

**Question #7 : Which measures did you take to protect civilians and to prevent looting and mistreatment of civilians during and after the hostilities.**

During the hostilities, earlier trainings in human rights, military police presence and clear instruction coming from the superior authority was to ensure, that all civilians in the area affected by the war were protected. It is noteworthy, that Georgian militaries have not been accused of looting nor mistreatment of civilians. However, if any credible information becomes available to Georgian government, it will be thoroughly investigated .

It is noted by the Human Rights Watch, that Georgian military strictly followed the order of the President to “Protect Civilians”:

*The majority of witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch did not complain about other types of violations against them by the Georgian forces. Judging by their statements, **in most cases the troops entering the villages did not deliberately cause physical harm to civilians.** Several Ossetian interviewees said that Georgian soldiers told them they were under orders to look for and pursue Ossetian militias, **but to spare women, children and elderly during the ground offensive.**<sup>1</sup>*

*Zareta Z., from the village of Sarabuki, said that when Georgian soldiers entered the basement where she was hiding with her husband, they told them, “Now you’ll live with us, with Georgians, and we’ll live in peace. **Misha [Saakashvili] told us not to touch women and children.** We’re instructed to kill the young guys [fighters] only. And that’s what we’ll do. You are not to worry.” Another woman from the same village, “Svetlana S.,” also said that the Georgian soldiers were telling the residents, “**We have not killed any residents and we are not going to! Everyone is safe!**”<sup>2</sup>*

It is also to be noted, that even after Russian occupation Georgian Government tried its best to maintain at least minimal police presence to provide some protection to the civilians. Police was indeed the last to leave the villages and towns after Russian forces arrival. For the sole purpose of providing moral support to civilian population and at least record, if not to prevent the mistreatment and looting, police in Zugdidi (west Georgia) even agreed to be disarmed by occupational forces in exchange of the permission to stay.

However, it must be admitted, that no effective result was achieved from these efforts, as human rights violations by Russian militaries as well as their proxy authorities and irregular forces, mistreatment, looting, burning, killing and discrimination on ethnic grounds was a heavy burden on civil population of affected areas during the hostilities as well as aftermath.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Up In Flames: Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia*, 2009. p. 61

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Up In Flames: Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia*, 2009. p. 61

<sup>3</sup> List of Incidents