



Field Office Mtskheta is...

## Covering the whole of Eastern Georgia

The Field Office in Mtskheta is one of the Mission's three Field Offices, located across Georgia. From here the Mission's monitors conduct their patrols and cooperate with local partners and interlocutors.

In terms of personnel strength, Field Office Mtskheta is the smallest, but it has the largest Area of Responsibility covering Eastern Georgia, from Akhaltsikhe in the southeast to Stepantsminda in the north and Lagodekhi in the east.

The Field Office monitors the eastern section of the South Ossetian Administrative Boundary Line, including the Controlled Crossing Point in Odzisi (see page 2).

The impact on the conflict-affected population on both sides of the Administrative Boundary line, including the large number of Internally Displaced Persons, is a particular focus for the Field Office (see page 5). As part of this work, the Field Office monitors how ethnic and religious minorities are affected and how this may have an impact on the stability in the country.

### 23 kilometres from the capital

As Georgia's capital Tbilisi is located nearby, the Field Office has close contacts with various civil society organization and government institutions. Field Office Mtskheta is also the main contributor to the Mission's mandated task to monitor the Georgian Military and Police Forces and their compliance with the 2008 Six-point Ceasefire Agreement as well as the separate agreements between the Mission and the Georgian authorities, aimed at providing full transparency of military



Monitors from Field Office Mtskheta patrol the entire Eastern Georgia, as here in Truso Valley.

and police activities as a confidence-building measure (see page 3).

### Covers 50% of Georgia

The eastern half of Georgia consists of six Regions and the Capital Tbilisi, covering approximately 50% of country's surface and 65% of its population. It borders to Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the south and Russia in the north.

Large areas are covered by mountains, both in the north and in the central parts with fertile valleys in-between, the largest one being Alazani Valley in Kakheti. The main river is Mtkvari, which runs from Turkey and Akhaltsikhe in the south-west via Mtskheta and

Tbilisi to Rustavi and Azerbaijan in the southeast on its way to the Caspian Sea. Samtskhe-Javakheti and Shida Kartli in the south have large settlements of ethnic Armenians and Azeri. The majority of Ossetians live in South Ossetia, which also has a significant Russian military presence.



In terms of personnel strength, Field Office Mtskheta is the smallest of the Mission's three Field Offices, but it has the largest Area of Responsibility (blue).

### THE REGIONS OF EASTERN GEORGIA

REGION	Main City	Population	Area
Tbilisi	Tbilisi	1,114,600	504 km <sup>2</sup>
Kvemo Kartli	Rustavi	427,400	6,072 km <sup>2</sup>
Kakheti	Telavi	317,500	11,311 km <sup>2</sup>
Shida Kartli	Gori	263,700	4,768 km <sup>2</sup>
Samtskhe-Javakheti	Akhaltsikhe	160,600	6,413 km <sup>2</sup>
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Mtskheta	93,800	6,786 km <sup>2</sup>
South Ossetia/Tskhinvali Region	Tskhinvali	53,000*	2,349 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,430,600</b>	<b>38,203 km<sup>2</sup></b>

Source: 2017 figures from the National Statistics Office of Georgia (\*2015 census by de facto South Ossetian authorities).

# The Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia

**The U-shaped Administrative Boundary Line between South Ossetia and Tbilisi Administered Territory has a total length of 390 kilometres.**

The eastern north-south section of the Line extends 110 kilometres from the Russian Federation

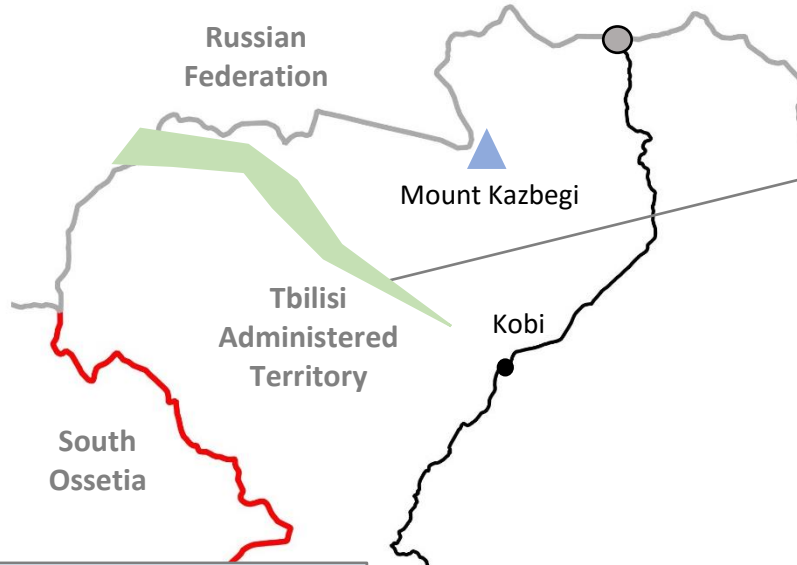
border in the north to the Akhmaji village in the south. This section of the Line belongs to the Area of Responsibility of the Mission's Field Office in Mtskheta.

