritage, noting that the right to take part in cultural life (Article 15 (1a) of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights) *“includes the obligation to preserve and protect expressions of culture, knowledge and ideas from damage and destruction by third-party actors (duty to protect) and the obligation to provide adequate resources to preserve and restore cultural heritage for current and future generations (duty to fulfil)”* (Rashid International, n.d.).

Finally the report reviews national and international actions regarding the cultural heritage of the occupied regions and draws conclusions.

Based on these conclusions, it presents recommendations to improve the protection of heritage in the region, better implement international law, and improve recovery of illegally trafficked objects. As such, it gives an impression of the state of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali region, not a definitive overview. This report uses a multi-source analysis to provide the fullest picture possible, whilst acknowledging that this is

² The Blue Shield is an international Movement of national committees and an international Board and Secretariat “committed to the protection of the world’s cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster” (Articles of Association 2016: Art.2.1).

³ The website of the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield may be found at: <https://blueshield.ge/>

⁴ Grant Ref: ES/M500513/1 (Newcastle University) via an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.

⁵ The publication of this report has been significantly delayed by technical difficulties and COVID.

⁶ The first publication of this report mistakenly stated that Russia withdrew from Additional Protocol I in 2019: they only withdrew from a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Declaration made at the time of the ratification (ICRC 2019).

nevertheless incomplete. This report is a first attempt to fill a gap, raise awareness on the issue and encourage wider interest and engagement in future research on the topic.

Context

Following the 2008 conflict, the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared independence, supported and recognised by Russia within days. Although the Ceasefire Agreement called for a withdrawal of Russian troops, to this day, Russia is supporting both Georgian regions with soldiers (in numerous military bases), security personnel, border guards, and significant financial support to the de facto government. In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled its verdict in the case concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008 and its consequences, and established the legal fact that Russia has been occupying and exercising effective control over the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia following the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement (Civil.ge 2021a). Cultural sites are today managed by the Monuments Protection Service of the de facto Ministry of Culture; the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, and a local, self-proclaimed “Diocese of Alania” also have a strong presence in the region.

International Law

The 1954 Hague Convention calls on states to implement safeguarding measures at cultural sites in peacetime, register sites for special protection (and enhanced protection under the Second Protocol) and to train armed forces and civil authorities in its measures. During conflict, in addition to the wider principles of the Laws of Armed Conflict (distinction between military objectives and civilians and civilian property; proportionality in attacks, and the requirement to take precautions in attack) armed forces are obligated to respect cultural sites (not to attack or use sites except in cases of imperative military necessity, not to loot, and not to conduct reprisals), and to cooperate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding. Although cultural sites are protected generally as civilian property under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, both Additional Protocol I and the 1954 Hague Convention draw particular attention to the protection of cultural property, and special care should be taken in operational planning. High Contracting Parties should also create a specialist cultural property protection unit in their armed forces. There is also a system of international oversight and monitoring for potential breaches, called Control.

Immediately following the conflict, several international organisations and fora declared Russia to be an occupying power for some months, in effective control. Today, many still widely consider them an occupying power. They provide significant financial and military support to the de facto government in order to maintain their independence: the strong Russian presence and the South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities’ dependency on the Russian Federation is shown particularly by the cooperation and assistance agreements signed with the latter, provision of 99% of South Ossetia’s financial budget by Russia, and more than half the government staff being from Russia, indicating that there is continued effective control over Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Amnesty International 2019; Civil.ge 2021a; ECHR 2021; Ferraro 2012; UNSC Members 2021, a, b; Ferraro 2012; **Annex Two** contains a list of international statements that use the term occupation). However, international law calls for the occupying power to work with the competent authorities: this is less clear. Where the 1954 Hague Convention discusses occupation, the previous national heritage authorities (before occupation) remain the “competent national authorities”, even during occupation. Only if these authorities are unavailable may the occupier take “the most necessary measures of preservation” (Article 5). However, “stringent” access restrictions (CoE 2019b: 14) are in place:

the Georgian authorities have no access to the region, and nor do international monitoring bodies such as the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, an issue they have raised repeatedly. Given the lack of access, the burden of protection rests with the occupying power and de facto Monuments Protection Service.

A number of laws relating to illicit trafficking are also included. As well as those commonly considered, such as the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and UN Security Council Resolutions, the authors include those relating to terrorist financing, anti-money laundering and transnational organized crime. However, as the Georgian authorities lack access to the area to prevent looting and trafficking, the focus is on restitution and recovery.

Method

Monitoring in the region is extremely difficult. This report uses a multi-source analysis, based on eyewitness reports, interviews, media, social media, published NGO and IO reports, and satellite imagery assessment via Google Earth and published reports by UNOSAT-UNITAR to inform a comprehensive analysis. Acknowledging that some sources may be biased, data is verified using multiple sources to improve veracity. The authors were provided with a database of sites that the Ministry of Culture bears peacetime responsibility for: sites were verified and located on satellite imagery where possible and their condition assessed. However, the 1954 Hague Convention has a broader remit, and includes libraries and archives, for example, as well as religious sites of other faiths which may not be managed by governments. Given that, this report has taken a broad view of cultural heritage, and included all heritage sites where information was available. These sites were also located on satellite imagery and assessed where possible. The goal is to build up an overall picture of the state of cultural heritage in the region based on cumulative evidence collected, rather than focussing on the specifics of any one site. However, some sites are used as illustrative case studies.

The final data informs not only this overview report, but a comprehensive **Annex One** detailing the damage to each site and the sources of information: data is also made available in an online database and website (<http://map.blueshield.ge/>).

Findings: Cultural Heritage Damage

In total, 737 sites were assessed - these were a combination of sites identified by the Ministry of Culture database, additional sites identified and located by the Didi Lakhvi Valley Museum Reserve, and historical and religious sites where damage was reported which were located on satellite imagery. Of these, 413 could not be located on the satellite imagery; however, eyewitnesses and media information allowed assessments at 6 of these. Of the 324 sites that were located, 25 had such poor imagery no condition estimate was possible.

Just 36 sites of 737 were in a Good condition, whilst nearly 20% (1/5) of sites for which information is available are Destroyed (although this includes sites that have long been in a ruinous condition).

Following the shelling and immediate fighting in 2008, monitoring missions reported that South Ossetian forces sought to ethnically cleanse the villages along (what is now) the Administrative Boundary Line with

Georgia (HRW 2009; IFFMCG 2009). In total, the authors assessed 17 villages that were shelled and deliberately burned, although others were clearly affected. 11 of these were then bulldozed away and completely cleared, and another 2 were partially cleared. Where villages were burned and cleared, in most (but not all) cases the churches were left intact, albeit neglected and deteriorating. Following the demolition of the original fabric, many of these spaces were used for construction, such as new residential flats and military facilities; in one case, Eredvi, the site is being used as a landfill (something residents and historians believe is a punishment for the activity of the residents before and during the war).

13 sites were damaged during and after hostilities; 10 were destroyed (including one which had already sustained damage). The majority of these are museums and religious buildings. Fortifications, presumably as a result of their more rural location and / or often-ruined nature, experienced little damage of this type. The majority of the damage occurred along the Didi and Patara Liakhvi River Valleys.

Some of the destroyed villages are now used as training spaces for the military. Two sites are thought to have been destroyed by the construction of a military facility; 38 are within 500m of a base; and a further 62 are within a kilometre. Military training has been reported by eyewitnesses at another 7 sites, which are just over 1km away from various military bases. Where military training takes place regularly, sites are exposed to a greater risk of physical damage, and eyewitnesses report some cracks on walls and vaults grow larger daily. Additional potential risks include existing structural instability exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion - and collateral damage should the garrison become a target.

Approximately 1 in 4 of the fortifications, and churches and religious buildings located and assessed were damaged from neglect and lack of maintenance. The true number is likely higher, but many neglected sites are now so overgrown they cannot be seen on satellite imagery available via Google Earth. 587 sites were in a Poor Condition, a Destroyed ruin, or Unknown, or Unknown and thought to be Poor or Destroyed: no condition assessment was possible today at 390 of them but there is no reason to expect improvement.

Unauthorised works were reported at 25 sites (many carried out by clergy): the authentic fabric of one church, renovated by the landowner, is presumed completely destroyed. Leaking (or absent) roofs, and bulging and cracked walls, are causing significant damage to mediaeval wall paintings and to walls. The authors could not find any evidence that work is carried out with specialist heritage supervision, often causing considerable damage through use of inappropriate material (such as cement), and by inappropriate interventions removing and altering authentic elements (interior, exterior and walls). Religious buildings are particularly susceptible to renovations that change the original outlook of the building from the Georgian Orthodox to Russian Orthodox, with interiors repainted in Russian styles, and traditional templon replaced with new concrete ones. Some repairs were halted by the de facto Monuments Protection Service, who then called in a specialist from Russia to assist in repairing the botched works, as the MPS lacked the expertise for remedial works, but photos supplied to the authors indicate that the concrete remained following this intervention.

The de-facto Ministry of Culture is significantly underfunded: they recognised in 2016 (SIA "RES" 2016) that they lacked both the funding to restore the large number of sites in urgent need, and suitably trained conservation staff, but only minimal interventions have been possible to address these problems.

Of the six museums in the occupied Tskhinvali Region in 2008: one was closed in the 1990s and its collection evacuated; two more were damaged during the fighting. One of these was damaged again in 2004, when it was targeted by Ossetian separatist artillery (some walls and roofs collapsed). In the fighting in 2008, four were heavily damaged or destroyed (including the site damaged in the 1990s and 2004), as well as one associated storage facility. Of those, one was rehoused in a new building, one was reopened on the same site last year, one reopened a small centre in an IDP settlement in Gori and another one in the IDP settlement in Tserovani. Just one was undamaged during fighting and is still active; however, part of the building collapsed in 2017 from neglect, and emergency repairs were completed. Following the extensive damage from fighting, the Local History Museum has been rebuilt as the so-called “State Museum of South Ossetia”: the original building is now used as a storage warehouse. Exact information about the collection is unavailable but news stories indicate the origins of the Museum are placed in an Ossetian narrative of independence. Today it is presented in the news as evidence of the ancient history of the Ossetian people, “as a symbol of their courage and resilience” (Biazarti 2019), with intent to collect material for a genocide department.

Illegal excavation and the possible looting of museum collections from the 1990s until the present day is clearly an issue, but only limited information is available. It is highly likely that illicit trafficking is taking place, but there is little capacity in the Georgian or international heritage community to detect or monitor any of its phases.

Although the national authorities in Germany, Japan, and France do not recognise the South Ossetian government, archaeologists from those countries have requested permits from the de facto government to work there, breaching international professional codes of conduct.

The intangible heritage of the occupied Tskhinvali Region, similar to tangible heritage, is facing preservation challenges and is at risk of loss. Displacement and access restrictions pose critical challenges to intangible cultural heritage. To name a few examples, according to a study among IDPs (Internally Displaced Person), beer brewing, which was once common and used local ingredients, is now rare. Ceramic tableware production is threatened by the scattering of the population, loss of access to the materials, and the ageing and death of many of those with the skills. The veneration of various religious shrines in the territory of Ksani Valley located in the sacred lands and forest was also a common tradition amongst the local population which is no longer possible.

Disinformation campaigns are also a critical threat. Such practices are often very subtle, such as the changing of the place names by the de-facto authorities, the alteration of religious histories, and the publishing of articles and books presenting alternative histories of the region that do not associate it with Georgia, reiterated in the previously mentioned “State Museum of South Ossetia”. Exacerbating the situation, many ethnic Georgians, particularly in Akhgori, are denied access to their native language.

Findings: National and International Actions

The Georgian Government, numerous international organisations, and local and international NGOs have, on different occasions and at different scales, engaged with the issues of cultural heritage in the occupied territories, and in particular the Tskhinvali Region.

Most activities (proposed, attempted, and realised) - whether by civilians, civil society, or organisations at all levels - have been hindered by “stringent” access restrictions (CoE 2019b: 14). A UNESCO Monitoring Mission was deployed to Abkhazia in 1997. Past the initial missions by Human Rights Watch, Council of Europe, and the EU Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFMCG), attempts to deploy heritage monitoring missions since 2008 have been entirely blocked by Russia and the two de facto governments. A small exception was a short mission (chosen by the EU delegation in Georgia) to evaluate only four sites in Abkhazia in 2016, within the framework of the Council of Europe programme and as a result of planning during the Geneva International Discussions. This and the 1997 UNESCO mission to Abkhazia were the only cultural heritage monitoring missions that have been permitted in only one of the two occupied regions.

The Georgian government created various inter-agency working groups whose remits include cultural heritage. The Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve, a collaborative partner for this report, was established in 2005 and is part of the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH) since 2009. It was situated in Kurta village until 2008, but the office of the museum and its equipment was destroyed during the war. After the war, it started operating at the IDP settlement in Gori. Staff have continued to undertake a systematic study on the condition of cultural heritage, as well as carrying out education and outreach programmes. NAPCH were able to carry out temporary protective measures in one of the occupied valleys, before access was completely blocked⁷. Works were undertaken under the supervision of nuns from Ikoti Monastery and by NAPCH specialists and included installation of new (temporary) roofs, maintenance, and repairs.

At the international level, Georgian representatives continue to raise the issues surrounding the occupied territories in a wide variety of international fora, including various UN bodies, such as the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council, and elsewhere, such as the Geneva International Discussions, and at UNESCO. The Council of Europe, EU, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and Members of the UN Security Council all continue to raise the issue; some are vocal about “violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights, various forms of discrimination against ethnic Georgians, and the obliteration and alteration of Georgian features from Georgian cultural heritage monuments in both regions, as a direct consequence of the Russian Federation’s ongoing occupation and “russification” policy” (OSCEPA 2022: 147) . In addition, organisations such as UNESCO and the ICRC continue to promote adherence to international law, including the 1954 Hague Convention, in the region.

Documentation, monitoring and awareness raising has also been carried out by national organisations and NGOs, with conferences, project funding, and statements and appeals.

Although a wide number of local, national and international organisations are keenly interested in the condition of cultural heritage in the occupied regions, lack of access prevents active measures being taken in the region to protect it.

⁷ Akhagori and Java Districts have been partially accessible by ethnic Georgians living there, using permits. It closed off completely in September 2019 and reopened in August 2022 (Aftiauri 2022). (<https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31995909.html?>)

Findings: International Law

There is little evidence of the implementation of the proactive safeguarding measures of the 1954 Hague Convention prior to the August 2008 war: buildings had no plans for fire or structural collapse, no place to move collections to, no blue shields placed, and no sites were registered for special protection. There was an incomplete inventory of sites, but it was not fully digitised and could not be shared. No provisions of the system of Control were implemented: none of the staff were appointed, and no investigations conducted. That being said, the system has barely been used elsewhere since inception, and is often considered obsolete, as it requires approval from all parties concerned which makes it almost unachievable.

It is unclear whether armed forces were trained in the obligations of respect in the 1954 Hague Convention: they were not trained to cooperate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding, and neither country's army had, or has, a specialist cultural protection unit. This report makes no judgments on military activity with regards to the shelling of sites and possible collateral damage: with the data available to the authors, whether due care was taken specifically with regard to cultural property, or whether actions were based on imperative military necessity is often unknown. We refer those interested in military conduct to the existing monitoring reports by, for example, the Council of Europe Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), and the Human Rights Watch Reports.

Following the initial fighting, the Russian Federation and de facto governments are in effective control. They are required under Article 5 of the 1954 Hague Convention to provide adequate support to safeguard and preserve the cultural heritage of the region, and to ensure that the "most necessary measures of preservation" are taken. A large number of sites are in Poor condition, with many suffering extreme neglect and some "on the brink of destruction", according to eyewitness reports. Many clergy and private individuals have resorted to conducting their own repairs, with no appropriate oversight, and significant damage has been caused - even those repairs that have been undertaken with specialist oversight have caused extensive damage to the authentic fabric of the sites. There is an obligation to prevent looting and trafficking of objects, but given the known prevalence of such activity in Russia (Hardy 2018), it is unlikely prevention in the Tskhinvali region is a priority. Restitution of looted objects and prevention of illegal excavations and trafficking of archaeological goods remains a priority for the Georgian government, but is extremely difficult.

Since the 2008 war, Georgia has signed the Second Protocol, which contains more explicit measures and offers increased protection for sites, such as Enhanced Protection, but the lack of access and failure of Russia to ratify hinders its effectiveness. However, it does offer Georgia new avenues to raise the protection of its cultural heritage, with the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and access to the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. There is little evidence of Russian intent to comply with international law, and unfortunately implementation is dependent on political will as there is no UN presence in the region, and Russia is not formally recognised by the UN as an occupying power (as it blocks such resolutions).

Conclusion

Damage to cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali Region is significant, and comes from many sources. Damage was incurred not only during the actual periods of hostilities but has continued since and still continues today. Factors include illegal interventions causing alteration of historic fabric of sites, construction of

military facilities and other new infrastructure in close proximity to the sites, alongside general neglect. These pose serious risks to the preservation of cultural heritage of the region.

The slow attrition of Georgian cultural heritage forms part of a wider narrative of loss. The lives of the people who owned and used the cultural heritage - whose ancestors may have built the sites, who visited them, who worshipped in the churches and the synagogue - are deeply impacted by the conflict in ways that move beyond their immediate needs. Not only have they lost access to their sites, but their traditions and practices and ways of living that have been passed down through generations are disrupted, and in some cases at risk of permanent loss. The demolition of historic Georgian villages, loss of authentic fabric at sites, and modification of churches, is part of a wider revision of the entire landscape, also evidenced in the alteration of place names, and revision of historical and religious narratives.

Actions to protect and maintain heritage are hindered by lack of access; monitoring is extremely difficult. Since the early 1990s and especially in the years since 2008, given the political deadlock and lack of access, it has been - and remains - impossible for Georgia to make any progress in implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property.

The report concludes with a number of Recommendations, aimed primarily at the Georgian government (**page 117**).

- **Annex One** contains the details of each damaged site, with sources.
- **Annex Two** contains a list of statements by western governments and multilateral organisations that use the term “occupation”.
- **Annex Three** contains the official Statement (dated September, 2008) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning cultural heritage damage in Georgia during the 2008 war.

This report aims to investigate the condition of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali Region of Georgia over the last 30 years, and in particular since the 2008 war. It relies on data sources such as satellite imagery from Google Earth, media monitoring, and eye-witness reports, such as the clergy, local museums' staff, and other members of the local population.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report aims to capture and collate information relating to the current state of cultural heritage located in the occupied territories of Georgia, following two periods of conflict between Georgia, Russia, and the self-proclaimed republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the 1990s, and again in 2008. Following the conflict, the Tskhinvali region (de-facto South Ossetia) and Abkhazia broke away and declared independence, supported and recognised by Russia. To this day, Russia is supporting both Georgian regions economically and militarily. Damage to cultural heritage happened on both occasions and continues until the present day. However, there was little information on the specific effects of the conflicts upon cultural heritage.

In 2018⁸, the NGO Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)^{9,10} and the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace team at Newcastle University (UK) were awarded a grant from the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)¹¹. The authors have aimed to investigate the damage to cultural heritage during the 2008 war and afterwards, in light of the primary piece of international legislation designed to regulate the protection of cultural heritage in conflict - namely, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols (1954, 1999), applicable during situations of conflict and occupation. This report also includes the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and key laws relating to illicit trafficking.

Monitoring is extremely difficult. This report collates reports, media stories, satellite imagery analysis, and eyewitness accounts to provide the fullest picture possible, whilst acknowledging that this is nevertheless incomplete. Where possible, data has been verified and this is indicated. As such, it gives an impression of the state of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali region, not a definitive overview. This report is a first attempt to fill a gap and describe the results of the armed conflicts from the angle of cultural losses and its future threats, and to enable future analysis in this direction. Within this context, this report presents the team's preliminary results concerning the occupied territories¹² of Georgia, specifically in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. These results are also being fed into a website¹³ featuring an interactive map of cultural heritage sites of the region. Figure 1.1 shows the sites assessed in this report.

⁸ The publication of this report has been significantly delayed by technical difficulties and COVID.

⁹ The Blue Shield is an international association of national committees "committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster" (Articles of Association 2016: Art.2.1).

¹⁰ The website of the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield may be found at: <https://blueshield.ge/>.

¹¹ Grant Ref: ES/M500513/1 (Newcastle University) via an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account.

¹² The definition refers to the "Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories" (Parliament of Georgia 2008: Art.2).

¹³ See: <http://map.blueshield.ge/>

It should also be noted that this report only describes the damage and destruction of cultural heritage on the territory of the Tskhinvali Region which remains occupied until the present day. It does not include detailed descriptions of damage that occurred in areas temporarily occupied by the Russian troops during August - October 2008 and which are since back to Georgia's control. Only damage to one site - Nikozi Monastery Complex - is mentioned briefly in Chapter 4 (**4.2.1. Damage and Destruction from and following hostilities in August 2008**): however, there are more of them, including minor damages to the museums.

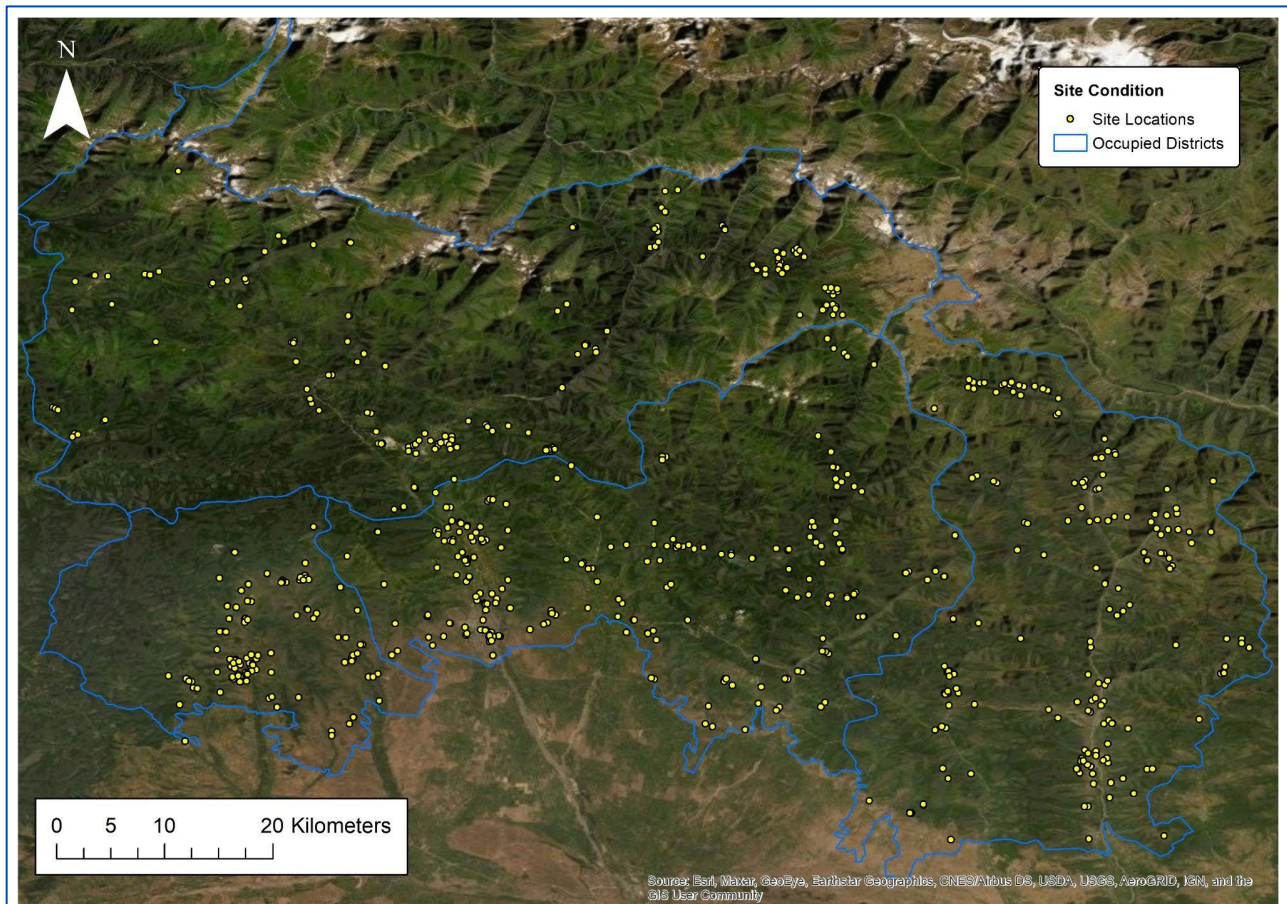


Figure 1.1: Location of sites assessed.

1.2 Report Structure

The report is divided into 8 chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The report begins with a brief introduction to cultural property damage in armed conflict, and the background and overview of the conflict in order to present a clearer understanding of the situation.

Chapter 2: Cultural Heritage Law in Conflict, Occupation and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking

Chapter 2 presents a brief discussion of the international legal context, with key obligations regarding cultural property protection (CPP) under international law in situations of conflict and occupation, followed by a brief discussion of laws relating to illicit trafficking.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 presents the methodology used in this report. This investigation uses a multi-source analysis, based on eyewitness reports, interviews, media¹⁴, social media, published NGO and IO reports, and satellite imagery assessment. The authors do not vouch for the accuracy of the information of any individual site that is discussed, but have attempted to verify and cross check data against multiple sources wherever possible.

Chapter 4: Immovable Cultural Heritage Damage

This chapter describes the damage and destruction of immovable cultural heritage, focussing on (but not only covering) the fighting in 2008 and situation since. It gives a summary overview of the following various damage and threat categories: Damage and Destruction From and Following Hostilities, Damage and Destruction from Construction, Damage and Destruction as a Result of Unauthorised works (after 2008), Damage and Destruction from Neglect and Lack of Maintenance; and Current and Future Threats: Proximity to Military Facilities. While the report presents summaries, detailed descriptions of individual sites are to be found in **Annex One** in alphabetical order.

Chapter 5: Movable Cultural Heritage Damage

Movable Cultural Heritage, mainly the situation in the museums in the Tskhinvali region, is described in Chapter 5. Besides the damages and destruction related to the museums, summarised individually, this chapter is also concerned with the illegal archaeology and looting, and the threats to future finds in the region. While the report presents summaries, detailed descriptions of individual sites are to be found in **Annex One** in alphabetical order.

Chapter 6: Intangible Cultural Heritage Damage

The chapter talks about intangible cultural heritage in the occupied Tskhinvali Region and the threats facing it. It reproduces the ethnographic survey undertaken by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia among the internally displaced communities from the upper part of Ksani River valley, Akhagori Municipality to highlight the intangible cultural heritage elements, both those which have been preserved and those which are facing threat of being lost. An overview of the disinformation campaigns such as the changing of the place names, is also given.

Chapter 7: Responses

This chapter lists and describes actions taken by various national and international actors since the end of the hostilities to the present, with regards to documenting and responding to threats to cultural heritage in the occupied territories.

Chapter 8: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The final chapter recaps the main findings of the previous chapters, focusing on the types of damages and threats revealed to tangible and intangible heritage of the region. It reviews the damage in light of the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the First Protocol (1954), signed by all parties in the conflict, and the Second Protocol (1999) signed by Georgia.

¹⁴ Media review in most cases included news outlets from Russia and both de-facto regimes in the occupied regions which are regarded as sources of disinformation and Russian propaganda. Where possible, information was verified by multiple sources, and was used with caution.

The Report concludes with recommendations, aimed primarily at the Georgian government, which fall into three areas:

- 1 - Better implementation of international law, specifically the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols
- 2 - Prevention of illicit trafficking
- 3 - General recommendations.

The main chapters of this report are followed by the **Bibliography** and **Annexes**.

1.3 Context of Heritage Damage

International attention has recently come to consider cultural heritage damage in conflict alongside other war crimes, with successful prosecutions for heritage damage at the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY¹⁵) and the International Criminal Court (ICC¹⁶); the latter have now released a full policy on the prosecution of Cultural Heritage Crimes (OTP ICC 2021). Following the opening of an investigation into possible crimes in Ukraine, a coalition of organisations, and the Ukrainian government, have been collecting cultural heritage data for inclusion in the investigation (Seymour and Kishkovsky 2022). The Prosecutor General's Office of Ukraine was already submitting communications on war crimes against cultural heritage sites in the temporarily occupied Crimea to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (Ukrinform 2012). The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crime Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD¹⁷) include cultural heritage in their investigations. National courts are also prosecuting cultural crimes. For example, Iraqi courts have successfully prosecuted members of ISIS for the destruction of the Mosul Museum. Damage to cultural heritage may constitute a war crime or even part of a case for crimes against humanity (O'Keefe et al. 2016). In this vein, 2017 saw the first UN Security Council Resolution - UNSCR 2347¹⁸ exclusively dedicated to cultural heritage damage. The former UN Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights, Karima Bennouna, has also described the intentional destruction of cultural heritage - whether in or out of conflict - as a violation of cultural rights (Bennouna 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Within this context, then, this report considers cultural heritage damage in the Tskhinvali Region. Both Russia and Georgia have signed the Convention and its Protocols¹⁹. Parts of the Convention are recognised by enough states that they are also considered part of customary law (O'Keefe et al. 2016).

There have been a number of reports by international and national NGOs describing various aspects of the 2008 war. Some focus on fact-finding and documentation of war crimes, while others analyse the aftermath of the conflicts through the perspective of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). For example, those by Amnesty International focus on the human rights situation of the IDPs, which also include the general situation with regards to civilians during and after the war (Amnesty International 2008, 2010; Open Society

¹⁵ <http://heritage.sense-agency.com/>

¹⁶ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/mali/al-mahdi>

¹⁷ <https://www.unitad.un.org/>

¹⁸ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2347>

¹⁹ The Russian Federation has not ratified, and is therefore not a State Party to, the Second 1999 Hague Protocol. Georgia ratified the Second Protocol in 2010. See more at: <https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/states-parties>

Georgia Foundation 2009). They analyse the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, but none mention the 1954 Hague Convention and its 1954 and 1999 Protocols, or discuss cultural heritage damage and destruction and the ensuing violations of cultural rights of the displaced population. All the reports mention the destruction of over a dozen Georgian villages after the occupation of the Shida Kartli, Tskhinvali Region, although they do not note their historic value.

It is worth noting at the outset that among many other war-related reports about conflicts in Georgia, this report is the first since the Council of Europe Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG), published in 2009, which describes the violations of international law in relation to damage, destruction and lack of access to cultural properties and practises. To the authors' knowledge, the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) active in Georgia published its very first special report on cultural heritage in Georgia in early 2022, but it has been classified as an internal document and has not been shared to the authors.

Damage has occurred to all aspects of cultural heritage in the affected areas: movable, immovable and intangible. Article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention gives a list of examples of cultural property protected under the Convention; the examples are broad and encompass secular and religious buildings, archaeological sites, museums, libraries and archives, as well as movable cultural property. However, it is up to state parties to designate which of its cultural properties should be protected under the Convention.

Georgia has yet to produce a list of this type. In the event no list is available, however, to "ensure their state's compliance with the law of armed conflict and to avoid their personal responsibility for war crimes, commanders and other military personnel should treat all objects, structures and sites of historic, artistic or architectural significance on foreign territory as 'cultural property' protected by the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols and by customary international law" (O'Keefe et al. 2016: 14). In Georgia, this includes: ecclesiastical architecture with reliefs, inscriptions, wall paintings, interior structures, or mosaics, vernacular architecture, fortifications, as well as archaeological sites, places of memory and museum collections. However, cultural property is only a subset of cultural heritage, which includes the intangible elements of heritage, so this report will also note the cultural loss to the people who were forced to flee their homes, thus abandoning traditional lifestyle and cultural practices.

It must be stressed that this report is by no means complete and remains a work-in-progress as the monitoring of open sources and the verification of facts and data continues.

1.4 Overview of the Conflict

Georgia was under Russian colonial occupation from 1801 to 1991. For a brief period between 1918 and 1921 Georgia reclaimed independence only to face a Soviet invasion and another 70 years of Soviet rule. In 1991, as the Soviet Union collapsed, Georgia regained its independence and began a state-building process, with strong aspirations to European and Euro-Atlantic integration. However, shortly after Georgia's independence, Russia sponsored separatist movements in Georgia in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in 1991 and the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia in 1992. Situations in both regions escalated to armed hostilities, wherein Russian-backed separatist armed groups, defeated the newly-formed weak and fragmented Georgian military forces. This resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Georgians from those regions.

Throughout the 1992-1993 conflict, widespread human rights violations and mass atrocities were perpetrated on a large scale (UNSC 1993; US Department of State 1993). This is evidenced by the UN Secretary General-mandated fact-finding mission to Abkhazia in 1993, and further confirmed by a number of independent human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW 1995), who noted that forces on all sides were responsible for “gross violations of international humanitarian law - the laws of war” (HRW 1995) – largely relating to indiscriminate attacks. By 1994, the majority of the ethnic Georgian population (approximately 260,000 people) had been forced to flee from Abkhazia (UNHCR 2000: 357). The hostilities in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia also resulted in the violent expulsion of ethnic Georgians from the town of Tskhinvali and the villages of Java municipality. However, an estimated 35 000 Georgians remained in the region. This population, as well as those few that escaped atrocities in 1992-1993 and remained in Abkhazia (mostly concentrated in the Gali district), was continuously subject to further human rights violations including: deprivation of the right to free movement, ownership of property, education in native language, as well as forced passportisation (IIFFMCG 2009: Vol. II, 187, Agenda.ge 2022).

A ceasefire was finally agreed upon and signed between the Georgian government and Abkhaz separatists in 1994, and by agreement Russian peacekeeping forces were deployed to the area. However, by the time a ceasefire was signed, at least 12,000 people had been killed, nearly a quarter of a million ethnic Georgians were forced to leave their homes, and Abkhazia was no longer under Georgian control.

In early August 2008, Russian troop movements in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia accelerated existing tensions, and war broke out. Russian and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetian proxy forces under effective control of the Russian Federation and commanded by officers of the Russian Army at senior levels, fought Georgian forces in and around Tskhinvali Region for several days, until Georgian forces retreated. Russian and Abkhaz proxy forces opened a second front by attacking the Kodori Valley (adjacent to Abkhazia), held by Georgia. Russian naval forces blockaded part of the Georgian coast. The Russian air force attacked targets beyond the conflict zone, in undisputed parts of Georgia. The aftermath of the war saw the entire Tskhinvali Region and Kodori Valley in Abkhazia fall under the control of Russian occupational forces, where it remains to this day. In June 2022, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for three Russian nationals who held senior positions in the fighting, relating to their conduct in 2008, considering “that there were reasonable grounds to believe that each of these three suspects bears responsibility for war crimes) (ICC 2022) (ICC 2016: §27).

The fighting brought a new wave of violence and accompanying human rights violations (HRW 2009: 127-194; Amnesty International 2008: 34-45).: both, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch they and the IIFFMCG report concluded that:

“... ethnic cleansing was indeed practised against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia both during and after the August 2008 conflict”.

(IIFFMCG 2009: Vol. I, p27)

and

“As an occupying power in Georgia, Russia failed overwhelmingly in its duty under international humanitarian law to ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in areas under its effective

control, instead allowing South Ossetian forces, including volunteer militias to engage in wanton and widespread pillage and burning of Georgian homes and to [target] civilians”.

(HRW 2009: 6)

Georgian villages in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, with a total ethnic Georgian population of approximately 35,000 people, were partly or completely burned down and destroyed in order to preclude any return of the expelled population, confirmed by UN satellite images (UNOSAT 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e).

Through European Union mediation, Russia and Georgia agreed to the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement to diffuse the military conflict in Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia in August 2008 (DPA 2008). The agreement was not a peace settlement but provided the basis for a legally binding text to end the fighting and pave the way for a political solution. Point 5 of the Ceasefire Agreement called for the withdrawal of Russian troops to the places held prior to the outbreak of hostilities. However, a total of 5,000 Russian military and security personnel (International Crisis Group 2012), later rising to 10,000, with 7,000 soldiers and 3,000 border guards in both regions (Klein 2019: 23, Table 2) - as well as 900 FSB (a state security organisation) border patrol troops - remain in both areas, with several military bases, including air force and air defence naval bases, which Russia claims are to protect its citizens.

After the 2008 war, Russia recognized the independence of both two regions (figure 1.2). The independence of the occupied regions of Georgia - Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia - is recognized only by four other UN members: Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and Syria.

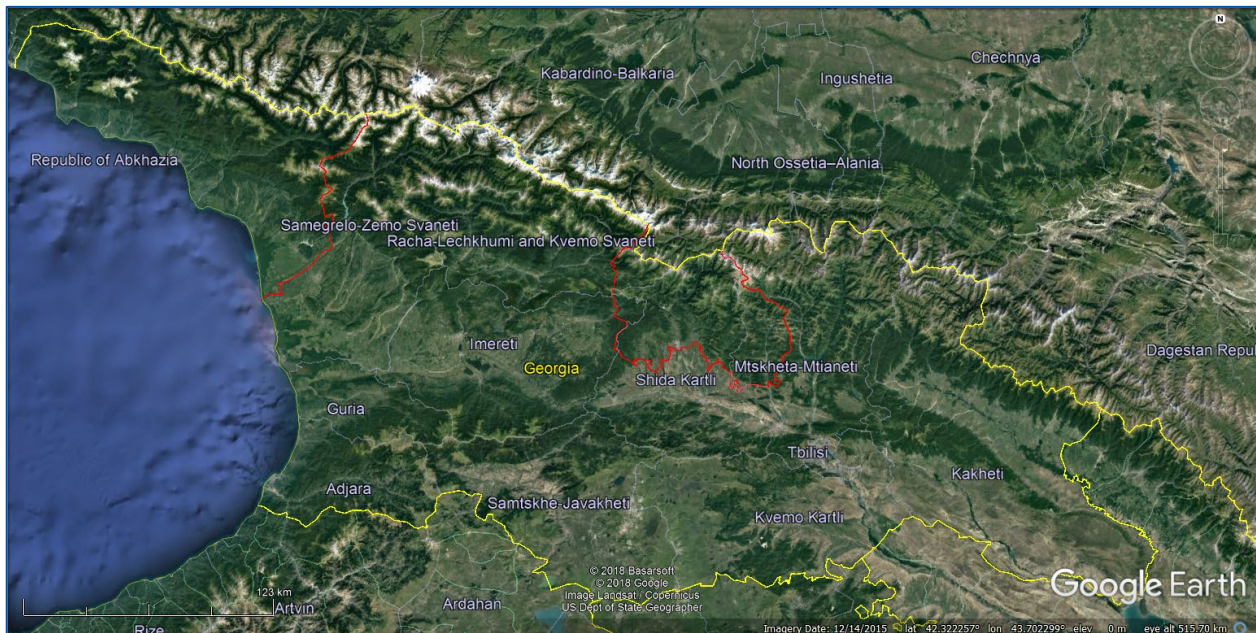


Figure 1.2: Map of Georgia showing occupied areas outlined in red. Abkhazia is to the left, and the Tskhinvali Region is in the centre. Map via Google Earth, 13 May 2019.

Today, as discussed in more detail in the next section, the area is governed by the de facto authorities of South Ossetia, supported by the Russian Federation. For the heritage sites of the region, this means the Monuments Protection Service of the de facto Ministry of Culture. In addition, according to the recent publication of the National Agency for Religious Issues (Vashakmadze, 2021) "two Orthodox religious

organisations operate illegally in the occupied territory of the Tskhinvali region - the church opened for the Russian soldiers stationed there belongs to the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, at the same time, there is a local, self-proclaimed 'Diocese of Alania'. The Diocese of Alania, often referred to in the news as the Alanian Eparchy, is a schismatic church governed by an uncanonical synod (Liberali.ge 2017). The Georgian Orthodox Church is only present in Akhagori District, where three Georgian monasteries continue to operate despite the occupation. These are the Ikoti Nunnery of St. Monk Aleks, and Monasteries in Akhagori and Largvisi. Their work to continue to try and protect the heritage of the region, among a number of other agencies, is discussed in Chapter 7.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the conflict between Russia and Georgia and of the importance of heritage damage within that. The authors have aimed to investigate the damage to cultural heritage during the 2008 war and afterwards, in light of key international legislation designed to regulate the protection of cultural heritage in conflict - namely, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, and its two Protocols (1954, 1999), applicable during situations of conflict and occupation, in addition to the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. They have used a wide variety of evidence to provide the fullest picture possible, whilst acknowledging that this is nevertheless incomplete. As such, it gives an impression of the state of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali region, not a definitive overview. This report is a first attempt to fill a gap and describe the results of the armed conflicts from the angle of cultural heritage damage, cultural losses and its future threats, and to enable future analysis in this direction. Within this context, this report presents the team's preliminary results concerning the occupied territories²⁰ of Georgia, specifically in the Tskhinvali Region /South Ossetia. These results are also being fed into a website²¹ featuring an interactive map of cultural heritage sites of the region.

This chapter has further outlined the key gap in the assessment of the 2008 conflict filled by this report. There have been a number of reports by international and national NGOs describing various aspects of the 2008 war, but none have examined heritage protection and destruction and the application of international law.

²⁰ The definition refers to the "Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories" (Parliament of Georgia 2008: Art.2).

²¹ See: <http://map.blueshield.ge/>

Chapter 2. Cultural Heritage Law in Conflict, Occupation and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking

2.1 Overview

This chapter provides insight into the legal context. It is split into two parts. The first part discusses the law relating to cultural property, rather than any aspect of the conduct of the war more widely, while the second part focuses on laws relating to looting and illicit trafficking.

Sections 2.2 - 2.4 of this chapter outline the importance of international armed conflict to international law, before considering the laws of occupation in section 2.4. The current laws relating to the occupied territories are discussed in sections 2.6 and 2.7. Section 2.8 details the relevant laws relating to illicit trafficking.

2.2 International Armed Conflict

The 2008 conflict is accepted to be an international armed conflict, as the fighting occurred between Russia and Georgia, making international law applicable. The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber further stated that:

“there is sufficient indication that the Russian Federation exercised overall control over the South Ossetian forces, meaning that also the period before the direct intervention of Russian forces may be seen as an international armed conflict”

(ICC 2016: §27).

Russia, Georgia, and the separatists are bound by the laws of armed conflict and international humanitarian law during the conduct of hostilities. The main and most relevant international agreements for the protection of cultural heritage during armed conflict are Additional Protocols I and II 1977 to the Geneva Conventions (1949), and the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its Protocols (1954 and 1999). These have specific obligations for the protection of cultural property in advance of conflict, during it, and in the event of occupation. By 2008, both Russia and Georgia were signatories to Geneva Convention Additional Protocol I and II, and the 1954 Hague Convention and its First Protocol: however, neither had signed the 1999 Second Protocol during the actual fighting (although Georgia since acceded to it in 2010). These laws contain a number of specific provisions relating to the protection of cultural property, in addition to the broader protection that it is granted as a civilian object.²²

2.3 Obligations during Armed Conflict

This report investigates the premise that the stipulations relating to conflict in the 1954 Hague Convention and 1954 First Protocol, and also to occupation regarding the Second Protocol, do apply, and will therefore consider their full extent. With regards the fighting in 2008, the report is retrospective, and does not consider

²² The first publication of this report mistakenly stated that Russia withdrew from Additional Protocol I in 2019: they only withdrew from a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Declaration made at the time of the ratification (ICRC 2019).

the Second Protocol, which Georgia had not then signed: its applicability today, however, is investigated in Chapter 8.

2.3.1 Proactive Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols to prepare for conflict

It should be noted that warring states have a number of legal expectations placed on them under the 1954 Hague Convention before armed conflict begins in order to prepare for the actuality of conflict. These are:

- To proactively prepare emergency safeguarding measures in times of peace against the foreseeable effects of an armed conflict (Article 3²³).
- The optional application of the distinctive (blue shield) emblem (Convention Article 16 and 17) can also be considered a safeguarding measure
- To foster a spirit of respect for the culture and cultural property of all peoples in the members of their armed forces, and to introduce military regulations or instructions that will ensure observance of the Convention (Article 7(1)), and to disseminate its provisions widely (Article 25).
- To establish services or specialist personnel within their armed forces whose purpose will be to secure respect for cultural property and to cooperate with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding it (Article 7(2));
- To place a limited number of more important sites under special protection (Convention Chapter II).

As will be discussed in the next Chapter, Georgia had a national inventory of protected cultural property (though it was not digitised in 2008), but due to the speed of the conflict it was not possible to share it, and no blue shields were placed on sites. In addition, the inventory which was provided to the authors contains only those sites that the Ministry of Culture bears peacetime responsibility for, whilst the 1954 Hague Convention has a broader remit, and includes libraries and archives, for example, as well as religious sites of other faiths which may not be managed by governments (see, for example, the entry in **Annex One** on the synagogue in Tskhinvali). Nor were there any safeguarding measures at most sites, such as preparation for fire²⁴ or structural collapse. This is not an atypical position, even today: in a recent publication, Cunliffe and Fox note (2022: 7, 17)

“Enabling respect, then, rests on the implementation of safeguarding measures ideally in advance of a conflict: before, or at least in parallel with, military mission planning, which it should inform. The planning and execution of safeguarding lies at the heart of effective [cultural property protection]. [...] Despite hard evidence of its effectiveness, and the negative consequences evidenced in multiple recent conflicts of not acting accordingly, most [High Contracting Parties] continue to implement as little as possible of the Convention’s practical measures”.

²³ Although the 1954 Hague Convention does not specify the safeguarding measures to be taken in Article 3, leaving it to states “as they consider appropriate”, Article 5 of the 1999 Second Protocol contains examples of the types of measures expected: the preparation of inventories; preparation to remove movable cultural property away from danger; preparation of proactive measures for cultural property that cannot be moved; preparations against fire and structural collapse; and the designation of competent authorities to manage it all. For more on this, see Cunliffe and Fox (2022), O’Keefe (2006: 112), and Noblecourt (1958).

²⁴ In fact, the problem of fires in wooden churches (a structure that is common in eastern Europe) has only been addressed in limited, and often internal, literature; to the extent that new guides have been written in 2022 specifically on firefighting in wooden churches, and the use of fire extinguishers more generally, for Ukraine, as no appropriate existing guidance that could be adapted could be located.

No sites are under special protection (in fact the entire register has less than 20 sites worldwide, and its provisions are often considered unworkable²⁵).

Like most of the world, neither state has created a specialist unit as of 2022. The Russian Federation Military Manual (1990) and Regulation on the Application of IHL (2001) both prohibit the use of cultural property in warfare. The authors have no information on Georgia's military regulations in 2008; however basic training on international humanitarian law for most countries usually covers the key elements of the Laws of Armed Conflict (discussed on the following page). Neither state had conducted any particular military training or awareness raising on cultural property protection at that time - a common state of affairs internationally at the time.

2.3.2 Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols during conflict

During armed conflict states are obliged:

- To refrain from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict (Article 4(1)) or any act of hostility (Article 4(1)) - subject to imperative military necessity (Article 4(2));
- To prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage, misappropriation or vandalism directed against cultural property, and refrain from requisitioning another State party's movable cultural property (Article 4(3)).
- To refrain from reprisals directed against cultural property (Article 4(4));
- To recognise the higher protection granted to sites and transports under special protection. Sites under special protection may only be taken into use by a divisional commander in cases of unavoidable military necessity, and should not be made into a military objective unless they have been taken into use (Articles 8, 9, 11). Transport under special protection are immune from seizure (Article 14);
- In addition, armed forces may be required to support the State Party in protecting cultural property, such as, for example, transporting cultural property to a refuge (Article 7(2), Convention and Regulations Chapter III).

2.3.2 Other relevant conflict provisions

However, the Convention is bound by the Laws of Armed Conflict/customary international law, so the principles of necessity, proportionality, and distinction, and the requirement to take precautions also apply. As such, although the Convention does not, for example, prohibit collateral damage (as it is not a directed attack as per Article 4(2)), customary law and the 1977 Geneva Convention Additional Protocol 1 (1977 AP1)²⁶, prohibits indiscriminate attacks that do not distinguish between civilian property and military objectives (Articles 48, 51(2) and 52(2)). Indiscriminate attacks are those: which are not directed at a specific military objective; which employ a method or means of combat which cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by international humanitarian law.

²⁵ Cunliffe and Fox (2022) contest this, noting for example, that the small number of registrations was taken as indicative that the system was unworkable. However, the introduction of a simpler system of registration for enhanced protection in the Second Protocol did not result in an increase in registrations. They argue the problem is lack of interest by States Parties.

²⁶ Signed by Russia on 29.09.1989, and signed by Georgia on 14.09.1993.

Attacks must also be proportional (1977 AP1, Article 51(5b), Article 57): launching an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated, is prohibited. As part of this, attacks must take account of the cultural value of any location that may be damaged as part of the attack.

Lastly, attacks must be necessary, requiring (amongst other criteria) all feasible precautions to be taken in the determination of means and methods of attack to limit damage. It is prohibited to make any use of cultural property or its immediate surroundings for purposes likely to expose it to destruction or damage, unless this is imperatively required by military necessity, meaning that it offers a definite military advantage at the time of the attack (and not a theoretical future advantage) and no feasible alternative exists for obtaining a similar military advantage.

The other relevant clause in the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions is Article 53, which emphasises “acts of hostility directed against the historic monuments, works of art or places of worship which constitute the cultural or spiritual heritage of peoples” are prohibited. Protected cultural property under the 1954 Hague Convention is that which a State Party considers to be significant in relation to the communities within it; the description in Article 53 is considered to be a shorthand for the 1954 Hague Convention definition (O’Keefe 2006). However, the AP1 exists without prejudice to the 1954 Hague Convention, meaning States Parties who have signed the Convention may still resort to arguments of military necessity.

2.3.2 The Organisation of Control in the 1954 Hague Convention

The Regulations for the Execution of the 1954 Hague Convention contain a system for monitoring the implementation of, and adherence to, the Convention during conflict, in country and through international oversight - called the Control of the Convention (Regulations, Chapter 1). Specifically, national and international representatives are nominated who are responsible for overseeing its application with authority mandated under international law. They have the authority to investigate breaches of the Convention, and report on their findings, as well as to attempt to secure the cessation of such breaches.

As soon as any High Contracting Party (HCP) is engaged in an armed conflict with another (signatory) State, each warring State appoints an internal **Representative**, and an international **Protecting Power**²⁷. Together with the Protecting Power of the opposing Party, States also agree to **Commissioner-Generals for Cultural Property (CGCP)** from an international list of people held by UNESCO. (All High Contracting Parties are eligible to submit names of appropriate candidates for Commissioner-Generals to UNESCO for inclusion on the list under Regulations Article 1: International list of persons).

²⁷ According to the ICRC (n.d), a “Protecting Power” is a neutral State or other State not a Party to the conflict which has been designated by a Party to the conflict and accepted by the enemy Party and has agreed to carry out the functions assigned to a Protecting Power under international humanitarian law. In the absence of an agreement on a Protecting Power, the International Committee of the Red Cross or any other impartial humanitarian organisation should be designated as a substitute. In practice, the Protecting Powers system has not been used in recent years. Instead, the International Committee of the Red Cross has come to be recognized as a substitute for the Protecting Power. If there is no Protecting Power, a Commissioner-General shall exercise the functions of the Protecting Power as laid down in Articles 21 and 22 of the Regulations for the Execution of the 1954 Hague Convention.

The Protecting Powers shall lend support in all cases where they may deem it useful in the interests of cultural property, particularly if there is disagreement between the HCPs regarding interpretation or application of the Convention or the Regulations for its Execution. They may also provide neutral ground for meetings. The Protecting Power shall appoint **Delegates** accredited to the HCP they are appointed to from among the members of the diplomatic or consular staff of the Protecting Power, or, with the approval of the Party to which they will be accredited, from among other persons. Delegates have the following functions:

- Take note of violations of the Convention;
- Investigate the circumstances in which they have occurred, with the approval of the Party to which they are accredited;
- Make representations locally to secure their cessation;
- If necessary, notify the CGCP of such violations. They shall keep him/her informed of their activities.

If a State Party is in occupation of another territory, it shall appoint a **special representative** for cultural property situated in that territory. Representatives assist the CGCP in matters concerning CP in their own territory (that is, they supply the local knowledge of CP to aid the CGCP in applying the 1954 Hague Convention).

Each CGCP works with the HCP Representative for the state they are appointed to, and may have the following duties:

- Deal with all matters referred to them in connection with the application of the Convention, in conjunction with the **Representative** of the state party to which he/she is accredited, and with the **Delegates** concerned;
- Order an investigation, or conduct it him/herself, with the agreement of the Party to which he/she is accredited;
- Whenever the CGCP considers it necessary, either at the request of the Delegates concerned or after consultation with them, The CGCP shall propose, for the approval of the Party to which he is accredited, an **inspector** of cultural property to be charged with a specific mission. An inspector shall be responsible only to the CGCP;
- Make representations to the Parties to the conflict or to their Protecting Powers which may be useful for the application of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols;
- Draw up reports on the application of the 1954 Hague Convention, and communicate them to the Parties concerned, to their Protecting Powers - and to the Director-General of UNESCO, who may make use only of their technical contents.
- HCPs must make the CGCP aware of improvised refuges storing movable cultural property. The CGCP may authorise displaying the triple blue shield emblem of special protection. He must then communicate this decision to the **Delegates** (who have 30 days to contest it). If it is not contested, the CGCP must request that UNESCO enter the refuge in the Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection.

Although the Convention did not foresee long periods of occupation, and so Commissioner-Generals were envisaged to only fulfil their duties during the actual fighting, in the Arab-Israel War (1967), Commissioner-Generals were appointed for a decade following the 6 days of fighting, monitoring the situation of cultural heritage throughout, including in areas considered to be under belligerent occupation (O'Keefe 2006: 170).

This system of oversight is little used²⁸, replaced by UNESCO with ‘quiet diplomacy’. However, Fox notes (222: p129) he and his colleague provided cultural property protection training on NATO exercises: “Having campaigned for its inclusion in [NATO] exercise scenarios, ... [they] have represented Commissioner-Generals, their staff, and especially State Party Representatives for Cultural Property at national and regional levels. The impact of doing so was profound”. Regardless of any such practical benefit, to date in total less than 10 Commissioner-Generals, Protecting Powers, and Delegates have been appointed, ever, rendering the system effectively obsolete.

2.4 Laws of Occupation

2.4.1 Occupation

Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia are part of Georgia under international law. Statements by many western governments, including heads of state, as well as multilateral organisations, including the EU, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the European Commission and its President, the Council of Europe, the Baltic Assembly, the European Parliament, NATO, and others, use the term “occupation” (statements can be found in **Annex Two**). They argue that Russia is an occupying power via use of proxy forces.

This includes the initial period of conflict and immediate post-conflict-period, as well as the period following this to the present day. The ceasefire agreement in 2008 called for Russia’s withdrawal from both regions; however Russian troops remained and are still present today. The ICC’s Pre-Trial Chamber supports a determination of initial occupation, noting there has been “Russian occupation of parts of Georgian territory, in particular the “buffer zone”, until at least 10 October 201[0]8²⁹”. The Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts project argues these territories are considered occupied under international law as they are “under the authority of the hostile army” (Hague Convention IV 1907: Art. 42) who exercises effective control: i.e.: they are physically present; the territorial state did not consent to that presence - and they have established their own authority. If a state exercises overall control over de facto local authorities or other local groups that exert effective control over the territory, the state can be considered an occupying force by proxy (RULAC 2019; see also Ferraro 2012).

Reliant on significant military support from Russia to maintain independence, both Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia have established de facto authorities in which numerous senior political figures in both states hold Russian passports, more than half the government staff are from Russia, and Russia supplies approximately 99% of South Ossetia’s financial budget, and more than half of Abkhazia’s budget (RULAC 2019).

In 2018, the High Representative of the European Union declared that “Russian military presence in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia continues in violation of international law” (General Secretariat of the Council (Press office) 2018). As Amnesty International argue, given Russia’s overall effective control over Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, including effective control over the ABL (Administrative Boundary Line), and given that Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia are still parts of Georgia under public international law, the situation can be classified as a military occupation (Amnesty International 2019) . According to Amnesty International, “Russia also has obligations under International humanitarian law with regard to the situation

²⁸ For more on control see Fox (2022), and Fox and Cunliffe (2022).

²⁹ The report (ICC 2016: 13 paragraph 27) states 2018; we believe that is a typo as the report was published in 2016, and it states its mandate was an investigation until 10 October 2008.

in Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia because its role in these areas falls under the definition of military occupation” (Amnesty International 2019).

In 2021, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled its verdict in the case concerning the armed conflict between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008 and its consequences, and established the legal fact that Russia has been occupying and exercising effective control over the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia following the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement (Civil.ge 2021a). The judgement asserted that since 12 August 2008, Russia has exercised continued “effective control” over Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Court considers that the Russian Federation exercised “effective control”, within the meaning of the Court’s case-law, over Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Abkhazia and the “buffer zone” from 12 August to 10 October 2008, the date of the official withdrawal of the Russian troops. Even after that period, the strong Russian presence and the South Ossetian and Abkhazian authorities’ dependency on the Russian Federation is shown particularly by the cooperation and assistance agreements signed with the latter, indicate that there was continued “effective control” over Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia (ECHR 2021: Paragraph 174).

A joint statement by members of the UN Security Council on the 13th anniversary of the beginning of the conflict between Russia and Georgia, recalled this judgement, and the Members reaffirmed “Georgia’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. “We regret that the territorial integrity of Georgia continues to be violated by the Russian Federation. We condemn Russia’s illegal military presence and exercising of control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, integral parts of Georgia, and its steps toward annexation of these Georgian regions. Russia’s actions are in clear violation of international law” (UNSC Members 2021, a, b).

In light of the many international statements and reports, this report classifies the situation as occupation, utilising both military forces and proxy control. However, the question as to whether or not the relevant clauses of the 1954 Hague Convention pertaining to cultural property protection in occupied territories apply and how, is complex and have not yet become a matter of wider public discussion. Chapter 8 provides some initial discussion and conclusions on this issue.

2.4.2 Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols during occupation

The Hague Convention and its First Protocol apply to all cases of partial or total occupation, even if said occupation meets with no armed resistance, and thus may be applicable here. During occupation:

- The occupying state shall as far as possible support the competent national authorities (discussed below) of the occupied country in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property (Convention, Article 5(1));
- Should it prove necessary to take measures to preserve cultural property situated in occupied territory and damaged by military operations, and should the competent national authorities be unable to take such measures, the Occupying Power shall, as far as possible, and in close co-operation with such authorities, take the most necessary measures of preservation (Convention, Article 5(2));
- Any High Contracting Party whose government is considered their legitimate government by members of a resistance movement, shall, if possible, draw their attention to the obligation to comply with those provisions of the Convention dealing with respect for cultural property. (Convention, Article 5(3));

- The occupier must prevent any illicit export, other removal, or transfer of ownership of cultural property from the occupied territory (First Protocol, Article 1).
- A state must take any such exported cultural property that enters its territory into custody, and return it at the close of hostilities (First Protocol, Article 2).
- Each High Contracting Party undertakes to return illicitly exported / transferred CP to the competent authorities of the previously occupied territory at the close of hostilities. Such property shall never be retained as war reparations (First Protocol, Article 3).
- The High Contracting Party who were obligated to prevent the exportation of CP from the territory they occupied shall pay an indemnity to the good faith holders of any cultural property which has to be returned (First Protocol, Article 3).

There are also obligations listed in the 1999 Second Protocol, to which Russia is not a party, but Georgia is. However, they must be considered in conjunction with Article 5's provision in the main Convention: Russia is bound to "support the competent national authorities of the occupied country in safeguarding" cultural property as far as possible, which could be considered as supporting the competent national authorities to carry out their legal safeguarding duties.

Under the Second Protocol:

- The occupier must prevent any illicit export, other removal or transfer of ownership of cultural property from the occupied territory (Article 9(1a));
- The occupier must prevent any archaeological excavation, unless this is strictly required to safeguard, record, or preserve cultural property (Article 9(1b));
- The occupier must prevent any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence (Article 9(1c));
- Any archaeological excavation of, alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property in occupied territory shall, unless circumstances do not permit, be carried out in close co-operation with the competent national authorities of the occupied territory (Article 9(2)).

2.4.3 Competent Authorities

Many provisions of international law refer to the competent authorities of a territory (occupied or otherwise). In unoccupied territory, they are the legal, legitimate cultural authority. In occupied territory, the situation is more complex. International laws of occupation³⁰ are governed by the 1907 Hague Regulations - now widely considered customary, and other laws should be interpreted with reference to these. Article 42 of Annex to Hague Convention (IV)³¹ indicates that a "territory is considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised." Article 43 indicates that the occupier must respect existing laws as far as possible - but the expectation was that occupation would be temporary.

Where the 1954 Hague Convention discusses occupation, the previous national heritage authorities (before occupation) remain the "competent national authorities", even during occupation. Only if these authorities are unavailable may the occupier take "the most necessary measures of preservation".

³⁰ A detailed explanation of the laws of occupation are available from the ICRC (2004).

³¹ Annex to Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907

If the international community determines that the situation is one of occupation, then there is one organisation who may be the competent authority in this case: the Georgian Ministry of Culture. However, the Ministry has no staff on the ground, and cannot exercise its responsibilities. The acting authority on the ground is presently the Monument Protection Department of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia. Whether the Ossetian cultural authorities are a competent authority in the sense of the Convention (that is, the existing organisation responsible for managing cultural heritage and working with the occupying power to do so) or a “new” authority that has replaced the former authorities depends on whether they are materially the same as the former authority, in terms of (for example) organisational continuity, continuity of rules, same personnel, and free decision-making in cultural matters. Furthermore, as discussed in section 1.3.2, the Ossetian cultural authorities look to Russia, rather than Georgia, in cultural matters, for their staff, technical expertise, and funding, then they are arguably a proxy government, bound by Russia’s legal system, or a “new” authority, and there is no “competent authority” for the occupying power to deal with. Consequently, in that scenario, the burden of protection rests with the occupying power (i.e., the occupying state and its proxy government). The Monument Protection Department may take only “the most necessary measures of preservation” with regards to the cultural heritage of the area.

2.5 Human Rights Law

A review of the loss of cultural heritage during conflict must not focus only on physical property, but on the people who own the cultural heritage, and whose lives are deeply impacted by the conflict in ways that move beyond their immediate needs. Both Russia and Georgia are parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights. These laws protect the cultural rights of individuals, including the right to access and enjoy their culture, of which cultural property is a physical expression:

“The right to take part in cultural life, Article 15 (1)(a) ICESCR and Article 27 UDHR, guarantees every human being the right to be part of a culture, to access the expressions of a culture and to contribute to a culture (para 15 of CESCR General Comment N. 21). However, “taking part” goes beyond mere access and a State’s duty to respect. Access alone is worth little when nothing remains that is worthy of access. The full dimension of Article 15 (1)(a) ICESCR also includes the obligation to preserve and protect expressions of culture, knowledge and ideas from damage and destruction by third-party actors (duty to protect) and the obligation to provide adequate resources to preserve and restore cultural heritage for current and future generations (duty to fulfil)”

(Rashid International, n.d.)³².

Further examples of human rights law as it relates to cultural heritage are listed in the footnotes³³. It is not our intent to discuss the legal situation as it relates to cultural rights, but it remains important to highlight intangible cultural losses suffered by people, as well as tangible losses.

³² Rashid International detail the specific human rights relevant to cultural heritage.

³³ See also Shaeed 2010; and Bennoune 2016a, b, c.

2.6 Georgian Law

In addition to its national cultural heritage protection laws, and the international law it is party to, in October 2008, Georgia adopted its *Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories*. Point 4, Article 7 of the Law, “The Protection of Human Rights and Cultural Monuments in the Occupied Territories” states that:

“Responsibility of the Russian Federation, being the state exercising the military occupation, to protect cultural heritage in the Occupied Territories, shall be determined in compliance with norms and principles under international law.”

(Parliament of Georgia 2008)

Cultural heritage protection in the occupied territories is of high national priority, and has also been integrated into national policy. For instance, the policy document, “The National Security Concept of Georgia” (2011) refers to cultural heritage explicitly, asserting that:

“The protection of the monuments linked to the country’s cultural heritage is important for Georgia. Georgia is concerned about intentional damage to cultural heritage monuments in the occupied territories”.

(National Security Concept 2011: 27)

The 2011 Concept underlines cultural heritage protection as a priority of national security. In addition to other instances, it affirms its desire for international support by stating, for example, that:

“Georgian cultural heritage monuments are under especially serious threat in the Russian-occupied territories. The international community should take an active part in protecting cultural heritage in the occupied territories. From this point of view, cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN is especially important”

(National Security Concept 2011: 27).

Other actions by the Georgian government and its agencies at the national and international level are discussed in **Chapter 7, section 7.1**.

2.7 De-facto South Ossetian Law and Practice

The South Ossetian Law on culture has most likely been created to resemble Russian law: for example, South Ossetia uses a modified version of the Russian criminal code (Freedom House 2021).

In a public statement (SIA “RES” 2016), the de-facto South Ossetian Minister of Culture, Madina Ostayeva, outlined measures to develop and implement state policy and regulatory and legal regulation. A new draft Regulation for heritage protection and conservation was developed to protect cultural heritage monuments, and the issue of heritage preservation would be raised with the Government. Ostayeva outlined plans to create a state programme “Preservation of historical and cultural monuments in South Ossetia for 2016-2020”, which would include a protected buffer zones around sites, and to inventory the monuments of the

region, and number them according to the urgency of the conservation work needed. This was considered a necessity given “the huge number of architectural objects to be protected, as well as the lack of funds to maintain them in good condition” (SIA “RES” 2016), exacerbated by the lack of trained conservators in the area. A Cooperation Program was also drafted between the Ministries of Culture of South Ossetia and of the Russian Federation, and the Ministry announced plans for an internship programme with Russian specialists at the site of restoration work at one of the cultural heritage sites of Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Furthermore, “the important tasks of cultural cooperation with the Russian Federation could [include] promot[ing] the legacy of South Ossetia, including through the organisation of joint exhibitions” (SIA “RES” 2016). The de-facto Minister announced that “The goal of the program is to improve the work on the creation and construction of monuments and memorials in the territory of South Ossetia” (SIA “RES” 2016).

In September 2018, the South Ossetian parliament discussed two drafts for new laws on “historical achievements of the Republic of South Ossetia” and the “preservation of intangible cultural heritage of South Ossetia” (Sputnik 2018). The preservation of cultural heritage was named as a priority of the de-facto government. This priority should receive funding from the budget as well. The laws were to be discussed in the committee of national politics, culture, science, education and religion of the de-facto Parliament.

