

The Statistics of Social Assistance for the Victims of Political Repressions



ინფორმაციის თავისუფლების
განვითარების ინსტიტუტი

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This material has been financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. Responsibility for the content rests entirely with the creator. Sida does not necessarily share the expressed views and interpretations.

Introduction

On 24 April 2020, IDFI published the article “The Mechanisms for Restoring the Rights of the Victims of Political Repression in Georgia and Their Assessment”. It is emphasized in the article that the amount of subsidy for the social support and daily living needs of the victims of political repression is not enough for satisfying the minimal daily needs. Additionally, the amount of subsidies is not proportional compared to the damage the repressed individuals and their descendants have experienced. In such conditions, IDFI’s one of the major recommendations is to increase social assistance and daily living subsidies for the repressed individuals and their heirs, considering the minimal living wage.

In this article, the statistical data about the social assistance for the repressed individuals during the last 10 years (except for the joint compensations for the several first-rank heirs of the repressed individuals), published on the website of Social Service Agency, is analyzed by IDFI. Specifically, the statistics of living subsidy, social packages for beneficiaries and related expenses are reviewed in this article. It is also discussed how much budgetary expenses will be needed for increasing living subsidy for the repressed individuals and its equation with the subsidy for the war and military service veterans and the family members of those persons who have died or have been lost while fighting for Georgia’s independence and territorial integrity.

For the individuals who have been recognized as the victims of political repressions, according to the decree of the government of 2007, the subsidy for their living needs and utility services was established – 7 GEL which has not changed since 2007. For the war and military service veterans, the subsidy is 44 GEL. As for social packages, they have been enacted since 1 September 2012 and were improved in 2013.

Daily living subsidy:

- For the victims of political repressions and their family members with disabilities - **7 GEL**

Social Packages:

- For the persons recognized as the victims of political repressions - **107 GEL;**
- For the persons recognized as the victims of political repressions who, at the same time, have participated in the military operations for the territorial integrity of Georgia and independence - **122 GEL;**
- Social packages increased by **7 GEL** for the different social categories of the victims of political repressions (persons with disabilities, persons left without a breadwinner, etc.)

It is notable that the society for commemoration of the victims of political repressions and solidarity “Memorial” and its chairman, Mr. Guram Soselia have been requesting the increase of the daily living subsidy for the victims of repression (7 GEL) and its equation with the subsidy for the war and military

service veterans (44) for years. Based on his constitutional lawsuit, the Constitutional Court of Georgia has addressed to the Parliament of Georgia with recommendations. Specifically, regarding the case “The citizens of Georgia – Guram Soselia and Avtandil Imnadze against the Parliament of Georgia”, in the final court ruling, the Court addresses to the Parliament of Georgia to ensure the free electricity service for the victims of political repressions similarly to the war and military service veterans and the family members of those persons who have died or have been lost while fighting for Georgia’s independence and territorial integrity.¹

The society “Memorial” and Mr. Guram Soselia, who is himself a victim of political repressions, have addressed to the Prime Minister of Georgia and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia with the request to ensure the equality principle guaranteed by the Constitution, acknowledge the historical merit of the repressed individuals and implement appropriate measures for restoring their violated rights and their rehabilitation. In a letter sent to Guram Soselia by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs in 2016, it is mentioned that the increase of the living subsidy from 7 to 44 GEL was impossible as long as it was not considered by the state budget.

Until 1 January 2006, the Article 12 of the law “on the Acknowledgment of Citizens of Georgia as Victims of Political Repression and Social Protection of Repressed Persons” included the payment of privileged prices for utility services (heating, water, household waste collection service, gas and thermal energy, telephone subscriber’s fee) at the expense of the State, in the amount of 50% of the total amount, if such services are provided by a state institution. As for the electricity, the law included the free consumption of electricity in the amount of 30 kWh per month and where there were two or more persons in the family who enjoy such privileges, in the amount of 45 kWh per month. Allowances for the payment of dwelling space rental fees were established for persons who resided in a public housing. This entry was abolished after the adoption the law “On Public Assistance” (on 1 January 2006).

The Qualitative Data about the Victims of Political Repression Receiving Living Subsidy and Social Package

The qualitative data about the victims of political repression receiving living subsidy shows that the number of recipients declines each year. For instance, in 2010, 20,775 received 7 GEL living subsidy while their number in 2020 was 10,396.

