

EUMM Human Security Teams – Connecting with conflict-affected communities



Overview

The promotion of Human Security and human rights is central to the work of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and is the focus of dedicated staff who monitor and report on the subject daily, both at the EUMM Headquarters (HQ) in Tbilisi and at the Field Offices in Mtskheta, Gori and Zugdidi. Each of the three EUMM Field Offices has a specialised Human Security team – normally consisting of between five and seven monitors – who follow the living conditions of people affected by the conflict in their specific area of operations. Experts at EUMM HQ coordinate and provide analysis and guidance to this work.

Ever since the Mission first deployed to Georgia, identifying the needs and daily challenges

of internally displaced persons and local residents whose lives have been adversely affected by the conflict, has been a priority. ‘Normalisation’ – meaning the return to the life that the conflict-affected population enjoyed before it was disrupted by the war – is one of the four pillars of the Mission’s mandate as defined by EU member states and has remained integral to its work since the first monitor put his/her feet on the ground on the 1st of October 2008. However, the obstacles to the resumption of a normal life have changed since the immediate aftermath of the 2008 war, and in some areas the challenges have actually increased. The Mission documents these challenges and uses available mechanisms to address them and alleviate problems – including,

where appropriate, by sharing information with other international organisations and potential donors. This issue of the Monitor gives an overview of the activities of the EUMM in the area of Human Security.

What is Human Security?

Traditionally, ‘Human Security’ was viewed as the physical protection of communities. More recently, the definition has evolved to include a people rights-centric approach. Today the focus is more on the individual and the end goal is not simply physical protection, but also protection from threats such as poverty, disease and hunger. Human Security, from the Mission’s perspective, takes into consideration economic security, food security, health security, environmental security and community security to mention just a few.

How does EUMM work with Human Security?

As previously mentioned, a key component of the Mission’s mandate is ‘normalisation’. Normalisation includes Human Security as a whole, encompassing issues such as freedom of movement, access to land and entitlement to personal documents. To this end, the Mission monitors, analyses and reports on Human Security and has dedicated Human Security teams who focus on the living conditions

of the many thousands of people whose rights and circumstances are still impaired. Mission monitors assess their freedom of movement, protection of property rights, access to medical facilities, access to education, access to agricultural lands and water, access to justice, and access to markets and cross-Administrative Boundary Line trade. These are essential basic freedoms, and affect economic possibilities.

To collect information on living conditions, EUMM monitors meet with local interlocutors as well as with international and civil society organisations and experts daily. Meetings often take place close to the Administrative Boundary Lines with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Mission also speaks with internally displaced persons (IDPs) across all of the territory controlled by the Georgian government, many of whom (45%) live in collective centres not intended for human habitation.

Staff assigned to the Mission's dedicated Human Security teams typically have extensive expertise and professional experience in human rights and the protection of Human Security. The Mission HQ in Tbilisi coordinates with each



Field Office, aiming to cover all of Georgia, and provides advice through the Mission Human Rights and Gender Advisers. Due to the constantly evolving nature of Human Security challenges, focus areas are regularly updated by the Mission HQ in coordination with the EU institutions in Brussels, to ensure that the information collected is relevant to decision-makers at local and EU level.

The Human Security teams regularly meet with the institutions and agencies responsible for

defining or implementing policies relevant for Human Security. Since 2009, the Mission organises regular 'Information Sharing Meetings' (ISMs) for civil society organisations across Georgia - both in Zugdidi and in Tbilisi. These meetings offer a platform for the exchange of views and information on the situation for the local population and also provide an opportunity for the Mission to inform civil society representatives about conflict-related developments. The ISMs connect EUMM with non-governmental organisations and greatly assist the Mission by increasing its overall knowledge of Human Security issues on the ground and civil society initiatives to address them.

Central to the Mission's Human Security work are the monitors themselves. Monitors today come from 26 EU Member States, with varied life experiences and specific expertise and interests in gender, equality, community policing and human rights among others. These diverse experiences all benefit the work and specialisation of our Human Security teams.



A Day in the Life of ... Human Security Team Monitor in Gori



Gerard de Boer, The Netherlands, Human Security Team Monitor - Field Office Gori

Why is your job important?