2.8 Illicit Trafficking Laws

The strong prevention of illicit trafficking and restitution of objects – whether from illegally looted archaeological sites or stolen museum collections – depends on more than the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols. This type of criminal activity is prohibited under a number of other laws as well as UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) which apply at all times, both during peace and conflict (including occupation as defined by international law). These include, but are not limited to:

1. **UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (“1970 Convention”):** The 1970 Convention obliges States to identify cultural property, prevent its illegal export, and assist other State Parties in recovering illicitly exported cultural property that is imported into their borders. It typically operates on a State to State basis between Ministries of Culture, but can occasionally (albeit very rarely) be used in the civil courts. The Russian Federation became a party to the Convention on 28 April 1988 and Georgia acceded to the Convention in 1993. Georgia submitted a National Report on implementation to UNESCO in 2011, and 2015, but not 2019; the Russian Federation has not submitted any³⁴.
2. **UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs): Resolution 1373 (2001); Resolution 1483 (2003); Resolution 2253 (2015); Resolution 2347 (2017); and Resolution 2386 (2017):** The UNSCRs call on States to prevent and suppress terrorist financing, often specifically mentioning the prohibition and suppression of the trade in illicit cultural property, and, in one case (2347), directly condemning the smuggling of cultural property from heritage sites and calling for the restitution of such objects. UN Security Council Resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter are binding on all UN Member States.
3. **Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Regulations:** The Russian Federation is bound by Federal Law No. 115-FZ “On Combating Money Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism” dated 7 August 2001 (the AML Law) and ancillary normative acts. Georgia is bound by the Law of Georgia on Facilitating the

³⁴ Available on the UNESCO website: https://en.unesco.org/fighttrafficking/1970/national_reports

Suppression of Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing (2019, amended 2021)³⁵. Although both Russia and Georgia have AML Regulations in place, this report's recommendations focus on Georgian AML Regulations, which call for the monitoring of transactions involving cash as well as non-cash settlements if the amount of the transaction or the series of transactions exceeds GEL 30,000 (or its equivalent in other currency) and/or the transaction is suspicious regardless of its amount. However, there is no specific mention in either the legislation or related guidance³⁶ of art or cultural property.

4. **UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000):** This Convention was ratified by the Russian Federation in 2004, and Georgia in 2006. Its obligations include extensive international cooperation in the fight against trafficking of cultural property and related offences where they contribute to serious organised crime. Through this application, this convention is of great significance in the prevention, investigation and prosecution of trafficking in cultural property as well as the return and restitution of stolen/trafficked cultural property.
5. **UN General Assembly International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences (Resolution 69/196 of 2014):** This international instrument provides guidelines on criminal justice-related aspects of combatting trafficking in cultural property, including crime prevention strategies, criminal justice policies, and law enforcement and judicial cooperation mechanisms to ensure return, restitution or repatriation. As Guidelines they are non-binding, but contribute to standard setting.

The import and export of cultural goods in Georgia has been regulated by the Ministry of Culture since 1995, with a permit system covering a wide range of cultural objects, including manuscripts, flora, fauna, and other categories of objects consistent with the definition of cultural property in the 1970 UNESCO Convention. Georgia began implementing a State Programme on Movable Monument Inventory and Passportization in 2001. The process of digitizing inventories is far from complete: in 2008, very few inventories were digitised.

Criminal sanctions are in place for illegal excavations under the Law of Georgia on Cultural Heritage and the Criminal Code of Georgia; Georgia also has an established collaboration with Interpol and its Ministry of Internal Affairs in case of theft of its cultural objects, as well as evacuation plans with many supporting agencies. However, it is not possible for Georgia to implement these laws in its occupied territories to prevent and punish looting.

While legal instruments address many important issues, they also point to various provisions that need to be translated into national legislation to further prevent illicit trafficking.

Illicit trafficking of cultural objects is made easier for criminals as a result of the difficulties countries of origin face in trying to evidence the illicit export of an object. There is often a lack of documentation to confirm that an object is from a specific country of origin, or that it was in situ during a conflict and at a certain time period, leaving room for doubt that criminal networks can exploit. Without accurate records, doubt can be cast on who removed the objects and when, making the prospect of eventual recovery more difficult. Illegally excavated objects are, by their nature, not inventoried, and it can be difficult to identify the country of origin from neighbouring regions with any degree of certainty. Furthermore, borders and customs authorities are

³⁵ Available here: <https://www.fms.gov.ge/eng/page/laws>

³⁶ For more on AML Regulations in Georgia, see the website of the LEPL Financial Monitoring Service of Georgia: <https://www.fms.gov.ge/eng/page/about>

often overwhelmed and lack expertise to identify looted or illicitly trafficked cultural property, relying instead on random checks and tips by third parties.

Once objects reach the open market, the lack of requirements to document export and origin in transit paperwork in earlier stages of an object's journey makes it easy for potential buyers to argue good faith acquisition. If a "good faith" buyer cannot find information to suggest the object is missing or stolen when they carry out "due diligence" (i.e., the checks to ensure that the object is not stolen) before the sale takes place, in many several countries (but not all) they will be considered a good faith buyer and after a certain number of years, this could give the buyer valid title. After a certain period of time, the laws in some jurisdictions even recognise the rights of buyers who were not in good faith (this is called "acquisitive prescription"). The consequences of good faith purchases and acquisitive prescription is often that a country of origin is prevented from claiming the object and is time barred in that country.

The return of cultural property is also hindered by any evidence of disorganisation, confusion, and lack of communication; this can result in testimony given in court being viewed as "unreliable" and undermining the claim. The nature of assessing a country of origin by a scholar is by nature a matter of professional opinion, not one of fact. The nature of the art market is also that transactions are typically confidential, and so testimony is often based on opinion and evidence from many years ago which can be easily challenged.

Lastly, looting rarely carries a serious criminal sentence – or is prosecuted at all - and seizure and return are frequently seen as sufficient³⁷.

2.9 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the international laws that govern heritage damage and protection in armed conflict and occupation that are (or may be) applicable in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its First Protocol were signed by both the Russian Federation and Georgia long before hostilities broke out, and places obligations on their conduct during conflict. Prior to conflict, states should prepare safeguarding measures for their cultural property, and train their armed forces in the 1954 Hague Convention - ideally creating a specialist unit. Most importantly during hostilities, cultural property should be respected, and may not be used, or made the object of attack unless the situation is one of imperative military necessity.

³⁷ "[I]n accordance with the policy of protection and recovery, law enforcement and particularly customs authorities are encouraged to recover and return these archaeologically unimportant objects without following through with criminal prosecution. In 2009, for example, the UK returned to Afghanistan more than 1500 artifacts weighing together 3.4 tons. The material had been seized by UK customs during random searches made since 2003 at London's Heathrow airport of incoming passengers from Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. All the objects had been illegally traded, but it was reported that something like 90 percent were of limited importance because of their lost contexts. A second shipment of 800 objects was returned in 2012. The fact that more than 2000 objects were discovered in the luggage of incoming air passengers suggests a substantial number of individual interceptions of people passing through customs, but it is noticeable that no prosecutions or convictions were ever reported. Presumably recovery and return were considered an appropriate and sufficient response. This pattern of seizure and civil forfeiture without prosecution is widespread. [...] Seizures and forfeiture actions are defended because the lower burden of proof and reduced mental requirement of civil actions makes it easier to recover objects than would otherwise be the case through criminal prosecution. But if they are intended to exert a deterrent effect upon dealers, it is far from clear that they do." (Brodie 2015:324-5).

Following the immediate conflict, EU, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the European Commission and its President, the Council of Europe, the Baltic Assembly, the European Parliament, NATO, and others have argued that Russia is occupying Georgia via use of proxy forces, which would mean that the Articles of the 1954 Hague Convention regarding occupation are also relevant - the occupying power is bound to ensure the safeguarding of cultural property in the region, ideally by supporting the competent authorities, but if they are not able to act, then the occupying power must assume responsibility for preservation. Furthermore, under the First Protocol, the occupier must prevent any illicit export, other removal, or transfer of ownership of cultural property from the occupied territory.

Lastly, the chapter provides a very brief overview of human rights law relating to cultural heritage, with specific reference to intangible heritage loss and protection, and what is publicly known about the heritage law of the de-facto South Ossetian Ministry of Culture, to contextualise events following 2008. In brief, the Monuments Protection Service of the de facto Ministry of Culture was created to protect the sites, with laws to govern their protection, and allocated funding. However, as will be shown, the allocated funding, and capacity to enforce those laws, is lacking.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

This report aims to investigate the condition of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali Region of Georgia over the last 30 years, and in particular since the 2008 war. Unlike the armed conflict of 1991-1992, information is available regarding when and how (shelling, fire, etc.) some of these sites were damaged during and after August 2008. After this time, better information becomes available due to the increasing availability of satellite imagery from Google Earth, media monitoring, and eye-witness reports. In addition to some media reports, reasonably accurate information is available based on satellite imagery analysis provided by UNOSAT, the United Nations Satellite Imagery Team (2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d; 2008e). The following summary is also based on eyewitness reports, such as the clergy, museum-reserve staff, and other members of the local population.

This investigation compiles information from various sources, including published reports from and interviews with: governmental agencies in Georgia, NGOs, foreign missions, and (anonymised) individuals who have crossed the administrative boundary line into Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. These are supported by images which have been published here when possible. A comprehensive media review was carried out in both Russian and Georgian, supported by satellite imagery analysis. Descriptions of heritage sites that were taken as a baseline come from the official registry of cultural heritage maintained by the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia³⁸. A large part of this data - especially the information from the municipalities to which Tbilisi has lost control since the 1990s, is outdated.

All data come with caveats: media sources can be biased; eyewitnesses can misremember or be simply incorrect; and satellite imagery presents only a “top down” view, obscuring what may be a complicated internal story. In addition, satellite imagery relies on correct coordinates, and is heavily dependent on the quality of the image used. Given this, the authors have combined multiple forms of information to inform this report, verifying and complementing each type of source when possible. They do not vouch for the accuracy of the information of any individual site that is discussed, but have attempted to verify and cross check data against multiple sources wherever possible. The goal is to build up an overall picture of the state of cultural heritage in the region based on cumulative evidence collected, rather than focussing on the specifics of any one site. However, some sites are used as illustrative case studies.

The collated information on heritage damage is organized into:

- immovable heritage (Chapter 4);
- moveable heritage (including looting and illicit trafficking) (Chapter 5);
- intangible heritage (Chapter 6);
- actions and responses of various organisations (Chapter 7).
- **Annex One** contains the condition assessment of individual sites. Where additional information was available we have provided expanded entries for each site in **Annex One**, detailing damage recorded via media, eyewitness reports, satellite imagery, and so on.

³⁸ <https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge/>

3.2 Data Sources

This report includes data compiled from various sources. The Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield has conducted interviews with a number of official agencies, as well as NGOs, foreign missions and individuals. A major review of relevant media was also conducted, and sites were identified and assessed on the free satellite imagery available via Google Earth wherever possible, in addition to the inclusion of existing satellite imagery assessments from UNOSAT following the 2008 hostilities.

3.2.1 Official Sources

Official sources include:

- The Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and its Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve
- The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport of Georgia
- The State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia
- The Georgian National Commission for UNESCO
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

In addition to governmental agencies, the collated information also comes from NGOs, foreign missions, and individuals who have crossed the administrative boundary lines.

Between 2018-2020, the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield collated and reviewed documentation from:

- The Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation
- The Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve
- Ministry of Science, Education, Culture and Sport of Georgia
- State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia
- Georgian National Commission for UNESCO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

Between 2018 and 2019, interviews were conducted with representatives of the following organisations:

- State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia
- Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve
- Georgian National Museum
- The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)
- Delegation of the Council of Europe to Georgia

3.2.2 Media Sources

Between 2018 and 2021, a media review was carried out using search terms, such as 'heritage', 'reconstruction', 'repair', etc. and the names of those heritage sites that appeared in the media report which was compiled and shared with the authors by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia to find open access information in news reports. Most media sources searched are from Russia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. Some news outlets used, such as Sputnik for example, are considered by many to play an important role within Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem. According to a recent report investigating Russian media (US Department of State Global Engagement Centre 2022: 4-5): "They serve as means for the

Kremlin to disseminate disinformation and propaganda narratives to audiences outside of Russia to influence public opinion and foreign policy in favour of the Kremlin's political goals".

Therefore, where possible, the information from those news outlets was verified by multiple sources before inclusion, and was used with caution. These reports contribute to the overall understanding of the state of heritage in the region. If multiple reports sharing the same information were available, only the first found or most detailed has been included, as the goal is to present a picture of the information, not of the popularity and sharing of said information.

As much information as possible was translated into English (often via Google Translate) and archived.

3.2.3 Satellite Imagery

This investigation incorporates the United Nations Satellite Imagery Assessment Team (UNOSAT) damage analyses from August and September 2008³⁹ following the fighting, which included some cultural heritage sites.

The authors are reviewing, updating (and where possible, expanding), UNOSAT's results over the last 13 years using freely available satellite imagery on Google Earth, ranging from Maxar imagery from 29 April 2002 to CNES imagery from 17 August 2020. In many cases, more than one image was available to provide a comparison, but none were available specifically from August 2008.

Site coordinates were primarily supplied by the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia, and additional and updated information was also supplied by the Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve. The coordinates are partly a subset of the National Agency database for the region. The data on heritage sites from the regions to which Tbilisi had lost control already from the first conflict in the 1990s mostly derives from the 1970s and onwards. Some of the sites in this documentation were designated as being in a ruinous condition, which makes it even more difficult to locate those on satellite imagery after several decades of neglect and no maintenance. Prior to the 2008 war, the Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve was working to map site coordinates using a GPS system, and had added new sites to the existing information. Not all site coordinates were accurate (as is common in historically collected data); wherever possible the authors have tried to update this information by locating sites on satellite imagery available through Google Earth, but this process is ongoing. The authors have also located and mapped sites which have been reported to them or through the news as damaged, but which were not listed in previous databases, such as the Parliament building in Tskhinvali, and the Tskhinvali synagogue. However, the inventory, and so our data, is still largely reflective of the sites which the Ministry of Culture is responsible for in peacetime: no archives or libraries are included, for example.

³⁹ The UNOSAT damage assessments were conducted using WorldView-1 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August 2008 at a spatial resolution of 50cm; Formosat-2 satellite imagery recorded 19 August 2008 at a spatial resolution of 2m; WorldView-1 Satellite Imagery recorded on 10 August 2008 at a spatial resolution of 50cm and IKONOS satellite imagery recorded 10 August 2008, resolution unspecified.

3.3 Data Management

3.3.1 Online Database

The information compiled from the sources mentioned above have been added to an online database, with a map-based visualisation platform (figure 3.1). The map-based database aims to map registered cultural heritage sites (with the exception of archaeological sites) across the entire Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Each site displays the Damage and Threat for each monument; the monument category; the physical state, and the location (municipality and village), and can be searched according to any of these. Sites can be displayed against a map, or a variety of freely available imagery. The sites are accompanied by site descriptions and where available, a selection of photos. The descriptions are based on the ones from the inventory cards - monument IDs published in “The History of Shida Kartli” by Tsira Dadianidze gathered as a result of fieldwork undertaken by the Georgian National Board for Monuments Protection between 1981 and 1986 and have been reworked and updated by the authors, where possible. Additional and updated information was also supplied by the Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve.



Figure 3.1: Online data visualisation map, August 2022⁴⁰

3.3.2 Categories

Data categories in the online database have been organised according to several principles. These seek to sort data on cultural heritage according to the **type of cultural heritage it is (monument categories)**, the **quality of its present condition (physical state/condition)**, and an assessment as to the **possible reasons for its conditional assessment (damage, temporary protective measures, and threats)**. The latter category also incorporates an element of future-orientated risk assessment.

⁴⁰ <http://map.blueshield.ge/en-US/Home/Map>

Monument categories

Sites are recorded in the database using the following monument categories:

- Basilica
- Domed church
- Single Nave Church
- Undefined Church
- Fortification
- Complex
- Auxiliary building (i.e., halls, kitchens, wine cellars, and buildings that are part of larger complexes)
- Museum
- Palace
- Dwelling
- Undefined Ruin
- Unknown

The Monument category includes the category “Complex”: this indicates a site usually (though not always) composed of multiple sites - for example, multiple towers, or a Church and its related fortification(s) and/or gates. In these cases, the database contains a record for the overall complex to indicate the relationship in the database, and a record for the individual components. Only the individual records are included in the summary data presented in chapter 4: the overall complex records are excluded from these summaries.

Caves, historic (archaeological) settlements, archaeological cemeteries, and archaeological sites were purposefully removed from the database in order not to attract unnecessary attention and prevent them being turned into targets of looting - the so-called “black archaeology” - and are not included in the analysis. Intangible cultural heritage is not recorded in the database.

Physical State/Condition:

This category indicates the physical state of the site today, based on the available evidence. In some cases reports/evidence are contradictory - for example, imagery may indicate a site is destroyed, but an eyewitness may say it is still present. The physical state is thus an estimate; the term “condition” should be considered synonymous with “physical state”, and a condition assessment is an assessment of the physical state.

Categories for physical state (condition) are as follows:

- **Good:** good condition
- **Moderate:** limited damage / slightly ruined, most walls remaining to at least one storey
- **Poor:** severely damaged / in a ruinous state, perhaps with walls to almost one storey
- **Destroyed:** site is destroyed / little remains other than perhaps a few small walls
- **Unknown**

If the site could not be located on imagery and no other information is available the Condition is recorded as Unknown with the condition from the original records in brackets, to indicate this has not been verified or updated (e.g. **Unknown (Poor)**).

Event: Damage and Threat

Physical state in this report should be assessed in combination with **Damage and Threat**.

In all cases where sites are recorded as Destroyed, if the Damage is listed as “No visible damage”, the site remains in the same physical state as when it was first recorded, and the damage has no relation to the conflict and pre-dates it. If damage of any type is recorded, this may indicate a change of physical state. For example, if a site is in “Poor” physical state, and the damage is listed as “Damaged as a result of unauthorised works”, this indicates the physical state has been affected by those works. The only exception is that a ruin may be listed as Destroyed (reflecting its ruined nature), and may later become neglected and overgrown: but there are no cases in the database where neglect has resulted in site destruction.

Categories for damage and threats are as follows:

- **No visible damage:** no damage is visible
- **Damaged during hostilities (2008):** damaged during the hostilities in 2008
- **Destroyed as a result of hostilities (2008):** destroyed as a result of hostilities in 2008 (for example a building that was damaged during fighting and later collapsed)
- **Damaged or destroyed as a result of unauthorised works (after 2008):** unauthorised repair/restoration/ reconstruction by members of the public, individual clergy, or site owners with no heritage professional present; and repair/ restoration/reconstruction overseen by the de-facto South Ossetian Monuments Protection Service
- **Damaged by neglect:** site has become overgrown, or has deteriorated due to neglect and lack of maintenance
- **Damaged or Destroyed by Construction (military):** a military base built over site
- **Potential threat: proximity to military facility:** site is near (within 500m) a newly constructed military facility or other military infrastructure, or eyewitnesses reported military training occurring nearby
- **Deliberate destruction:** site is damaged, but the cause and perpetrator are unknown
- **Looting:** evidence of looting at the site
- **Unknown:** site condition could not be assessed

The physical state may remain unchanged since the original data was collected. For example, a site may be recorded as “Destroyed”, because it is a monument in a ruinous state, and has been for decades.

Event: Georgian Protective Measures

There is one further category used in the report.

- **Temporary emergency protective measures:** Between 2015-2018, temporary emergency protective measures were carried out under the supervision of nuns from Ikoti Monastery and by specialists from the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia.

This work is detailed in chapter 7, under the work of the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH).

3.4 Summary

This report uses a multi-source analysis, based on eyewitness reports, interviews, media, social media, published NGO and IO reports, and satellite imagery assessment to inform a comprehensive analysis, where individual data is verified using multiple sources to improve veracity. The data informs not only this overview

report, but a comprehensive annex (**Annex One**) detailing the damage to each site and the sources of information, as well as an online database and website.

Data is separated into immovable, moveable, and intangible cultural heritage, as well as a summary of actions of the various organisations involved in heritage protection.

Chapter 4. Immovable Cultural Heritage Damage

4.1 Background

The Tskhinvali Region, historically called Samachablo in Georgian, is today administratively part of the Shida Kartli and (partially) Mtskheta-Mtianeti regions of Georgia, located on the southern side of the Central Caucasus. Tskhinvali Region encompasses the territory of the former autonomous district of South Ossetia of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic that existed from 1922 to 1990. According to the present administrative division of Georgia, the territory of the former autonomous district, that covers some 3,900km², includes the following 6 municipalities: Akhagori, Gori, Java, Kareli, Oni and Sachkhere. Although within the sovereign territory of Georgia, some parts of the region have been out of Georgian control since 1992, and others since 2008. The self-declared Republic of South Ossetia or Alania, is recognized by 5 members of the United Nations (Russian Federation, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, and Syria).

The wider Shida Kartli region encompasses the Didi and Patara Liakhvi, Frone and Ksani river valleys, and contains about 800 registered cultural heritage sites. These are mainly orthodox churches and cathedrals, towers, and fortresses dating from the 6th to 20th centuries AD, and archaeological sites. In addition to locally important sites, there are monuments of national importance that are covered in rare wall paintings and ornamented or engraved stones, as well as Georgian lapidary inscriptions bearing names of historical figures and important historic events. Many (if not all) of these lie within the occupied area. To this we have also added records for historical and religious sites where damage was reported and that have been assessed in this report and added into the online database (Table 4.1).

Summary statistics are provided here, along with caveats about the data. The specifics of the damage, for example, which sites are damaged by what, are provided in the following sections.

Table 4.1: Sites with damage reported in the occupied Tskhinvali Region

Municipality ⁴¹	No. of sites in the National Registry	Sites mapped by authors (Figure 1.1)
Akhagori	114	213
Java (Oni / Sachkhere)	153	155
Tskhinvali (Gori) ⁴²	185	278
Znauri (Kareli) ⁴³	126	130
Total	693	776

⁴¹ This column repeats the names of the localities as they are named in the monument register (the monument ID records which are kept in the archives of the national agency) provided to us by the national agency for cultural heritage preservation

⁴² Presently Gori Municipality.

⁴³ Historically, Okona region was renamed as Znauri during the Soviet era: today this territory is part of Kareli and Khashuri Municipalities, which extends beyond the occupation line.

4.2 Overview of Damage

This section provides an overview of the data collected on the sites. In total, 776 records were assessed on satellite imagery. Of these, 39 were “Complex” sites, meaning there is an overall record for the site and also individual records for the constituent parts. These “Complex” records are removed from the analysis, leaving 737 sites. Figure 4.1 shows a summary of the types of site for all 737 sites.

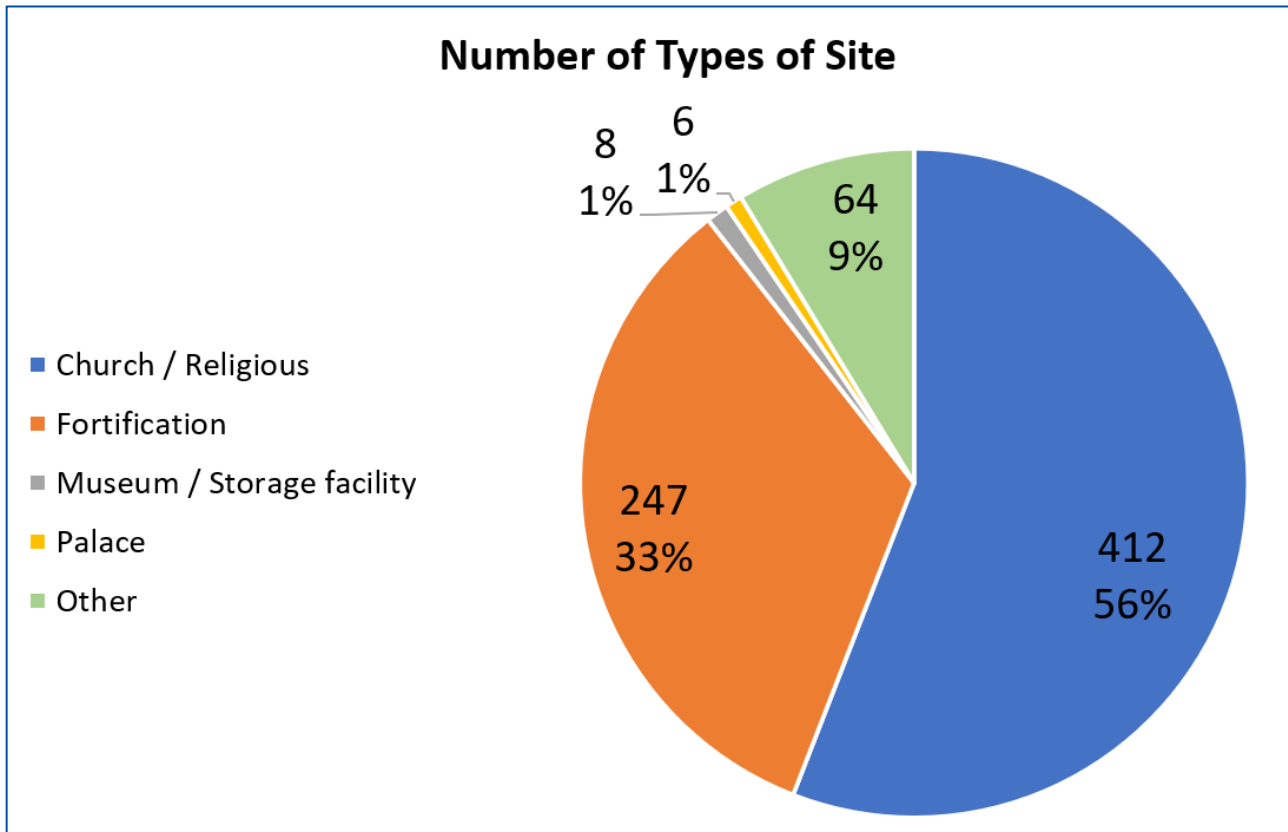


Figure 4.1: Summary of types of site in the region

Of the 737 sites, 413 could not be located on the satellite imagery. This is not always a reflection on their condition: the exact GPS coordinates of some of these sites are unknown as their inventories date back to as early as the 1970s, and many are in dense woodland and cannot be located on imagery. Site types for all sites are given in Table 4.2. Some reporting figures are given excluding sites that could not be located on imagery; if they are reproduced including sites that are not visible, there is almost no change. For example, 56% of all sites are churches or other religious buildings. 54% of visible sites located on imagery are churches. The type of site has no relationship to whether the site is visible or can be located.

Table 4.2: Types of sites assessed on imagery and number located on imagery

Site Type	Located on imagery	Unable to Locate	Total Reviewed
Church (Basilica)	3	5	8
Church (Domed)	15	16	31
Church (Single Nave)	117	70	187
Church (Undefined)	41	129	170
Religious (Auxiliary Building)	13	8	21
Religious (Other)	2	14	16
Dwelling	2	1	3
Fortification	111	136	247
Museum	6	2	8
Palace	4	2	6
Ruin (Undefined)	4	14	18
Unknown	6	16	22
Grand Total	324	413	737

Most sites in the original data had a condition which reflected site visits, and information on the full condition of the monument where possible. However, not all sites were visited, and some site conditions were taken from books and reports. Those which are Unknown with a condition (e.g., Unknown (Poor)) are sites for which no information was available, and the condition reflects the condition in the original records. To reiterate: satellite imagery provides a “top down” view: not all images were clear, and it is not possible to see beneath roofs, through walls, or inside buildings, so additional damage may have been sustained to walls or building interiors. In a few cases, sites were in better condition than originally reported, and the condition has been upgraded to reflect that. For some sites, this is a mistake in the original records, but in other cases, for example, temporary emergency protective measures have been installed (see **7.2.2 National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH)**).

Table 4.3 shows the condition of the sites. Of the 324 sites located, 25 had such poor imagery no condition estimate was possible (those in the column for sites that were located, but where the condition is “Unknown”). For six of the sites that could not be located, other information was available, and these have a condition assessment and are not considered unknown.

Table 4.3: Site Conditions for sites which were located on imagery

Assessed Condition	Located on imagery / records available	Unable to Locate	Grand Total
Good	35	1	36
Moderate	72	0	72
Poor	139	1	140
Destroyed*	53	4	57
Unknown	20	20	40
Unknown (Good)	0	4	4
Unknown (Moderate)	1	37	38
Unknown (Poor)	3	199	202
Unknown (Destroyed*)	1	147	148
Grand Total	324	413	737

* Destroyed sites are ruins, but may still exist.

587 sites were in a Poor Condition, a Destroyed ruin, or Unknown, or Unknown and thought to be Poor or Destroyed: no condition assessment was possible today at 390 of them. Just 36 sites, less than 5% of sites, are in a good condition.

Table 4.4 shows the condition of the sites as percentage of the total number of sites. The first row includes all 737 sites (including all those where no new condition assessment was possible, and excluding complexes). The second row excludes all sites with an unknown condition, to give only the current known conditions. It is clear that when sites whose condition is Unknown are excluded, just one third of sites are considered to be in a Good or Moderate Condition, and nearly 20% of sites for which information is available are Destroyed.

Table 4.4 - Percentage site conditions

	Good	Moderate	Poor	Destroyed	Unknown
% of sites in each condition (including Unknown Conditions) 737 sites	4.88%	9.77%	19.00%	7.73%	58.62%
% of sites excluding all sites (excluding Unknown conditions) 305 sites	11.80%	23.61%	45.90%	18.69%	-

Table 4.5 shows the condition of the various monument types for all 737 sites. Although the fortifications are generally in a Poor or Destroyed condition, this includes many which are in a ruinous condition. However, as will be discussed in the following sections, this does not mean that their condition is unchanged and there is no damage or risk. Many are at severe risk from neglect, amongst other threats. Churches have the highest proportion of sites in Good condition; however, eyewitnesses who have visited churches report that in cases the original Georgian interior has been replaced by a Russian Orthodox style inside. This type of damage is not visible on satellite imagery and eyewitness reports were not widely available. Results should therefore be treated with caution. In fact, churches have a particular place in this report, discussed in 4.2.1 - Damage and Destruction From and Following Hostilities.

Table 4.5 Condition of different monument types

Site Type No. / %	Good	Moderate	Poor	Destroyed	Unknown	Total
Auxiliary Building	4	1	6	1	9	21
% (in each category)	19.05	4.76	28.75	4.76	42.86	100
Churches	22	58	63	26	227	396
% (in each category)	5.56	14.65	15.91	6.57	57.32	100
Religious (Other)	0	0	1	1	14	16
% (in each category)	0.00	0.00	6.25	6.25	87.50	100
Dwelling	0	0	0	1	2	3
% (in each category)	0.00	0.00	0.00	33.33	66.67	100

category)						
Fortification	5	11	66	19	146	247
% (in each category)	2.02	4.45	26.72	7.69	59.11	100
Museum	1	1	2	3	1	8
% (in each category)	12.50	12.50	25.00	37.50	12.50	100
Palace	1	0	0	3	2	6
% (in each category)	16.67	0.00	0.00	50.00	33.33	100
Ruin (Undefined)	0	0	2	1	15	18
% (in each category)	0.00	0.00	11.11	5.56	83.33	100
Unknown	3	1	0	2	16	22
% (in each category)	13.64	4.55	0.00	9.09	72.73	100
Total	36	72	140	57	432	737

Table 4.6 shows an overview of the specific types of damage discussed, which were recorded on 178 sites, according to a summary of monument types. As can be seen from a comparison to figure 4.1, which shows the breakdown of monument types in the region, no type of site is more likely to be damaged than any other type of site. For example, 56% of sites are churches or other religious sites, and 56.5% of the damage causes recorded were sustained by churches (reiterating there is no relationship between the visibility of sites and the site type).

Table 4.6: Damage sustained to each type of site⁴⁴

	Damaged or destroyed by hostilities	Damaged or destroyed by unauthorized works (after 2008)	Damaged or destroyed by neglect	Proximity to military facility ⁴⁵	Looting	Total
Church / Religious	12	21	49	25	1	108
	6.3 %	11.0%	25.7%	13.1%	0.5%	56.5%
Fortification	0	3	34	16	0	53
	0.0%	1.6%	17.8%	8.4%	0.0%	27.7%
Museum	5	1	3	0	1	10
	2.6%	0.5%	1.6%	0.0%	0.5%	5.2%
Palace	2	1	0	0	0	3
	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%
Other	4	0	9	4	0	17
	2.1%	0.0%	4.7%	2.1%	0.0%	8.9%
Grand Total	23	26	95	45	2	191
	12.0%	13.6%	49.7%	23.6%	1.0%	100.0%

4.2.1 Damage and Destruction from and following Hostilities in August 2008

A number of reports (Amnesty International 2010, 2008; Open Society Georgia Foundation 2009) have been released by human rights organisations, examining the situation in Georgia following the 2008 war. They analyse the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, but none mention the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols (1954, 1999), or discuss cultural heritage damage and

⁴⁴ This table excludes the single church with the category of “deliberate damage”, where the cause of the damage is uncertain and one case when the cause was vandalism that took place in the period of occupation

⁴⁵ This includes the 3 sites discussed below which were damaged directly by the construction of military facilities

destruction, and the ensuing violations of cultural rights of the displaced population. Nevertheless, all the reports mention the destruction of over a dozen Georgian villages after the occupation of the Shida Kartli, Tskhinvali Region, albeit without noting their historic value.

For instance, Human Rights Watch reported that:

“ ... [from their] observations on the ground and from these interviews have led us to conclude that the South Ossetian forces sought to ethnically cleanse these villages: that is, the destruction of the homes in these villages was deliberate, systematic, and carried out on the basis of the ethnic and imputed political affiliations of the residents of these villages, with the express purpose of forcing those who remained to leave and ensuring that no former residents would return.”

(HRW 2009)

The villages in question here were: Tamarasheni, Zemo Achabeti, Kvemo Achabeti, Kurta, Kekhvi, Eredvi, Vanati, Avnevi, Nuli, Beloti, Satskheneti, Atsriskhevi, Disevi, Dzartsemi, Kheiti, Prisi, and Kemerti. The majority of these 17 villages were historic villages: Eredvi, for example, is mentioned in historic sources as early as the 8th century, and was the largest village in the Didi and Patara Liakhvi river valleys. UNOSAT also confirmed that much of the damage to the ethnic Georgian villages along the Didi Liakhvi River was caused by intentional burning and not shelling or bombardment.

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys. A review of their current status using Google Earth imagery indicates that all the villages in the Didi Liakhvi river valley were bulldozed, as were some in the Patara Liakhvi river valley (including, notably, Eredvi - see below); and that those in the Frone River valley were partially demolished. A brief assessment of each village, where possible, is included in **Annex One**. To indicate the full scale of damage in these villages, the satellite imagery assessment of all sites known to be in these villages are included in **Annex One** as well.

Of the villages reported to be burned and cleared, satellite imagery analysis undertaken via Google Earth confirmed the burning and clearance of:

- Zemo Achabeti, Kvemo Achabeti, Disevi, Dzartsemi, Eredvi, Kekhvi, Kemerti, Kheiti, Kurta, Tamarasheni, and Kvemo Zonkari.
- Argvitsi and Nuli were burned and partially cleared.
- Google Earth satellite imagery indicates evidence of partial demolition in a number of other villages along the Frone River valley between 2013 and 2018.

The following sites were burned and ruined, but - as of the imagery available dated to 2019 (Maxar) and 2020 (CNES / Airbus) - they had not been cleared:

- Atsriskhevi, Avnevi, Berula, Ksuisi, Prisi, Satskheneti, Vanati (now named Wanat), and Zemo Zonkari.

All cultural sites in each village are listed in **Annex One**: however, sites in residential areas are much more likely to be affected than those outside the main settled areas. Sites outside the central residential area of the village were not burned or cleared - there is a strongly geographic element to the damage. Towers, fortresses, and other fortifications, for example, were largely spared - not because of any particular

importance, but because of location. On the other hand, they are far more likely to suffer from neglect for the same reason (see **section 4.2.4**, below).

It is significant that - in almost all cases where villages were destroyed to the foundations, and when they were bulldozed and cleared away - the churches were, as far as possible, left standing. This was noted in almost all cases where churches could be located. One wooden church, St George's in Sveri, was burned during hostilities, and Archangel Church and Holy Mother of God Church (Church of the Virgin), Kheiti, were hit during fighting, sustaining damage. The latter slowly collapsed from the damage, although unlike the rest of Kheiti, it was not cleared away. In Nuli, St. George's Church - a local single-nave church dating to the 16th/17th centuries (listed as being in Poor condition in the original record) - could not be positively identified: however, all buildings in the vicinity of the coordinates suffered heavy damage, and so the church is assumed to have been destroyed. In Dzartsemi, several of the churches were burned and cleared: large parts of this area were cleared to make a military training ground and no sites in that area were spared. However, in all other cases, churches have been left standing. In fact, in one case, Kashueti Church, in Kemerti, demolition of the village began some time after 22 March 2014, and was completed by 11 July 2014. Between May 2016 and September 2017, the woodlands and roads were also completely bulldozed to leave a clear area, which has been used for military purposes. The church was labelled with the number 658 (see **Figure A1.43, Annex One**): it was expected that the church would be demolished like the rest of the town, but in fact it was recently rebuilt. That is not to say all the churches that are standing are in a good condition - many are unused and heavily neglected, with some in danger of collapse. In a few, but by no means most, cases, civilians or the de facto Monuments Protection Service have conducted work to stabilise the buildings, most of the time causing irreversible damage due to inappropriate intervention into the historic fabric, discussed under 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, and several are located close to military facilities, threatening their physical integrity.

This can be seen in the example of Eredvi. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) reported damage to the historic village during the conflict, and Human Rights Watch reported visiting the village in September 2008, which "by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning" (HRW 2009: 131). After the war in 2009, Google Earth imagery by Maxar indicates that, except for St. George's Church, the ruined village remained for several years, but later imagery shows the village, except the church, was bulldozed and cleared (Figures 4.2, 4.3).

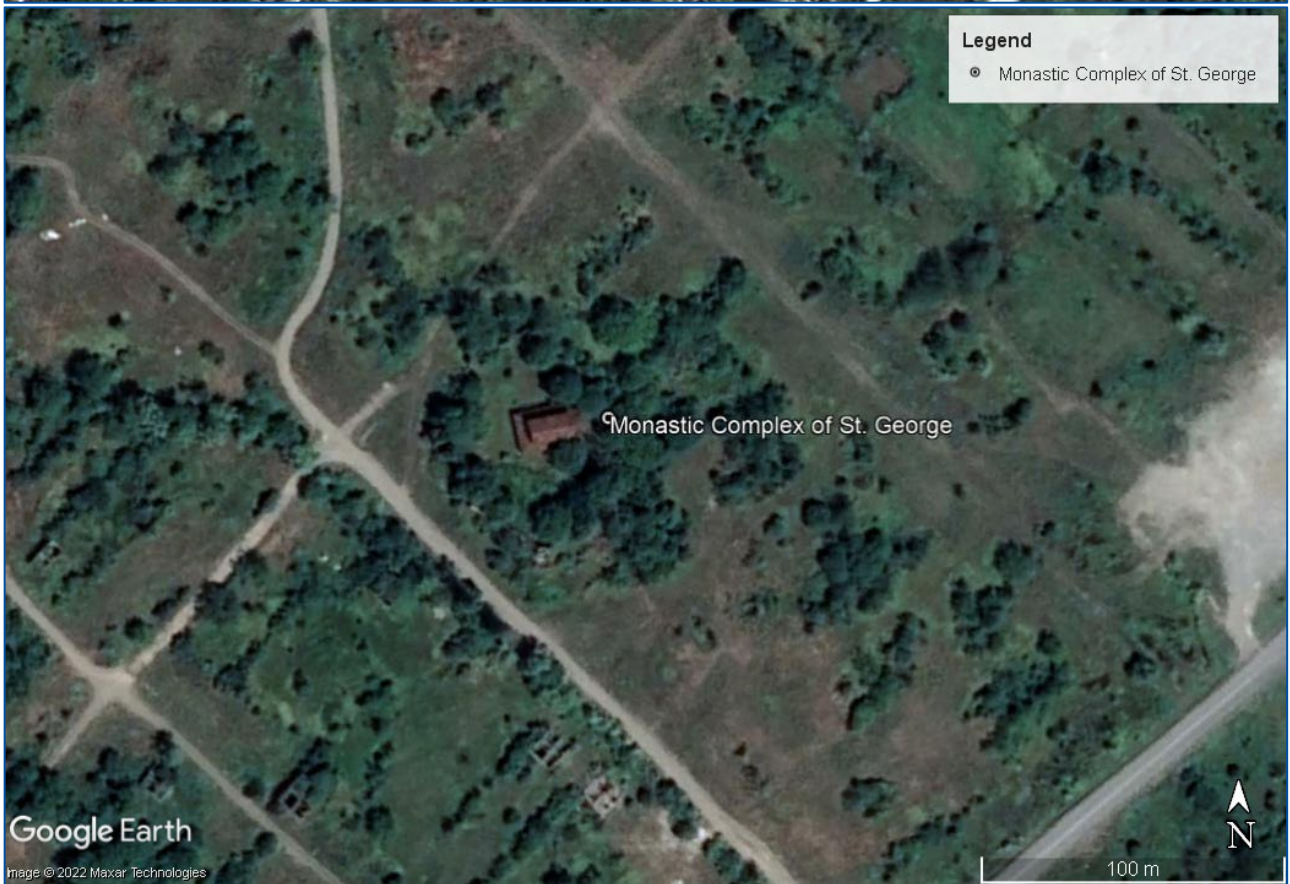
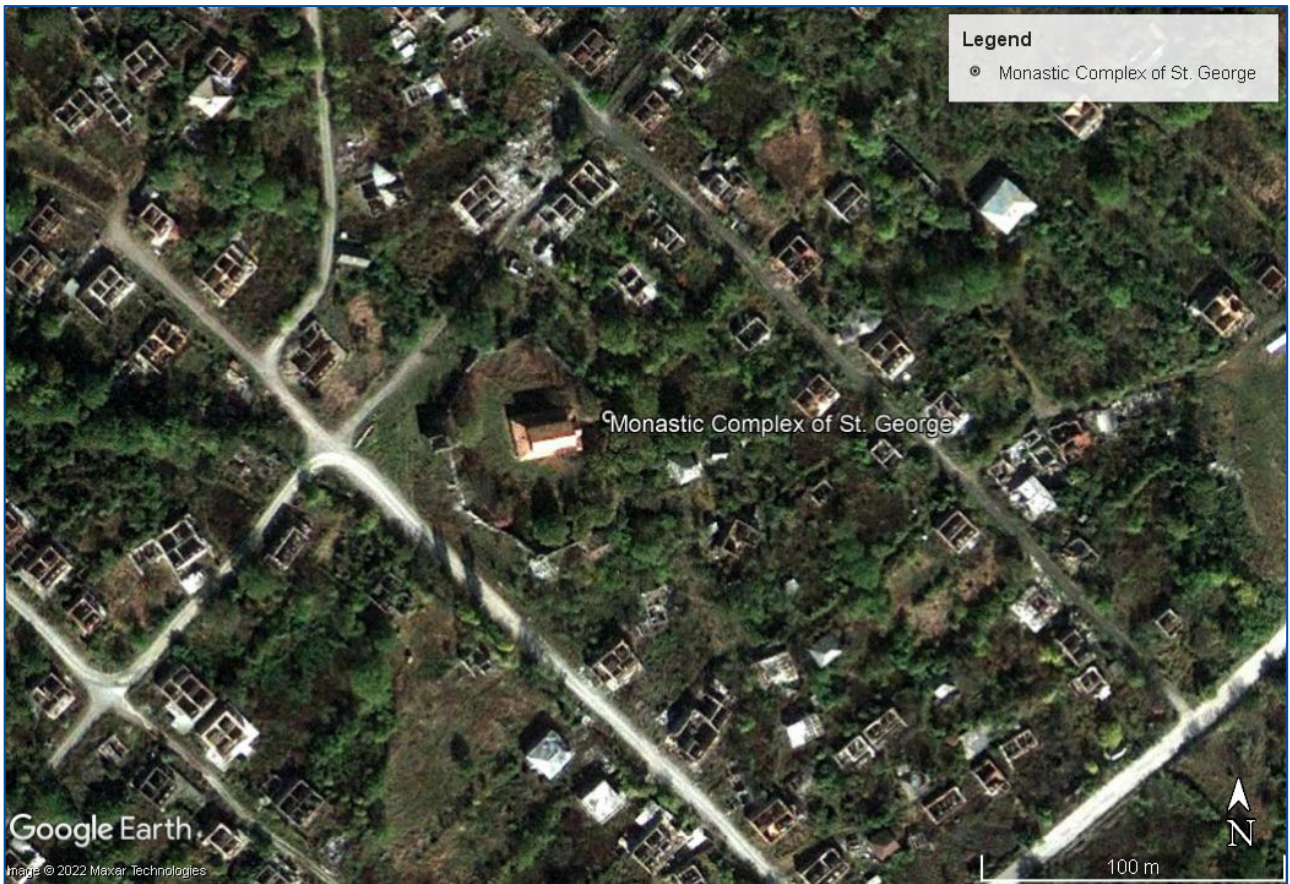


Figure 4.2: the ruined village of Eredvi and intact St George's complex. Maxar (19 10 2009)
Figure 4.3: CNES/Airbus (16 07 2019) satellite images via Google Earth.

Below is a list of sites damaged as a result of hostilities during August 2008 and its aftermath. The below list is different from the document published as an annex of the official statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning cultural heritage damage in Georgia during the 2008 war (**Annex Three** to this report), as it also includes data from the satellite imagery assessment of sites and some of the information listed there turned out to be inaccurate when verification with multiple sources was possible. In addition, it excludes sites such as Nikozi, which were damaged during fighting, but are no longer occupied after the forces retreated.

13 sites were damaged during hostilities. Of these, the damage to the Parliament Building, Kashueti Church (Kemerti), Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin (Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary)/Former Armenian Church (Tskhinvali) and some of the Museums (see chapter 5) was repaired, and the Abajev / Abaev Memorial Monument was replaced. In one case - Ivane Machabeli House-Museum - the building was badly damaged by fire, and collapsed later, while parts of it were bulldozed later.

1. **Avnevi - Church of the Assumption (10th-14thC):** Damaged as a result of hostilities in 2008: according to eyewitness reports, its windows shattered as a result of the military operations.
2. **Eredvi - St George's Complex: Monastery and Three-Church Basilica (906):** Church of St. George (906) and its surrounding gate were damaged by a shell that fell in the vicinity of the complex. According to a report by a heritage researcher who visited the site anonymously after the war, part of the gate wall was destroyed and the decorative relief of the window in the west wall of the church had fallen off. The damage was still visible in 2017.
3. **Kemerti - Kashueti Church (1997):** The church was damaged during the war, and later numbered and marked for demolition: however, in a photo posted online in 2021, the church has a restored dome, a new roof and stones have been laid at the base of the exterior walls (Streltsov 2021a). When this image is compared to the older photos (Vera_lookour 2017, roks_alana 2012, Lost Ossetia n.d.-b) the wooden door has been replaced with the metal one and there have been changes in the interior as well; the templon has been replaced and the icons have been removed from the church.
4. **Kheiti - Holy Mother of God Church (Church of the Virgin) (10th-15thC):** The church was badly damaged during hostilities. A comparison of Maxar images dated 26 July 2007, and 19 October 2009 from Google Earth shows severe damage to the roof, which has almost completely collapsed. There is evidence of rubble around the walls, suggesting structural damage. The building continued to deteriorate; and partially collapsed on the image dated 22 March 2014. It does not seem to have been bulldozed; the remains are fewer on each sequential image, until only a few small foundation walls remain on the image dated 16 July 2019.
5. **Kheiti - Archangel Church (18th-19thC):** According to eyewitnesses, the church dome and the belfry were damaged during shelling on 12th of August 2008. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) reported "ID:1. Archangel Church in Kheiti (XIX c.) Severe Damages to south-western section of building"(sic). Unlike the rest of the village (which was bulldozed), the church is still visible on the most recent satellite image on Google Earth, a CNES/Airbus image dated 21 October 2019. The damage was not repaired, and the church is neglected.
6. **Tbeti - Church "Kvavisakdari" (Late Middle Ages):** The church was hit by a shell during the fighting on August 8-10, 2008. The south corner and the southern wall of the skeleton of the church were destroyed. It is tentatively located on satellite imagery in a highly ruined state, only a few courses high. Possible damage is visible to the southeastern corner of the ruin on the Maxar image dated 19 October 2009, via Google Earth.

7. **Tskhinvali - Abajev / Abaev Memorial Monument (2000)**: This monument was hit during the shelling in Tskhinvali on 8-9 August 2008, and the upper part of the sculpture was destroyed. It was also reported to be riddled with bullet holes.
8. **Tskhinvali - Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin (Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary)/Former Armenian Church (1718)**: The church's office premises were shelled during the fighting in August 8-9, 2008, causing significant damage to the upper part of the buildings, which were destroyed. It was later restored.
9. **Tskhinvali - Museum of Local History (now the "State Museum of South Ossetia") (Original museum building)**: According to eyewitnesses, the museum suffered damage during both phases of the war. During the fighting in the 1990s, the museum lay empty and was heavily damaged and the collections were taken to North Ossetia. It was further damaged in 2008. Today the building is used as a warehouse.
10. **Tskhinvali - Parliament Building (1937)**: the building suffered heavy damage during the shelling of Tskhinvali on August 8-9, 2008, and was rebuilt by 2015.
11. **Tskhinvali - Tskhinvali Synagogue (1950s)**: The synagogue was badly damaged during the fighting in 1992, and again in the shelling during the fighting on 8-9 August 2008. Today it is abandoned.
12. **Tsunari (Khetagurovo) - Memorial Monument (date unknown)**: War Memorial to villagers who died in World War II. It came under fire in the fighting in August 2008: holes and losses from bullets and fragments were recorded on the stele and sculpture.
13. **Vanati - Church of the Virgin (19thC)**: The church is heavily damaged in the Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth from 19th October 2009, where it is surrounded by other heavily damaged buildings. It is assumed that this is a result of the burning of the village during the 2008 hostilities. By 2019, the church had no roof or a door, and was suffering from neglect; however, the walls were still standing.

A further 10 sites, including one which had already sustained damage, were destroyed.

1. **Dzartsemi - Parseti Niche (Geri St George's Niche) (19thC)**: Eyewitnesses reported this wooden church was burned during the war, confirmed via imagery assessment, and left in ruins that became overgrown by vegetation and collapsed.
2. **Dzartsemi - Church of the Assumption (Middle Ages)**: on the Maxar image dating to 19 October 2009, the area is burned and ruined and by 10 October 2013, large parts of this area were cleared to build military facilities/installations. The site is not visible on imagery and is presumed destroyed, but this is not confirmed as the coordinates could be wrong.
3. **Kekhvi - Storage Facility of the Office of Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve**: UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 19) reported "Likely severe damages, possible impact crater in roof, surrounded by fire-damaged buildings". Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth shows that in 2009 the village and the storage facility of DLVMR were affected by war and the building was ruined. The ruins were bulldozed with the rest of the village between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014.
4. **Kurta - Giorgi Machabeli Palace and House Museum**: Site was robbed and destroyed during the first phase of conflict in 1990s. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) indicates that "No visual damage identified [sic], but multiple fire-destroyed buildings in close proximity." However, a later update (UNOSAT 2008d) reported "No visual damage to ruins as marked before, however the main building complex roof markings are possible indications of fire-related damages and there is a

- possible impact site in the roof consistent with a mortar round.” Sequential Google Earth imagery supports the interpretation of fire damage to the building, and Maxar satellite images indicate that between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014, the site was completely destroyed.
5. **Kurta - Office of Didi Lakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve:** UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 20) reported “Building destroyed, arson probably, surrounded by fire-damaged buildings”. Assessment of Maxar satellite imagery on Google Earth indicates that between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014, the site was completely destroyed.
 6. **Kurta - Basishvili House ("Priest's House") (date unknown):** The site could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today but, as everything else in the vicinity has been destroyed, either as a result of the hostilities or when the village was bulldozed between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014 (Maxar imagery via Google Earth), Basishvili House is presumed Destroyed.
 7. **Kurta - Tsiskarishvili Palace (19thC):** The site was destroyed between 26th July 2007 and 19th October 2009 as a result of hostilities, and then cleared when the village was bulldozed, according to Maxar imagery on Google Earth.
 8. **Sveri - St. George Wooden Church (19thC):** the church is listed as a rare example of wooden architecture. Eyewitnesses to the event informed that it was completely burnt as a result of an airstrike during the fighting in 2008. UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c) “confirmed severe damage/destroyed”.
 9. **Tamarasheni - Ivane Machabeli House-Museum (18th-19thC)** (Gori Municipality): The house-museum of a prominent Georgian writer and public figure – Ivane Machabeli - was damaged in fighting in the 1990s, and then heavily bombed and damaged during the 2008 war according to museum staff. The collections could not be evacuated due to the sudden developments. UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c) reports “ID2: Ivane Machabeli Museum (XIX c.) in Tamarasheni. Possible damage to roof of northern section (uncertain). 8 adjacent buildings destroyed / severely damaged.” Imagery assessment via Google Earth indicates the heavy damage sustained led to the partial collapse of the building by 2010. The southern part has now been bulldozed, though the northern part remains (as of 2019) in a highly ruined condition.
 10. **Tskhinvali - Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum (also called the Vaso Abajev House Museum) (his original residence):** the house completely burned down and the exhibits were lost during the shelling in Tskhinvali on 8-9 August 2008. It was reopened following restoration in 2021.

In most of these cases, the sites were burned during the fighting, and any remains were completely cleared away, along with the rest of the historic ethnic Georgian fabric of the villages. Figure 4.4a provides an overview of these sites. The majority are in the area closest to the border, where the fighting was heaviest (close up in figure 4.4b).

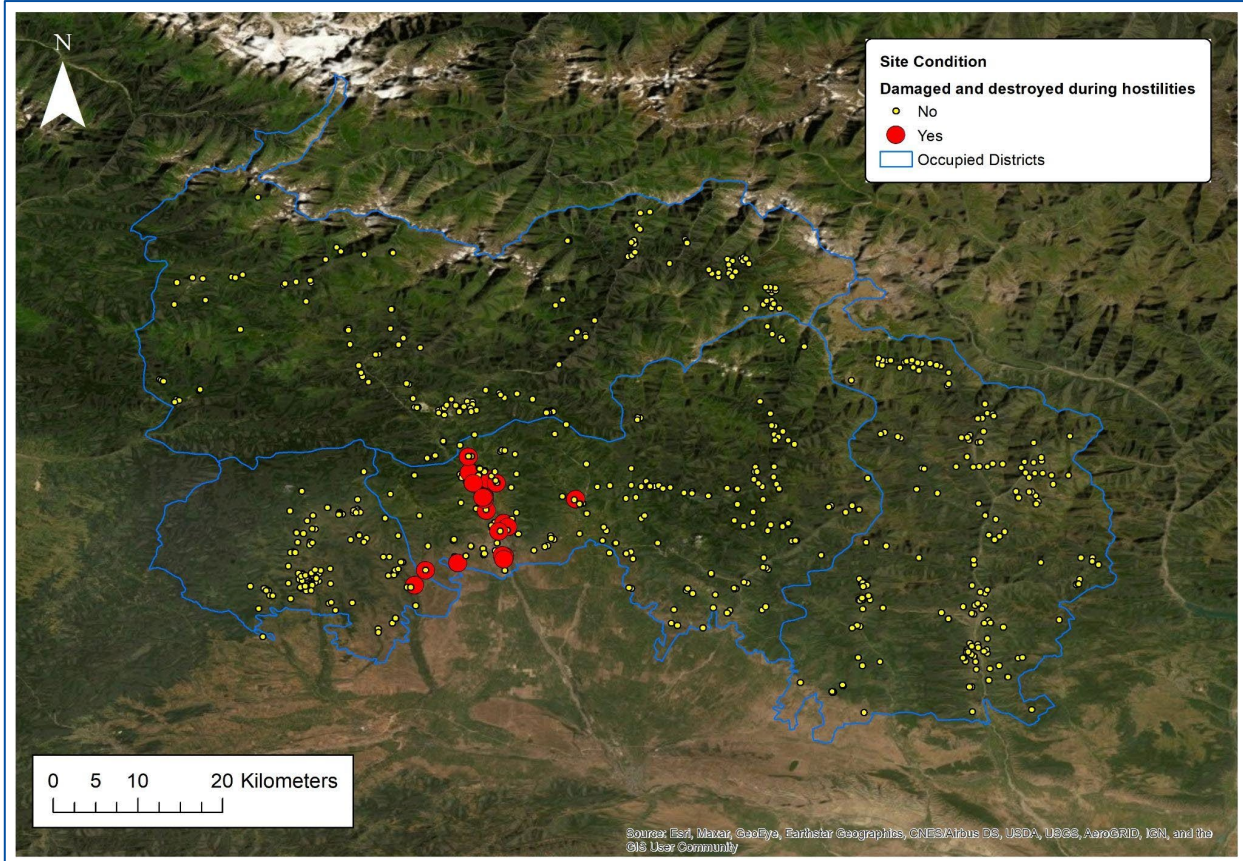


Figure 4.4(a): Sites damaged and destroyed by hostilities

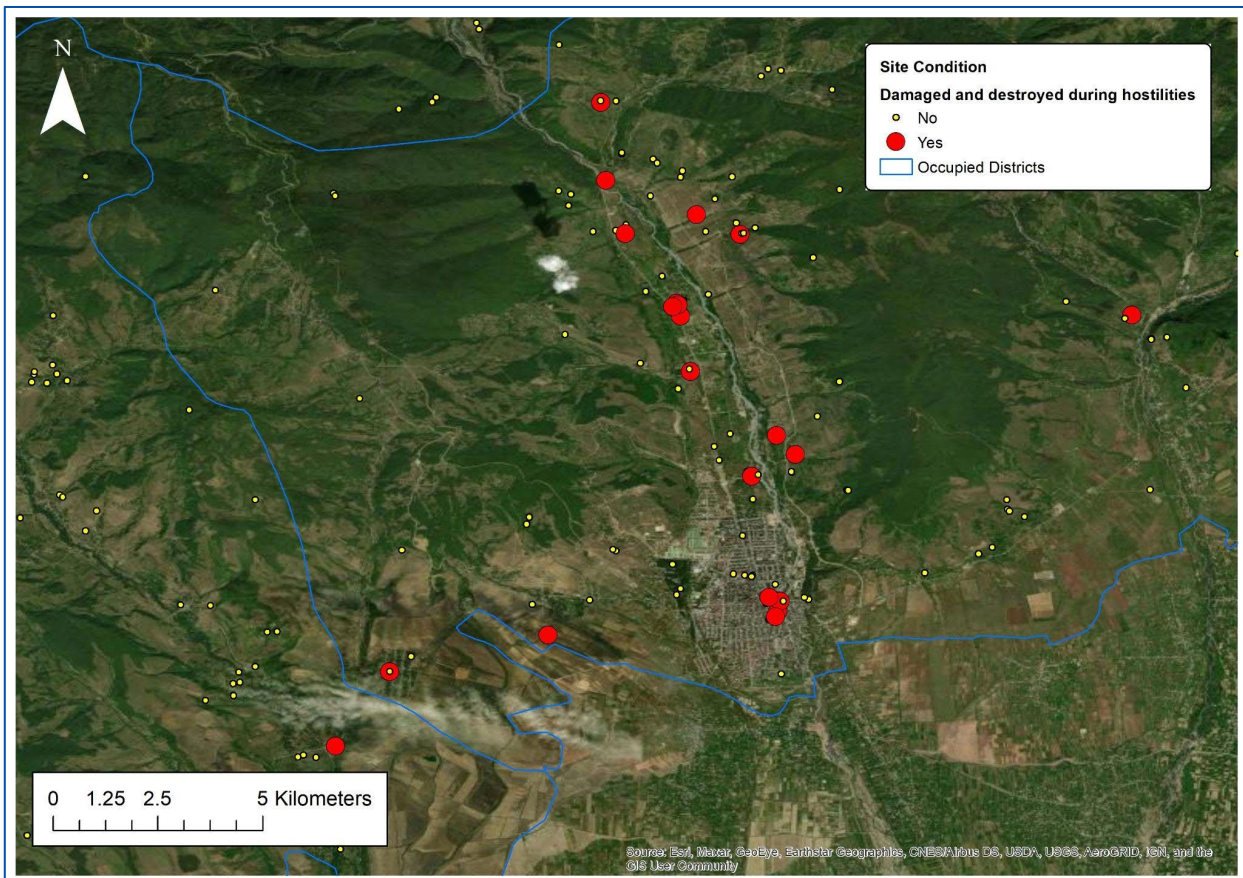


Figure 4.4(b): Close up of sites damaged and destroyed by hostilities

One site was damaged between 2007-2009, but the cause is unknown: it may be related to the fighting, but may not be.

1. **Achabeti, Zemo (Upper) - Church of St Estate (St Eustathius Church) (8thC):** UNOSAT satellite imagery assessment (2008d) (ID: 21) following the fighting in 2008 reported “no visual damages, but located close to fire-damaged buildings”. Imagery assessment via Google Earth dated 19 October 2009 indicated the roof was intact (unlike most surrounding buildings); however, the south wall of the church yard was demolished between 2007 and 2009.

Whilst this section has only concentrated on the occupied territories, the damage to cultural heritage during the hostilities in August 2008 extended to further territories of Gori and Kaspi Municipalities - the so-called “buffer zone” - which was occupied by the Russian troops until October 2008. The damage to cultural sites concerned dwelling houses, religious sites and museums. One such case is the **Monastery Complex of Nikozi** in Gori Municipality. During the hostilities in 2008, the Episcopal Palace of Nikozi (10th century) was significantly damaged (figures 4.5. and 4.6). The palace is one of the buildings of the Monastic Complex of Nikozi, which also includes the Church of the Deity (5th - 14-15thC), the Archangel Church, Bell Towers, and monastic residences (2000s). The rectangular Episcopal palace is two-storied and was built using stone and brick, and the structural details were made of brick. The restoration of the palace had started before 2008; however, during the events of the war, up to 30 shells fell on the territory of the Nikozi complex. These destroyed monastic residences, and the fire caused by the falling shells burned the interior of the Episcopal Palace and caused the roof to collapse. During 2009-2014, the Bishop's Palace of Nikozi was completely restored.

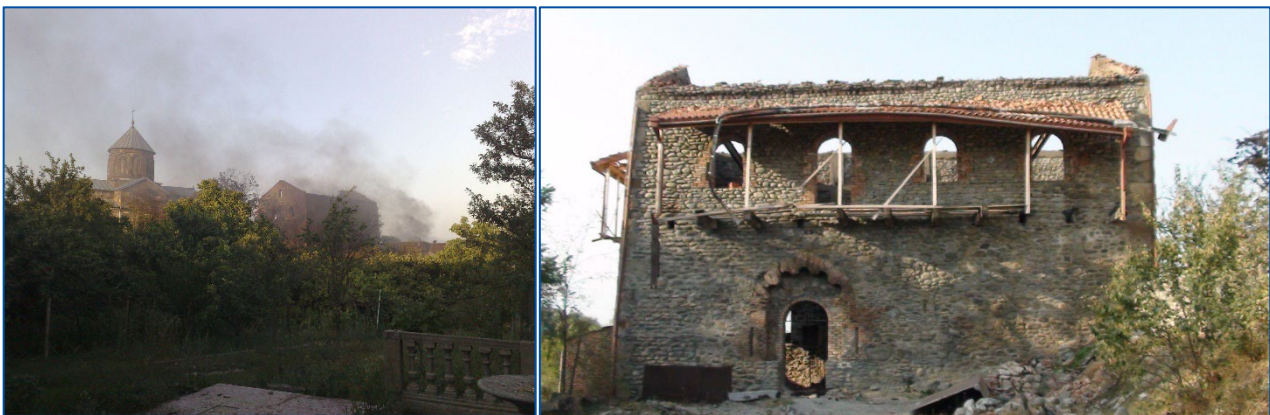


Figure 4.5 (left): Nikozi Archangel Church during the 2008 shell strikes © Mitropolit Isaiah (Chanturia)
Figure 4.6 (right): Nikozi Episcopal palace after shell strikes in 2008 © Mitropolit Isaiah (Chanturia)

4.2.2 Current and Future Threats: Damage and Destruction from Construction (Civilian)

In the village of Kemerti, as well as other villages in Didi Liakhvi valley, the historic houses damaged as a result of the 2008 war have been completely torn down, and new residential flats have since been constructed (see **examples and sources in Annex One**)⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ This is not recorded as a category in the database, as the actual damage occurred prior to the construction, through the clearance of the villages following hostilities. However, the land use reflects the wider reorganisation of the landscape and removal of the evidence of ethnic Georgian presence in the land.

One such example has been completed in the village of Achabeti⁴⁷ (figures 4.7a,b).



Figure 4.7a (left): Upper and Lower Achabeti, 30 September 2004 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth)
Figure 4.7b (right): New constructions in Upper and Lower Achabeti following the clearance of the villages,
06 June 2020 (CNES / Airbus satellite image via Google Earth)

Another historic village - Tamarasheni is also in a similar situation, where apartment blocks have been built and the area has been named “Moskovski” (see **Annex One figures A1.61, A1.62**). The burnt houses which are still standing are labelled with numbers (according to the new owner and in preparation for demolition). According to recent news (Aptsiauri 2020a) a landfill is being built on the territory of village Eredvi with funds from the Russian Government. The village, which is mentioned in historic sources as early as the 8th century, was the largest in the Didi and Patara Liakhvi river valleys. Throughout history, it has had a strong strategic and geographic importance and was inhabited by 1,000 families up until the war. In the years before the war, the residents strongly resisted separatist military groups; historians and some local residents consider the creation of the landfill there as a form of punishment and revenge.

⁴⁷ For example, visible on Google Earth on CNES/Airbus imagery dated 06 June 2020 at coordinates 42.271222, 43.960417; 42.276889, 43.969889

4.2.3 Current and Future Threats: Damage and Destruction as a Result of Unauthorized Works

Following the hostilities and through to the present day, a number of sites have been damaged as a result of unauthorized works either by local population, volunteer students, local businessmen, clergy, or the de-facto cultural heritage authorities themselves. In all the cases, quasi-restoration and repair works have either been conducted by construction companies or individuals with no heritage preservation knowledge and skills and with the use of inappropriate materials: in a very small number of cases an expert was then brought in from Russia to oversee the works, but this does not seem to have resulted in the removal of inappropriate materials, such as cement, and significant damage to the historic fabric remains. For example, the experts from the Grabar Art Conservation Center (Russia) were invited to give recommendations after the wall painting was damaged in Tiri Monastery (Sputnik 2015b).

There are a number of cases in which repair works have been initiated by the local clergy (including the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate, and the self-proclaimed Diocese of Alania and even single individual priests).

There are also several cases, where the de facto Ministries of Construction, and Defence are making decisions and carrying out the activities (for example, Geri St. George, Tskhinvali Bridge, to name a few), reported in local media and discussed in more detail in **Annex One**.

The types of damage include:

- Demolition and reconstruction of entire or parts of the historic structures;
- Plastering and painting or repainting the entire or parts of the facade stones and painting parts of the interior structures (i.e. templon) and walls in Russian-style wall painting;
- Construction of additional structures on the facade covering the inscriptions;
- Damaging wall paintings;
- Repair works with the use of inappropriate material, such as cement;
- Major reconstruction works affecting the authenticity of the site.

Unauthorised works were reported at **25** sites (figure 4.8). Of these, some were carried out by civilians, the de facto Monuments Protection Service, clergy, and the construction companies they hired. Most are repairs to churches, often carried out by the priests. When churches are repaired, the original Georgian fabric is often removed and/or painted over to present the Church in a Russian style. (Approximately 1 in 10 of the 191 churches and religious buildings located and assessed were affected by unauthorised works: the problem is widespread). Some repairs were halted by the de facto Monuments Protection Service, who then called in a specialist from Russia to assist, as they lacked the expertise for remedial works. The Head of the Service has indicated several times in press statements referenced in **Annex One** that they lack the necessary finances for restoration and repair work at many of the sites known to need restoration.

