



SOCIAL
JUSTICE
CENTER



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

2020

(FORMERLY EMC)

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ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear supporters and fellow campaigners,

We would like to share with you some news about important processes that have taken place within our organization over the last year, and their consequences, which relate to the change of our name, and the renewal of the strategy and tasks of the organization going forward.

Social Justice Center is the new name for the Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC). The change of name of the organization expresses our common desire, as well as of our fellow campaigners, supporters and followers, that the name of the organization should make clear from the outset the principles, ideals and ideas that have united us from the day of its foundation. For us, the idea of justice, and predominantly social justice, has always been the goal of our struggle and daily labours. The change of the name is not related to a change in the mission and vision of the organization; rather it aims to outline our ideological framework, principles and goals.

Our organization has been trying for the last eight years to promote policies based on social justice, solidarity and inclusive democracy in the country. Since its inception, we have seen that the political agenda in the country is built on the private interests of privileged political and economic groups, and completely ignores the real social and political concerns, needs and interests of a large part of our society and of various oppressed groups. Such policies not only exclude the public interest, but also alienate broad groups and exclude them from the field of politics. In the conditions wherein private interests predominate, the pursuit of public interests, the promotion of the democratic organization of social groups for their implementation, and the facilitation of political expression, have become the main strategies and principles of our work. Clearly, these goals were difficult to achieve in a highly polarized, anti-social and less democratic political environment, so we are constantly searching for and developing new strategies for working and fighting.

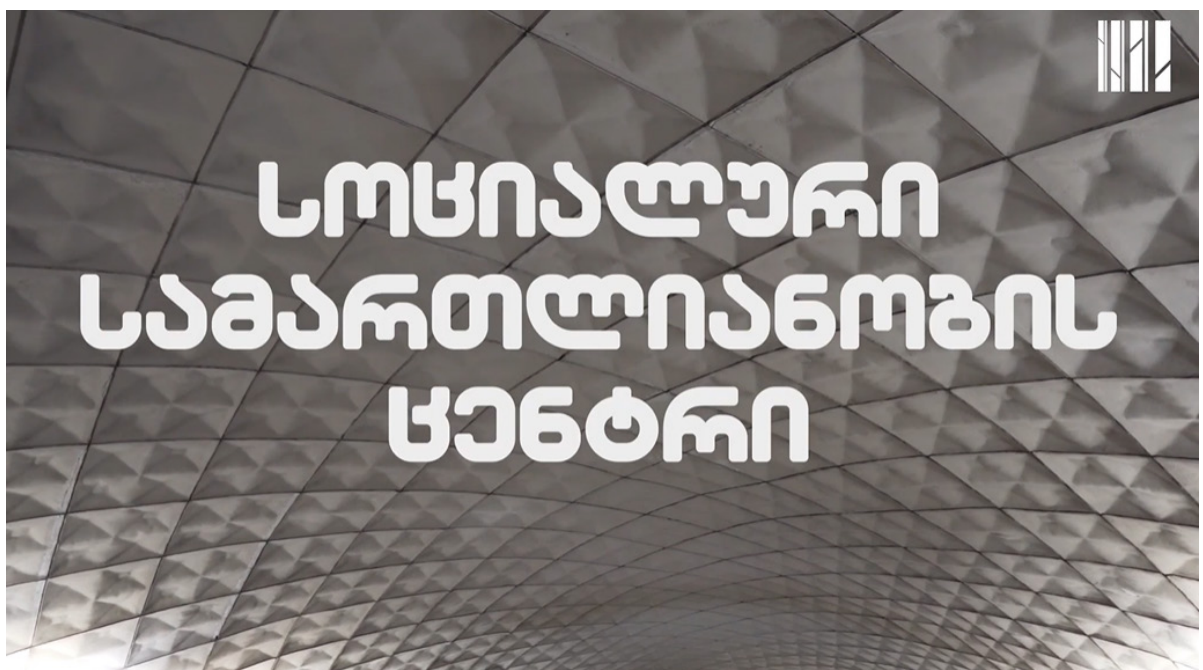
Following eight years of work experience, the organization implemented a democratic process of rethinking and developing its own goals, objectives and strategies, in which our colleagues, associates and fellow campaigners actively participated. After months of thinking and discussion, the new strategy, on the one hand, fully retained all the ideas and tasks that our organization had been based on for the last eight years, and on the other hand, tried to respond to wider social grievances and expand the organization's work topics and strategies. Critical analysis of the current historical, political and social processes in the country and the production of a wider public discussion around them, provided us with another important task.

The Social Justice Center maintains all areas of work and strengthens its activities with new topics, including: environmental justice and policy; issues of inclusive governance and participatory democracy; the critique of the antisocial policies around crime and punishment; promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the protection of rights; and providing support for a fair social and economic policy towards women.

We recognize the need for a radical transformation of the existing economic and political order in order to create a more just, equal and democratic political, economic and social environment for all social groups. To this end, we want the democratic organization of citizens from the ground up, the construction of policies aimed at real social change, and the development of solidarity networks to become the leading principles of the political and work strategy of the Social Justice Center.

The Social Justice Center thanks all its friends, staff and fellow campaigners who have made a significant contribution to building a more just, equitable and democratic environment in our country.

We believe that a just future can only be created, produced and achieved through reciprocal solidarity. That is why we remain as supporters and friends of all those processes, people and organized social groups that fight for justice in their own community, village, town, or workplace and thus play an important role in radical transformations in the country.



About Our Organizational Changes



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SOCIAL POLICY PROGRAM

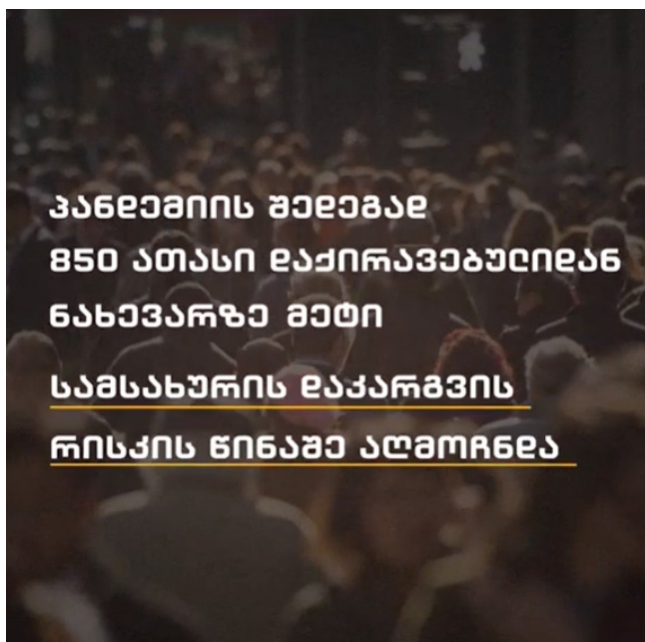
COVID 19 AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The year 2020 proved to be particularly difficult in terms of the aggravation of the economic and social situation for formal and informal workers and various other groups within the society in the light of the pandemic and its related economic challenges.

With the deterioration of the epidemiological and economic situation, the working conditions and legal statuses of large groups of workers have sharply deteriorated. Tens of thousands of employees had their employment contracts terminated prematurely, lost or had their wages reduced, or were forced to take unpaid leave.

At the same time, some of the employees who performed necessary, key jobs, continued to

work while facing increased risks in a substantially altered work environment, often in physically challenging, hazardous conditions. Among them are tailors in textile factories, [nurses and doctors](#), the employees of retail chains, [subway drivers](#), [miners](#) and others. The Social Justice Center (formerly known as EMC) responded to and assessed specific [cases](#) of workers' rights violations, as well as large-scale violations and systemic [failures](#) in labour and social policy.



▶ Informal work and COVID 19



▶ COVID 19 and women's rights

In parallel with the grievous legal situation of those employed in the formal sector, the social and economic situation of citizens involved in the informal sector presented a serious problem throughout the whole year, as they were hit especially hard by the economic restrictions applied due to the pandemic. In addition, informal workers were either partially and inadequately included or were completely excluded from the provisions of the government's anti-crisis plan. Particularly visible in this regard were the resistance activities to which [traders periodically resorted](#) due to the restrictions imposed by the government and the lack of appropriate social protection or support mechanisms. The public domain has frequently been used for sharing the protest manifestos [by students suspended due to non-payment of tuition fees as well as for other protests](#) about the numerous acute social and economic issues raised by various social groups.



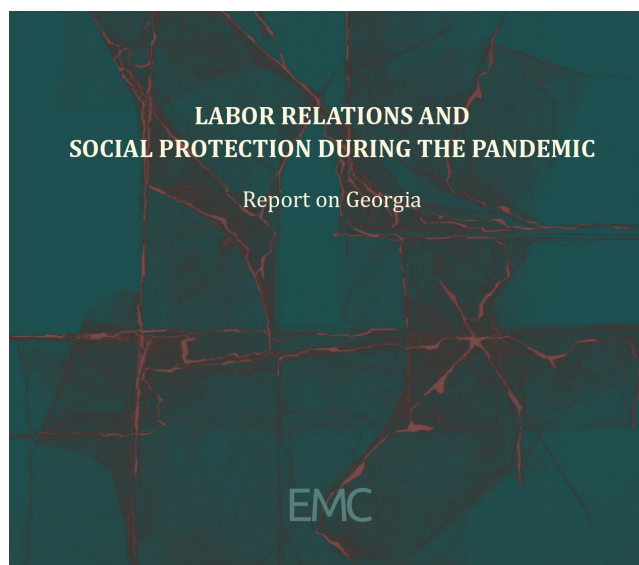
 **Healthcare policy in times of crisis – interview with Tengiz Verulava**

The anti-crisis programs developed by the Georgian government are unprecedented in the history of the country, both legally and politically. Emergency social assistance programs have targeted groups that have remained out of the state spotlight for years. Nevertheless, their design and administration revealed [significant shortcomings and risks](#), as indicated by the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) in various formats. The COVID 19 pandemic has exposed, with exceptional clarity, the extreme vulnerability of the people and the economic and social policy failures that affect them. The identified risks were related to the access of those employed informally to allocated social assistance, questions concerning the acquisition of new foreign debt, and issues of social equity in the redistribution of assistance. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has prepared [expert interviews](#), [news clips](#) and [analytical documents](#) on these and other [sectoral](#) or general consequences of the pandemic and the anti-crisis programs.