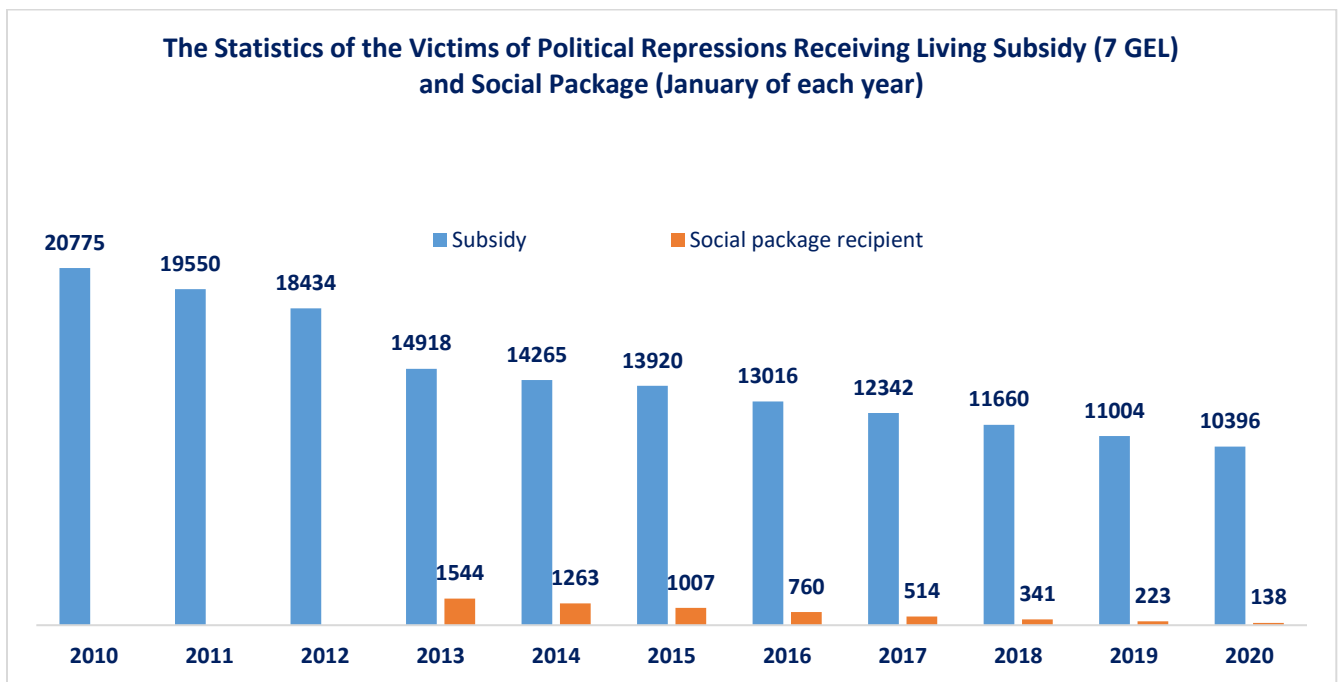
As for the social packages enacted since 1 September 2012, as it turns out, the majority of the victims have not used the social packages. According to the statistical data, in September 2012, only 1,642 persons received the support included in the package.

¹ The court ruling of the Constitutional Court of Georgia of 31 October 2003 on the case “The Citizens of Georgia – Guram SoSelia and Avtandil Imnadze against the Parliament of Georgia”, <https://constcourt.ge/ka/judicial-acts?legal=264>.

Unfortunately, there is no separate data about the usage of improved packaged by 7 GEL for the victims of repressions of different social categories (persons with disabilities, persons left without a breadwinner, etc.). However, considering the fact that, compared to August, in September 2012, the number of beneficiaries decreased by only 2, 958, including the natural decrease² (the usage of living subsidy and social package simultaneously is limited) , it can be assumed that minimum 83% of beneficiaries were not able to use the package.

The reason for which the majority of the victims of political repression were left without social package was that the usage of state pension and social package simultaneously is not allowed by the state. Therefore, the repressed individuals of the pension age preferred higher compensation and they chose the state pensions while the younger persons used the social package. For example, at the beginning of enacting the social packages, in September 2012, out of 1,641 people using them: 1 was under 40, 33 were between 40-49, 801 were between 50-59 and 807 were over 59.³ Supposedly, in the last category of the people over 59, were only men who had not reached the pension age.

The rate of decrease in the number of beneficiaries of social packages is much higher that the number of recipients of living subsidy. The number of the recipients of social packages in September 2012 (1,642) was decreased by 92% in 2020, which was mainly facilitated by the fact that their majority were close to the pension age and when they reached it, they refused to receive the social package.



** 2012 წლის მხოლოდ 4 თვის მონაცემებს. In this statistics, the number of the recipients of social package in 2012 is not included because it started in September 2012 and only includes the data of the four months of 2012.*

² See the statistical data provided by the Social Service Agency about the number of recipients of living subsidy in 2012: http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=747.

