

First of all, I would like to greet you!

2020 was in deed a year of unexpected and complicated challenges. The world faced a completely different reality with the pandemic of the new "Covid 19", in this respect, Georgia was no exception. The pandemic completely changed the agenda of the Government of Georgia, and therefore our agenda as well. A large team of the Ministry of Internal Affairs - consisting of different departments, has been working in emergency mode all this time and is still working. At the same time, we maintained order and security across the country, guarded and controlled the border, combated crime, protected human rights, fought fires and natural disasters, ensured safe election environment, implemented infrastructure projects, ensured road safety, improved technical equipment, cared for qualification raising of the personnel, improved social packages and in parallel with all the mentioned, in the conditions of the pandemic, in coordination with the government, we have enforced and still implementing the decisions of the Coordination Council even now.

Police are and will be everywhere, wherever the country and our citizens are in need of it!

During the fight against pandemic, the role and importance of police in daily life of people was especially emphasized. **I would like to thank each and every employee of the Ministry for this invaluable work.**

During the pandemic, major units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs operated in round-the-clock regime. We had to arrange checkpoints and control closed cities. Probably everyone remembers **our police officers** stuck in these cities **for months**, far from their own families. Nevertheless, we did not stop even for a moment in the uncompromising fight against crime, which was even reflected in the concrete numbers.

**I can provide you with some examples:**

- In 2020, throughout the country 5 thieves-in-law were prosecuted;
- 49 individuals were detained and charged for "Thieves` World" membership, support and appeal to the "thief in law";
- 71 individuals were detained for selling drugs;
- As a result of international cooperation, an organized group of drug criminals was identified and 40 kg of "Heroin" was seized;
- 16 persons involved in online drug trafficking were given to criminal responsibility;
- 13 online drug stores were closed;
- A drug laboratory producing a psychoactive substance has been exposed;
- 89 kilograms of "Heroin" seized from illegal trafficking;
- 1 Kilogram of „Cocaine“;

- 7 000 pills of „Subutex“/“Suboxin“
- 6,5 kg of new psychoactive substance

Probably everyone remembers the resonated special operation in Batumi during the state of emergency, when our services, in cooperation with foreign colleagues, seized 40 kg of "Heroin", the market value of which exceeds 2 million USD on the so called "black market". It was a successful operation to combat international drug trafficking.

As for crime statistics for 2020, opponents often state that crime has increased in the country. Let's follow the data and we will see that these statements are only aimed at police discrimination.

As a result of the efforts of the law enforcement officers, the crime rate has decreased by 10 percent.

Of course, we have an increase with regard to certain crimes, on which we provide information to the public on a monthly basis, for example:

Cybercrime increased by 24 percent, domestic violence by 8.5 percent, and homicide by 11 percent, implying that cases increased by 7 units.

You know that cybercrime is a challenge of the 21st century and Georgia is no exception. The trend of increasing domestic violence is the result of the increased reporting to police on such cases, which has been quite a challenge for years.

It is necessary to touch upon the positive tendencies we have on such category of crimes that affect the criminogenic situation in the country, in particular:

- Armed robbery -42%
- Extortion -34%
- Robbery -25%
- Theft -12%
- Apartment robberies decreased as well by -28%
- Attempted murder -5%

You got familiarized with the real figures, reflecting the situation in the country in terms of crime. However, there are frequent cases when even small incidents are intensively covered by the media, which creates the feeling that crime rate has increased.

We respect the freedom of speech and expression and its the result of efforts made by our government that the media is free, not controlled from one cabinet and any information is available to everyone.

The fight against trafficking is a priority direction for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. I would like to note that according to the report of the US State Department, Georgia fully meets the international standards necessary for the prevention of trafficking, and in 2020 Georgia still remains in the first basket.

As for cybercrime, you are aware that modern technologies are developing and improving in the 21st century, and so do the types of cybercrime. This is not a problem only for Georgia, the whole world is facing the same challenge. In 2020 police has indicted and took under arrest 152 cyber criminals.