 **EMC: Significant deficiencies and risks are identified in anti-crisis programs**

In addition to feedback and assessments, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) disseminated a range of information materials throughout the year, **advising** workers of their rights and **informing** the general public about the latest economic and social dimensions of the current crisis. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) also used significant resources to provide free legal advice and representation for citizens. The shortcomings identified during the COVID 19 pandemic in the area of labour rights and the social protection system were also addressed in the in-depth report **Labour Relations and Social Protection during the Pandemic**.



 Labor Relations and Social Protection During the Pandemic - Report on Georgia

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

Acceptable working environments and working practices: The epidemic situation has worsened in the metro



STATEMENT

EMC: The agricultural anti-crisis plan is unfair



RESEARCH

Labor Market Segmentation and Informal Labor during Crisis



REPORT

Labour relations and social protection during the pandemic – report on Georgia



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Coronavirus and labour rights



ARTICLE

Does the employer have the right to send you on unpaid leave or terminate your employment contract?



BLOG

Tkibuli, Pandemic and Extractivism



BLOG

Necessary yet unappreciated labour – nurses speak about their working conditions



VIDEO SERIES

COVID-19 and labour rights



INFOGRAPHIC SERIES

Justice for worker

LABOUR RIGHTS

Apart from the severe additional challenges associated with the pandemic, 2020 proved to be a difficult year for workers in almost all sectors. The past year has been particularly difficult for employees in the service sector.



 EMC calls the Georgian Labour Inspection for an immediate inspection of "Spar"

The [death](#) of one of the supermarket assistants along with periodic reports on the harshest working conditions in the service sector has confirmed that labour safety standards and the provision of a safe working environment are equally important issues for employees in all sectors.

Despite the existence of the Labour Inspection, (its mandate extended to employment safety issues in 2020), severe cases of non-compliance with labour safety standards were still a major issue in 2020. In September, in Kutaisi, during the dismantling of the transmission line support structure, the deaths of two electricians of JSC Georgian Railway were [assessed](#) as being the result of a weak labour safety policy. 2020 has not passed without incidents in mono-industrial cities either. In early Septem-

ber, [information](#) was spread about the death of a worker in the Chiatura mine. A [dangerous work environment](#) and outdated equipment are also part of everyday life for Tkibuli miners, which, by 2020, had been already the subject of many protests by mineworkers.

During 2020, the issue of the proper investigation of workplace deaths due to violations of labour safety regulations and the imposition of criminal liability on the relevant persons remains a significant challenge, putting the need to review and strengthen criminal policy around these issues firmly on the agenda. This observation is also based on an [analytical document](#) created by the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), which was prepared as a result of an analysis of the organization's ongoing cases.



The insecurity of labour rights for social workers in the Ministry of Health was also an important issue in 2020. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Health **dismissed** some social workers for misconduct. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) is defending in court the interests of some of the social workers who were dismissed from their positions. At the end of October, the court declared the dismissal of one of the social workers illegal and **charged** the LEPL Agency For State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking with 15,000 GEL as a compensation payable to the dismissed employee.

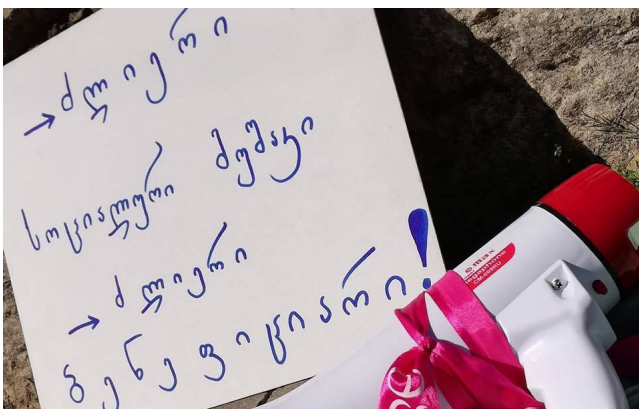
The ongoing processes in the Adjara Public Broadcasting Service in 2020 clearly showed the intentions of the new management of the Public Broadcasting Service who changed the editorial policy. These changes were implemented through the harassment of employees, including those responsible for editorial policy, by illegally changing their positions or by dismissing them. Journalists of the broadcasting service were subject to dismissal and apparent persecution by the new management, which continued throughout the whole year. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) actively supported the struggle for the journalists' rights; in addition, the interests of the majority of dismissed employees are also **defended** by the Social Justice Center (formerly



 The chronicle of three months of persecution of journalists at the Adjara Broadcasting Service

EMC) in court. The problematic nature of the ongoing processes within the Adjara Public Broadcaster has been confirmed repeatedly: the Public Defender of Georgia has **established** that some journalists have been directly discriminated against on the grounds of dissent and membership in a trade union; the State Inspector's Office **fined** the Adjara Public Broadcaster for leaking personal data of members of alternative trade unions.

The most important event of last year in terms of labour policy, was perhaps the reform of labour legislation, in the advocacy process of which the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) was actively involved throughout the year. After the Georgian Parliament supported the reform in the first reading in the spring of 2020, the process was **delayed**, posing the **threat** of a possible failure of the reform. However, at the end of September, the Parliament of Georgia finally adopted the package of legislative changes in the third reading. The implemented labour reform should be considered as a clear step forward towards the protection of workers' rights, however, despite the positive changes, significant problems and shortcomings remain in the legislation. The extension of the mandate of the Labour Inspection, which will be given full authority to supervise the protection of labour rights from next year, should



be welcomed. The [document](#), prepared by the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), details various aspects of labour reform, including problematic issues such as the uncertainty of the minimal wage and the regulation of over-time pay.

The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has sought to protect workers' rights in a variety of ways throughout the year, including the dissemination of information about labour rights' violations, preparing assessments, raising workers' concerns, advocating, providing legal advice, and defending employees' interests in court.



May 1st – The International Labour Day

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

Miners poisoned by toxic gases in Tkibuli - Response



STATEMENT

The process of the dismissal of social workers is carried out with violations



STATEMENT

EMC: 15,000 GEL in favour of an illegally dismissed social worker



STATEMENT

EMC responds to the Ombudsman's recommendations on the cases of Adjara Public Broadcaster staff



STATEMENT

The State Inspector's Office fined the Adjara Broadcaster



STATEMENT

Labor Reform Under Threat



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

EMC will defend the interests of the employees of the Adjara Public Broadcasting Service in court



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

EMC assesses the package of changes in labour legislation



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Employment policy in Georgia



INFOGRAPHICS

1 social worker serves from 19 to 82 thousand inhabitants

THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING

2020 did not see any substantial changes in the country in the fight against homelessness. The government has not yet developed a housing strategy and action plan that clearly outlines the short-term and long-term steps to be taken in this direction.



► Society vs. Usury

Despite a number of recommendations, the state has also failed to address the acute shortage of housing services, to improve the institutional framework, to create a unified database of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, and to address household needs, and the causes and forms of homelessness.

Amid the inaction of the state and the unregulated financial system, and the network of landlords and predatory lending practices, a particular challenge has been the issue of the loss of housing, which threatens hundreds of householders who stand to lose their homes. Although the state has halted evictions in the wake of the pandemic, there is an expectation that even more households will be at risk of eviction amid the severe economic crisis caused by the pandemic, while evictions will resume amid existing flawed legislation and housing policies.

State inaction continued during the COVID-19 pandemic. The state not only ignored the most vulnerable groups but, in some cases, even pursued repressive policies against them, including fining homeless people on the streets during curfew.

The serious problem of homelessness, its causes and scale, the lack of housing policy and the punitive approaches used instead, became especially visible in the context of the large-scale dismantling of housing in the Africa settlement by the Tbilisi City Hall, which was implemented using particularly severe and illegal methods. The process of dismantling housing in the Africa settlement has once again shown the state's rejection of poverty, economic inequality or extreme social desperation, leading to the homelessness of large groups of people. In addition, it has become clear that the moratorium on evictions does not apply to the



► Eviction from one's home – the road to homelessness



 Photo report from Africa settlement

demolition of illegally constructed buildings, which is why people affected by the demolition are not even considered as evicted, even though those demolitions may result in the loss of their last refuge.

During 2020, some processes were under way within the framework of the Interagency Commission and Working Group responsible for drafting the Housing Policy Document and Action Plan, as well as the Housing Thematic Re-

search Group of the Parliament of Georgia, in which the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) was actively involved. Yet, the interagency commission has not achieved any substantial results in the process of developing the housing strategy. During this period, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) was also involved in the international advocacy process to address the issue of homelessness. In particular, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), together with its partners, presented a [Coalition Report](#) as part of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which, along with various other important issues, reviewed the failures of state policy to combat homelessness and inadequate housing and made relevant recommendations.

In addition, the organization [prepared](#) four analytical documents in 2020 aimed at identifying systemic housing policy challenges and developing recommendations based on international standards.

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

EMC calls on the government to provide special protection to the homeless amid the spread of the Coronavirus



REPORT

EMC, GYLA and PHR Submitted Joint Report on Social Rights in the framework of UPR



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

People against Loan Sharks: Predatory Credit System and its Social Implications



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Credit boom: over-indebtedness and the National Bank



INFOGRAPHICS

Homelessness as perceived by political parties



INFOGRAPHICS

COVID-19 and homelessness - what are the obligations of the state?

GREEN POLICY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The year 2020 was particularly marked by the diversity of state policies on green issues and on environmental and natural resource development, which, in turn, was accompanied by intensified critical discussions in the public domain.