³ See the statistical data provided by the Social Service Agency about the number of recipients of social package in 2012: http://ssa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=880

The number of the recipients of social package according to age and sex								
Date	0-17	18-39	40-49	50-59	Over 59	Female	Male	Total
September 2012	0	1	33	801	807	514	1 128	1 642
April 2020	0	0	5	51	82	40	98	138

The Expenses on the Living Subsidy and Social Packages for the Victims of Political Repressions

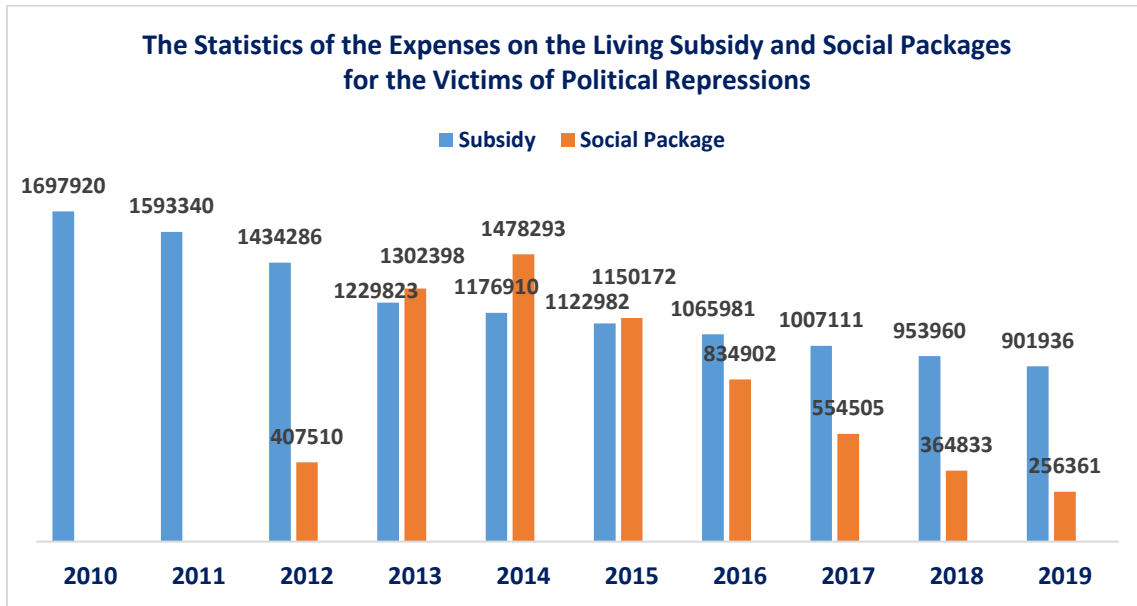
Together with decline in the number of the victims of repressions receiving living subsidy and social package, the state expenses on their support also declines proportionally. For example, the amount of living subsidy (7 GEL) has not changed since 2007. Therefore, the decline on the related expenses is proportional with the decline in their recipients. For instance, in 2010, approximately 1,7 million GEL was spent from the budget on living subsidy, 900,000 GEL in 2019.

In a letter sent to Guram Soselia by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs in 2016, it is mentioned that the increase of the living subsidy from 7 to 44 GEL was impossible as long as it was not considered by the state budget.

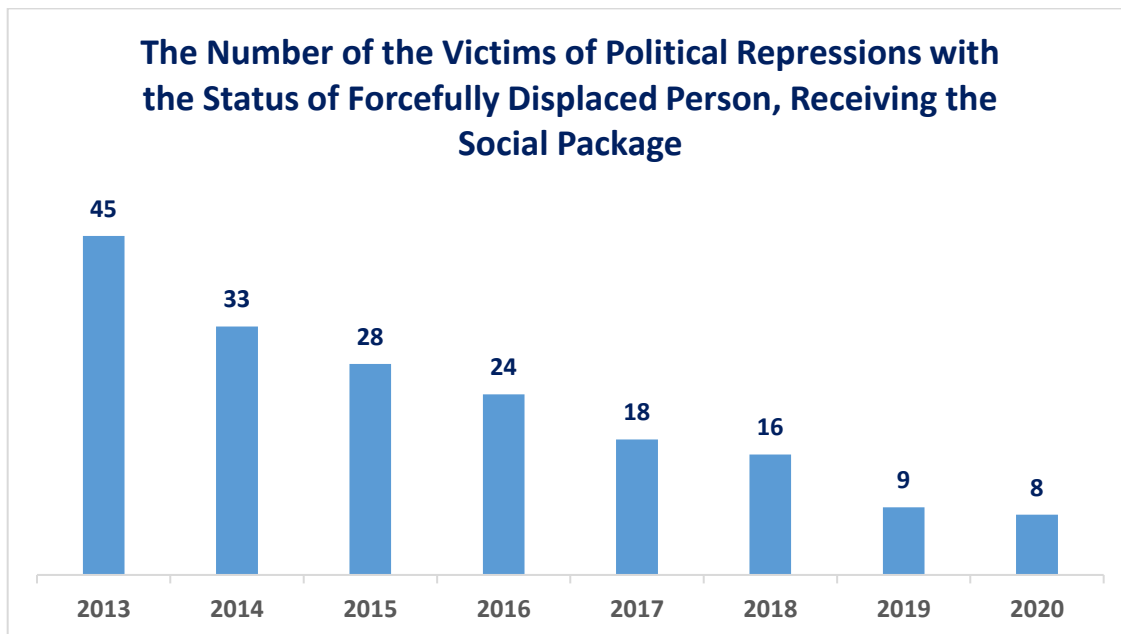
As for the social packages, the greatest amount – 1,5 million GEL was spent in 2014, which was facilitated by the improved packages in 2013. ⁴ For example, the amount of 62 GEL allocated for the victims of political repressions increased to 107 GEL while for the victims of repressions who are at the same time participants of military operations for the territorial integrity of Georgia and independence – from 77 GEL to 122 GEL; After 2013, regardless of the decline in the number of the recipients of the