I would like to remind you that, most recently, in cooperation with Europol and Interpol, our police officers took part in an unprecedented international police operation. It involved law enforcement agencies from 16 countries, 20 members of the criminal network were arrested, including Georgians, who, under the instructions of the world's leading cybercriminals, laundered tens of millions of Euros. This operation was preceded by a complex investigation conducted in European states as well as in the United States of America. The Central Criminal Police Department was involved in this operation on our part.

2020 was a year of special challenges for each unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. All of the units were equally involved in the fight against pandemic. Hundreds of employees were and are currently working in a special regime.

In this regard, I have to underline the work of the Patrol Police Department that does not include only following of road safety rules, patrolling throughout the city, preserving public order during demonstrations. In the time of pandemic, functions and obligations of patrol police became diverse.

Hereby, I have to emphasize the efforts of both Tbilisi Police Department and territorial agencies in the fight against pandemic. They are succeeding in the fight against crime and at the same time, in enforcing pandemic related regulations.

Unfortunately, we had and have to fine people for breaching regulations but as I have already mentioned and wish to repeat once again, neither we, nor any police officer is delighted to fine our citizens. I understand that the situation is difficult, but everyone has to obey the law!

During the pandemic people very often applied to the police for the help.

Despite the spread of “COVID-19” and high risk of infection of the employees, the working process was not hindered for a second and everyone responded properly to the challenges.

The Ministry acted in accordance with the decisions of the Government. Within our competences we are responsible for:

- Periodic monitoring of persons in self-isolation;
- Isolation of specific, high-risk locations;
- Arranging special checkpoints;
- Control and protection of quarantine zones;
- Control of the State Border checkpoints and the "green line" of the State Border;
- Opening of a field hospital;
- Enforcement of restrictions imposed under the special quarantine regime.

I wish to emphasize that the Ministry worked in coordination with various governmental structures.

I want to recall the night when Marneuli and Bolnisi were placed under lockdown. Our employees from the Emergency Management Service, together with the soldiers, organized a field hospital for 100 people in one night.

In the conditions of Covid-19, it is especially noteworthy PCR testing of the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the laboratory of the Forensic-Criminalistics Department.

Special thanks to our partner international organizations for providing us with the means to combat the pandemic.

With the aim of reducing the risks of the spread of COVID-19, the trials of persons placed in temporary detention isolators have been conducted remotely. We were able to provide the isolators with the necessary equipment in the shortest period of time; appropriate infrastructure was provided at all locations and the employees were trained. Trials are held without the detainee not leaving the isolator. In total, as of November 30, 2020, trials of 3,337 detained persons have been conducted remotely.

112" is one of the main channels of communication between citizens and the MIA.

For example, from January 1 to November 30, 2019, 112 operators received up to 2 million calls, and in the same period of 2020, the number of calls increased to 4 million. Together with emergency calls, the amount of non-emergency calls also increased, since everyone was calling 112 for questions related to "COVID-19". This elevated the number and duration of pending calls. Step-by-step we added the appropriate amount of resources.

Using the existing infrastructure of "112", a new governmental hotline -144 was built and launched on March 30, 2020. Due to urgent necessity, hotline infrastructure was arranged at 3 additional locations throughout Tbilisi. Considering the recent situation, once again, we increased the number of hotline operators to reduce the waiting time for our citizens as much as possible.

Protecting human rights remains one of our top priorities.

In June, Juvenile Affairs Main Division was established in the Ministry, which is composed of specialized investigators and detectives.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs continues to work towards creating an environment tailored to the best interests of minors. A child-friendly environment has been created in the administrative buildings of the Ministry in accordance with the UNICEF concept and recommendations.

On our initiative, "the Law on Combating Crimes against Sexual Freedom and Inviolability" was adopted in 2020, according to which the punishment for sexual violence against minors became stiffer and monitoring mechanisms on the perpetrators were launched for the purpose of prevention of the mentioned crime.