The strategy announced by the Ministry of Economy, before the pandemic, about issuing 100 new licenses for the extraction of minerals has raised many unanswered questions regarding the state privatization policy.

At the same time, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has also been active in responding to urban sprawl, such as protests in Anna's Garden, Batumi Riviera, or within resistance movements in Rustavi, as well as in ongoing protests in peripheral areas, such as the confrontation of Shukruti and Itkhvisi residents with a company over the compensation for the damage caused as a result of mining activities.

If the state policy before the pandemic was characterized by systemic and institutional failures in terms of green, environmental or natural resource management, it was within the context of the COVID 19 pandemic that this policy emerged and acquired a more aggressive or 'force majeure' quality. This has become particularly noticeable in the case of hydropower development programs and massive hydropower construction programs. EMC has responded to this policy with statements and critical appraisals and even resorted to litigation tools.



Protest in the village Shukruti

Photo credit: The Public Broadcasting Service



In 2020, Racha-Lechkhumi became an important center of resistance, where preparations began for the construction of the largest infrastructural project: Namakhvani HPP. The local population of the Rioni Valley is still actively and physically resisting the implementation of this project. Numerous specialists and public organizations point to the inexpediency of the construction of Namakhvani HPP and its clearly illegal nature, but this did not hinder the construction of the HPP by the company or modify the intentions of the state, which is quite prepared to use police force and punitive methods against the population.

The resumption of economic production in the mining regions under universal lockdown and the transfer of local employees to a "barack-style" work schedule has confirmed the state's new attitude towards green, environmental and natural resource policies. To analyse this policy, four analytical articles were prepared that examined the risks of the new policy of the state formed during the pandemic crisis.



▶ For protection of Rioni Valley

In addition to assessing the risks posed by the new pandemic crisis, EMC continued to provide in-depth and systematic [analysis](#) of mining-related policies, as well as [offering](#) new conceptual approaches or methodologically and thematically rich knowledge in the case of mono-industrial and resource-dependent regions. In addition, a [short series of podcasts](#) focusing on resource policy, employment policy, women's issues, urban policy, or resistance policy has been prepared to raise awareness of green, environmental, and natural resource management issues and resource acquisition.

At the end of the year, a [three-day international forum](#) was organized to summarize and publicize the knowledge accumulated over the years on green, environmental and natural resource management policies, with public lectures, panel discussions, book presentations and policy debates on topics such as environmental change, natural resource management, global market systems and their impact on Georgia's subsoil management policy.



IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENTS - NAMAKHVANI PROJECT



STATEMENT

EMC responds to the ongoing campaign against air pollution in Rustavi



STATEMENT

Nenskra HPP trial



EXTRACTIVE ENCOUNTERS IN SOUTH CAUCASUS: EMERGING CONCEPTS AND ENGAGED RESEARCH



ARTICLE

Natural resources and labour market



BLOG

Tkibuli, pandemic and extractivism



BLOG

Mining activities during the pandemic: the neoliberal order and the hybrid state



EXTRACTIVE ENCOUNTERS: TRANSLATED ANTHOLOGY



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Extractivist Encounters –Politics, Ecology and Social Justice



PODCASTS SERIES

Green Policy

THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In 2020, the state still did not take effective steps to improve meaningfully the legal status of persons with disabilities – the creation of an institutional framework responsible for the implementation of the Convention, the introduction of a social model, and the development of services tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Against the background of state inaction, the rights of people with disabilities on psychosocial and intellectual grounds are still grossly violated - **no effective steps have been taken**, on the one hand, toward the deinstitutionalization process which would see the return of hundreds of beneficiaries to the community, and on the other hand, toward the implementation of capacity reform. Against these challenges, the law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities approved by the Parliament of Georgia, despite some positive changes, **failed to meet the needs and expectations of the disabled community**. At the end of 2020, the approval of the National Standards of Access by the Government of Georgia should be considered as a significant positive news.

Additionally, during the pandemic, the community of people with disabilities, in the absence of a proper system for protecting their rights, faced much greater challenges due to their increased vulnerability to COVID-19 infection, a lack of access to services and the exclusion of a number of groups from the government's anti-crisis plan.

During 2020, the **need for the state to make special efforts to protect the rights of persons with disabilities** in the face of the pandemic, including the special vulnerability of persons living in large institutions and the need to protect them, remained a significant challenge for the community.



▶ Mariam Janiashvili about the shortcomings in the law on persons with disabilities

In 2020, the main focus of the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) was the legal status of persons with disabilities on psychosocial and intellectual grounds. The organization's main objective was to address the urgent need to plan and begin the implementation of the reforms, and the **deinstitutionalization of the majority** of persons with relevant disabilities. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), in cooperation with partner organizations, has prepared a **study** that assesses the implementation of the efficiency reform and the functioning of the support system in Georgia,



Return of will

and provides relevant recommendations for the implementation of the reform. In addition to discussing the main findings of the study, the organization held and / or participated in dozens of meetings with representatives of the disabled community, experts, government agencies and students.

In February 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), together with its partners, also submitted two documents to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, assessing the state's progress towards the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Series of Articles

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENTS

Disability Rights



RESEARCH

Assessment of the Legal Capacity Reform - Legislation and Practice



RESEARCH

A reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities into labour relations



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Deinstitutionalization of Mental Health Services - International Experience and the Georgian Context



PRACTICAL HANDBOOKS



BLOG

The way to an independent life



BLOG

The right of people with disabilities to live independently - The harsh reality and its alternative



BLOG

Difficulties in implementing employment reform from a psychiatrist's perspective



VIDEO

Practice of the unchanged institutionalization of persons with disabilities



VIDEO

Persons with disabilities on psychosocial and intellectual grounds without support



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JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

DEMOCRACY AND THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

Last year saw a crisis for Georgian democracy, and it was caused by several factors at once. In parallel with failed electoral reform and the politicization of the justice / law enforcement system, pandemic restrictions aggravated the situation, eradicating political dialogue and proving public engagement in politics to be illusory.

The launch of the constitutional reform by the Georgian Dream in November 2019 contributed to the creation of a destructive and aggressive political environment that had already been substantially polarized earlier. In the beginning of 2020, the political discussion was fully focused on the new model of the electoral system, although the discussion was held not within the constitutional and state institutional framework, but it was led by foreign moderators behind closed doors. This once again exposed the alienation of the Georgian political elite from the population and, after all, a concealed agreement on the most important issue for the country - the content of the constitutional reform of the electoral system - can not exactly be considered as a positive

experience in the development of democracy in Georgia.



Photo credit: Netgazeti




 Pre-election Programs of the Parties on the Issues of Justice – 2020

COVID 19 and the restrictions associated with it became one of the main barriers to the existence of an inclusive and open democratic order last year. In the course of the pandemic, Georgia, being no exception, declared a state of emergency in the country on March 21, 2020 to stop the spread of the virus. President Zurbishvili, while declaring the state of emergency, handed over her full power to the executive branch. The declaration / enforcement of a state of emergency in this manner failed to provide adequate parliamentary supervision and judicial oversight over these processes, which set a dangerous precedent for the executive branch to exercise undue and unbal-


anced power. As for the practical application of the state of emergency, the government relied on [police force](#) and strict sanctions in managing the crisis, neglecting the social and economic needs of different groups.

An example of the use of unprecedented police force by the state in recent years was the events that took place on June 20-21, 2019, which resulted in the damage of health of dozens of people and violation of the rights of peaceful demonstrators. A year later after



 One year since the events of June 20



 Legal and political content of the state of emergency - analysis of existing experience

these events, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has prepared a short [analytical document](#) demonstrating the lack of political will for thoroughly investigating the case of June 20-21 and identifying all those who made the decisions that violated human rights.

The main political event of the last year was the parliamentary elections held on October 31st. The current polarized and antagonistic political environment has also affected the election process, and unfortunately, numerous violent incidents took place in and around polling stations. Political parties, and especially the members of the ruling party, constantly used aggressive and hostile rhetoric towards their political opponents throughout the pre-election period, which also affected the general attitude of the population. Under such conditions took place the parliamentary elections of 2020, during which the emphasis in creating order, peace and equal environment was made not on political consensus and mutual trust, but on [police force](#).

The parliamentary elections of 2020 were also distinguished by a critical lack of communication between political parties about election programs and future plans. The pre-election programs of most of the parties essentially ignored the issues of [equality](#), [ethnic minorities](#) and [social issues](#); the views of most of the parties were also extremely fragmented on the reform of [justice](#) and the [law enforcement system](#). The pre-election program of the Georgian Dream was particularly deficient, as it almost completely ignored the social, political and institutional problems in the country and promised the voters only fragmentary reforms.



State of Emergency and a New Reality

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

The model of electoral system proposed by the ruling party is unacceptable and unserious



STATEMENT

EMC responds to the fact of removing the counters of street traders in different cities



STATEMENT

EMC: In case of emergency, agencies should provide public information in a timely and comprehensive manner



STATEMENT

EMC responds to the inefficiency of the police during elections



STATEMENT

EMC: The preplanned changes in the Law on Health contain certain risks of human rights violations



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Legal and political content of the state of emergency - analysis of existing experience



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

One year since the events of June 20-21



ARTICLE

The Reform of Electoral System: the Opposition Bill and its Compliance with the Constitution

FAILED REFORM OF JUSTICE

Despite the four waves of reforms in the system of justice, public confidence in the judiciary remains low, mostly due to the fragmentation of reforms and the lack of solutions to real systemic problems. The political neutrality of the judiciary and the independence of individual judges from internal and external influences remain unattainable and, consequently, the justice system poses a great need for fundamental reforms.