⁴ The decree of the Government of Georgia on the amendments in the decree “On Establishing the Social Package” №279, 23 July 2012, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1991562>.

social package, the amount of assistance has not changed. As a result, in 2019, these expenses amounted to 256,361 GEL.



On the website of the Social Service Agency, the statistics of the victims of political repressions who have a status of a forcefully displaced and receive the same social package is also provided. Among the recipients of social package, such persons are just 8. Within the frame of the package, a different type of assistance is not considered for them for which they are eligible for the same conditions as the victims of political repressions.



Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis of the statistical data about the social assistance for the victims of political repressions shows that the state cannot respect them appropriately. The unchanged assistance of 7 GEL, regardless of the natural decline of these people, can be considered of a symbolic nature only as it cannot meet their minimal needs. It should also be emphasized that until 1 January 2006, the Article 12 of the law “on the Acknowledgment of Citizens of Georgia as Victims of Political Repression and Social Protection of Repressed Persons” included the payment of privileged prices for utility services (heating, water, household waste collection service, gas and thermal energy, telephone subscriber’s fee) at the expense of the State, in the amount of 50% of the total cost. Additionally, allowances for the payment of dwelling space rental fees were established for persons who resided in a public housing. Therefore, it is clear that by abolishing this entry and establishing 7 GEL subsidy, the assistance for the victims of repressions has worsened significantly.

According to the decision of the Constitutional Court of Georgia (18 April 2002, №1/1126, 129, 158), a principle is established, according to which, during limiting social schemes, the state is obliged to substantiate that it is caused by worsening the economic situation, increase in the number of beneficiaries, decline in the budgetary income and other factors. Any interested person can apply to the court in such cases.⁵ Based on the statistical analysis carried out by IDFI, it can be concluded that the recipients of living subsidy significantly declines each year.

Considering the natural decline of the recipients, IDFI attempted to find out approximately what would be the cost of increasing the living subsidy for the victims of political repressions from 7 GEL to 44 GEL. It was concluded that in the case of increasing the subsidy to 44 GEL (which is the amount for Second World War veterans, people with disabilities due to crashing the 9 April demonstrations, etc.) since May 2020, the total cost would be 3,8 million GEL (2,95 million GEL increase) and 5 million GEL (4,2 million GEL increase) in 2021.

The Assumed Expenses on the Living Subsidy for the Victims of Political Repressions in the Case of Its Equation with the Amount Established for the Other Social Categories			
	7 GEL subsidy	44 GEL subsidy (increase is considered since May 2020)	Difference
Total expenses of 2020	850,000 GEL	3,8 million GEL	+2,95 million GEL
Total expenses of 2021	800,000 GEL	5 million GEL	+4,2 million GEL

⁵ The decision of the Constitutional Court of Georgia №1/1/126,129,158, 18 April 2002, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/1096951?publication=0>.

Together with the increase of the living subsidy for the victims of political repressions, the increase of the number of assistances included in the social package in line with the minimal financial need is especially important. The implementation of this initiative is absolutely realistic as long as the number of recipients of the package has decreased and the increase of the subsidy does not require exceptionally huge recourses from the state.

It is also notable that among the living subsidies established for the different social categories, the amount for the victims of political repressions (together with the persons who were at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant) – 7 GEL is the smallest. Moreover, it is also important that the living subsidy for the other categories – 44 GEL does not meet the existing needs either.

Together with the increase of the living subsidy for the victims of political repressions, the increase of the number of assistances included in the social package in line with the minimal financial need is especially important. The implementation of this initiative is absolutely realistic as long as the number of recipients of the package has decreased and the increase of the subsidy does not require exceptionally huge recourses from the state.