Another important innovation for the refinement of mechanisms to combat domestic violence and violence against women, is the introduction of electronic surveillance of abusers, which aims to increase and improve the security of victims. Since September 1, 2020, along with the issuance of a restraining order, new regulations made possible to impose electronic surveillance against the abuser through an electronic bracelet and appropriate device.

Along with effective crime investigation, it is vital for the Ministry to support the victim and witness of the crime. With these priorities in mind, the Witness and Victim Coordinator Service expanded in the second half of 2020 to cover all territorial units of the Ministry.

The main purpose of the Service is to promote effective communication between the investigator and the victim / witness and to support them in dealing with the stress caused by the crime. This year coordinators provided assistance up to 1000 citizens.

Due to the pandemic, the units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had to provide services to the citizens in a limited way following the recommendations set by the Coordination Council. The Service Agency has provided services to half a million citizens to date.

- The Unified Service Center of the Security Police Department operates in compliance with the established regulations in which citizens have the opportunity to receive all services of the Security Police Department in a single space;
- The Service Agency has additionally started issuance of new types of notices (for example, “on the Criminal Liability of a Legal Entity”), and a remote weapon registration service was launched this year.
- An innovative service is in progress, which prescribes remote, online registration/re-registration of vehicles. The Agency will also offer citizens a simplified, remote delivery service to change license plates.
- The Unified Service Center of the Patrol Police Department in compliance with the regulations of “COVID-19” has served more than 400,000 citizens in 2020.

As you are aware, due to Covid-19 pandemic, most of the units of the Ministry started working in a remote regime. However, there are agencies, which cannot conduct their activities remotely.

One of such agencies is the Emergency Situations Management Service, whose capacity building and development remains one of the priority directions of the Ministry.

The service obtained 30 new Euro-standard “Iveco Magirus” fire-rescue vehicles and new equipment during the year of 2020. The work conditions of our firefighters-rescuers were improved and firefighters-rescuers on shift were provided with foodstuffs for the first time.

3 new firefighting-rescue stations were opened in 2020, each in Borjomi, Chkhorotsku and Anaklia.

Since June 2020 salary was increased for all firefighters-rescuers, as well as for the employees of other units of the Ministry.

In parallel to tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, the rescuers continued the efficient fight against fires, disasters or calamities.

All of you remembers the natural disaster, which occurred in Racha. Firefighters-rescuers evacuated 706 citizens from the disaster zone and built temporary cable roads, which gave us the possibility to deliver medicines and foodstuffs.

Dozens of forest fires were extinguished by our firefighters during this year. Among them the fires in Svaneti were especially difficult to handle. There were cases, when, due to the complexity of terrain, it was impossible to bring special vehicles to the fire sources and therefore, in frequent cases our firefighters had to reach the them on foot with the help of alpine equipment and work there during whole day and night.

There were some fires in fairs. Among them fires in Lilo, Eliava, Tsereteli and Varketili. The latter was especially dangerous. There was a threat of the explosion of gas station and the spreading of fire to the residential building. Firefighters-rescuers could manage to extinguish this fire under risk of their own lives.

346 citizens were saved along the Black Sea coastline from June to August.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Emergency Situations Management Service and to each firefighter-rescuer.

The Border Police is one of the important agencies of the Ministry, which cannot conduct its activities remotely.

I would like to underline that the frontiers of our country are protected by the men of dignity!

In 2020 important steps were taken in the directions of improvement of border infrastructure, equipping the state border with modern technical means of surveillance, capacity building of aviation, deepening of international relations and cooperation with NATO.

A number of important projects were accomplished for the border police with the financial support of US Government and EU.

The following 4 border sectors were built with the assistance of US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA):

- The sector “Lekiskure” of Dedoplistskaro Division;
- The sector “Chirukhi” of Batumi Division;
- The sector “Juta” of Kazbegi Division;

- The sector “Truso” of Kazbegi Division.