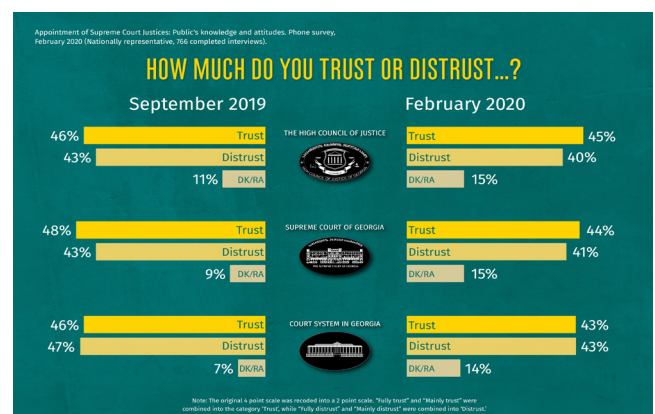


▶ Reforms in the justice system

At the end of 2019, the Parliament of Georgia appointed 14 judges to the Supreme Court for life. The process of selecting / appointing judges has been extremely problematic and failed to ensure high public confidence in the judiciary and more specifically, towards the particular candidates to be appointed as judges. The final decisions on the appointment of candidates created a sense of political bias and clannish mentality, which further undermined the belief that the judiciary developed in the right direction.

The process of selection / appointment of judges in the judiciary continued in 2020. In

this regard, one should highlight the election of Nino Kadagidze as the Chairperson of the Supreme Court, whose past activities are also linked to an influential group among the judiciary; her selection process was non-transparent and failed to inspire public confidence. Last year, the newly recruited Plenum of the Supreme Court appointed two new judges to the Constitutional Court as well. The selection / appointment of judges coincided with the state of emergency declared due to the pandemic, which significantly weakened the openness of the processes and reduced public involvement in them.



▶ Appointment of Supreme Court Justices: What people in Georgia know and think about the process



How the members of the Supreme Court were recruited – brief review



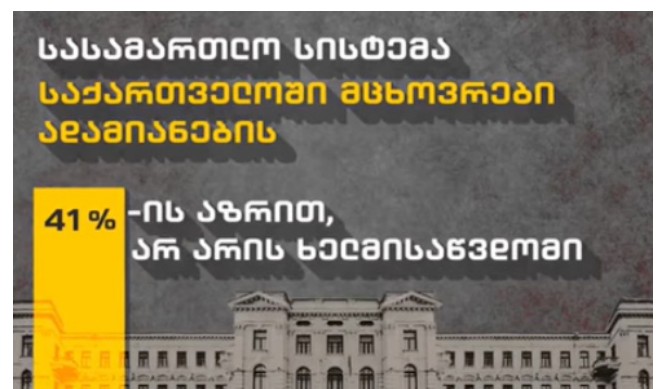
Assessment of reforms in the judiciary system

In 2020, the government did not take effective steps to address the institutional and legislative problems in the system of justice. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has published several reports and analytical papers on these issues together with partner organizations. The prepared documents reaffirm that the changes made within the framework of the “four waves” of reform in recent years are mostly formal, and the fair and equitable [distribution](#) of cases and the just selection and appointment of judges remain to be unattainable goals. Nor has the judiciary take any effective steps last year to implement [the strategy and action plan](#) previously developed and outlined by them.

In addition to [formal and superficial approaches](#) to institutional challenges to the judiciary, today's justice system is problematic in both content and quality. Last year, EMC, in partnership with its partner organization, conducted a large-scale public survey that once again demonstrated the prevailed public sentiment in terms of [accessibility](#) to justice in the country. Among other factors, the court expenses, length of proceedings, distrust towards the court, the risk of retaliation on part of the offender in the future, and the difficulties involved in preparing documents to be submitted to the court, prevent the majority

of the population from going to court. The [collection of articles](#) prepared by EMC last year, along with the institutional challenges of justice, includes papers that discuss existing legal practices related to environmental issues, the rights of female sex workers in Georgia, access to justice for socially marginalized groups, and etc.

To support systemic justice reform, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has been involved in advocacy processes with local and international partners. To this end, along with other analytical documents, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) in partnership with GYLA submitted collective shadow reports to UN instruments, including the UPR and the IC-CPR.



Access to court

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

The Coalition's Statement on Nominating Nino Kadagidze as the Chair



STATEMENT

Signatory organizations call on Supreme Court Plenum to refrain from appointing the judge of the Constitutional Court until the end of state of emergency



STATEMENT

EMC and GYLA: The established vision of judicial reform needs to be changed



RESEARCH

Second Shadow Report on Implementation of the Judicial Strategy and the Action Plan



RESEARCH

Electronic System of Case Distribution in Courts



REPORT

Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

Appointment of Supreme Court Justices: What people in Georgia know and think about the process



ARTICLE

The issue of power in the justice system



ONLINE JOURNAL ON JUDICIARY



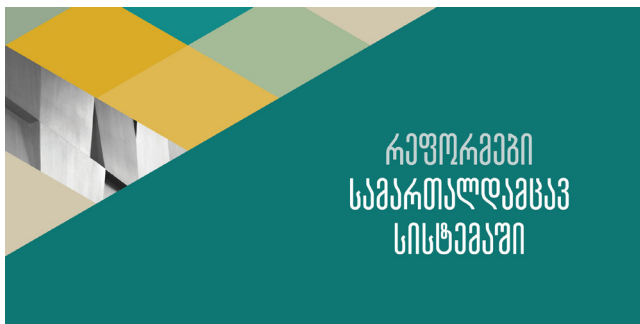
VIDEO

How does the system of electronic distribution of cases work in court?

LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The politicized and closed law enforcement system has been one of the main sources of human rights violations in the country for many years.

In 2020, institutional problems in the work of the police, prosecutor's office, and state security services were almost completely ignored, and no effective efforts were made to address them. Therefore, the risks of politicization of the law enforcement system continue to pose a significant challenge, aggravated by the non-transparency of these agencies and weak accountability mechanisms.



Reforms in the Law Enforcement System

Last year, the law enforcement and criminal justice reforms were almost completely removed from the political agenda. Despite the tragic case of [Luka Siradze](#) at the end of 2019, which once again revealed the problems in both the investigative and school systems in the country, no relevant efforts were made to create a more inclusive system of individual support that would minimize the violation of individual (especially adolescent) rights. In 2020, the reform of the investigative system was also suspended, within the framework of which the functions of the prosecutor's office and the investigation was supposed to be separated and the independence and competence of the investigation - encouraged.


In 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) outlined a [map of law enforcement reforms](#), which summarizes the reforms to be carried out in the Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as well as in the field of operative investigation and fact-finding activities. The organization also held working meetings with political parties regarding these issues in order to encourage them to address these issues in their pre-election programs.

As for the content of the criminal law in the country, no essential efforts were made in this direction to implement a humane and human-centered policy. In 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) and a partner organization launched a research on the social and economic aspects of crime, which should demonstrate what are the factors contributing to drug abuse and property crime in the country and what approaches does the state offer to those convicted of these crimes for re-socialization and rehabilitation. Critical articles on [zero tolerance](#) policies and [socio-economic factors of crimes](#) have also been translated.

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Drug policy in the visions of political parties



 **EMC: The use of imprisonment as a form of punishment against Mikhailo will be unjustified**

In terms of criminal policy, [suspended drug policy reform](#) and the maintenance of repressive, punitive-oriented approaches in the country are worth emphasizing. Drug policy issues were also presented in a fragmented way in [the pre-election programs](#) of various political parties. The visions of the ruling political party seem to be particularly problematic, which in this case also ignores the challenges regarding drug policy and offers only fragmentary reforms to remedy the situation. In terms of the humane application of drug policy, the practice of the Constitutional Court remains the only effective tool, although there are a number of challenges regarding the length of validity for filed lawsuits. The practice of reviewing [constitutional submissions](#) from common courts should be subject for further refinement in order to minimize the risks of human rights violations in the process.

Last year, [Mikhailo's case](#) once again demonstrated the injustice of the existing drug policy even in relation to those whose sentence has been replaced by another type of sanction. At the end of 2020, the ruling political team announced the initiation of an [Amnesty Law](#). The original draft of the bill envisaged the abolition of imprisonment for those convicted of drug offenses, which once again confirms the need for drug policy reform.

In terms of combating the use of excessive force by law enforcement agents, it was important to equip the State Inspector Office with the authority to investigate specific crimes committed by the police from November 2019. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), in conjunction with IDFI, has launched a comprehensive study to thoroughly analyze the competence and institutional arrangements of the State Inspector's Investigative Service and assess the extent to which this service can perform the functions assigned to it within the existing arrangement. According to the [initial assessment](#) of the organizations, one year after the launch of the independent investigation mechanism, there are not enough guarantees for the institutional and functional independence of the service and further steps are required to support the service of the state inspector.

To prevent the use of excessive force by the police, it is critical for citizens to be informed about their own rights as well as about the responsibilities of law enforcement agencies. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has been trying in various ways for years to inform citizens about their rights. An updated [informational brochure](#) prepared last year tells us in a popular language what a citizen should know when contacting the police. The brochure was also translated into Azerbaijani and distributed in areas populated by ethnic minorities.



 **Suspended reform - grave consequences of current drug policy**

As for the State Security Service, the agency remains an extremely closed and unaccountable institution, which exercises excessive power and considerably influences current political and social developments in the country. The activities of the Security Service continue to be based on a [policy of control and exclusion](#), which encourages the marginalization of specific groups.



Brochure – What do we need to know while contacting the police?