Details about the damage incurred as a result of unauthorised works to the following sites can be obtained in **Annex One** of the report⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ The original database records indicate that at the Middle Ages Church of St George in Sinaguri, which was partially ruined, the village residents carried out restoration works on the church built of large hewn stone, which resulted in losing the original appearance of the monument. This took place in the last century and is not included in the report or database.

One site is presumed completely destroyed⁴⁹:

1. **Tsorbisi - Cemetery Tower.** Following renovations in 2019-2021, financed by the civilian Dzambolat Tedeev, the historic tower located in the cemetery cannot be seen on the new photos of the renovated church and the surrounding area. Satellite imagery via Google Earth suggests that the easternmost of the new towers is in fact the rebuilt original tower: however, photos of the new towers suggest that, if this is correct, then little (if any) of the original fabric remains. If it is not the original tower (or in the location of it), then the original can no longer be seen. Satellite imagery via Google Earth suggests that one of the new towers built close to the church is in fact the rebuilt original tower: however, photos of the new towers and eyewitness reports indicate little (if any) of the original fabric remains. The tower is completely destroyed, replaced by a concrete reconstruction. The attached church (number 20 below) was also heavily damaged by the works.

A further 25 sites were reported to be damaged by unauthorised works. One example is the fortress at Achabeti. According to a 2014 news report (SIA “RES” 2014a), a foundation called “Kurdalagon” for the development and restoration of architectural monuments, owned by a local businessman, rented the fortress from the de facto Division for Protection of Monuments. They planned to start the reconstruction of this site and create a reconstruction centre, and held a public ceremony dedicated to laying the foundation stone for the project; reports indicated a number of workshops were already underway, such as cutting stone, metalwork and other crafts. Construction workers were employed, assisted by local schoolchildren, and the eastern wall was partially rebuilt: there are no reports of the involvement of any heritage professionals in the work. However, eyewitnesses reported that the works were halted by the Division for Protection of Monuments.

The list of damaged sites includes:

1. **Zemo (Upper) Achabeti** - Fortress
2. **Akhalgori** - Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs (Palace of the Eristavs) - main building (museum)
3. **Armazi** - St. George Monastery Complex Church of St. George
4. **Dmenisi** - Church of the Archangel
5. **Geri** - St. George’s Church
6. **Ghromi** - Church of the Virgin
7. **Ikoti** - Monastery of St. Monk Alexi and Mukhranbatoni Palace
8. **Ikorta** – Complex: Castle; and Church of the Archangels⁵⁰
9. **Kemerti** - Church of Kashueti
10. **Monasteri (Kvemo)** - Tiri Monastery
11. **Roka** - Tower of the Toranovs
12. **Rustavi** - Church of the Archangel
13. **Skhliti** - Church (village church, name unknown)
14. **Tighva** - Church of the Holy Cross
15. **Tskhinvali** - Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin
16. **Tskhinvali** - Church of St. George (Red Church of Dgvrisi)
17. **Tskhinvali** - Zghuderi St. George’s Church
18. **Tskhinvali** - St. George’s Church (now referred to as St. Konstantine and Helen)

⁴⁹ The Church of St Nicholas in Tskhinvali was used as a warehouse during the communist era. They demolished it and built a grocery store in its place. This is not included in the count of sites as it predates the period of investigation.

⁵⁰ As these are counted as different sites in the database as they are different site types, they are separated here.

19. **Tskhinvali** - Kavti St. George Church
20. **Tsorbisi** - Gomarta St. George's Church (now referred to as Holy Trinity Church/the Church of Gomarty Dzuar)
21. **Tsorbisi** - Church (unnamed - Cemetery Church)
22. **Tsunari (Khetagurovo)** - Church of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin (Church of the Assumption)
23. **Vanati** - Church of Christ the Saviour
24. **Zonkari** - Church of the Virgin

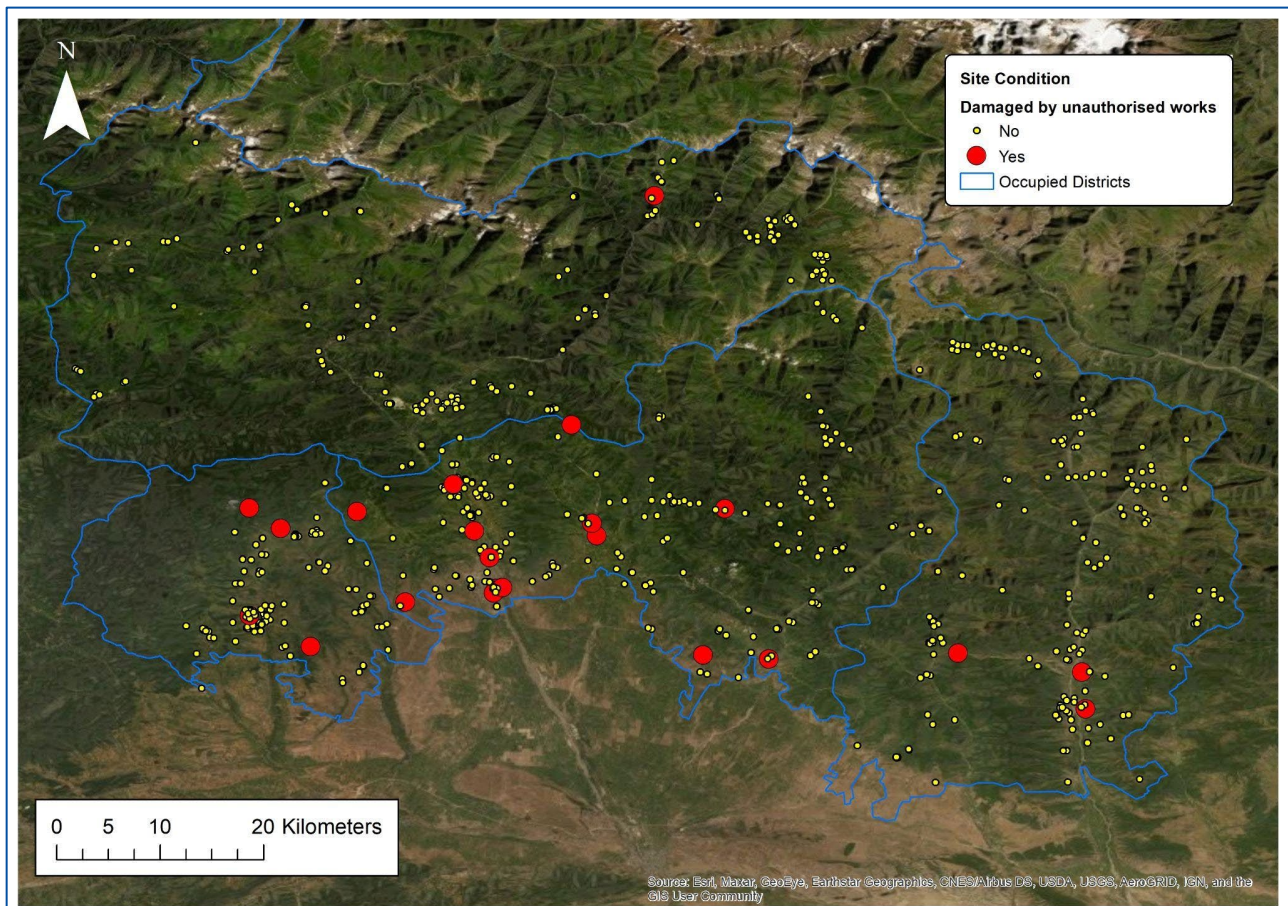


Figure 4.8: Sites damaged and destroyed by unauthorised works

4.2.4 Current and Future Threats: Damage and Destruction from Neglect and Lack of Maintenance

There are a large number of historic sites which have been in poor physical condition for decades and face serious damage if not treated. Lack of maintenance, in addition to weathering, can lead to further deterioration of their physical state. The significant lack of finances available to the de facto Ministry of Culture Monuments' Division and general lack of interest in some remote regions of the occupied Tskhinvali region, has resulted in extensive neglect.

The main church of the Largvisi Monastery Complex, according to an eyewitness, is also suffering from neglect. The Eristavi palace is gradually collapsing; the bath house roof collapsed in 2017, only unauthorised repairs to the main building roof have prevented damage to the collections, while the main portal is already on the brink of collapse.

According to an eyewitness, up to 100 towers and fortresses are exposed to the elements, with growing vegetation posing threat to their integrity. The monuments of Beloti (10th-18th centuries), Dzaghina (17th century), Karchokhi (9th century) in Eloiani, Kekhvi (16th century), and Vanati (16th century), just to name a few, among others, are on the brink of destruction. Some other sites where the damage from neglect has been confirmed via the media monitoring or via the satellite imagery include: Atsriskhevi Fortress Complex, Beloti Fortress, St. George Complex: Castle Hall and St George’s Church in Dadianeti, Dzagina Complex: Castle-tower/Fortress/ and Palace/Castle-tower, St George’s Church in Dzartsemi, Kviratskhoveli Church in Dzartsemi, St George’s Complex in Eredvi, Tsinkibe Fortress Complex: (Doretkari St. Barbara Church and Tower) in Gavazi, Sabatsminda Monastery Complex in Kheiti, Church of the Virgin in Kulbiti and Church of the Archangel in Kurta, but there are many others reported. Detailed information is available in **Annex One**.

Eyewitness reports and satellite imagery assessment confirms neglect to at least 95 sites (figure 4.9). Approximately 1 in 4⁵¹ of the fortifications, and churches and religious buildings located and assessed were damaged from neglect and lack of maintenance. It is likely that the true number is higher, but many neglected sites are now so overgrown they cannot be seen on satellite imagery available via Google Earth. 587 sites were in a Poor Condition, a Destroyed ruin, or Unknown (including Unknown (Poor) and Unknown (Destroyed)). No condition assessment was possible today at 390 of them: most could not be located on satellite imagery. It is highly likely that plant growth is preventing their identification, and that they are also suffering from neglect and lack of maintenance.

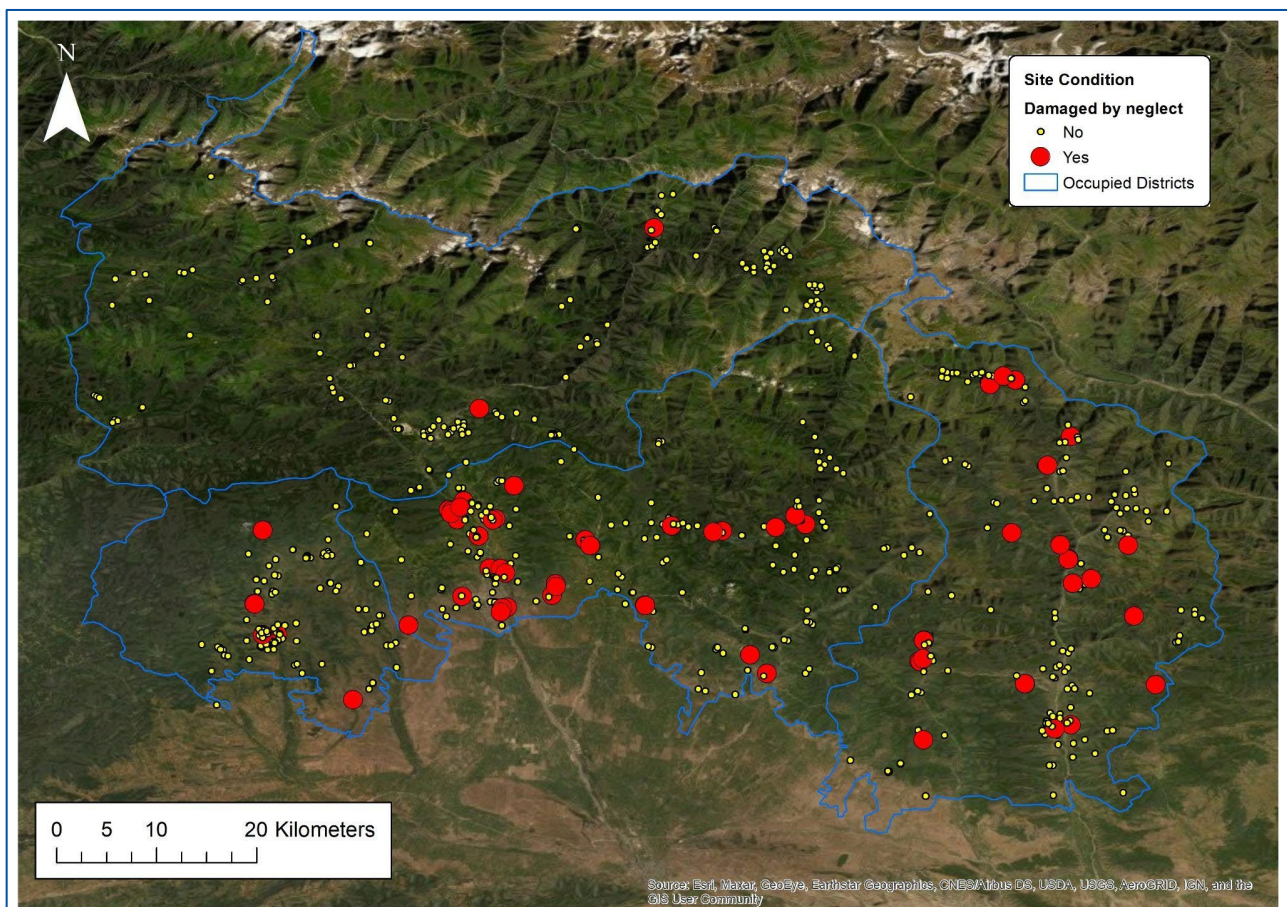


Figure 4.9: Sites damaged and destroyed by neglect

⁵¹ 25.6% of the 191 churches and religious buildings located and assessed, and 30.6% of the 111 fortifications identified. Building numbers Table 4.2, column 1; damage table 4.6, column 3..

4.2.5. Current and Future Threats: Military Construction

26 military bases and probable military facilities have been mapped using open source information⁵², and information from residents, and verified using Google Earth satellite imagery.

Two sites are within the area of these new military facilities. The ruins of Mskhlebi late Middle Ages Church in Sakire and another (unnamed) ruin at Khumsarta/Ugardanta lie within the boundary of the military area. In addition, Eredvi Red Church is located slightly to the north of a new military base in the area of a Soviet era industrial facility. Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth shows the facility was largely demolished between 15 August 2011 and 28 April 2013; it is increasingly likely the site was destroyed. All sites were ruins: they could not be located on imagery and it is unknown if they are still present.

4.2.6. Current and Future Threats: Proximity to Military facilities

Some of the destroyed villages are now used as training spaces for the military. These include the former village of Dzartsemi, for example, where news reports indicate the location of a shooting range of the Russian Federation's 4th base (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation 2015).

Several historic monuments are now located next to the newly-built military structures where military training takes place regularly, thus exposing these sites to a greater risk of physical damage. As an example, the Church of the Virgin of Kulbiti in Village Disevi is located approximately 200m from the military base (built on the site of the bulldozed section of the village), in the active training area (explosive use is visible on Google Earth - see **Disevi Village in Annex One**). According to eyewitnesses and photographs supplied to us, cracks on walls and vaults grow larger daily. Potential risks include existing structural instability exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion, and collateral damage should the garrison become a target. Intense ongoing military training⁵³ has resulted in explosions in the so-called 'Vedzadkedi polygon': the vibrations have damaged cultural heritage sites in nearby villages of Kanchaeti and Tsirkoli in Akhagori district.

Only sites within 500m of a military base, or where military training has been reported by an eyewitness, are marked in the database as being "near" a military facility and therefore at increased risk. However, given the sites at which eyewitnesses have reported training are all more than a kilometre away from a military base, there is still a clear risk to sites beyond that reported here.

38 sites are within 500m of a military base, and are at risk of collateral damage should fighting break out, in addition to the risks from military training (see, for example, Agenda.ge 2019d):

- **Akhalgori** - Akhalgori Fortress; Cathedral of the Virgin; a Watchtower; Two-Sided (Ormkhrivi) Church;
- **Balaani** - Balaani Castle Tower;
- **Disevi** - Church of the Virgin of Kulbiti (Kulbits Mother of God Church / Kulbiti Church of Virgin Mary); Holy Cross (Dzelitskhoveli) Church; Kulbiti Fortress;
- **Dzartsemi** - Church of All Saints (Kvelatsminda);
- **Dzvileti** - Church of the Virgin;

⁵²<https://www.gfsis.org/maps/russian-military-forces?fbclid=IwAR0kemtTGdbwJXNzkC062IFbrZFH8fYOc9dXfskDbWy0k6v7BYZYOCJ0bM4>

⁵³ There is no official source about the training taking place there. They were reported to us by an anonymous source that has witnessed them several times, and cross-checked.

- **Eredvi** - Red Church;
- **Ghromi** - the Monastery Complex of the Virgin (Hall), Gate & Chapel; Church of the Virgin; St George's Church;
- **Kemerti** - Kashueti Church; Kasraant cylindrical tower; Church at Kaulaant Fortress; (Kaaluant fortress is just outside 500m away);
- **Khumsarta** - a Castle Tower; unnamed Church;
- **Kornisi** - Building and Church ruins x2; Church of the Virgin; Church of St Giorgi; Sameba Church (near Moghrisi), St George's Church (near Moghrisi); Tower (Karmidamo of Khasievs); Tower (Gagiev of Karmidamo); Tower (Jioev Karmidamo);
- **Sakire** - Mskhlebi Church; Padiev's Tower;
- **Tskhinvali** - Castle Ruins; St George's Church (also called Red Church of Dgvrts);
- **Ugardanta** - two Towers; unnamed ruin;
- **Vakhtana/Khtaana** - Remains of an old building; Tower ruins.

62 sites are within one kilometre of a military base, and likely to be at increased risk from military training:

- **Akhalgori** - the Church of the Cross; Palace of Ksani Valley Eristavs Complex (Main building (Museum); Bath House; Tower I; Tower II; Tower III);
- **Akhmaji** - Church of the Virgin (also called Church of the Assumption) (just over 500m from the base);
- **Balaani** - St George's Church;
- **Zemo Boli** - Wine Cellar;
- **Didmukha** - Church Ruins;
- **Disevi** - Church of St George;
- **Dzartsemi** - Enclosure wall; Kviratskhoveli Church; Geri St George's/Parseti Niche; Church of the Assumption*; St George's Church; and the Wooden House (already destroyed);
- **Dzvileti** - Church of St George;
- **Gduleti** - Church of the Virgin;
- **Kekhvi** - Church of St George; Church of the Mother of God;
- **Kemerti** - Cylindrical tower ruins; Kaulaant Fortress; Otinaant Castle; St George's Church; St George's Niche;
- **Khumsarta** - Tower;
- **Khundisubani** - St Nicholas Church;
- **Kornisi** - Church (unnamed); Church of St Marine; Ruins of the Palace and Tower; Building Ruins; Church Ruins; Tower IV; Ecclesiastical Ruin (near Moghrisi);
- **Kurta** - Church of the Archangel; St George's Church;
- **Kusreti** - Church (unnamed), tower;
- **Morbedaani** - Ancestral Tower; Kviratskhoveli Church;
- **Nedlati** - Kviratskhoveli Church;
- **Ninia** - Religious building (unnamed); Tower;
- **Patkineti** - Patkineti Church; Church of St Elijah;
- **Shiukata** - Name Unknown;
- **Sinaguri** - Skhalnari Church; St. Nino Church;
- **Tandelta** - Name Unknown;
- **Tighva** - Ruins of fences and other buildings; Tower VI;
- **Tsiptauri** - Church (Unnamed)
- **Tskhinvali** - Divine Church; St Nicholas' Church; Church of the Assumption; Tower; St George's Church; and tower ruins;
- **Vakhtana/Khtaana** - Church of the Virgin (Church of the Assumption); Church of the Virgin; Remains of old building.

*Presumed destroyed already.

In addition, military training has been reported by eyewitnesses at another 7 sites, which are just over 1km away from various military bases:

- **Kanchaeti** - Monastery Complex of the Virgin of Kabeni (Church of the Virgin of Gethsemane, Refectory, Ruined Bell Tower; Archangel Church, St. Georges Church & Tower;
- **Tsirkoli** - Church of the Virgin (Church of the Assumption / Holy Virgin Church); St Marine's Church; Tower.

4.3 Summary

In total, 776 records were assessed - these were a combination of sites identified by the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia database, additional sites identified and located by the Didi Lakhvi Valley Museum Reserve, and historical and religious sites where damage was reported which were located on satellite imagery. Of these, 39 were "Complex" sites, meaning there is an overall record for the site and also individual records for the constituent parts. These "Complex" records were removed from the analysis, leaving 737 sites. Of these 413 could not be located on the satellite imagery; of the remaining 324 sites, 25 had such poor imagery no condition estimate was possible. For six of the sites that could not be located, other information was available and these have a condition assessment. Ultimately 330 sites were reviewed on satellite imagery, but also from published reports, media information, online sources such as photo archives, interviews, and eyewitness reports and site visits.

Just 36 sites were in a Good condition, whilst nearly 20% of sites for which information is available are Destroyed (although this includes sites that have long been in a ruinous condition). The Monuments Protection Service of the de facto Ministry of Culture has openly stated that it has neither the funds nor the specialist expertise to conserve the vast majority of sites in its care. The lack of funding has resulted in confirmed, reported, or suspected neglect to over 400 sites, some of which are today on the brink of collapse. For some sites, particularly historic ruins, this is visible on satellite imagery as tree and plant growth; neglect has also been reported at a large number of sites in the media and by eyewitnesses. However, the true number is almost certain to be far higher; not all sites were visited, and satellite imagery presents a seasonal, top down, external view of a site. At those sites where it is known, the damage ranges from loss of paintings, to structural instability to potential collapse. The de-facto Ministry of Culture is significantly underfunded: they recognised in 2016 (SIA "RES" 2016) that they lacked both the funding to restore the large number of sites in urgent need, and suitably trained conservation staff, but only minimal interventions have been possible to address these problems.

During the war, the towns and villages along the occupation line were damaged in fighting - in Tamarasheni, for example, UNOSAT (2008b) assessed that over 50% of the village was damaged in the fighting. Many were extremely historic - Eredvi, for example, is mentioned in records dating to the 8th century. However, following the shelling, South Ossetian forces sought to ethnically cleanse the villages along (what is now) the occupation or the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL). In total, the authors assessed 17 villages that were shelled and deliberately burned, although others were clearly affected. 11 of these were then bulldozed away and completely cleared, and another 2 were partially cleared. In total, 13 individual sites were damaged during hostilities, and 10 were completely destroyed. The majority of these are museums and religious buildings. Fortifications, presumably as a result of their more rural location and / or often ruined nature, experienced little damage of this type. The majority of the damage occurred along the Didi and Patara Liakhvi River Valleys. A number of other villages along the Frone River Valley were also partially demolished. Following the demolition of the original fabric, many of these sites were used for construction, such as new

residential flats, although in one case, Eredvi, the site is being used as a landfill (something residents and historians believe is a punishment for the activity of the residents before and during the war). Of these, only 4 buildings and monuments, and some museums, were rebuilt or restored.

Some of the destroyed villages are now used as training spaces for the military. Two sites are thought to have been destroyed by the construction of a military facility, 38 are within 500m of a base, and a further 62 are within a kilometre. In addition, eyewitnesses have reported military training near another 7 sites which are more than a kilometre away from any military base, indicating others may be at risk. Eyewitnesses and photographs indicate that at some sites that are very near military bases, where military training takes place regularly, sites are exposed to a greater risk of physical damage, and cracks on walls and vaults grow larger daily. Additional potential risks include existing structural instability exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion - and collateral damage should the garrison become a target.

The majority of individual sites assessed are Christian religious sites (churches, cathedrals, etc.). Of those where information was available, almost all were in a Poor Condition, or Destroyed. Few were damaged by hostilities: this is notable, as in most cases although their villages were cleared away, the churches were usually (although not always) left intact. Nonetheless, many (in those villages and elsewhere) are neglected: leaking (or absent) roofs, and bulging and cracked walls, are causing significant damage to mediaeval wall paintings and to walls. Many more have been subject to unauthorised work by members of the local clergy who are trying to preserve their buildings. However, we could not find any evidence that the work is carried out with specialist heritage supervision, often causing considerable damage through use of inappropriate material (such as cement), and by restyling (or removing) authentic elements (interior, exterior and walls). Religious buildings are particularly susceptible to renovations that restyle the building from the original Georgian Orthodox to Russian Orthodox, with interiors repainted in Russian styles, and traditional templon replaced with new concrete ones. Some repairs were halted by the de facto Monuments Protection Service, who then called in a specialist from Russia to assist in repairing the botched works, as the MPS lacked the expertise for remedial works, but photos supplied to the authors indicate that the concrete remained following the intervention.

In total, unauthorised works were reported at 25 sites; the authentic fabric of one church is thought to be completely destroyed. The types of damage include:

- Demolition and reconstruction of entire or parts of the historic structures;
- Plastering and painting or repainting the entire or parts of the facade stones and painting parts of the interior structures (i.e. templon) and walls in Russian-style wall painting, removing or covering the original Georgian fabric;
- Construction of additional structures on the facade covering the inscriptions;
- Damaging wall paintings;
- Repair works with the use of inappropriate material, such as cement;
- Major reconstruction works affecting the authenticity of the site.

In one (non-religious) example, the Old Bridge in Tskhinvali, which is a symbol for the city, has become damaged through neglect and needs urgent restoration, but no funds are available. Instead, heavy traffic was restricted on the bridge in 2018 (Kozueva 2018b) to prevent further damage and possible collapse. However, by 2021, the situation had become so bad that the de-facto Minister of Constructions stated that

it would be impossible to restore the old bridge, so it may be demolished and replaced with a new one while trying to “preserve its historical appearance as much as possible.” He also stated that the old city should be bulldozed as it is impossible to restore it due to the lack of funds (Sputnik 2021a). The issue is still being discussed by the de facto government (SIA "RES" 2022).

The overall picture for immovable heritage is that hundreds of sites are destroyed, damaged, and decaying, and damage that occurred more than a decade ago has still not been fixed.

Chapter 5. Movable Heritage Damage

5.1 Overview

The moveable heritage of the region falls into two key types. The first is the archaeology of the region: sites and finds demonstrate the long and rich history of the region. The second is the museums that house not only the archaeological finds of the region, but also the ethnographic collections and the objects associated with its more recent history - including not only the evidence of key historical events, but also objects and buildings evidencing the lives of key people, as well as art and archival materials.

5.1.1 Archaeology

Archaeological materials discovered in Shida Kartli prove that life has existed here from the oldest times until today. The region is rich in materials dating as far back as the Middle Palaeolithic period, with dozens of Acheulian and Mousterian sites - cave-like stalls located unusually high above sea level. Important archaeological sites represent the Kura–Araxes culture (Korinta, Natsargori of Tskhinvali, Kulbakebi, Nuli etc.) and the Trialeti Culture of Early and Middle Bronze Ages (Avnevi, Muguti, Tsunari, etc.) Traces of Trialeti Culture are visible on older sites as well. The “Treasure of Akhagori” alone is enough to represent the Classical Period in the region. As for the sites dating from the Early Middle Ages, those are Alevi and Korinta. Together with local products, there are imported goods (in Roka, for example), which confirms that River Mtkvari was part of certain trade routes. Apart from vessels, tools and jewellery, several important coins were discovered on the territory. They mainly belong to the Late Classical Period: analogs of Staters of Alexander the Great; Denarii of Octavian Augustus; Georgian Drakmas (Orid II, Fraat IV), Sasanian coins; Colchis Tetris; a coin of Shapur II (Stirpazi, Arkneti, Akhagori, Zakhori).

Archaeological research in Shida Kartli started in the 20th century. By that time, two important sites had already been discovered by accident: Sadzeguri, the burial site containing the Treasure of Akhagori in 1908; and the Treasure of Tskhinvali in 1909. Several important expeditions on the territory of the currently occupied Shida Kartli (on the southern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains) took place between 1940 and 1960. Unfortunately, the information about artifacts discovered both by accident and during planned expeditions is incomplete and lacks details about the nature and location of artifacts. Some discovered artifacts typically remained in the Tskhinvali Local Museum, while some were transferred to the Georgian National Museum for further research. For example, a publication from 2013 (Orjonikidze, 2013) claims that the materials found during the archaeological excavation in Kvasatala and Kviana of Tskhinvali in 1947-1948 were already lacking artifacts when they were delivered for further study. No less hazy are the events of the 1990s, when a lot of artifacts were lost from the Tskhinvali Local Museum. A good example of the state of events back then is the story of the 11th century Icon of Okona; it was lost from the Tskhinvali Local Museum in 1991 before reappearing at Christie’s Auction in 2001. After long inquiries Switzerland returned the Icon to Georgia in 2004 (Khusk’ivadze 2004; Hardy n.d.).

5.1.2. Museums

The occupied Tskhinvali region contains the following museums:

1. **Tskhinvali Local History Museum** (now called the “State Museum of South Ossetia”) Still active, but rehoused in a new building

2. **Akhalgori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs)** (also called Bibiluri-Eristavi's House-Museum by Russian and Ossetian media outlets following the war and recently renamed as the "State Museum of History and Local Lore"). Still active
3. **Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum** (also called Vaso Abajev House Museum). Burned down in 2008, but was reopened in 2021
4. **Kosta Khetagurov House-Museum**. Closed since the 1990s. The collection has been moved to Tskhinvali
5. **Ivane Machabeli House Museum**. Building and collection destroyed during the 2008 war, but the museum reopened and remains active as a memorial center in IDP settlement in village Tserovani, Mtskheta Municipality
6. **Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve** - its building was destroyed, but the museum reopened and remains active in IDP settlement in Gori, Gori Municipality
7. **House Museum of Ruten Gagloev** (new)

Like immovable heritage, it remains difficult to gather accurate information and report on the state of museum collections in the occupied Tskhinvali region: the following overview presents a summary of the available information, with more information in **Annex One**.

5.2 Damage to Museums and Museum Collections

This section presents an overview of the museums in the region. Museums suffered extensive damage from the fighting and tensions in the region. The Tskhinvali Local History Museum was heavily damaged in the 1990s, and again in 2008 (though the collection was evacuated). The Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum and its collection burned down in fighting in 2008. The Kosta Khetagurov House-Museum was never reopened after it closed in the 1990s (though the collection was evacuated). The Ivane Machabeli House Museum was bombed in 1997 and 2004, causing serious damage. The site was then almost destroyed by bombing in 2008, collapsing in 2010: it was then partially bulldozed away. The Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve in village Kurta) and its Kekhvi Storage Facility were destroyed in fighting in 2008, and the remains were bulldozed away in 2014.

The Akhalgori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs) was in a Poor condition: the dome of the bath house, which is part of the complex, collapsed around 2017. However, following the (unauthorised) repairs recently completed to the roof, the condition is improved to Moderate.

Some reconstruction and repair work has been undertaken: the de Facto Ministry of Culture Department of Monument Protection restored some of the Akhalgori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs). They also built a new Local History Museum building to replace the Tskhinvali Local History Museum, and built a new facility for the Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum. However, the Tskhinvali Local History Museum was renamed the State Museum of South Ossetia, and tells a new history of the region (see next Chapter 6.4.2). The Akhalgori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs) became the State Museum of History and Local Lore. In addition, existing Georgian staff have also been replaced - the Museum Director of the Akhalgori Museum was fired and demoted to the position of a guide in 2018, before eventually leaving due to pressure (Aptsiauri 2021). Two new museums are also under discussion in the region. Construction of the House Museum of Ruten Gagloev apparently took place in 2013. Ruten Gagloev's grandchildren were heavily involved in this process; however as of 2017, the museum remained closed (Sputnik 2017). In addition, local

media reported on the 2015 activity report of the de-facto Minister of Culture, who stated that the construction of the Art Gallery remains a pressing issue for them. The report mentioned that the utility bills for the museum were to be covered from the government reserve funds. According to her, construction of an art gallery to create a single complex with the National Museum was to be considered for 2016 investment works (SIA "RES" 2016) - it is unknown if this took place.

The displaced Ivane Machabeli House Museum and Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve remain active in IDP settlements on Tbilisi controlled territory, serving as a community space for the IDPs from the area.

The following presents a summary of the damage experienced:

1. Tskhinvali Local History Museum

During the fighting in the 1990s, the museum was heavily damaged, with claims of looting of the collections, which were evacuated for storage to Vladikavkaz in the Republic of North Ossetia, Russia (SIA "RES 2010; SIA "RES" 2016; Biazarti 2019). It was further damaged in fighting in 2008. The de facto Ministry of Culture built a new Local History Museum building, which opened 21 September 2015 (SIA "RES" 2016): the original building is now used as a warehouse. The collections, including the evacuated works of Kosta Khetagurov and Makharbek Tuganov, the archaeological collection of Koban bronze from the Tlia burial ground, and the exhibits of the former Museum of Military Glory were moved here (SIA "RES" 2016; Kotaeva 2015). It is unknown if the full collection has been returned. The museum apparently shows an Ossetian narrative of independence, "evidence of the ancient history of the Ossetian people, as a symbol of their courage and resilience" (Biazarti 2019).

2. Akhagori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs)

This listed building is also called Bibiluri-Eristavi's House-Museum by Russian and Ossetian media outlets following the war. The building is largely in good condition, with the exception of the bath building, which is in a poor condition. Besides unauthorised repairs to the roof, which have been taking place since 2008, eyewitnesses reported that the dome of the bath house collapsed around 2017. The de facto Monuments Protection Service restored the site as part of their 2017-18 program of works (Byazrova 2017/eyewitness), but another eyewitness indicates the building is still in need of a new roof. On June 17th 2021, the de facto Ministry of Culture adopted a resolution to create the "State Museum of History and Local Lore", housed in the Palace of the Ksani Eristavs (SIA "RES" 2021). The former Museum Director - an ethnic Georgian, who was fired as Director and demoted to guide in 2018 - left the town on the same day as this announcement for health reasons and openly talked about the ongoing pressure he had been experiencing (Aptsiauri 2021).

3. Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum (also called Vaso Abajev House Museum)

This wooden memorial house museum of Vaso Abajev (Abaev) was opened in either 2000 or 2002. However, during the shelling in Tskhinvali on 8-9 August 2008, the house completely burned down and the exhibits were lost (Plieva 2015). Restoration started in 2014 when the construction company from Tatarstan "Everest" began to restore the house-museum as a "gift" at their own expense. The builders poured the foundation and erected the walls but then construction stopped (Plieva 2015; Kulumbegov 2021). In 2016, the former de-facto President of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov promised to allocate funds from the presidential fund for the restoration of the museum and complete it for the next birthday of the scientist. The money was allocated, but the president's order was never fulfilled. In 2019 reconstruction resumed, and in February 2021 the museum was reopened in a newly constructed building. The de-facto Ministry of

Culture was actively engaged in equipping the restored museum with exhibits and materials about Vaso Abaev which were collected or requested as loans (Kulumbegov 2021; SES “RES” 2021).

4. Kosta Khetagurov House-Museum in Tsunari (today called Khetagurovo)

This museum was never reopened after it closed in the 1990s. The collection was moved to Tskhinvali and the plan of the local authorities is to establish a museum of literature there, where the collection will be displayed. However, other news reports suggest the works of Kosta Khetagurov were taken to Vladikavkaz in the 1990s, and only returned to Tskhinvali in 2015 (SIA “RES” 2016; Kotaeva 2015). In 2014 it was reported that the museum was going through some renovations (SIA “RES” 2014d). However no further articles have since confirmed the re-opening of the museum.

5. Ivane Machabeli House Museum

Reports indicate that in 1997 bombing by South Ossetian forces destroyed a historical wine-cellar located in the yard of the museum. During 2001-2003 the building of the house-museum was restored by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia and reopened. During the summer of 2004, the palace was targeted by Ossetian separatist artillery (walls and roofs collapsed), when tensions were high. According to museum staff, the palace was heavily bombed and damaged during the 2008 war; the collections could not be evacuated due to the sudden developments. Satellite imagery assessment (by us and UNOSAT 2008c) confirmed the site was in a poor conduction, damaged due to hostilities. Google Earth imagery by Maxar indicates that the heavy damage UNOSAT reported during the fighting led to the partial collapse of the building by 2010, and although the southern part has been bulldozed, the northern part remains (as of 2019) in a highly ruined condition. The museum reopened and remains active in IDP settlement in village Tserovani, Mtskheta Municipality, where it serves as a community space for the IDPs from the area and exhibits photographic material.

6. Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve

The main office was located in village Kurta. It was destroyed in the fighting in 2008. UNOSAT (2008d) note it was most likely arson and the site was cleared in 2014. The Kekhvi Storage facility of the museum was severely damaged during the 2008 hostilities. The ruins were bulldozed with the rest of the village between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014. The museum remains active in IDP settlement in Gori where it serves as a community education centre focusing on the local and IDP youth.

7. House Museum of Ruten Gagloev

It is apparently a new museum and no information was available at the time of preparing the report. The construction of a new museum ended in 2013, his grandchildren were heavily involved in this process, however as of the 2017 report, the museum remained closed (Sputnik 2017).

5.3 Threats to Moveable Heritage

5.3.1 “Black Archaeology”: Illegal Digging, Looting, and Illicit Trafficking

Black archaeology, that is, illegal excavation for archaeological finds, often using metal detectors, has been continuously raised as an issue by Georgians, both by official authorities and heritage professionals.

In 2015, the Georgian Ministry of culture confirmed illegal excavations are a problem throughout Georgia:

“The problem of illegal archaeological excavations (so-called black archaeology) used to and still continues to persist in Georgia. The problem is largely caused by the ineffective and inconsistent operation of governmental and non-governmental sector, lack of coordination with law-enforcement agencies and defects in legislation. The main cause of the problem is, however, the population’s low level of awareness and weak civic position”.

(Georgian Ministry of Culture 2015:6)

There is no reason to suspect it has lessened in the occupied area: all global evidence is that situations of conflict result in weakened security that increase illegal excavation and allow greater opportunity for illicit trafficking. Although there are no figures on the scale of illegal digging in the area, it is instructive to note that research into other Eastern European countries has revealed 4,910 illicit detectorists in Belarus (around 1 in 638 residents), 54,066 illicit detectorists in Poland (around 1 in 702 residents), 26,377 illicit detectorists in Ukraine (around 1 in 1706 residents) and 75,158 illicit detectorists in Russia (around 1 in 1921 residents), together with a very well established network for the movement of such goods (Hardy 2018). It is highly likely that these shockingly high numbers are equally prevalent in this region.

Certainly, there are several eyewitness reports of illegal digging and use of metal detectors in remote areas of the occupied Tskhinvali region. One news report also details the arrest of a couple caught digging illegally and imprisoned. Although no details were released on the status of the case, the maximum punishment for such an offence is imprisonment or a fine of up to 1 million rubles (about 50 thousand GEL, or £12,500) (Aptsiauri 2020b).

When a new road was being built in Akhagori in 2014, an anonymous source informed the authors that there were a number of cases where artefacts found during the construction were brought to Akhagori museum for dating.

There are oral histories which cannot be verified: according to these, in the 1990s, a number of artefacts disappeared from the Tskhinvali museums. There are also news reports that looting may have occurred in the 1990s at the Tskhinvali Local History Museum (SIA “RES” 2016; Biazarti 2019).

5.3.2 Archaeology and competent authorities

Before the 1990s, all archaeological expeditions in the Tskhinvali Region were planned and led from Tbilisi. In recent years, only Russian archaeologists have worked to study the archaeology of the region. The history presented in the new so-called State Museum of South Ossetia, which was previously the Tskhinvali Museum of Local History, notes that only ‘Soviet’ and ‘South Ossetian’ archaeologists worked and researched the area (Biazarti 2019).

Recently, news from the occupied Tskhinvali region has reported about archaeological excavations co-organized by the scientific-research institute and the university of the de-facto South Ossetia taking place in village Edisa (Ossetians calling it Edis) in August 2022 (SIA "RES" 2022c). A 2021 news article (Sputnik 2021b) quotes an official of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia saying that there is great interest in the archaeology of the region from foreigners. Groups of archaeologists from Germany, Japan and France were scheduled to arrive and study the cave of Kudaro in 2020 but the pandemic obstructed them. However, the national authorities in Germany, Japan, and France do not recognize the South Ossetian government. Given this, archaeologists should not request permits from an authority that their government has no diplomatic relations with.

Archaeological Codes of Conduct also frequently prohibit such activity. For example, the World Archaeological Congress agreed to the Dead Sea Accord on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in 2014 (WAC 2014). The Accord “calls on all States and non-state actors, as well as its membership, to refrain from archaeological excavation in occupied territory, save where this is strictly required to safeguard, record or preserve cultural heritage” (Article 6), echoing the 1954 Hague Convention. Such actions, then, are at best unethical, and at worst potentially illegal.

5.4 Summary

The chapter gave an overview of the type of movable cultural heritage in the occupied Tskhinvali region and described past damage, and existing and potential threats to the museums and their collections, as well as to archaeological sites.

It became clear through the discussion above that there is much uncertainty when it comes to the conditions of museum collections, as it is difficult to monitor remotely, and little information is available through the open sources. However, of the six museums in the occupied Tskhinvali Region in 2008: one was closed in the 1990s and its collection evacuated; two more were damaged during the fighting. One of these was damaged again in 2004, when it was targeted by Ossetian separatist artillery (some walls and roofs collapsed). In the fighting in 2008, four were heavily damaged or destroyed (including the site damaged in the 1990s and 2004), as well as one associated storage facility. Of those, one was rehoused in a new building, one was reopened on the same site last year, and one reopened a small centre in an IDP settlement in Gori. Just one was undamaged during fighting and is still active; however, part of the building collapsed in 2017 from neglect. Some unauthorised repairs have been completed, however.

There is some investment in museums from the de facto regime. A new facility was built for the Tskhinvali Local History Museum, a new museum has recently opened - the House Museum of Ruten Gagloev, and it is reported that the construction of the Art Gallery remains a pressing issue for the de-facto Ministry of Culture, although that was in 2016, and no information was available on whether that has occurred. Some (unauthorised) restoration work also took place at the Akhlagori Museum (Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs), improving it from a Poor to a Moderate condition.

However, the new Local History Museum, the so-called “State Museum of South Ossetia” is built in the style of Soviet classicism: local sources report the original building is now used as a storage warehouse. Exact information about the collection is unavailable but news stories indicate the origins of the Museum are

placed in an Ossetian narrative of independence. Today it is presented in the news as evidence of the ancient history of the Ossetian people, “as a symbol of their courage and resilience” (Biazarti 2019), with intent to collect material for a genocide department.

So-called “black archaeology”, involving not only illegal excavation but the possible looting of museum collections from the 1990s until the present day, is also clearly an issue, and it is highly likely that illicit trafficking is taking place, with little capacity within the Georgian or international heritage community to detect or monitor any of its phases. As site access is unfortunately limited, rendering looting prevention outside the control of the Georgian authorities, the authors have made a number of recommendations regarding enabling the restitution of looted objects in the final chapter.

Lastly, the authors note the involvement of international archaeologists in unethical practice. Although the national authorities in Germany, Japan, and France do not recognise the South Ossetian government, archaeologists from those countries have requested permits from the de facto government to work there. There has been no contact with the Georgian authorities, or even offer to share any scientific information gained, violation of archaeological codes of conduct.

Chapter 6. Intangible Cultural Heritage Damage and Loss

6.1 Overview

The intangible cultural heritage of the occupied territories are just as important as the tangible cultural heritage for consideration in respect to damage and loss. Although such heritage is not itself protected under the 1954 Hague Convention, the physical places associated with such practices are. Further, they are vital elements of the cultural rights of the communities, which are protected.

Georgia has ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and maintains a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Georgia. The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia is in charge of the research, listing and preservation programs for intangible cultural heritage elements⁵⁴, as well as the nomination for the UNESCO representative list for intangible heritage.

Tskhinvali Region is an example of a region that is rich in intangible cultural heritage, which is attested by significant research in the ethnography and folklore of the region. Within the scope of this report, we were only able to collect information concerning intangible heritage from one of the valleys of the occupied Tskhinvali Region - namely, the Ksani River Valley.

There is increasing interest to document and study the intangible heritage of the IDPs from the occupied territories and find out what parts of the intangible heritage are being preserved or lost by the communities and what is undergoing transformation. More recently, a student folklore expedition was undertaken by Gori University with the purpose of documenting folklore heritage among IDPs from Didi Liakhvi Valley (Gori State Teaching University, 2021).

The Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield has recently also launched a pilot project funded by the Prince Claus Fund Cultural Emergency Response programme to document intangible heritage of the IDPS from one Georgian village of Didi Liakhvi Valley - Kekhvi - which has been out of Georgia's control since 2008 and which was completely cleared following the war.

6.2 “The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the River Ksani Valley”: Report by the National Agency of Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia (2017)

In 2017, the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia conducted an ethnographic survey within the currently-occupied upper part of Ksani River valley, among the Internally Displaced People (IDP) compact settlements from Akhagori Municipality. The survey included fieldwork within the three IDP settlements of Tserovani, Prezeti, and Tsilkani; these are densely populated with IDPs from Akhagori and the surrounding villages.

The inventorying process documented the diverse everyday practices that were being kept alive in the territories around the Ksani Valley. The survey covered different intangible cultural heritage domains such as crafts and artisanal practices, folk festivals, traditional knowledge concerning nature and agriculture, traditional medicine, local cuisine, the oral traditions and various religious rites and beliefs, etc.

⁵⁴ Website <https://heritagesites.ge/en/files/100>

The report derived from the survey data is entitled **“The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the River Ksani Valley”**. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia. It was also kindly enhanced by Dr. Ana Shanshiashvili from the Georgian Heritage Crafts Association. Where some updates have been made here to the Report, this is indicated in [].

The examples of intangible cultural heritage described below are of course not exhaustive. Nevertheless, in 2018 two examples of intangible cultural heritage from the River Ksani Valley - namely, “Pottery Traditions from Tskhavati” (Resolution N02/12, 29.03.2018) and “Ulami (The traditions of collective voluntary work) from Ksani” (Resolution N02/46, 31.07.2018) - have been inscribed on List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Georgia.

The Report includes the following overview of the intangible heritage of the IDPs.

6.2.1 Traditional Craftsmanship: Pottery Traditions from Tskhavati

The village Tskhavati was the only centre of ceramic tableware production in the Ksani valley. The pottery production was the main activity of the population of this particular village. This place was famous for female artisans, as the making of clay table utensils was an indispensable part of women’s work (figures 6.1, 6.2).

In local families one would come across the high quality unglazed tableware, adorned with patterns executed in red earth pigments, the typical design for Tskhavati ceramics. [The clay from Tskhavati after firing was distinguished by its solidity against liquid infiltration, and therefore the tableware was made without glaze.



Figures 6.1, 6.2. Tskhavati Pottery. (2010) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Due to the fact that this was a winemaking area, the Tskhavati population also produced ‘kvevri’, the underground clay vessels used to ferment wine. They were different from the giant kvevris produced in other parts of Georgia in terms of their modest size, as they were completely wheel-thrown.]

After the 2008 War, the local population, including the aged artisans, was scattered in different villages across Georgia. According to the information provided by the interviewed IDPs, the old potters (both male and female) already passed away, whereas some of their descendants, who still know how to make ceramic tableware, do not continue this tradition. Furthermore, the clay resources, which are vital to make the ceramic typical to Tskhavati, are no longer available due to their location in the occupied territories. This altogether endangers the livelihood of this Intangible Cultural Heritage element.

6.2.2 Traditional Craftsmanship: Woodworking Traditions (Woodcarving and Basket Weaving)

Until 2008, the highlanders and the population living at the foot of the mountains in the Ksani valley used to make furniture and agricultural utensils from the wood. The oak, beech, hornbeams, elms, populus, alder, hazelnut and other trees were used for this purpose. The artisans from the Ksani River Valley were also skillful in weaving baskets, trays and fences.

The traditions of working on the wood have been passed from generation to generation and due to this transmission, they continue to exist today. The master craftsmen still practice woodcarving (for example, Z. Gatenashvili is a famous master woodcarver from Tserovani. Together with his father, who still lives and teaches apprentices in Akhagori, he works to transmit these skills to future generations.

[Darbazi – the hall type dwelling predominantly found in southern and eastern Georgia - is also typical for this region. It has a central hall with a graded wooden dome named ‘Gvirgvini’, which literally means the crown. The only opening in the middle of the dome symbolised the heavenly light and emphasised the sacredness of the place. Another essential element of this traditional dwelling is the central wooden column ‘Dedabodzi’ (the mother pillar). Rising in the middle of the central hall of the dwelling, widening up to the dome, decorated with wood-carved geometric ornamental patterns, it bears the astral imagery and reflects the ancient cult of the sacred Tree - axis mundi maintained in Georgia throughout centuries. As an ancient symbol of home, these pillars are highly significant to their families. For example, the Gatenashvili woodcarver family brought their mother pillar from their original house, and have recreated it in a new context in Tserovani after the war, installing it in a completely new and typical cottage.]

6.2.3 Traditional Craftsmanship: Traditions of Textile Production

Due to highly developed sheepherding traditions, techniques of wool production have been evolving throughout the centuries in this area. The inhabitants of Ksani valley produced their own clothing, including such elements as: gloves, hats, outerwear, socks and slippers. Up until the mid of the 20th century the rugs were also woven on looms in this area.

The IDP families from Akhagori still keep this knowledge alive: they still produce cloths and process wool by carding, spinning, natural dying, and knitting. In this respect the elderly women are especially distinguished. The rug weavers unfortunately are not there anymore. The young textile master, Nino Sekhniashvili, who lives in Tserovani village, tries to revitalise this tradition of rug weaving. In order to revive the specific features of the rugs made in Ksani River Valley, she is exploring typical old patterns and motifs. She also teaches young IDPs, who live in Tserovani.

6.2.4 Festivals

The valley of the river Ksani (the upper part) was marked by the richness and diversity of folk and religious festivals celebrated with love and dedication on the due dates following the traditional calendar. Amongst these are: Lomisoba, the Feast of St. George, Easter, Kvirastkhovloba (the next weekend after Easter), the Feast of the Holy Virgin, St. Archangels’ Day, Ascension, Holy Trinity Day, New Year, Tskhradzmitoba, Flowers’ Day, Khalarjoba, Tetrkhatoba, Alaverdoba (celebrated both by Georgian and Osetians), Arbooba,

Sakhlitangelozoba, Tsitelkhatoba (the latter referred by the interviewers as the Festival of Ossetians), Kashuetoba, Transfiguration, etc.

Today, in order to celebrate the festival days locally, any local people who have the option of crossing the occupation line will enter the occupied zone. [This was still possible when the interviews were made. Crossing of the so-called boundary with Akhagori is no longer possible since late 2019. (ed.)] Those who still live there attend the religious ceremonies in the nearby churches.

The veneration of various religious shrines on the territory of Ksani valley located in the sacred lands and forest is [was] also a common tradition amongst the local population. In old times the sacred lands, which used to belong to the shrines, were ploughed and sown. Wheat and barley were often harvested on these lands. The bread and beer made from these crops were used as an offering during the religious festivals commemorated at these shrines. According to tradition, no trees were allowed to be cut in these forests, nor were the branches permitted to be taken from these woods. [As local people are now displaced, such practices are no longer possible]

6.2.5 *Ulami* - The Traditions of Collective Voluntary Work

Ulami is the social practice of collective voluntary work, which is based on principles of mutual support. The idea behind this tradition is to help neighbouring families when workloads couldn't be accomplished without external help, or the tools and equipment of a single family were insufficient for a job. Neighbourhoods, districts, or the whole village would engage in these activities on a purely voluntary basis. For instance, cutting the grass in the Alpine zone of the Ksani River Valley for feeding of livestock during the winter time was often conducted as ulami work.

Until the 2008 war, ulami was a common social practice. In the collective work of cutting the grass, both men and women were engaged, whereas wool processing (carding, yarn spinning) was typically collective voluntary work for women. Neighbours would help each other during natural disasters, construction processes, etc. This tradition is still kept alive in the upper part of the Ksani valley and in the densely populated IDP villages.

6.2.6 Traditional Medicine

The upper part of the river Ksani is rich in the practices concerning traditional medicine. Local populations [who are now IDPs] still keep the knowledge about natural healing treatments for wounds, burns, bone breakages, internal organ disorders, and so on. The specific practices for treating the child infections such as measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox are also still practised today.

6.2.7 Traditions of Building Secondary Agricultural Structures

The secondary buildings used for different agricultural purposes were typical for the traditional dwelling in the Ksani valley. Amongst these are: the stoves (the special stone building for baking the bread), which were widespread in both highlands and lower part of this territory; the special ceramic ovens (tandoor or tone) used for baking the bread, which are typical for lowlands; 'baki', the special buildings for keeping sheep during the summer; 'bera', the feedlot for easy counting of sheep (with the narrow pass for milking). The

livestock barns, which are also found in the newly built IDP settlements, follow the arrangement typical for old structures, though are constructed with modern materials.

6.2.8 Fruit and Vegetable Gardening Traditions

The population of Ksani River valley passed on knowledge on the natural methods of grafting fruit trees and soil fertilisation.

6.2.9 Wild Fruit Collecting Traditions

Traditions for gathering wild fruits in the wood were widespread amongst the inhabitants of the Ksani valley. Fruits, berries and nuts are still gathered in the forest by the locals who stayed behind in Akhagori. [At the time this section of the report was written, some part of the Georgian population was living in Akhagori and had permits to cross the so-called border.]

6.2.10 Traditional Viniculture Knowledge

Some villages in Akhagori are where the grapes grow, and people make wine, vodka and Churchkhela - the traditional dessert in which walnut pieces are threaded on a string, dipped in thickened grape juice and subsequently dried out. The traditions of winemaking using *kvevri* are still alive here. After pressing the grapes, the grape pomace is used to distil vodka. The tradition of making vodka from different fruits and wheat (typical for the upper zone of the river Ksani) is also practised in this region. [The IDPs who were surveyed for this report at that time were still able to return to Akhagori with special permits and shared that they continued to make wine in their homes where they kept their *kvevris* and also in the IDP settlements.]

6.2.11 Folk Brewing Traditions

Beer brewing was a common tradition practised in the Ksani river valley. The beer was made for festivals, weddings, for the commemoration rituals dedicated to the deceased, etc. The beer was made of the malted grains of wheat and hops. The process was launched one week ahead, to let the drink boil, ferment and filter. Rye, wild pear, and sometimes *rosa canina*, were also used as an alternative ingredient for making the beer. Now as the population mostly uses ready vodka or wine, the brewing of beer has become a very rare activity, although it is still practised by the IDPs from time to time.]

6.2.12 Folk Traditions of Product Storage

In the upper zone of the Ksani valley, animal husbandry was a highly advanced field, which in turn, determined the development of dairy production and the relevant empirical methods to conserve and store them. Local inhabitants used to store cheese, butter, meat, and fruit through drying or (from apple, pear etc.) making *tklapi*, the Georgian puréed fruit roll-up sheet (from sour or sweet plums).

The upper zone of the Ksani valley is rich in folk beliefs, legends, spells and rituals concerning marriage, death, childbirth, New Year, hunting, forecasting and controlling the weather, etc.

6.2.13 Traditional meals

The meat products, dairy, vegetable dishes (bread, porridge, bakery and greens with various dressings), soups, crafted beer, vodka, and wine (typical for the lowland area) are the traditional meals typical to the river Ksani valley. The compotes, juices and tea from different medicinal herbs are part of the everyday or festive tables here.

The traditional dishes typical for this area are: the sorrel dish 'khachapuri' (the cheese-filled bread), 'khinkali' (dumplings), the barbeque, the cornus dish, various baked goods (stuffed with sweet wheat mixed with butter, cottage cheese, beetroot leaves or potato), mint dish, cheese porridge, 'korkoti' (powdered wheat porridge), 'chirkhali' (a mix of dry wild pear and other fruits and corn), nettles, and 'matsoni' (a yoghurt), etc.

6.3 Threats to Intangible Cultural Heritage

6.3.1 Displacement

The first and most obvious threat is the displacement of the Georgian population and loss of access to their ancestral lands. Many of the traditions known to have been practised for generations are no longer possible. Loss of access to local materials and agricultural practices prevents the creation of traditional crafts, dishes and drinks; but also traditional medical practices. Loss of access to local produce in turn removes the need for the traditional buildings that stored them. Lastly, and perhaps worst, the displacement of these communities results in the loss of their communal practices and traditions. Ulami, the collective voluntary work to achieve activities beyond individual scope, is no longer required. Festivals can no longer be held. As the International Training Centre for Intangible Heritage wrote "*Intangible cultural heritage is important as it gives us a sense of identity and belonging, linking our past, through the present, with our future. Intangible cultural heritage is of both social and economic importance. It aids social cohesion and helps individuals to feel part of a community and of society at large*" (CRIHAP n.d.). Without it, the Georgian IDPs may lose that sense of cohesion, of who and what they were.

6.3.2 Disinformation Campaigns

Deliberate campaigns are underway in the Tskhinvali Region to falsify history using TV programmes, printed media, and other publications. Georgian cultural heritage and sites are hence called monuments of Alanian culture or are referred to as being built in the Byzantine style. False references to Armenian craftsmen are also common (e.g. Sputnik 2017b; Monastery Mira 2009 Valiev 2021b). Books presenting alternative history, such as "Recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia: History, Politics, Law" are being published (Labyrinth n.d.).

This narrative is particularly prevalent in museums, such as the Tskhinvali Museum of Local History (now the so-called State Museum of South Ossetia). Following significant damage to the original building during the 2008 fighting, the collections were moved to a new building, which opened on 21 September 2015. In 2019, Sputnik News reported on the history of the Museum from its founding to the present day (Biazarti 2019). The news report places the origins of the Museum in an Ossetian narrative of independence dating back to the 1920s through to the current day, where it presents evidence of the ancient history of the Ossetian people, and is "a symbol of their courage and resilience".

However, it is also seen in religious institutions. In 2021, information was spread online that, in the 1990s, the relics of Georgia's famous historical figures, who had been canonised by the Georgian Orthodox Church, St. Bidzina Chelokashvili, the remains of St. Shalva and St. Elizbar Eristavis of Ksani, were stolen from Ikorta monastery and subsequently placed in the Tskhinvali Church of the Mother of God. According to the website of the Alanian Epiphany Convent (which is located in Vladikavkaz, Russia) the relics of the holy martyrs Shalva and Elizbar Eristavis were donated to the Convent in 2008 by Vladimir Koroev, a "well-known ktitor and benefactor in Ossetia-Alania and beyond". However, the website then alleges that said holy martyrs were of Ossetian heritage (Artinfo.ge 2021, Alanian nunnery n.d).

6.3.3 Language and Changing Place Names

Another manifestation of such disinformation campaigns is the deliberate changing of place names / local toponyms (and so heritage site names) and hydronyms in the occupied territories by the authorities, which reflects the erasure of Georgian cultural heritage. Geographical names (e.g. villages, rivers, valleys) are being translated into Ossetian; Georgian names are being changed by adding or omitting a letter.

Several churches have been referred to in the media by changed names, for example the church of Christ the Saviour in Vanati, Archangel church in Rustavi and Tsovbisi church (see **Annex One**).

Four volumes of "The History of Shida Kartli" by Tsira Dadianidze (published between 2002 and 2007) is currently being translated into Russian and Ossetian. The book is based on research materials and monument IDs – passports gathered as a result of fieldwork undertaken by the Georgian National Board for Monuments Protection between 1981 and 1986. The new Russian to Ossetian translation will contain new Ossetian toponyms with the original Georgian names subordinated in brackets.

The first volume of the Russian to Ossetian series "South Ossetian toponyms" was published in 2013 (Kavkazoved 2013). The first volume, *The Java District*, contains changed names of not only churches and villages, but of all other geographical points: villages, settlements, rivers, valleys, roads and so on. Sometimes Georgian names are simply translated into Ossetian, sometimes new letters are added to or subtracted from the name. In other cases, names are completely changed. The second volume was published in 2015. It consists of toponyms from Znauri and Tskhinvali districts (Publishing House Nauka n.d.).

Exacerbating the situation, many ethnic Georgians, particularly in Akhalkgori, are denied access to their native language (CoE 2019b, Agenda.ge 2022).

6.4 Summary

This chapter outlined the ways in which the intangible heritage of the occupied Tskhinvali Region, similar to tangible heritage, is facing preservation challenges and is at risk of being partially lost. Since most of the intangible heritage is the interconnection of the humans with the nature and the traditional living environment of a community, the loss of physical access to these areas poses significant risk to the continuity and future existence of the intangible heritage element.

A key aspect of cultural rights, embodied in the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, is the right to take part in cultural life. Displacement is a critical challenge to intangible cultural

heritage - for example, beer brewing, which was once common and used local ingredients, is now rare, as the displaced population mostly drink vodka and wine. Similarly, ceramic tableware production is threatened by the scattering of the population, loss of access to the materials, and the ageing and death of many of those with the skills. The veneration of various religious shrines on the territory of Ksani Valley located in the sacred lands and forest was also a common tradition amongst the local population which is no longer possible. Social practices, such as Ulami - based on principles of mutual support, are also threatened. Neighbourhoods, districts, or whole villages would engage in these large activities on a purely voluntary basis. For instance, cutting the grass in the Alpine zone of the Ksani River Valley for feeding of livestock during the winter time was often conducted as ulami work, and until the 2008 war, ulami was a common social practice. Now, although it is still practised in the upper part of the Ksani River Valley and densely populated IDP settlements, many of the traditionally ulami activities are no longer possible.

Some displaced families try to keep old traditions alive. For example, families from Akhalgori still produce cloths and process wool by carding, spinning, natural dying, and knitting. One young textile master, Nino Sekhniashvili, is trying to revitalise traditional rug weaving, as the original rug weavers are now gone and the tradition is dying out. She is exploring typical old patterns and motifs, and teaching young IDPs. A handful of master woodcarvers are also trying to pass on skills to new generations. Some parts of the Georgian population living in Akhalgori had permits to cross the so-called border, and were able to collect fruits and nuts as they have always done, and to keep the traditions of making vodka, and winemaking using *kvevri* alive, however, increasing restrictions at the border are impacting livelihoods (Council of Europe 2019b).

In addition to displacement, disinformation campaigns are also a critical threat. Such practices are often very subtle, such as the changing of the place names by the de-facto authorities, the alteration of religious histories, and the publishing of articles and books presenting alternative histories of the region that do not associate it with Georgia, to name just a few. However, special attention must be drawn to the use of museums to present and legitimise these fictionalised narratives, such as the Tskhinvali Museum of Local History (now the so-called State Museum of South Ossetia), which now tells a singularly 'Ossetian' narrative. Exacerbating the situation, many ethnic Georgians, particularly in Akhalgori, are denied access to their native language (CoE 2019b, Agenda.ge 2022). Cumulatively, these contribute towards a narrative denying the existence of ethnic Georgians in the region, slowly persuading the population, particularly the younger generation, of this falsification.

While intangible heritage is not the focus of the 1954 Hague Convention, the authors have tried to emphasise the relevance of the issue in the scope of wider issues of the protection of human rights, under which cultural rights also fall.

Chapter 7. Responses

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an **overview of responses** - that is, actions taken towards cultural heritage with respect to Tskhinvali Region. These actions can be divided into those undertaken by:

- **Georgian local and national authorities** (such as Georgian government ministries);
- **NGOs** (such as Georgian national committees of international NGOs); and
- **International Organisations** (including multilateral institutions such as the EU and the UN).

Each of these three categories lists the actions undertaken by relevant organisations.

7.2 Georgian Local and National Authorities

Since the end of hostilities in the early 1990s, Georgia has been raising awareness of cultural heritage and cultural property protection issues in the occupied territories. The Georgian priority has been to elicit the deployment of an independent, international monitoring mission.

Cultural heritage has been incorporated into the agendas of multiple Georgian state bodies, including (for example) the Parliament of Georgia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA), and several international delegations to e.g., UNESCO. In addition to this, the Georgian response includes national bodies such as the Ministry of Culture and National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH).

This section of the report details the involvement of the following:

- Parliament of Georgia, Ministries and Policies
 - Parliamentary Interim Commission on the Restoration of Territorial Integrity and Deoccupation
 - Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA)
 - Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia (MCSY)
 - Georgian lawmakers, as per “The Protection of Human Rights and Cultural Monuments in the Occupied Territories” (2008)
 - The Georgian National Security Concept (2011)
 - State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia (SMR)
 - The State Agency for Religious Issues
- Georgian Heritage and Research Organisations
 - National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH)
 - Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve (DLVMR)
 - The George Chubinashvili National Centre (GCNC) for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation
 - The Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts
 - Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia

The work discussed below is in addition to the work already discussed, such as the adoption of the *Law of Georgia on Occupied Territories* in 2008 by the Parliament of Georgia (Chapter 2.6).

7.2.1 Parliament of Georgia, Ministries, and Policies

The Interim Commission on the Restoration of Territorial Integrity and Deoccupation (previously: The Interim Commission on Territorial Integrity)

Due to a lack of resources, the vast majority of this Report concerns itself with the cultural heritage of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. It remains important, however, to note that the actions by the listed organisations have equally concerned both the occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region. For instance, the Georgian Parliament created an Interim Commission on Territorial Integrity, which has been active since 2004: its remit concerns the occupied territories as a whole. Although its main activities are to coordinate efforts towards conflict resolution in the occupied territories, the state of cultural heritage is also included within its purview (Parliament of Georgia n.d.).

In 2005, the Commission - with the help of researchers - drafted a programme document for the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Abkhazia. In the 2006 report, the chairman of the Commission underlined the importance of collaboration with UNESCO in order to protect Cultural Heritage in the occupied territories (Civil.ge 2006). The state of Georgian cultural heritage monuments in the occupied territories and the measures taken to protect them were discussed at the session of the Commission in 2012 (Netgazeti 2012). In the Commission's Report of 2010-2012, it was noted that the Commission had already drafted a programme for the preservation of cultural heritage in the occupied territories in 2005. Undermining the ability to access cultural heritage sites in the occupied territories for monitoring purposes, it is stated in the Report that Russian actors hindered access to the occupied territories, to both Georgian specialists and clergy, and also to international organisations.

Over the years, the Commission has held a number of hearings in the parliament with the participation of multiple committees. In 2014, joint hearings were held between the Commission and relevant committees for the following issues: culture, education, and science; foreign relations; European integration; diaspora; and the Caucasus. Several recommendations were issued for the protection of cultural heritage in the occupied territories, and activities were planned by the respective ministries of Foreign Affairs, Culture (Ministry of Culture Sport and Youth of Georgia, or MCSY), the legitimate Georgian government of Abkhazia, and the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia. One of the activities undertaken was the opening of "The Hall of Abkhazia - Sokhumi", a meeting room at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA) which exhibits photos and artefacts from the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. This endeavour was also supported by the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO.

The same Committee representatives discussed the issues again in March 2016 at a hearing of the Interim Commission on Territorial Integrity. The Commission listened to the report by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding the works undertaken and planned by the MFA in the field of cultural heritage protection in the occupied territories. It was noted in the report that Georgia was elected as a member of the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (established in the 1999 Second Protocol) in 2013 for 4 years, and that in December 2014 the Georgian state party delivered a report at the Committee meeting regarding the problems of protecting cultural heritage in the occupied territories (Parliament of Georgia 2014b). The hearing was dedicated to the topic of international organisations and

their involvement in the protection of cultural heritage in the occupied territories, their current activities in that direction, and future goals.

In November 2014, the report on the activities of the Interim Commission on Territorial Integrity of the Parliament of Georgia from November 2012 to November 2014 was presented by the Chairman of the Commission, Giorgi Volski, during the Parliament Autumn Session. According to the report, the Commission had held a meeting with non-governmental organizations and also discussed the protection of cultural heritage in the occupied territories (Parliament of Georgia 2014a).