Except for in the southernmost part of this section of the Administrative Boundary Line, the terrain is extremely mountainous,

rough and almost impassable. Nevertheless, people cross the Line at various locations other than the Controlled Crossing Point in Odzisi.

Monitors from Field Office Mtskheta patrol this section of the Administrative Boundary Line. Field Office Gori patrols the remainder of the Administrative Boundary Line.

## Kazbegi Border Crossing Point, Georgia/Russian Federation



### Truso Valley

Truso Valley is the home of many historical monuments, considered to be part of both Georgian and Ossetian cultural heritage. As the issue of preserving the cultural heritage is a topic of concern for all parties, the Mission patrols the valley regularly, to ensure stability in the area.



### Akhalgori Valley

The residents of Akhalgori village and Akhalgori Valley hold a special status in South Ossetia due to the fact that the majority of the Akhalgori population were ethnic Georgians and Akhalgori area remained under Georgian jurisdiction after most of South Ossetia broke away from the central government's control during the early 1990s conflict. After the 2008 August War, the area came under control of the de facto South Ossetian authorities and Akhalgori was renamed Leningor – its Soviet era name. However, due to its historical and ethnical heritage, Akhalgori residents may apply for *de facto* South Ossetian travel documents, which allows passage through the Odzisi Controlled Crossing Point.

### Georgian Military Highway

The 212 km long highway follows an ancient passage across the Caucasus from Tbilisi, via the border crossing point at Dariali, to Vladikavkaz in Russia, the capital of North Ossetia. The highway is the only road connecting Georgia (Tbilisi Administered Territory) with the Russian Federation. At the Jvari Pass, it reaches its maximum altitude of 2,379 meters.

### Russian Federation Border Guard bases



Between 2009 and 2012, 19 Russian Federation Border Guard bases were erected along the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia. These form part of a complex of Russian Federation Border Guard facilities inside South Ossetia. The bases, such as the depicted Akhmaji Base, are manned by Russian Federation Border Guards.

### The Administrative Boundary Line

CXP Odzisi

Tbilisi Administered Territory

### Odzisi Controlled Crossing Point



The Odzisi Controlled Crossing Point (CXP) is the only crossing point allowing vehicles to cross the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia. Approx. 100 vehicles and 400 persons (total in both directions) cross daily. On the South Ossetian side, the Crossing Point is manned by Russian Federation Border Guards. On the Tbilisi Administered Territory side, traffic is controlled by officers from the former 'Akhalgori Police', now residing on Tbilisi Administered Territory.

# Field Office Mtskheta's Compliance Team monitors Georgia's Commitment to transparency and trust

When the EU-mediated Six Point Ceasefire Agreement between Georgia and Russia ended the hostilities of the 2008 August War, a framework was needed to provide an effective means of monitoring compliance.

This was established when the Mission entered into Agreements with the Georgian Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs allowing the Mission to access sites and monitor military and police activity to ensure compliance in the territory under control of the Georgian Central Government. At this stage, similar Agreements do not exist for the breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, to which the Mission has not been granted access.

The Georgian decision to allow the Mission to monitor military and police activities is unilateral and similar Agreements do not exist with the Russian Federation. The Agreements with the Georgian ministries,

referred to as Memoranda of Understanding, demonstrates the country's will and commitment to transparency and to finding peaceful solutions to the conflict.

The monitoring process intends

to be open and transparent, while respecting the need for security and confidentiality. Monitoring compliance with these Memoranda is at the heart of the work of the Compliance Team.

## Agreement on military compliance

The Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Defence is officially called the 'Provisional Arrangement for the Exchange of Information between the Ministry of Defence and the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia'. It was signed on 26 January 2009. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive, transparent and effective mechanism of interaction between the Mission and the Georgian Ministry of Defence.



## Agreement on police compliance

Similarly, the 'Technical Arrangements between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Head of European Union Monitoring Mission' was signed on 10 October 2008. It is a mechanism, which aims to provide assurances of stability through information and consultation between the conflict parties and the Mission. A third Memorandum, a Technical Agreement between the Mission and the recently formed State Security Service of Georgia was signed in 2015, when this organisation separated from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.



Both Memoranda establish what can be monitored, where and when. They also detail the type of unit and equipment allowed close

to the Administrative Boundary Lines and what notice the Mission has to give before a monitoring visit. On average, each unit

is visited every six months, but the time between visits can vary.



## Compliance Visits...

# Step-by-Step

Compliance visits cover a wide range of activities. One day a patrol might be visiting a Coast Guard unit on the Black Sea coast, another day a Border Police check-point in the mountains, an infantry battalion getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan or an inner city police station.