We play an important role in preventing a return to open conflict and in providing opportunities for people on both sides of the conflict to talk to one another. Through our monitoring work, we try to foster a return to a normal life for those people whose lives have been most affected, particularly those living in villages on or close to the Administrative Boundary Line. I place huge importance on this work and am proud to play a part in it.

What tasks related to Human Security will you carry out today and how does it fit into the overall Human Security Team Plan?

Today we have an interview with the Social Service Agency in Gori to discuss and get any updated or new relevant information on the agency's work and any urgent issues. We will then go to the villages of Plavi and Kveshi to get an update from local residents on their access to drinking water, irrigation, agricultural land, and also on any security-related issues. This is important because as a Mission we need to see and hear how the unresolved conflict affects people's access to basic needs in order to inform decision-makers in the EU, and to look for possible solutions with decision-makers on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines.

Who will support you?

My Human Security team colleague, Karin Eklund from Sweden and interpreter Nino from Georgia will support me.

How long will the patrol take?

The patrol is planned for five to six hours, but experience has taught me that once you get talking to people, the conversation flows, and the patrol will likely be longer.



Human Rights at the Centre of the Mission and EU action

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are at the heart of the EU and integral to its actions, including its work with international partners. All EU Missions are required to conduct their activities in line with the fundamental principles of human rights. The EUMM achieves this by collecting, verifying and analysing information on human rights issues, and regularly reporting about human rights violations to EU Member States. The Mission uses well-established communication mechanisms – Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings as well as the Mission-managed Hotline – to discuss challenges to human rights and international humanitarian law with all conflict parties.

Every Mission monitor across all three teams (Human Security, Compliance and Administrative Boundary Line) is required to identify and report on human rights issues. However, the EUMM Human Security teams have a primary role in providing in-depth monitoring and reporting on such issues. The Human Rights Adviser based in Tbilisi analyses the information from the field with reference to international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international standards. In addition to assessing the consequences of the 2008 war vis-à-vis the application of international treaties, customary international law and other general principles of international law, the Human Rights Adviser also examines related property rights and how they are enforced. This includes access to cultural and religious heritage sites across Georgia, ethnic minority relations, international criminal law cases related to the conflict, cases of hate speech or hate crime, migration issues related to required documentation, crossing regime or internally displaced people, cases of detentions and detention conditions.

To ensure the smooth flow of information on the human rights situation in Georgia, EUMM has created a network of dedicated colleagues, connecting the Field Offices and Mission HQ with one another. This network meets on a regular basis to discuss the latest findings, developments and trends on human rights issues in the country. These meetings and regular information exchanges improve both the Mission's monitoring and its analysis of human rights developments on the ground, enabling it to better inform EU Member States and international partners.



"It is great to see how dedicated my colleagues from the Field Offices are in supporting human rights mainstreaming. They organise ISMs with local stakeholders, both with NGOs and state officials. They gather information pertaining to vulnerable groups and potential human rights violations. It can take a long time to gather and verify information, for example on freedom of movement or the right to education in one's mother tongue, but they don't give up until they find real answers," Radka Rubilina, EUMM Human Rights Adviser.



A Day in the Life of ... Human Security Team Monitor in Zugdidi



**Nadezhda Drumeva, Bulgaria,
Human Security Team Monitor –
Field Office Zugdidi**

Why is your job important?

I see my job as important, as many people I encounter in my work – especially internally displaced persons, live in extremely difficult conditions. In talking to people I'm able to gain a better understanding of these challenges, including on issues such as freedom of movement at the Administrative Boundary Line with Abkhazia, human rights violations and access to social security and social assistance, to mention but a few. Monitoring

these issues is crucial as it helps the Mission to understand how people are affected, and sometimes to identify potential solutions that could be discussed via the Hotline, or in the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meeting. The most fulfilling part of this job for me so far has been the interaction with the local population, as Georgians are like Bulgarians. They are kind, cordial, warm, good and hospitable people. I feel it is similar to home here.

What task related to Human Security will you carry out today and how does it fit into the overall Human Security team plan?