In early 2019, the Commission was renamed as “The Interim Commission on the Restoration of Territorial Integrity and Deoccupation”. The latest meeting hosted by this commission was held in Spring 2021 (Parliament of Georgia 2021b) and all relevant stakeholders were invited, including state agencies, representatives of the Orthodox Church, academia, and NGOs. As a follow-up from the meeting, a document of recommendations (Parliament of Georgia, 2021c) was drafted and circulated to all state agencies attending. According to the document, the Commission deemed the state of cultural heritage in the occupied territories as alarming and asserted that the coordination and involvement of state and civil society organisations on this matter is unsatisfactory. Thus, it was proposed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should continue to work closely with the MCSY, SMR, legitimate authorities of the occupied regions, and field specialists, among others, on the following:

- Make use of legal mechanisms to argue against intentional alteration, damage, destruction of cultural sites and illegal extraction and trafficking of movable cultural property from the occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region;
- continue its effort, including at the GID to enable UNESCO expert mission on the occupied territories for the study of the condition of the sites (Parliament of Georgia 2021d).

Most recent working meetings discussing the state of cultural heritage in the occupied territories were hosted by the Committee for Culture (Parliament of Georgia 2021a) in April 2021, where the representatives of the executive branch, including national heritage agency and the MFA representatives, were asked to report to the parliamentary Committee on the developments and future prospects for cultural property protection on the occupied territories and the assistance from the international missions.

[Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly](#)

In 2012, the Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly reported on the reconstruction and deliberate damage of heritage sites in the occupied territories. Georgian MPs addressed their colleagues at the Committee of Culture and in International Organisations to actively get involved in the safeguarding of Georgia’s cultural heritage in its occupied territories. The Head of the Committee expressed grave concern and encouraged the Committee to support a special resolution on this issue to be discussed at the next session (Georgian Parliamentary Delegation to the Francophone Parliamentary Assembly, 2012).

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia \(MFA\)](#)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (MFA) is the main state actor through which other state agencies interact with the international organisations relevant to the issue of cultural heritage protection in the occupied territories. The issue of activation of the Hague Convention (1954) with respect to Georgia’s occupied territories has been on the agenda of the MFA for many years. This is manifested through the inclusion of the issue in the official addresses of heads of state to the Director General of UNESCO. The

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has been continuously raising the issue in the meetings and official correspondence with UNESCO, in addition to the Ambassador of Georgia to France (who is also the Permanent Representative to UNESCO).

The only UNESCO mission to date to the occupied territories for the monitoring of cultural heritage took place in 1997 (see **7.4.1 International Organisations: United Nations: Agencies and Fora - UNESCO**). It was initiated and planned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. In Georgia, the National Commission of UNESCO is also part of the MFA⁵⁵.

Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth of Georgia (MCSY)

The Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Youth of Georgia (MCSY) considers it very important to increase the involvement of the international community and to create effective mechanisms for the protection of cultural heritage in the occupied territories through effective use of international instruments. It is noteworthy that this issue is given due importance in the long-term document of Georgian cultural development policy, "Culture Strategy 2025" (Ministry of Culture and Monuments' Protection, 2016), which was developed by the Ministry with the involvement of the wider public and interagency commission of the Government of Georgia in 2016.

Given the relevance and priority of the topic, in 2016 the MCSY established an inter-agency working group, which discusses the protection of cultural heritage located within the occupied territories. Since then, the Ministry has regularly convened the "interagency working group on the protection and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural properties located on the occupied and neighbouring territories". The working group consists of representatives from various state agencies. It has drafted and annually revises an action plan. According to the unified action plan the inter-agency group will coordinate the efficient implementation of the planned events. For the past few years, the Ministry has also been monitoring the media of the self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to collect information on the state of heritage sites located in the occupied territories and compiles and updates the media monitoring report. To the authors' knowledge, the working group has not been convened since late 2019 and whether the annual plan (which Blue Shield Georgia regularly contributed to) and the media monitoring reports have been updated, is unclear.

State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality of Georgia (SMR)

The SMR, supported by the Council of Europe, has been conducting a programme to bring together cultural heritage professionals from Tbilisi, Sokhumi, and Tskhinvali, to discuss various aspects of heritage protection and management. This programme has been implemented by the Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict⁵⁶, an NGO which, over the course of 5 years (2013-2017), has facilitated 9 meetings held in various locations outside Georgia.

These programme meetings have been dedicated to two subjects: Museum Management, and the Inventory of Architectural Heritage. 3 meetings were dedicated to museum management issues, 1 to archival material, and 5 to architectural heritage. As a result of the workshops, architectural heritage surveys were developed. These were later used by the team from Abkhazia to survey/inventory one street in Gudauta, which has a

⁵⁵ See more concerning Georgia's National Commission of UNESCO at its official website: <http://unesco.ge/>

⁵⁶ The website for The Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict can be found at: <http://www.isnc.ge/>

number of historic buildings from the 19th century. As a result, photos of these sites were shared with the organisers in Tbilisi. The archives workshop facilitated cooperation between the Archive of Sokhumi and the archive of the Ministry of Interior of Georgia. Together they worked on a book named “Big Terror in Abkhazia - (Abkhazian ASSR during 1937-1938” (published 2017) (Capello 2019).

SMR points out that the objective of these programmes has been to conduct an international monitoring mission. The negotiations have failed several times already. The ministry has requested that the UNESCO mission be invited by the Georgian government, which the Abkhaz side has not agreed to.

The State Agency for Religious Issues

The State Agency for Religious Issues⁵⁷ is a state agency in Georgia that focuses on establishing a coherent religious policy based on national experience and the requirements of modern times. In 2021 the Agency published a book called “Occupied Heritage”. The book is an album that presents photos of religious buildings in the occupied autonomous republic of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, taken before and after the conflicts (Kevanishvili 2021; IPN 2021). Its aims are:

“to show the results of the occupation and annexation of the Georgian territories by Russia in only one, specific segment. Our task is to clarify Russia’s attitude towards religious sanctities, as well as to show the condition of the ecclesiastic buildings, as any of them are an integral part of our history and national identity.”

(Vashakmadze and the State Agency for Religious Issues 2021: 6).

7.2.2 Heritage Preservation Agencies and Bodies

National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH)

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia⁵⁸ is one of the main implementing bodies of the state strategy in the field of cultural heritage in Georgia, which is authorised to implement the state programme of cultural heritage. The Agency holds authority over seven house-museums and 12 museum-reserves throughout the country, including Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve. Its actions are discussed throughout the report.

During 2015-2018, minor repair works and emergency protective measures were undertaken by Georgian specialists from the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage under the supervision of nuns from Ikoti Monastery on over a dozen sites located in the Akhagori district. Works included the installation of new (temporary) roofs, maintenance, and repairs. These included the following sites:

1. **Armazi** - St. George’s Church (following the damage through a fallen tree)
2. **Chitiani** - Church of All Saints
3. **Dabakneti (Basharti)** - Church
4. **Kanchaeti** - Monastery Complex of the Virgin of Kabeni
5. **Mosabruni** - Church of the Virgin
6. **Mosabruni** - Monastery of Khopa, Church of St. John the Baptist and the Refractory

⁵⁷ See the official website at: <https://religion.gov.ge/en/saagentos-sesaxeb/cvens-sesaxeb> .

⁵⁸ See the official website at: <https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge/>

7. **Largvisi** - Belfry of the Monastery of Largvisi
8. **Ikoti** - St. George's Church
9. **Ikoti** - St. Marine's Church
10. **Ikoti** - Pitskhelauri Tower
11. **Ikoti** - Monastery of St.Monk Aleks/ House of the Mukhranbatoni
12. **Tsirkoli** - Church of the Virgin
13. **Tskhavati** - Monastery of Tskhavati, Southern addition of Church of the Virgin and Church of St. George
14. **Tskhavati** - Church of Christ the Saviour

Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve (DLVMR)

This Museum-Reserve is one of a number of museum-reserves and a collaborative partner of GNCBS for this report. Until the 2008 war, it was situated in the village Kurta, adjacent to the historical site of the Giorgi Machabeli Palace.

Its mission was to:

- Inventory the heritage sites located in Didi and Patara (big and small) Liakhvi river valleys;
- Undertake archaeological monitoring works in the valleys;
- Carry out maintenance works on the sites;
- Prepare studies prior to restoration design works; and
- Carry out restoration and rehabilitation works.

The office of the museum and its equipment was destroyed during the war. After the war, an information centre was established on the basis of the occupied Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve at the IDP settlement in Gori. Since 2009, it has been part of the NAPCH (GeorgianMuseums.ge 2022).

The current aims of the DLVMR are to:

- Maintain material on cultural heritage monuments;
- Arrange a museum-reserve;
- Participate in the preparation of guides;
- Undertake a systematic study on the condition of the cultural heritage in its area;
- Identify monuments and cultural heritage sites in its area;
- Elaborate proposals; and
- Determine the historical, scientific and artistic values of exhibits.

The Museum-Reserve, together with the NAPCH, also carries out educational activities. These include: exhibitions, various types of competitions, "workshops", activities dedicated to the International Museum Day, "Night at the Museum", etc. (Cultural Heritage Portal n.d.).

A report of works undertaken between 2005-2015 can be seen in the presentation published on the Museum's Facebook page (Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve 2015). This includes restoration works on architectural monuments prior to the 2008 war, documentation of the damage and destruction incurred by heritage sites during the war, and monitoring works. Nowadays it serves as a community education centre, focusing on local and IDP youth from the Tskhinvali region.

In recent years, the DLVMR has also collaborated with the GNCBS on several project proposals focused on both tangible and intangible heritage preservation in the Tskhinvali region. In 2022, two of the proposals have been approved and the organisations - in collaboration with another partner (Historical and Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre (HCHPC)), and with financial support from Cultural Emergency Response (CER) (GNCBS 2022a) and the US embassy in Georgia (GNCBS 2022b) - have started to implement projects with the aim of preserving intangible cultural heritage of the Didi Liakhvi valley.

The George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation (GCNC)

The Centre was founded in 2006. The activities of the Centre are academic study of Georgian art and Georgian cultural heritage preservation.

In June 2021, the Centre organised an online two-day international conference on the “Protection of Cultural Heritage Across Occupied Territories of Georgia: International Practices and Regional Application”. The project was funded by a SRNFFG grant (GCNC 2020). International speakers of the conference included the Blue Shield International president, a researcher from Newcastle University UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace, representatives of University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology Cultural Heritage Center, and scholars from Ukraine delivering case studies from Kyiv and Crimea. Recordings of the conference presentations are available online⁵⁹, and the proceedings have also been published online in English and Georgian (Khosroshvili et al. 2021).

The Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts

On 25-31 May 2021, the Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts hosted an International Spring School on “Abkhazia: From the Middle Ages to the Present (Historical-Culturological Aspects)”. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Sokhumi State University, through the financial support from the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation within the framework of “Grant Competition for Support of Scientific Research Projects and International Scientific Events of Georgia’s Occupied Territories”.

The aim of the school was to:

- Provide an in-depth reflection of the history of the occupied territory of Georgia and its integral parts (including the autonomous republic of Abkhazia) from the Middle Ages to the present.
- Summarise accumulated knowledge.
- Actualize the different historical and culturological studies regarding Abkhazia.
- Promote and develop collaborative relationships.

During the conference, Manana Tevzadze, Chairperson of the Blue Shield Georgia, presented a paper concerning the “Protection of Cultural Heritage on the Occupied Territory of Abkhazia in Light of Implementation of the Hague Convention”⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Conference presentations are available via Chubinashvili Centre Youtube Channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpLOHrCqdv0jc-2_NTJAtg/featured

⁶⁰ The conference programme can be found at <https://manuscript.ge/12919-2/> (last accessed 22 December 2021)

7.2.3 Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia

Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia supports the cultural heritage of Georgia's occupied territories by offering grants for projects (including grant calls and targeted programmes). The Foundation is also involved in international scientific networks and joint projects. It administers more than 20 programmes, out of which 15 are national, about 10 are international bilateral programmes, and 2 are multilateral projects.

The Foundation offers annual grants for the Promotion of Scientific Research Projects and International Scientific Events in the Occupied Territories of Georgia. Types of projects that get financed include:

- 1) Scientific research projects concerning the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region of Georgia.
- 2) Organising international scientific events such as seasonal schools, conferences, congresses, fora, and symposia.

Proposals that have been approved by the foundation, among others, include: Historical representation of Shida Kartli occupied territory (Didi Liakhvi Valley) by Gori State Teaching University; Sixth International Scientific Conference "Prospects for the development of Georgian-Ossetian relations" by Tbilisi State University (SRNSFG 2019).

Aims of the call include: the development of scientific studies in the occupied territories of Georgia, their approximation to international standards, the creation of new knowledge, and the study and analysis of new ideas and concepts, events and facts, etc.

7.3 NGOs

This section details the involvement of NGOs, including the following:

- Open Society Georgia Foundation
- Young Psychologists' Association of Abkhazia
- ICOMOS Georgia
- ICOM Georgia and the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)
- The Georgian Arts and Culture Centre (GACC)
- Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)
- Historical and Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre (HCHPC)
- Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict and COBERM (with the EU/UNDP)

7.3.1 Open Society Georgia Foundation

In 2008, Georgian NGOs collaborated with the Open Society Georgia Foundation to prepare and publish "In August Ruins", a report concerning the Violation of Fundamental Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law with respect to the August War of 2008 (Open Society Georgia Foundation 2009). It included information about the destruction of ethnically Georgian historic villages in the occupied territories.

7.3.2 Young Psychologists' Association of Abkhazia

In the past years, this NGO has been actively collecting data on the state of conservation of cultural heritage sites in occupied Abkhazia and has actively advocated for concrete action on behalf of both the state authorities and civil society. On its initiative, a joint appeal was prepared in 2014 and signed by various NGOs and semi-state institutions regarding the state of cultural heritage located on the occupied territory of Abkhazia (Akhaldze, L. et al. 2014).

This organisation, and particularly its Chairperson, Mr. Shermadin Sharia, initiated and provided information on raising cultural heritage issues during the Geneva International Discussions. He was actively involved in organising a conference in Sokhumi State University in Tbilisi held in 2012, called "Cultural Heritage of Georgia in the Occupied Territories - Abkhazia" which also resulted in the publication with the same name (Sokhumi State University 2012). Participants of the conference signed a joint statement addressed and sent to international organisations (ICOMOS Georgia et al. 2015).

7.3.4 ICOMOS Georgia

The Georgian National Committee of ICOMOS has regularly signed joint statements directed towards the international heritage community, regarding unprofessional interventions to heritage sites in occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region. ICOMOS Georgia is one of the founding members of Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield and supports it in its endeavours for the research and study of the situation of cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Georgia. During the August 2008 war, it was also actively communicating with ICOMOS International and other international organisations regarding threats and damage to cultural property of Georgia as a result of armed conflict.

7.3.4 ICOM Georgia

ICOM Georgia has actively gathered information on the damages and threats to cultural heritage sites and museums during the August 2008 war. It has supplied information to ICOM-International's Disaster Relief Task Force which was posted on a dedicated website⁶¹.

In 2011, ICOM Georgia held a Workshop for the South Caucasus Region on the topic of 'Museums Disaster Preparedness and Management - Natural Disasters and Armed Conflict', with the participation of the ICOM Disaster Relief Task Force and the President of the (then) Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS)⁶². As a follow-up to the workshop, in 2012 ICOM Georgia initiated the foundation of the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield.

7.3.5 Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)

The Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS) was founded in late 2012 upon the initiative of ICOM Georgia, along with ICOMOS Georgia, and the Association of Georgian Librarians. In 2013, the

⁶¹ This website was located at <http://drfm.info/georgia/>, and is sadly no longer functional (last accessed 22 December 2021).

⁶² Today ANCBS no longer exists; it merged with ICBS and is simply the Blue Shield

GNCBS was also supported by the Georgian National Archive which is part of the ICA and received accreditation from the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS)⁶³.

Since its founding in 2013, the GNCBS has engaged with cultural heritage protection in the occupied territories, in addition to the activation of the 1954 Hague Convention for this purpose. In order to raise awareness and facilitate implementation of both Protocols of the Convention in Georgia, the GNCBS has translated and published relevant documents into the Georgian language. The GNCBS has appealed to the international heritage community and international organisations with petitions and open letters following the news concerning undertaken or planned works on heritage sites in the occupied territories.

From 2018 to 2019, the GNCBS collaborated with the University of Newcastle School of Arts and Cultures to implement the project, “Implementing the 1954 Hague Convention and its two Protocols to protect heritage sites in occupied territories of Georgia”. This project was funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) fund (Grant Ref: ES/M500513/1 (Newcastle University)). The present report and the map of cultural heritage sites of the Occupied Shida Kartli region are the outputs of this project, which has entailed the collation and translation of documents relating to the state of conservation of heritage sites in Georgia’s occupied territories. It uses sources including the media, governmental institutions, and others. The project maps data to understand which heritage sites have been affected during the conflict. It includes review of the data with the University of Newcastle and the identification of paths for future work, translation of the data into English, and the development of a case study (occupied Georgia) examining implementation and effectiveness of Article 9 of the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention.

In 2021, the GNCBS was an organising partner in the international conference, “Protection of Cultural Heritage on the Occupied Territories: Georgia and International Experience”, along with the Giorgi Chubinashvili National Research Center for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation. At the conference, the GNCBS Chairperson Manana Tevzadze, together with Emma Cunliffe of the University of Newcastle (UK), presented the initial findings of the above project in a joint paper titled “Cultural Heritage Destruction in Occupied Tskhinvali Region: a Preliminary Review”⁶⁴ which has since been published (Tevzadze and Cunliffe 2021).

7.3.5 The Georgian Arts and Culture Centre (GACC)

The GACC is a cultural heritage NGO actively operating since 1995 in the fields of cultural heritage preservation, creative industries and crafts development. Its remit includes the “preservation, promotion, and sustainable use of Georgian Culture and Cultural Heritage”.⁶⁵

In 2009 the GACC organised a symposium and an exhibition on the theme of “Georgian Cultural Heritage – Abkhazeti and Shida Kartli”, concerning cultural heritage in the occupied territories (GACC 2009a, 2009b). Its website also features a 2009 report published by ICOM Georgia, concerning war damages in the aftermath

⁶³ ICBS no longer exists. It merged with ANCBS to become the Blue Shield - www.theblueshield.org

⁶⁴ The recording of this presentation is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KY8Q7tdAEDo> (last accessed 14 January 2022).

⁶⁵ As per the “About Us” of the GACC’s official website: <https://www.gaccgeorgia.org/FSUs.html> (last accessed 14 January 2022).

of the 2008 war. This has been disseminated among its international partners and donors (ICOM Georgia 2008).

7.3.6. Historical and Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre (HCHPC)

HCHPC is a non-governmental organization which was established in 2009 and was based in Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve in village Kurta (occupied since 2008) in order to support and promote the museum's activities. Since 2009, it has worked in close cooperation with the museum-reserve on various types of activities, such as: Inventory of immovable cultural heritage monuments, their passportization and restoration, up to 200 inventory cards have been made, archaeological monitoring works have been carried out in villages of Sveri, Kekhvi, Dzartsemi, medieval fortified structures in Achabeti, Sveri and Kemerti have been cleaned and maintained. Restoration works were carried out on the following churches: Church of St. George in Kekhvi, Church of St. Archangel of Kheiti, Tkviavi Church, Marana St. George and Holy Trinity Church in Alevi. The mission of the organization is to study, research, protect and promote cultural heritage monuments in the Didi Liakhvi valley and the Tskhinvali region, which are currently occupied.

7.3.7 Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict and COBERM (with the EU/UNDP)

In the period 2016-2018, the Institute implemented a project with the support of COBERM (Confidence-Building Early Response Mechanism). COBERM is an apolitical, impartial and flexible programme funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). The objective of COBERM is to strengthen an enabling environment involving conflict-affected communities by addressing local needs and supporting initiatives aiming to build social cohesion and confidence that foster peace and stability.

The Institute/COBERM project supports immediate and concrete initiatives which seek to have an impact on confidence-building within and across conflict-divided communities.⁶⁶ The objective of COBERM is to strengthen an enabling environment involving conflict-affected communities by addressing local needs and supporting initiatives aiming to build social cohesion and confidence that foster peace and stability.

A public event, the "Roundtable: Cultural Heritage in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – Challenges of State Policy" was held (under the Chatham House Rules) by the NGO at Ilia State University (ISNC 2017) to share some of the findings of the above-mentioned project. Topics discussed included: problems in the field of cultural heritage protection in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; the inventory and restoration of architectural heritage; challenges with professionals; and the roles and responsibilities of state and non-state actors (as well as international actors). The event was also held as part of COBERM's "Renewing professional cooperation through science and culture" phase.

7.4 International Organisations

This section details examples of involvement at the international level from the following organisations:

- The United Nations: Agencies and Fora (UNESCO, OCHA, UNRGID, UNHRC, UNSC, UNDP)
- Geneva International Discussions (GIDs)

⁶⁶ More on COBERM can be found on the UNDP Georgia website at: <https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/projects/coberm.html> [last accessed 13 January 2022]

- Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
- Council of Europe (CoE)
- European Union (EU), including the IIFFMCG and EUMM
- The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

7.4.1 The United Nations: Agencies and Fora

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation)

1996 Seminar, “International Humanitarian Law and Legislation for the Protection of Cultural Properties”

Research on archival material (official correspondence) requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia revealed that, in May 1996, a seminar on the topic "International Humanitarian Law and the legislation for the protection of Cultural Properties” was held in Tbilisi. It was organised jointly by UNESCO and the ICRC. The seminar discussed "possibilities of application of the Hague Convention" among the participants representing the Government of Georgia.

1997 Mission to Abkhazia

As stated above, the only UNESCO mission to Georgia’s occupied territories took place in 1997, four years after the first phase of conflict. Official correspondence between the Georgian State party and UNESCO on this matter spans less than a year. The below information is based on archival material obtained from the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO which is based at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

The background back then, as also today, was that the Georgian State party was unable to check the condition of cultural heritage sites which suffered through armed conflict and was in need of international specialists to study the physical condition of the sites and if need be, help activate the Hague Convention.

In response to the plea from the Georgian State party (sometime in July, August 1996), UNESCO’s Director-General expressed readiness and consent to start the process of deploying a mission to Abkhazia to evaluate and document the heritage properties affected and damaged during the conflict. In the couple of months since the initial request, UNESCO (Bouchenaki, 1996) identified two experts to come on the Abkhazian mission. Initially the UNDP office in Tbilisi was contacted for security clearance for the mission from the UN Resident Coordinator at the UN office in Georgia, but the request was in fact forwarded (Tonello, 1996) to the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). In less than 6 months, the security clearance was received and mission dates were proposed. It only took a few more months before the final dates were agreed and the mission was deployed.

Subsequently, the initially identified experts were changed and two other consultants were proposed. Initially it was proposed by UNESCO (Bouchenaki 1997a) that the mission would last about 10-12 days. The purpose of the mission would be to undertake a preliminary survey of the damage to monuments and historic sites in Abkhazia. Lastly, the mission had a week-long duration, of which only three days were spent visiting the monuments and sites in Abkhazia while the rest was travel time and meetings in Tbilisi. In the preparatory correspondence, UNESCO (Bouchenaki 1997b) stated that it considered it absolutely essential that the team be accompanied in Abkhazia by a national specialist from the Ministry of Culture of Georgia. The Georgian side identified such a specialist and addressed UNOMIG to guarantee the same immunity and security status for the person. In the end, the Abkhazian authorities (Harun-Ar-Rashid 1997) did not agree on a Georgian specialist to accompany the UNESCO team across the ABL to Abkhazia. Instead, they offered

a local specialist to accompany the team in Abkhazia. The report of this mission can be accessed from the UNESCO archives (Boccardi 1997).

Since then Georgia, as a State party to the 1954 Hague Convention, has regularly brought attention to the necessity of deploying another mission to assess the state of heritage conservation. This issue is on the agenda of not only high-ranking meetings between UNESCO and state officials, but it is also raised regularly in the framework of UNESCO General Conference in the address of the Head of Delegation. For years, UNESCO has stated that the consent of the parties to the conflict, and a security guarantee, as the two main preconditions to the deployment of such a mission. The issue is raised also regularly in the official correspondence to the General Director of UNESCO as well as during the annual meetings of the intergovernmental committee for the protection of cultural properties during armed conflict.

A chronology of the events of 2015 to 2018 is as follows (Darsalia 2019):

- The issue of deployment of mission on Georgia's occupied territories was discussed during the official visit to Georgia of the Assistant Secretary General of UNESCO, Eric Falt, in September 2015;
- In October 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia addressed UNESCO's Director General Irina Bokova with the request of the mission deployment;
- During the meeting in February 2016 with the head of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, the organisation was asked to name concrete measures that Georgia would need to take in order to progress with the issue of the mission;
- The Director General was again addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in January 2017 following the destruction of a multilayered archaeological and architectural monument in the village of Tsebelda in Abkhazia. In response to the letter the Director General replied with a general remark that UNESCO "will deploy all instruments at its disposal to respond to your concerns and ensure the protection of heritage."
- In December 2018, the Permanent Representative of Georgia to UNESCO disseminated a summary of the state of conservation of Georgia's cultural heritage in the occupied territories at the 13th meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties in the Event of Armed Conflict.

[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#)

UN OCHA and its specialised digital service ReliefWeb republished some of UNOSAT's Satellite Damage Assessment for Cultural Heritage Monuments in the Tskhinvali Region during the 2008 war (UNOSAT 2008c).

[United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions \(UNRGID\)](#)

In 2018, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) appointed the UN Representative Ayşe Cihan Sultanoğlu to co-chair the Geneva International Discussions (GID), succeeding Antti Turunen (UNSG n.d.). The UNRGID reports through the department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs directly to the Secretary-General.

The explicit mandate of the UNRGID is as follows:

"Following the non-extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia in June 2009, the United Nations has continued to support the Geneva International Discussions on security and stability and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees, which commenced on 15 October 2008 in Geneva in accordance with the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and

implementing measures of 08 September 2008, following the hostilities of August 2008 (see S/2009/254, para. 5). In resolution 1866 (2009), the Security Council welcomed the beginning of the discussions and requested the Secretary-General, through his Special Representative, to continue to fully support the process. The discussions are co-chaired by the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations.

The United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions serves as the UN Co-Chair of the Discussions and works in consultation with the other Co-Chairs, and with support from her team, to prepare and facilitate the sessions of the Geneva International Discussions. The United Nations Representative and her team are also responsible for preparing, convening and facilitating the periodic meetings of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) for Abkhazia. With regard to the latter, the UNRGID team maintains a hotline to facilitate timely communication and exchange of information among the parties on any issues of mutual concern.”

(UNRGID n.d.)

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The Georgian Government has tried on several occasions to bring the issue of cultural heritage protection in its occupied territories to the attention of the UN HRC. For example, Georgian representatives raised the issue of Russian authorities denying access to observe the cultural heritage sites in the occupied territories at one of the UNHRC meetings discussing the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, and cultural rights in 2018 (UNHRC 2018).

In its March 2017 resolution, the Human Rights Council requested that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continue to provide technical assistance through the latter's office in Tbilisi. It also called for immediate access for the Office of the High Commissioner, and international and regional human rights mechanisms, to Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia (UNGA 2017) According to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (Tsiskarishvili 2020), the Georgian government has a standing invitation to all of the UN institutions to access the territories but the access is constantly being denied.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Resolution 1808, adopted by the Security Council on April 15th, 2008 “reaffirms the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders” (UNSC 2008). On 15 June 2009, the UN Security Council voted on Draft Resolution 484 seeking to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) by two weeks, which was to expire that same day. The Draft Resolution was not adopted as the Russian Federation, a permanent member, voted against it. In explanation, the Representative of the Russian Federation held that the mandate of UNOMIG had ceased to exist, owing to Georgian aggression against South Ossetia in August 2008. Therefore, the Russian Federation could not support the Draft Resolution, which would have established a new security regime with “politically incorrect provisions and old, contradictory terms”, and “which was aimed at reaffirming the territorial integrity of Georgia and denying the existence of Abkhazia as a State” (UNSC 2008-2009).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP has implemented an apolitical, impartial, and flexible programme funded by the European Union called COBERM (Confidence-Building Early Response Mechanism). COBERM was launched in 2010 and during the programme's first two phases in 2010-2015 COBERM has enabled the implementation of 137 initiatives that addressed all key sectors relevant for confidence-building, among them the sphere of cultural cooperation.

More detail regarding the UNDP and COBERM can be found above in the NGOs section, under: **Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflict and COBERM (with the EU/UNDP)**.

Geneva International Discussions (GID)

The Geneva International Discussions (GID) are a series of international meetings that began in October 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland, in the aftermath of the 2008 war in Georgia with the goal of addressing the fallout of the conflict, and which continue today. The Geneva process is co-chaired by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), and the United Nations (UN), with participation of representatives from Georgia, Russia, and Georgia's occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia—as well as the United States of America (Civil.ge 2015).

The three organisations provide one co-chair and one co-moderator and operate according to the *primus inter pares* principle. The UNSG Representative co-chairs the GID (SMR.GOV.GE n.d.). UNRGID – Reports through the department of Political and peacebuilding affairs directly to the SG. Following the August 2008 Russo–Georgian war, the UN and OSCE missions in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, respectively, ceased their operations, leaving the GID as the only forum for all interested parties to discuss security challenges and humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected people (OSCE 2009, 2021; Civil.ge 2015; SMR.GOV.GE n.d.).

The GID happens in two parallel groups. While the first group discusses security issues, the second group deals with humanitarian affairs such as: the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to the places of their origin; cultural heritage; freedom of movement; etc., and takes place every three months. The second group regularly raises the topic of cultural heritage and the threats it faces in the occupied territories including that of deliberate destruction.

The topic of cultural heritage has come up on several occasions at the GID. As the meeting minutes are not public, one can judge only according to comments made by the participants either in public or in interviews with us. The case of intervention on the Ilori church together with other sites in Abkhazia was brought up by the Georgian side several times. In the recent round of talks, the South Ossetian side has claimed that the Truso Valley and Kazbegi region are historically South Ossetian and that cultural heritage in those territories should be monitored by them. The issue of Okona Triptych has also been a topic of discussion (Jam-News 2016; Qarti.ge 2018). The platform is also used to bring to the attention of the delegates frequent cases of “Black Archaeology” when illegally excavated cultural artefacts are being sold abroad. The Georgian side regularly asks for the deployment of international monitors for the study of cultural heritage in the occupied territories which will enable its future comprehensive rehabilitation (Darsalia, 2019).

As expressed by the EUMM representatives, there is a certain fatigue in the format after 10 years and it is questioned - with some right. The format was created for security and stability, but not for conflict resolution (EUMM 2019).

Other UN Fora and Agency Interactions

In 2018 Georgia became a state party to the “**Group of Friends for the Protection of Cultural Heritage**”. It was established under the auspices of the UN in New York in April 2018, following the initiative of Cyprus and Italy. The Group of Friends aims at enhancing recent efforts, including relevant legal instruments, to combat the destruction and trafficking of cultural property mostly, but not exclusively, in the context of armed conflicts (notably by terrorist groups and organised crime).

Georgia’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva addressed the UN Human Rights Council on its 36th Session in September 2017 where the issue of heritage protection in the occupied territories was also mentioned (Tsiskarishvili 2017).

At the 73rd UNGA, a Ministerial side event, “Protecting Cultural Heritage: Staying Committed to the Implementation of UN legal instruments” was held on 26 September 2018. Here, Georgia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs made remarks addressing the state of conservation of the monuments on Georgia’s occupied territories – that is, the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and particularly, the “facts of deliberate destruction, looting and illicit trade of cultural artefacts by the Russian occupation regimes” (Darsalia 2019). He mentioned the case of Tsebelda and general concern about inaccessibility of cultural heritage for Georgian and international experts. During this session, in June 2019, New York, the Resolution on the “Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali Region / South Ossetia, Georgia” initiated by Georgia was accepted once again (Agenda.ge 2019b). The UN General Assembly adopted this Resolution in 2008 (UNGA 2020, 2021), which strengthens the fundamental rights of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) to, first of all, the right to a voluntary, safe, and dignified return to their places of residence⁶⁷. The Resolution was again adopted in 2020 (74/300: UNGA 2020), and in 2021 (A/RES/75/285: UNGA 2021, Civil.ge 2021b).

The letters of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the destruction of heritage in Tsebelda were disseminated as official documents at the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council during its 2017 session. The same issue was addressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the parallel event of the UN General Assembly Ministerial held in 2018 (Zalkaliani, 2018).

The Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva mentioned the challenges related to the monitoring of Georgia’s cultural heritage during the Statement by Ms. Karima Bennouna, Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights at the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council in 2018 (Jgenti 2018).

7.4.2 OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe)

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCEPA)

⁶⁷ The General Assembly: Article 1. Recognizes the right of return of all internally displaced persons and refugees and their descendants, regardless of ethnicity, to their homes throughout Georgia, including in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia (UNGA 2020, 2021).

In July 2022, at its 29th Annual Session held in Birmingham, the OSCEPA adopted a resolution which, among other things, talked about Georgia's occupied territories, calling on the "Russian Federation to end its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and engage constructively in the Geneva International Discussions" (OSCEPA 2022: 28), while at the same time condemning the

"humanitarian and human rights situation which has deteriorated in Russian-occupied regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia – as a result of the violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights of people living there, various forms of discrimination against ethnic Georgians, and the obliteration and alteration of Georgian features from Georgian cultural heritage monuments in both regions, as a direct consequence of the Russian Federation's ongoing occupation and "russification" policy".

(OSCEPA 2022: 147)

The incident of Tsebelda, where an archaeological site was destroyed, was reported to the 1,128th Session of OSCE's Permanent Council in January 2017. The meeting was addressed by the delegation of Georgia with a statement concerning the destruction of cultural heritage in the Georgian region of Abkhazia, an excerpt of which states that:

*"Russian Federation's above mentioned actions constitute a flagrant violation of the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, inter alia, provisions concerning respect for cultural property, as well as the principles of the 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage. We condemn the destruction of the monuments of Georgia's historical and cultural heritage by the occupation regime. This illegal act is another demonstration of the violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We call on the international community, UNESCO and other relevant international organisations to address this illegal action in an urgent and proper manner and to ensure the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage in the occupied territories of Georgia."*⁶⁸

(Delegation of Georgia 2017)

Statements on the same issue were also made by the EU (European Union 2017) and by the United State's Mission to OSCE condemning Russia's destruction of cultural heritage in Georgia (United States Mission to the OSCE 2017) In response to the above statements, the Delegation of the Russian Federation cited the Press Service of the Southern Military District who had commented on this matter earlier: "No construction or other work has been carried out or is planned in the village of Tsebelda in the Republic of Abkhazia by the 7th military base of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" (Delegation of the Russian Federation to OSCE 2017).

On 07 December 2018, the Group of Friends of Georgia issued a statement in the OSCE regarding the 10th Anniversary of the August 2008 war. The statement was delivered at the 25th OSCE Ministerial Council Closing Plenary Session. Cultural heritage protection issues were also featured in the statement among other issues, e.g.:

⁶⁸ The Session details are available on the OSCE website (OSCE 2017); although the address by the Georgian delegation is not online, a copy was given to us by the Georgian MFA and is available on request.

“We condemn the mass destruction of houses of IDPs, which illustrates Russia’s purposeful policy aimed at completely erasing the traces of ethnic Georgian population and cultural heritage in Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.”

(OSCE 2018)

7.4.3 Council of Europe (CoE)

In October 2008, the Council of Europe’s “Assessment Mission on the Situation of the Cultural Heritage in the Conflict Zone of Georgia” visited the country and investigated damage that had taken place to cultural heritage, including buildings, in the August 2008 conflict zone. This was with particular reference to the former so-called “Buffer Zone” to the north of Gori (Johnson and CoE 2008).

The CoE has published further reports concerning the conflict in Georgia since 2010. The most recent was published in April 2019 and focuses on the human rights and security situation in the Russian-occupied regions of Georgia: Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia (Agenda.ge 2019).

There have been a number of meetings held at the CoE with respect to the situation in Georgia’s occupied territories. Cultural heritage was on the agenda at the 1,345th meeting, held on 02 May 2019, where the 6th Decision of the committee of ministers “reiterated their call to the authorities exercising effective control ... to prevent further deterioration of monuments belonging to the cultural heritage throughout Georgia’s regions” (CoE 2019a: 2-3).

In addition to this:

“... more than ten years after the conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, the Russian Federation continues to impede the peaceful conflict resolution process and undermines the security and stability in the region through its continuing military presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, increased military exercises and infrastructure reinforcements, the implementation of the so-called treaties on alliance and strategic partnership/integration, incorporation of military units of the Tskhinvali region of Georgia into the armed forces of the Russian Federation, the creation of a so-called “joint group of armed forces” in the Abkhazia region, establishment of so-called “joint information and coordination centres of law enforcement agencies”, as well as the functioning of so-called “customs points” in both Georgian regions, aimed at the integration of these regions respectively into the customs sphere of the Russian Federation.”

(CoE 2019a: 1)

The incident in Tsebelda, Abkhazia, was reflected in the address of the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the CoE at the Council of Europe 1,275th committee meeting of deputy ministers (January 2017) under agenda item 2.1. Council of Europe and Conflict in Georgia:

“The Georgian delegation would like to update the Committee of Minister’s Deputies on the situation in the occupied territories of Georgia. On 3 January, 2017 the Russian occupation forces in Abkhazia region destroyed the multi-layered archaeological and architectural monument – the 8-9th c and late middle ages settlement site, tombs, ruins of the church as well as the graveyard of mid 20th c. – while preparing the ground for a military range... The intentional damage of the cultural heritage violated

the provisions of international humanitarian law, including the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. This illegal act is unacceptable and deserves due attention of this Committee, especially when the issue of protection of cultural heritage is among the priorities of the Cyprus Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.”

(CoE 2017a, b)

CoE Expert Mission to Abkhazia

Within the framework of the CoE programme and as a result of planning during the GID, an Italian expert (chosen by the EU delegation in Georgia) was commissioned to monitor four sites in Abkhazia: Moqvi, Ilori, Likhne and Bedia churches in 2016. The subsequent report has not been shared. Within the same programme, one Georgian and one Abkhaz heritage professional were supported to undertake a one-month internship in Strasbourg to gain international experience.

7.4.4 The European Union (EU)

Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG)

The European Union commissioned an Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFFMCG) which was published in September 2009.⁶⁹ The Report makes specific reference to cultural heritage and cultural property.

For instance, Volume II, Chapter 7, “International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law” (Part III, Point 6, “Cultural Objects, Monuments, Museums and Churches”) refers to the 1954 Hague Convention provisions relevant to the situation. It is also stated that there is a lack of information and uncertainty regarding the extent of damage, and that:

“more information is needed in order to assess both the extent of the damage and the facts relating to the circumstances of the military operations. This is critical as the special protection given to cultural property ceases only in cases of imperative military necessity”.

(IIFFMCG 2009: 335)

The European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM)

The EUMM is an unarmed civilian monitoring mission in Georgia, deployed in September 2008 following the EU-mediated Six Point Agreement signed by both Georgia and Russia on 12 August 2008, that ended the August 2008 conflict. Its mandate covers the whole of Georgia, although access has been restricted to the contested territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by their de-facto authorities (EUEAS 2020). The EUMM monitors compliance with the (EU mediated) 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and Russia and with the Implementing Measures subsequently agreed to on 08 September 2008. Its aims (EUMM.eu, n.d.) are:

- To ensure that there is no return to hostilities;
- To facilitate the resumption of a safe and normal life for the local communities living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL) with Abkhazia and South Ossetia;
- To build confidence among the conflict parties; and
- To inform EU policy in Georgia and the wider region.

⁶⁹ All three volumes of the report can be found at the website of the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law: https://www.mpil.de/en/pub/publications/archive/independent_international_fact.cfm

The Mission's headquarters are in Tbilisi, and there are three field offices in Mtskheta, Gori, and Zugdidi, in total employing about 200 monitors (EUMM.eu, n.d.). The work of the Mission is thus seen as an important contributor to local security by EU Member States, as well as others (EUMM 2018: 2).

Several mechanisms have been implemented under the auspices of the EUMM:

- Under an agreement reached at the Geneva International Discussions in February 2009, regular meetings take place between parties to the conflict, under the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). The Mechanism involves representative parties from the EUMM, UN, OSCE, Georgia, Russia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, who discuss and resolve specific incidents and issues. The meetings have proven useful in developing greater confidence and co-operation between the parties. The Mechanism is facilitated by a 'hotline' telephone system that renders increased common understanding, cooperation, and confidence (EUMM 2018: 2).
- The human security teams among others try to maintain a map of religious sites and cemeteries and monitor the security situation during religious holidays such as Easter when the population visits the cemeteries and religious sites near the ABL. Although the Mission is mandated to monitor the situation on the entire territory of Georgia in its internationally-recognised boundaries, it is unable to do so. For this reason, the Mission uses various technologies to be able to monitor the situation also across the ABL (Agenda.ge 2019c).
- The EUMM also provides funding for some projects that involve culture and cultural heritage. For instance, some funded projects aimed at confidence-building over the past few years have dealt with culture. The Mission has recently completed its first special report concerning cultural heritage, for which it has been consulting several institutions working on heritage issues, including the initial draft of this current report. The report is an internal document and has not been shared to the authors.

7.4.5 The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC's Georgia delegation has been active since the early 1990s. The organisation has been helping people affected by the conflicts of the 1990s and by the August 2008 war and by the administrative boundary lines in Georgia. The ICRC promotes the integration of international humanitarian law (IHL) into Georgian legislation by assisting the Georgian authorities. A National Inter-Agency Commission on the Implementation of IHL has been created with the help of the organisation and with the close cooperation with Georgian authorities (ICRC 2014).

The ICRC was one of the organisers of a seminar on the topic "International Humanitarian Law and the legislation for the protection of Cultural Properties" held in Tbilisi in May 1996. Presently, its IHL trainers regularly provide training for the Georgian defence forces on the topics of IHL, including the 1954 Hague Convention.

The ICRC, however, has only limited access in the occupied region, and can only "implement small-scale humanitarian actions" (CoE 2019b: 7).

7.5 Summary

The chapter presented a detailed list of all national and international organisations and groups who, on different occasions and at different scales, had engaged with the issues of cultural heritage in the occupied

territories, and in particular the Tskhinvali Region. The parties include: the Georgian government, local and international NGOs, and international organisations. It also provided insight into the work of the variety of international platforms and confidence building mechanisms introduced by the international donors following both phases of the conflict. Many of the issues arose following the conflict in the 1990s, and continued (and often worsened) following the 2008 war. The below represents only a summary of actors involved and key actions taken.

First and foremost, many activities (proposed, attempted, and realised) - whether by civilians, civil society, or organisations at all levels - have been hindered by “stringent” access restrictions (CoE 2019b: 14). A UNESCO Monitoring Mission was deployed to Abkhazia in 1997, and a short CoE mediated mission to only assess four sites in Abkhazia in 2016, but these were the only two cultural heritage monitoring missions that have been permitted in either region. Attempts to deploy formal monitoring missions (incorporating cultural heritage or not) since 2008, other than the initial missions by Human Rights Watch, Council of Europe, the EU Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, have been largely unsuccessful. For example, the UN Human Rights Council requested that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provide technical assistance and called for immediate access for the Office of the High Commissioner, and international and regional human rights mechanisms, to Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, which was blocked (UNGA 2017). Formal missions and mechanisms are blocked by either the two de facto governments or the Russian Federation (who, for example, blocked the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia in the UN Security Council (draft resolution 484, 15 June 2009)), and civilian access is limited by Russian, Abkhazian, and South Ossetian actors at the border. A small exception is an Italian expert (chosen by the EU delegation in Georgia), who was commissioned to monitor four sites in Abkhazia: Moqvi, Ilori, Likhne and Bedia churches in 2016, within the framework of the CoE programme and as a result of planning during the Geneva International Discussions.

In addition to legislation regarding the Occupied Regions, the Georgian government has invested extensive time over the past three decades in attempting to monitor and document the condition of the occupied regions; this has included cultural heritage. Various inter-agency working groups have been set up whose remits include cultural heritage, for example. Another example is the Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve, a collaborative partner for this report. It was situated in the village Kurta until 2008, but the office of the museum and its equipment was destroyed during the war. It is part of the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia (NAPCH), and after the war, it started operating as an information and educational centre for Didi Liakhvi cultural heritage at the IDP settlement in Gori. Staff have continued to undertake a systematic study on the condition of cultural heritage, as well as carrying out education and outreach programmes. NAPCH were able to carry out temporary protective measures in one of the occupied valleys, before access was completely blocked. Works were undertaken under the supervision of nuns from Ikoti Monastery and by NAPCH specialists and included installation of new (temporary) roofs, maintenance, and repairs.

At the international level, Georgian representatives continue to raise the issues surrounding the occupied territories in a wide variety of international fora, including various UN bodies, such as the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council, and elsewhere, such as the Geneva International Discussions. At UNESCO, this includes the UNESCO General Assembly, during the annual meetings of the intergovernmental committee for the protection of cultural properties during armed conflict, and directly to the General

Director of UNESCO. At the 73rd UNGA, a Ministerial side event, “Protecting Cultural Heritage: Staying Committed to the Implementation of UN legal instruments” was held on 26 September 2018. Here, Georgia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs made remarks addressing the state of conservation of the monuments on Georgia’s occupied territories.

The Council of Europe also continues to engage with the issue, holding meetings and reporting on the topic. In 2019, the 6th Decision of the committee of ministers *“reiterated their call to the authorities exercising effective control ... to prevent further deterioration of monuments belonging to the cultural heritage throughout Georgia’s regions”* (CoE 2019a: 2-3). The issues surrounding the condition of Georgia’s cultural heritage in occupied areas have also been raised with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, such as the illegal destruction of Tsebelda archaeological site in Abkhazia, and organisations such the EU and national missions to the OSCE have written statements to the OSCE condemning the destruction. Most recently, the OSCE PA adopted a resolution which focused on the deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in Russian-occupied regions of Georgia – Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The resolution pointed at the *“various forms of discrimination against ethnic Georgians, and the obliteration and alteration of Georgian features from Georgian cultural heritage monuments in both regions, as a direct consequence of the Russian Federation’s ongoing occupation and “russification” policy”* (OSCEPA 2022:28).

Documentation, monitoring and awareness raising has also been carried out by national organisations and NGOs, such as the George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation (GCNC), the Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia, Sokhumi State University, and the Georgian Arts and Culture Centre. They have supported / co-organised conferences on the subject, offered funding for projects, and written and published statements and appeals to those involved and the wider international community. Many of these conferences resulted in reports documenting the condition of cultural heritage, referenced in this report. In addition, organisations such as UNESCO and the ICRC continue to promote adherence to international law, including the 1954 Hague Convention, in the region.

As can be seen from this summary (and the more detailed chapter), although a wide number of local, national and international organisations are keenly interested in the condition of cultural heritage in the occupied regions, lack of access prevents active measures being taken in the region. However, as was clear from the previous chapters, the cultural heritage across occupied Tskhinvali region at least, (and in Abkhazia too), continues to be damaged, deteriorate, and none of the mentioned local and international actors are in the position to change the existing status quo.

Chapter 8. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Overview

This report aimed to document the state of affairs relating to cultural heritage in one of Georgia's occupied territories – the Tskhinvali Region - and to examine the various provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954/1999) that could have been applied before, and during the armed conflict, and which can still be applied today in relation to the ongoing conflict situation and occupation.

8.1.1 Cultural heritage damage and loss

The authors assessed 737 sites across the region, collating damage from existing heritage records, media sources, published reports, eyewitnesses, and satellite imagery. In addition to considering registered heritage sites, museums, and moveable objects, and those which were not registered but which damage was also reported to, the report also considered damage to intangible heritage.

Damage was recorded in the following categories in the database:

- **Damaged and destroyed during hostilities (2008):** damaged during the hostilities in 2008
- **Damaged and destroyed as a result of hostilities (2008):** destroyed as a result of hostilities in 2008 (for example a building that was damaged during fighting and later collapsed)
- **Damaged and destroyed as a result of unauthorised works (after 2008):** unauthorised repair/restoration/ reconstruction by members of the public, individual clergy, or site owners with no heritage professional present; and repair/ restoration/reconstruction overseen by the de-facto South Ossetian Monuments Protection Service
- **Damaged and destroyed by neglect:** site has become overgrown, or has deteriorated due to neglect and lack of maintenance
- **Construction (military):** military base built over site
- **Proximity to military facility:** site is near (within 500m) a newly constructed military base or other military infrastructure, or eyewitnesses reported military training occurring nearby.
- **Deliberate destruction:** site damaged, cause and perpetrator unknown
- **Looting:** evidence of looting at the site
- **No visible damage:** no damage is visible
- **Unknown:** site condition could not be assessed

Two other forms of damage were recorded that do not have categories in the database. Damage was recorded at one site, Zghuderi Church, from vandalism during the occupation period. The construction of civilian infrastructure, such as houses and a highway, also threatens various sites. However, the residential construction always occurred following the damage to and/or clearance of the original houses, which is recorded under **Damaged and destroyed as a result of hostilities (2008)**. The damage from the construction of the highway was most acute when the builders completed unauthorised works at Armazi St. George's church, and so is recorded as a form of unauthorised works. No information was available on any potential damage of archaeological heritage as a result of the construction works.

Damaged and destroyed during, and as a result of, hostilities (1991-1993, 2008)

Very little information is available on the condition of sites during and following the fighting in the 1990s. The best information relates to the museums. Of the 6 museums in the (now) occupied Tskhinvali Region in 2008: one was closed in the 1990s and its collection evacuated; 2 more were damaged during the fighting. One of these was damaged again in 2004, when it was targeted by Ossetian separatist artillery (some walls and roofs collapsed).

During the 2008 war, 13 sites were damaged during and after hostilities; 10 were destroyed (including one which had already sustained damage). Types of damage range from impact damage from shells and gunfire, sometimes resulting in fire damage, but arson was also recorded in multiple cases. In one case a building was badly burned at the time, and collapsed some years later. Of the six museums, four were heavily damaged or destroyed (including the site damaged in the 1990s and 2004), as well as one associated storage facility. Of these, only 4 buildings and monuments, and some of the museums, were rebuilt or restored.

This number does not reflect the full extent of the cultural damage: 13 ethnic Georgian villages along the Didi and Patara Liakhvi Rivers and the Administrative Boundary Line were intentionally burned, rather than shelled. The authors' analysis confirmed they were then demolished and cleared; 8 more were burned but not cleared. A number of other villages along the Frone River Valley were also partially demolished. Most of these villages represented a historic Georgian occupation of the area. UNOSAT (2008a,b) reported that 51% of the village Tamarasheni, which dated to at least the Middle Ages, was damaged or destroyed during fighting in August 2008: Human Rights Watch reported (2009: 131) witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting that by September 2008 it "had been almost fully destroyed". The village of Eredvi, for example, is mentioned in historic sources as early as the 8th century, and was the largest village in the Didi and Patara Liakhvi river valleys. The village was damaged during the August fighting in 2008, and when Human Rights Watch visited the village in September, "by that time [the village] had been almost completely destroyed by burning" (HRW 2009: 131). Between 9 May 2016, and 19 September 2019, according to Maxar and CNES/Airbus satellite imagery on Google Earth it was entirely demolished, except for St George's complex (a church and cemetery).

Damage and destruction from construction (civilian)

In some cases, once the historic houses damaged and destroyed as a result of the war were torn down, new buildings, such as apartment blocks, have been erected in their place. The houses which are still standing (many of which were badly burned during and following the fighting) are labelled with numbers in preparation for demolition. In the historic village of Eredvi, a landfill is being built on the territory of the village with funds from the Russian Government, which some view as revenge for the role the villagers played in the war.

Damage and destruction from construction (military)

26 military bases and probable military facilities have been mapped using open source information⁷⁰, and information from residents, and verified using Google Earth satellite imagery.

Three sites are within the area of these new military facilities. Eredvi Red Church, the ruins of Mskhlebi late Middle Ages Church in Sakire, and another (unnamed) ruin at Khumsarta/Ugardanta all lie within the

⁷⁰<https://www.gfsis.org/maps/russian-military-forces?fbclid=IwAR0kemtTGdbwJXNzkC062IFbrZFH8fYOC9dXfskDbWy0k6v7BYZYOCJ0bM4>

boundary of the military area. All sites were ruins: they could not be located on imagery and it is unknown if they are still present.

Proximity to military facility

38 sites are within 500m of a military base, and a further 62 are within one kilometre. In addition, eyewitnesses reported military training at an additional seven sites outside this area, suggesting the number of sites at risk could be greater. This proximity to the bases poses several risks. The most obvious is the risk of collateral damage should fighting break out, but there is a greater risk from the proximity to military training. Any existing structural instability will be exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion and - should the garrison become a target - collateral damage. Reports of military exercises in Abkhazia, for example, involve training some 3,000 troops (Agenda.ge 2019d). The clearest evidence of the effect of such proximity can be seen at Disevi, where several damaged and abandoned buildings near the military base were destroyed between 28 April 2013, and 31 July 2015 (according to Maxar imagery via Google Earth). The damage pattern is consistent with impact damage, suggesting the area is used for military training. The Church of the Virgin of Kulbiti (Kulbiti Mother of God Church / Kulbiti Church of Virgin Mary) at Disevi is less than 200m from the base. Eyewitness accounts and photos evidence growing cracks in the walls, vaults, and roofs that grow larger daily.

Damage and destruction as a result of unauthorised works (after 2008)

24 sites are known to have been damaged by unauthorised works, and one appears to have been destroyed by the removal of all authentic fabric, though the true number may be higher. The majority of these are by local clergy and individuals, aimed at restoring the buildings, many of which were suffering from neglect. Such activity is banned with the supervision of an authorised heritage specialist, or certified worker, but the de-facto heritage authorities - the Monuments Protection Service (MPS) - lack any kind of capacity to enforce the law in this regard. In a small number of cases, the de-facto heritage authorities - the Monuments Protection Service (MPS) - authorised the works, but these were carried out by workers with no heritage protection expertise, who used inappropriate methods and materials, such as concrete. A Russian specialist had to be requested to oversee repairing the botched work: photographic evidence provided indicates that the use of inappropriate materials, such as concrete, remains.

The types of damage include:

- Demolition and reconstruction of entire or parts of the historic structures;
- Plastering and painting or repainting the entire or parts of the facade stones and painting parts of the interior structures (i.e. templon) and walls in Russian-style wall painting, removing or covering the original Georgian fabric;
- Construction of additional structures on the facade covering the inscriptions;
- Damaging wall paintings;
- Repair works with the use of inappropriate material, such as cement;
- Major reconstruction works affecting the authenticity of the site.

Damage and destruction as a result of neglect

Neglect is a significant problem: the MPS (and de facto Ministry of Culture more generally) have stated they lack sufficient funding and expertise to adequately conserve all the sites in their area of responsibility. The lack of funding, but also the general lack of interest in preserving sites, especially in the remote regions, has

resulted in confirmed, reported, or suspected neglect to over 400 sites, some of which are today on the brink of collapse. For some sites, particularly historic ruins, this is visible on satellite imagery as tree and plant growth; neglect has also been reported at a large number of sites in the media and by eyewitnesses, ranging from loss of paintings, to structural instability to potential collapse. It is likely that the problems of neglect will only continue to grow given the continued lack of interest, and the fact that the issue is not priority for the de facto authorities, as well as (and because of) the lack of funding to stabilise sites.

Damage and destruction as a result of Looting

Looting of archaeological sites is a significant concern. Although figures do not exist for Georgia or its occupied territories, regionally speaking, illegal excavation networks of looters and sellers are well established and widespread. However, several reports of illicit excavations (so-called “black” archaeology), and of illicitly excavated artifacts being brought into museums for dating, were shared with GNCBS. In addition, there are numerous concerns regarding museum collections, some of which were removed from their museums and taken to North Ossetia, Russia. Others have been redisplayed to tell an Ossetian narrative, removing any ethnic Georgian context.

Damage to and loss of intangible heritage

Although not recorded as a category in the database, damage to the intangible heritage of the region was, and continues to be, extensive, resulting in considerable loss and placing it at high risk. It included the burning, clearance and near-complete removal of entire Georgian villages from the landscape, and deliberate and indifferent revision of the historical narrative that included the villages and their occupants - not only in television and media, but even in museums and religious institutions, supported by removal of Georgian place names / local toponyms (and so heritage site names) and hydronyms, which reflects the erasure of Georgian cultural heritage. Such activities are primarily conducted at the state level, but reflected in wider society. Less visibly, but no less importantly, the displacement of hundreds of thousands ethnic Georgians has resulted in a loss of intergenerational cultural traditions and practices, crafts and traditional knowledge as local people were forced to leave their homes, losing access to the places and materials those traditions required.

A regularly occurring fact since the occupation, and parallel to the ‘borderization’, has been the denied access (for both clergy and worshippers) to sacred sites and cemeteries. These used to be accessible during festive dates, such as Easter or St. George’s day, but eventually became inaccessible. Attempts to access sites even sometimes resulted in the detention of individuals (for example, in the case of St George’s Church, Adzvi).

Future threats

Given the current situation of the de facto Ministry of Culture, and the wider political situation, it seems unlikely that the situation described above will change in the near future. As a result, many of the causes of damage discussed above also form key threats into the future:

- Damage and destruction from civilian construction
- Damage and destruction as a result of unauthorised works
- Damage and destruction from neglect and lack of maintenance
- Damage and destruction from looting and theft
- Damage and destruction from construction of new military facilities
- Damage and destruction from conducting military training in close proximity to sites

Damage to cultural heritage across the occupied region is, unfortunately, likely to continue and increase. Indeed, if the case of the old bridge in Tskhinvali is indicative of the wider problems, there is great cause for concern. The bridge was suffering from neglect and a lack of funds to restore it: the Minister of Constructions has declared the bridge is to be demolished and replaced with an authentic-looking (but not actually authentic) new bridge, although the matter is still under discussion (SIA "RES" 2022). It is cheaper, and more efficient, to replace the cultural heritage of the region with a “fake” heritage, yet another way in which Georgia’s authentic heritage is being degraded, removed, and replaced.

8.2 Legal Discussion

The damage to the cultural heritage of Georgia’s occupied regions demonstrates not only (the perhaps expected) combat damage, but damage from a number of other causes. Significant, and far less obvious, damage occurred to Georgian heritage as a result of deliberate arson in August 2008, and in the ensuing clearance of villages in the years following the fighting, along with the loss of intangible heritage resulting from the loss of access and forced displacement and the revision of narratives of place, reinforced through relocation and reinterpretation of museum collections, and the deliberate change to place names. Cultural heritage damage across the region is augmented by the large number of unauthorised works, intensified by significant under-funding of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia. Multiple sites are neglected and, as a result, often private individuals and clergy are taking unauthorised repairs upon themselves, causing extensive damage to the original fabric. Just 36 sites, of 737, were in a Good condition, whilst nearly 20% of sites for which information is available are Destroyed (although this includes sites that have long been in a ruinous condition).

A key aim of this report was to review the damage in light of the provisions of international law, specifically the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and the First Protocol (1954), signed by all parties in the conflict, and the Second Protocol (1999) signed by Georgia. These fall into three sets, those to be implemented in advance of conflict, with the goal of providing protection during it; those to be implemented during conflict; and those following it in periods of occupation.

8.2.1 Proactive Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention to prepare for conflict

As discussed in Chapter 2, proactive site-based measures include the preparation of safeguarding measures, such as application of the blue shield distinctive protective emblem, registration of sites for special and enhanced protection, preparation of materials and plans to protect against fire and collapse, and preparation to move collections to safety. Preparatory measures for combat include:

- the preparation of safeguarding measures at sites;
- the creation of inventories ready to share;
- the application of blue shields (or a list made of sites to be marked with blue shields);
- the placement of sites under special protection;
- the formation of a specialist cultural protection unit within the armed forces; and
- dissemination, training, and awareness raising on all aspects of the Convention amongst civilians and armed forces.

Immediately before, and during conflict:

- collections should be evacuated to safe refuges outside the conflict area;

- blue shields should be applied if they have not been (if the competent authority feels they should);
- inventories should be shared between armed forces;
- trained armed forces should recognise blue shields and protect cultural heritage, and mitigate the effect of their operations on it, obeying the obligations of Respect.

Given the data collected, to what extent would these measures have helped in the case of Georgia? Whilst this discussion can only be theoretical, we believe the comprehensive data collected in this report can nonetheless contribute important insights.

The preparation of safeguarding measures

The Convention calls on states to prepare safeguarding measures in peace ready for conflict, including preparation for fire or structural collapse, and the removal of movable objects to a safe refuge. As noted in Section 2.3, few measures were in place at most sites. However, had such measures been in place they would not have been able to prevent the widespread and deliberate burning of the villages, or the direct damage from shelling. They may have been able to mitigate some of the collateral damage from burning. However, as many owners / occupiers were forced to flee, and abandon some of the buildings which were damaged, there would have been no-one able to activate measures in some - but not all - cases.

The evacuation of museum collections is not a quick activity: it is one that requires training and careful practice, and resourcing, as well as the creation of appropriate storage venues away from possible areas of conflict. It also rests on a nominated competent authority, advised by the defence and / or security sector to order the closing and evacuation of a museum prior to the outbreak of even a potential conflict. Whilst noting that the conflict - when it occurred - was sudden and quick: tensions had increased for some months prior, and pre-emptive activity could have helped protect collections which, in the case of one museum, has been completely destroyed.

Inventories and blue shields

Inventories, supported by the potential application of blue shields, are a key safeguarding tool that enable armed forces to identify cultural property and mitigate the effect of their operations on it. If inventories of cultural property (such as those used in this report) had been created and disseminated in 2008, this would have theoretically facilitated the military recognition of sites in making decisions in accordance with the Laws of Armed Conflict regarding distinguishing between military and civilian objectives, and proportionality in means and methods of warfare. However, retrospective analysis of the conduct of war and the actions following the end of hostilities and in the ongoing occupation, such as clearance of villages, makes it less likely to believe the above would have been possible. It should also be noted that sharing of inventories is dependent on agreement and relations between states. Given, in this case, the 2008 war was preceded by the increasing deterioration of relations and rising tension, this may never have been possible.

When armed forces are accused of deliberately damaging cultural property, common claims to refute the damage are that: they did not know it was cultural property; that damage was accidental; and / or that due care was taken in directing the attack. The presence of a blue shield on a site that is damaged helps refute such claims⁷¹.

⁷¹ The presence of a blue shield on a site, and / or its formal inclusion in a shared inventory can also support the prosecution of war crimes, or (if the destruction is sustained, widespread, and not on the battlelines), contribute to investigations into crimes against humanity, by demonstrating that the site was significant cultural property, and that

However, diplomatic relations aside, the sharing of inventories between armies at war, and the placement of blue shields, is highly controversial, and has been since the wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, when some sites marked with blue shields were deliberately shelled. Recent guidance published by UNESCO and Blue Shield International states:

“Affixing the blue shield emblem on cultural property is not mandatory but it may prevent unintended damage and deter unlawful targeting of cultural property during an armed conflict. However, the decision to mark cultural property must be carefully assessed as an explicit indication of cultural value may transform it into a target”.

(UNESCO and BSI 2022: 8)

Given the heritage damage recorded during the 2008 war, and shortly after, this seems a valid concern. Almost all the museums were damaged or destroyed during fighting: given the later treatment of ethnic Georgian heritage, this suggests possible deliberate action. Furthermore, the widespread deliberate arson by soldiers, villagers and militia, and clearance of the Georgian villages, indicates that distinctive emblems would not have facilitated protective measures, unless soldiers were able and intending to maintain law. However, it is unlikely that the application of blue shields would have facilitated damage, either. Those causing it were clearly aware of which buildings to target and needed no assistance in their identification.

At this point, it is worth noting the particular treatment of churches. Many of the churches in the villages which were burned and cleared were left (largely) untouched, albeit neglected and decaying. However, given the different treatment of civilian and religious property, a distinction must be made between the two. As can be seen from photos of churches in **Annex One**, to an outsider, some are not obviously religious, as some are small village chapels and most neglected for decades, thus lacking common identifiers, such as large towers or belfries. In addition, many (although not all) of the churches which were destroyed or heavily damaged were wooden, and so susceptible to the secondary effects of shelling and more general arson. Since there was clearly a will to spare religious buildings, it is possible their clear identification via a shared inventory may have spared additional damage. However, it is unlikely that they were spared with any intent to obey international law, although Geneva Convention Additional Protocol I prohibits acts of hostility against places of worship (Article 53), and the 1954 Hague Convention (article 1) also specifically mentions “monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular”. Since attacks are also prohibited against historic monuments and works of art in Article 53, and attacks against all important cultural property are prohibited under the 1954 Hague Convention, and most museums were damaged, the protection of churches should not be taken as evidence of intent to obey international law, but rather respect for religious property.

Special Protection

Although no sites have been placed under special (or enhanced protection), had any been placed under special protection, it could have contributed to their protection during the fighting and ensuing occupation by identifying their importance. The triple blue shield of special protection identifies a limited number of

the individual who ordered / caused the damage was deliberately directing an attack against protected cultural property with no military necessity. The presence of such an indicator is not required for an investigation into any destruction, but it may support it. Nor is ignorance of a distinctive legal emblem like a blue shield an excuse to legitimise damage. However, as this report is investigating the validity of potential, not actual, actions, this aspect of blue shields is not considered further.

immovable sites, refuges, and centres containing monuments “of very great importance” (Hague Convention Article 8). However, whilst prioritisation doubtless contributes to the ability of any armed forces intending in good faith to obey international law, the same arguments and concerns applied to the single blue shield are equally valid here.

Sites could also have been nominated since, either by the competent authority, or the occupying power. Article 13(2) of the Regulations states that in the event of occupation, the occupying power is authorised to place sites under special protection, which also has not occurred but which could provide future protection if conflict were to break out. In the review of the cultural property of the region conducted in this report, no refuges were identified, but many immovable sites that could potentially be declared of great importance were noted. However, special protection is approved by a meeting of all States Parties to the Convention. Although the reasons under which objections may be lodged are legally prescribed (Regulations Article 14), States Parties have previously raised objections for other reasons which have deadlocked the procedure (in Cambodia). In addition, the Russian Delegation to UNESCO previously attempted to block the placement of Syria’s World Heritage sites on the World Heritage in Danger List - a move Syria was in favour of as it granted access to additional funding (Meskell 2015:6). Given this, placing sites under special protection could be extremely difficult.

Specialist Units and Awareness-Raising

Awareness raising is, in many ways, the single most important task that can be carried out before conflict. If civilians and armed forces understand their obligations, what is being protected, and why, then such protection is far more likely to be allocated personnel and resources during conflict. One expression of this is the creation of specialist units within armed forces - military personnel allocated the specific task of protecting cultural property during conflict and cooperating with the civilian authorities responsible for safeguarding. Such cooperation is considerably more successful if relationships (and requirements) are established in peacetime.

Dissemination and Training

Article 25 of the Hague Convention calls on High Contracting Parties “to include the study [of the Convention and its Regulations] in their programmes of military and, if possible, civilian training, so that its principles are made known to the whole population, especially the armed forces and personnel engaged in the protection of cultural property”.