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

EMC: The use of imprisonment as a form of punishment against Mikhailo will be unjustified



STATEMENT

EMC calls on the Ministry of Internal Affairs to carry out systemic reforms



STATEMENT

EMC responds to possible incidents of police violence



ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT

EMC responds to the annual report of the State Security Service



BLOG

Law enforcement reform – a real perspective beyond pre-election slogans



TRANSLATION

Discussing Independence: Raising the Issue of Police Accountability through Independent Investigation of Complaints



TRANSLATION

Crime and Capital: Rethinking the Marxist Theory of Crime and Punishment



BROCHURE

What we need to know when contacting the police



SOCIAL
JUSTICE
CENTER



EQUALITY POLICY PROGRAM

LEGAL AND SOCIAL STATUS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES

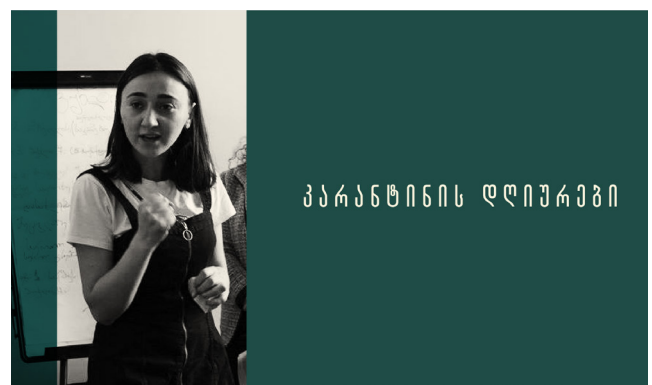
The legal and social conditions for ethnic minorities living in Georgia has not substantially improved in 2020. Moreover, the social crises that developed in the country in the wake of the pandemic unveiled to even a greater extent the wide-ranging and systematic nature of the political and social exclusion of ethnic minorities.



Photo Credit: kvira.ge

These challenges emerged most symptomatically during the closure and severe [quarantines](#) applied to Marneuli and [Bolnisi](#) municipalities. The expulsion of the language of ethnic minorities from administrative communication and information policy even in regions densely populated by ethnic minorities, the [alienation of the local community](#) from state institutions, [sharp backwardness of social infrastructure](#) in these regions, [poor political participation](#) and low confidence of minorities generated [humanitarian and social crisis](#) in closed municipalities. A wave of hate speech and the negative experience of the racialization of the Azerbaijanis in Georgia were added to these challenges, which later [escalated](#) into a chauvinist campaign over the Nariman Narimanov's monument in Marneuli led by the local bishop

and an ultra-conservative political group, the Georgian March. The state did not respond appropriately to the crisis and the systemic causes it caused, nor did it react against the social tensions triggered by the local bishop in Marneuli. Moreover, an arbitrary intervention on part of SSSG was traced in the ongoing processes, such as the SSSG's investigation of the alleged sabotage, linked to the ongoing protests in response to the humanitarian crisis, the investigation launched into the campaign organized by Bishop Giorgi Jamdeliani and the Georgian March and the interrogation of local civil activists within the framework of this investigation. This experience once again points to the problematic fact that the regions densely populated by ethnic minorities are mostly seen and managed only from the perspective of security. It is clear that such practices become the [reason for social nihilism](#).



 The Quarantine Diaries - Aitaj Khalil



▶ The signs of domination and eradication of local culture in Kvemo Kartli

The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has been constantly monitoring the ongoing processes and conducting public evaluations of Marneuli and Bolnisi municipalities since they were declared as quarantine zones. The organization also launched a bilingual legal aid hotline and provided legal assistance to citizens on a daily basis exchanging relevant information with local government officials and the central government. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the organization could no longer offer permanent assistance from the organized local workspace in Marneuli, although they constantly tried to provide legal and social support to local residents through mobile clinics and online call centres.

It is noteworthy that in recent times, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) studied the work of the Georgian Public Broadcasting Service under the pandemic restrictions and their experience of using minority languages, which once again revealed the insufficient consideration of the needs and interests of ethnic minorities on part of the broadcasting service.

The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) also examined the issues of cultural policy in Kvemo Kartli region and their social and political implications, highlighting the threat of eradication and non-recognition practices towards minority culture, and a lack of both understanding and experience in building a multicultural environment in a multi-ethnic region. The research also highlighted the important social processes taking place in the Azerbaijani community of Georgia, which indicate the deepening of their political self-identification with Georgia and their efforts to broaden the current national project from the level of their community. Multiple experiences of self-organization of local youth and struggle for their own rights and interests are unique.



▶ There is another world over there. Is that because they speak a different language?



▶ The five of evidences of SSSG – The case of Temirlan Machalikashvili

On January 25, 2020, the Georgian Prosecutor's Office terminated the investigation of the murder of Temirlan Machalikashvili, despite the fact that the investigation still faced a number of serious and critical unanswered questions and doubts while the Prosecutor General had not yet even been appointed at the time. This decision finally confirmed that the investigation had been completely formal, illusory and ineffective throughout all three years. The special operation held by the State Security Service, which took the life of Temirlan Machalikashvili, the repression of the Machalikashvili family during the process, and the multiple violations of the presumption of innocence against Temirlan Machalikashvili made up [the severest case](#), which exposed the state's repressive policy in the Pankisi Gorge. The case of Machalikashvili and Others vs. Georgia is pending before the European Court of Human Rights, and on November 21, 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) submitted a detailed [response](#) of the applicants to the Government's review.

At present, a study conducted by the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) about [the social needs of major villages](#) in the Pankisi Gorge has revealed the [dissatisfaction and frustration of the local population](#) with the policies that are focused on security and control in the gorge. Acute social challenges at the local level were also identified, including the low participation of the community in local self-government, unemployment, failure of drinking water systems in villages, absence of public transport, and lack of medical and social infrastructure.



▶ The Pankisi population on the practice of repressions and police control

It should be noted that in response to the local challenges during the reporting period, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) addressed the municipalities of Marneuli, Bolnisi, Tsalka, Khulo, Shuakhevi, Keda and Akhmeta with budget recommendations and proposals and presented the visions based on their research on political participation, social policy, multiculturalism and active consultation with local communities. In some municipalities (Marneuli, Khulo, Akhmeta) the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) presented these viewpoints along with local public activists.

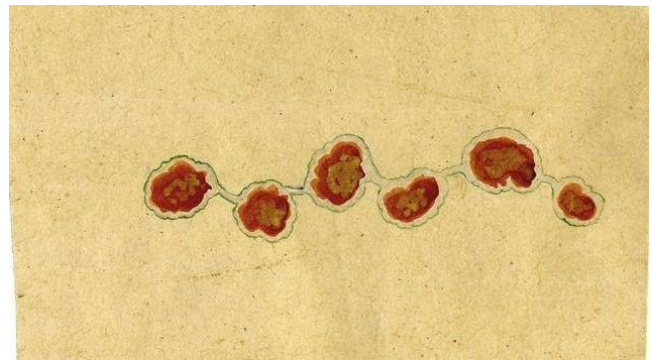


It should be noted that the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) offered to the social services of the above listed main self-governments a series of trainings on the rights of persons with disabilities, women, and children as well as on the activities and mandate of the social worker.

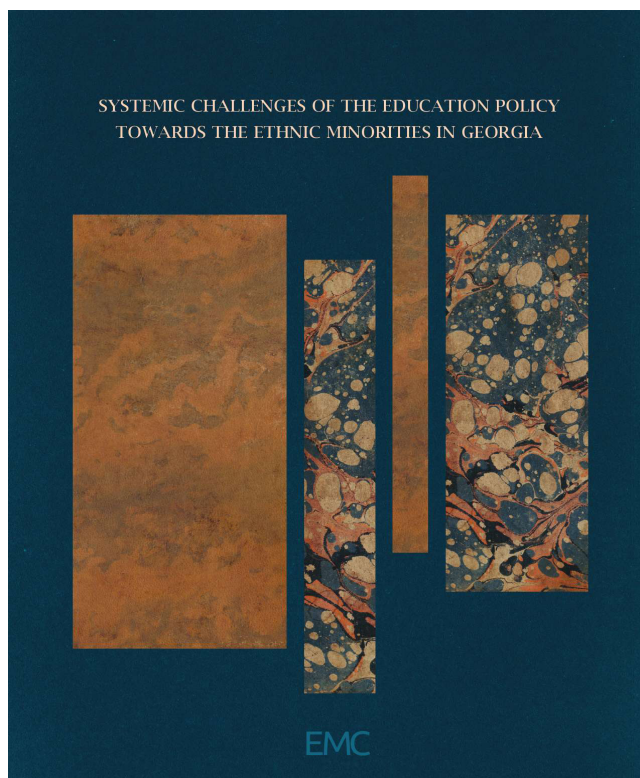
The pre-election period demonstrated once again that minority issues are less included in the interests of political parties, and therefore their political participation in solving the problem is also noticeably low. Moreover, the pre-election processes saw numerous cases of violence in Marneuli and Bolnisi, which were the result of combination of local clans and the poor democratic practices. The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) prepared a number of analytical documents on this issue in 2020, which summarized the international standards and the best practices and theories on minority participation (including consultation mechanisms, special mechanisms to support political participation). A series of critical articles on the participation of ethnic minorities in important political processes has also been prepared.

In 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly the EMC) completed a fundamental research assessing critically the ethnic minorities' access to higher and secondary education, in which it identified a number of systemic problems in

this area, including a lack of vision for minority education, the problems of quality of existing textbooks, teacher qualifications and general staff shortage, etc. These systemic challenges not only hinder minorities from learning the state language, but also limit their access to quality education, which is further reflected in a number of problems, including their low political participation and social and economic vulnerability.



Emotional Bond and Alienation: Discussion about Homeland



Systemic challenges of the education policy towards the ethnic minorities in Georgia

The current situation convinces us once again that the inclusive approaches described in the state strategies are only formal and superficial and the power and activities of the office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality are, unfortunately, illusory.

The Social Justice Center (formerly the EMC) has submitted collective shadow reports on human rights issues, including ethnic minorities as well as religious minorities and conflict regions, to UN instruments, including the UPR and the ICCPR.

It should be noted that this year the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has launched a network of teachers in Kvemo Kartli region, which brings together active and young teachers from different ethnic and religious groups. We have offered a series of lectures and seminars to the network participants; implementations of joint projects are also planned.