For the purpose of capacity building of the border protection, personal equipment, as well as the means of border incidents detection and response, transport and communication means were renewed in the border police.

- With the financial assistance of US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), the border police was provided with 20 “Argo” SUVs for the purpose of development of land border protection capacities;
- border police was equipped with 90 SUV vehicles;
- Radio communication system of the Coast Guard was totally renewed;
- With the support of the Turkish side, vessels of the Coast Guard, “Sokhumi” and “Poti”, were repaired.

Moreover, I would like to underline the work of our pilots. They are engaged in the fight against disasters, as well as they save human lives. They accomplished a number of flights for border, as well as firefighting and rescue purposes and additionally, they conduct civil flights to assist population in the mountains.

- A new Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between the Border Police and NATO Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM), on the basis of which the fields of cooperation were considerably expended;
- With the assistance of Export Control and Border Security (EXBS) Program of the US Embassy, the construction works of the border sector of Akhaltsikhe Division are being conducted;
- The construction of a border sector adapted to modern standards on the Davit Gareji territory will soon be accomplished.

Construction and infrastructural projects were in progress not only in the Border Police but also in other agencies:

Totally 12 new buildings were constructed this year, including:

- Temporary Detention Isolator and facility for administrative prisoners were opened in Avchala. Both buildings fully comply with the international standards. Relevant conditions for each detainee is ensured.
- New police building was opened in Tsalenjikha.



- Building for Police and Special Tasks Department was constructed in village Dzibakhevi, Pankisi.
- New police buildings were opened in Bakuriani and Rustavi;
- New building for the firearms registration was opened in Service Agency in Tbilisi, while in regions – in Kutaisi and Batumi the infrastructure was renovated.
- Untied Service Centre of Patrol Police Department was opened in Mtskheta in May. As you are aware, the center provides up to 50 police services based on one-window principle.
- Auto park of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was renewed by 320 cars/vehicles in 2020.
- As for the road safety, throughout the country totally 4 696 video cameras and 251 speed control sections were installed. Abovementioned allows to control totally 1 100 kilometers length of road section.

The infrastructural projects will be continued next year as well. New buildings will be constructed and existing infrastructure will be renewed.

2020 was challenging not only in the areas of fighting pandemic, but also in ensuring the conduct of Parliamentary elections in a peaceful and secure environment.

The Ministry was ensuring the rule of law during the parliamentary elections, in order to safeguard that each citizen of Georgia had the opportunity to make his/her choice in a free and secure environment.

We actively cooperated with the international observing missions and local Non-Governmental Organizations. We proactively provided them with the information on the incidents during the elections and the responsive measures undertaken by police.

Ministry of Internal Affairs actively cooperated with the Interagency Commission for Free and Fair Elections, and the responses of the Ministry on the incidents received from the commission were instantaneous.

With the purpose of integration in NATO and the EU Ministry of Internal Affairs successfully continues implementation of the obligations undertaken by Georgia.

Georgia, as a reliable partner of NATO, is actively involved in the process of ensuring peace and security in the Black Sea Region.

In order to ensure successful implementation of the visa free regime with the EU, cooperation with European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) was further strengthened.

Resolution of the European Parliament adopted on 16 September 2020, positively assessed the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia in fighting against crime and human rights protection.

Throughout the reform process within the Ministry, particular importance is attached to the support of our strategic partners – the EU and the USA, that are assisting the Ministry in developing its capacities already for years.

This was my short report on what we were able to implement in this short period, to introduce the main topics. I would like to thank entire staff of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for their invaluable and tireless work, beginning from the lower ranks and up to the top, you are all presented here. I would also like to thank my deputies.

It was a difficult year in deed, the elections coincided with the pandemic, and most importantly, I think that our main challenge - the fight against crime, was not handled badly thanks to the joint efforts. I would like to thank everyone. Thank you for your attention.