

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/19/georgia-investigate-sexual-abuse-prison>

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(Berlin) Video footage broadcast on Georgian television on September 18, 2012, depicts sexual and other abuse of inmates in a notorious prison in Georgia, which should be subject to criminal investigation, Human Rights Watch said today. The government of [Georgia](#) should conduct a prompt, thorough, and independent investigation into the abuse, hold those found responsible accountable, and ensure the victims a remedy.

A Georgian corrections official stated publicly that the head of the penitentiary department has been dismissed as a result of the abuse and that several other officials have been arrested. Acts of a criminal nature, such as assault and including sexual assault, should be subject to criminal investigations and prosecutions, and not simply disciplinary sanctions, Human Rights Watch said.

The abuse captured in this footage is profoundly disturbing, said [Giorgi Gogia](#), senior Europe and Central Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch. The authorities need to ensure full accountability including criminal accountability for this abuse and take measures to prevent it from ever happening again.

Human Rights Watch also said that those under suspicion for involvement in the abuse should be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

On September 18, the Interior Ministry issued a statement saying it had opened an investigation into ill-treatment in Gldani Prison No.8 against prisoners by certain penitentiary department employees. The statement included a link to video footage allegedly taken by one of the former employees of the prison administration depicting physical assault on prisoners by members of the prison administration.

That evening, a talk show on Maestro television station broadcast further video materials depicting Gldani prison officials beating, insulting, and humiliating newly arrived inmates at Gldani prison No. 8. Shortly afterward, another TV station, TV9, aired further video footage vividly and graphically depicting rape of prisoners by prison staff.

The Interior Ministry statement acknowledged the ill-treatment. However, it claimed that several prison officials video recorded the abuse as part of a previously elaborated plot by one of the inmates, who convinced several prison staff to carry it out in exchange for substantial reimbursement.

Georgias human rights [ombudsman](#) has often referred to Gldani Prison No. 8 as one of Georgias most problematic prison facilities. In a 2010 [report](#), the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture said that former inmates of the Gldani prison alleged that staff had punched, kicked, and struck them with truncheons during the intake process and as punishment for such actions as talking loudly or attempting to communicate with prisoners from other cells. The report also said it found an uncommon silence by prisoners the committee met in the prison.

Georgian authorities have an obligation under international human rights law not only to effectively investigate all allegations of ill-treatment and torture, but to enforce criminal sanctions against those identified as criminally responsible, Human Rights Watch said. Victims of the abuse are also entitled to a legally enforceable remedy for their violations, Human Rights Watch said.

Sexual assault on a detainee constitutes torture, Gogia said. The prohibition on torture is absolute, and the government should ensure that the justice is done.

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