Education policy towards ethnic minorities



Solidarity Platform Meeting

This year, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) continued to support the Solidarity Platform, which brought together activists from Tbilisi and from the regions of Pankisi, Kvemo Kartli, Adjara, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Gali. The goal of the Solidarity Platform is to establish the practice of sharing solidarity and knowledge and inspire the practice of collective solidarity among the activists. Dozens of lectures, discussions, and meetings were held within the framework of the platform, and so were organized the field trips addressing the issues of politics, culture and social justice. Members of the Solidarity Platform meet monthly and sometimes publish public responses and opinions.

The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) also continued to provide institutional support and cooperation to local community organizations this year.

During the reporting period, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) sought to publish [translations](#), reviews, and articles critical of racism and capitalism blended with patriarchy and oppression.



Collection of translations - Racism, Capitalism, Patriarchy

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:

**STATEMENT**

EMC is responding to the social crisis in Marneuli and Bolnisi

**STATEMENT**

The General Assembly of a Settlement - fictitious democracy instead of real democracy: EMC addresses Marneuli municipality

**STATEMENT**

The case of Machalikashvili and Others v. Georgia – Review of the ongoing communication at the European Court of Human Rights

**RESEARCH**

Systemic challenges of the education policy towards the ethnic minorities in Georgia

**RESEARCH**

Ethnic minority needs, Public broadcaster and Pandemic

**REPORT**

Public and Religious Organizations submitted an alternative report to the UN within UPR

**ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT**

Pankisi Gorge a year later after the special police operation

**ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT**

The needs assessment of villages in Marneuli Municipality

**ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT**

Positive mechanisms to support minority political participation - Review of International Experience

**ARTICLE**

Punishment, Reward And Abandonment: Political Strategies for Elections in Marneuli and Bolnisi

**ARTICLE**

Non-dominant Ethnic Groups and the Constitution - The Perspectives of Politicians

**ARTICLE**

Overlooked Needs, Interests and History - The Problem of Teaching the Georgian Language to the Azerbaijani Community of Georgia

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND NON-DOMINANT RELIGIOUS GROUPS

During the reporting period, the situation in the country in terms of freedom of religion has not improved. On the contrary, the pandemic once again exposed the obvious loyalty of the government to the dominant church and the unequal treatment of religious organizations, which is expressed in the official political language or in individual administrative decisions.



Pandemic and the Church


Despite the fact that life and health face higher risks during the pandemic, the patriarchate continued to organize religious gatherings, and the anti-scientific sermons related to the pandemic and the virus were constantly heard in churches, which prevented the establishment of correct approaches and practices in the parish. This issue has become the subject of theological and internal debates within the Church. During the first wave of the

pandemic, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC), with the participation of clergy and theologians, sought to [gather](#) and [disseminate](#) knowledge about the Church's social doctrines and responsibilities.

During the pandemic, we also saw unique examples of solidarity between religious organizations and communities, including [Muslim communities](#).

In the pre-election period, the open participation and support of the high-ranking hierarchs of the Patriarchate in the public meetings of the ruling political team has traditionally been evident. The pre-election context should be linked to the establishment of exclusive privileges and preferences for the Orthodox Church in the newly adopted [Forest Code](#), which by allowing a problematic exception to the practice of transferring public resources to private organizations in favour of the Orthodox church, deepened the inequalities between the dominant church and other religious organizations.



 **Solidarity in Islam: Zakat, Khums, Sadaqah and daily practices of support**

The pre-election processes should be linked to the [illegal arrest and persecution](#) of cartographers Iveri Melashvili and Natalia Ilychova. The accusation against them is clearly unsubstantiated and contains a number of fundamental factual and legal flaws. The timing and context of the investigation and the pre-election political campaign organized by the Georgian Dream around the question of David Gareja obviously manifests their political interests in the case and attempts a political usage of law enforcement systems and power. The active participation of the clergy and an awkward alliance between the high-ranking hierarchs of the Patriarchate and the government officials were traced in this case.



 **Legal Assessment of the Cartographers' Case**
Photo Credit: Publika

Another problem emerged about the issue of letting the other religious communities celebrate their religious holidays during the curfew imposed in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic in December. In parallel with the exceptions and benefits associated with the celebration of Orthodox Nativity feast and New Year holidays, the government [did not take into account](#) other religious holidays and, consequently, the needs of other religious communities. To address this issue, the State Agency for Religious Issues, which has already been criticized for being a controlling and [low-trust organization](#), requested the religious communities to share with them the list and personal data of their clergy and parishioners. Religious organizations felt uneasy about this request due to security and privacy risks and its discriminative policy. Finally, they ended up changing the times for their liturgies.



 **Pandemic and the idea of solidarity – The views of clergy and theologians**

During the reporting period, a chain of anti-Semitic sermons and positions was generated in church circles, which once again exposed the problem of misguided knowledge and visions within the church. Unfortunately, the Georgian Patriarchate did not take a trouble to respond properly to these incidents. Its representatives did not criticize or dissociate themselves from the views of Ioane Gamrekeli, the Metropolitan of Kutaisi-Gaenati and the head of the Education Center of the Georgian Patriarchate.



 **EMC: We call upon the government to protect the interests of the peasants in the Dzama Valley**

The issue of the poor health condition and providing a proper medical treatment for Archpriest Giorgi Mamaladze was also serious this year. Despite a number of requests, the penitentiary authorities did not offer him adequate treatment, nor did the mechanisms for deferral of punishment work reasonably.

At the same time, the negative and antisocial practice of arbitrary transfer of pasture lands and other land lots to the Orthodox Church has continued at the expense of neglecting the social interests of local peasants in the regions. In this regard, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) has been actively investigating various cases in Dzama Valley and the village of Kedeli.

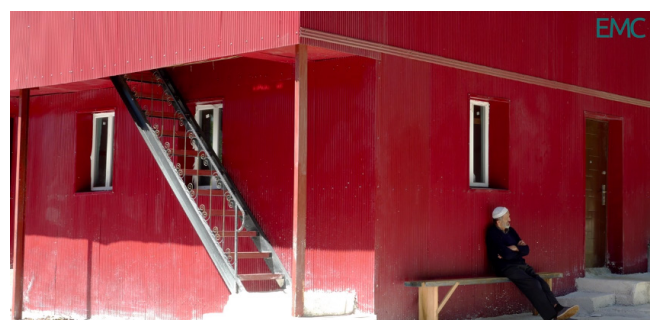
During the reporting period, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) was intensely identifying the social and legal needs of local communities in the highlands of Adjara in terms of providing for them legal aid and advocacy.



 **The case of Batumi Mosque**

Within this context, a workspace was created in the small town of Khulo through the efforts of EMC. While working in Adjara, the instances of political non-recognition and eradication of Islam as a social and cultural system posed a particular problem. A special interdisciplinary research and multimedia materials were produced on this topic. This year, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) also examined education challenges and policies in the highlands of Adjara, including the challenges of religious education.

During the reporting period, the organization published a comprehensive collection of reports, articles, and studies on religion, politics, and social contexts. In addition, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) continued to produce translations and critical analytical resources on these topics and share them with the interested circles.



 **Visible and invisible borders of Adjara**

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:

**STATEMENT**

EMC: According to the Forest Code, it will be unconstitutional to transfer forest resources to the church only

**STATEMENT**

EMC makes a critical assessment of the Government's request to non-dominant religious organizations about sharing with them the lists of their Clergy and parishioners

**RESEARCH**

Religion, Politics and Social Contexts-The Collection of Researches, Reports and Articles

**ANALYTICAL DOCUMENT**

analysis of the crimes committed against Jehovah's Witnesses in 2019

**ARTICLE**

When a Secular Discourse Precedes the Secular Practice: The "Spoon-Worshippers" and the Secular State

**ARTICLE**

Time – Part One: State of Emergency

**ARTICLE**

Time - Part Two: Leviathan, Freedom of Religion, and the Majority

**ARTICLE**

Time - Part Three: Life or Salvation?

**ARTICLE**

Religion, Nation and State in Georgia: The Spread of Christianity in Muslim Adjara

**ARTICLE**

Critical Analysis of the Activities of the State Agency for Religious Issues

**INFOGRAPHICS**

Activities of the State Agency for Religious Issues

THE REGIONS OF CONFLICTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) continued monitoring the situation of human rights and social needs in conflict regions in 2020 and constantly informed central government and international partners about local challenges, especially the ones that emerged in the wake of the pandemic.

EMC

დისკუსია:

ორთლახია ორთლახიანი - კონფლიქტის რეგიონების გაუმჯობესების პანდემიის დროს

თამარა ორთლახიანი
EMC (დისკუსიის მომდგრადობა)ზვიად ჩაჩავა
კონფლიქტის რეგიონების გაუმჯობესების პანდემიის დროსთამარა მთხალი
აქტივისტი ახალგორიდანთამარა ორთლახიანი
EMCთამარა ორთლახიანი
ნაციონალიზმისა და კონფლიქტების კვლევის ინსტიტუტი

Isolation within the Isolation - Challenges in Conflict Regions

The legal and humanitarian situation is particularly grievous in Tskhinvali region, specifically in Akhgori, which is becoming even more alarming in the face of restrictions on the rights to relocate. Isolation during the pandemic dramatically worsened the social situation. Most of the locals living in Akhgori are elderly and the only source of their income is the Georgian old age pension, which they can no longer withdraw from the bank while living in isolation. Dozens of patients have died due to lack of access to healthcare services.

The pandemic has complicated the situation of students who have moved to Tbilisi from Gali and Akhgori; they found themselves unemployed due to restrictions and are now unable to afford to pay the rent.