Today we have a special task to gather information regarding the harvest, which has been problematic for many people over the last few years because of invasive pests. We will also talk to local NGOs working on the issue of gender-based violence about the complaint and protection mechanisms that are in place in their local communities, and women's access to them. Monitoring the ongoing impact of pests on the annual harvest is an important task because it is a measure of the economic security of people who rely almost entirely on farming for their family income. Gender-based violence is widely understood to be a barometer of conflict – increases in violence in the home have historically been a precursor to conflict within the wider community. Furthermore, personal security for women, men, boys and girls is a basic human right, and it is our job in the Human Security team to evaluate this.

Who will support you and in which area will your task be carried out?

I rely on my international and national colleagues to help me to talk to people in order to collect, verify and analyse information on human rights and gender related issues. My Human Security team colleagues today are Davide Moura from Luxemburg and interpreter Manana from Georgia.

How long will the patrol take?

My patrol starts at 9am and is due to finish at 5pm. Sometimes when there is a specific task and we need to speak with a number of people to get the 'big picture', it might take longer.

Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility at EUMM

In monitoring the post-conflict situation in Georgia, EUMM ensures that both women and men are equally consulted, in order to better understand how their differing roles in Georgian society and gender inequality affect their experience of Human Security, including access to justice, personal, economic, health, food and environmental security.

Gender equality is at the core of EUMM's work in Georgia. Awareness of the differences in gender roles and relations helps the Mission to understand how the conflict has affected each differently. In order to achieve this, it is important that the Mission speaks to both women and men, and that their points of view are analysed and reported. This is a focus for all EUMM teams, including Human Security.



"Gender mainstreaming and advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility at EUMM. The Gender Focal Point network is an invaluable resource for strengthening the integration of gender into day-to-day monitoring activities of our patrols in the field. Systematic efforts are needed to successfully and meaningfully integrate a gender perspective into our work: every staff member has a key role to play," Sini Ramo, Mission Gender Adviser.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security not only acknowledges the differences in how women, men, boys and girls experience conflict, but also recognises that lasting peace can only be achieved if women are involved in the processes undertaken to achieve it. The EU fully supports this resolution, and has adopted its own guidelines in line with it, including the requirement for EU Common Security and Defence Policy Missions to take gender issues into account in all aspects of their work. This means, for example, analysing how gender affects people's needs, challenges and opportunities, collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data, designing appropriate questions for women and men, and ensuring that the EUMM patrols asking these questions consist of both women and men.

A network of Gender Focal Points at HQ and in the Field Offices supports gender mainstreaming across the Mission.

Confidence building on irrigation and access to agricultural land at the Administrative Boundary Line

The Human Security team at the EUMM Field Office in Gori has five monitors from different nationalities and with a range of backgrounds, including community policing, international human rights law, asylum protection, good governance and technical support for sustainable livelihoods. The team covers a wide range of topics including the challenges faced by local populations in communities along the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia. These include access to land and access to water for irrigation purposes.

Some 90% of households at the Administrative Boundary Line are heavily reliant on agriculture for their survival. As such, a large part of the team's focus is on related issues. The 2008 conflict has had serious negative consequences for those living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line. Many farmers now find themselves in a situation where they cannot access land that they traditionally farmed and relied on for an income.

The team shares its findings and assessments, including on extreme cases of poverty, with specialised agencies and NGOs. As a result, assistance has been provided for several households from both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line.



Irrigation water is another important focus for the team. Traditionally, water for irrigation ran through systems from South Ossetia to territory controlled by the Georgian government. After 2008, many large-scale systems ceased to function, leaving vast areas of agricultural land dry.

Thousands of fruit trees died, and farmers replaced vegetable crops that need a lot of water to grow with those that do not, but which are also of lower value. Access to water is a basic human rights issue.

Some of these irrigation systems have been restored on the territory controlled by the Georgian government using expensive pump stations. However, the Human Security team hopes that a less costly and more sustainable solution can be found in ongoing discussions at meetings of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.

EUMM brings local NGOs together to exchange their experience

The Human Security team in Field Office Zugdidi has seven members. They have a mixed civilian and police background.

One of the main standing tasks for the Zugdidi team is to organise regular Information Sharing Meetings (ISMs), typically every six to eight weeks. These build on similar meetings originally held by the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), which was phased out after 2009. From the outset, EUMM has worked closely with a wide network of civil society and local authorities' representatives. Human Security teams participate in these important meetings and often chair them.