The Compliance Patrols are essential to achieving the Mission's mandate and for the monitors, they often require long demanding patrols to distant and remote sites.



# 1

**Planning the visit.** The planning for a Compliance Patrol begins several days in advance. Once the Compliance Team has identified the unit they will visit, a 'Pre-Announced Visit' notice is prepared. The notice sets out the time and place of the visit and who the monitors would like to speak to. Some units, located in the Weapon Limitations Zones, can be visited without any prior notice. The Weapon Limitations Zones are clearly defined zones, adjacent to the Administrative Boundary Lines, where movement and deployment of clearly defined weapon systems are restricted.

# 2

**Advance notification of the unit.** The written notice is then sent to the relevant ministry through the Mission's Liaison Officer in the Mission's Headquarters in Tbilisi. The ministry then informs the unit about the date and time of the visit.

# 3

**Arriving at the unit.** On the day of the visit, the Compliance Patrol arrives at the agreed time. Monitors always wear the Mission's easily recognizable blue vest, and carry identification card to avoid any misunderstandings on arrival.

# 4

**Conducting the visit.** Normally the visit follows an agreed format for exchange of information. Explaining the role and responsibilities of the Mission is as important as asking questions. Professionalism, good communication, humour and understanding, are all key elements of a good visit.

# 5

**Reporting.** If any form of infringement was to occur, such as unauthorized weapons in the Weapon Limitations Zones, or personnel not wearing the correct insignia, this is noted in the short report written after each patrol. In the vast majority of visits, the Mission's compliance work is welcomed by the unit and its commander. It is generally understood that the Mission's visits provide evidence that Georgia is complying with its agreements and shows transparency.



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The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is the EU's only current mission that is specifically dedicated to monitoring. On 12 December 2016, the European Council extended the mandate of the Mission until 14 December 2018. Erik Høeg (Denmark) is Acting Head of Mission. He succeeded Kęstutis Jančiauskas (Lithuania), Toivo Klaar (Estonia), Andrzej Tyszkiewicz (Poland), and Hansjörg Haber (Germany).

Our Human Security Team is...

# Working with Internally Displaced Persons

The Mission's all-encompassing approach to incorporate Human Rights into its operations is well implemented. Field Office Mtskheta's Human Security Team regularly monitors the situation in the main Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) settlements Tserovani, Tsilkani and Prezeti, as well as in smaller remote settlements along the Administrative Boundary Line, and in the vicinity of Gori.

On a patrol, our monitors can travel several hundred kilometres to monitor IDPs Human Rights and their socio-economic situation. This includes their freedom of movement, living conditions, and access to basic services such as healthcare and education.

During these patrols, our monitors interact with IDPs and other residents in the conflict affected communities.

They speak with commuters who are authorized to cross the Administrative Boundary Line as well as interlocutors in local administrations, schools, ambulatories or local grocery shops, and with NGOs.

Weekend patrols allow monitors to meet people who spend their working week away from home. Altogether, these sources enable the Mission to establish a clear picture of the IDPs situation, challenges and needs, which donor organisations can use in their efforts to target aid to IDPs.

## A country of contrasts

Over the course of time, the living conditions in some IDP communities have improved substantially. However, every week or two, the Human Security Team talks to families whose living standards do not meet criteria for a safe and acceptable housing solution.



The Tserovani Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Settlement outside Tbilisi has 2,000 57 m<sup>2</sup> cottages, mostly occupied by families displaced from South Ossetia after the 2008 August War.

*"In line with development management practices, tackling socio-economic issues remains a local responsibility, so approaching vulnerable people without being able to help them directly is our biggest challenge", says an experienced monitor from Field Office Mtskheta, who has previously worked with IDPs and refugees in several countries. He continues: "...those are the moments when you need to improvise without knowing the outcome of the conversation. It might sound silly, but being yourself, and at the same time being able to listen to others is a strong instrument, that helps facilitate unfamiliar situations."*

Discussing freedom of movement issues and memories from a 'previous' life in the *de facto* Republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia often brings tears to

interlocutor's eyes. Talking openly about his or her problems is the best remedy we can offer our conflict-affected counterparts. It often helps.

Georgia is a country of contradictions. A genuine hospitality of its people, however, is a common attribute. The most valuable information often comes by accepting an invitation to someone's home or supra (traditional Georgian hospitality meal).



Every week or two, the Mission's Human Security Teams find families whose living conditions are horrendous. The above photo depicts one of the cases, which our monitors meet regularly.

## Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia

An Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is someone who is forced to flee his or her home, but who remains within his or her country's borders. Following the early 1990s and 2008 conflicts, more than 230,000\* Georgians have been displaced from their homes in the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and settled on Tbilisi Administered Territory where they live in collective centres or private housing.