It is important that during the pandemic, the Georgian government sought to receive and

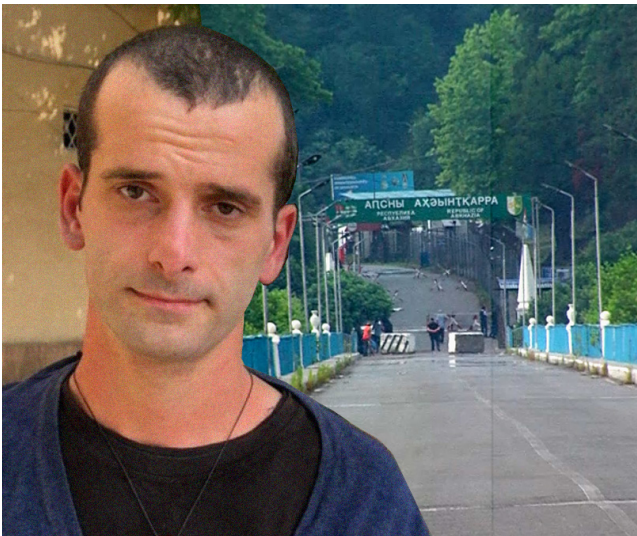
support patients from conflict regions. Nevertheless, the government did not respond to the new political signals coming from the new management of the de facto government of Abkhazia with proper initiatives and new strategies aiming at the transformation of the conflict. We do not yet have relevant platforms for de facto cooperation and effective communication with the authorities, which also emerged as critical problem during the evacuation of patients from Akhgori and / or large wildfires in Abkhazia.



Inal Jabiev died in Tskhinvali on August 28th in 2020, as a result of being treated brutally by the de facto law enforcement agents, followed by a mass protest of his family and the local community. This aggravated the increased dissatisfaction with the Bibilov's regime and the subsequent crisis even further. Inal Jabiev's family continues to protest in front of the administration of the de facto president of South

Ossetia. The official Tskhinvali still fails to assemble the de facto government, and the work of the Parliament has been blocked.

On September 30, 2020, Irakli Bebuia, who is still in prison, was arrested for burning the Abkhazian flag in Gali. Irakli Bebuia's health is in poor condition and the difficult situation in the de facto prisons of Abkhazia puts his health under a greater threat.



 Rights Georgia and EMC release a new appeal about the case of Irakli Bebuia convicted in Abkhazia

Several analytical papers prepared by the Social Justice Center (formerly the EMC) in 2020, in the light of the challenges in conflict regions criticize the state's rigid and non-transformative nature of the [peace policy](#), which has been carried out for many years, failing to address the legal and humanitarian [challenges](#) of the target regions. In this context, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) sought to organize publishing [articles](#), [reviews](#), [critical texts](#), and [to hold public discussions](#) about conflict zones and peace policy.



 Walking on a steep cliff or on the edge between recognition and non-recognition

The lack of new and alternative ways to conflict resolution has once again was detected as a result of observations of [pre-election plans](#) of political parties, which have clearly shown that the parties fail to offer substantially new approaches that would provide step-by-step and realistic visions of conflict resolution.

Considering the ongoing war in Karabakh and its grave human and political consequences, the Social Justice Center (formerly the EMC) has organized the creation of a [Public Peace Manifesto](#) and a protest rally. In the text, we condemned the prevailing ideologies of chauvinism, militarism and ethnocentrism as well as the policies of running and controlling our region and people with these mechanisms. It is important that despite the emotional involvement in these processes, the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of Georgia do not apply their war-related sentiments and alienation locally, because our citizens are aware of the importance of peaceful coexistence in the community. However, their active conscious and emotional involvement in the politics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the segregated social practices of ethnic groups living in multi-ethnic regions, once again point to the need for multilevel integration policies and the existence of relevant challenges.



 Photo from the demonstration – “Peace Manifesto”

It should be noted that during the reporting period certain facts of violence of ethnic and religious nature revealed in [Gardabani](#), Tetrtskaro, and Ponichala. Nevertheless, the state fails to identify, prevent, and manage the causes of such incidents and practices. In this process, we mainly saw a one-off response on part of the police, while the state has no experience of conflict resolution or a transformational social work in conflicting or high-risk of conflict communities. This approach also manifested in the latest chain of religious conflicts and the state’s indifference to handle the causes and consequences of the conflict whether on the micro or macro levels.

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

The rights of people living in conflict regions and nearby and conflict transformation



ARTICLE

Discourses, Practices, and Challenges of the Protection of Human Rights and Humanitarian Interests in the context of Georgian Peace Policy



ARTICLE

Assessment of the Law on Occupied Territories from Rights and Humanitarian Perspectives



SERIES OF BLOGS

Conflict Regions and Human Rights



TRANSLATION

David and Goliath and The Georgians in the Kremlin: A Post-Colonial Perspective on Conflict in Post-Soviet Georgia



VIDEO

The idea of peace in the Caucasus: experiences, perspectives and opportunities

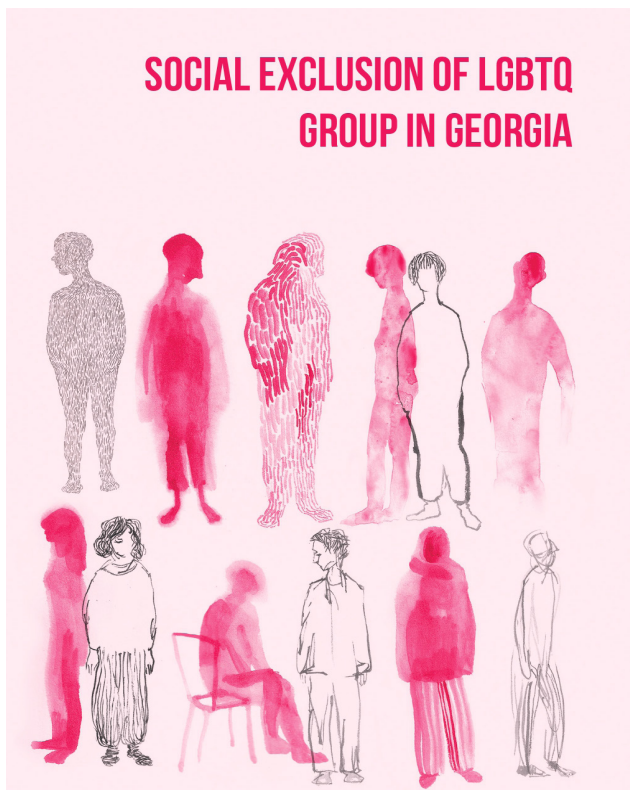


VIDEO

The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh: past, present and future

THE RIGHTS OF LGBTQ PERSONS

In 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) conducted a study on the social exclusion and violent actions against the LGBTQ Groups.



Social Exclusion of LGBTQ Group in Georgia

The Equality Policy Program began to work on a wide-ranging quantitative survey in 2019 and questioned 320 members of the LGBTQ community. By expanding the scope of social exclusion, the study attempted to show its multifaceted aspects, namely, along with the economic vulnerability, to expose those forms of exclusion of LGBTQ people, which manifest in lessening their chances in life and their cultural non-recognition, including the loss of their identity and their exclusion from the idea of equal citizenship. Research shows that LGBTQ people experience both the negative impact of shared socio-economic structures

and stigma, discrimination or other social difficulties causing identity issues, which make them even more susceptible to social vulnerability.

Based on the findings of the research, it is clear that there is a deep connection between different forms of oppression against LGBTQ people. Addressing this problem requires equal recognition of LGBTQ persons, granting them equal citizenship, focusing independently on existing social and economic needs and take effective measures for overcoming oppression. Operationalization of the research findings could have helped to create a social agenda based on justice in a state that aims to recognize the rights of LGBTQ people and prevent and eliminate their social exclusion through encouraging more democratic, and sensitive policies based on the needs of the target groups. It will also help identify the existing flaws in organizations, activists, and on the community level, and set effective ways to address them in order to create a more pluralistic, socially challenging, decentralized and inclusive agenda in Georgia.



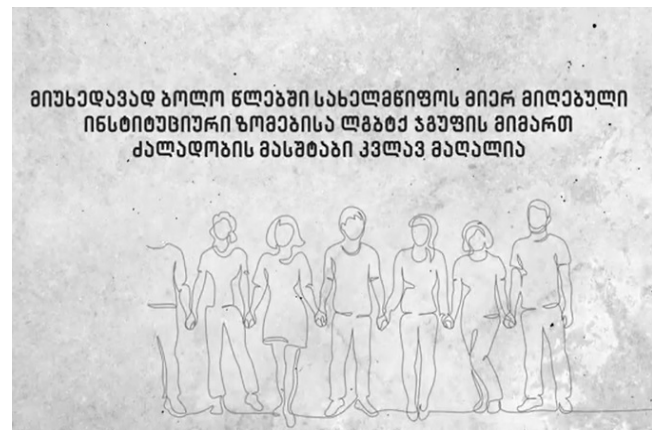
Lika Jalaghania on poverty, the influence of homophobia on it and the idea of equality

Besides the study, the Equality Policy Program actively monitored the situation of the LGBTQ group throughout 2020 and particularly focused on the needs that had worsened under Covid 19 regulations. As part of the monitoring, the Social Justice Center (formerly the EMC) worked closely with LGBTQ community organizations, especially the regional ones, seeking appropriate support for them, for which the organization held several important meetings with the organizations and activists of LGBTQ community.

In December 2020, a two-day training was given for social workers employed in both state and various non-governmental organizations. The training focused on the socio-economic situation of the LGBTQ group and the role of social workers from different perspectives. The training aimed to equip social workers with knowledge about the needs of LGBTQ people and increase their sensitivity.

During 2020, while also actively working on international advocacy, the Social Justice Center

(formerly the EMC) presented a report within framework of the United Nations Center for Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on sexual and reproductive health and rights within the informal coalition, which included, among many other important issues, the rights of LGBTQ people. In addition, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) participated in the pre-sessions organized by UPR and conducted advocacy activities for the delegates.