“At these meetings local experts from all walks of life support us in an open and transparent manner to better understand developments in the area and how they have a positive impact on people’s lives”, Pekka Mattila, Leader of Field Office Zugdidi Human Security team.

There are usually about 20 participants at each meeting, representing up to 18 NGOs, from various regions. The goal of these meetings is to exchange information on developments in Western Georgia, which are relevant to civil society. Participating organisations offer insights into their projects, community life and daily challenges.

“Since 2009, our Field Office in Zugdidi has chaired over 72 Information Sharing Meetings with our local partners and with the participation of other international stakeholders, such as the Office of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and UNHCR. These meetings help not only to create a much better understanding between our partners, but they also create unique outreach opportunities for us to inform people in Georgia about our mandate and activities”, Eva Proksova, Deputy Head of the EUMM Field Office Zugdidi.

“We are concerned about fewer opportunities for peacebuilding in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; however, much good work is still ongoing in support of conflict transformation. We see that EUMM puts serious efforts to keep a peaceful environment here”, NGO representative during an ISM with the EUMM.



The importance of Zugdidi market to people living in Gali

One of the goals of the EUMM is to monitor progress made for people living along both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines in returning to a safe and normal life. One of many measures, of course, includes ready access to food and other necessities. On this point, Zugdidi market provides an insightful example.

Zugdidi market is located approximately 10 kilometres from the Enguri Bridge, which is the main crossing point between the territory controlled by the Georgian government and Abkhazia. For many of the approximately 2,000 people a day who cross the Administrative Boundary Line, their main reason to cross is to visit Zugdidi market and buy basic goods. These tend to be cheaper than in the Gali market. According to market vendors, about half of their customers come from Abkhazia.



“People should have the right to cross the bridge and to travel wherever they want in this area. We should be allowed to transport our goods without restrictions from Zugdidi to Gali and back”, local resident from Zugdidi.

Prolonged crossing restrictions at the Enguri Bridge controlled crossing point in 2019 imposed by the de facto authorities of Abkhazia have caused considerable hardship for both vendors and customers. The vendors complained about the lack of customers and the consequent sharp decrease in their incomes during the restrictions. Worse still, Gali residents informed the Mission that without access to Zugdidi market, they had to pay triple the price for goods in Gali market. EUMM monitors regularly visit the market to learn about socio-economic developments and trends in freedom of movement. The information collected from discussions with

vendors and commuters enriches EUMM analysis and reporting about the consequences of the conflict.

Georgia has a diverse ethnic landscape



EUMM follows developments all over Georgia that are relevant to its mandate, including in minority communities, where social and economic inclusion is limited and the potential for external influence is high. While the Mission is well known in predominantly Georgian-speaking areas, the Human Security team has to make a greater effort to explain its tasks and activities, as well as the overall role of the EUMM in other regions

of Georgia. In both Azeri and Armenian communities, poverty often prevents travel beyond an individual’s home village and a lack of Georgian language skills impedes full participation in Georgian social and political life. Because of this relative isolation, many people living in the Azeri and Armenian communities have limited knowledge of the 2008 conflict or have a different viewpoint on its causes and outcomes than that in mainstream Georgian society. This dichotomy often also applies to the political situation in the rest of the country, and is amplified when it comes to the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The EUMM has increased its visibility in minority areas, especially in Azeri and Armenian communities.

Children cross the Administrative Boundary Line to attend classes

School is not always easy. For some it is difficult enough to get out of bed in time to go to school. Having an Administrative Boundary Line or checkpoint in between you and your school makes things even more complicated. The Field Office Zugdidi Human Security team works to ensure that children can cross with the least inconvenience.

The Human Security team in Field Office Zugdidi pays particular attention to the right to education and the need for schoolchildren to cross the Administrative Boundary Line in order to obtain instruction in a language that is familiar to them. Since 2016 there has been a decreasing number of pupils (from kindergarten up to the 12th grade) crossing the Administrative Boundary Line each day to attend school. Between 2009 and 2010, 128 children crossed daily. Between 2016 and 2017, this figure reduced to 39 and the figure in 2018 was only 21. The installation of more and more fences along the Administrative Boundary Line and the closure of two crossing points in 2016 and 2017 have contributed to the decline in crossings. Many pupils were forced to change schools. Others moved with their families to the territory controlled by the Georgian government.

