



**TOLERANCE AND
DIVERSITY INSTITUTE**

10 YEARS



2013-2023

About TDI

The non-governmental organization "Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI)" was founded in 2013.

TDI's goals: Protecting and advocating freedom of religion or belief, protecting the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, overcoming racial discrimination, fostering and supporting equality, civil integration, cultural diversity, tolerance, intercultural dialogue, democratic development and Euro-Atlantic integration.

TDI's activities: Protecting freedom of religion or belief and fighting against religious, ethnic, and racial discrimination through strategic litigation and advocacy; monitoring, research and analysis of state policies; working on public awareness and non-formal education to promote tolerance, equality and diversity; encouraging and advocating positive changes in public education; cooperating with local and international research, academic and human rights organizations and media; strengthening and supporting local religious, ethnic and community organizations.

10-year Performance Summary

Strategic Litigation and Advocacy

Strategic litigation and legal assistance

TDI continually works to protect freedom of religion or belief and to combat religious, ethnic and racial discrimination through strategic litigation.

During the past decade, to protect the freedom of religion, equality, and rights of religious and ethnic minorities and migrants, TDI:

- Brought up to **60 cases in courts**, administrative bodies and with the Public Defender;
- Provided legal counsel and aid to up to **1,500 individuals and legal entities**;
- Helped up to **30 victims of religion, ethnicity and race-based hate crimes**.

As an outcome of strategic litigation:

- The Constitutional Court of Georgia **eliminated inequality based on religion** after recognizing specific norms of the Tax Code and the State Property Law as unconstitutional and discriminatory;
- The **courts recognized as illegal the request for the consent of the State Agency for Religious Issues** for the construction of religious buildings;
- The **court considered it a violation of the freedom of religion** to appoint a unified national exam for Adventist applicants on Saturday, giving them the opportunity to take the exam on another day;
- **Discrimination against Nigerian citizens** in commercial banks has been **eliminated**;
- A number of migrants from African and Asian countries **were granted residence permits**;
- Asylum seekers were **granted asylum**.

Advocacy

TDI conducts comprehensive research on governmental policies, practices, and legal frameworks related to freedom of religion, religious and ethnic minority rights, and the rights of migrants. Through our proactive engagement, we were successful in the removal of an unconstitutional article from the Georgian Constitution that had previously infringed upon freedom of religion and belief. We also actively opposed legislative proposals aimed at unjustifiably restricting freedom of expression, particularly those concerning "insulting religious feelings" and "blasphemy." TDI played a pivotal role in preventing the enactment of a potentially perilous religious law and has consistently opposed various discriminatory legislative measures.

Throughout the pandemic, TDI provided vital assistance to migrants residing in Georgia, advocating their health, education, movement, and other rights and freedoms. We also examined the state's potentially discriminatory policies towards religious organizations during the pandemic and advocated for equality and the protection of freedom of religion or belief.

To facilitate effective advocacy and legal support, TDI's team members regularly hold meetings with local religious and ethnic communities in various regions of Georgia, with a special focus on Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Adjara.

In the pursuit of advocacy, TDI frequently organizes diverse gatherings and events, involving participation from religious and ethnic communities, migrants, government bodies, diplomats, both local and international organizations, and the media.

Informal Education

Images of Diversity

TDI is deeply committed to enhancing public knowledge and awareness about religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, as well as promoting tolerance and equality.

One of our notable initiatives is the "[*Images of Diversity*](#)" platform, established in 2017. Through this project, we have developed documentary videos, educational articles, photo narratives, and exhibitions, as well as organized discussions and gatherings with young individuals in both Tbilisi and the surrounding regions.

Images of Diversity

- Up to 20 educational articles.
- Up to 40 distinct video profiles featuring individuals from diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, including Muslims, Catholics, Protestants (including Evangelical-Baptists and Lutherans), followers of Judaism, followers of Krishna, Jehovah's Witnesses, Yezidis, etc., as well as ethnic Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, and migrants from various countries such as Sri Lankans, Iranians, Nigerians, and more.
- Up to 10 educational videos detailing the contributions, heritage, and historical significance of various ethnic and religious groups in Georgia.
- Over 60 engagements with young individuals, students, and schoolchildren residing in both Tbilisi and various regions of Georgia.



Many resources produced by TDI are incorporated as supplementary reading materials in school textbooks and find utility in universities, schools, and various human rights organizations. Notably, one of TDI's photo stories received the European Union Prize in Journalism in 2018, while a documentary video highlighting Hurie Abashidze, a member of the Muslim community, was honored with the ADAMI Media Award for Cultural Diversity. This project played a pivotal role in heightening media awareness of cultural diversity and inspired several stories created using TDI materials. Additionally, it contributed to discovering and empowerment of leaders within local community organizations.

As part of diverse initiatives, TDI has developed an extensive array of educational and awareness materials covering a wide range of subjects. These include topics such as the tradition of tolerance in Georgia, stories of individuals who have evolved in their understanding of diversity and equality, the preservation of freedom of religion or belief, equality and tolerance, the alignment of Georgian traditions with European values, and more.



Promoting Reforms and Positive Changes in Public Education

Under initiatives supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, TDI successfully increased awareness of cultural diversity, tolerance, and equality within public schools. This effort resulted in substantial improvements to curriculum content and textbooks.

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Georgia, TDI developed various educational resources for public school educators, textbook authors, and publishers. An analysis and assessment of approximately 60 textbooks across subjects such as Georgian language and literature, history, civic education, and geography were conducted, with a focus on human rights protection, equality, and cultural diversity. The outcome was a set of recommendations and a guide. These resources serve as long-term aids to assist textbook authors and publishers in aligning their materials with principles of human rights and tolerance, avoiding discriminatory and stereotypical language, and providing a more inclusive representation of cultural diversity.