Studying the social exclusion of LGBTQ group in Georgia

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



STATEMENT

Coalition for Equality – The Needs of Groups Beyond the Scope of the State Anti-crisis Plan



RESEARCH

Social Exclusion of LGBTQ Group in Georgia



REPORT

Human rights organizations submit coalition report on sexual and reproductive health and rights within the framework of UPR

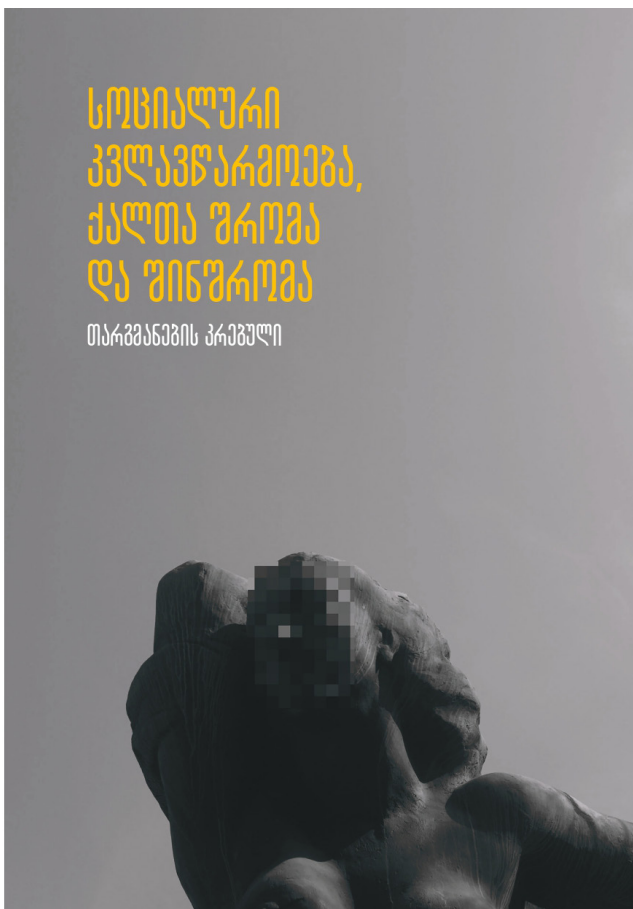


SERIES OF VIDEO

Social exclusion of LGBTQ group

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In 2020, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) further expanded its organizational vision and activities related to women's rights. The organization has carried out several important activities in recent times.



 Social Reproduction, Women's Labor and Domestic Work

The aggravated social conditions in the wake of the pandemic, which made the burden of labour even heavier for women, stressed the importance of drawing attention to the work done by women both at work and at home by theorizing it and translating the importance

of their labour into practice. To this end, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) translated the writings of important feminist authors on women's domestic labour and reproductive labour; it also selected a group of authors working in Georgia to write articles on the same subject, taking into account the Georgian reality.

In addition, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) began to study the needs of women in Adjara and Kvemo Kartli regions this year and to conduct preliminary preparatory work to assess their conditions. Numerous critical articles, ethnographic records, and multimedia materials on the prevailing discourses about Muslim women, representations describing their daily lives and challenges have been published.



 Article - Muslim Women of the Highlands of Adjara: Part Two – Face to Face with Everyday Life



Do not Die Without Water on This Land - in the Khulo village, from which Water has Disappeared

At the municipal level, the Social Justice Center (formerly EMC) also supported the further development of “Women’s Rooms” in Khulo and Bolnisi. The organization also supported the radio channels such as Marneuli and Batumelebi in promoting the preparation and [publicity](#) of media materials on the needs of local women.

IN THIS RESPECT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED:



ARTICLE

The Muslim Women of the Highlands of Adjara



ARTICLE

The Muslim Women of the Highlands of Adjara: Part Two - Face to Face with Everyday Life



ARTICLE

Premature Marriage - Dominant Discourses and the Real Needs of Azerbaijani Women in Georgia



BLOG

Carried away by ghosts



BLOG

Georgian Muslim women of Adjara - Then and now



BLOG

Father and mother fighting with daggers: the impact of the pandemic on women and domestic violence



BLOG

between two countries - women inside and outside the borders



COLLECTION OF TRANSLATIONS

Social Reproduction, Women’s Labor and Domestic Work

STRATEGIC LITIGATION

სტრატეგიული
სამართალწარმოება

9

Cases litigated before the European Court of Human Rights

12

Criminal cases before investigative bodies

2

Public Defender as an equality mechanism

11

Cases before the Constitutional Court

6

Cases conducted in administrative bodies

62

Ongoing cases in common courts

1

UN Human Rights Committee

2020 – NUMBER OF
SUCCESSFUL CASES

15

PUBLICATIONS



12

Research



4

Practical handbook



39

Analytical documents



4

Collection of translations



2

Collection of articles

PUBLIC EVENTS

70

Public and Online Discussions, Presentations, Forums, Trainings and Press Conferences

MULTIMEDIA



32

Blog



7

Podcasts



25

Translation



51

Article



62

Video



19

Infographics

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE CENTER 2020

SOCIAL POLICY PROGRAM



Workplace Harassment: Analysis of International and National Standards



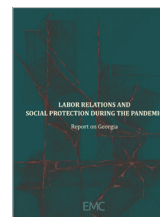
Reasonable Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities in Labour Relations



Labor Market Segmentation and Informal Labor during Crisis



Assessment of the Legal Capacity Reform - Legislation and Practice



Labor Relations and Social Protection During the Pandemic - Report on Georgia



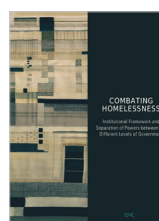
Employment policy in Georgia



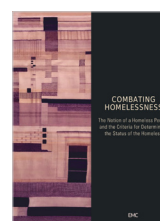
Credit boom: over-indebtedness and the National Bank



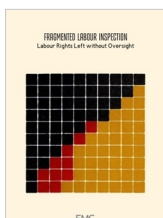
People against Loan Sharks: Predatory Credit System and its Social Implications



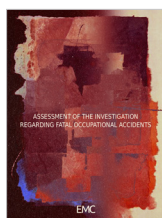
Institutional Framework and Separation of Powers between the Different Levels of Government



The Notion of a Homeless Person and the Criteria for Determining the Status of the Homeless



Fragmented Labour Inspection – Labour Rights Left without Oversight



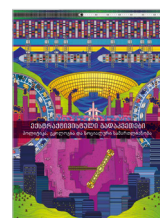
Assessment of The Investigation Regarding Fatal Occupational Accidents



Informal Domestic Work in the Light of the International Standards and Good Practices

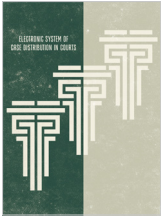


Extractive Encounters: Translated Anthology



Extractive Encounters in South Caucasus: Emerging Concepts and Engaged Research

JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY PROGRAM



Electronic System of Case Distribution in Courts



Access to courts, public opinion survey results



Second Shadow Report on Implementation of the Judicial Strategy and the Action Plan



The Legal and Political Essence of the State of Emergency - Analysis of Current Issues in Georgia



Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review



Drug Policy in Georgia - Trends in 2019



Problematic issues of the Common Courts' Constitutional Recommendation in Criminal Cases - Drug Crime Practice Analysis



Online Journal on Judiciary



Reforms in the Law Enforcement System

EQUALITY POLICY PROGRAM



Ethnic Minority Consultation Mechanisms - Reality in Georgia and International Experience



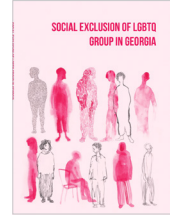
Ethnic minority needs, Public broadcaster and Pandemic



Religion, Politics and Social Contexts-The Collection of Researches, Reports and Articles



Systemic challenges of the education policy towards the ethnic minorities in Georgia



Social Exclusion of LGBTQ Group in Georgia



Strengthening ethnic minority political participation in Marneuli Municipality



Positive mechanisms to support minority political participation - Review of International Experience



Social Reproduction, Women's Labor and Domestic Work



Collection of translations: Religion, Secularism, Politics - Critical Reading



Racism, Capitalism, Patriarchate - Collection of translations



Political participation of non-dominant ethnic groups in the Constitutions of Georgia



Assessment of the Law on Occupied Territories from Rights and Humanitarian Perspectives



Discourses, Practices, and Challenges of the Protection of Human Rights and Humanitarian Interests in the context of Georgian Peace Policy



Pankisi Gorge a year later after the special police operation



The needs assessment of villages in Marneuli Municipality

DONOR ORGANIZATIONS AND CURRENT PROJECTS



Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)

Project name: Strengthen the human rights situation of LGBT persons, advocate SRHR issues and support the queer activists

Budget: 1 027 600 GEL



United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported program under East-West Management Institute (EWMI) "Promoting Rule of Law Georgia" (PROLoG)

Project name: Improving Human Rights Conditions for Marginalized Groups through Strategic Litigation

Budget: 38,163.82 USD



Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Project name: Strengthening and Supporting Community life and teachers in Kvemo Kartli as agents of social Change

Budget: 35,000.00 USD



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia

Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia

Project name: Strengthening ethnic minority integration and rights protection via research, education, advocacy, and confidence-building activities

Budget: 180,320.42 EUR



Open Society Foundations (OSF)

Project name: Promoting and Enabling Legal Capacity in Georgia

Budget: 279,459.00 USD



Heinrich Boell Foundation - South Caucasus Regional Office

Project name: Mining Industries and Related Social-Ecological Aspects

Budget: 34,000.00 EUR



Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Project name: Improving the rights of employees in the formal and informal sectors

Budget: 69 949.61 USD



Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Project name: Supporting Social Rights in Georgia through research and participatory advocacy

Budget: 60 000.00 USD



International Partnership for Human Rights

Project name: Supporting The Right To Protest In Georgia

Budget: 15 000.00 USD



Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Project name: Formation of Fair and Humane Criminal Justice Policy

Budget: 91,348.00 EUR



The Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC)

Project name: Project Regarding the need of Services, Care and Policy Advocacy

Budget: 48,271.44 USD



United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported program under East-West Management Institute (EWMI) "Promoting Rule of Law Georgia" (PROLoG)

Project name: Improving Access to Justice

Budget: 30,210.31 USD

JOINT PROJECTS



Open Society Foundations (OSF)

Project name: Supporting the Functioning of the State Inspector Service

Budget: 49,890.00 USD





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