Children who do cross the Administrative Boundary Line on a daily basis leave their house in Abkhazia in the morning and cross at the Saberio controlled crossing point, which is manned by Russian border guards. They then catch the bus to go to school in the territory controlled by the Georgian government. After school, they take the bus to the same controlled crossing point to return home. The Field Office monitors their travel closely, and regularly go to Saberio to observe their commute. Monitors also liaise with school directors regarding attendance and to identify any additional obstacles for these children to attend school.



“A resumption of a safe and normal life for people living on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Lines, including all children having the right to education in their mother tongue, is a key element of the Mission mandate. It’s a human right!” Tineke Rillaerts, Deputy Leader of Field Office Zugdidi Human Security team.

Other schoolchildren and students cross the Administrative Boundary Line on a less frequent basis. They go, for instance, to school, vocational college or university in Zugdidi or Tbilisi, but reside in dorms or with family members in the territory controlled by the Georgian government. They only return at weekends or during school holidays.

The EUMM regularly updates EU Member States and institutions on the situation for schoolchildren in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Mission advocates for a humanitarian approach in all possible instances and fora, including through the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings and EUMM-managed Hotline, and that freedom of movement for children seeking mother-tongue education is facilitated.



Our monitors meet with Internally Displaced Persons regularly

In Field Office Mtskheta there are nine monitors in the Human Security team. They mainly come from a civilian background even though there are some with military and police experience. The team liaises with civil society organisations, local authorities, other institutions and individuals in its monitoring of Human Security issues, including on freedom of movement, rights for internally displaced persons and other day-to-day concerns across the whole of eastern Georgia.



“When will we be able to return back to our homes?” is perhaps the hardest question our Human Security monitors are asked while patrolling. The Human Security team in Field Office Mtskheta regularly visits the largest of the settlements for people who are unable to return to their homes because of the conflict in Georgia, – located in Tserovani, Tsilkani and Prezeti. The team also visits the so-called ‘collective centres’ - buildings that were not built for accommodation, but have been repurposed to house internally displaced persons - located across Tbilisi and in regions across Georgia. Speaking with internally displaced persons gives us a better sense of the challenges they face.

Every now and then, monitors are invited into the homes of people with whom they speak during their patrols. Georgian hospitality is generous and genuine. Members of the Human Security team have attended birthday celebrations, weddings - and funerals - and have heard many sad stories about relatives who passed away on the other side of the Administrative Boundary Line and whose funerals they could not attend. These visits are also an opportunity for people to ask questions about us and the Mission’s work in Georgia.



Head of Mission Statement

“The Mission devotes resources to monitor issues of Human Security, which extends beyond protection from threats of physical harm to include threats from, for example, poverty, lack of freedom of movement, and access to health services. It is important that EUMM Georgia continues to provide detailed and unbiased information about such developments through the work of its teams in the field and experts at the Tbilisi HQ. This allows decision makers in the EU and EU capitals to be abreast of the challenges on the ground. In some cases, we also have an advocacy role, and a role in facilitating communication and cooperation that solves problems for locals whose rights and livelihoods are under pressure. We raise such issues through the EUMM-managed Hotline, the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism meetings and other relevant formats”, Erik Høeg, Head of Mission, EUMM Georgia.





European Union Monitoring
Mission in Georgia



www.eumm.eu



The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is the EU's only current Mission that is specifically dedicated to monitoring. On 3 December 2018, the European Council extended the mandate of the Mission until 14 December 2020.

Mr. Erik Høeg (Denmark) is Head of Mission. He succeeded Kęstutis Jankauskas (Lithuania), Toivo Käär (Estonia), Andrzej Tyszkiewicz (Poland), and Hansjörg Haber (Germany).

Contact: press@eumm.eu

· Des Doyle, Spokesperson
· William Boyd, Press and Public Information Officer
· Nino Sukhitashvili, Public Information and Media monitor
· Tamta Megrelidze, Public Information and Media monitor

Visit us on: www.eumm.eu,

Also on www.facebook.com/eumm.geo,

https://www.instagram.com/eumm_georgia/ and

www.flickr.com/photos/eeas-csdp/albums/72157677976230403