It is unclear whether the Georgian Ministry of Defence has conducted training specifically in the 1954 Hague Convention, its measures of respect, civil military cooperation in safeguarding and the various distinctive emblems, but regular training is essential. In 2022, the Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield, supported by Blue Shield International and funded by the ALIPH Foundation, conducted training in safeguarding and emergency evacuation training at the Sergi Makalatia Historical-Ethnographic Museum of Gori (BSI 2022). The training formed part of the project “Planning for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Georgia”, and participants included the National Guard of the Defence Forces of Georgia, Gori Municipality, a Representative of the State Administration – the Governor of Shida Kartli, the National Commission for UNESCO, General Mazniashvili Youth Legion, Georgian Society of the Red Cross, Security Police, and staff from 12 museums in the Shida Kartli region, including staff from the Museum of Gori (figure 8.1).



Figure 8.1: Participants in the theoretical and practical course, “Protection of Cultural Heritage during the Armed Conflict” organised by Blue Shield Georgia and supported by Blue Shield International, 17-20 May 2022 © BSI / BS Georgia.

8.2.2 Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention during conflict

Respect (and the Laws of Armed Conflict)

Article 4 of the 1954 Hague Convention lays out the obligations of respect, the interpretation of which rests on the customary laws of armed conflict (distinction, proportionality, and the requirement to take due precautions). This report makes no judgments on military activity with regards to the shelling of sites and possible collateral damage: with the data available to the authors, whether due care was taken specifically with regard to cultural property, or whether actions were based on imperative military necessity is often unknown. We refer those interested in military conduct to the existing monitoring reports by, for example, the Council of Europe Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (IIFMCG), and the Human Rights Watch Reports.

Control

The measures for the Control of the Convention were intended to provide a system of national and international oversight for the implementation of the Convention and the protection of heritage in armed conflict. The measures have almost never been implemented in the 70-year history of the Convention. The system hangs on a Commissioner-General appointed to each party; after initial difficulties in appointing Commissioner-Generals, the system was largely considered to be unworkable by the international community. It is unclear how many High Contracting Parties ever submitted names to the list: given the extremely limited number of Periodic Reports submitted (never more than half the signatories), the number

is likely small. It is unclear if the list is kept at all today: certainly none of the 2021 reporting cycle reports⁷² mention submission of a candidate. However, Cunliffe and Fox (2022) and Fox (2022) note that the system was also almost never invoked or attempted, and its relegation to dormancy was based on a very small number of conflicts.

No Commissioner-Generals, State Party Representatives (or Special Representatives), Protecting Powers, or Delegates were appointed by either side. This is unlikely to have been deliberate - few States Parties are aware of the obligations in the Regulations for the Execution of the Hague Convention (1954) since it fell into disuse - raising the question of whether it would have helped had they been aware. Commissioner-Generals could have called international attention to the damage to cultural heritage, not just during fighting but in the years since. However, it seems highly unlikely that, even if they were aware of the obligations, the Russian Federation would have appointed a Commissioner-General (or inspectors to investigate) to ensure their own compliance. The appointment of a Special Representative for Cultural Property by those in control of the occupied area could perhaps have circumvented the significant access issues in the occupied area and enabled monitoring, nationally and internationally. However, such action also seems a highly unlikely eventuality - few states are comfortable with any form of oversight, national or international.

In reality, Control is a very impractical mechanism as it requires approval from all parties concerned which makes it almost unachievable.

8.2.3 Occupation-Based Provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention Following Conflict

In the first instance, an occupying state is required to appoint a special representative during any period of conflict: the precedent of previous appointments relating to the Control of the Convention indicates such appointments could continue well past the initial fighting. However, no appointments were made.

Chapter 2 established that the competent authorities of the occupied region should be the Georgian Ministry of Culture and their subordinates, such as the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia and its Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve. However, although the de-facto authorities are legally required to cooperate with them to safeguard the heritage of the region, they have been denied access. The Ossetian de-facto Ministry of Culture and their Monuments Protection Service are in effective control, together with the Russian Federation who support them, and so are responsible for the protection of the heritage.

The Russian Federation, who currently supply the majority of the government budget for South Ossetia, are required under Article 5 of the 1954 Hague Convention to provide adequate support to safeguard and preserve the cultural heritage of the region, and to ensure that the “most necessary measures of preservation” are taken. This report has demonstrated that a large number of sites are in Poor condition, with many suffering extreme neglect and some “on the brink of destruction”, according to eyewitness reports. Many clergy have resorted to conducting their own repairs, with no appropriate oversight, and significant damage has been caused - even those repairs that have been undertaken with specialist oversight have caused extensive damage to the authentic fabric of the respective sites. This has resulted in damage to

⁷² The Periodic Reports on the implementation of the Convention submitted to UNESCO by States Parties are available on UNESCO’s website: <https://en.unesco.org/node/343239>

well over 100 sites. In addition, there are about another 100 sites which are under threat of damage and destruction due to their close proximity (up to 1 km) to the military infrastructure built post 2008.

There are numerous reports of black archaeology: the Russian Federation and de facto South Ossetian Ministry of Culture are both required to prevent the illicit removal of cultural property, and to take it into custody, pending return. However, given the high numbers of illicit metal detectorists known to operate in Russia, and well established networks for trafficking material (Hardy 2018), it is clear that there is little will to prevent the illicit export of cultural property.

The occupation provisions of the 1999 Second Protocol were intended to update the provisions in the original Convention, based on later experience of the treatment of heritage in occupation following the drafting of the Convention. In addition to the requirement to prevent looting, of particular relevance in this situation is Article 9(1c): *The occupier must prevent any alteration to, or change of use of, cultural property which is intended to conceal or destroy cultural, historical or scientific evidence.* The extensive changes to the region's museums, churches, and toponyms, which rewrite history to remove the ethnic Georgian presence in the region, would have been prohibited under this Article. It is regrettable that Russia has not signed the Second Protocol, although there is little evidence of intent to comply more generally.

8.2.4 The Second Protocol today

The 1999 Second Protocol, which Georgia acceded to in 2010, updated the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention in line with advances in international law, and clarified some of the provisions. Those relating to occupation have been discussed already, as have the exemplar safeguarding measures in Article 5, intended to encourage the implementation of the generic safeguarding provisions in Article 3 of the Convention.

However, the Second Protocol also introduced several new measures which could be applicable now. Considering special protection to be unworkable - based in part on the small number of registrations - a new protective regime, called enhanced protection, was developed. This has a simpler registration process, and offers more stringent protection during conflict as sites may never be taken into use. If a site is illegally taken into use, any mission (based on military necessity), requires authorisation from the force commander. Any sites placed under such protection must be of the greatest importance for humanity (which does not equate with World Heritage, but can overlap) have adequate domestic and legal measures in place ensuring the highest level of protection - and must not be used for military purposes (Article 10). In situations where states, like Russia, have not signed the Second Protocol, special protection could provide complementary protection to enhanced protection: it is not replaced by it.

Either the High Contracting Party which has jurisdiction or that which has control over the cultural property may request it (Article 11(2)). However, it is unclear whether Georgia could demonstrate that adequate protective measures are in place and confirm that the site will not be used for military purposes, and Russia is not a signatory State. However, if they were able to do so, it would send a clear international signal of the importance of the sites. As a preliminary step, sites that are to be considered for enhanced protection are placed on a Provisional List until it can be determined that they fulfil the criteria (UNESCO n.d.:8). In March 2022, Ukraine, who is also a signatory to the Second Protocol and who are currently engaged in a war with Russia, attempted to list sites for enhanced protection to send a strong international signal of their importance (UNESCO 2022, meeting attendees pers. comm. 2022).

The Second Protocol also created the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, who meet annually. Their duties include monitoring implementation of the Protocol, including management of registrations for Enhanced Protection, and considering requests for international assistance. Even if a party is not bound by the Protocol, if they accept the provisions, they may also ask for technical assistance (Article 3(2) and Article 32(2)). Lastly, the Committee determines the use of the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which can be used for proactive protection and emergencies. Thus far, these provisions have not been utilised, but they offer the potential to improve the protection of heritage in the occupied areas.

8.2.5 The Political Situation

The previous discussion highlighted the applicability of the various aspects of the 1954 Hague Convention to Georgia's case. There are articles which could be activated, but so far Georgia has been unable to do so. In addition to the reasons noted above, the authors (discussed in Tevzadze 2021) draw attention to the political situation around the conflict and particularly:

1. No UN presence in the conflict region:

Russia, being a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN with a veto power, has vetoed the extension of UN and OSCE peacekeeping forces in the conflict zones with Georgia (UN 2009). As there is no international presence in the conflict, it is impossible for anyone to enter the territory from Georgia's side and no international mission to ensure security of any mission personnel (in violation of the Six Point Ceasefire Agreement). This lack of access to the territory prevents deployment of a mission for the purpose of inventorying the damaged sites and monitoring their state of conservation.

2. Russia is not formally recognized by the UN as an occupying power

Again, as Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it has blocked all UN resolutions calling the Russian Federation an occupying power. On the other hand, Council of Europe resolutions #1633 (2008), Article 6 and #1647 (2009) Article 16 (CoE Parliamentary Assembly 2008, 2009) state that Russia has occupied Georgia's territories, as do a wide number of other organisations listed in **Annex Two**.

8.2.6 Illegal Excavation and Illicit Trafficking

As discussed in chapter 2, the difficulty in recognizing who can be considered as "the competent national authority", and / or the "Party in occupation of the territory" as per the 1954 Hague Convention, hinders the implementation of the Convention. Regional access for the Georgian authorities is not possible, so prevention of looting and illegal export of moveable cultural property is outside their control, limiting the implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention as well. The authors understand that a complete digitised inventory of the moveable cultural property of the region was not available in 2008, and it has not been possible to reconstruct the inventory since.

Illegal excavations (so-called "black archaeology") and ensuing illicit trafficking have been noted in various news stories noted in Chapter 5, as well as various international fora, such as the Geneva International Discussions. However, Georgia has no control in the occupied territories and neither the excavations, whether "official" or illegal, nor any transit of artifacts to Russia can be traced. Restitution of looted objects

remains a priority for the Georgian government, but is extremely difficult. With that in mind, the recommendations made in section 8.4.2 focus on assisting the Georgian government in the recovery of looted cultural property.

8.2.7 Legal summary

Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states within days of the war in 2008, and does not consider itself an occupying power (by proxy or otherwise). The violation of human rights of the ethnic Georgians, including loss of access to education in native language, and renaming of the land, together with falsification of regional narratives, demonstrate a lack of acknowledgement or acceptance for the ethnic Georgian heritage of the region.

There was widespread ethnic violence during the fighting, as reported by Amnesty International (2008), Human Rights Watch (2009), the IIFMCG (2009) and the time, and evidenced in the ICC arrest warrants for war crimes (ICC 2022), and the later deliberate destruction of historic Georgian heritage documented here. Given this, it seems unlikely that the measures in the 1954 Hague Convention would have contributed to the protection of cultural heritage. The Convention, like all law, is dependent on the will of states to implement it, and respect it. The same applies to the laws governing illegal excavation and illicit trafficking - they require enforcement.

In the years since 2008, given the political deadlock and lack of access, it has been - and remains - impossible for Georgia to make any progress in implementation of the Hague Convention in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property (Convention Article 5(1)). Nor are even “the most necessary measures of preservation” (Article 5(2)) being undertaken. Similarly, illicit trafficking is almost certainly a problem, but the extent is extremely difficult to assess, and access restrictions make it impossible to prevent.

8.3 Conclusion

As the above chapters clearly evidence, the damage to all types of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali Region is significant, and comes from many sources. Damage was incurred not only during the actual periods of hostilities but also continued in the years following the war, and still continues today. Currently, many factors, such as the lack of access for monitoring or maintenance purposes, illegal interventions causing alteration of historic fabric of sites, construction of military facilities and other new infrastructure in close proximity to the sites pose serious risks to the preservation of tangible cultural heritage of the region, to say nothing of the insidious and increasing damage from neglect.

The findings presented in this report also made it clear that there is much uncertainty when it comes to the condition of museum collections, as it is difficult to monitor remotely and little information is available through the open sources. Archaeological looting is clearly an issue and illicit trafficking could well be taking place, with little capacity on behalf of the Georgian or international heritage community to detect or monitor any of its phases.

The slow attrition of Georgian cultural heritage forms part of a wider narrative of loss. The lives of the people who owned and used the cultural heritage - whose ancestors may have built the sites, who visited them, who worshipped in the churches and the synagogue - are deeply impacted by the conflict in ways that move

beyond their immediate needs. Not only have they lost access to their sites, but their traditions and practices and ways of living that have been passed down through generations are disrupted, and in some cases at risk of permanent loss. The demolition of historic Georgian villages, loss of authentic fabric at sites, and modification of churches, is part of a wider revision of the entire landscape, also evidenced in the alteration of place names, and revision of historical and religious narratives - a narrative that is presented and legitimised in the so-called State Museum of South Ossetia.

The report also captured the main actions taken by the various state actors, the non-governmental sector, and international organisations in response to damage and potential threats to cultural property in the occupied Tskhinvali region over the decades. However, it is clear that many actions are greatly hindered by the restriction on access to the region, which is repeatedly blocked at local, national, and international level. In addition to highlighting the limits on actions taken by various organisations, institutions, and government bodies, the preceding sections of this chapter discussed the applicability of the various aspects of the 1954 Hague Convention to Georgia's case. As highlighted above, there are articles which could be activated, but so far Georgia has been unable to do so.

Based on the findings throughout this report, the authors offer recommendations to improve the protection of heritage in the occupied regions. It was also deemed essential to extend the discussion in relation to the potential implementation of the relevant provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention and thus offer recommendations to improve the application of international law, which are discussed below.

8.4 Recommendations

Significant portions of this report have focussed on the implementation of international law regarding the protection of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali region. Enforcement of such laws is not assured: at the international level, Russia has pulled out of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, the ICC retains authority to investigate crimes committed on Georgian soil, regardless of the nationality of the suspect, and so has issued arrest warrants in relation to war crimes in 2008 for Russian nationals. At the national level, there have been few - if any - prosecutions of breaches of the 1954 Hague Convention, or serious breaches under the 1999 Second Protocol, yet these laws exist to protect civilians and their property - including cultural property - and punish offences. The current focus on cultural rights is indicative of the international importance placed on cultural identity, and fair access to culture.

The first recommendation we must make, then is:

1. **Respect and Implement international law:** All parties to the conflict, State and non-state, should respect and abide by international law, and take all possible steps to implement it into domestic law.

The below recommendations are primarily aimed at the Georgian government, and fall into three areas:

- 1 - Better implementation of international law, specifically the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols
- 2 - Prevention of illicit trafficking
- 3 - General recommendations.

8.4.1 Better implementation of international law, specifically the 1954 Hague Convention and its Protocols

These recommendations focus on actions that the Georgian State Party could take for the implementation of the provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention, its Regulations for Execution, and its Second Protocol in relation to the occupied territories of the Tskhinvali Region:

2. **Identify potential Commissioner-Generals:** Provide a list to UNESCO of people capable of fulfilling the function of a Commissioner-General for Cultural Property.
3. **Appoint Commissioner-Generals:** Ask for each party to the conflict to appoint a **Commissioner-General for Cultural Property (CG-CP)**.
4. **Appoint National Representatives: Appoint a national Representative for cultural property.**
5. **Appoint Protecting Powers:** Try and arrange a Protecting Power who can accredit delegates to facilitate communication.
6. **Special Protection:** Nominate immovable sites of very great importance and centres containing monuments on the territory of the Tskhinvali Region for **special protection**.

Unfortunately, for these actions to become effective, agreement should be reached between all opposing Parties, thus leaving them absolutely theoretical.

7. **Promote implementation in UN Fora:** Utilise all UN fora in order to demand the Implementation of Article 5(1): “Any High Contracting Party in occupation of the whole or part of the territory of another High Contracting Party shall as far as possible support the competent national authorities of the occupied country in safeguarding and preserving its cultural property” would be beneficial for and can be concluded to be the strategy towards achieving the protection of cultural property in the Tskhinvali Region.
8. **Liaise with foreign governments:** Whether through international fora, diplomatic channels, or international organisations such as the World Archaeological Congress, highlight that archaeological teams should not request excavation permits from a government that their own government does not recognise, breaching professional Codes of Conduct, and where those countries are signatories to the 1954 Hague Convention, in violation of Article 5.

Implementation of these measures is, at best, extremely difficult. As discussed in chapter 2 above, while explaining the legal context, the difficulty in recognizing which Party can be considered as “the competent national authority”, as well as the “Party in occupation of the territory” as per Convention, hinders the implementation of the Convention, and particularly Article 5(1).

There are a number of actions the Georgian Government can take, relating to safeguarding its cultural property.

9. **Create and Share an Inventory:** Identify a comprehensive list of cultural property (including archives, libraries, objects, and other forms of cultural property), with geo-coordinates, for general protection under the 1954 Hague Convention, and record it in an **inventory**, and share the data either via UNESCO, or the Protecting Power delegates. (The updated database in this report will be shared with them to assist in this). Knowing what sites require protection is the first step in monitoring their condition and providing remedial measures.

10. **Enhanced Protection:** Demonstrate the international importance of key sites by nominating those of the greatest importance on the territory of the Tskhinvali Region for **enhanced protection**, potentially to be placed under **Provisional Enhanced Protection** until it can be confirmed that all requirements are met.
11. **Apply for Funding:** Apply to the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict for assistance in protecting the region's heritage, for example, hiring staff to digitise an inventory.
12. **Conduct Training:** Provide regular specialist and collaborative training for Georgia's armed forces and national guard, as well as civil authorities, in the measures of respect and safeguarding in the 1954 Hague Convention, and ensure armed forces have access to the inventory of sites.

8.4.2 Prevention of illicit trafficking

"The illegal trade in cultural objects is a persistent global problem, and any response aimed at controlling the trade needs to be conceived and implemented globally and applied resolutely and consistently" (Brodie 2015: 326).

Recognising that legal protection at the source is desirable, but outside the control of the Georgian authorities, in order to maximise the chances for any stolen objects to be returned, the authors make a number of recommendations. These recommendations come from expert sources, and we direct you to them for additional information⁷³. They fall into two sets:

- (1) improving information and information sharing, and
- (2) improving legislation and prosecution.

1. Improving information

Know who is responsible for preparing detailed inventories of cultural property, and for assessing the risk and status of cultural property you might want to document. Build a network/ database of experts, including from civil society, who can:

- a. Document objects;
- b. Opine on sites, types of objects found in the area at risk, have knowledge of collections, and identify objects;
- c. Communicate such information to the right channels.

2. Improve Identification and Documentation:

- a. Document movable objects that have been removed (whether illegally or for safekeeping) and those that remain in situ, including the following details:
 - i. Type of Object: What kind of object is it (e.g., painting, sculpture, clock, mask)?
 - ii. Materials & Techniques: What materials is the object made of (e.g., brass, wood, oil on canvas)? How was it made (e.g., carved, cast, etched)?

⁷³ Training given by cultural property lawyer and Chair of UK Blue Shield, Fionnuala Rogers, in countering illicit trafficking; Think Tank Policy papers by the Antiquities Coalition, by various authors including Neil Brodie and Fionnuala Rogers: <https://thinktank.theantiquitiescoalition.org/category/policy-briefs/>; Brodie 2015; ICOM website (<https://icom.museum/en/>)

- iii. Measurements: What is the size and/or weight of the object? Specify which unit of measurement is being used (e.g., cm., in.) and which dimension the measurement corresponds to (e.g., height, width, depth)
 - iv. Last known location and known studies, reports and inspections (including details of personnel)
 - v. Include any damage / any other details of the object's condition (for example, if they were cleaned or restored recently)
 - vi. Remember: Fixtures and other items attached to or placed on walls, which seem to be part of immovable structures, may become movable if they are forcefully removed.
- b. Digitise records, and keep them regularly updated as to where the objects are located/ moved to, as well as which organisation they were from originally.
 - c. A national database of stolen cultural items should be created because it represents a fundamental tool for investigations and for the recovery and restitution of such objects. It helps establish that the State has taken measures to track down looted and illicitly trafficked objects, which is taken into account during potential legal claims.
- 3. Identify typologies of at-risk objects with risk classifications:**
- a. Create typologies of at-risk objects to demonstrate the types of objects that could be illegally excavated and trafficked from regions at risk;
 - b. Create risk categories (ideally at least three) indicating the most at-risk objects, and update this information based on intelligence;
 - c. Encourage the creation of an international ICOM Red List⁷⁴ of at-risk Georgian cultural property.
- 4. Encourage information sharing at all levels:**
- a. The use of existing tools, developed under the auspices of international organizations such as UNESCO, UNODC, WCO and INTERPOL, should be strengthened and further integrated so as to effectively counter the illicit trafficking of cultural property. These tools include the INTERPOL Database of Stolen Works of Art, the WCO ARCHEO platform, all ICOM Red Lists, UNODC's knowledge management portal SHERLOC, and the UNESCO Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws.
 - b. In line with relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, information on illicit trafficking of cultural property, including from intelligence sources, should be shared between national counterparts and international organizations, including international customs authorities and INTERPOL.
 - c. Where appropriate, inform customs officials in Georgia and its neighbouring countries (and in market countries) if there have been recent large-scale thefts or instances of lootings, and notify them of the types of objects removed.
 - d. Make use of the two databases:
 - i. Art Loss Register which is a closed database that registers items that have been stolen or lost;

⁷⁴ ICOM Red Lists are not lists of actual stolen objects. The cultural goods depicted in these lists are inventoried objects within the collections of recognised institutions. They serve to illustrate the categories of cultural goods most vulnerable to illicit traffic. They are widely shared with and known by international Police and Customs communities as a valuable resource and are available here: <https://icom.museum/en/resources/red-lists/>

- ii. Cultural Heritage At Risk Database (“CHARD”) Database which is a database that integrates with the Art Loss Register but lists objects that are at risk (such as pre-conflict) even if they are still in situ and have not been lost/ stolen.

II Improving legislation, guidance and prosecution

Designate a national point of contact

- a. This point of contact should have adequately trained personnel that can collect domestic information, provide advice to national authorities and foster cooperation at the international level, within the application of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, for the purpose of preventing and combating illicit trafficking in cultural property. In line with paragraph 6 of General Assembly Resolution 68/186, these points of contact could be included in the directory of competent national authorities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

2. Improve national legislation and guidance:

- a. Transpose the provisions of the international treaties and guidelines into national laws and strategies, incorporating cultural property, art, and dealers in such, into laws, including:
 - i. UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000);
 - ii. International Guidelines for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice with Respect to Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences;
 - iii. AML Regulations and Guidance.
- b. Ensure Art Market Participants (e.g. art galleries, dealers, auction houses, etc.), antiquities, and works of art are clearly included in the regulations and legislation. Objects at the highest risk of use in money laundering or organised crime should be included, in particular coins and archaeological/ ethnographic objects, and dealers for such objects should be included in the same way as dealers in precious stones and metals are currently included in the Georgian AML Regulations.
- c. Improve regulation of internet sales websites, including requiring unambiguous display of provenance and valid export documentation online, and ensure enforcement.

3. Improve regulations and provide information to national Customs Authorities:

- a. Adopt a risk-based approach at customs, and require enhanced checks on higher risk categories of objects at certain times, based on the advice of experts or intelligence. For example, the highest and most endangered risk group could require heightened scrutiny on import / export. This would allow customs authorities to “switch on” emergency measures without the need for further legislation.
- b. Share information with Georgia’s and other customs officials on at-risk objects, and level of risk.
- c. Ensure the origin and evidence of the origin is a requirement on customs forms.

4. Encourage prosecutions (nationally and internationally):

- a. Ensure that the illicit traffic of cultural property is treated nationally as a serious crime.
- b. Encourage national prosecutions to impose serious sentences on looting and illicit trafficking, with a focus not only on recovering stolen cultural property but also:
 - i. crime and the proceeds of crime;
 - ii. including academics, museum curators and conservators whose knowledge and expertise is crucial to establish the monetary value of illegally-traded cultural objects in private possession;

- iii. consider shippers and logistics professionals who transport illegal goods.
 - c. Encourage States who seize Georgian cultural property with the aim of returning it to prosecute individuals and entities in their own jurisdictions.
- 5. **Conclude and strengthen bilateral agreements and treaties, as well as existing multilateral treaties:**
 - a. Bilateral agreements and treaties should be concluded and strengthened, as well as existing applicable multilateral treaties. There is also a need to elaborate on existing provisions and extend their reach to places where they may not yet apply. This would provide a legal basis for the widest measure of mutual legal assistance in investigations, prosecutions, and judicial proceedings in cases of trafficked cultural property. It would also establish a pattern of cooperation and collaboration to serve as an example for neighbouring countries.

Annex One. Condition Assessment of Sites (Tskhinvali Region)

The following list presents information on the condition of cultural heritage in the Tskhinvali Region since the hostilities of the 1990s, during the 2008 war, and up to the present.

Sites are presented alphabetically by region (town or village name), and then by site name.

Zemo (Upper) Achabeti Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and Human Rights Watch (2009) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Zemo and Kvemo Achabeti.

UNOSAT conducted a satellite imagery assessment of the village immediately after the fighting in 2008. Their assessment (2008b)⁷⁵ reported heavy damage to the historic village during the fighting. 56 buildings were destroyed and 21 were severely damaged. 42% of the village was considered affected. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting “in September [2008], the villages had been almost fully destroyed”.

After the war, Zemo Achabeti was almost completely bulldozed and torn down. Maxar imagery available via Google Earth indicates this occurred between 10 October 2013 and 22 March 2014. New residential flats have since been constructed⁷⁶.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the general historic fabric of the village).

Achabeti Fortress

Site type: Fortification

Condition: Moderate

This 16th century fortress⁷⁷ was known to have been abandoned by 1770. UNOSAT conducted a satellite imagery assessment of the site immediately after the fighting in 2008. Their assessment (2008c) indicates that the site (ID:10), suffered “No visual damage, but located by multiple fire-destroyed buildings”.

⁷⁵ Where UNOSAT’s imagery assessments have been cited, UNOSAT note (2008c):

“1) building sites with ‘no visible damage’ does not imply no damages, only that none were visually identified with the available satellite imagery. Satellite-derived damage assessments can generally identify only a low percentage of buildings with limited damages.

2) Affected buildings were classified either as destroyed or severely damaged by standard satellite image interpretation methods. Destroyed buildings have been defined either by the total collapse of the structure or when it was standing but with less than 50% of the roof still intact. Severely damaged buildings were defined as having visible structural damage to a portion of one wall, or where a section of the roof was damaged but with over 50% of the roof still intact.”

⁷⁶ For example, visible on Google Earth on CNES/Airbus imagery dated 06 June 2020 at coordinates 42.271222, 43.960417; 42.276889, 43.969889

⁷⁷ Undated photo of the site available via Google Earth:

https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipOd9P05GumI5SBm_Cfrdremh-UWp2QhCWGH1mGx=w408-h306-k-no

Although the majority of the village remains were bulldozed and cleared by 2014, the fortress is still clearly visible on Maxar imagery available via Google Earth dated 21 October 2019.

According to a 2014 news report (SIA “RES” 2014a), a foundation called “Kurdalagon” for the development and restoration of architectural monuments, owned by a local businessman, rented the fortress from the Division for Protection of Monuments of the de facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia⁷⁸. They planned to start the reconstruction of this site and create a reconstruction centre, and held a public ceremony dedicated to laying the foundation stone for the project; reports indicated a number of workshops were already underway, such as cutting stone, metalwork and other crafts. Construction workers were employed, assisted by local schoolchildren, and the eastern wall was partially rebuilt (figure A1.1a,b,c): there are no reports of the involvement of any heritage professionals in the work. However, eyewitnesses reported to us that the works were halted by the South Ossetian Monuments’ Protection Service.

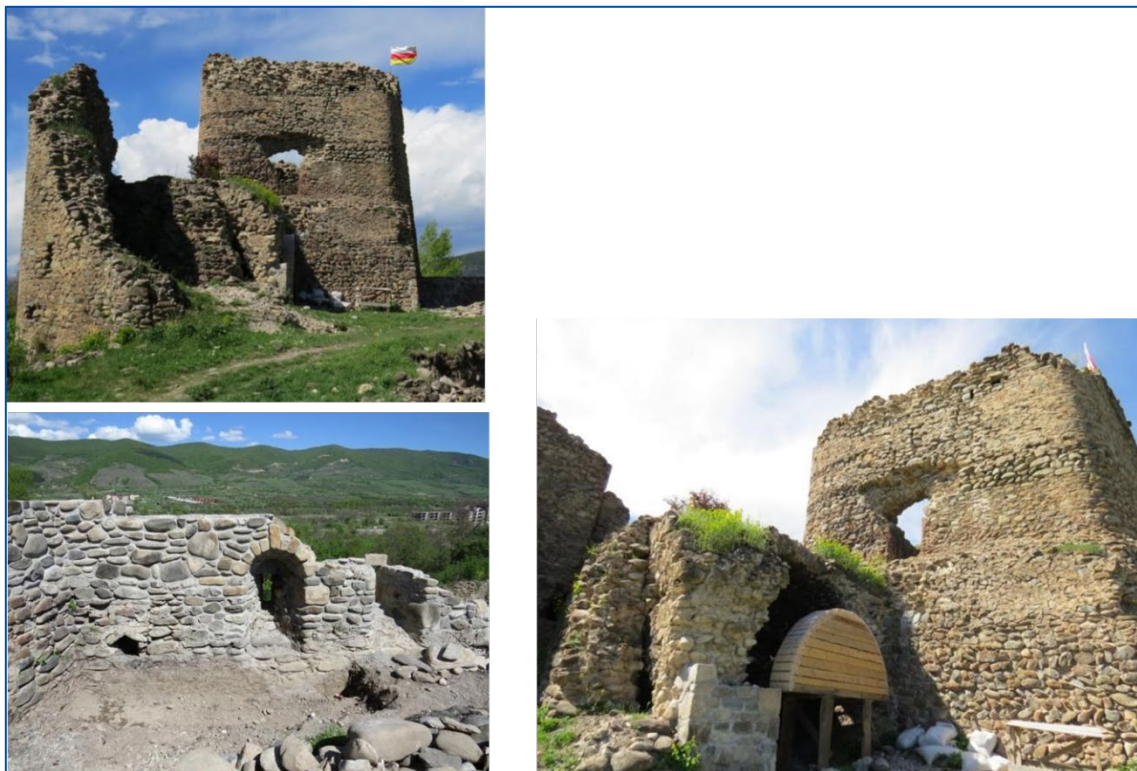


Figure A1.1a,b,c: Reconstruction works on Achabeti Fortress in 2014. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Sequential imagery assessment using Maxar and CNES Airbus images from Google Earth dating to 2004, 2007, 2009, 2010, and then at least annually from 2013 to 2018, show no damage to the site, which remains in its previous ruined condition. A comparison of the Maxar images from 22 March 2014 to 11 July 2014 show the vegetation cleared around the castle in the later image, presumably indicating the start of the proposed restoration, and confirm some level of restoration and vegetation clearance took place on the western wall.

⁷⁸ Use of the organisation name, or reference to South Ossetia, should not be interpreted as conferring recognition. Only the international community of states can make such determinations.

Church of St. Abo (Absotsminda Church)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Records provided to us indicate that the Church of St Abo is a High Middle Ages Church in Zemo Achabeti. However, of the original church only the west wall, north-west and southwest corners and part of the apse were preserved. The condition was unknown when the database records were collected, and the ruin could not be located on satellite imagery via Google Earth, as the coordinates are in a small wooded copse to the east of the village.

In a photo taken in 2013, only one wall of the church appears to be standing (Dubrovskii 2013b).

Church of St Estate (St Eustathius church)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This small single-nave church dedicated to St. Eustathius dates to the 8th century and is one of the oldest churches in the Didi Liakhvi valley.

UNOSAT conducted a satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the church (ID: 21), which is adjacent to the fortress, following the fighting in 2008. They reported “no visual damages, but located close to fire-damaged buildings”.

Maxar satellite imagery assessment dated 19 October 2009, via Google Earth, indicated the roof was intact (unlike most surrounding buildings). However, the south wall of the church yard was demolished between 2007 and 2009.

In photos taken in 2013 and 2017 the church is still standing and appears to be undamaged, although according to the photographers, it had been abandoned (Dubrovskii, 2013a, Yanochkin & Yanochkin, 2017b). The church was still visible on Maxar imagery via Google Earth dated 21 October 2019, indicating it survived the demolition of the rest of the village between 2013-2014.

St George’s Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

A late Middle Ages single nave church in a cemetery enclosed by a wall, at the south-west end of the village of Zemo Achabeti, in a wooded copse in the southwest. The database recorded the original condition as “Good”, and the church was still visible on Maxar imagery via Google Earth dated 21 October 2019, indicating it survived the demolition of the rest of the village between 2013-2014. There is no evidence of any condition change from the aerial view provided by imagery.

Kvemo (Lower) Achabeti Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Zemo and Kvemo Achabeti.

UNOSAT conducted a satellite imagery assessment of the historic village immediately after the fighting in 2008. They reported (2008b) heavy damage during the fighting. 88 buildings were destroyed and 33 were severely damaged. 52% of the village was considered affected. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting “in September [2008], the villages had been almost fully destroyed”.

After the war, the village was completely bulldozed and torn down: Maxar imagery available via Google Earth indicates the demolition of most of the village occurred rapidly, between 1 June 2010 and 15 August 2011, and the process continues until 2014 when the village remains are no longer on the satellite imagery.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of St Nicholas

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The church, which was constructed in the 18th century, was badly damaged in an earthquake in 1991.

UNOSAT conducted a satellite imagery assessment of the site (2008c, ID:11) which found “No visual damage, but located by multiple fire-destroyed buildings.” However, this location (which is to the east of the road) is not correct; the church is to the west of the road, visible only on one satellite image available to us from 2014. Eyewitnesses report that, although the village is deserted, the church is still standing (Spring 2021) (figure A1.2, A1.3).

Adzvi

St George’s Church (Zeda Adzvi)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown.

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period, but condition is assumed to be good.

The village of Adzvi was split; St. George’s Church fell across the occupation line (also called the administrative boundary line (ABL) by the EUMM) a few months before April 2014. Russian FSB troops (illegally deployed along the occupation line) set up banners marking the de-facto border in the vicinity of Adzvi and barred locals from crossing, leaving two Adzvi churches in the occupied territories as a result of ‘borderization’ (Aptsiauri 2014). Reporters from TV-3 who wanted to film these churches were also detained (Aptsiauri 2014). Former residents requested access at Easter, but it was denied. The Patriarchate of Georgia



Figure A1.2: the Church of St. Nicholas in Kvemo Achabeti as identified by UNOSAT, 30 September 2004 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).



Figure A1.3: Actual location of the Church of St. Nicholas in Kvemo Achabeti as identified by former residents., 22 March 2014, on Maxar satellite image via Google Earth, contrast adjusted.

issued a statement regarding the denial of access to religious sites, and requesting that parishioners be allowed to visit shrines and graves in the occupied areas during religious holidays (Tabula 2014).

In May 2014, villagers were able to reach the Church in Adzvi for the first time in six months without the intervention of Russian FSB troops (Aptsiauri 2014). In May 2017, on St. George's Day, a peace service was held by the Archbishop of Gori and Ateni, Andria; for their safety, the police would not allow the congregation to access the church, as there have been attempts to arrest them in previous years (Imedi news 2017).

In addition, three men were detained in the church. They were there with families to celebrate St. George's Day, but only men were detained and women and children could return (GHN 2015). Problems persist: on April 7th, 2018 (Diasamidze 2018) two men who had gone to Adzvi church for worship were detained.

In 2018, Georgian media (DFWatch 2018) reported that the priests who perform the liturgy on St. George's Day every year at Adzvi Church were not able to cross the de-facto border, and were accused of provocation. To prevent their "illegal crossing attempt", the de-facto border was closed from May 7th 8:00 pm to May 10th, 8:00am to deny the priests access. In 2018 liturgy was held in the neighbouring village of Mejvriskhevi: the archbishop met with the population of Adzvi there.

No damage is visible to the church on satellite imagery available via Google Earth, but nearby buildings were bulldozed and cleared before 5 June 2010 (from Maxar image via Google Earth).

Akhalgori-Tskhinvali: Highway Construction

The highway is not contained in the online database: sites known to be affected are mentioned individually

Construction of the Akhalgori-Tskhinvali highway may have caused further damage: no information was available on the damage of archaeological heritage as a result of the construction works. Through the descriptions of the roads it is possible to assess which historic sites are being affected. For example, the road workers built inappropriate stairs with no oversight from any cultural authority to reach the Armazi St. George's church (see below) which is located next to the newly constructed road (SIA "RES" 2014c).

Akhalgori

Site Type: Historic Village

Akhalgori is first mentioned in the 16th century in the historical chronicles where it is referred to as "a minor town". Although all monuments in the town appear to be in the same condition as they were pre war, a new military base has been built, visible on satellite imagery. The military complex is just under 300m from a single nave church, which was in poor condition when assessed in the 1990s, just over 400m from the Cathedral of the Virgin, and approximately 600m from the Palace of the Ksani Gorge Eristavs.

A new road was also built in the town: an anonymous source stated that there were a number of cases where artefacts found during the construction were brought to Akhalgori museum for dating.

Known damage to specific buildings (rather than to the general historic fabric) is listed below.

Cathedral of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

Satellite imagery via Google Earth shows no visible damage; however, it is within 500m of a military base.

Palace of the Ksani Valley Eristavs (Palace of the Eristavs)

Site Type: Historic Building / Museum

Condition: Moderate

The site is also called Bibiluri-Eristavi's House-Museum (and today called the State Museum of History and Local Lore).

The Eristavs' residence was moved from Kvenipnevi to Akhagori by Ksani Eristavs in the 17th century and it remained an administrative centre of the valley until the abolition of the eristavate in 1777. A descendant of the Eristavs - Kola Eristavi (1866-1929) and his family lived in the Akhagori residence until the 1930s. The Eristavs' residence spreads out on the hillside and overlooks the valley, comprising a palace, church, towers, bathhouses and other structures defended by a high mortar-bounded stone wall. Today, the outer structures and church have been destroyed. The ground and the first floors are 17th c, and the rest dates to the second half of the 19th century.

The Eristavs' palace is now a listed building (figure A1.4) housing a museum which opened in 1982 and houses 5137 objects, specifically the Pre-and-Early-Christian archaeological objects, ecclesiastical sacred objects, like fragments of mediaeval templon and stone reliefs and dozens of figurative decorative tiles, which had been used to cover church walls; and locally created crosses and icons from the 17th to 20th centuries, bearing historically interesting inscriptions, and 18th-19th century ethnographic material. It was reported that the artefacts were to be moved to the new Museum of Tskhinvali in 2015, but this information was later denied.

The museum is called the Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve of Ksani River Valley and is part of the National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia.

The Director of the museum, who was appointed by the Georgian National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and held the position for several years, was fired from the position in early 2018. Until 2021 (see below), he held the position of a guide and monitored developments there.

The building is largely in good condition, with the exception of the bath building, which is in a poor condition. Besides unauthorised repairs to the roof, which have been taking place since 2008, eyewitnesses reported that the dome of the bath house collapsed around 2017. A news report (Byazrova 2017) indicated that the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia intended to restore Bibiluri-Eristavi's house-museum (Palace of Ksani Valley Eristavs is referred to like this by the Ossetian media) in Akhagori district as part of their 2017-18 program of works, which eyewitnesses confirm took place.



Figure A1.4: The Palace of the Eristavs in 2009 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

In the winter of 2018, underground communications were replaced around the building and during the digging, a six-metre-wide wall of a fortress was revealed, dating to the early middle ages. According to eyewitnesses, the digging took place at night to easily conceal if something valuable was discovered.

On June 17th 2021, an Ossetian news agency (SIA "RES" 2021a) reported that the Tskhinvali de facto regime adopted a resolution on the creation of a new state budgetary institution: the "State Museum of History and Local Lore". According to the decree of the de facto Cabinet of Ministers, the museum was to be housed in the Palace of the Ksani Eristavs in Akhagori, which will become a subordinate department of the Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia. On the same day, the former director of the museum left the town for health reasons and openly talked about the ongoing pressure he had been experiencing over the recent period (Aptsiauri 2021). However, the museum remains on the list of sites owned and de jure administered by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia⁷⁹.

The original database records mark the majority of the site as Destroyed or in a Poor condition: however, this is not visible via imagery. No damage is visible on the satellite imagery available on Google Earth: this includes Maxar images dating to 21 April 2002, 21 June 2013, 21 June 2015 and a CNES Airbus image dated to 14 June 2020.

Akhagori Fortress Complex

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Good

This fortress complex was recorded as being in a largely Poor condition in the original records. However, sequential satellite imagery assessment indicates the site is in a Good condition. However, it is within 500m

⁷⁹ Historical and architectural museum-reserve of Ksani river valley <https://heritagesites.ge/en/service/23>

of a military base. Photos taken in 2017 show that a restaurant called “Old Fortress” has been opened inside the fortress (Yanochkin & Yanochkin, 2017b).

Watchtower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

The site was recorded in a Poor Condition in the original database. Records⁸⁰ indicate much of the west and east walls have collapsed. The tower has a rectangular outbuilding from the west that extends to the north. The walls are preserved at a height of two metres. The tower was severely damaged. It could not be located on imagery today, and its current condition is unknown. It is within 500m of a military base.

Two-Sided (Ormkhrevi) Church

Site type: Religious (church)

Condition: Moderate

This Church, which was recorded in a Poor Condition in the original database, appears to be in a Moderate condition according to sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth. It is within 500m of a military base.

Akhmaji

Church of the Virgin (Church of the Assumption)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The church was in poor condition when surveyed in the 1990s. No change in condition is visible on CNES imagery available on Google Earth, including Maxar images dating to 29 April 2002, 5 October 2004, 21 June 2013 and a CNES Airbus image dated to 14 June 2020, so the condition is retained as Poor.

The church is just over 500m from a new military base that has been built in the village.

Akhshadi

Akhshadi Monastery Complex: Church of St. George

Site Type: Religious (Church and Monastic complex)

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Akhshadi monastery is located in a forest, near Akhgori. This 8th-9th century site is also known as "Akhshadi Shrine". The architectural complex, surrounded by an enclosure, comprises a single nave church and other structures of different functions. According to the original database records, most of them are almost totally destroyed and covered with vegetation. The Church of St. George is the best preserved among the monastic

⁸⁰ <https://bit.ly/3KSr3ZK>

structures. Traces of the mural decoration are visible in the only surviving fragment in the apse conch; no information can be determined about the original composition.

Argvitsi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Argvitsi.

The satellite imagery available on Google Earth showed the intact village on Maxar image dating to 26 July 2007. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) reported damage to the historic village during the fighting.

After the war, Maxar imagery available via Google earth indicates the village remained ruined for many years after 2009. Between the images dated 11 October 2018, and 16 July 2019 a small part of it was bulldozed, and some houses may have been demolished to their foundations. The recent CNES/Airbus image dating to 10 September 2021 suggests the village is completely abandoned.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of St George

Site Type: Religious (Church and Monastic complex)

Condition: Destroyed

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Late Middle Ages Church reported as a Destroyed condition in the original records. Site could not be located on satellite imagery, but all buildings in the area where it is located are burned and ruined (though not cleared), and have become completely overgrown.

Church of the Mother of God

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

There are no details in the original record for this church except the coordinates⁸¹. Sequential Maxar and CNES/Airbus satellite imagery from 2007 to 2019 via Google Earth indicates the church sustained no damage and appeared in a good condition. However, on the most recent image (dated 10 September 2021, CNES/Airbus), the eastern end of the roof appears damaged.

⁸¹ Google Earth mistakenly records this as St Elias Church, Berula, which is actually located to the northeast (<https://goo.gl/maps/awetyekyp9bLu1GT8>).

Armazi

St. George's Monastery Complex and Church of St. George

Site Type: Religious (Church and Monastic complex)

Condition: Good

The Armazi church (figure A1.5, A1.6) is one of the most distinguished examples of Georgian architecture, dating to 864 AD. Its importance lies in its architectural form and type: covered with a two-sloped roof, the church is domed from the inside. The painted templon is the oldest surviving one amongst painted Georgian templons. The name of the builder Mamasakhilisi Giorgi and the exact date of completion (864AD) are also preserved in the church (Beridze, 1974).

According to the Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve representatives, in 2014 restoration works by local clergy and businessmen were undertaken at Armazi St. George's Church, intended to strengthen the inside columns of the church, as well as renew the infrastructure outside. The workers strengthened the north-western column and posts holding the templon with concrete. The works were later halted by the South Ossetian de facto Monuments Protection Service.

Interviewed sources indicated the restoration works were not approved by the Tskhinvali occupation regime. In most cases they have been conducted by local businessmen or Ossetian clergymen.

The newly constructed Akhagori-Tskhinvali highway runs approximately 10m below the church - the museum representative also expressed concern about how near the road was. With no authority, the road workers built an inappropriately wide staircase with three parts and railing west of the church, connecting the church with the road to improve access (SIA "RES" 2014c).



Figure A1.5: Church of St. George in 2006 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve



Figure A1.6: Templon in the Church of St. George in 2006 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

The site was assessed on Maxar imagery dating to April 2002, April 2013 (by which point the road was relatively new but complete), June 2015, and a CNES/Airbus image dating to October 2018, all available via Google Earth. No damage was visible to the site on any image.

According to the Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve, in 2020, Armazi St. George's Church suffered damage from a nearby tree (located at the north-east wall of the church), which fell on its tin roof and damaged it (figure

A1.7a,b). This can also be seen in the photos found online (Ravknatashvili 2020d). Georgian nuns managed to repair the roof with remote support from the Georgian National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage as the access to the region has been blocked since 2019



Figure A1.7a,b: The roof of Armazi church in 2020 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Atsriskhevi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that a number of historic villages, including Astriskhevi, were bulldozed and torn down.

Atsriskhevi was a protected area, preserved as a natural site; several buildings remain today for this purpose. Even before the war only 13 families lived there. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) visited the historic village in November 2008, reporting it was “fully deserted and almost completely destroyed, with only two houses still intact when Human Rights Watch was there”.

The satellite imagery available through Google Earth has a large time-gap: it, first, appears on Maxar imagery dated back to 9 May 2002, then it indicates between 28 April 2013 and 11 October 2018 a few houses in the middle of the village may have been demolished to their foundations, but they may simply have collapsed and become overgrown - there are several houses where no walls are visible, and somewhere only low foundations are visible. However, they were not cleared.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Atsriskhevi Fortress Complex (now called Fidar)

Site Type: Fortress

Condition: Poor

Despite the widespread damage to the village from hostilities, a review of satellite imagery on Google Earth shows no damage to the historic fortress to the north of the village. However, after a low resolution 2002 image, the next image is a 2013 image, so any small damage occurring around 2008 may no longer be visible. However, on CNES imagery dated to 11 October 2018 and Maxar imagery on 17 November 2019, the walls of the site appear to be suffering from neglect and are partially obscured by vegetation. This is also evident in photos taken in 2020 (Ravknatashvili 2020a).

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Site could not be located, but was reported to be in a Moderate condition in the original records.

Tonaant Castle and Remains of a watchtower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor / Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Site could not be located, but the Castle was reported to be in a Poor condition in the original records, and the watchtower was a Destroyed Ruin.

Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Site could not be located, but was reported to be in a Destroyed condition in the original records.

Avnevi Village (Now called Awnew)

Site Type: Historic Village

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW2009; 140) “the village of Avnevi has two parts, one populated prior to the conflict mainly by ethnic Georgians and administered by Tbilisi, and the other populated mainly by ethnic Ossetians and administered by Tskhinvali. Wide-scale looting and torching in the Tbilisi-administered part began around August 12, and continued at a lesser scale at least until early September”. They visited the village in September 2008, which “by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning” (HRW 2009: 131).

A 2018 news report suggested that following the war, the historic Avnevi village was bulldozed and torn down (Kevanishvil 2018). However, a review of sequential satellite imagery on CNES images via Google Earth (as far as the most recent image of 16 July 2019) indicates that the village has been left in its ruined state, rather than being cleared.

Known damage to specific buildings (rather than to the general historic fabric) is listed below.

Castle Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Middle Ages fortification marked as Moderate Condition in the original records.

Church of the Assumption (Mother Of God)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

This domed church dates to 10-14th century. Although most of the village is completely ruined, a review of the sequential satellite imagery available on Google Earth (images dating to 26 July 2007, 19 October 2009 on Maxar imagery and through until the most recent image, dated 16 July 2019 using CNES/Airbus imagery) shows no visible damage to the church. In photos taken in 2020, the church appears to be undamaged (Ravknatashvili 2020b).

However, the site is marked as damaged during hostilities in 2008 as according to eyewitness reports, its windows shattered as a result of the military operations (figure A1.8).



Figure A1.8: Avnevi Church of the Assumption, shattered window (2013) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Church ruins (Kvavis Sakdari)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Middle Ages Church marked as Destroyed ruin in the original records.

Ecclesiastical Ruins (Unnamed)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Middle Ages Church marked as Destroyed in the original records.

Balaani

Balaani Castle-Tower

Site Type: Fortress

Condition: Poor

This fortification was assessed as being in Poor condition in the 1990s. Sequential Maxar and CNES/Airbus satellite imagery via Google Earth indicates that there is no change in condition (the most recent image is from a CNES/Airbus satellite dated 12 May 2021).

However, the fortification is approximately 450m from a military base, constructed in 2011.

Beloti

Beloti Fortress Complex: Fortress, Church and Towers

Site Type: Fortress

Condition: Poor

According to an eyewitness, the fortress, which dates to the 10th-18th centuries, is exposed to the elements and growing vegetation, posing a threat to its integrity (figure A1.9). The fortress is reportedly on the brink of destruction. The damage can be seen in the photo taken in 2018 (Olofirenko 2018). An undated photo of the site is available on Google Earth⁸².

Satellite imagery assessment of Maxar imagery dating to 28 April 2013, 31 July 2015, 11 January 2018 and a CNES/Airbus image dating to 11 October 2018 via Google Earth suggests damage through neglect.

⁸² Arseniy, S: https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipPCW4Qvj78k5qjPGCF4E4lMuuuE5v5BTI5c_cWW=h720



Figure A1.9: Beloti Fortress (2013) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Berula Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, media (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a), Human Rights Watch (2009), and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Berula.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) reported damage to the historic village during the fighting. Sequential Google Earth imagery from Maxar dates 19 October 2019 until CNES images dates 16 July 2019 indicates that, following the war, the majority of the village is almost completely ruined. The last images from CNES via Google Earth shows signs of total destruction down to ground level; the ruins area is now overgrown.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of St Elijah

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

The Church dates to the 14th Century. Although the majority of the historic village is now almost completely ruined, the Church of St Elijah appears intact, visible on sequential Google Earth imagery from Maxar on 19 October 2009, as of imagery until the last image on CNES dated 16 July 2019.



Figure A1.10a,b: Church of St. Elijah, Berula © Paata Basishvili

Church of the Monk (Beris Sakdari)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The church was marked as Destroyed ruins in the original records: ruins are still visible on satellite imagery available via Google Earth - no change in condition.

The Church dates to the 10th Century. It was already a ruin when the south wall collapsed during the 1991 earthquake, leaving a small fragment. The church is marked as Destroyed in the original records. Although the majority of the historic village is now almost completely ruined, the Church is still visible on sequential Google Earth imagery from Maxar on 19 October 2009, as of imagery until the last image on CNES dated 16 July 2019, but the ruin is overgrown. The condition is still Destroyed.

Church of the Mtskheta Cross

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

The Church dates to the Late Middle Ages and was restored around 2004 according to the database records.

Although the majority of the historic village is now almost completely ruined, the Church of the Cross appears intact, visible on sequential Google Earth imagery from Maxar on 19 October 2009, as of imagery until the last image on CNES dated 16 July 2019.

Fortress (remains)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

The remains of a late Middle Ages castle tower which are still standing to about 4m. The site was originally in a Poor condition. Although the majority of the historic village is now almost completely ruined, the fortification appears intact, but overgrown and neglected, visible on sequential Google Earth imagery from Maxar on 19 October 2009, as of imagery until the last image on CNES dated 16 July 2019.

Dadianeti

St. George Complex: Castle Hall and St. George Church

Site Type: Historic complex

Condition: Poor

This is one of the most distinguished Eristavi (local ruler) complexes in the region: with a palace, a hall, a bell tower and a church, all dating back to 9th-14th centuries.

The 14th century wall paintings of St. George Church complex in Akhlagori wall paintings are gradually deteriorating, according to eyewitness reports. This problem was noted in the original database, which records: “The church once had frescoes; The painting, which was supposed to have been created in the fourteenth century, is now almost entirely obsolete. Surviving from the frescoes are the Saviour depicted in the conch of the altar, surrounded by flying angels in the baptismal Sharavand - Mandorla, and on the west wall a composition of the Annunciation and the Holy Warriors - St. George and St. Demetrius. Another composition depicting a feast - the ascent to hell can be seen on the north door. Currently the corner of the north-west wall of the church is open, which damages the still surviving painting on the west wall.” The site was, and remains, in a Poor condition (figure A1.11a,b, figure A.1.12).



Figure A1.11a,b: Exterior of St. George Complex in 2009 © Blue Shield Georgia

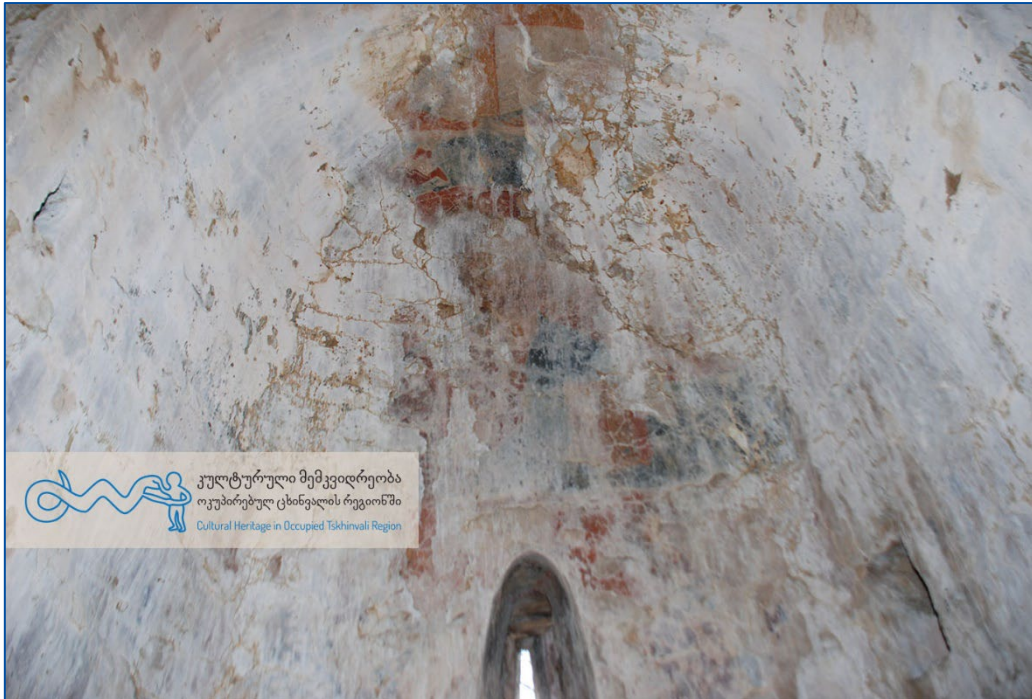


Figure A1.12: Interior wall paintings in the Church of St. George Complex in 2009 © Blue Shield Georgia.

As a result of the dense vegetation, the complex is rarely visible on the satellite imagery via Google Earth: however, a low-resolution Maxar image dating to 17 March 2010 indicates the complex with its building and walls is present (figure A1.13).



Figure A1.13: St George complex. 17 March 2010 Maxar image via Google Earth

Disevi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Disevi.

"Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) visited the historic village of Disevi in the Patara Liakhvi River Valley in November 2008, reporting it was "also almost fully destroyed". A news report (Aptsiauri 2020) and anonymous sources indicated that the village was later bulldozed.

The earliest satellite image available on Maxar imagery via Google Earth dates to 5 June 2010: although there is no prior image to compare the village to, the damage pattern to the buildings is consistent with the destruction visible across the wider area on the 2009 imagery available elsewhere, suggesting the village sustained very heavy damage and was ruined.

By 2010, a small amount of bulldozing had also occurred; in particular, a large rectangular area was cleared, and some structures on the road to it were removed (visible as small square empty beige patches connected to roads amongst otherwise green areas.) Bulldozing of selected areas on the road continued (image dated 15 August 2011 by Maxar via Google Earth); a military base has been built in the cleared rectangular area. The rest of the village is ruined and overgrown.

However, Maxar imagery available via Google Earth also indicates that the ruins of some buildings were destroyed between 28 April 2013, and 31 July 2015. The damage pattern is consistent with impact damage, suggesting the area is used for military training.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of St George

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The database recorded this site as Destroyed, indicating it was in a ruinous condition pre-conflict. According to the inventories from the early 1980s, only its western wall, still containing a window in the centre, and part of the northern wall were extant. The records located it 1 km south from the village, but it could not be located on satellite imagery available via Google Earth and no update is available.

Church of the Virgin of Kulbiti (Kulbiti Mother of God Church / Kulbiti Church of Virgin Mary)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

Kulbiti Church of the Virgin dates to the 13-14th century (figure A1.14), and was in a Moderate condition in 2008. Restoration works on the church were to commence in August 2008 (works undertaken by the Georgian National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage). However, following the loss of access, the work was terminated and materials remained unused on site.



Figure A1.14: Disevi Church of the Virgin of Kulbiti (on the left) and Holy Cross (Dzelitskhoveli) Church (center) (2006) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Although the village is completely ruined, with a small section bulldozed (see **Disevi Village**), Maxar and CNES satellite imagery available via Google Earth, of which the most recent is 2018, indicate that the church is intact and has sustained no additional visible damage.

However, today the church is located approximately 200m from the military base (built on the site of the bulldozed section of the village (figure A1.15), in the active training area (explosive use is visible on Google Earth - see **Disevi Village**). According to eyewitnesses, in Kulbiti Church of Virgin Mary, cracks on walls and vaults grow larger daily. A large crack in the wall and small damage to the roof can be seen in a photo taken in 2017 (Yanochkin & Yanochkin, 2017b) available online. Potential risks include existing structural instability exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion, and collateral damage should the garrison become a target.



Figure A1.15: The churches of Disevi on satellite imagery, next to a military facility. CNES /Airbus satellite image dated 10 September 2021 via Google Earth.

Holy Cross (Dzelitskhoveli) Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The 10th-century Holy Cross (Dzelitskhoveli) Church was in a Moderate condition in 2008. Restoration works had just been completed prior to the war in August 2008 (undertaken by the Georgian National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage).

Although the village is completely ruined, with a small section bulldozed (see **Disevi Village**), Maxar and CNES satellite imagery available via Google Earth, of which the most recent is 2018, indicate that the church is intact and has sustained no additional visible damage.

Today it is located approximately 200m from the military base (built on the site of the bulldozed section of the village), in the active training area (see **Disevi: Kulbiti Church of the Virgin**, and figure A.15 for more information). Potential risks include existing structural instability exacerbated by vibrations from the movement of heavy vehicles, ordnance explosion, and collateral damage should the garrison become a target.

Kulbiti Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Destroyed

Ruins of the fortification wall dating to the Middle Ages are all that are preserved, and the original condition was Destroyed. The first image of the site is a Maxar image on Google Earth dated 05 June 2010, so there is no pre-conflict to compare the site to. The ruined walls are still visible on CNES/Airbus satellite imagery from

Google Earth dated to 19 October 2021, indicating the ruins survived the destruction of the village. Today the site is less than 250m from the military base.

Doretkari

Tsinkibe Fortress Complex: (Doretkari St. Barbare Church and Tower) in village Gavazi

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate (to Poor)

The Tsinkibe Complex dates to the 9th century, 10th-11th century, and 13th-14th century. It comprises three churches with frescoes (A1.17), one of which has a tower (figure A1.16), structures of different functions and remains of an enclosure. In particular, the Church of St. Barbare (figure A.18), with a high tower built onto it on the southwest, is distinguished among all above-mentioned buildings. This church was built in the 8th-14th centuries AD. It is recorded to be in a Moderate condition. According to an eyewitness, the 14th century wall paintings are gradually deteriorating. Those paintings represent a valuable example for the “Palaeologus” style of fresco painting. (Note: The complex is located in village Gavazi, opposite of village Doretkari. In scientific literature, this complex is described as Tsinkibe Doretkari complex).



Figure A1.16 (left): Tsinkibe Fortress Complex Tower in 2009 © Blue Shield Georgia

Figure A1.17 (right): Tsinkibe Fortress Complex, wall painting in St. Barbare church in 2009 © Blue Shield Georgia



Figure A.1.18: Tsinkibe Fortress Complex, St. Barbare church in 2009 © Blue Shield Georgia

The Tower was considered to be in a Poor condition in the original dataset, and an (undated) photo visible via Google Earth⁸³ supports this. Rubble may be visible at the base of the Tower, indicating neglect, on Maxar satellite imagery dating to 29 April 2002, 28 April 2013, and 21 June 2015, but the imagery is unclear.

A news report (SIA “RES” 2014b) indicates that restoration works were undertaken at the village church in 2013 by the Alanian eparchy who also entirely funded the work. Their church restoration work in Tskhinvali was carried out in consultation with specialists of the de facto Ministry of Construction in close cooperation with the Department for the Protection of Monuments of the de facto Ministry of Culture, who have jurisdiction over the building; it is unknown if that is the case here.

Dzaghina

Dzaghina Complex: Castle-tower/Fortress, and Palace

Site Type: Fortification and Palace

Condition: Poor

The site consists of a Palace and Castle-tower in the centre of the village, and a (lower) Castle-Tower fortress in the northwest of the village (figure A1.19). Both are in a Poor condition in the original records.

According to an eyewitness the fortress, which dates to the 17th century, is exposed to the elements and growing vegetation, posing a threat to its integrity. The fortress is reportedly on the brink of destruction. This can be seen in photos of both sites available online (Streltsov 2021g, vadim_fomichev 2014).

⁸³ https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QjpNXoS6NF4i-3iS3KF_XZWU8aV2tVIEwblnT4JUu=h1440

The Fortress complex in the northwest is in a poor condition on satellite imagery today, matching its original description, whilst the main complex appears to be in a reasonable condition on Maxar images dating to 6 March 2011, 11 April 2011, 17 February 2012, and CNES/Airbus dating 21 September 2018 all via Google Earth. However, the available photos (SIA “RES” 2020a) indicate a large hole in the tower wall (just visible on the CNES/Airbus image dated 11 August 2021 from Google Earth), and vegetation growing from the site.



Figure A1.19: The Dzaghina Fortress and Complex and Lower Fortress on CNES/Airbus satellite image dating 11 August 2021 via Google Earth.

Dzartsemi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Dzartsemi.

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008b) reported damage to the historic village during the fighting. 25 buildings were destroyed and 8 were severely damaged. 15% of the village was considered affected. Dzartsemi was a very historic village: after the war, it was completely bulldozed and torn down.⁸⁴ Maxar imagery via Google Earth satellite indicates the demolition had begun by 19 October 2009, and continued until 11 October 2014, when most of the buildings were gone (figure A1.20, A.1.21, A1.22).

⁸⁴ See some examples and before/after pictures in Kevanishvil (2018).



Figure A1.20, A1.21, A1.22: The situation of Dzartsemi village - 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite image), 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite image), and 6 June 2020 (CNES/Airbus satellite image), all via Google Earth.

Some of the village is now used as a training space for military forces. News reports (Aptsiauri 2020) indicate the shooting range of the Russian Federation's 4th base is located there (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation 2015), and sequential imagery from Google Earth indicates the expansion of the military area into the western side of the road following the clearance of the village.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Archangel (Beoti) Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The site was in Poor condition in the original database records.

The Church dates to the late Middle Ages. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 17) reported "No visual damages". (The UNOSAT report refers to this site as Szarcemi, which is thought to be a mis-spelling of Dzartsemi.)

CNES/Airbus imagery via Google Earth, dated 6 June 2020, indicates the church is still intact and has not been cleared, and no new damage is visible: the church remains in a Poor condition.

Church of All Saints (Kvelatsminda)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A ruined high Middle Ages church half a kilometre north-east of the village with only north and east wall fragments remaining. Large trees were reported to grow throughout the site in the original records. Site was recorded as a Destroyed ruin in the original records, but could not be located on imagery to confirm this status. The provided coordinates indicate the site is within 500m of a military base.

Church of the Assumption

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

Church ruins dating to the Middle Ages on the eastern edge of the village. The ruins could not be located at the supplied coordinates on the Maxar imagery on Google Earth dating to 30 September 2004 or 26 July 2007. There is considerable farming in the area: it is possible the ruins were destroyed at this point. However, on the Maxar image dating to 19 October 2009, the area is burned and ruined and by 10 October 2013, large parts of this area were cleared to build military facilities/installations. The site is presumed destroyed, but this is not confirmed.

Enclosure Wall

Site Type: Undefined Ruin

Condition: Poor

Late Middle Ages rectangular enclosure wall 1 km south-west of the village: the south and north walls remain at a height of 2.5 to 1.5 m; the east wall has been demolished to the foundation; and the west wall no longer exists at all, as it has been eroded by the river. The site was originally recorded as being in a Poor condition; an assessment of sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth shows no new damage.

Kviratskhoveli Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Single-nave church ruins dating to the Middle Ages above a mound settlement site on the edge of the village. The site was originally recorded as a “Destroyed” ruin, covered with debris and vegetation. The coordinates could not be confirmed via satellite imagery.

Parseti Niche (Geri St George’s Niche)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

The Niche of Parseti, 19th century, known as St. George's Niche. The small church was recorded in a Good condition in the original records. Due to its small size and large trees surrounding it, it was not visible even on the older images - pre-war. However, according to locals who fled the area during the war, the little wooden church was burnt during the hostilities.

The coordinates provided related to a group of structures, and it was unclear which was the specific building. However, a review of sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth shows that all buildings in that area were burned between 2007 and 2009, and left in ruins that became overgrown by vegetation and collapsed.

St George’s Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the 19-20th century church (ID: 18) reported “No visual damages, but located close to fire damaged buildings”. Although it is correct that the church is located next to many fire damaged buildings, these coordinates are wrong (figure A1.23).

Maxar imagery via Google Earth indicates that in 2009 (figure A1.23), the building was intact. However, a 2014 video (Magaladze 2015) states that the building was abandoned after the war, which is supported in the video evidence. The recording also shows cracks in the walls, and the roof seems to be leaking. The building can still be seen on a CNES/Airbus image dated 21 October 2019, but the condition is hard to determine.



Figure A1.23: UNOSAT location and actual location of St George's Church, 19 October 2009 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).

Wooden House

Site Type: Dwelling

Condition: Unknown

19th century fir log house with a new slate roof, in a churchyard outside the village. The site is just visible through the tree cover on a Maxar image satellite image dating to 22 March 2014 on Google Earth, indicating it survived the burning of the village. However, the trees distort the image and no assessment of condition is possible.

Dzvileti

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

A Middle Ages Church that was in a Moderate condition in the original records. No change is visible on satellite imagery via Google Earth. It is within 500m of a military base.

Eloiani

Karchokhi Castle

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

The fortress dates to the 6-7th century and was recorded as being ruined. According to an eyewitness, the fortress is now exposed to the elements and growing vegetation, posing a threat to its integrity (figure A1.24). The fortress is reportedly on the brink of destruction.