\* The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that there are up to 232,700 Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia (December 2014).

# Georgia's different ethnicities

While the population in the Tbilisi Administered Territory\* has declined by 15% (658,000) to 3,713,804\* since 2002, the share of ethnic minorities has declined twice as much – by 31%. Nevertheless, Georgia remains an extremely diverse ethnical landscape.

As elsewhere, dissimilar backgrounds, political and cultural orientation, values and beliefs has a potential to influence national and regional stability.

Addressing these issues will, accordingly, contribute to stabilisation and continuity.

The Mission is mandated to monitor, analyse and report on the stabilisation process, including violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. To accomplish this, Field Office Mtskheta includes in its operational planning monitoring and outreach activities towards a variety of ethnical communities across Eastern Georgia.

It is the Field Office's Human Security Team who conducts these patrols to observe and report on everyday life within the communities. To ensure a balanced relationship, each patrol is carefully configured to match the attributes of the specific community, e.g. is it essential that female monitors and interpreters form part of patrols engaging with women and girls.

\* Basis the 2014 Census in Tbilisi Administered Territory

## Abkhaz in Tbilisi Administered Territory

Population\* ..... 4,500  
Percentage of population ..... 0.12

After the early 1990s conflict, the bulk of ethnic Abkhaz population remained in Abkhazia. Today there is a 3,000-member community residing in (the Autonomous Republic of) Adjara adjacent to Turkey.

## Ossetians in Tbilisi Administered Territory

Population\* ..... 14,400  
Percentage of population ..... 0.4

In 1989 there were 164,055 ethnic Ossetians living in Georgia (over 3% of the population). The Ossetian community was considered the most integrated national minority. The early 1990s conflict destroyed this cohabitation. Since 2001 the number has declined, and today only some 14.000 Ossetians are settled along the southern section of the Administrative Boundary Line to South Ossetia, in the Kakheti region, and in the Borjomi area.

## Kists in in Tbilisi Administered Territory

Population\* ..... 5,700  
Percentage of population ..... 0.15

The population of Kists (Ethnic Chechens) is concentrated in the Pankisi Valley. The Kist community is also declining, counting some 5.700 members.

## Armenians in Tbilisi Administered Territory

Population\* ..... 168,100  
Percentage of population ..... 4.5

Since the previous census in 2002, the Armenian population has declined by 32%. The group forms the majority (109.000 members) of the Armenian Apostolic Church. They are settled in the southern central region of Samtskhe-Javakheti, along the border to Armenia and Turkey, where they count for 40% of the population. In addition, some 55.000 Armenians account for 4.8%\* of the capital's population of just over 1,100,000.

## Azeris in Tbilisi Administered Territory

Population\* ..... 233,000  
Percentage of population ..... 6.3

Ethnic Azeris represents the largest minority group in Georgia. The group comprises both Shia and Sunni Muslims and forms the bulk of the Muslim community in Georgia. They reside in a relatively compact area adjacent to Azerbaijan and Armenia, historically called the Borchali region.



The map has been simplified based on the "Ethnic Groups of Georgia" map series by the Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, June 2016.

# Religious communities in Georgia

83.4% of the inhabitants in Georgia practice Orthodox Christianity, primarily in the Georgian Orthodox Church. 2.9% of the population, mostly ethnic Armenians, follow the Armenian Apostolic Church and around 1% belong to the Russian Orthodox Church.

A relatively large Muslim community adds further to the diversity. This community largely consists of ethnic Azeris as well as ethnic Georgians in the south-west, mostly settled in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. The Muslim community is estimated at 10.7% (up from 9.9% in 2002) of the population corresponding to just under 400,000 inhabitants.

This group makes up 43% of the population in Kvemo Kartli, 40% in Adjara, and 12% in Kakheti.

Additionally, there are approximately 19,000 Catholics in Georgia, 12,400 Jehovah's Witnesses, 8,600 Yazidis, 2,500 Protestants, and 1,400 Jews.



*A mosque typical for the mountainous area between Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara, inhabited by ethnic Georgian Muslims.*

## 60,000 Patrols in Georgia

On Friday 20 October 2017, at 06:05 hrs, Field Office Mtskheta launched the Mission's 60,000<sup>th</sup> patrol. Since the European Union Monitoring Mission was deployed in Georgia in October 2008, an average of 18 patrols have been conducted each day.

The 60,000<sup>th</sup> patrol was an Administrative Boundary Line Patrol headed for the Odzisi Crossing Point. It was manned by Mission Monitors from Bulgaria, Portugal and Romania, supported by an interpreter and a medic from Georgia.

Reaching this significant number of patrols, shows the European Union's firm and continuous commitment to facilitating a safe and secure environment in Georgia and in preventing a resumption of hostilities.