Figure A1.24: Karchokhi castle in 2017 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth confirms the fortress is very overgrown, and trees are growing in and around it.

Eredvi Village (Now referred to by Ossetians as Irykau/ Ered)

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Eredvi.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) reported damage to the historic village during the fighting. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported visiting the village in September, which "by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning". After the war in 2009, Google Earth imagery by Maxar indicates the village remained ruined for several years.

However, bulldozing of most of the village took place between 9 May 2016, and 19 September 2019, according to Maxar and CNES/Airbus satellite imagery on Google Earth. A blog post (Ynaochkin & Ynaochkin 2017b) also discussed that demolitions were still taking place in 2017. A news report indicates the cemetery has survived (Aptsiauri 2018). In the most recent CNES/Airbus imagery available via Google Earth (dated 16 July 2019) the majority of the village is gone; only a few ruined buildings remain. Only one roofed building remains, within a walled enclosure: it is likely that this is St George's complex (figure A1.25, A.26).

According to recent news (Aptsiauri 2020) a landfill is being built on the territory of Eredvi with funds from the Russian Government. The village, which is mentioned in historic sources as early as the 8th century, was the largest in the Large and Small Liakhvi river valleys. Until the war, it was inhabited by 1,000 families. Throughout history, it has had a strong strategic and geographic importance. In the years before the war, the residents strongly resisted separatist military groups. Tskhinvali Mayor, Alan Kochiev, recently stated that a landfill will be put in place near Eredvi. Historians and some local residents consider the creation of the landfill there as a form of punishment and revenge (Aptsiauri 2020; Open Society Georgia Foundation 2009).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village). Known damage to specific buildings (rather than to the general historic fabric) is listed below.

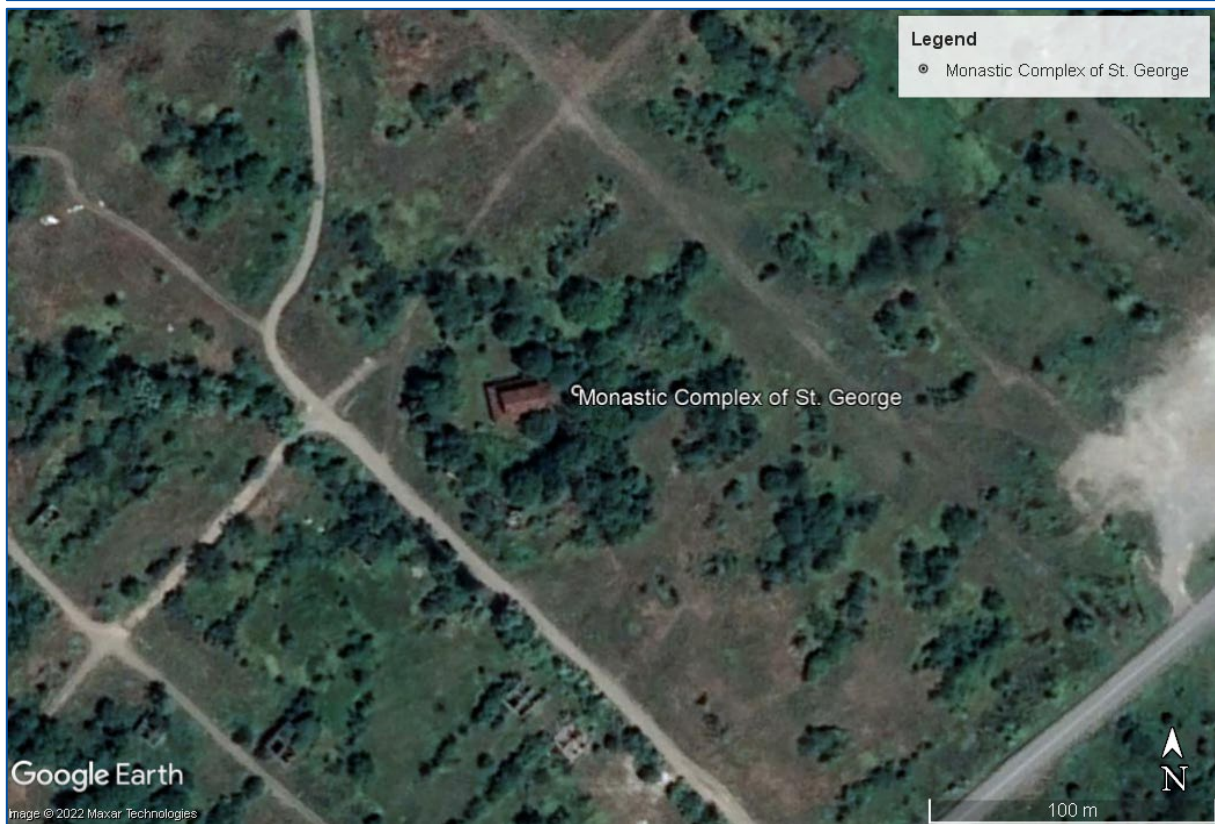
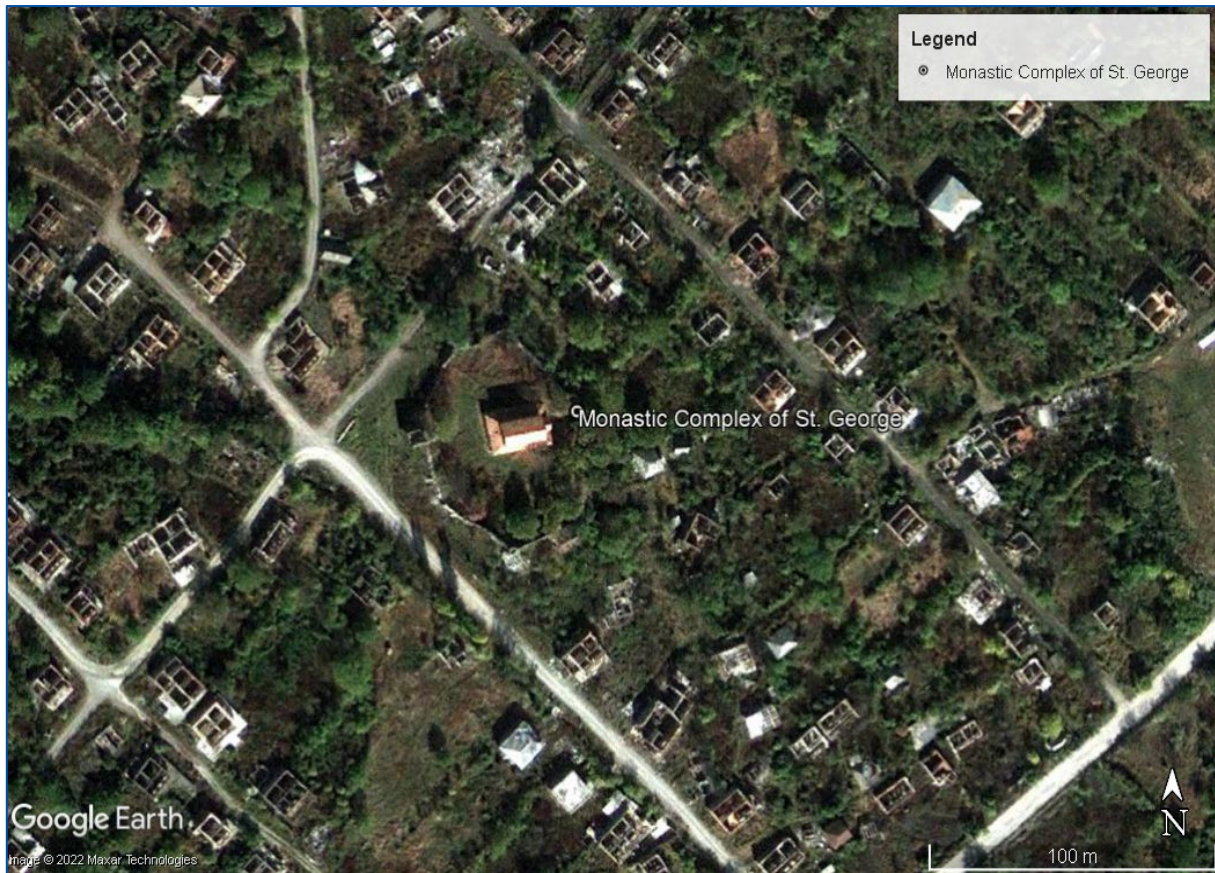


Figure A1.25 Top: The ruined village of Eredvi and intact St George's complex, 19 October 2009 (Maxar Satellite image via Google Earth).

Figure A1.26 Bottom: The ruined village of Eredvi and intact St George's complex 16 July 2019 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

St George's Complex: Monastery and Three-Church Basilica

Site Type: Complex (Religious)

Condition: Moderate

Constructed in 906 AD, the basilica preserves an Asomtavruli (old Georgian alphabet) inscription, which mentions the donor, the builder and date of construction of the church. Today, it consists of a Church, chapel and towered gate (figure A1.27, also see Lost Ossetia n.d.-f).

Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve reported that the church and its surrounding gate were damaged by a shell that fell in the vicinity of the complex. According to its report, after the war, part of the gate wall was destroyed and the decorative relief of the window in the west wall of the church fell off. The damage to the western window relief is still visible in a photo taken in 2017, and the fallen parts of the relief can still be seen below the window, on the roof of the church (Yanochkin & Yanochkin 2017b), the photographers also noted, that the church was abandoned and appeared to be infested by bats.

The sequential satellite images from Maxar and CNES via Google Earth show that the monastery building remained intact. No damage is visible to the wall, but the earliest image (against which change is assessed) dates to 2009.



Figure A1.27: Eredvi St. George Monastery (2013) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Red Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

These High Middle Ages ruins of a three-church basilica were preserved in fragments, located approximately 1 kilometre from the village, on the territory of a Soviet period facility for agrotechnics.

No comparative pre-conflict satellite image is available: on the Maxar image dated 19 October 2009 (figure A1.28), the coordinates are located in a copse in the area of a newly-built facility. The facility to the south of the road is Dmenisi military base. Maxar imagery on Google Earth shows that In 2013, the northern part of the facility goes out of use and is cleared. It is not possible to determine if the ruins remain in the copse or were destroyed when the site was built, or cleared.



Figure A1.28: Location of the Red Church ruins (Maxar satellite image 19 October 2009 via Google Earth).

Geri (now called Jer, Dzher)

Church of St. George

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This late Middle Ages church (figure A1.29) was destroyed in the earthquake of 1991 and reconstructed and restored in 2002. News articles (SIA “RES” 2014b, Sputnik 2015i) report the Alanian eparchy renovated the bell-tower of the St. George’s Church in Geri, which “was in a terrible state”, refurbished the church yard and put up a fence in 2014-15; they also entirely funded the work. A source reported to the authors that the gate leading to the church was also demolished and reconstructed. The new gate can be seen in photos taken in 2015 (Ygricus 2015).



Figure A1.29: Gate of Geri St. George’s Church (Ioseb Megrelidze private archive; 1960s)

The news report stated that the church restoration work in Tskhinvali was carried out in consultation with specialists of the de-facto Ministry of Construction in close cooperation with the Department for the Protection of Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture, who have jurisdiction over the building; it is unknown if that is the case here. A news report (Sputnik 2015h) stated that the reconstruction works were completed by August 2015 but other sources imply that nothing has been done there. According to local reports, in September 2019 the Alanian eparchy, together with the de-facto Ministry of Defense of the Republic of South Ossetia, began work on replacing the roof of the Church (SOT 2019b).

Photos posted later in the same month show that the belltower roof was also being changed. (Orthodox church of Alania 2019). In the photos posted on social media in 2021, the new roof of the gate of the church can also be seen (Orthodox church of Alania 2021).

The Google Earth satellite by Maxar and CNES/Airbus images show no signs of any damage to the building.

Ghromi

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The Church was reported as a Destroyed ruin in the original records: imagery available via Google Earth suggests the Church was redeveloped. It is less than 500m from a military base.

Monastery Complex of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Complex)

Condition: Destroyed

The Middle Ages site, consisting of a hall, gate, chapel and the Church of the Assumption, was a Destroyed ruin in the original records. Sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth indicates it is increasingly overgrown, and is less than 500m from a military base.

St George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Reported in a Poor condition in the original records, the church could not be located on satellite imagery via Google Earth. Supplied coordinates indicate it is within 500m of a military base.

Ikoti

Satellite imagery available via Google Earth demonstrates three heritage sites in this area - Church of St. George (figure A1.30), Church of St. Marine (figure A1.31), and Pitskhelaurebi tower - all had their roofs covered with tin in 2017. The new roof of St. Marine Church can be seen in the photos taken in 2021 (Streltsov 2021k). These sites were roofed with the involvement and support of the Georgian nuns who live there and Georgian specialists from Tbilisi, who managed to enter the area before it became totally inaccessible to ethnic Georgians in 2019. These sites are three of just 15 which had temporary emergency protective measures installed (see **7.2.2 Heritage Preservation Agencies and Bodies: National Agency for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage of Georgia**). There are no reports of damage to the sites, so they are not included as separate entries.



Figure A1.30: Church of St. George, Ikoti in 2017 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve



Figure A1.31: St. Marine church in Ikoti in 2011 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Monastery of St. Monk Alexi and Mukhranbatoni Palace

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good



Figure A1.34: Mukhranbatoni palace in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

In 2009, the Ossetian and Russian FSB troops deployed along the occupation line planned to build a heliport in Ikoti village, in close proximity to a historic country house, Mukhranbatoni Palace (figure A1.34). The palace was built in 1840, and in 2005 housed a nunnery. Georgian media reported that the few remaining Georgian nuns had protested to the Russian military that the heliport could threaten the historical palace - including the nunnery as well as a number of monuments in the surrounding area (Tsamalashvili 2009; IPN 2010). The Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs also published a statement (MFAG 2009).

Eyewitness reports indicate the historical orchards with rare species of trees belonging to the palace were cut and bulldozed to clear space for the construction (figures A1.32, A1.33). However, later plans changed and the construction stopped.

No damage is visible to the site on any satellite imagery available via Google Earth.



Figure A1.32, A1,33: Historic Orchards of the palace being bulldozed (2010) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Ikorta

Ikorta Complex: Castle-Palace and Church of the Archangels

Site Type: Complex - Church and Castle

Condition: Moderate

(The fortification was, and remains, in a Poor condition, and the church in a Moderate condition)

The complex consists of the main Archangel Church (figure A1.35), which dates to 1172 AD, and the castle residence of the Ksani Eristavi family. Since the 17th century it has served as a burial place for Ksani Eristavs and the interior still preserves a number of graves today. In the 1991 earthquake, the complex was heavily damaged: a large chunk of the dome collapsed, the walls partially collapsed, and the columns were badly shaken.



Figure A1.35: The Church of Archangels in 2013 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

In 2000, Ikorta was listed by the World Monuments' Fund as site no 26 on the "100 Most Endangered Sites" (WMF 2000). From 1999-2006, restoration works were supported by various international organizations, as well as the government of Georgia. The majority of the work was conducted by the Georgian National Committee of ICOMOS. In 2004-2005, the works had to be terminated due to the tensions in the region. Small parts of the exterior scaffolding remained, but most exterior work had been finished. However, substantial work was still to be undertaken in the interior, for which the Kartu Foundation had allocated

funds. Special interior scaffolding had been erected for this purpose and remained in place when the restoration team had to be evacuated. The conservation of the wall painting also remained incomplete, according to the Didi Liakhvi Museum Reserve. The interior of the church and its wall paintings were whitewashed in the beginning of the 20th century by the tsarist authorities, and the restoration project meant to clean and conserve the wall painting, but it could not be completed.

In 2013, a public event dedicated to the International Day for the Protection of Monuments and Historical Sites was held close to the complex. At the conference Nelli Tabuyeva, Head of the Department for the Protection of Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of the Republic of South Ossetia stated that the South Ossetian public organisation "Ziu" would cover the windows of the church with a special mesh to protect the interior from birds. She also noted that the restoration of the temple was included in the Investment Program for the Promotion of the Social and Economic Development of the Republic for 2014-2017 (SIA "RES" 2013b). Photos posted in the same article depict scaffolding in the exterior of the church and some damage to the roof can be seen.

According to Sputnik news (2015g), a construction company called "Uyut", who had previously worked without a heritage specialism licence on the Tiri Monastery, and been banned, were to be allowed to work at the 12th century Church of the Holy Virgin In Ikorta. The de-facto Minister of Culture said they would be allowed to continue work on the conservation of four churches in South Ossetia (including this one) in accordance with the recommendations of the head of the All-Russian Art Scientific and Restoration Center named after Academician Grabar, Alexander Lesovoy and under the supervision of employees of the Monument Protection Department, and in collaboration with the Alanian diocese. Sputnik later reported that Lesovoy trained "Uyut's" workers on how to carry out emergency conservation of historic monuments. Restoration was then carried out in accordance with his "strict recommendations" and under the control of the de-facto Ministry of Culture (2015h).

News reports (SIA "RES" 2016, Byazrova 2017) indicated that the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia carried out restoration works at the Church as part of the 2015-16 investment program. It is unknown what works were carried out, and of what standard, but it is presumably those referenced above. The work was carried out with the involvement of Russian specialists and based on their recommendations, local estimates were compiled.

In photos taken in 2017, damage to the roof seems to be repaired and the scaffolding is gone (Yanochkin & Yanochkin 2017b). In 2021, information was spread online that in the 1990s, the relics of St. Bidzina Cholokashvili, the remains of St. Shalva and St. Elizbar Eristavis of Ksani - three prominent Georgian historic figures canonised as saints by the Georgian Orthodox Church - were stolen from Ikorta monastery and were subsequently placed in the Tskhinvali Church of the Mother of God. According to the website of the Alanian Epiphany Convent (which is located in Vladikavkaz, Russia) the relics of the holy martyrs Shalva and Elizbar Eristavis were donated to the Convent in 2008 by Vladimir Koroev, a "well-known benefactor in Ossetia-Alania and beyond". The website also alleges that said holy martyrs were of Ossetian heritage (Artinfo.ge 2021, Alanian nunnery n.d).

Assessment of satellite imagery by Maxar and CNES/Airbus from Google Earth reveals no visible damage.

Inauri

Bekhushe Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

The fortress is located on the right bank of the Patara Liakhvi river, on the mountain slope, 2 km. to the south of the village-site Inauri. The original records indicate that the lateral walls are destroyed in many places. The ground floor and partially the first floor are filled up with chunks of masonry, although the tower is preserved on the level of five floors; fortification walls are preserved on the height of 1-3 m. However, the fortress territory is covered with vegetation.

Kanchaeti

Archangel Church, St. Georges Church, and Tower

Site Type: Religious (Church and Monastic complex)

Condition: Unknown

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The Complex dates to the late Middle Ages. An anonymous source reported to us that they have witnessed military training taking place in the vicinity of the site several times.

Monastery Complex of the Virgin of Kabeni

Site Type: Religious (Church and Monastic complex)

Condition: Poor



Figure A1.36: Kanchaeti Kabeni Church of the Virgin, 2018 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Dating to the 9th-18th centuries, the complex consists of a Church, ambulatory, refectory and ruined bell tower. The site is a centre of Georgian writing traditions, with a 9th-13th century church and high quality wall paintings from the same period. The restoration process that started in the 1950s was still partially still ongoing when hostilities broke out in 2008 and had to be halted (the scaffolding is still intact in the church) (figure A1.36). The original records mark the ruined bell tower as Destroyed, and the Monastery, Refectory and other buildings as being in a Poor condition.

Today, eyewitnesses report that the ornamented stones from the 13th century are scattered in the yard and affected by weathering, and the main church is on the brink of collapse. It is left roofless and is protected by a piece of red tin plate and scaffolding, which is visible on satellite imagery on images dated 21 June 2015 (Maxar) and 14 June 2020 (CNES/Airbus). On a photograph available via Google Earth⁸⁵ the church is clearly in a poor condition.

An anonymous source reported to the authors that they have witnessed military training taking place in the vicinity of the site several times.

Kekhvi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

Kekhvi was a very historic village. After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Kekhvi.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008b) reported heavy damage to the village during the fighting. 110 buildings were destroyed and 44 were severely damaged. 44% of the village was considered affected. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting "in September [2008], the villages had been almost fully destroyed; in Kekhvi the debris of some houses along the road appeared to have been bulldozed."

After the war, it was completely bulldozed and torn down. Maxar imagery via Google Earth imagery indicates that the houses were destroyed in 2010 and the demolition occurred between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014. Moreover, Maxar imagery shows that in 2015, the whole village was torn down (figure A1.37, A1.38).

Many of the registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of St. George

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

Single-nave church in Zangaladzeebi neighbourhood, in the centre of the village. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c, site ID: 8) reported "No visual damage, but located by multiple fire-destroyed buildings".

⁸⁵ <https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipPqwUwjZg8kQBp8LKK1m6HsNVG0WhBdQ3Ae7Alo=h1440>

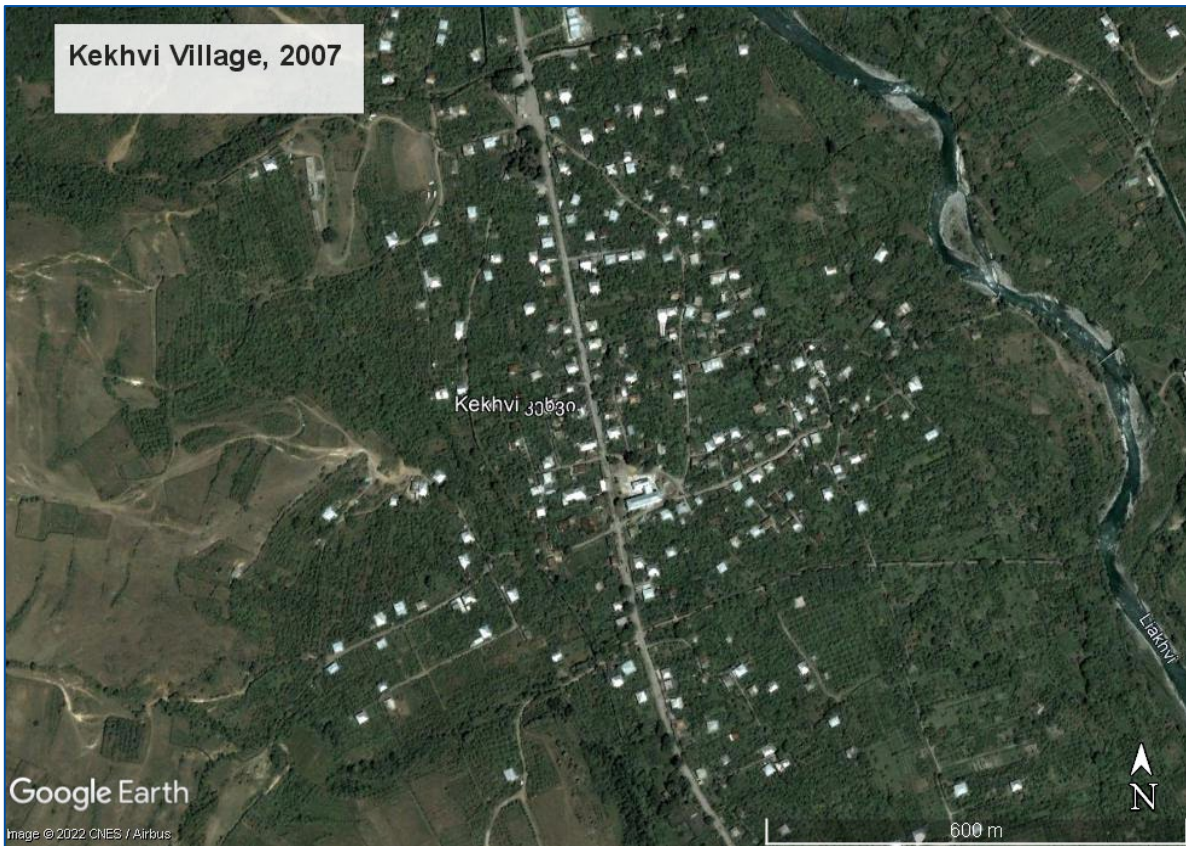


Figure A1.37 Top: Kekhvi Village 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).
Figure A1.38 Bottom: Kekhvi Village 21 October 2019 (CNES / Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Unlike the rest of the village, the building is still visible, and apparently intact, on the most recent satellite image available from CNES/Airbus via Google Earth dated 21 October 2019.

St. George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

A single-nave church from the High Middle Ages. The Church ruins have been preserved in a wooded area on the top of a hill to the west of Kekhvi. Sequential satellite imagery from Google Earth suggests the ruins are neglected and overgrown by the forest.

Church of the Mother of God (Basilica) "Tsinadedaghvtisa"

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This basilica (8-9thC.) was listed as being in a Destroyed condition in the original records. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Church of the Mother of God "Kvedadedaghvtisa"

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

This small hall church of the late middle ages on the river was listed in the original record as being in a Destroyed condition; whilst the area is heavily overgrown, the ruin can be seen on Maxar satellite imagery on 17th February 2012 (via Google Earth).

Church of the Saviour

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This church was listed as being in a Destroyed condition in the original record. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This church was listed in the original record as being in Good condition, though it was noted that the building was not, at the time, complete. The building is visible in satellite imagery from 30th September 2004 until 6th June 2020 (Maxar and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth), but the condition appears to have deteriorated over that time.

Kekhvi Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Good

This fortress dates to the Middle Ages. UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c, site ID: 7) confirmed that no damage was suffered by this fortress during the war, and no damage is visible on sequential Google satellite imagery by Maxar and CNES (as far the most recent image dated 6 June 2020).



Figure A1.39: Kekhvi Fortress in 2013 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

However, the ID document filed in 2004 describes the condition as poor, and an anonymous source indicated that today the site suffers from extreme neglect and is on the brink of destruction.

Kekhvi Storage facility for the office of Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Site Type: Museum-Reserve support facility

Condition: Destroyed

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 19) reported “Likely severe damages, possible impact crater in roof, surrounded by fire-damaged buildings”. Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth shows that in 2009 the village and the storage facility of DLVMR were affected by war and the building was ruined. The ruins were bulldozed with the rest of the village between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014.

For more information, see **Kurta: Office of Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve**.

Ruins of a Rectangular Building

Site Type: Undefined Ruin

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This ruin was listed as being in a Destroyed condition in the original record. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Kemerti Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Kemerti.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008b) reported heavy damage to the historic village during the fighting. 71 buildings were destroyed and 25 were severely damaged. 31% of the village was considered affected. Kemerti was a very historic village: after the war, it was completely bulldozed and torn down. Maxar imagery available via Google Earth imagery indicates demolition of the village began some time after 22 March 2014, and was completed by 11 July 2014. Between May 2016 and September 2017, the woodlands and roads were also completely bulldozed to leave a clear area, which has been used for military purposes (figures A1.40, A1.41, A1.42).

The burnt houses which are still standing are labelled with numbers (see examples in **Tamarasheni, figure A1.61, A1.62,** and **Kashueti Church, figure A1.43,** below).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Archangel Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

Archangel Church was built by the village in 1995. The original database records indicate the Church was damaged during hostilities in 2008; this is thought to be a mistake, confusing the church with Kashueti Church.

The sequential satellite imagery by Maxar and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth shows that the church stayed intact while the village was torn down: it is still visible on the most recent image in 2020. However, the church is not visible in some imagery due to dense vegetation



Figure A1.40 Top: Kemerti village before the war, 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite imagery)
Figure A1.41 Middle: Kemerti village when the destruction began, 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite imagery)
Figure A1.42 Bottom: Kemerti village total demolition, 6 June 2020 (CNES/Airbus satellite imagery)
All via Google Earth.

Church at Kaulaant Fortress

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

A church on the south wall of the Kaulaant Fortress is listed in the original record as being under construction but in Good condition. Sequential satellite imagery (Maxar imagery and CNES/Airbus imagery, both via Google Earth) from 30th September 2004 onwards show that the site is still in the same state, although at risk of the same forest growth as the Fortress and the proximity to the military facility. Satellite imagery indicates the Church is within 500m of a new military base.

Cylindrical Tower Ruins

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The original record includes the ruins of a cylindrical tower, listed as being in a Destroyed condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Kashueti Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This church, built in 1997 in Kaulaantubani neighbourhood, was damaged during the war. Damage is visible to the roof by the dome on Maxar satellite imagery dated 1 June 2010 via Google Earth, and on later images. On the Maxar image dated 10 October 2013, there may be rubble around the base of the eastern wall, and in the southwest corner. Photos taken in 2017 also confirm the dome, roof and walls were damaged (vera_lookout 2017).

The burnt houses which are still standing are labelled with numbers (see examples in **Tamarasheni**). The Kemerti Kashueti Church bears the number 658: it was expected that the church would probably be demolished (figure A1.43). However, demolition did not take place.

In a photo posted online in 2021, the church has a restored dome, a new roof and stone cladding at the base of the exterior walls (Streltsov 2021a). When this image is compared to the older photos (Vera_lookour 2017, roks_alana 2012, Lost Ossetia n.d.-b) the wooden door has been replaced with the metal one and there have been changes in the interior as well; the templon has been replaced and the icons have been removed from the church. Satellite imagery indicates the Church is within 500m of a new military base.



Figure A1.43: Kashueti Church 2013. The building is labeled with the number 658: it was expected that the church would be demolished, but it was rebuilt. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Kasraant Cylindrical Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Moderate

Kasraant Tower, dated to the 17th-18th Centuries, is listed in the original record as being in Moderate condition; the west wall is ruined. It is clearly visible in satellite imagery (Maxar and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth) from 26th July 2007 onwards. The site is within 500m of a military base.

Kaulaant Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

On top of a high hill on the left bank of Sveri River, Kaulaant Fortress (sometimes referred to as Sveri Forstess) was significantly damaged in the earthquake of 1991. The original record lists it as in a Poor condition. Sequential satellite imagery (Maxar imagery and CNES/Airbus imagery, both via Google Earth) from 30th September 2004 onwards show that the site is still in the same state. The fortress appears neglected: the wall of the fortress is visible on September 2004 Maxar imagery via Google Earth while in the recent CNES/Airbus image on 6 June 2020 parts of it are covered by forest growth.

Otinaant Castle

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

A castle dating to the Late Middle Ages which is listed in the original record as being in Poor condition. It is visible in satellite imagery (Maxar and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth) from 30th September 2004 onwards; its condition seems unchanged.

Shios Sakdari (Shio's Chapel)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period

Commonly known as Shios Sakdari, the ruins of this single-nave Middle Ages church site are located within a kilometre to the south-east of the village; remaining fragments are hidden by debris and vegetation. This site was listed as being in a Destroyed condition in the original records. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

St. George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The hall Church was built in the 9-10th century and restored in 1996-97.

According to UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) "ID: 5. No visual damage, but located by multiple fire-destroyed buildings".

The Church is located outside the area of demolition for the military area: on the most recent image on Google Earth (by CNES/Airbus dated 21 October 2019) it is in the same condition it was in on the UNOSAT image from 2008.

St George's Niche

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

This church was listed in the original record as being in Good condition after restoration work in 2002. It is visible in satellite imagery (Maxar and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth) from 30th September 2004 onwards; its condition seems unchanged.

Khaduriantkari

Khaduriantkari Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

A cylindrical tower is erected on a cliff cape, on the right bank of Patara Liakhvi river, in the outskirts of the village. To the west of the tower, at a distance of several metres, ruins of the second tower of relatively smaller diameter and of the fortification wall are preserved, all dating to the 18th century. The main tower is four-storied; third floor walls are preserved to a height of 1m. Remnants of the second tower are filled up with chunks of masonry and bushes growing inside.

Kheiti Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Kheiti.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008b) reported damage to the historic village during the fighting. 10 buildings were destroyed and 2 were severely damaged. 5% of the village was considered affected. Kheiti was a very historic village: after the war, it was almost completely bulldozed and torn down. Maxar imagery available via Google Earth indicates the demolition mostly occurred between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014 (see Kevanishvil 2018 for pictures, and **figures A1.44, A1.45, A1.46**).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).



Figure A1.44 Top: Kheiti village before the war, 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite imagery)
Figure A1.45 Middle: Kheiti village when the destruction began, 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite imagery)
Figure A1.46 Bottom: Kheiti village total demolition, 21 October 2019 (CNES/Airbus satellite imagery)
All via Google Earth.

Archangel Church (Church of the Archangel)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The 18-19th century church was restored by the Georgian Ministry of Culture in 2006. According to eyewitnesses, the dome of the church and the belfry were damaged during shelling on 12th of August 2008. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) reported "ID:1. Archangel Church in Kheiti (XIX c.) Severe Damages to south-western section of building" (*sic*). In a photo taken in 2012/3, the damage to the southern side of the church dome and the roof, as well as eastern side of the belltower's roof can be seen (roks_alana 2012, see also figure A1.47).

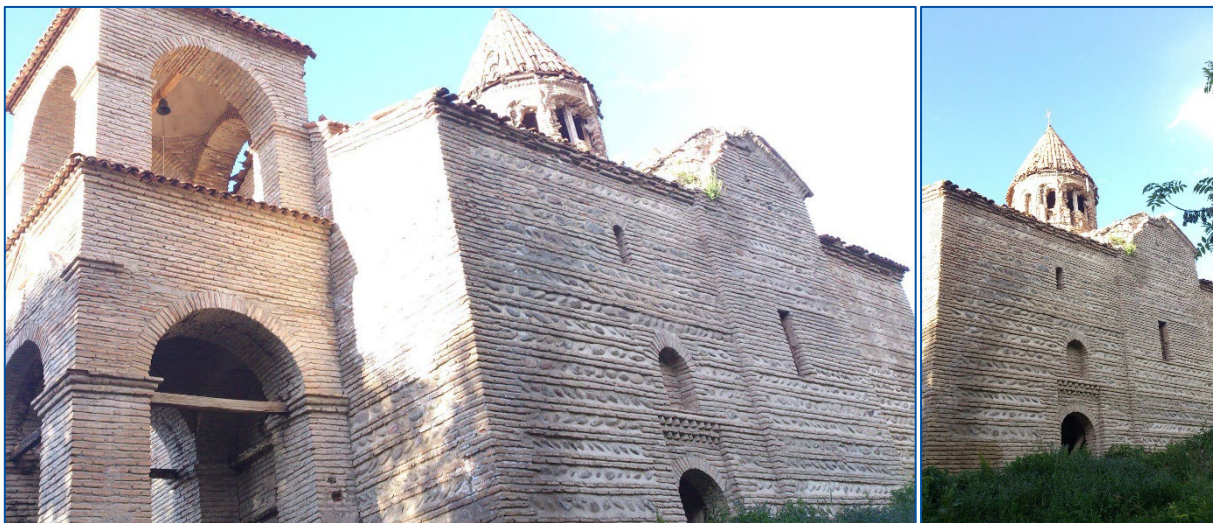


Figure A1.47 a,b: Archangel Church in 2013. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve.

Unlike the rest of the village; the church was not bulldozed and is still visible on the most recent satellite image on Google Earth, a CNES/Airbus image dated 21 October 2019 (A.1.48).



Figure A1.48: Archangel church is still standing (CNES imagery 2020), while the rest of the village has been torn down.

However, in photos dated 2018 (Karsanov 2018a, b) and 2021, the damage hasn't been repaired and the interior of the church dome seems to be in very poor condition (Streltsov 2021b).

Church of Dzelitskhoveli (Church of the True Pillar)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The church dates to the 8th-14th centuries, but the chamber and the walls were painted in the Russian style in the 19th century. Fragments of a fence are preserved around the church.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) of the 13th-14th century church (ID: 12) reported "No visual damage".

No damage is visible at the site on any image on Google Earth: the most recent image is taken by CNES/Airbus and dated 21 October 2019.

Church of Jvaripationsani

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

This late Middle Ages church was reported to be in a Poor condition in the original records.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 16) reported "No visual damages".

No damage is visible at the site on any image on Google Earth: the most recent image is dated 21 October 2019 provided by CNES/Airbus.

Holy Mother of God Church (Church of the Virgin)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

The church dates to the 10-15th centuries. It was destroyed during the 1991 earthquake when the western half of the arch and the southern part of the western wall collapsed.

CNES/Airbus imagery available via Google Earth indicates that the building tentatively identified as the Holy Mother Church in Kheiti was heavily damaged during fighting in 2008. A comparison of Maxar images dated 26 July 2007, and 19 October 2009 from Google Earth shows severe damage to the roof, which has almost completely collapsed. There is evidence of rubble around the walls, suggesting structural damage.

The building continued to deteriorate; and was partially collapsed on the image dated 22 March 2014. It does not seem to have been bulldozed; the remains are fewer on each sequential image, until only a few small foundation walls remain on the image dated 16 July 2019.

Church of the Saviour

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period

A small single-nave church dated to the Late Middle Ages. The original record lists it as being in Moderate condition, but it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Moderate

Known popularly as the “Dokaant Tower”, it was listed as being in Moderate condition in the original record as a result of an earthquake in 1991. It is visible on satellite imagery from 19th October 2009 (Maxar imagery via Google Earth) to 16th July 2019 (CNES/Airbus via Google Earth) where no further damage appears to have taken place.

Sabatsminda (also known as Kheiti)

Sabatsminda Monastery Complex

Site Type: Complex (Religious)

Condition: Poor

The site is sometimes referred to as being located at Mamisaantubani, the district. Sabatsminda is the name of the original area, before it was engulfed by the expansion of Kheiti. The complex (from the first half of the 10th c.) was badly damaged during the 1991 earthquake. The site was recorded as being in a very Poor condition in the original records: “the interior of the church is heavily deformed. Almost every wall is cracked”.

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c, site ID: 13) reported the site, which dates to the Middle Ages, records “No visual damages”. No damage is visible to the site on Google Earth satellite imagery: the most recent image assessed is from CNES/Airbus dated 16 July 2019.

In the photos taken in 2020, ruins of the church are exposed to growing vegetation and are in a poor condition (Orthodox church of Alania 2020b).

Sabatsminda Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Good

The site is sometimes referred to as being located at Mamisaantubani, the district. Sabatsminda is the name of the original area, before it was engulfed by the expansion of Kheiti.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c, site ID: 14) reported the site, which dates to the Middle Ages, records "No visual damages".

No damage is visible to the site on Google Earth satellite imagery: the most recent image is from CNES/Airbus dated 16 July 2019.

Khumsarta

Castle-Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The site was recorded in a Poor condition in the original records. It could not be located on the satellite imagery available via Google Earth and its current condition is unknown. Coordinates given are within 500m of a military base.

Church (Unnamed)

Site Type: Religious (church)

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The site was recorded in a Poor condition in the original records. It could not be located on the satellite imagery available via Google Earth and its current condition is unknown. Coordinates given are within 500m of a military base.

Kornisi

Building Ruins and Church ruins

Site Type: Dwelling / Religious (church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Sites could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The sites were recorded as Destroyed ruins in the original records. They could not be located on the satellite imagery available via Google Earth and their current condition is unknown. Coordinates given are within 500m of a military base.

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (church)

Condition: Moderate

This mediaeval church is within 500m of a military base.

Church of St. Giorgi

Site Type: Religious (church)

Condition: Poor

This 19th century church is within 500m of a military base. The church is also suffering from neglect.

Ruins of the Palace and Tower

Site Type: Complex

Condition: Moderate

This 17th century complex was recorded in a Poor condition in the original records; satellite imagery available via Google Earth suggests it is in a Moderate condition. However, it is 500m from a military base.

St George's Church

Site Type: Religious (church)

Condition: Good

The 19th century Church, located near Moghrisi, was recorded in a Good condition in the original records, however records also indicated the east wall has deep cracks; the interior is covered with vegetation and fallen stones are scattered around the church. No change is visible on satellite imagery available via Google Earth; however, it is within 500m of a military base.

St. Sameba Church

Site Type: Religious (church)

Condition: Poor

This Middle Ages church, located near Moghrisi, is within 500m of a military base.

Tower (Karmidamo of Khasievs)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

This Middle Ages Tower is in a Poor Condition, and is within 500m of a military base.

Tower (Gagiev of Karmidamo)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

This Middle Ages Tower is in a Poor Condition, and is within 500m of a military base.

Tower (Jioev Karmidamo)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Sites could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This mediaeval Tower could not be located on satellite imagery. It was in a moderate condition: supplied coordinates are within 500m of a military base.

Ksuisi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

According to eyewitnesses, Ksuisi was burnt and destroyed during and following the fighting. No satellite imagery is available on Google Earth of this historic village before 2008. Half the village is visible on the Maxar images on Google Earth dated to 19 October 2009 and 2 March 2010, and the first full image is available dated 1 June 2010. All imagery confirms the village suffered heavy damage and was ruined (but not cleared). Some houses were left intact; these are apparently Ossetian.

However, between 11 January 2018 and 11 October 2018, CNES satellite imagery via Google Earth shows that scattered ruined houses were destroyed (figure A1.49). The damage pattern is consistent with an explosion / blast radius, suggesting either conflict occurred (although there is no record of this), or the site was used for military manoeuvres.



Figure A1.49: Destroyed houses at Ksuisi village, 11 October 2018 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Church of the Archangel

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This church, dated to the Late Middle Ages, is listed in the original record as being in Moderate condition. It is visible in sequential satellite imagery from 1st June 2010 to 10th September 2021 (Maxar and CNES/Airbus imagery via Google Earth) which shows no further damage seems to have taken place.

Kurta Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Kurta.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008b) reported heavy damage to the historic village during the fighting. 123 buildings were destroyed and 21 were severely damaged. 43% of the village was considered affected. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting "in September [2008], the villages had been almost fully destroyed".

Kurta was a very historic village: after the war, most of the village was completely bulldozed and torn down (Kevanishvili 2018). Maxar satellite imagery available via Google Earth indicates this occurred between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014 (figure A1.50a,b,c,d).



Figure A1.50a,b,c,d: Kurta Village pre war and post war. Top left: standing village 30 September 2004 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth) Top right: Initial destruction 19 October 2009 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth) Bottom left: Demolition 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth) Bottom right: Total destruction 21 October 2019 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Basishvili House (“Priest’s House”)

Site Type: Dwelling

Condition: Destroyed

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This site was listed as being in a Moderate condition in the original record. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today but, as everything else in the vicinity has been destroyed, either as a result of the hostilities or when the village was bulldozed between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014 (Maxar imagery via Google Earth), it is assumed that Basishvili House is now cleared.

Church of the Archangel

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

This church, located on the east side of Kurta, was listed as being in Good condition in the original record. By 21st October 2019 (visible on CNES/Airbus imagery via Google Earth), the area had been completely overgrown by trees, so the condition is now considered to be Poor. In photos taken in 2018 the roof of the church seems to be deteriorating (Kozueva 2018a).

Church of St. George

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

The 9th century church was destroyed in the 1991 earthquake and a new church was built on the site in 2003. The church is surrounded by a fence, with a gate-bell tower to the east.

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c) indicates the church(ID: 9) has “No visual damage, but located by multiple fire-destroyed buildings”.

Unlike the rest of the village, which has been cleared, the recent Google Earth satellite imagery by CNES/Airbus dated 21 October 2019 indicates this building has been left intact (figures A.51, A1.52, A1.53).

Giorgi Machabeli Palace and House Museum

Site Type: Museum

Condition: Destroyed

Database records indicate the site “was robbed and destroyed during the first Ossetian-Georgian conflict”. According to the locals, the 19th century building was in a damaged state before 2008; there were plans to reconstruct the damaged palace. However, they say the site was damaged during the war: the nature of the damage is not reported.



In spite of the village's destruction, St. George's church is still standing. Figure A1.51 (top): St George's Church before village demolition 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth). Figure A1.52 (Middle): St George's Church during village demolition 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth). Figure A1.53 (Bottom): St George's Church, Kurta, after village demolition 11 July 2014 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) indicates "ID:4. George Machabeli's Palace in Kurta. No visual damage identified [sic], but multiple fire-destroyed buildings in close proximity." However, in their later update (UNOSAT 2008d), they reported "No visual damage to ruins as marked before, however the main building complex roof markings are possible indications of fire-related damages and there is a possible impact site in the roof consistent with a mortar round."

Later sequential Google Earth imagery supports the interpretation of fire damage to the building, and Maxar satellite images indicate that between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014, the site was completely destroyed.

Kurta Office of Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Site Type: Museum-Reserve

Condition: Destroyed

Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve was established in 2005 and has been part of the National Agency for Heritage Preservation since 2009. Until the 2008 war, it was situated in village Kurta, adjacent to the historical site - Giorgi Machabeli Palace.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 20) reported "Building destroyed, arson probably, surrounded by fire-damaged buildings".

Assessment of Maxar satellite imagery on Google Earth indicates that between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014, the site was completely destroyed.

Missions of the museum was to:

- Inventory the heritage sites located in Didi and Patara (big and small) Liakhvi river valleys.
- Undertake archeological monitoring works in the valleys;
- Carry out maintenance works on the sites;
- Prepare studies prior to restoration design works;
- Carry out restoration and rehabilitation works.

A report of the works undertaken between 2005-2015 can be seen in the presentation published on the museum's Facebook page (Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve 2017a). It includes restoration works on architectural monuments prior to the 2008 war, documentation of the damage and destruction incurred by heritage sites during the war and monitoring works. Nowadays the museum is located in the IDP settlement in Gori and it serves as a community education centre focusing on the local and IDP youth from the Tskhinvali region.

Kurta Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This rectangular tower, dated to the 17th-18th Centuries, was listed in the original record as being in Poor condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Kviratskhoveli Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Kviratskhoveli (St. Thomas Sunday) Church, dating to the Middle Ages, was listed in the original record as being in Moderate condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

St. George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Good)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The Niche of St. George of Geri is described in the original record as being in a Good condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Tsiskarishvili Palace

Site Type: Palace

Condition: Destroyed

The Tsiskarishvili Palace, dating to the 19th Century, was clearly Destroyed between 26th July 2007 and 19th October 2009 as a result of the hostilities. The ruins were cleared when the village was bulldozed between 22 March 2014 and 11 July 2014 (Maxar imagery via Google Earth).

Largvisi

Largvisi Monastery Complex (Fortification, and Church of St. Theodore the Tyron)

Site Type: Complex (Religious)

Condition: Moderate (some parts Poor)

The Largvisi Monastery Complex (figure A1.54) dates from the 6th and 14th-18th centuries: according to the chronicles, monastic life and construction activities had been recorded there since the 14th century. It consists of a burial site, church and residential castle-palace of the Ksani Eristavi family. It was an important centre for monasticism, where Georgian writing traditions thrived, and an important spiritual and educational centre. The river Ksani has destroyed the foundation of Largvisi church many times.

According to an eyewitness who had been travelling in the area, the main church of the Monastery Complex is in mediocre condition, but the bare windows can not protect the interior from weathering and birds. The Eristavi palace is gradually collapsing while the main portal is already on the brink of collapse.

No new damage is visible on the satellite imagery available on Google Earth: this includes Maxar images dating to 21 April 2002, 28 April 2013, 21 June 2015 and a CNES Airbus image dated to 29 June 2018 and 12 May 2021.

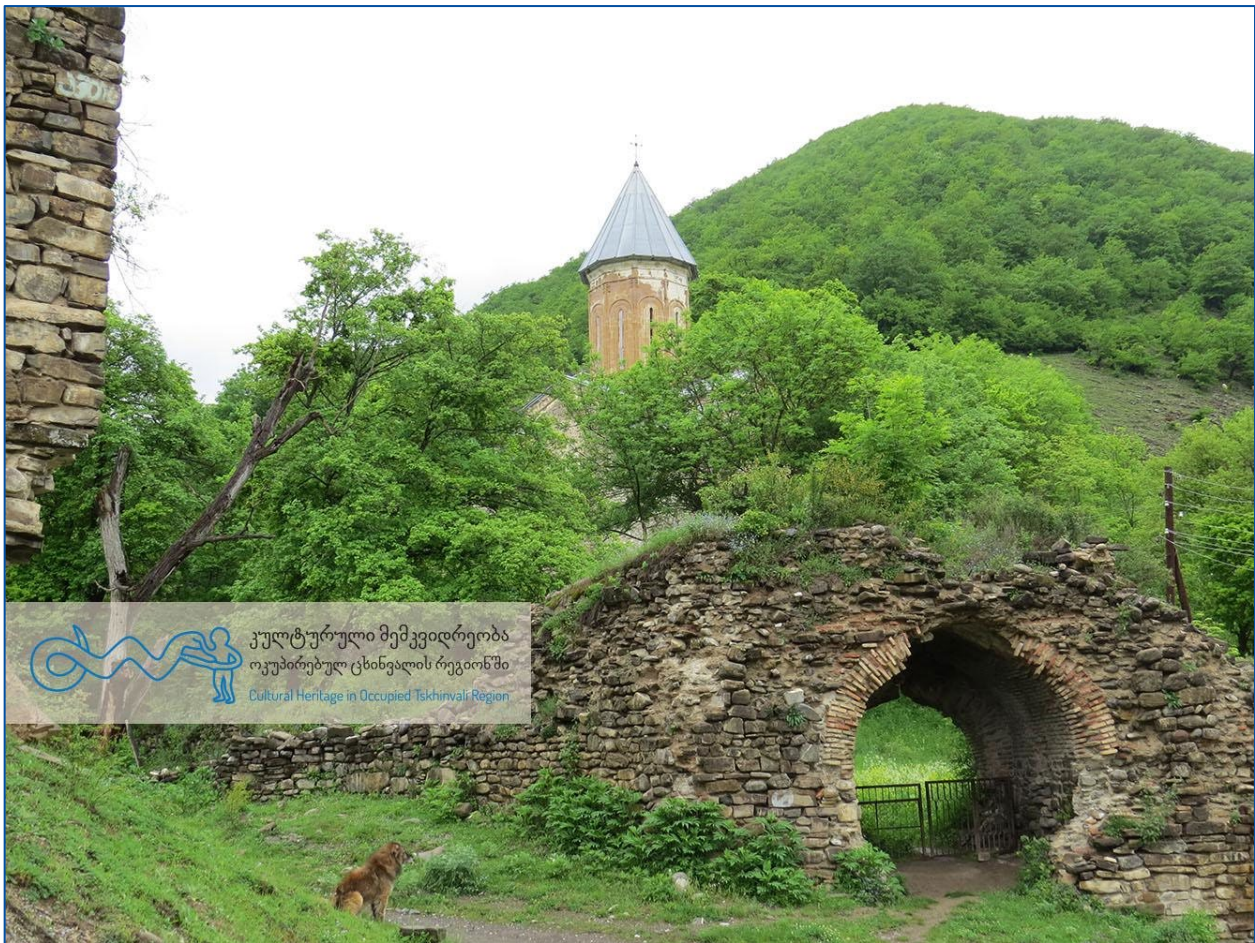


Figure A1.54: Largvisi Monastery in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Lisa

Church (Lisa Jvari) and Tower

Site Type: Religious and Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The church lies on a hill, 3 km north-east of the village. The church used to be plastered inside. Plaster has detached from the wall surface at many locations. The north and south walls have lost facing stone in many places. The west wall of the church abuts on a rectangular tower, which survives at the height of three storeys. The floor is covered with earth. The interior of the tower is filled with vegetation and the building is damaged.

Monasteri (Kvemo)

Tiri Monastery - Monastic Complex of the Nativity of the Virgin (nowadays referred to as “Church of St. Tuty” by Ossetians)

Site Type: Religious (Monastic complex)

Condition: Moderate

Tiri Monastery is one of the most prominent monuments of Georgian culture, distinguished by its architecture, ornamentation, wall paintings, and lapidary inscriptions, which were constantly renewed throughout the 13th to 17th centuries by Georgian noblemen and kings. It has been used as a crypt for many noble families of Georgia, with family names such as Tavkhelidze, Taktakidze and Machabeli. The son of King Vakhtang the 6th, Rostom Batonishvili, is buried in the main church. The monastery is small, only one church and bell tower. It has a simple gable roof, there are two entrances from the south side - to the church and to the narthex - and one from the north, to the tomb. Windows and doors are decorated with beautiful stone carvings.

UNOSAT’s satellite imagery assessment (2008c⁸⁶, site ID: 15) confirmed that no damage was suffered by this 13th century monastery during the war.

A Russian clergyman lived and preached at the Tiri Monastery from 2008 until 2010. However, today the monastery is deserted.

Nevertheless, neglect has resulted in damage from natural causes: the condition of the monastery is slowly worsening. The ceilings and walls of the church are dilapidated, and water leaking from the roof is damaging the walls. The rising humidity threatens the 14th century wall paintings. In 2009, a Russian newspaper reported that services were renewed in the church after many years. According to the monk who lived there, he photographed the frescoes three months ago, and if the pictures were compared to the (then) current state of the frescoes, deterioration was visible even over the three months. The monk also reported cracks that let the rain in, causing further damage. The article finished with a phone number for a charity created to raise money for restoration (Komsomolskaya Pravda 2009).

Russian and Georgian news reported (Blagovest-info 2015; Gruzija Online 2015) that in 2008, a Russian conservation expert examined the frescoes: they were in an “unsatisfactory condition as the roof of the temple was leaking, the paint layer had swelled, and the masonry was separated from the plaster. [We] made recommendations to the Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia on the restoration of this fresco painting”, as well on the restoration and reconstruction of the roof, conservation work, and prepared a program for the restoration of frescoes. They noted emergency conservation work had already become necessary in the church. However, as of 2015, the recommendations were not implemented due to “lack of funding”.

In November 2012 students and other volunteers cleaned the church and its surroundings. They were reported saying that the church roof needs repairs, the walls have cracks, and the wall paintings were deteriorating (Yuga.ru 2012).

⁸⁶ The label on the satellite image repeats the text of Kekhvi Fortress: we use the text on the map label instead.

In 2013, a local businessman funded repair works of the roof. The cracks in the stones were covered in concrete, and small-scale archaeological works were conducted in the monastic cells north of the church. According to the local people, workers who lacked specialist conservation skills and who came from Echmiadzin (Armenia) carried out the work. Media reports indicate that in 2013 the presidential funds covered the costs for the repair of the roof of the church to protect it from weathering (Sputnik 2015c) (figure A1.55). A news report (SIA “RES” 2014b) indicates the clergy restored the roof of the church in 2013 with funds allocated from the President to the Alanian Eparchy, but they stated the building was “still in disrepair and needs to be restored immediately”. It is unknown whether the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia were involved or to what standard the works were carried out.



Figure A1.55: Tiri Monastery in 2013. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

In July 2015, Russian news agencies reported (Sputnik 2015b, 2015f, 2015h) that unauthorised works had been carried out at Tiri Monastery: a team of unskilled workers from construction company called “Uyut” caused “significant damage” to ancient murals and used stones from the 17th century refectory to build the fence⁸⁷. In either the 2013 or the 2015 restoration, when local people undertook to rebuild the church, they covered the walls in an era-inappropriate cement mortar that should not be used on historic buildings (Sputnik 2015h).

The de-facto Ministry of Culture of Tskhinvali occupation regime suspended the work until a Russian specialist could be called in to assess the damage. The de-facto Minister of Culture said they would be

⁸⁷ GNCBS reacted to the news in one of its appeal letters (GNCBS 2013).

allowed to continue work on the conservation of four churches in South Ossetia in accordance with the recommendations of the head of the All-Russian Art Scientific and Restoration Centre named after Academician Grabar, Alexander Lesovoy and under the supervision of employees of the Monument Protection Department (Sputnik 2015g). Lesovoy trained “Uyut’s” workers how to carry out emergency conservation of historic monuments. Restoration was then carried out in accordance with his “strict recommendations” and under the control of the de-facto Ministry of Culture. In particular, they removed the cement mortar they placed on the walls, and replaced it with an era-appropriate material (Sputnik 2015h).



Figures A1.56a,b,c: Use of cement in the reconstruction and repair work at Tiri Monastery, 2016. ©Blue Shield Georgia.

News reports (SIA “RES” 2016, Byazrova 2017) indicated that the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia carried out restoration works at the Monastery complex as part of the 2015-16 investment program with the involvement of Russian specialists and based on their recommendations. This is presumably the 2015 work referenced above. However, photos of the respective repair works dated 2016 (figure A1.56a,b,c) obtained by us show that the works were undertaken with the use of non-traditional material such as cement, which will contribute to further damage of the structure. The works were referred to as “roof repair works under the investment programme”. Another article reported the workers of the same company saying that they were not touching the wall painting in Tiri, rather covering it with some material to prevent collapse (Sputnik 2015e).

The site was assessed via sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth between September 2004 on Maxar and June 2020 on CNES. Although there were signs of neglect, the site appears to be in a moderate to good condition. Obviously, the damages to and the current condition of the wall painting could not be assessed.

Nuli Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Nuli.

Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported visiting the historic village in September 2008, which “by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning” and was deserted.

The satellite imagery by Maxar available through Google Earth has a large time-gap: it indicates between 10 October 2013 and 22 March 2014 some houses were demolished. However, the ruins of many others remain, and are still visible on the most recent imagery provided by CNES satellite dated 16 July 2019.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Church of Friday

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A local church dated to the Middle Ages; it was listed as being in Moderate condition in the original record. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is Unknown.

Ruins of the Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

Very little is known about this church, other than that it is listed as having been Destroyed in the original record. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its current condition is Unknown.



Nuli village pre and post war.

Figure A1.57 (top left): 26 July 2007 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth)

A1.58 (top right): 2022 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth)

A1.59: (bottom): Close of up 2022 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth)

St. George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

A local single-nave church dating to the 16th-17th centuries. The church was listed as being in Poor condition in the original record, but it has not been possible to positively identify it in the available satellite imagery. However, all buildings in the vicinity of the coordinates have suffered heavy damage between 26th July 2007 and 4th November 2011 (both Maxar images via Google Earth), and so the church is assumed to have been destroyed.

St. Sameba Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This church, dating to the 17th-18th centuries was listed as being in Moderate condition in the original record. The church is visible on satellite imagery between 26th July 2007 and 16th July 2019 (Maxar images and CNES/Airbus via Google Earth), where no additional damage is evident.

Prisi Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, a news report (Kevanishvil 2018) indicates that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Prisi.

Information provided to the research team during the research from those visiting the area, and analysis of sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth, indicates one side of the village - the ethnic Georgian side - was badly damaged and almost completely burned down during and just after the war, although there is no evidence that the ruins were bulldozed and cleared.

Today, only the part of the village which used to be inhabited by ethnic Ossetians remains.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the general historic fabric of the village)

Church of the Virgin Mary

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This church is listed in the original record as being in Unknown condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and so its condition is still Unknown.

Roka

Tower of the Toranovs

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

The Tower dates primarily to the Middle Ages but has a history spanning 4th-18th centuries. In the photos taken in 2008 the tower is in a poor condition and two of its walls are partially ruined (Lost Ossetia n.d-e). Site identification is highly tentative, but satellite imagery available via Google Earth indicates that, in 2011, the tower was partially collapsed, and a new building is visible adjacent to it.

Rustavi

Archangel Church

Site type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

A single nave church dating to the 10th-15th centuries; the site was listed as a Destroyed ruin in the original records, however a Maxar satellite image available on Google Earth dating to 30 September 2004, and another dating to 26 July 2007, indicate that the building was more or less intact with a roof (although the roof was not in good condition).

The church was in a poor condition in the years following the war. In the photos found online, the roof was severely damaged and the annex on the southern side of the church was almost completely destroyed (Lost Ossetia n.d.-c). Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth shows that the roof was (reasonably) intact in February 2012, but in a very poor condition by March 2014. By 9 May 2016 (Maxar image via Google Earth), the majority of the roof had collapsed.

In 2018, according to media reports the church (referred to as the temple of Tarandjeloz, which alters its toponym) was to be restored. Valery Tskhovrebov was named as the head of the restoration works, an individual, who had also led the unauthorised works in Zonkari church (Osinform 2018, Sputnik 2021c). In a video posted on social media in 2019, the church appears to have undergone significant intervention. The southern annex has been fully reconstructed, the church has a new roof, interior of the church is also fully renovated - walls are covered with decorative stone masonry and the ceiling is plastered (Kharebati 2019). It appears that the era-inappropriate mortar was used during the process. The new roof is clearly visible on a CNES/Airbus image dated 21 October 2019 via Google Earth. The changes can be seen more clearly in the photos taken in 2021 (Streltsov 2021h) - which confirm that little of the original material remains.

Sakire

Mskhlebi Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This late Middle Ages Church was recorded as Destroyed in the original database, with only rubble visible. The coordinates given today lie within the boundaries of a military area. It could not be located on satellite imagery and it is unknown if it survives.

Padiev's Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The late Middle Ages tower is built of large-size rubble stone and is preserved on to five stories. The site was recorded in a Poor condition in the original records. It could not be located on the satellite imagery available via Google Earth and its current condition is unknown.

Coordinates given are within 500m of a military base.

Satskheneti Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, a news report (Kevanishvil 2018) indicates that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Satskheneti.

Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported visiting the historic village in November 2008, reporting it was "also almost fully destroyed".

However, a review of imagery from Maxar via Google Earth indicates the ruins remain (with the most recent image dated to 11 October 2018) and were not cleared.

According to local sources, those houses which have residents are inhabited by Ossetians.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

St. George's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This church is listed in the original record as being in Poor condition. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Siata

Remains of building

Site Type: Dwelling

Condition: Destroyed

Remains of a rectangular late mediaeval building. The walls are preserved in some places up to 2 metres high. The settlement is covered with earth and vegetation. The site was recorded as a Destroyed ruin in the original database; sequential satellite imagery via Google earth indicates no visible change in condition.

Skhliti

Church (Unnamed)

Site type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The church dates to the 8th-9th centuries, although the condition was largely good, the database noted that "The edging stones on the facades have been removed in many places". A news report (SIA "RES" 2014b) indicates that restoration works were undertaken at the village church in 2014 by the Alanian eparchy who also entirely funded the work. Their works were carried out in consultation with specialists of the de-facto Ministry of Construction in close cooperation with the Department for the Protection of Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture, who have jurisdiction over the building; it is unknown if that is the case here.

The Maxar imagery via Google Earth indicates that another building was constructed next to the church by 4 November 2011 which is still visible in the recent Maxar images via Google Earth (14 June 2020) (figure A1.60a,b).

The framework of the new building can be seen on images found online (Lost Ossetia n.d.-a). In social media posts published in 2021 the new building is finished and the church stone walls look like they have been filled with cement mortar, its roof has been changed and the interior walls have been plastered (Pukhaev, 2021; Gabarati, 2021; Streltsov 2021d). The images suggest that little of the original fabric remains.



Figure A1.60 a,b (left): Skhliti village church, 26 July 2007. (Right) the new building next to it, 17 May 2012. Maxar satellite images via Google Earth.

Sveri Village

Site Type: Historic Village

The village clearly sustained damage during the fighting in 2008, CNES/Airbus imagery via Google Earth indicates that the ruins of the village are still present today (as of 21 October 2019, on the most recent image).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

St. George's (Wooden) Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

The 19th century church is listed as a rare example of wooden architecture. However, eyewitnesses to the event informed the authors that it was completely burnt as a result of an airstrike during the fighting in 2008, and showed photographs of the burned church.

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) confirms "ID:6. one building destroyed, second potentially severely damaged. 4 adjacent buildings destroyed / severely". The destroyed building is the church itself. Examination of Maxar imagery available via Google Earth indicates the same results.

Sveri Zakartsminda

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A Middle Ages single-nave church on the right bank of the Sveriskhevi. The original record lists the church as being in a Destroyed condition, with walls preserved to a height of between 0.5 and 1.8 metres. It could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Tamarasheni Village

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, news reports (Kevanishvil 2018; Aptsiauri 2020a) and other anonymous sources indicate that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Tamarensi.

During the war, UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008a) reported "Heaviest concentration of building damages in the town of Tamarasheni north of Tskhinvali, with a total of 177 affected buildings." A second analysis (UNOSAT 2008b) detailed the damage to the historic village during the fighting. 136 buildings were destroyed and 47 were severely damaged. 51% of the village was considered affected. Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported witnessing the deliberate looting and burning of the village in August 2008, noting "in September [2008], the villages had been almost fully destroyed".

After the war, in 2015, the ruins were completely bulldozed and torn down (Kevanishvil 2018), and confirmed via Maxar satellite imagery available through Google Earth. Demolition occurred between 22 March 2014 and 7 November 2014. Very little of the original village remains, although a news report indicates the cemetery has survived (Aptsiauri 2018).

Following the war, apartment blocks were built in the historic village (see figures A1.61, A1.62), and the area has been renamed "Moskovski" (Moscowian) (Aptsiauri 2020). The burnt houses which are still standing are labeled with numbers (according to the new owners); this is thought to be in preparation for demolition. This process has also happened elsewhere, and includes religious structures (see for example, **Kashueti Church, Kemerti, figure A1.43**).

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).



Figure A1.61, A1.62: The transformation of Tamarasheni within two years. The northern construction is “Moskovski” . Top: Pre war, 26 July 2007. Bottom: Post war, 19 October 2019 (Maxar satellite images via Google Earth).

Ivane Machabeli House-Museum

Site Type: Museum

Condition: Poor

The Ivane Machabeli House Museum (from the 18th-19th centuries) is located in village Tamarasheni, Gori Municipality; it was a memorial museum for a prominent Georgian writer and public figure – Ivane Machabeli and contained memorial items of Ivane Machabeli, ethnographic objects from the 19th century from Samachablo region.

Reports indicate that in 1997 bombing by South Ossetian forces destroyed a historical wine-cellar located in the yard of the museum.

During 2001- 2003 the building of the house-museum was restored by the Ministry of Culture and Monuments Protection of Georgia and reopened. During the restoration, the concrete ceiling of the palace was covered with tin.

The original database record reports that during the summer of 2004, the palace was targeted by Ossetian separatist artillery (walls and roofs collapsed), when tensions were high.

According to museum staff, the palace was heavily bombed and damaged during the 2008 war; the collections could not be evacuated due to the sudden developments. UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008c) reports "ID2: Ivane Machabeli Museum (XIX c.) in Tamarasheni. Possible damage to roof of northern section (uncertain). 8 adjacent buildings destroyed / severely damaged." Satellite imagery assessment conducted for this project confirmed the site was in a poor condition, damaged due to hostilities.

Although we were informed that the museum was completely knocked down after the war, Maxar imagery available on Google Earth indicates that the heavy damage UNOSAT reported during the fighting led to the partial collapse of the building by 2010, and although the southern part has been bulldozed, the northern part remains (as of 2019) in a highly ruined condition (figure A1.63, A1.64, A1.65).

Today, a small exhibition space in the IDP settlement in village Tserovani is dedicated to the photos of Ivane Machabeli and the vanished museum building. It serves as a community space for the IDPs from the area.



Figure A1.63: Ivane Machabeli House-Museum, 2013. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve



Figure A1.64: The Ivane Machabeli House Museum before the war (30 September 2004, Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).

Figure A1.65: The Ivane Machabeli House Museum after the war (2022, CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Matskhovari Church of the Saviour

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

UNOSAT's satellite imagery assessment (2008d) of the site (ID: 212) reported "no visual damages" at the 16th century building. Google Earth imagery suggests that the building is still present on Maxar imagery dated 16 July 2019 despite the demolition of the rest of the village, but the vegetation is very overgrown, and obscures a clear view: however, at least some of the building remains.

Church of the Archangel

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Good)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A single-nave church that stood on the site of a former church. The original record lists this church as being in Good condition, but it has not been possible to locate it in satellite imagery, so this cannot be verified.

Church of the Assumption of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A wooden church that is listed as Destroyed in the original record, to the extent that an archaeological excavation would be required to identify it. It has not been possible to locate it in the satellite imagery, so this cannot be verified.

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A single-nave church that dated to the Middle Ages. This church is listed in the original records as having been Destroyed, with only ruins and fragments of foundation discernible. It has not been possible to locate it in the satellite imagery, so this cannot be verified.

Tbeti

Church Kvisakdari

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

According to Russian news (Russian Newspaper 2008), a village church, which dated to the Late Middle Ages, and which was located 700m SE of the village, was hit by a shell during the fighting on August 8-10, 2008. The south corner and the southern wall of the skeleton of the church were destroyed.

There are three Churches in the village, all dating to the Middle Ages: the article does not specify whether it is Bzebi Church, Kvavisakdari Church, or Church of the Virgin, or the Mother of God. All three are recorded as Destroyed in the national database records, with photos dated to 1982⁸⁸, that indicates the pre-conflict condition: they were in a ruinous condition before the fighting occurred. Only Church "Kvavisakdari" is reported to be 700m SE of the village, tentatively located in a highly ruined state, only a few courses high. Possible damage is visible to the south-eastern corner of the ruin on the Maxar image dated 19 October 2009, via Google Earth.

In photos taken in 2021 Kvavisakdari Church is in ruinous condition, but parts of its eastern and western walls are still standing (Streltsov, 2021j).

Tighva

Church of the Holy Cross

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

This monastic complex (figure A1.66) dates to 1152, and was repaired in 1892-1939, and restored in 1971, according to the database records⁸⁹.



Figure A1.66: Tighva Church of the Holy Cross (2004) © Tengo Gabunia

⁸⁸ https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge:60/Files?id=234113_A50D5028-DD2D-4F31-A70C-EDEDED328EB5

⁸⁹ Photo of the site (undated) on Google Earth: https://lh5.googleusercontent.com/p/AF1QipPPnWPLdvbpnfLOl-OnPqyAKuWXql5uCyJ_5q2-=w408-h306-k-no

A 2014 news report (SIA “RES” 2014b) indicated the Alanian clergy planned to create an Orthodox centre on their own at “the Church”. (That is assumed to be this church, given its condition and clear investment in its maintenance, unlike others in the village.) The state gave them the old library building, which was located on church and monastery land. The building dates to the 1940s, and was in disrepair. The clergy repaired the roof, strengthened the walls and prepared for major repairs.

A 2017 news report (Byazrova 2017) indicated that the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia intended to conduct restoration at the 12th century Church as part of the 2017-18 program of works. However, according to a 2018 news report (SIA “RES” 2018a), the “Alanian Orthodox Church” began repairing the 12th century church on their own as “there is no money for a large-scale reconstruction of the cultural monument in the village of Tighva yet. The building is in poor condition”. They reported that the building needed significant strengthening works, but as of 2018, they had only been able to afford to install new windows to prevent water infiltration. However, they were seeking additional funding to continue the work. As a historic listed building, all restoration works should have been conducted under supervision of the proper professionals; it is unclear if this occurred.

The complex is visible in sequential satellite imagery from 6th March 2011 (Maxar via Google Earth) to 11th August 2021 (CNES/Airbus via Google Earth), but the damage is not evident within the images.

Tskhavati

Holy Virgin Monastery Complex

Site Type: Religious (Monastic Complex)

Condition: Poor

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.



Figure A1.67 (left): Tskhavati Monastery, church of St. George in 2016 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Figure A1.68 (right): Tskhavati Monastery, wall paintings in the church of the Holy Virgin in 2016 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Holy Virgin Monastery Complex is one of the few sites in the village. This Monastic complex dates from the 9th-13th centuries, and was originally reported in a Poor condition. According to an eyewitness, the 13th century wall paintings in the main church are in a woeful condition. In the church of St. George, which is part of the complex, and in the adjoining space on its northern side, the vault is about to collapse and water is

penetrating (figure A1.67, A1.68). Although no imagery assessment is possible, there is no evidence the condition of the site has improved.

Tskhinvali

Site Type: Historic Village

Tskhinvali was first chronicled by Georgian sources in 1398 as a village in Kartli (central Georgia) though a later account credits the 3rd century AD Georgian king Asphagur of Iberia with its foundation as a fortress. By the early 18th century, Tskhinvali was a small "royal town" populated chiefly by monastic serfs.

Tskhinvali Historic quarter and other buildings

Site Type: Historic quarter

According to Russian news (Vorobiev 2008), the historic quarters of Tskhinvali were almost completely destroyed by shelling by Georgian troops on August 8-9, 2008. They also reported significant damage to a complex of residential buildings in Theatre Square that dated to the 1930s, and to a 1930s university building.

Abajev / Abaev Memorial house-museum (also called the Vaso Abajev House Museum)

Site Type: Museum

Condition: Destroyed (and replaced)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

According to Russian news (Vorobiev 2008), Vaso Abajev (Abaev), an "outstanding Iranianist, Ossetian scholar, researcher of the Ossetian language and folklore" lived in this house in 1980-90. This wooden memorial house museum was opened in either 2000 or 2002 in Tskhinvali.

However, during the shelling in Tskhinvali on 8-9 August 2008, the house completely burned down and the exhibits were lost (Plieva 2015).

Restoration of the museum apparently started in 2014 when the construction company from Tatarstan "Everest" began to restore the house-museum as a "gift" at their own expense. The builders poured the foundation and erected the walls but then "the workers disappeared somewhere, promising to finish their work. The construction of the museum ... stopped" (Plieva 2015; Kulumbegov 2021).

In 2016, the former de-facto President of South Ossetia Leonid Tibilov promised to allocate funds from the presidential fund for the restoration of the museum and complete it for the next birthday of the scientist. The money was allocated, but the president's order was never fulfilled. A year later, the de-facto Minister of Culture Zhanna Zasseeva reported that the restoration of the house-museum of Vaso Abaev was to be completed in 2018, about three million rubles would be needed for these purposes (Kulumbegov 2021). In 2019 reconstruction resumed, and in February 2021 the museum was reopened in a newly constructed building. The de-facto Ministry of Culture was actively engaged in equipping the restored museum with exhibits and materials about Vaso Abaev which were collected or requested as loans (Kulumbegov 2021; SES "RES" 2021a).

Abajev / Abaev Memorial Monument

Site Type: Other

Condition: Unknown

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period, and is not in the online database.

According to a news report (Vorobiev 2008), this monument to Vaso Abajev (Abaev), an “outstanding Iranianist, Ossetian scholar, researcher of the Ossetian language and folklore”, erected in 2000, was hit during the shelling in Tskhinvali on 8-9 August 2008, and the upper part of the sculpture was destroyed. It was also reported to be riddled with bullet holes (Kulumbegov 2021). The damage can be seen in the photo posted online in 2009 (Kozhukharov 2009).

According to the reports, in 2009 a new monument made out of bronze was to be placed in the same spot and the damaged monument would be transferred to the state library (SIA “RES” 2009). The monument was replaced with the new one which was still in place in 2021 (Streltsov 2021f).

Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin (Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary), Former Armenian Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Good

The Cathedral is located in the centre of Tskhinvali. Following a period of disuse (and misuse as a warehouse), the church was restored in the 1990s (SIA “RES” 2014b): it was fenced, repaired, and services resumed in the church. A new small structure (eukterion) was built on the south side of the cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin, covering the Georgian donor inscription on the southern façade giving its construction date – 1718.



Figure A1.69: The Cathedral in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve.

According to Russian news (Vorobiev 2008), during the fighting in 2008, Georgian troops shelled the office premises located on the church's territory on August 8-9, 2008, which were significantly damaged. The upper part of the buildings was destroyed. Local Georgians contest this, however.

After 2008, a new portico was also built on the northern side of the church and the interior was covered with new wall painting in the Russian style. The façade previously showed a relief of the Virgin, together with writing in the Georgian Mkhedruli alphabet from 1816 detailing the previous restoration of the church by local Armenian residents. The ramparts on the façade and the framing on the windows were painted red. New dwelling structures for the clergy, and a shop, bell tower and gate have been built around the church, according to the Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum Reserve representatives (figure A1.60), and an eyewitness who had been travelling in the area.

A news report (SIA "RES" 2014b) indicates that further restoration works were undertaken in 2014 by the local eparchy who also entirely funded the work. It was carried out in consultation with specialists of the de-facto Ministry of Construction in close cooperation with the Department for the Protection of Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture, who have de facto jurisdiction over the building. According to the clergy, the walls of the temple were covered with oil paint, which did not allow them to breathe; they were covered with mold resulting in the gradual deterioration of the building. Restoration works included: strengthening the foundations, replacing electrical wiring, plastering the walls and installing a new warm floor. The article also reported that the old plywood templon would be replaced with a new stone one by specialists from Moscow, adorned with marble mosaics. It states also that the eparchy decided not to paint the walls of the lower sections of the church but to place icons instead and preserve the existing old painting in the upper sections.

No damage was visible to the Church on satellite imagery available via Google Earth (figure A1.70).



Figure A1.70: Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin in Tskhinvali dated 2019 by CNES satellite via Google Earth

Castle Ruins

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site was listed as a Destroyed ruin in the original records. It could not be located on satellite imagery via Google but the coordinates provided are within 500m of a new military base.

Church of St. George (Red Church of Dgvrisi)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

This 19th Century Church is a Destroyed ruin on the earliest available imagery. A front annex is visible in an undated photo on Google Earth, and on Maxar satellite images from 26 July 2007 and 19 October 2010. Following this, the entire church becomes very overgrown with trees and vegetation, visible on multiple images. On the most recent image at time of assessment (CNES/Airbus, April 2022), the trees are cleared, the ruin is clearly visible, but the Annex is gone. Some time after 2007, a wall was put up between the front of the church and the road. The wall was removed some time after 16 July 2019 (when it was still visible on the Maxar image on Google Earth); the annex may have been destroyed then. It is within 500m of a military base.

Museum of Local History (now the so-called State Museum of South Ossetia)

Site Type: Museum

Condition: Poor/Good

Both the original museum, which was damaged in the fighting, and the new museum, are in the database.

The Tskhinvali Museum of Local History was opened in the 1920s. initially it consisted of ethnographic objects, but the collection was soon enriched with archaeological objects from regional archaeological expeditions. It also has collections of paintings and graphic art. Archaeological findings from nearby Tlia, gathered over 28 years of expeditions there, form the most precious collection of the museum and consist of 16,000 objects from burials of the early and middle Bronze Age. The famous Okona Triptych was also kept in this museum (see below).

According to eyewitnesses, the museum suffered damage during both phases of the war. During the fighting in the 1990s, the museum lay empty and was heavily damaged, with claims of looting of the collections, which were evacuated for storage to Vladikavkaz in the Republic of North Ossetia, Russia (SIA "RES" 2016; Biazarti 2019). According to a 2010 news article, the museum was in very bad condition (SIA "RES" 2010) (figure A1.71). As claimed on news websites of Tskhinvali, many artifacts from Tskhinvali Local Museum were damaged in the 1990s due to the lack of appropriate storing conditions (Sputnik 2015a). In order to protect those artifacts, which included materials found in the Tlia burial site, they were transferred to Vladikavkaz (SIA "RES" 2017; Sputnik 2016).

In 2015 as part of the de facto Ministry of Culture Investment Program for the Promotion of Social and Economic Development of South Ossetia, a new Local History Museum building was commissioned and completed at a cost of 86,590 rubles (SIA "RES" 2016). The new building is in the city centre and is "built in the style of Soviet classicism", with an area of more than two thousand square metres that includes: two

exhibition halls, a library, a restoration workshop, and a conference hall (Kotaeva 2015). Local sources report the original building is now used as a storage warehouse: Maxar satellite imagery available via Google Earth indicates a new roof was built between June 2010 and August 2011.



Figure A1.71: Old building of the Museum of Local History in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

According to the information available today, the artifacts transferred from the Tskhinvali Local Museum in the 1990s were given back to the newly opened Museum of Tskhinvali in 2015 (Sputnik 2015j, Sputnik 2016; SIA “RES” 2015). The collections, including the evacuated works of Kosta Khetagurov and Makharbek Tuganov and the collection of Koban bronze from the Tlia burial ground, were returned from Vladikavkaz to Tskhinvali (SIA “RES” 2016; Kotaeva 2015). The new museum contains collections of paintings by the Ossetian artist Makharbek Tuganov, elements of The Koban Bronze, the Iron Age, tools of the Scythian-Sarmatian period, elements of women's jewellery of the Bronze Age and the Silver Age, and famous artifacts from the Tlia burial grounds, amongst other collections. The exhibits of the former Museum of Military Glory have also been moved here and placed on display (Kotaeva 2015). The de facto Minister of Culture, Madina Ostayeva reported “Work is underway to collect material to create a genocide department for the recent history of South Ossetia” (SIA “RES” 2016). Nonetheless, it is unknown if the full collection has been returned or not. Interesting in this aspect is the news spread online in 2016: a representative of Tskhinvali Museum states in an interview that there are 40,000 objects in the museum (Sputnik 2016). However, the number of objects mentioned in a newspaper report of 1972 only equals 30,000 (Khubulov 1972).

Newspaper articles about Tskhinvali Museum usually mention that the Museum is gaining new artefacts, but the exact information about the collection displayed there is unavailable. Thus, we can only speculate about Tskhinvali Museum collections using brief reports and research materials.

The new museum opened on 21 September 2015. In 2019, Sputnik News reported on the history of the Museum from its founding to the present day (Biazarti 2019). The news report places the origins of the Museum in an Ossetian narrative of independence dating back to the 1920s through to the current day. Today it is presented in the news as evidence of the ancient history of the Ossetian people, “as a symbol of their courage and resilience”.

Museum: Icon of Okona, also known as the Triptych of Okona

An 11th century icon which originates from a Byzantine town of Ikonion. Since the 13th century it has resided in Gori and was considered as a patron icon of the town. According to Gori University professor Tamila Gogoladze, the icon belonged to the Palavandishvili family and was kept in their family church in Okona, where the family members were later buried. In 1925, after the Soviet occupation, a priest from Okona church moved the icon to the museum in Tskhinvali.

The Director of the National Museum of South Ossetia claimed that the icon was looted during the 1991 conflict. However, Elene Kavlelashvili, the curator of the Gold Fund of the Sh. Amiranashvili Georgian Museum of Fine Arts, indicated Oleg Zemlyannikov purchased the icon for \$300 US in the Tskhinvali Museum, but that the museum didn't report it missing or make any statements concerning the icon until 2002. According to Kavlelashvili, Oleg Zemlyannikov recalls he bought the triptych at a street jumble sale in Vladikavkaz (Tskhinvali 2016), from a stranger (Hardy n.d.). However, another paper records Zemlyannikov claims that he inherited the icon (Gelashvili 2002).

In the summer of 2001, Zemlyannikov decided to sell the icon at Christie's Auction House in Geneva, where it was identified as stolen as the museum number was on the back. After nearly 3 years of investigative research and study, and lengthy negotiations between the Georgian and Swiss governments, Christie's Auction House and the Georgian Orthodox Church, the icon was finally handed to Georgia in 2004, by a decision of a Swiss court (Biazarti 2019; Chagelishvili 2021; Gelashvili 2002; Agenda.ge 2015; Hardy n.d.).

South Ossetia has requested the return of the icon to Tskhinvali as it claims that it was looted by the Georgians during the early 1990s (Jam-News 2016; Qarti.ge 2018). This request was made during Geneva discussions as well, simultaneously the Georgian side requested the release of Georgian prisoners held in the Tskhinvali region. The representative of the 'President' of the Tskhinvali region on post-conflict issues Murat Jigoev has stated that the sides didn't agree upon an exchange but the return of the icon to Ossetia would possibly help Georgia in the future negotiations with the Ossetian side.

An article from Sputnik Ossetia reports that a short film is being directed on the history of the icon (Kozueva 2019).

Old Bridge

Site Type: Other

Condition: Poor

According to Tskhinvali City Hall, the old bridge of the city, which is a symbol for the city, is heavily damaged and needs urgent restoration, but no funds are available in the budget at the moment, so no restoration is planned. Heavy traffic has been restricted on the bridge to prevent further damage and possible collapse (Kozueva 2018b, Kochiev 2019). The bridge is visible in sequential satellite imagery from 26th July 2007 (Maxar via Google Earth) to 16th July 2019 (CNES/Airbus via Google Earth), but the damage cannot be verified by this analysis.

In 2021 media sources started to report that the local government was planning on demolishing the historic bridge and replacing it with the new one while trying to “preserve its historical appearance as much as possible.” The de-facto Minister of Constructions stated that it would be impossible to restore the old bridge and they were not considering the option of building a new bridge in another spot despite the protests from the locals. He also stated that the old city should be bulldozed as it is impossible to restore it due to the lack of funds (Sputnik 2021a). It is unclear whether this plan of demolishing the old bridge has come to fruition: the most recent satellite image available via Google Earth is from 2019. However, a recent news report indicates the issue is still being discussed by the de facto government (SIA "RES" 2022b).

Parliament Building

Site Type: Auxiliary building

Condition: Good

The parliament / administrative building was designed by Architect M. Shavishvili and built in 1937. According to Russian news (Vorobiev 2008), the building suffered heavy damage during Georgian shelling of Tskhinvali on August 8-9, 2008.

Assessment of Maxar satellite imagery from Google Earth dated to 26 July 2007 and 19 October 2009 confirms the building was gutted between 2007 and 2009. Later images from 2 March 2010, 1 June 2010, 15 August 2011, 17 February 2012, 26 June 2013, 22 March and 11 July 2014, and 31 July 2015 indicate it was not rebuilt until 2015. However, according to the media sources, the reconstruction started in the spring of 2011 (Osinform 2011) and was finished in late 2015 (Attika-decor 2015).

St. George's Church (Kavti)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

This is one of the oldest churches in Tskhinvali, dated to the 9th-10th centuries⁹⁰, located in the Kavti neighbourhood of Tskhinvali.

⁹⁰<https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge/objects/immovable/immovableObject?id=12315>
https://memkvidreoba.gov.ge:60/Files?id=233907_30AF5D11-1AD6-4865-B173-134C46656D48

According to Russian sources cracks in its walls appeared after the earthquake in 1991, and became wider due to the shock waves (Regnum 2008), and it was this which caused damage, rather than fire during the war.

News reports (SIA "RES" 2016, Byazrova 2017, ParliamentRSO n.d.) indicated that the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia carried out restoration works at the Church as part of the 2015-16 investment program. According to Sputnik news (2015g), a construction company called "Uyut" - who had previously been banned for working without a heritage specialism licence on the Tiri Monastery - were to be allowed to work at the Church of St George. The de-facto Minister of Culture said they would be allowed to continue work on the conservation of four churches in South Ossetia (including this one) in accordance with the recommendations of the head of the All-Russian Art Scientific and Restoration Center named after Academician Grabar - Alexander Lesovoy and under the supervision of employees of the Monument Protection Department, and in collaboration with the Alanian diocese. Sputnik later reported (2015h) that Lesovoy trained "Uyut's" workers how to carry out emergency conservation of historic monuments. Restoration was then carried out in accordance with his "strict recommendations" and under the control of the de-facto Ministry of Culture. However, works could not be undertaken because its wall was adjoined by or closely adjacent to that of a private house, which hindered the work (2015h).

When the photos taken in 2017 are compared to those taken in 2013 (SIA "RES" 2013a), it is apparent that the exterior walls of the church have been renovated and the roof has been changed (Yanochkin & Yanochkin 2017a).

In photos taken in 2021, the entrance to the church has a new cover and a new templon has been installed. According to the source, renovations were taking place in the interior (Lukoye 2021).

The church is visible in sequential satellite imagery from 26th July 2007 (Maxar via Google Earth) to 16th July 2019 (CNES/Airbus via Google Earth), but the internal damage cannot be verified by this analysis.

St. George's Church (now referred to as St. Konstantine and Helen)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The church suffered from historical neglect causing some decay; in 2002 the facades and frescoes were restored and the entrance was rebuilt. According to the Ossetian narrative, while services were once again held in the church, its "reactivation" required a new name: St. Konstantine and Helen was chosen as a new name to "testify" that Christianity came to South Ossetia from the Byzantine Empire (SOT 2017).

In 2012, according to an eyewitness and photos found online the church was completely plastered and painted white and light green. The photos also indicate that the apse was painted blue and, when compared to the photo taken in 2007 (Anatolyevich 2007), the roof was replaced as well (SIA"RES" 2012b, Parastaeva 2013).

The Alanian clergy reported in 2014 (SIA "RES" 2014b) they had financed and carried out repairs to the Church: the city administration donated tiles to restore the courtyard of the church. In the photos found

online in 2020, it is clear that the exterior walls have been plastered and the apse have been painted white (Orthodox church of Alania 2020a). As of 2021 the old stone wall still could be seen on the top part of the western facade, while the bottom part of the wall was hidden due to the adjacent block fence (Lukoye 2021).

The assessment of sequential satellite imagery available via Google Earth imagery found no visible damage to the Church.

St. George's Church (Zghuderi)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

A 17th century Orthodox Church. According to a news report (SIA "RES" 2012a) the 17th century St George's Church was suffering from severe neglect. Construction company LLC Leya was approached by the "leadership of the Republic" and decided to carry out repair and restoration work free of charge (SIA "RES" 2012a). They repaired the foundations, and rebuilt the entrance, which had washed away, as well as installing new drainage. An eyewitness reported that the interior was repainted in a characteristic Russian style, the traditional templon was replaced with a new concrete one, and the floor was covered with new tiles (figure A1.72).



Figure A1.72: Interior of Zghuderi St. George Church in Tskhinvali, 2014. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

In 2017, local news reported a 22-year-old youngster vandalised the Church: the offender broke icons and the stone altar. Police were notified by a local priest: the vandal pleaded guilty to the charges (Timer.ge 2017)

In 2020, it was reported (SIA "RES" 2020b) that a crack in the western side of the church had appeared several years before and was becoming larger. According to the head of the department for the protection of monuments under the de-facto Ministry of Culture of the Republic of South Ossetia, Nelly Tabueva, this problem was not new, but the department did not have the financial resources to carry out the necessary repairs at the Church. In the photo posted online in 2021, the exterior walls of the building have been tied with metal poles and the templon has been changed (Streltsov 2021c). In 2022 the priest reported that the cracks appeared a long time ago, but the situation worsened after the construction of the stairs leading to the church (SIA "RES" 2022a).

Multi-temporal satellite assessment via Google Earth imagery from 2007 to 2020 for this site determined no visible damage as it occurred mostly to the interior.

Tskhinvali Synagogue

Site Type: Religious (Synagogue)

Condition: Poor

The synagogue dates to approximately the 1950s (FJH n.d.). The European Route of Jewish Heritage in Georgia records (ERJHG) that the synagogue was badly damaged during the 1992 Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and again in the 2008 war. Russian news (Vorobiev 2008) records that the damage was the result of Georgian shelling during the fighting on 8-9 August 2008. The building required repair and restoration work, but the Foundation for Jewish Heritage reports that after 2008 the synagogue was abandoned. They report the condition today as "C (Poor): widespread problems and lack of basic maintenance" (FJH n.d.).

Maxar satellite imagery from Google Earth (dated from 26 July 2007 and 19 October 2009) suggests that the synagogue remained largely intact over the period of fighting. However, the 2009 image quality is very poor, and some damage, such as rubble, or small holes in the roof, may not be visible. No damage is visible today. No damage is visible to the site on any imagery available via Google Earth: the condition reflects the information gathered by Foundation for Jewish Heritage.

In a photo taken in 2020, the building seems to be suffering from neglect (Ravknatashvili 2020c).

Tsirkoli

Tsirkoli Fortress

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

The site, which dates to the 8-9th century, is a ruined fortification in Poor condition (figure A1.73). Satellite imagery assessment using Maxar imagery from 28 April 2013, 21 June 2015, and CNES/Airbus images via Google Earth dating to 14 June 2020 show no change in status.



Figure A1.73: Tsirkoli Fortress in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

However, an anonymous source reported to us that they have witnessed military training taking place in the vicinity of the site several times.

Church of the Virgin (Church of the Assumption / Holy Virgin Church)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The site dates to the 8th century AD. It has unique architectural features - specifically it is covered with a two-sided roof from the outside and domed in the interior, and is covered with wall paintings (figure A1.74).

Satellite imagery assessment using Maxar imagery from 28 April 2013, 21 June 2015, and CNES/Airbus images via Google Earth dating to 14 June 2020 show no damage. However, the roof was replaced as part of a series of works during 2015-2018 on about a dozen sites in need of maintenance located in the Akhagori district. Temporary emergency protective measures were undertaken under the supervision of nuns from Ikoti Monastery and by specialists from the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia before they could no longer access the area.

An anonymous source reported to the authors that they have witnessed military training taking place in the vicinity of the site several times.



Figure A1.74: Tsirkoli Church of the Virgin in 2014 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

St. Marine's Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The Church dates to the 19th century. Satellite imagery assessment using Maxar imagery from 28 April 2013, 21 June 2015, and CNES/Airbus images via Google Earth dating to 14 June 2020 show no damage.

An anonymous source reported to us that they have witnessed military training taking place in the vicinity of the site several times.

Tsorbisi

Gomarta St. George's Church (today called Holy Trinity Church, or Church of the Assumption)

(Near Tsorbisi and Vakhtana villages)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

News articles refer to the Church as the Holy Trinity Church (SOT 2019a), the Church of Gomarty Dzuar (SIA "RES" 2016), and historical records mistakenly call it Church of the Assumption. However, it is usually known as St George's Church, or Gomarta Church.

The church was built in the 12th century, although the decor elements that are located around it indicate that the original building dates back to the early Middle Ages (SOT 2019a). Gomarta church represented a

holy place for inhabitants of both Liakhvi and the Frone River Valleys. The annual festival of “Gomartoba” was extensively celebrated by locals and visitors from neighbouring and faraway villages. In addition, the church also served as a family church for one of the noble families of Kartli - Palavandishvili. The western eukterion was used as a burial site for Palavandishvili family members. The interior of the church was covered in frescoes depicting the family, and the whole church was covered by 16th century wall paintings. It was previously recorded as being in a Moderate condition.

According to the information obtained by the Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve, the church suffered from neglect: water damaged the walls and the wall painting and there were cracks in the vault. In the photos posted online in 2009, the church is in poor condition, it doesn't have a roof but frescos are still visible (Osinform 2009a). In the photos that were supposedly taken later, the church still doesn't have a cover, the scaffolding has been erected in the interior, the upper parts of the walls are gone and frescos cannot be seen (Lost Ossetia n.d.-d).

A news report (SIA “RES” 2014b) indicates that restoration works were to be undertaken at the church of the Gomarta St. George in 2014 by the Alanian eparchy in consultation with specialists of the de-facto Ministry of Construction.

“Despite the ban imposed by the Ministry of Culture on the intervention of unskilled workers in the repair of temples and churches in South Ossetia, work continue[d] in the Gomart church in the Znaursky district”, David Gobozov, an employee of the monument protection department, told Sputnik News. “Workers began to plaster the church wall, made of stones. They prepared all the material in advance, installed scaffolding and continued to work calmly, despite [the] Ministry of Culture’s ban, ”said Gobozov [...] The workers levelled the area around the sanctuary with the tractor, where historical artifacts could be located. “In such places it is impossible to carry out work with heavy machinery. And they decided to level the territory with a tractor, and could destroy archaeological material that needs to be carefully examined”, said Department head Nelly Tabuyeva (Sputnik 2015d). The construction company, called “Uyut”, had previously worked on the Tiri Monastery, and been banned. The de-facto Minister of Culture said they would be allowed to continue work on the conservation of four churches in South Ossetia in accordance with the recommendations of the head of the All-Russian Art Scientific and Restoration Center named after Academician Grabar, Alexander Lesovoy and under the supervision of employees of the Monument Protection Department. Sputnik later reported (Sputnik 2015h) that Lesovoy trained “Uyut’s” workers on how to carry out emergency conservation of historic monuments. Restoration was then carried out in accordance with his “strict recommendations” and under the control of the Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Monuments of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia as part of the 2015-16 investment program. The work was carried out with the involvement of Russian specialists and based on their recommendations, local budget estimates were compiled (SIA “RES” 2016).

However, by the time the work was halted in 2014, damage had occurred both to the architecture and wall painting in the interior. The western eukterion was fully plastered in concrete, changing the proportions. The scaffolds erected in the church almost completely erased the wall paintings: only faint traces of paint are visible on the walls today. The works have significantly altered its original outlook. All of this is evident in the video and photos posted online in September 2014 (IUDINAD 2014, Kaesopty 2014).

Maxar satellite imagery from March 2011 and February 2021 available on Google Earth shows that the site was a ruin without a roof. A new roof is visible on imagery by September 2017. The current state of conservation of the interior of the site could not be confirmed via satellite imagery assessment.

Church (unnamed - Cemetery Church)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

In a photo taken in 2009, the church (dated 8-9th centuries) that is located on the territory of the cemetery in Tsorbisi was in poor condition: it had no roof and its walls were partially ruined (OsInform 2009b). The church is visible on a Maxar satellite image from Google Earth from 17 February 2012, confirming this was still the case in 2012.

In 2019, media sources started to report that the church located in the village cemetery was being restored. (CNES/Airbus satellite imagery available via GoogleEarth indicates this had begun by 16 July 2019). The renovations were financed by the civilian Dzambolat Tedeev. Several towers, a new building, and walls were to be built in proximity to the church, and the historic tower was to be restored (for the Tower, see next entry). The articles claim that the church was built 120 years ago and it was a Tedeev family chapel (Sputnik 2019a, 2019b, Osinform 2019): this constitutes changing of the church's toponym and falsifying its history.

In photos taken in 2021, construction has been finished, the exterior and interior walls have been fully reconstructed, the church has a new roof, and the original authentic fabric of the church has been significantly and irreversibly altered with the use of inappropriate mortar and new decorative stone masonry in the interior. A tower is built very close to the southern wall of the church and another two large towers are located on each side of the entrance to the church yard/cemetery as well (Streltsov 2021i).

Tsorbisi Cemetery Tower (adjacent to “Cemetery church”)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Destroyed

The historic tower located in the Tsorbisi cemetery close to the church, which was in a moderate condition in the photos posted online in 2009 (Osinform 2009b), cannot be seen in the new photos of the church and the surrounding area. Satellite imagery via Google Earth suggests that the easternmost of the new towers is in fact the rebuilt original tower: however, photos of the new towers suggest that, if this is correct, then little (if any) of the original fabric has survived the reconstruction. If it is not the original tower (or in the location of it), then the original can no longer be seen.

The destruction of the historic tower ruins as a result of the reconstruction works was confirmed by the Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve in 2022: they stated that the historic stone tower built in 15-16th centuries was taken apart and replaced by a concrete tower (Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve 2022b).

Tsunari (today called Khetagurovo)

Church of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin (Church of the Assumption)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The Church dates to the 14th Century. The original records indicate that the site was in a Good condition, We have no further information on this.

According to news reports (SIA "RES" 2018b, Bestaeva 2019), rehabilitation works began on the church in Tsunari (now called Khetagurovo), in early Summer 2018. The roof tiles were replaced to fix leaks; the lower tiers (presumably of the walls) were fixed with concrete; the windows and doors of the church were also renovated, and the yard was to be repaved. The Alanian Diocese financed the works, which were authorised by the Department for the Protection of Monuments and Cultural Heritage of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of the Republic of South Ossetia. It is unclear whether the reconstruction firm had any experience in heritage reconstruction.

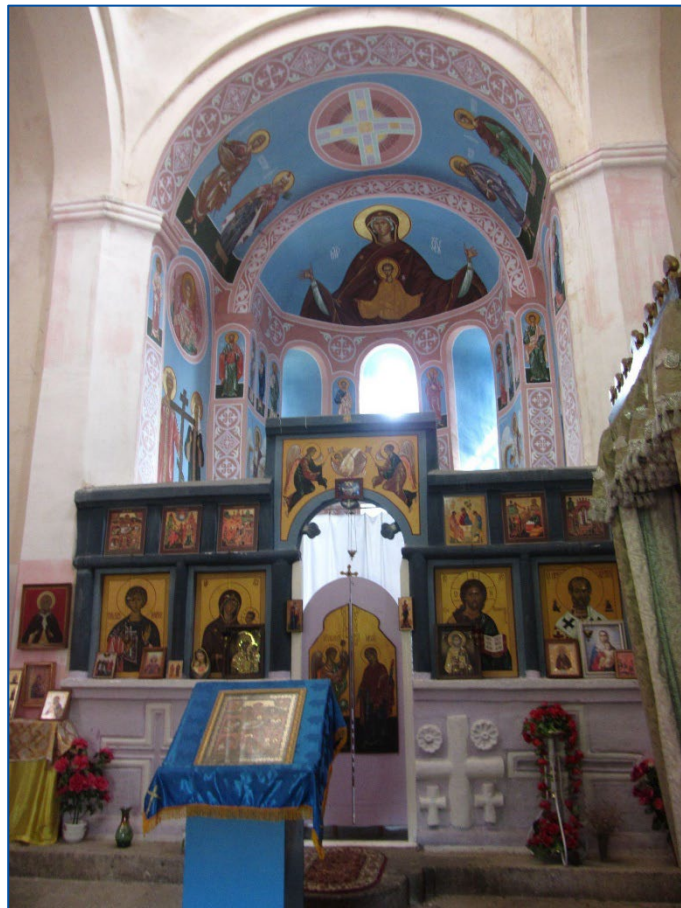


Figure A1.75: Tsunari church of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, apse wall paintings, 2013. © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

Multi-temporal satellite assessment via Google Earth imagery from 2004 to 2020 found no visible damage to the site (figure A1.76).

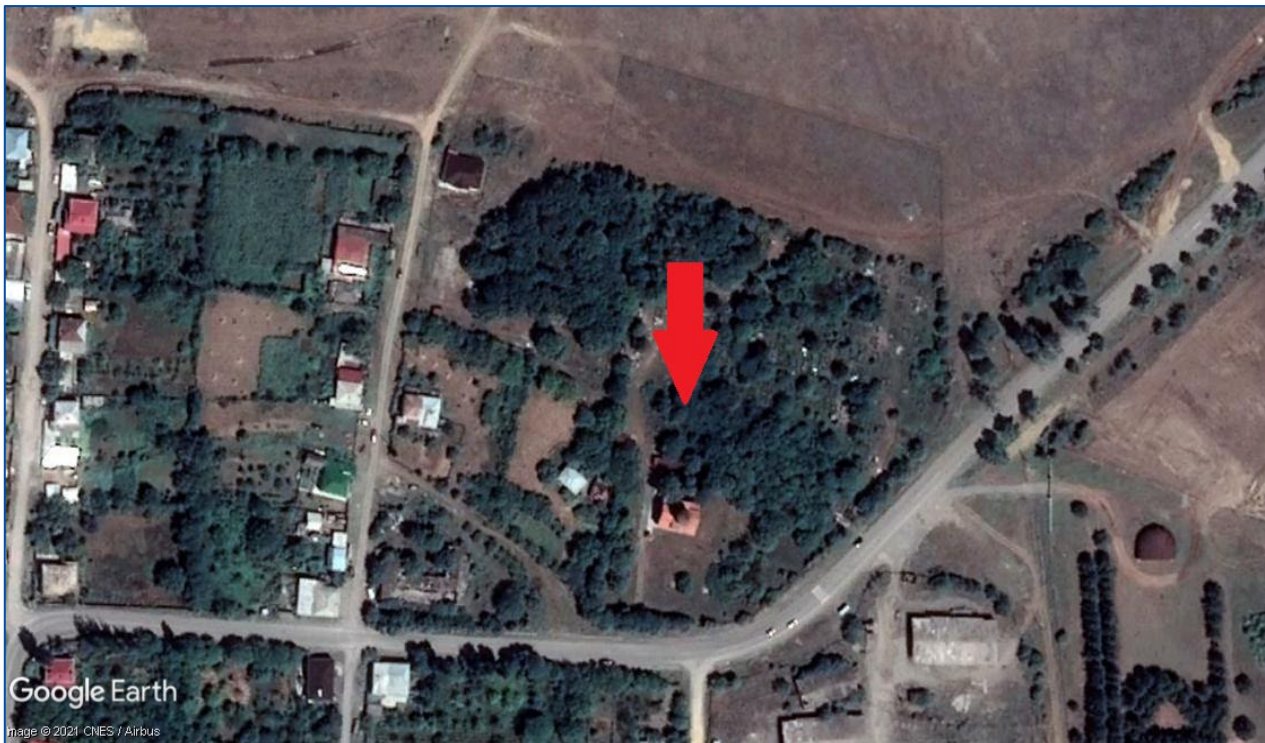


Figure A1.76: Tsunari Church of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, 16 July 2019 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Kosta Khetagurov House-Museum

Site Type: Museum

Condition: Moderate

This museum has been closed for a long time. It was never reopened after the 1990s. The collection has been moved to Tskhinvali and the plan of the local authorities is to establish a museum of literature there, where the collection will be displayed.

In 2014 it was reported that the museum was going through some renovations (SIA “RES” 2014d). However no further articles have since confirmed the re-opening of the museum. The site could not be located on satellite imagery.

Memorial Monument

Site Type: Other

Condition: Unknown

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

According to Russian news (Vorobiev 2008) this monument is to the villagers who died in World War II. The news report indicates the memorial came under fire in the fighting in August 2008: holes and losses from bullets and fragments were recorded on the stele and sculpture. There was no listing for the monument in the original records, and it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today leaving its condition unknown.

Ugardanta

Ruin (Unnamed)

Site Type: Ruin

Condition: Destroyed

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

No description is available. Today, this site lies within the boundary of the Khumsarta Military base. It is not visible on satellite imagery, and it is unknown if the site survives.

Towers (two)

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor/ Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

One Middle Ages Tower was recorded in a Poor condition in the original records, and remains so. The other was recorded as Destroyed and could not be located on satellite imagery available via Google Earth: its condition is unknown. Both are within 500m of a military base.

Vakhtana

Remains of an old building

Site Type: Ruin

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The site could not be located but the coordinates supplied are within 500m of a military base.

Tower ruins

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

The site could not be located but the coordinates supplied are within 500m of a military base.

The Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The sixteenth century Church of the Virgin is located in the middle of the village, in an old cemetery. Today, the building is on the verge of destruction: only the northern and eastern walls of the building are standing. The frescos on the northern wall are preserved: these include a figure of St. George, below which are the frescoes depicting 8 historical figures from the Shalbelikishvili family (figure A1.77). The frescoes are still visible in the video taken in 2019, however, they are in a poor condition due to being left without a cover (TA"KT" 2019).



Figure A1.77: Vakhtana Church of the Virgin, the Northern wall (2014) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

The Church is located 500 metres from the military base.

Vanati Village (today called Wanat)

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, a news report (Kevanishvil 2018) indicates that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Vanati.

Human Rights Watch (HRW 2009: 131) reported visiting the historic village in September, which “by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning”.

However, a review of imagery on Google Earth indicates the ruins remain (with the most recent image dated to 11 October 2018) and the village was destroyed but not bulldozed. There were some 400 families there before the 2008 conflict: today only a few houses remain inhabited by ethnic Ossetians.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).



Figure A1.78, A1.79, A1.80: The transformation of Vanati village.

Top Left: Before the war, 30 September 2004 (Maxar satellite image via Google Earth).

Top Right: After the war, 11 October 2018 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Bottom: Close up after the war, 11 October 2018 (CNES/Airbus satellite image via Google Earth).

Vanati Fortress Complex: Castle and Towers

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Poor

According to an eyewitness the fortress, which dates to the 16th century, is exposed to the elements and growing vegetation, posing a threat to its integrity (figure A1.81). The fortress is reportedly on the brink of destruction.

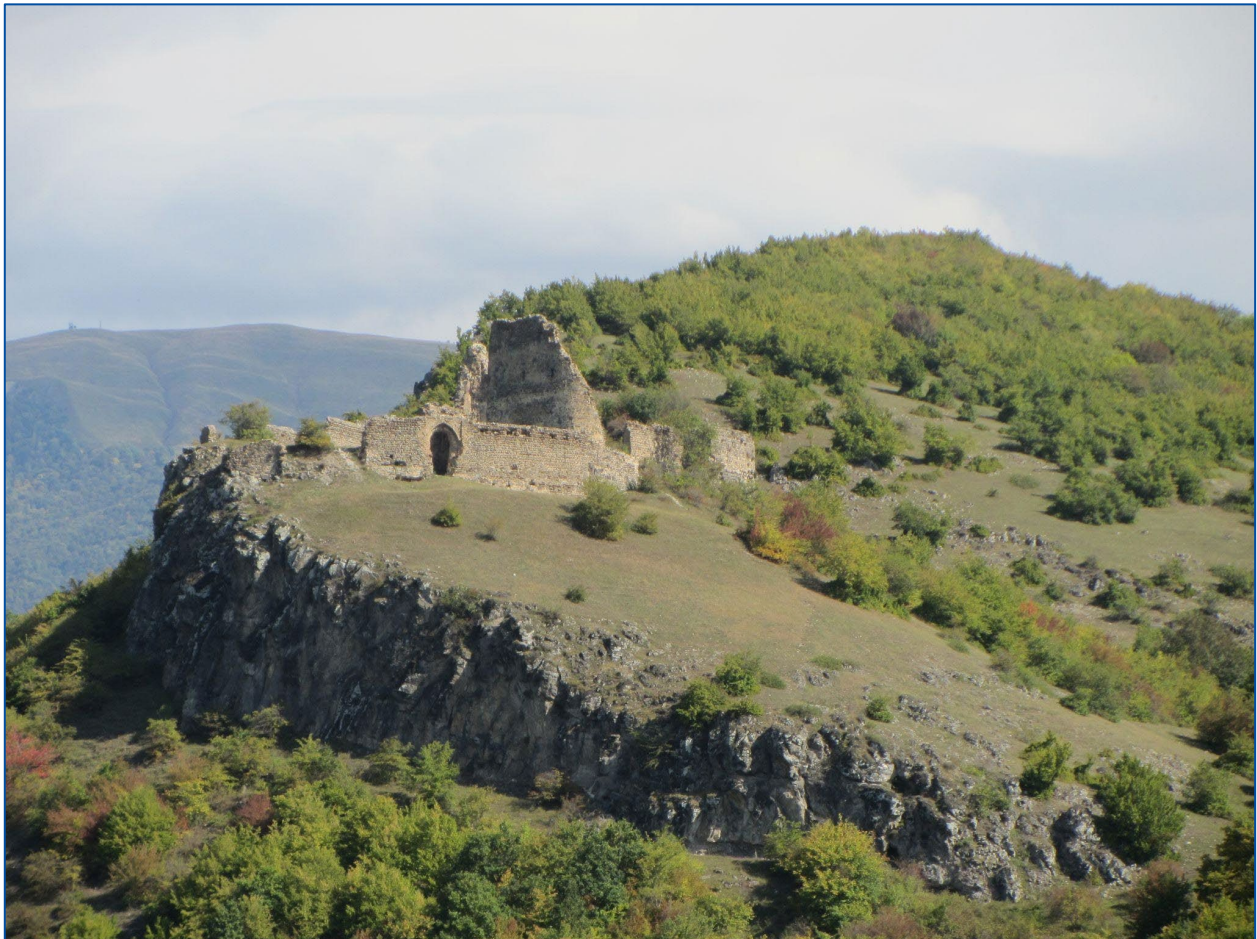


Figure A1.81: Vanati Fortress in 2013 © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

The multi-temporal satellite assessment from 2007 to 2020 for this project determined no new visible damage to the fortress; however, it was in a Poor condition in the original records.

Church of Christ the Saviour

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Poor

The site was originally recorded as being in Poor condition. In 2022 a news report claimed that the Church of Christ the Saviour in Dmenisi has been restored. (Sputnik 2022). Based on the name of the church, its description and satellite imagery it is clear that this church is a historic Vanati Church of Christ the Savior (referred to as Dmenisi Church of Christ the Saviour in Russian sources due to the fact that it is located close to the village of Dmenisi and that the village Vanati had been bulldozed).

The so-called restoration was financed by private individuals, the brothers Vladislav and Vendik Valiev. (This is the same family who has been conducting unlicensed renovations in the Church of the Virgin in Zonkari). According to reports, the roof has been replaced, and the walls have been painted and covered with new frescos (Gobozova, 2022). The artists who had previously worked on frescos in Tskhinvali Church of Holy Trinity were invited from Russia, the city of Ivanovo (Sputnik 2022). Images confirm little of the original authentic fabric remains as it has been covered in cement and has been irreversibly damaged.

Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve responded to the news, stating that reconstruction significantly changed the original appearance of the church, and referring to it as the Church of Christ the Saviour of Dmenisi alters its toponym and contributes to falsifying history (Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve 2022a).

Church of the Virgin (19th C)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

A single nave church, located in the center of the village. According to the original records, the church was in Moderate condition, and this is visible in the Maxar imagery via Google Earth on 30th September 2004. However, the church is destroyed in the Maxar satellite imagery via Google Earth from 19th October 2009, where it is surrounded by other heavily damaged buildings. It is assumed that this is a result of the burning of the village during the 2008 hostilities. In a video taken in 2019, the church does not have a roof or a door and is suffering from neglect, however, the walls are still standing (Tibilov 2019).

Church of the Virgin (High Middle Ages)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A single nave church, approximately 1km outside of the village, was reported as a Destroyed ruin in the original record; it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Church of the Virgin (High/Late Middle Ages)

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

A single nave church on the western edge of the village, on the bank of the Vanati Canal. The original record lists this church as being in Moderate condition, and sequential Maxar imagery from 19th October 2009 to 28th April 2013 via Google Earth confirms this.

Zonkari villages: Kvemo (Lower) and Zemo (Upper) Zonkari villages

Site Type: Historic Village

After the war, a news report (Kevanishvil 2018) indicates that historic villages were bulldozed and torn down in the Didi Liakhvi, Patara Liakhvi, and Frone river valleys, including Zemo Zonkari.

Satellite imagery assessment using Google Earth, dated 28 April 2013, indicates the houses at Kvemo Zonkari were demolished to their foundations: no walls are visible, and there is extensive rubble. By the 11 October 2018 image, only the foundations of the houses remain; the village is overgrown. However, it was not cleared.

All registered historic sites in the area are listed below to provide an overview of specific damage (in addition to the damage to the general historic fabric of the village).

Back Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This tower, located in Kvemo (Lower) Zonkari, was recorded as a Destroyed ruin in the original records; it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Church of the Virgin

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Moderate

The church dates to the 8-9th century, and was originally recorded in Moderate condition (figure A1.82).



Figure A1.82: Zonkari Church of the Virgin (2013) © Didi Liakhvi Valley Museum-Reserve

A news report from June 2021 states that the family of Valiev is reconstructing the 8th-9th century church in the village Zonkari. It states that the works were started due to safety concerns as the walls were about to collapse. A local mason is working on the reconstruction of the masonry. The article notes that the Department for Monument Protection of the de-facto Ministry of Culture of South Ossetia was unhappy with the works as they were not licensed (Sputnik 2021c, 2021d).

A member of the family posted about the process of reconstruction on social media: according to the posts, in July 2021 the site was visited by a restoration specialist assigned by the Ministry of Culture of Russian Federation (Valiev 2021a, 2021b). In October, the process stopped because the person leading the work quit. The family was looking for a new candidate for the position to resume the restoration in the spring of 2022 (Valiev 2021c). In September 2022, the restoration process resumed and the church roof is being constructed (Valiev 2022).

Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve responded to the news, stating that reconstruction has been planned since 2019 and is carried out without any research or involvement of professionals (Didi Liakhvi Museum-Reserve 2021).

Multi-temporal satellite assessment via Google Earth imagery from 2004 to 2020 found no visible damage to the site.

Church Tower

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Unknown (Destroyed)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This church tower, located in Zemo (Upper) Zonkari, was recorded as a Destroyed ruin in the original records; it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Medieval Hall / Refectory

Site Type: Auxiliary building

Condition: Unknown (Moderate)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

This is a mediaeval hall, preserved in places up to 5m. The original records list it as being in a Moderate condition; however, it could not be located on the satellite imagery available on Google Earth.

Palace

Site Type: Palace

Condition: Unknown (Poor)

Site could not be located on imagery during the assessment period.

A palace in Kvemo (Lower) Zonkari. According to the original records, the site was in a Poor condition; it could not be located on satellite imagery available on Google Earth today and its condition is unknown.

Ruins of the Back Tower

Site Type: Fortification

Condition: Destroyed

The ruins of the back tower which date to the Middle Ages, located in Zemo (Upper) Zonkari. It was recorded as being a Destroyed ruin in the original records. The site is visible on the Maxar 28th April 2013 imagery, where the ruin appears to be overgrown.

Shiotsminda (St. Shio) Church

Site Type: Religious (Church)

Condition: Destroyed

A single nave church dating from the High Middle Ages.

It is marked as a Destroyed ruin in the original records; on the Maxar 28th April 2013 imagery via Google Earth the ruin can still be seen and no additional damage is visible.

Annex Two. International Statements Using the Term “Occupation”

Use of the term “occupation/occupied territories” by the international community with regard to Abkhazia, Georgia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

A2.1 International Organizations

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
17 November 2010	José Manuel Barroso President of the European Commission	Statement: Press Conference with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Brussels	<p>“We defend ... the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. We made it clear that we do not recognize the occupation of any part of Georgia...”</p> <p><i>The audio version of the press conference is available at:</i> http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/download/audio_download_en.cfm?id=169687</p>
23 November 2010	Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe	Statement	<p>“The EU supports more CoE involvement and activity on the ground in Georgia. Therefore it encourages the Secretary General to intensify contacts with all the involved parties, in particular in order to have full access to the occupied Georgian territories”. (Statement made during the 1099th meeting of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers’ Deputies)</p> <p>https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=DD(2010)589&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864</p>
9 March 2017	OSCE Permanent Council No 1136	EU Statement on the “Closure of so-called border crossings in the occupied Abkhazia region in Georgia” Vienna	<p>EU Statement on the “Closure of so-called border crossings in the occupied Abkhazia region in Georgia”</p> <p>The European Union is deeply concerned about the closure by the de-facto authorities from the breakaway region of Abkhazia of two crossing points along the Administrative Boundary Line of Georgia’s breakaway region of Abkhazia – Nabakevi and Meore Otabaia - which were used daily by hundreds of commuters. The closure is detrimental to the freedom of movement of the population, including school children, on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line. It will likely increase the risk of incidents, especially detentions.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/305916?download=true</p>

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
23 March 2017	OSCE Permanent Council No 1138	EU Statement on "So-called elections in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia" Vienna	<p>EU Statement on "So-called elections in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia"</p> <p>In view of the reports about the so-called "elections" that took place on 12 March in the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia, we recall that the European Union does not recognise the constitutional and legal framework within which these elections have taken place. The European Union also condemns and does not recognise the decision by the de facto authorities in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia to conduct so-called "presidential elections" and an illegal "referendum" on changing the name of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia'.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/307751?download=true</p>
31 January 2018	European External Actions Service	Local Statements EUDel statement on developments in the occupied territories of Georgia Strasbourg	<p>The EU supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, as recognized by international law. The EU is aware of the ratification of the Russian Duma of the agreement for the incorporation of a number of de facto South Ossetian military units or personnel into the Russian Armed Forces. Such an agreement is detrimental to ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region. This so-called agreement has no legal status for the EU. It violates international law, including the principles of inviolability of Georgia's sovereignty, territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders. It also contradicts commitments made by the Russian Federation, under the 12 August 2008 Agreement and its Implementing Measures of 8 September 2008.</p> <p>https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/39167/eudel-statement-developments-occupied-territories-georgia_en</p>
8 March 2018	Donald Tusk President of the European Council	Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili	<p>During our meeting I reassured the President that the EU remains fully committed to the conflict resolution efforts and support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. We are concerned about attempts at a creeping annexation of the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The recent tragic death of Georgian citizen Archil Tatunashvili and the detention of two others in South Ossetia, was a sad reminder of the costs entailed by conflict. Thank you.</p> <p>http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/03/08/remarks-by-president-donald-tusk-after-his-meeting-with-president-of-georgia-giorgi-margvelashvili/</p>

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
20 March 2018	European Commission	European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Deputy Director-General Katarína Matheriová	Starting visit of Georgia by joining #EUMM patrol at admini border line w/#SouthOssetia occupied by RussiaRU since 2008 . Sobering 2 see military bases n checkpoints w/masked men. Great job EU monitoring mission! @EUinGeorgia @eu_near https://twitter.com/kmathernova/status/976256122263867392?s=19
20 January 2011	European Parliament	Resolution “On an EU Strategy for the Black Sea”	“The European Parliament ... points out that human rights violations are a daily occurrence in occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia... ” http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2011-0025+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN
9 June 2011	European Parliament	Resolution “On the EU-Russia summit”	“Russia still does not respect the agreements of 12 August and 8 September 2008 on the withdrawal of troops to the pre-conflict positions from the Georgian occupied provinces South Ossetia and Abkhazia... ” “The European Parliament ... calls on the High Representative and the Commission to persuade Russia to cease issuing passports to residents of the occupied provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia... ” “The European Parliament ... calls on Russia to respect the agreements it has signed, to fulfil all of the conditions under the Six-point Ceasefire Agreement and to immediately withdraw its troops from the occupied Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia... ” http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2011-0268+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN
28 August 2011	European Parliament	Statement by the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek	“Three years after the conflict, Russia still does not respect the agreements of 12 August and 8 September 2008 on the withdrawal of troops to the pre-conflict positions from the Georgian occupied province of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia should also cease issuing passports to the people of the occupied provinces.” http://www.europarl.europa.eu/president/view/en/press/press_release/2011/2011-August/press_release-2011-August-17.html

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
17 November 2011	European Parliament	Resolution on the "Negotiations of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement"	<p>"...whereas Russia continues to occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, in violation of the fundamental norms and principles of international law..."</p> <p>"... whereas ethnic cleansing and forcible demographic changes have taken place in the areas under the effective control of the occupying force, which bears the responsibility for human rights violations in these areas..."</p> <p>"The European Parliament... addresses ... the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS: ... (g) recognise Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as occupied territories".</p> <p>"The European Parliament... addresses ... the following recommendations to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS: ... (i) call on Russia to reverse its recognition of the separation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, to end the occupation of those Georgian territories and to fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia as well as the inviolability of its internationally-recognised borders..."</p> <p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2011-0514+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN</p>
14 December 2011	European Parliament	Resolution on the "EU-Russia Summit"	<p>"The European Parliament ... calls ... on the Russian authorities to ... allow, therefore, the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia to have access to the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in compliance with the 2008 Ceasefire Agreement".</p> <p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2011-0575+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN</p>
18 December 2014	European Parliament	Resolution on the "Conclusion of the Association agreement with Georgia"	<p>"...whereas Russia continues to occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, in violation of the fundamental norms and principles of international law; whereas ethnic cleansing and forcible demographic changes have taken place in the areas under the effective control of the occupying forces"</p> <p>"The European Parliament... calls on Russia to respect fully the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia ... to reverse its recognition of the separation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and to end its occupation thereof; ... condemns, in this regard, the conclusion of the 'alliance and strategic partnership' treaty between the occupied territory of Abkhazia and Russia; views this as a step taken by Russia to conclude the full annexation of Abkhazia; expresses further</p>

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
			<p>concern that a similar ‘treaty’ may be concluded with the occupied territory of Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as well...”</p> <p>http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P8-TA-2014-0110+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN</p>
5 April 2017	Anna Fotyga Chair of Sede Subcommittee on Security and Defense	Statement on the Latest Developments in the Occupied Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali	<p>I would like to express my deep concern about latest developments in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region in Georgia, namely the so-called “parliamentary elections” that took place in the occupied region of Abkhazia on March 12 and the so-called “presidential elections” in the occupied South Ossetia/Tskhinvali region to be held on April 9. These “elections” are taking place against the background of waves of ethnic cleansing in both regions and of serious violations of human rights. SEDE subcommittee has been closely following the situation in occupied territories, visiting the Administrative Boundary Line and IDP’s camps. Any attempt to legitimize forcibly changed demographic situation of both regions is unacceptable.</p> <p>I also strongly condemn the signing of so-called agreement on incorporation of the unlawful military units of the occupied Tskhinvali region into the armed forces of the Russian Federation that took place on 31 March 2017. This step continues a policy of annexation of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions by the Russian Federation that began with signing of so-called treaties of alliance and integration/strategic alliance between Russia and its occupation regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali. Integration of Georgia’s occupied regions into the military system of the Russian Federation also adds up to Moscow’s continued refusal to commit to the non-use of force in the region and to comply with the 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement.</p> <p>http://ecrgroup.eu/pl/statement-of-anna-fotyga-chair-of-sede-on-the-latest-developments-in-the-occupied-regions-of-abkhazia-and-south-ossetiatskhinvali/</p>
26-28 April 2017	Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy	Final Conclusions Malta EU2017 Parliamentary Dimension	<p>“emphasises the invalidity of elections and referenda held in the occupied territories of Georgia and Ukraine”</p> <p>https://parl.eu2017.mt/en/Events/Documents/CFSP-CSDP%20Conclusions%20Proposed%20HOD%20Compromise%20for%20adoption%20dated%2026%20April%202017%20(EN).doc</p>

European Union			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
26 April 2018	EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee Sixth Meeting	Final Statement and Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Condemns the ongoing occupation and rampant steps towards the annexation of the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation, in blatant violation of its international commitments to uphold the international legal order; calls on the Russian Federation to fulfil its obligations under the EU mediated 2008 Ceasefire Agreement and withdraw all its military forces from the occupied Georgian territories; calls on the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on the occupied territories of Georgia, urging the international community to consolidate efforts for a peaceful settlement of conflict on the basis of fundamental principles of international law; 2. Strongly condemns all steps taken by the Russian Federation resulting in intense militarisation and further deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia; 3. Deplores the violent death in custody, in Tskhinvali, in February 2018, of a Georgian citizen, Mr Archil Tatunashvili; considers that, just like the murder of another Georgian citizen, Mr Giga Otkhordia, along the occupation line of Abkhazia region in 2016, the deprivation of life of Mr Tatunashvili illustrates the deterioration of the human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia; calls on the Russian Federation as a power exercising effective control and its occupation regime not to hamper the investigation process, so that those responsible for Mr Tatunashvili's murder can be brought to justice; 4. commends the Georgian authorities on their endeavours to maintain any possible forms of dialogue and outreach towards the populations of occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, in order to foster people-to-people contacts and build up confidence between societies too long divided by occupation lines, to reduce their isolation and improve their welfare
12 June 2018	European Parliament	Joint Motion for a Resolution European Parliament resolution on Georgian occupied territories 10 years after the Russian invasion	http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P8-RC-2018-0275+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN

NATO			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
18 November 2008	Parliamentary Assembly	Declaration 373 “The Conflict Between Georgia and the Russian Federation”	“Deploing the disproportionate use of force by the Russian military against Georgia, the occupation of Georgian territory by Russian forces , the ethnic cleansing of Georgians from South Ossetia, the failure of Russia to comply fully with the ceasefire requirements and its recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia... “ shorturl.at/qxCKV
16 November 2010	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution 382 On the Situation in Georgia	“...Deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Georgia’s occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia...” http://www.parliament.ge/en/media/axali-ambebi/nato-parliamentary-assembly-resolution-quotthe-situation-in-georgiaquot-26251.page
24 November 2014	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution 417 On NATO Reassurance and Support to Partners	“The Assembly ... Strongly deploring Russia's ... continuous illegal occupation and unlawful recognition of the territories of Georgia, namely Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are a blatant violation of international law...” “Deeply concerned that Russia’s ... ongoing occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia and steps taken by Russia towards the de facto annexation of Abkhazia pose a serious threat to European peace and security” “Calls upon the government and parliament of the Russian Federation: to reverse ... the recognition of Georgia’s occupied regions , to fulfil its international obligations and to abide by international law” https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/NPA_resolutions_%D0%95ENGLISH.pdf
2015	Secretary General	Secretary General's Annual Report 2015	“Russia continued to pursue a more assertive and unpredictable military posture in 2015. While persisting in illegally occupying parts of Georgia , the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and continuing to support separatists fighting in eastern Ukraine, Russia also began a military operation in Syria...” http://nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_127331.htm?selectedLocale=en#sg10

NATO			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
10 April 2017	Spokesperson Oana Lungescu	Statement on “elections” and “referendum” in the Tskhinvali region	“NATO condemns illegitimate elections and referendum in Georgia’s occupied territories.” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_143120.htm?selectedLocale=en
29 May 2017	Parliamentary Assembly	Declaration 435 on Supporting Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic Integration	“14. Reaffirming its strong support to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia in its internationally recognised borders and condemning the continuous illegal occupation of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia, grave large-scale violations of human rights in the occupied regions, restrictions of freedom of movement across the Administrative Boundary Line, the continued violation of a six-point ceasefire agreement by the Russian Federation and steps taken towards the de facto annexation of these regions by Russia as well as extensive military build-up in these territories, which pose a serious threat to broader regional peace and security;” “a. to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders, reverse the recognition of Georgia’s occupied regions as independent states and withdraw its military forces from these territories” http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=4550
15 March 2018	Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg	Press conference by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the launch of his Annual Report for 2017	The attack in Salisbury has taken place against the backdrop of a reckless pattern of Russian behaviour. Over many years. The illegal annexation of Crimea and military support to separatists in Eastern Ukraine. The military presence in Moldova and Georgia against these countries’ will. After the end of the Cold War, we worked for a strategic partnership with Russia, but then Russia decided to use force against neighbours. We saw it in Georgia, but we saw it also in Ukraine. Jens Stoltenberg [NATO Secretary General]: I expect upcoming Summit in Brussels to recognise Georgia for the progress Georgia is making when it comes to reforms and also to recognise the contribution, the highly valid contribution Georgia is making to NATO missions and operations, especially in Afghanistan. Then I met with the President of Georgia last week; I expressed my condolences on the loss of the life of the man that was killed and also expressed... or reiterated the call on Russia to make sure that the two persons who are still abducted are released. We will continue to provide political support to Georgia and practical support to Georgia: training, capacity-building reforms, and we are impressed by the reforms that Georgia has been able to implement, including the fact that Georgia is able to engage in the dialogue with Russia on how to solve the issue related to South Abkhazia... South Ossetia and Abkhazia. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_152678.htm?selectedLocale=en

NATO			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
28 May 2018	NATO Parliamentary Assembly	Declaration 444 On Affirming NATO's Unity and Credibility at the Brussels Summit	<p>to reaffirm Allies' condemnation of Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, and ongoing occupation of Georgian and Ukrainian territories, and their unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine in their internationally recognised borders</p> <p>https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=sites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2018-05%2F041%20SESP%2018%20E%20rev.1%20fin%20%20-%20DECLARATION%20-%20NATO%20BRUSSELS%20SUMMIT%20final_0.pdf</p>

OSCE			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
July 2012	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution on the situation in Georgia	<p>"Concerned about the humanitarian situation of the displaced persons both in Georgia and in the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia, as well as the denial of the right of return to their places of living... the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly... Urges the Government and the Parliament of the Russian Federation, as well as the <i>de facto</i> authorities of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia, to allow the European Union Monitoring Mission unimpeded access to the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia as was previously agreed in the ceasefire agreement, and to co-operate fully with the EUMM".</p> <p>https://www.oscepa.org/meetings/annual-sessions/2012-monaco-annual-session/2012-monaco-final-declaration?start=23</p>
2016	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution on the Situation in Georgia 2016	<p>"Concerned about the humanitarian situation of the displaced persons both in Georgia and in the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia, as well as the denial of the right of return to their places of living,"</p> <p>"Urges the Government and the Parliament of the Russian Federation, as well as the <i>de facto</i> authorities of Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, Georgia, to allow the European Union Monitoring Mission unimpeded access to the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia as was previously agreed in the ceasefire agreement, and to co-operate fully with the EUMM"</p>

OSCE			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
			<p>“Expressing regret that despite international calls, the Russian Federation remains in breach of International Law and disregards the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, by continuing the policy of occupation and creeping annexation of the regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia through the so-called “integration treaties” “</p> <p>“7. Bearing in mind the grave humanitarian and human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia”</p> <p>“Deploing the process of the installation of razor wire fences and embankments by the Russian occupation forces along the occupation line, dividing the local population and depriving them of fundamental rights and freedoms, including, but not limited to, the freedom of movement, family life, right to property, education in their native language, and other civil and economic rights, 26”</p> <p>“Emphasizing that since 2009, following the closure of the OSCE Mission in Georgia and the UNOMIG, the EUMM is the only international monitoring mechanism on the ground, regrettably unable to fulfil its mandate fully, while denied access to the occupied regions of Georgia - Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia, The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly”</p> <p>“12. Urges the Russian Federation to reverse the recognition of Georgian regions and stop occupation of the territories of Georgia“</p> <p>“18. Urges the Russian Federation to allow the establishment of international security arrangements in the occupied regions of Georgia and ensure the unimpeded access of the EUMM therein”</p> <p>http://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2016-tbilisi/declaration-24/3371-tbilisi-declaration-eng/file</p>
9 December 2016	2016 OSCE Ministerial Council Group of Friends of Georgia	Joint Statement of the Group of Friends of Georgia OSCE Ministerial Council, Hamburg, Germany	<p>We call upon the Russian Federation to fully implement the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, inter alia to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia.</p> <p>We call upon the Russian Federation to enable access by international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied territories of Georgia.</p> <p>https://osce.usmission.gov/conflict-georgia-joint-statement-group-friends-georgia-2016-osce-ministerial-council/</p>

OSCE			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
8 December 2017	2017 OSCE Ministerial Council Group of Friends of Georgia	Joint Statement of the Group of Friends of Georgia on the Conflict in Georgia, 24th Ministerial Council, Vienna, Closing Session	We remain concerned over the continued occupation of the territories of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on full respect of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and the fundamental norms and principles of international law. We call upon the Russian Federation to fully implement the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, inter alia to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia . https://osce.usmission.gov/statement-group-friends-georgia-conflict-georgia/

Council of Europe			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
2 October 2008	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution 1633	“At the same time, the Russian counter-attack, including large-scale military actions in central and western Georgia and in Abkhazia, equally failed to respect the principle of proportionality and international humanitarian law, and constituted a violation of Council of Europe principles, as well as of the statutory obligations and specific accession commitments of Russia as a member state. It led to the occupation of a significant part of the territory of Georgia...” (Res. 1633, para 6) http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17681&lang=en
28 January 2009		Resolutions 1647, 1648	“The Assembly calls upon the EU to continue to seek effective ways for the peaceful solution of the Georgian-Russian conflict, including the strengthening and extension of the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to cover protection and peacekeeping functions covering both sides of the <i>de facto</i> borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and other parts of the former conflict zones that are occupied .” (Res. 1647, para 16) https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17708&lang=en
28 January 2009		Resolutions 1647, 1648	“There are still concerns about all acts which could contribute to ethnic cleansing of Georgians from the conflict areas and areas of occupation ”. (Res. 1648, para 6) http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17705&lang=en

Council of Europe			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
28 January 2009		Resolutions 1647, 1648	<p>“...agree on the strengthening of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to allow it to have a stronger presence and to have access to both sides of the de facto border zone and former conflict zones since occupied” (Res. 1648, para 24.14)</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17705&lang=en</p>
28 January 2009		Resolutions 1647, 1648	<p>“... agree to the extension of the mandate of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to cover protection and possibly peace-keeping covering both sides of the de facto borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and other parts of the former conflict zones since occupied” (Res. 1648, para 24.15)</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17705&lang=en</p>
28 January 2009		Resolutions 1647, 1648	<p>“guarantee the safety and security of all persons under their de facto control, not only in South Ossetia and Abkhazia but also in the occupied territories of the Akhagori district and Perevi, and in the Kodori Valley”. (Res. 1648, para 24.15)</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17705&lang=en</p>
13 April 2011		Resolution 1801	<p>“The Assembly reiterates its condemnation of the continuing human rights violations as a result of the 2008 war, including the grave violations of the principle of freedom of movement and right to return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of the occupation of the two breakaway regions of Georgia” (Res. 1801, para 22).</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17976&lang=en</p>
January 2013		Resolution 1916	<p>“In order to improve the humanitarian situation, the Assembly calls on Georgia, Russia and the <i>de facto</i> authorities in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali to ... work intensively on resolving security issues under the first working group of the Geneva International Discussions, and grant full and unimpeded access to the European Monitoring Mission (EUMM) to the former conflict zones now occupied...” (Res. 1916, para. 8.1).</p> <p>http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=19435&lang=en</p>
10 April 2014		Resolution 1990	<p>“The Assembly is deeply concerned by the continuous failure of the Russian Federation to implement Resolutions 1633 (2008), 1647 (2009) and 1683 (2009) on the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia, the occupation of the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russian troops and the refusal of the Russian Federation to allow European Union monitors and to reverse ethnic cleansing”. (Res. 1990, para 8).</p>

Council of Europe			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
26 January 2016		Resolution 2087	<p>https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20882&lang=en</p> <p>“The Assembly is seriously concerned about the current political context in Europe, where the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and its intervention resulting in a military conflict in eastern Ukraine, following the war between Russia and Georgia, and the occupation and illegal recognition of the independence of Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia by the Russian Federation, have generated a climate of mutual distrust and revived security concerns within Council of Europe and European Union member States”. (Res. 2087, para. 3).</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?fileid=22440&lang=EN&search=KjoqfGNhdGVnb3J5X3N0cl9lbjoiQWRvcHRIZCB0ZXh0lg</p>
15 June 2010	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance	Report on Georgia	<p>“There is an economic and financial crisis in the country and political discord with Russia and the two breakaway regions has led to tensions which developed into a five-day armed conflict in August 2008 followed by the occupations of some parts of the territory of Georgia” (p.22)</p> <p>https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Georgia/GEO-CbC-IV-2010-017-ENG.pdf</p>
2018	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution 2214: Humanitarian needs and rights of internally displaced persons in Europe	<p>7.2.3. open more so-called crossing points and cease the practice of installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers guarded by Russian military along the occupation line in order not to hinder the freedom of movement;</p> <p>shorturl.at/dgrNR</p>

La Francophonie			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
6 July 2009	Parliamentary Assembly	Resolution on the Situation in Georgia	<p>“...Dénonçant le renforcement de la présence militaire russe, ainsi que la construction par la Fédération de Russie de bases militaires et aériennes dans les zones occupées de la Géorgie...”</p>

			<i>Unofficial translation:</i> “...Denouncing the reinforcement of the Russian military presence, as well as the construction by the Russian Federation of the military and aerial bases in the occupied Georgian zones... ”
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GUAM			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
November 2011	Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly	Statement on the so called “presidential elections” in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia	<p>“...так называемые выборы на оккупированной территории Грузии были проведены без участия абсолютного большинства местного населения, в основном грузинов, которые подвергаются грубым и массовым нарушениям и были насильственно изгнаны из своих домов в следствии тяжелого преступления против человечества – этнической чистки”.</p> <p><i>Unofficial translation:</i> “... the so-called elections on the occupied territory of Georgia were held without participation of the overwhelming majority of the local population, predominantly Georgians, who were forcibly expelled from their homes as a result of a grave crime against humanity–ethnic cleansing and are still a subject to gross and mass violations”.</p> <p>http://guam-organization.org/node/1249</p>
9 June 2014		Statement on the so called “parliamentary elections” in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia	<p>“The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM expresses its deep concern and condemns the so-called parliamentary elections in Georgia’s occupied region - Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, held on 8 June 2014”.</p> <p>http://guam-organization.org/node/1605</p>
25 August 2014		Statement regarding the so called “presidential elections” in Abkhazia, Georgia	<p>“The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development - GUAM expresses its deep concern and condemns the so-called “presidential elections” in Georgia’s occupied region – Abkhazia, held on 24 August 2014... These “elections” were held under occupation and without participation of the overwhelming majority of local population, predominantly Georgians, who were subjected to ethnic cleansing”.</p> <p>http://guam-organization.org/node/1613</p>

Baltic Assembly			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
28 November 2009		Declaration on the situation in Georgia	<p>“The Baltic Assembly, concerned about continuing tension in the relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which is increasingly escalating after the military aggression by the Russian Federation against Georgia and occupation of a part of its territory, just over one year ago, in August 2008.... expressing its growing concern over the actions of the Russian Federation who is entrenching occupation of the parts of the sovereign and independent state of Georgia and concentrating its military forces in such Georgia’s regions as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, thus violating the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia as well as jeopardizing international peace, security and stability... urges the Russian Federation to start fulfilling its commitments listed in the 12 August 2008 and 8 September 2008 agreements: to withdraw the occupational forces from the territory of Georgia recognized by the international community”</p> <p>https://guam-organization.org/en/declaration-of-the-baltic-assembly-on-the-situation-in-georgia/</p>

GUAM - Baltic Assembly			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
October 2011	Joint International Conference "Building bridges over the borders" of GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and Baltic Assembly	Resolution October 2011, Baku	<p>“GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and Baltic Assembly ... Emphasizing the urgency of elimination of the consequences of the ongoing military occupation of the territories of states [GUAM area] and resolution of conflicts based on the norms and principles of international law...”</p> <p>http://guam-organization.org/en/node/1221</p>
3 December 2013	6th Session of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly	Joint Statement	<p>“The Participants outlined with regret that, recently, acts and attempts encouraging aggressive separatism and legitimization of occupation have become more frequent (... illegal setting of artificial barriers/barbwire fences along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali and Abkhazia regions of Georgia) and called upon the respective parties to stop actions that are incompatible with international law and undertaken obligations.”</p> <p>http://guam-organization.org/node/1530</p>

Community of Democracies			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
12 March 2010	Parliamentary Forum	Resolution "On the situation in Georgia"	<p>"Deeply concerned with the lack of progress on safe and dignified return of all IDPs to their homes as well as humanitarian situation of Georgian citizens remaining in the occupied territories" (para 1).</p> <p>"Urges the Georgian government to work towards implementing its own State Strategy on Reintegration and constructively engage communities remaining on the occupied territories as well as continue democratic reforms in all areas" (para 8).</p> <p>http://www3.lrs.lt/docs2/DORPTYCW.DOC</p>

European People's Party			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
16 September 2010		Press Release	<p>"They [the EPP Foreign Ministers] discussed about the EU-Georgia relations as well as the current situation in the Georgian occupied territories".</p> <p>http://www.32462857769.net/EPP/e-PressRelease/PDF/FMM.pdf</p> <p><i>Reference: On 16 September 2010, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy Franco Frattini and German MEP Elmar Brok chaired the regular meeting of EPP Foreign Ministers, including: Audronius Ažubalis (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania), Tonio Borg (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta), Mikuláš Dzurinda (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia), Lena Espersen (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark), Pierre Lellouche (Secretary of State for European Affairs of France), János Martonyi (Minister Foreign Affairs of Hungary), Karel Schwarzenberg (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), Radosław Sikorski (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland), Nikolay Mladenov (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria).</i></p>

Human Rights Watch			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
26 August 2008	Human Rights Watch	Article "Law on occupation and effective control"	<p>"...wherever Russian forces exercise effective control of an area in Georgian territory, including in South Ossetia or Abkhazia, without the consent or agreement of the Georgian government, for the purposes of international humanitarian law it is an occupying power and must adhere to its obligations as such".</p> <p>https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/08/26/law-occupation-and-effective-control</p>
25 November 2008	Tanya Lokshina, Deputy Director of the Moscow office	Statement in Press Release " <i>Russia: Protect Civilians in Occupied Georgia</i> "	<p>"South Ossetian militias are running wild attacking ethnic Georgians in Akhagori,"</p> <p>"It is high time for Russia to step up to its responsibilities as an occupying power in South Ossetia and rein them in"</p> <p>http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/11/25/russia-protect-civilians-occupied-georgia</p>
January 2009	Human Rights Watch	Report "Up in flames. Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia"	<p>"The armed conflict, in the making since spring 2008, started in August 7 ... and lasted until a ceasefire on August 15, with Georgian forces in retreat and Russian forces occupying South Ossetia and, temporarily, undisputed parts of Georgia" (p.8).</p> <p>"As an occupying power in Georgia, Russia failed overwhelmingly in its duty under international humanitarian law to ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety in areas under its effective control... " (p. 9).</p> <p>"Beginning with the Russian occupation of Georgia and through the end of September, Ossetian forces, often in the presence of Russian forces, conducted a campaign of deliberate violence against civilians..." (p.16).</p> <p>"International humanitarian law on occupation applies to Russia as an occupying power wherever Russian forces exercised effective control over an area of Georgian territory, including in South Ossetia or Abkhazia, without the consent or agreement of the Georgian government" (p.40).</p> <p>"The law of occupation also will no longer be in effect upon agreement between states that leaves the occupying government present or in control of the territory, but no longer as a belligerent force.¹⁰⁶ At this writing, Russia remains an occupying power in South Ossetia" (p.41).</p> <p>https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/01/23/flames/humanitarian-law-violations-and-civilian-victims-conflict-over-south</p>

Human Rights Watch			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
2011	Human Rights Watch	World Report 2011: Georgia	<p>"... Russia continued to occupy Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and strengthened its military presence in the region..."</p> <p>http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=12840&lang=eng</p>

Amnesty International			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
November 2008	Amnesty International	Report "Civilians in the line of fire"	<p>"As the occupying force, the Russian army had a duty to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian property in areas under their control" (p. 34).</p> <p>"As the occupying power Russian armed forces had overall responsibility for maintaining security, for law and order and for ensuring the welfare of the populations living in the areas under their control" (p. 41).</p> <p>"As the occupying power, Russian armed forces failed to ensure and protect the human rights of the ethnic Georgians population living there" (p.62).</p> <p>https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/52000/eur040052008eng.pdf</p>
2018	Amnesty International	Official Report 2018	<p>Georgia and a large part of the international community consider South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region to be the Russian occupied territory of Georgia. Parts of South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region broke away from Georgia in early 1990s. Russian armed forces have occupied South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region since the Russian-Georgian armed conflict in 2008. Russia recognised the independence of South Ossetia shortly after the 2008 armed conflict. Russia maintains a large military presence in the region and funds most of the budget of the de facto authorities.</p> <p>https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/7997/2018/en/</p>

A2.2 Countries

USA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
White House			
23 August 2008	Barack Obama Presidential Candidate	Statement	<p>“Russian forces continue to occupy strategic locations, checkpoints, and military sites outside the disputed regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russian officials call the troops violating the terms of last week's ceasefire "peacekeepers." The truth is, they are occupation forces controlling Georgian territory in violation of Russia's obligations under international law.”</p> <p>http://www.sras.org/official_statements_on_russia_georgia_conflict?print=1</p>
24 June 2010	The White House	U.S.- Russia Relations: “Reset” Fact Sheet	<p>“The Obama Administration continues to have serious disagreements with the Russian government over Georgia. We continue to call for Russia to end its occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia...”</p> <p>“We... continue to press for the strengthening of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms and a return of international observers to the two occupied regions of Georgia”</p> <p>http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-russia-relations-reset-fact-sheet</p>
June 11, 2010 22 June 2010	Michael McFaul Special Assistant to the US President and Senior Director for Russian and Central Asian Affairs	Statements / Press Briefings	<p>“Is it a foreign policy objective of the Obama administration to help end Russia's occupation of Georgia in a peaceful manner and restore Georgia's territorial integrity? Absolutely yes”</p> <p>http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/06/11/white_house_were_not_throwing_georgia_under_the_bus</p> <p>“We consider their [Russian] occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be illegitimate”</p> <p>http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/conference-call-briefing-with-administration-officials-president-medvedevs-visit-wh</p>
1 August 2017	Mike Pence	U.S. Vice President official visit to Georgia	<p>U.S. Vice President Mike Pence has reaffirmed Washington's support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity during a visit to Tbilisi and denounced Russia’s “aggression” and “occupation” of Georgian territory.</p>

USA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
			<p>"America stands with Georgia," Pence said on August 1 at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili. "Today, Russia continues to occupy one-fifth of Georgian territory," Pence said. "So, to be clear -- the United States of America strongly condemns Russia's occupation on Georgia's soil."</p> <p>https://www.rferl.org/a/pence-georgia-montenegro-nato-russia-baltics-visit/28652154.html</p>
State Department			
3 July 2010	Hillary Clinton Secretary of State	Statements	<p>"We have consistently opposed the occupation by Russian troops of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and have pushed for a resolution that would restore the full territorial integrity of Georgia" (Press Conference with Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, Poland)</p> <p>http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Clinton-Ahead-of-Caucasus-visit-Decries-Russian-Occupation-of-Georgian-Areas-97740629.html</p>
4 July 2010			<p>"We do not agree on what happened in Georgia, or the current continuing occupation by Russian forces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia". (Joint Press Availability with Armenian Foreign Minister Eduard Nalbandyan, Yerevan)</p> <p>http://armenia.usembassy.gov/news070410.html</p>
5 July 2010			<p>"...this occupation has not undermined the Georgian Government and the Georgian people's commitment to their own internal efforts to build the strongest possible state for the best future." (Joint Press Conference with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Tbilisi)</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/07/143973.htm</p>
5 July 2010			<p>"President Obama and I and other American officials raise our concerns about the invasion and occupation with Russian counterparts on a consistent basis. And it is very important for us that we do so, because we are very frank in asserting our concerns and our ongoing support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity." (Joint Press Conference With Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Tbilisi)</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/07/143973.htm</p>
5 July 2010			<p>"We continue to call for Russia to abide by the August 2008 cease fire commitment signed by President Saakashvili and President Medvedev, including ending the occupation and withdrawing Russian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their pre-conflict positions." (Joint Press Conference with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Tbilisi)</p>

USA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
8 September 2010			<p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/07/143973.htm</p> <p>“...on certain issues such as human rights with China or Russian occupation of Georgia, we simply do not see eye to eye, and the United States will not hesitate to speak out and stand our ground.” (Speech at Council on Foreign Relations).</p> <p>http://www.america.gov/st/texttransenglish/2010/September/20100908164005su0.9513295.html&distid=ucs#ixzz0z0Tp5jhE</p>
6 October 2010			<p>“We continue to call on Russia to end its occupation of Georgian territory, withdraw its forces, and abide by its other commitments under the 2008 ceasefire agreements”. (Second omnibus meeting of the U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership)</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/10/149080.htm</p>
5 June 2012			<p>“We reject Russia’s occupation and militarization of Georgian territory, and we call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement...” (Third Omnibus Session of the Strategic Partnership Commission, Batumi, Georgia)</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2012/06/191784.htm</p>
26 February 2014	John Kerry Secretary of State	Remarks at the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission Plenary Session	<p>“I am announcing additional assistance by the United States to help support Georgia’s European and Euro-Atlantic vision; specifically ... to mitigate the hardships caused by borderization along the occupied territories”.</p> <p>“We continue to object to Russia’s occupation, militarization, and borderization of Georgian territory, and we call on Russia to fulfil its obligations under the 2008 ceasefire agreement, including the withdrawal of its forces and free access for humanitarian assistance”</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/02/222580.htm</p>
10 November 2010	Phillip Gordon Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs	Statements: Interview to BBC	<p>“...she [Secretary of State] made clear that we want to see an end to Russian occupation and that we stand by Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”.</p> <p>http://www.epn-media.com/?p=203</p>
3 March 2011		Global Security 2011 Forum, Bratislava	<p>“Secretary Clinton referred to Russian occupation of Georgia. We don’t know what else to call it... So it’s not meant to be a particular provocation, it’s just a description of what we think the situation is”</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2011/157707.htm</p>

USA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
11 March 2010	Department of State	2009 Human Rights Report: Georgia	<p>“De facto authorities in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, supported by several thousand occupying Russian troops, remained outside the control of the central government.”</p> <p>“There were numerous reports of abductions by unidentified armed gangs of individuals on both sides of the administrative boundary line. Russian military forces and de facto militias did not permit observers into South Ossetia and occupied areas to investigate claims of abuses.”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eur/136032.htm</p>
17 November 2010	Department of State	International Religious Freedom Report 2010 : Georgia	<p>“De facto authorities in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, supported by several thousand occupying Russian troops, remained outside the control of the central government”.</p> <p>“The occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained outside the control of the central government...”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168312.htm</p>
8 April 2011	Department of State	2010 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Georgia	<p>“Russian occupying forces in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and de facto militias refused access to international monitors and conducted numerous unannounced exercises”</p> <p>“De facto authorities and Russian forces in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia restricted freedom of movement.”</p> <p>“despite the 2008 ceasefire agreement's provisions, the EUMM was denied access to the occupied regions”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154425.htm</p>
7 March 2012	Department of State	2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report	<p>“This information [on drugs flow] cannot be verified as there is little or no exchange of information on drug trafficking between the Russian occupying forces or the de facto authorities of these territories and the Government of Georgia.”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/187109.pdf</p>
2 October 2013	Department of State	Statement by the Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf	<p>“We note with concern the continued and increasing activities by Russian security forces to erect fences and other physical barriers along the administrative boundary lines of the occupied territories in Georgia.”</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2013/10/215040.htm#RUSSIA</p>

USA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
18 December 2014	Department of State	Joint Statement of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership Commission Working Group on People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges	<p>“... the United States expressed concern about the ongoing “borderization” activities along the Administrative Boundary Lines of Georgia’s occupied territories, which are inconsistent with Russia’s international commitments. In this context, the Working Group renewed its full support for the Geneva International Discussions as a key tool to achieve concrete progress on security and humanitarian issues in the occupied territories. The Working Group emphasized the importance of engagement with the inhabitants of the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia through civil integration and other reconciliation initiatives, and encouraged the continuation of such efforts”.</p> <p>http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/12/235418.htm</p>
6 March 2017	Mark C. Toner Acting Spokesperson, State Department	Press Statement	<p>“The United States is deeply concerned by the decision of de facto Abkhaz authorities to close two controlled crossing points along the administrative boundary line of the occupied territory of Abkhazia in Georgia.”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/03/268239.htm#.WL4NI4Wgeac.facebook</p>
7 April 2017	Mark C. Toner Acting Spokesperson State Department	Press Statement	<p>“United States Condemns Illegitimate Elections and Referenda in Georgia's Occupied Territories”</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/04/269629.htm</p>
9 August 2017	Press Statement US Department of State	Heather Nauert Department Spokesperson, Washington, DC	<p>The United States Urges Russia To Respect Georgia's Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity</p> <p>The United States views the visit of President Putin to the Russian occupied Georgian territory of Abkhazia as inappropriate and inconsistent with the principles underlying the Geneva International Discussions, to which Russia is a party. The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and rejects Russia’s recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The United States urges Russia to withdraw its forces to pre-war positions per the 2008 ceasefire agreement and reverse its recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/08/273312.htm</p>
27 February 2018	Department of State	Department Press Briefing	<p>Next, I’d like to say that the United States is deeply concerned by the death of a Georgian citizen, Archil Tatumashvili, during his February 22nd arrest and detention in the Russian-occupied Georgian territory of South Ossetia. We express our condolences to his family. The United States is also deeply concerned</p>

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			<p>by the arrest of other Georgian citizens, Levan Kutashvili and Ioseb Pavliashvili, and call for them to be allowed to return freely across the administrative boundary line. The United States calls for a full accounting of circumstances of the tragic incident and continues to encourage all sides to agree on additional measures to strengthen mutual confidence and transparency in the affected region.</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2018/02/278913.htm</p>
13 April 2018	Ambassador Kurt Volker, U.S. Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations	Latest Developments on Ukraine Negotiations, The Washington Foreign Press Center	<p>And I think the Georgian Government, with its package of measures, seems to be trying to do that in similar cases where Russia has taken territory in Georgia, occupies that territory. In the case of – Georgia[*] has also recognized these territories as independent states, something that very few others in the world would recognize. But it is an effort to try to enfranchise and reach and support the populations of these territories, because Georgia fundamentally continues to view them, as do all of us, as part of Georgia’s sovereign territory.</p> <p>https://fpc.state.gov/280441.htm</p>
20 April 2018	US State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour	Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Georgia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. arbitrary detentions and deprivation of life by Russian and de facto authorities of the country’s citizens along the administrative boundary lines (ABL) with the Russian-occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; 2. De facto authorities in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained outside central government control and were supported by several thousand Russian troops and border guards occupying the areas since the 2008 conflict with Russia. 3. Russian “borderization” of the ABL of the occupied territories continued, separating residents from their communities and livelihoods. 4. There were also frequent reports of detentions of Georgians along the ABL of both the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. 5. Unlike the previous year, individuals detained in Russian-occupied South Ossetia and Abkhazia who later returned to Georgian government-controlled territory did not report incidents of physical abuse. 6. While there was a relatively greater diversity of media in Abkhazia, media in the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia remained restricted by de facto authorities and Russian occupying forces.

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			<p>7. The law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation of citizens, but de facto authorities and Russian occupying forces limited this freedom in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.</p> <p>8. De facto authorities and Russian forces in the Russian-occupied territories also restricted the movement of the local population across the ABL, although they showed flexibility for travel for medical care, pension services, religious services, and education.</p> <p>9. The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, designed to cover Abkhazia and South Ossetia and including security actors from the government, Russia, and de facto authorities of the breakaway regions, often considered human rights abuses reported in the occupied territories and along the ABL.</p> <p>10. De facto authorities in the occupied territories did not grant representatives of the Public Defender’s Office access.</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/j/dri/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2017&dliid=277167#wrapper</p>
3 May 2018	Department of State	Heather Nauert Spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State	<p>Next, I’d like to discuss our Assistant Secretary Wess Mitchell’s travel to Georgia and Ukraine. Today, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Wess Mitchell is wrapping up his travel to Georgia and Ukraine. While in Tblisi from April 29th to May the 1st, he met with senior Georgian officials, including the president and the prime minister, to talk about our strong bilateral relationship and Georgia’s democratic and economic reforms. He reaffirmed the United States support for Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity with its – in its internationally recognized borders. He also reiterated that the United States stands by NATO’s 2008 Bucharest Declaration that Georgia will become a member of NATO. He also visited the administrative boundary line with the Russian-occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where are currently occupied by Russian forces in violation of the 2008 ceasefire agreement.</p> <p>https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2018/05/281803.htm</p>
8 May 2018	Department of State	Heather Nauert Spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State	<p>The United States is concerned by the decision of de facto South Ossetian authorities to temporarily close controlled crossing points in Georgia along the administrative boundary line in the Russian-occupied territory of South Ossetia. These closures coincide with Georgia’s celebration of Victory Day and restrict freedom of movement for residents living on both sides of the administrative boundary line. In addition, the United States calls for an immediate halt to the ongoing illegal detentions of Georgian citizens by de facto and Russian authorities along the administrative boundary lines with the Russian-</p>

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			<p>occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/05/281954.htm#.WvK7r9_XpXQ.facebook</p>
21 May 2018	Department of State	<p>Mike Pompeo Secretary of State Remarks at the 2018 Plenary Session of the U.S.-Georgia Strategic Partnership</p>	<p>“The United States unequivocally condemns Russia’s occupation on Georgian soil.”</p> <p>“The Russian-occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are integral parts of Georgia. The United States supports Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity with its internationally recognized borders.”</p> <p>“Despite Russian occupation of 20 percent of its territory, Georgia has continued to reform.” https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2018/05/282300.htm</p>
US Missions			
2 July 2009	US Mission to the OSCE	Statement	<p>“Mr. Chairman, the United States is deeply concerned by the fact that Russia is moving even further away from honoring the provisions of the August 12 and September 8 agreements... I think our view would be that Russia occupies Georgia. We also would further remind Russia of its responsibility to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in those areas of Georgia under Russian occupation.” http://www.osce.org/documents/pc/2009/07/38938_en.pdf</p>
9 March 2017	US Mission to the OSCE	<p>Speech delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes to the Permanent Council, Vienna</p>	<p>The United States is deeply concerned by the decision of de facto Abkhaz authorities to close two controlled crossing points along the administrative boundary line of the occupied territory of Abkhazia in Georgia. These closures will further restrict freedom of movement and damage the livelihoods of local residents. https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/305921?download=true</p>
1 March 2018	US Mission to the OSCE	<p>Speech delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian to the Permanent Council, Vienna</p>	<p>The United States is deeply concerned by the death of Georgian citizen Archil Tatunashvili during his February 22 arrest and detention in the Russian occupied Georgian territory of South Ossetia.</p> <p>We also reiterate our call for justice in the May 2016 murder of a Georgian citizen along the administrative boundary line of the occupied territory of Abkhazia in Georgia. https://osce.usmission.gov/on-the-death-of-georgian-citizen-archil-tatunashvili-in-georgias-south-ossetia-region/</p>

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28 January 2011	US Delegation at the 10th Session of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review	Statement at the UPR of Georgia	<p>"We also must note that due to the Russia's occupation of Georgia's regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Government of Georgia is unable to promote and protect human rights in these regions, which sit within Georgia's internationally recognized borders."</p> <p>http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/archive.asp?go=110128#am</p>
23 March 2018	Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva	General Statement by the United States of America as delivered by Jason Mack, Human Rights Council, 37th Session Geneva	<p>The United States strongly supports the resolution "Cooperation with Georgia" before us today and we call on all members of this Council to vote in favour of the resolution if a vote is called.</p> <p>The government of Georgia is cooperating closely with OHCHR to improve the human rights situation in their country. At the same time, de facto authorities in the Russian-occupied territories of Georgia continue to deny any access to OHCHR while there are reports of widespread abuses of rights in these territories. We note that any right of return is limited to refugees. However, we concur that internally displaced persons should also have the ability to return.</p> <p>https://geneva.usmission.gov/2018/03/23/general-statement-on-the-cooperation-with-georgia-hrc3-resolution-l-27/</p>
22 March 2018	U.S. Statement as delivered by Jason Mack	Human Rights Council 37th Session Geneva	<p>We are pleased by Georgia's cooperation with OHCHR and look forward to an update on the issues raised in the September report. We support international efforts to gain greater access to the Russian-occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We are concerned by the death of Archil Tatunashvili in the Russian-occupied Georgian territory of South Ossetia. The United States fully supports Georgia's territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We await the results of the government's investigation into the reported abduction of Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli.</p> <p>https://geneva.usmission.gov/2018/03/22/general-debate-on-item-10-2/</p>
29 March 2018	U.S. Delegation in the Geneva International Discussions	Press Statement by the U.S. Delegation	<p>The United States also called for greater access to the occupied territories for the diplomatic community and human rights organizations. The United States notes that there was not agreement on a non-use of force statement.</p> <p>https://geneva.usmission.gov/2018/03/29/gid/</p>

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12 April 2018	United States Mission to the OSCE	Response to Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister David Dondua	<p>The United States calls for greater access to the occupied territories for the diplomatic community and human rights organizations.</p> <p>For almost 10 years, Russia has sought to create an alternate reality. While Georgia seeks opportunities for engagement with people living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia maintains relations with two fictitious countries as a ruse to control and occupy regions of a neighbouring sovereign state.</p> <p>https://osce.usmission.gov/response-to-georgias-deputy-foreign-minister/</p>
31 May 2018	United States Mission to the OSCE	On Syria's Recognition of the Independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia	<p>The United States strongly condemns the Syrian regime's intention to establish diplomatic relations with the Russian-occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These regions are part of Georgia. https://osce.usmission.gov/on-syrias-recognition-of-the-independence-of-abkhazia-and-south-ossetia/</p>
United States Congress			
5 February 2011	John McCain US Senator	Statement: Munich Security Conference	<p>"...we will also work to rid it [world] of other security threats that still plague the Euro-Atlantic world: among them ... the illegal occupation of internationally recognized sovereign territory of Georgia".</p> <p>http://mccain.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressOffice.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=f5bc142f-9210-0be8-7563-b0ce18f951bf</p>
29 July 2011	US Senate	Resolution S.RES.175	<p>"... the Senate ... affirms that it is the policy of the United States to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its borders, and to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia occupied by the Russian Federation".</p>
19 September 2012	US House of Representatives	Resolution H. Res. 526	<p>"Whereas the Russian Federation opposed consensus on the extension of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Georgia, vetoed the extension of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) and blocked the work of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia..."</p> <p>"the House of Representatives... affirms that it is the policy of the United States to support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its borders, and to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as regions of Georgia illegally occupied by the Russian Federation and calls on the Russian Federation to fulfil all terms and conditions of the August 12, 2008, ceasefire</p>

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			<p>agreement, to end the occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to withdraw completely its troops from the internationally recognized border of Georgia...”</p> <p>“the House of Representatives ... calls upon the Russian Federation, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Tuvalu, and Nauru to reverse the recognition of the occupied Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent and respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders...”</p> <p>“the House of Representatives ... supports the Government of Georgia’s commitment to a policy of peaceful, constructive engagement and confidence building measures towards the occupied territories”.</p> <p>https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-resolution/526/text</p>
8 September 2016	US House of Representatives	Resolution H.Res.660	<p>Supports the U.S. Stimson Doctrine to not recognize territorial changes effected by force, and affirms that this policy should continue to guide U.S. foreign policy.</p> <p>Condemns Russia's military intervention and occupation of Georgia and its continuous illegal activities along the occupation line in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.</p> <p>Calls upon Russia to: (1) withdraw its recognition of Georgia's territories of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as independent countries, (2) refrain from acts and policies that undermine Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and (3) take steps to fulfill the August 12, 2008, Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and the Russian Federation.</p> <p>Urges the United States to: (1) declare that it will not recognize Russian de jure or de facto sovereignty over any part of Georgia, including Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia; (2) deepen cooperation with Georgia, including Georgia's advancement towards Euro-Atlantic integration; and (3) enhance Georgia's security through joint military training and the provision of self-defensive capabilities.</p> <p>Affirms that a free, united, democratic, and sovereign Georgia is in the long-term U.S. interest.</p> <p>https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-resolution/660</p>
signed into Law on 5 May 2017	US Congress	“Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017” (H.R.244), (Public Law No: 115-31).	<p>Law prohibits assistance to any county, which has recognized independence of Russian Occupied Georgian territories (pp.1416-1419) - language initiated by Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-SC)</p> <p>https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/244</p>

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2 August 2017	US Congress	“Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act” (H.R.3364), signed into Law on 2 August 2017 (Public Law No: 115-44).	<p>Law refers to illegal occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia in 2008 by Russia; calls on Russia to withdraw forces from Georgian Territories; designated Countering Russian Influence Fund for Countries participating in NATO enlargement, including Georgia (pp. 3364—41 - 3364—43) - language initiated by Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD).</p> <p>https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/3364</p>
14 March 2018	US Congressman, Head of US-Georgia Congress Group of Friends Ted Poe	REP. POE On Escalating Human Rights Violations in Russian Occupied Georgian Territory	<p>WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) released the following statement regarding the escalating human rights violations in Russian occupied Georgian territory.</p> <p>“The Russian Bear wastes no opportunity to showcase its evil intentions and flagrant disregard for international law and basic human decency. Just last month, three Georgian citizens were detained by forces in the Russian-occupied Georgian region of South Ossetia. Tragically, one of the Georgians detained, Archil Tatumashvili, was tortured and ultimately killed while in detention, and the Russian-backed separatist authorities are still refusing to turn over his corpse to his family. Only terrorists and hateful regimes intent on evil would stoop so low as to refuse to turn over the body of the fallen. The tyrannical regime of Vladimir Putin is not satisfied by kidnapping and murdering his own people alone, he wants to bring his tyranny to all the former Soviet Republics and usher in a new dark age of Russian hostile intimidation throughout eastern Europe. This latest egregious move by the Russians in Georgia must not pass in silence. Russia must pay a price for its ongoing violation of Georgia’s territorial integrity and the crimes against the people of Georgia. And that’s just the way it is.”</p> <p>https://poe.house.gov/2018/3/rep-poe-on-escalating-human-rights-violations-in-russian-occupied-georgian-territory</p>
21 March 2018	US Congressman, Head of US-Georgia Congress Group of Friends Ted Poe	The FY 2019 Foreign Assistance Budget	<p>"I recently met with the three speakers of parliaments of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. All of these countries have portions of their nation occupied by Russian troops. They have many things in common. They are I believe very concerned about which direction, each of those three countries, but three of them together going to move. They gonna move back to Russian bear, or they gonna move to West. And I think it is not only humanitarian issue, but a political issue – that the United States show the support for those three countries – getting rid of corruption, and developing their nations to be a more</p>

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			<p>prodemocracy, corrupt-free institutions. Still as we know occupied by Russian troops and probably will be for a long time."</p> <p>https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/hearing-fy-2019-foreign-assistance-budget/ Watch from 1:35:34.</p>
23 March 2018	"Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018"	Adopted on 23 March 2018	<p>OCCUPATION OF THE GEORGIAN TERRITORIES OF ABKHAZIA AND TSKHINVALI REGION/SOUTH OSSETIA.</p> <p>(1) None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be made available for assistance for the central government of a country that the Secretary of State determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations has recognized the independence of, or has established diplomatic relations with, the Russian occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia: Provided, That the Secretary shall publish on the Department of State Web site a list of any such central governments in a timely manner: Provided further, That the Secretary may waive the restriction on assistance required by this paragraph if the Secretary determines and reports to the Committees on Appropriations that to do so is in the national interest of the United States, and includes a justification for such interest. H. R. 1625—606</p> <p>(2) None of the funds appropriated by this Act may be made available to support the Russian occupation of the Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.</p> <p>(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the United States executive directors of each international financial institution to vote against any assistance by such institution (including any loan, credit, or guarantee) for any program that violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia.</p> <p>https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-115hr1625enr/pdf/BILLS-115hr1625enr.pdf</p>
21 May 2018	US Congressman, Chairman of Georgia's Group of Friends, Gerald Connolly	Tweet	<p>"We will not rest until Georgian territory is returned to the sovereign state of Georgia. Russian occupation must end."</p> <p>https://twitter.com/GerryConnolly/status/998690436230369281</p>
24 May 2018	115th Congress 2D Session S. RES. 527	Congratulating the people of Georgia on the 100th anniversary of its	<p>Whereas the Russian Federation's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 resulted in civilian and military casualties, the occupation of two Georgian regions, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and the violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity;</p>

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		<p>declaration of independence as a democratic republic and reaffirming the strength of the relationship between the United States and Georgia.</p>	<p>Whereas the Government of the Russian Federation has intensified steps to separate Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia from the rest of Georgia by continuing its fortification of the occupation lines and constructing barbed wire fences to further divide the population;</p> <p>Whereas the human rights situation in the Russian-occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/ South Ossetia has deteriorated, and the Parliament of Georgia adopted a resolution on March 21, 2018, in recognition of this fact;</p> <p>Whereas the United States Government supports Georgia’s sovereignty and right to choose its own alliances, and recognizes the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/ South Ossetia as Russian Federation-occupied territories within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia;</p> <p>Whereas, on August 1, 2017, Vice President Mike Pence visited Georgia to condemn the Russian Federation’s occupation of Georgian territory and attend Exercise Noble Partner, involving 800 Georgian and 1,600 United States troops;</p> <p>continues to condemn the Russian Federation’s occupation of Georgian sovereign territory, and recognizes Georgia’s regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia as Russian-occupied 16 territories within the internationally recognized borders of Georgia;</p> <p>condemns human rights abuses by the Government of the Russian Federation in the occupied Georgian territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, including the recent killing of Georgian citizens Archil Tatumashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, and Davit Basharuli;</p> <p>https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/sres527/BILLS-115sres527is.pdf</p>
Helsinki Commission			
9 August 2011	US Helsinki Commission	Press Release	<p>“Russia must cease its continuing, illegal occupation of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia and allow those who fled their homes during the 2008 war to go back without preconditions”. (Statement of Rep. Christopher Smith, Chairman of the Commission)</p> <p>“Since 2008 the Russian government has systematically entrenched itself in these occupied territories”.</p> <p>http://csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=1027&ContentRecordType=P&ContentType=P&CFID=61698534&CFTOKEN=61304832</p>

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20 March 2018	The U.S. Helsinki Commission monitors human rights and international cooperation in the 57 countries of the OSCE	Twitter status on military exercises in Georgia and Ukraine	New Russian military exercises, incl. in occupied parts of #Ukraine & #Georgia , 1 day after “elections” in #Russia. Use of exercises to bully & undermine neighbors violates key principles underpinning European #security. See our reporting on ZAPAD 2017: https://twitter.com/helsinki/comm/status/976203013839900673?s=12
16 July 2018	US Helsinki Commission	Report - The Russian Occupation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia	Occupation is mentioned more than 15 times. https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinki/mission.house.gov/files/Occupation%20of%20Georgia%20Designated%20FINAL.pdf

Canada			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
15 March 2018	Head of Permanent Delegation of Canada to the OSCE Ambassador Natasha Cayer	Delegation of Canada to the OSCE Statement by Ambassador Natasha Cayer on Illegal Russian Elections in the Temporarily Occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol - 1179th Meeting Of The Permanent Council	In the same period, Russia has held several rounds of Russian elections on the peninsula, in clear violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. In keeping with our previous statements, we condemn Russia’s intention to illegally hold Russian Presidential elections in Crimea on March 18, just as we have condemned its stated intention to do so in Georgia’s occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Canada remains steadfast in its support for the people of Ukraine and together with the international community will maintain its pressure, including through economic sanctions, until Russia respects international law and Ukraine’s sovereignty. Thank you

Czech Republic			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
8 October 2009	The Senate	Resolution "On the situation in Georgia"	"...consider it unavoidable for international organizations carrying out peacekeeping and humanitarian missions to be allowed to operate on occupied territories ..."

Denmark			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 October 2014	Michael Aastrup Jensen, Member of the Folketing, Member of PACE	Statement during the PACE Autumn Plenary Session	"Nothing has improved at all, and we were even denied entry into the occupied territories [of Georgia]." http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2014/E/1410011000E.htm

Estonia			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
8 August 2010	The Estonia-Georgia Parliamentary Group	Statement in connection with the second anniversary of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Georgia	"We consider it especially regrettable that a large part of Georgia is still occupied ... the citizens of Georgia, and also international organizations, and peacekeeping and humanitarian missions do not have access to the occupied territories ". "We call on international organizations... to consistently support the request for the territorial integrity of Georgia, contribute their assistance and continue demanding access to the occupied territories ". https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/press-releases/statement-of-the-estonia-georgia-parliamentary-group/
11 May 2011	Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Statement: 121st Session of the Committee of Ministers of the	"Estonia ... reiterates its call for granting humanitarian workers full access to the occupied territories and to proceed with the Geneva talks with full respect for the principle of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity as recognised by international law." https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM(2011)PV&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=prov&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383#P713_57114

Estonia			
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		Council of Europe, Istanbul	
6 December 2011	Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Statement during the 18th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, Vilnius	“As we speak, Georgia remains an OSCE country with part of its territory occupied already since 2008”. https://delweb.osce.org/docin/llisapi.dll/fetch/2000/107257/222921/20698884/21939611/21939500/M.C.DEL_0045_11_-_Estonia.pdf?nodeid=21944765&vernum=-2
9 June 2014	Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Statement on the so called “parliamentary elections” in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia	“Declaring such elections legal would be seen as an approval of the ethnic cleansing that occurred in 2008 and legitimizing of the military occupation ”. http://www.vm.ee/en/news/estonia-considers-so-called-parliamentary-elections-south-ossetia-be-illegitimate
25 August 2014	Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Statement on the so called “presidential elections” in Abkhazia, Georgia	“According to Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, the so-called presidential elections that were conducted in Georgia’s occupied territories in Abkhazia on August 24th are illegal since they are in contradiction with the principles of Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. “Recognizing these elections would mean legitimizing a military occupation . This is unacceptable,” Foreign Minister Paet added.” http://vm.ee/en/news/estonia-considers-so-called-presidential-elections-abkhazia-illegal
13 March 2017	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia	Twitter Statement on the so-called elections in Abkhazia region	So-called parlm. elections in occupied ABH/GEO are illegal. Support #GEO territ. integrity http://bit.ly/2meDfri https://twitter.com/valismin/status/841215154654195712
10 April 2017	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia	The Statement on the so-called elections and referendum in Georgia’s occupied region South Ossetia	“Estonia condemns the so-called Presidential elections and referendum on amending the name of the Georgian occupied region South Ossetia that took place on April 9.” http://www.vm.ee/en/news/statement-ministry-foreign-affairs-estonia-so-called-elections-and-referendum-georgias-occupied

Estonia			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
21 June 2018	The President of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid	Tweet	#Georgia can be proud of its achievements – from reforms at home (at the time when parts of your country are occupied) to progress made at the European and Euro-Atlantic track. And I firmly believe that #Georgia deserves more than just kind and encouraging words. https://twitter.com/KerstiKaljulaid/status/1009784899748888582?s=19
26 September 2018	The President of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid	UN General Assembly Speech	“Aggression should be called aggression, war is war, and occupation remains occupation . Regardless of whether it's Africa or Europe that we are talking about. I am deeply touched by the misery that war and conflict bring, whether it's talking with internally displaced women and children in occupied Eastern Ukraine or with Georgian politicians being told that due to occupation , their country will be forever denied full participation in the democratic world in the formats we, luckier others, so cherish.” “Crimean Peninsula remains occupied, as do parts of Georgia... ” https://news.err.ee/864396/kaljulaid-to-unga-small-countries-have-no-time-for-small-objectives

Republic of Ireland			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
31 October 2017	Chairman of Senate Mr. Denis O'Donovan	Statement during Official visit to Georgia,	Ireland condemns the occupation of Georgian territories by Russia "First of all we are startled and frightened by the fact that you have this border in your territory. We in our country, in Ireland had a similar situation, for many years. Our country condemns the encroachment of Russia on your territory and we hope for dialogue and peaceful and diplomatic means that this can be resolved, and we have some Irish people in the UN who are stationed here in Tbilisi, who are working as hard as they possibly can to resolve the problems with your neighbor." https://www.facebook.com/mfageorgia/videos/10154783894120899/
21 June 2018	Parliament of Ireland, Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade & Defence, Deputies Maureen O'Sullivan,	Motion	Expresses concern that after 10 years of the Russia-Georgia war and occupation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation the security and human rights situation on the ground has been further aggravated. http://mfa.gov.ge/News/irlandiis-parlamentshi-saqartvelos-pirveli-demokra.aspx?CatID=5

	Sean Barrett, Niall Collins and Noel Grealish		
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Japan			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 March 2017	The Embassy of Japan in Georgia	Statement on the so-called “referendum” in the Georgia’s Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and the closure of so-called crossing points along the occupation line of Abkhazia	<p>“It is Japan’s consistent position that peaceful resolution of the conflict in Georgia’s occupied regions of Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia in line with the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders is essential for the peace and stability of the country and the entire South Caucasus region.</p> <p>Japan expresses deep concern regarding the announced so-called “referendum” on changing the name of the Georgia’s Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, planned for April 9 as well as the closure of so-called crossing points along the occupation line of the Abkhazia region, which is causing grave violations of human rights, and reconfirms its above-mentioned position.”</p> <p>http://www.ge.emb-japan.go.jp/files/statement_01.03.2017/statement_01.03.2017_eng.pdf</p>

Lithuania			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
12 August 2008	The Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs	Statement Regarding the Situation in Georgia	<p>“...Strongly condemning the undeclared war that the Russian Federation began against Georgia and the ongoing occupation of the sovereign state...”</p> <p>http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=5789&p_k=2</p>
15 July 2009	The Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs	Statement Concerning the Situation in Georgia	<p>“...Concerned about the continuous and endless tension in the relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which has been growing as the countries are approaching the anniversary of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Georgia and the occupation of part of Georgia’s territory in August 2008”.</p> <p>“...Expressing a growing concern over the unilateral actions by the Russian Federation that are aimed at reinforcing the occupation of parts of the sovereign and independent state of Georgia”.</p> <p>http://www.geotimes.ge/index.php/css/?m=home&newsid=17580</p>

Lithuania			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 June 2010	The Seimas	Resolution "On the situation in Georgia"	<p>"...<i>deploring</i> all forms of aggression, including armed attack and invasion of the territory of another state, bombing of the territory of another state, its occupation and annexation, as well as massive illegal granting of citizenship and creation of pseudonational puppet formations in the occupied territory..."</p> <p>"...<i>regretting</i> that the Russian Federation does not fulfil its commitments undertaken under the cease-fire agreement of 12 August 2008 by failing to withdraw its forces from the occupied territory of Georgia..."</p> <p>"...<i>considers</i> the continuing presence of Russia's troops in the territory of Georgia and the activities of puppet formations in Abkhazia and South Ossetia as the unlawful occupation of the respective parts of the territory of Georgia..."</p> <p>http://www.parliament.ge/en/media/axali-ambebi/resolution-on-the-situation-in-georgia-24496.page</p>
6 August 2010	Emanuelis Zingeris Member of the Seimas	Statement "On 2nd Anniversary of the Occupation of Georgian Territories"	<p>"... Russia continues to retain and strengthen its military presence in the occupied regions of Georgia".</p> <p>"... The Russian Federation must comply fully and unconditionally with its commitments undertaken in the ceasefire agreements of 12 August 2008 and 8 September 2008 and withdraw its troops without delay from the occupied territories of Georgia".</p> <p>http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=7694&p_d=101389&p_k=2</p>
25 March 2015	The Seimas	Statement on the creeping annexation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali by the Russian Federation	<p>"The Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, regretting that since the war between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008 that resulted in the occupation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali..."</p> <p>"...firmly supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and considers the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali to be integral parts of Georgia"</p> <p>"...stresses that those treaties and similar previous agreements between the Russian Federation and the occupied regions of Georgia adversely affect security and stability across the region"</p> <p>"...calls on the Russian Federation to withdraw its recognition of the separation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and to end their occupation"</p> <p>http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=16385&p_k=2&p_t=154695</p>

Lithuania			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
24 February 2018	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania	Twitter Statement by Linas Linkevicius	The ugly face of oppressive regime in Russia's occupied South Ossetia . Condemn persecutions against Georgian citizens and echo the call to establish international human rights and security mechanisms on the ground. I will raise this issue during tomorrow's meetings in #FAC https://twitter.com/LinkeviciusL/status/967665251977256960
3 March 2018	Permanent Representative of Lithuania on the North Atlantic Council	Vytas Leškevičius On Twitter	Parliamentary leaders of #Moldova, #Georgia, #Ukraine decry Russian presence, stating their countries are profoundly concerned about Russian troops in Moldova, and Russian occupation and other forms of military intervention in parts of Georgia and Ukraine . https://twitter.com/Leskevicius/status/969871139039309824?s=19
18 May 2018	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania	Twitter Statement	#Lithuania raises concern at #CoE Committee of Ministers in Denmark that in Russian occupied territories in Ukraine & Georgia people are left without protection of #ECHR & calls for creation of CoE platform for protection of #HRDs. https://twitter.com/LithuaniaMFA/status/997438094105341952?s=19
28 June 2018	Lithuanian Seimas	Resolution on the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the occupation of a part of the territory of Georgia	The Resolution reminds that, ten years ago, the armed forces of the Russian Federation seized, by means of aggression, parts of the territory of Georgia, its neighbouring country, and set up unrecognised puppet authorities in the occupied territories . The Resolution condemns all forms of aggression, including armed attack and invasion of the territory of another state, and regrets that the Russian Federation hinders the activities of the European Union's observer mission in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and does not fulfil its own commitments undertaken under the cease-fire agreement of 12 August 2008 by failing to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories of Georgia to the pre-conflict positions and by recognising, on no legal grounds, the puppet formations supported by it in the occupied territories . The Seimas recognises and expresses strong support for the territorial integrity, as defined in the country's Constitution, of the state of Georgia, celebrating the centenary of its statehood, as well as the inviolability of its internationally recognised borders, and considers the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) to be an inseparable part of Georgia. Moreover, the Seimas considers the continued presence of the troops of the Russian Federation in the territory of Georgia and the activities of the puppet regimes in the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) to be the unlawful occupation of a sovereign country . http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=119&p_k=2&p_t=259840

Netherlands			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 October 2014	Pieter Omtzigt, Member of the House of Representatives, Member of PACE	Statement during the PACE Autumn Plenary Session	<p>“Georgia and Russia fought a war, and Georgia finds itself with 20% of its territory occupied.”</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2014/E/1410011000E.htm</p>

Poland			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
14 March 2017	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland	Statement on events in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia	<p>“They are being taken against the official position of the government in Tbilisi, by the unrecognized separatist authorities of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali/South Ossetia region, in a part of Georgian territory that has been under occupation for over eight years.”</p> <p>http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/c/MOBILE/news/mfa_statement_on_events_in_abkhazia_and_tskhinvali_south_ossetia</p>
5 March 2018	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland	Twitter Statement	<p>MFA on the death of a Georgian citizen arrested in South Ossetia:</p> <p>On February 23rd it was reported that Archil Tatunashvili - another victim of the illegal Russian occupation on Georgia's territory - died in uncertain circumstances.</p> <p>We demand an objective and urgent accounting of the circumstances of this tragic event and bringing to justice its perpetrators.</p> <p>We call for the immediate release of all Georgian citizens illegally detained in the occupied territory in Georgia.</p> <p>http://tbilisi.msz.gov.pl/en/c/MOBILE/news/polish_mfa_statement_on_the_death_of_a_georgian_citizen_arrested_in_tskhinvali_region</p>

Spain			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 October 2013	Pedro Agramunt, Senator, Member of the Spanish delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	Question addressed to Sergey Naryshkin, Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation PACE Autumn Plenary Session	“Mr Naryshkin, the neighbouring countries in eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, that will take part in the next summit in Vilnius, have told us about various forms of pressure exerted by Russia to prevent their achieving greater integration with western Europe. I am thinking of the occupation of Georgia and pressures exerted on Armenia, for example...” http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2013/E/1310011000E.htm

Slovakia			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
27 September 2018	President Andrej Kiska	UN General Assembly Speech	Sovereignty and territorial integrity are the DNA of stability and security - globally and regionally. But the occupation of Georgia and Ukraine and destabilisation in the region are just one of many examples that the respect of rules is being replaced by ruthless power politics. http://www.publicnow.com/view/94C7E7C48E034E01967BF09F80D1CA9475F90D16?2018-09-27-05:30:09+01:00-xxx8109

Sweden			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
11 May 2011	Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs	Statement during the 121st Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 11 May 2011, Istanbul	“... Let me then just make just four quick points... And finally of course, the situation in Georgia and the Russian Federation and the occupation that is there in part of the Georgian territory... ” https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM(2011)PV&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=prov&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383#P713_57114

15 Mar 2018	Jonas Sjöstedt Chairman of the Left Party	Twitter Statement 15 Mar 2018	<p>Rysslands illegala ockupation av delar av Georgien fortsätter. Ryskstödda separatister kidnappade georgiern Archil Tatunashvili, han avled i fångenskap. Nu vägrar de att återlämna hans kropp. Rysslands aggression mot Georgien måste upphöra.</p> <p>Russia's illegal occupation of parts of Georgia continues. Russian-supported separatists kidnapped the Georgian Archil Tatunashvili, who died in captivity. Now they refuse to return his body. Russia's aggression against Georgia must end.</p> <p>https://twitter.com/jsjostedt/status/974248569547968513</p>
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Ukraine			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
1 October 2014	Volodymyr Ariev, Member of Verkhovna Rada, Member of PACE	Statement during the PACE Autumn Plenary Session	<p>“Democratic changes and progress in this small country of Georgia made Moscow angry in a deadly way, and in 2008 Russian troops invaded Georgia to establish the occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.”</p> <p>http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/Records/2014/E/1410011000E.htm</p>
11 April 2017	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine	Statement on the so-called referendum in Tskhinvali region	<p>“Міністерство закордонних справ України засуджує проведення 9 квітня 2017 року в Цхінвальському регіоні/Південній Осетії, Грузія, російським окупаційним режимом так званих «виборів президента» і «референдуму щодо перейменування цього регіону Грузії на «республіку Південна Осетія – держава Аланія». Такі незаконні дії, поряд із проведенням 12 березня 2017 року так званих «парламентських виборів» в окупованому Абхазькому регіоні Грузії, є грубим порушенням міжнародного права і складовим елементом неоімперської політики Росії, спрямованої на дестабілізацію та підкорення держав Східної Європи.”</p> <p><i>Unofficial translation:</i> "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine condemns the holding of the so-called "presidential elections" and "referendum on renaming this region of Georgia to the "Republic of South Ossetia - State of Alania" by the Russian occupation regime on April 9, 2017 in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Such illegal actions, along with the holding of the so-called "parliamentary elections" in the occupied Abkhazian region of Georgia on March 12, 2017, are a gross violation of international law and a constituent element of Russia's neo-imperial policy aimed at destabilizing and subjugating the states of Eastern Europe”.</p> <p>http://mfa.gov.ua/ua/press-center/news/56286-zajava-ministerstva-zakordonnih-sprav-ukrajini-shhodo-provedennya-tak-zvanogo-referendumuv-ckhinvalysykomu-regioni-gruziji</p>

Ukraine			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
23 March 2017	Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna	Statement by the Delegation of Ukraine, 1138th meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council	<p>Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Delegation of the European Union on the so-called “parliamentary elections” in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia. I would also like to add some remarks in national capacity.</p> <p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in its statement of 17 March 2017 strongly condemned the holding of illegal so called “parliamentary elections” in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia, signing the so called “agreement between the Russian Federation and “the Republic of Southern Ossetia” on the modalities for the incorporation of a number of military units of “the Republic of Southern Ossetia” into the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation” and so-called “referendum on changing the name of Tskhinvali region of Georgia”.</p> <p>Ukraine considers such actions as yet another demonstration of Russia’s expansionist policy and as attempts to legitimize the occupation regime, which are null and void.</p> <p>http://vienna.mfa.gov.ua/en/press-center/news/55820-zajava-delegaciji-ukrajini-shhodo-tzv-parlamentsykih-viboriv-u-okupovanomu-abkhazykomu-regioni-gruziji</p>
1 February 2018	Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna	Statement on “Recent developments in the occupied regions of Georgia” 1174th meeting of the Permanent Council,	<p>On 29 January 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine issued a statement reiterating Ukraine’s unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders and strongly condemning the ratification by the State Duma of the Russian Federation of the so-called agreement on the order of inclusion of certain units of the armed forces of the self-proclaimed “Republic of South Ossetia” (occupied territory of Georgia) into the armed forces of the Russian Federation as well as the opening by the Russian occupation authorities of a customs checkpoint in Akhagori (Tskhinvali region) and establishment of a specialized customs checkpoint in Sukhumi in Abkhazia. This provocative act testifies to the continuation of the Kremlin’s policy aimed at destabilizing the situation in the Black Sea region and undermining the European security architecture. Ukraine calls upon the Russian Federation to fulfill its obligations under international law and withdraw all its armed formations and occupation administrations from the temporarily occupied territories of Georgia and Ukraine.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/370806?download=true</p>
12 April 2018	Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna	Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna	<p>Today, Ukraine and Georgia stand together defending their freedom, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as in their struggle against aggression and occupation. Ten years after the</p>

Ukraine			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
	International Organizations in Vienna	Organizations in Vienna, to the 1181st meeting of the Permanent Council	Russian aggression against Georgia of 2008, Russia still occupies Abkhazia and South Ossetia/Tskhinvali regions of Georgia. http://mfa.gov.ua/en/press-center/news/64260-zajava-delegaciji-ukrajini-u-vidpovidy-na-vistup-zastupnika-ministra-zakordonnih-sprav-gruziji-davida-dondua-movoju-originalu
1 June 2018	Ambassador Ihor Prokopchuk, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna	Statement on the decision of Syria to recognize the independence and to establish diplomatic relations with the occupied territories of Georgia	I would like to draw your attention to the following statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine concerning the decision of Syria to recognize the independence and to establish diplomatic relations with the occupied territories of Georgia: «The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine strongly condemns the decision of the Syrian Arab Republic to recognize and establish diplomatic relations with the occupied territories of Georgia – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/383820?download=true

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
27 August 2008	David Miliband Foreign Secretary	Statement	“By continuing to occupy parts of Georgia , Russia has failed to live up to the terms of the ceasefire, brokered by President Sarkozy” (Speech, Kyiv) http://ukinmalta.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=News&id=5610259
14 Mar 2018	Paul Masterton UK MP	Tweeter Statement	“I strongly welcomed the Prime Minister's statement today and asked her to ensure this Government continues to call out the Putin Regime, including regarding its occupation of Georgia ” https://twitter.com/PM4EastRen/status/973929370543951872
29 May 2018	Conservative Member of UK Parliament for the Huntingdon constituency	Twitter Statement	Checking out the Abkhazia occupied territory with EU Monitoring Mission to Georgia- this is as far as we can go, Russians ahead! https://twitter.com/JDjanogly/status/1001452248256450561

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
30 May 2018	Mark Pritchard Conservative MP	Twitter Statement	<p>" Syria, now in part, a vassal State of Russia, recognizes illegally occupied South Ossetia and #Abkhazia - time for UN & EU to revisit Russian aggression beyond Ukraine"</p> <p>https://twitter.com/MPritchardUK/status/1001703107208806402</p>
30 May 2018	Joint Communiqué	Visit to Georgia by the delegation of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Georgia in the UK Parliament in the framework of the UK-Georgia Wardrop Strategic Dialogue's Parliamentary Dimension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Both sides paid special attention to Russia's wide pattern of aggressive behaviour and discussed the current situation in the occupied territories of Georgia, expressing deep concerns about ethnic discrimination and grave violations of human rights, including the violent death of the Georgian citizen, Archil Tatunashvili in the occupied Tskhinvali region. On the 10th year of the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, the delegations expressed concerns over the continuous occupation of Georgian territories, as well as steps taken towards factual annexation in violation of the fundamental norms of international law by the Russian Federation and underlined the necessity of implementation of the EU mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and Russia. The parties discussed and expressed support to the new initiative of the Government of Georgia "A Step Towards a Better Future", which aspires to improve humanitarian, social and economic conditions of the populations in Georgia's Russian-occupied regions through trade, educational programs and equal opportunities.
10 July 2018	House of Commons UK Parliament	Georgia 100th Anniversary Motion	<p>Expresses concern that after 10 years of the Russia-Georgia war and the occupation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, South Ossetia, by the Russian Federation the security and human rights situation on the ground has been further aggravated</p> <p>https://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1500</p>

Alignments, Joint Statements			
Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
27 August 2008	Ministers of Foreign Affairs	Joint Statement	<p>"We, the foreign ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom, condemn the action of our fellow G8 member... We deplore Russia's excessive use of military force in Georgia and its continued occupation of parts of Georgia."</p> <p>http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7583486.stm</p>

FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
9 March 2017	OSCE Permanent Council No 1136	EU Statement on the "Closure of so-called border crossings in the occupied Abkhazia region in Georgia" Vienna, 9 March 2017	<p>EU Statement on the "Closure of so-called border crossings in the occupied Abkhazia region in Georgia"</p> <p>The European Union is deeply concerned about the closure by the de-facto authorities from the breakaway region of Abkhazia of two crossing points along the Administrative Boundary Line of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia – Nabakevi and Meore Otobaia - which were used daily by hundreds of commuters. The closure is detrimental to the freedom of movement of the population, including school children, on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line. It will likely increase the risk of incidents, especially detentions.</p> <p>The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/305916?download=true</p>

TURKEY, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area (EEA), as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO.			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
23 March 2017	OSCE Permanent Council No 1138 Vienna, 23 March 2017	EU Statement on "So-called elections in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia" Vienna, 23 March 2017	<p>EU Statement on "So-called elections in the occupied Abkhazia region of Georgia"</p> <p>In view of the reports about the so-called "elections" that took place on 12 March in the Georgian breakaway region of Abkhazia, we recall that the European Union does not recognise the constitutional and legal framework within which these elections have taken place. The European Union also condemns and does not recognise the decision by the de facto authorities in the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia to conduct so-called "presidential elections" and an illegal "referendum" on changing the name of the Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia'.</p> <p>The Candidate Countries TURKEY, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/307751?download=true</p>

Norway and Canada			
Date	Agency / Representative	Document	Quote / Link
23 March 2017	Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE	Statement on the So-Called Parliamentary Elections in the Occupied Abkhazia Region of Georgia Vienna, 23 March 2017	<p>STATEMENT ON THE SO-CALLED PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ABKHAZIA REGOIN OF GEORGIA As delivered to the Permanent Council, Vienna, 23 March 2017</p> <p>I make this statement on behalf of Canada and Norway.</p> <p>Two weeks after urging Russia and the de-facto authorities of the breakaway regions to refrain from actions that violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Canada and Norway once again unite their voices to share the concerns expressed by the EU and the US on the illegitimate so-called "parliamentary elections" conducted in Georgian territory without the consent of its Government.</p> <p>https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/307806?download=true</p>

Annex Three. Official statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning cultural heritage damage in Georgia during the 2008 war

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

A number of monuments in and around the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and in Gori have been damaged by bombings raids, ground attacks, arson and looting carried out by Russian forces and Tskhinvali separatists. A precise survey of the damage is not possible, as the expert group mandated by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia to carry out the survey cannot gain access to the zones controlled by Russian forces.

The extensive pattern of damage reported from the Georgian territories occupied by Russian forces (see annex I) suggests that the destruction is at the very least tolerated by Russian forces, and almost certainly carried out as part of a deliberate policy of cultural destruction.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses its grave concern and condemns in the strongest possible terms the illegal and unacceptable practice of destruction of the cultural heritage monuments on the Georgian territories occupied by Russian forces.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reminds the Russian Federation that any intentional damage of cultural heritage sites breaks international commitments which both Georgia and the Russian Federation have signed, such as those contained in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflicts and the 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional destruction of Cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the International Community, UNESCO and other international organizations to assess the existing situation and to use their influence to avoid further destruction of Georgia's unique historical monuments. Ministry of Foreign Affairs also calls for an international monitoring mission to evaluate the state of cultural heritage sites on the occupied territories and to facilitate assistance for future rehabilitation processes.

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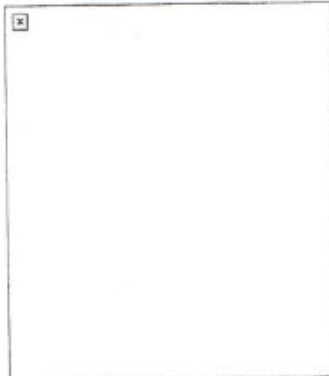
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A number of monuments in and around the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and in Gori have been damaged by bombings, raids, ground attacks, arson and looting carried out by Russian forces and Tskhinvali separatists. A precise survey of the damage is not possible, as the expert group mandated by the Ministry of Culture of Georgia to carry out the survey cannot gain access to the zones controlled by Russian forces.

The extensive pattern of damage reported from the Georgian territories occupied by Russian forces (see annex 1) suggests that the destruction is at the very least tolerated by Russian forces, and almost certainly carried out as part of a deliberate policy of cultural destruction.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses its grave concern and condemns in the strongest possible terms the illegal and unacceptable practice of destruction of the cultural heritage monuments on the Georgian territories occupied by Russian forces.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reminds the Russian Federation that any intentional damage of cultural heritage sites breaks international commitments which both Georgia and the Russian Federation have signed, such as those contained in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflicts and the 2003 UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional destruction of Cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges the International Community, UNESCO and other international organizations to assess the existing situation and to use their influence to avoid further destruction of Georgia's unique historical monuments. Ministry of Foreign Affairs also calls for an international monitoring mission to evaluate the state of cultural heritage sites on the occupied territories and to facilitate assistance for future rehabilitation processes.

Tbilisi, 15 September 2008

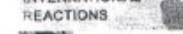
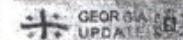
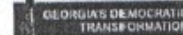
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27	28	29	30			

September 2008



SITMAP

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Damage to Cultural Heritage (monuments, churches and museums)

The information below is accurate to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to verification. It is based on reports from local inhabitants and museum staff, data compiled by the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia, and UNOSAT satellite-based damage assessment for cultural heritage monuments (Annex II)

The Ministry of Culture's inventory lists about 500 registered historical monuments and archaeological sites in the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

A number of monuments in and around the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia and in Gori have been damaged by bombings raids, ground attacks, arson and looting carried out by Russian forces and Tskhinvali separatists. A precise survey of the damage is not possible because the experts of the Ministry of Culture of Georgia are not allowed into the Russian occupation zones.

The following list is therefore highly provisional. The high density of monuments in the Shida Kartli region makes it likely that many more churches or monuments are damaged as well.

Archangel church (19th century)

This church, found in Kheiti, was damaged following shelling on 12th August. Severe damage has been confirmed by the UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart, based on WorldView-1 satellite imagery recorded on 19 August 2008.

Ikorta church (12th century)

One of the most interesting examples of Georgian Christian architecture, this church hosts the graves of three famous Georgians. According to the staff of the attendant museum, the church was damaged by shelling on the 9th and 10th of August.

Ivane Machabelli museum

The museum in village Tamarasheni just north of Tskhinvali was heavily bombed and damaged, according to museum staff. UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart confirms possible damage to roof of northern section, 8 adjacent buildings destroyed/severely.

Bishop's Palace in Nikozi (10th/11th centuries)

One of the most important examples of palace architecture from the late medieval period. It was recently restored, and has now been burned and destroyed. The Archbishop's residence and the monastery adjacent to palace were bombed on 9th of August. The resulting fire engulfed the Palace, too, according to museum staff.

The Monastery Complex of village Nikozi (6th, 10th centuries)

One of the most important examples of sacred medieval architecture to be found in the Caucasus. It has been severely damaged by shelling. UNOSAT confirms 3 buildings destroyed, main church appears intact, but possible damages.

Wooden Church of St. George In Sveri (19th century)

A rare example of wooden architecture. The church was completely burnt. UNOSAT lists the building as "confirmed severe damages/destroyed".

Kemerti St. George Church (9th-10th centuries)

This church was bombed on 10th of August. Satellite images do not reveal direct damage, but the building is located within 100m of buildings whose damage is visible from satellite (see UNOSAT chart). Local inhabitants report that the grounds of the church have been mined.

Ksani Gorge Museum Reserve (Eristavi Palace)

This museum, in Akhlagori, is occupied by South Ossetian militias. Sporadic looting attempts have been reported.

Didi Liakhi Gorge museum reserve

According to staff and Georgian ICOM National Committee, the Kurta and Kekhvi offices of the museum reserve, where significant exhibits of bronze and medieval age were preserved, were looted. According to UNOSAT satellite imagery Kurta office is "destroyed, arson probable". UNOSAT lists the Kekhvi office as likely "severely damaged, with possible impact crater in roof".

Monuments located within 100m from bombing or shelling

According to preservationist and architectural experts, an explosion within 100 meters of an ancient building risks inflicting significant damages to the structure. UNOSAT satellite imagery lists the following monuments as being less than 100 meters from shelled or bombed areas:

- Church of St. George in the village of Kekhvi (17th century)
- Church of St. George in the village of Kurta (9th century)
- Fortress in the village Achabeti (16th century)
- Church of St. Nicola in the village of Achabeti (18th century)
- Giorgi Machabeli Palace (18th century)

The Document is followed by UNOSAT (2008d)

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