A specially designed training module facilitated over 80 sessions involving more than 165 teachers, school administrators, and field experts. Several educational and support materials were generated through this project, which is designed for teachers, researchers, as well as students. They present religions through the lens of tolerance, compassion, and a stance against violence.

Furthermore, [a guide](#) tailored for textbook authors supported them in better showcasing the cultural diversity of Georgia in new educational materials while ensuring the absence of discriminatory and stereotypical content or hate speech. "[Lessons of Tolerance](#)" addresses issues related to freedom of religion and ethnic diversity in Georgia's public schools and provides practical solutions for educators and administrators.

TDI Training Programs and Courses

School of Freedom of Religion or Belief

TDI actively collaborates with both local and international organizations to raise awareness about freedom of religion or belief and equality.

In 2023, in partnership with the [Norwegian Center for Human Rights at the University of Oslo](#), as part of the Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief initiative, we introduced a pioneering international certificate course and training module in Georgia, "Freedom of Religion or Belief for All."

[This program](#) commenced on September 28, 2023, and consists of four weekly online workshops, concluding with in-person sessions led by experts from TDI, the University of Oxford, and the Norwegian Center for Human Rights at the University of Oslo. The course is open to a wide range of participants, including civil servants from various regions of Georgia, individuals working in public agencies at both central and local levels, social workers, educators, representatives from civil society organizations (including non-governmental organizations, religious groups, grassroots community organizations), and media personnel. The United Nations Development Program and Norway provided support for this initiative.

TDI plans to continue offering the Freedom of Religion or Belief course to diverse target audiences in the future.

School of Tolerance

To enhance the understanding of young individuals regarding the principles of tolerance, freedom of religion and belief, and secularism, and to stimulate dialogue on these subjects, TDI periodically conducts a series of public lectures in collaboration with academic institutions. As part of one of these initiatives, we established a public lecture series titled "School of Tolerance" at Ilia State University. A total of 12 public lectures were held, offering participants diverse insights into the concepts of freedom of religion and belief, tolerance, diversity, and equality. These perspectives were explored through the lenses of cinema, literature, art, media, religion, democratic politics, and more.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI)

In 2023, with the support of the United Nations Association of Georgia and USAID's "Unity Through Diversity" initiative, TDI designed an innovative diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training program specifically tailored to Georgian private and public institutions. This program focuses on religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity issues.

This short educational program is intended for both employers and employees, with the aim of fostering awareness about diversity and instructing organizations on how to establish a harmonious and equal workplace for individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, religions, beliefs, and identities.

TDI offers this training course to both the private and public sectors, encompassing interactive modules that emphasize the significance of diversity in the workplace, the various forms it takes, examination of biases, as well as discussions on the complexities of intersectionality. Participants gain insights into the value and advantages of diversity and engage in conversations about creating an inclusive work environment, enhancing engagement, and eradicating all types of workplace harassment and discrimination.

Cooperation and Awareness-Raising with Media

TDI has actively engaged in collaborations with the media for numerous years, employing various approaches such as offering training sessions to media organizations, facilitating interactions between local ethnic and religious communities, activists, and media representatives, and creating educational materials for both media organizations and journalism students.

In partnership with TDI and approximately ten distinct media organizations, around 40 journalistic pieces have been developed and published. These pieces are designed to inform the public about members of diverse religious and ethnic communities, migrants, their challenges, and governmental policies.

TDI has crafted the following resources for the media: "A [Glossary](#) of Frequently Used Terms in the Media - Religious, Ethnic, and Cultural Diversity," and "A [Handbook](#) for Journalism Students and Media Professionals on How to Report on Migration and Migrants."



TDI's Studies and Reports

TDI consistently compiles and releases analytical reports and research studies. These materials encompass legal and policy analysis on freedom of religion or belief, the rights of religious and ethnic minority communities, migrants and the issues of racial discrimination. These publications employ a range of research methodologies and provide a critical examination of governmental policies, practices, and legislation, assessing their alignment with constitutional and international human rights standards.

Freedom of Religion and Belief

- TDI regularly prepares and publishes special reports on the state of freedom of religion or belief in Georgia: [2010-2019](#); [2020-2021](#); [2022](#);
- Religious property restitution policy in Georgia ([2020](#));
- Research on the needs of religious communities ([2014](#));
- Research on religious discrimination and constitutional secularism in Georgia ([2014](#));
- State financing policy of religious organizations in Georgia ([2014-2015](#))
- State financing policy of religious organizations in Georgia ([2013-2014](#))



Racism and Migrants Rights

- In special reports, TDI describes racism, xenophobia and the legal situation of foreigners in Georgia: [2014-2018](#); [2020-2021](#); [2022](#).
- Racial Profiling in Georgia: Policies and Practices for Ethnic Minorities and Migrants in the Police System ([2021](#)):



Anti-Semitism

One of the most important research and advocacy areas for TDI is analyzing and combating anti-Semitism in Georgia. Starting in 2020, we have been monitoring and documenting anti-Semitic sentiments and occurrences in Georgia.

- [2020-2021](#) Chronology Anti-Semitic statements;
- [2022](#) Anti-Semitism cases;

Guides

- Guide for Textbook Authors: Race, Racialization and Global Migration ([2022](#));
- Guide for Journalism Students and Media: How to Cover Migration and Migrants ([2021](#));
- Religious, ethnic and cultural diversity: glossary of terms frequently used in the media ([2020](#));
- Guide for school teachers: Lessons of tolerance - Religious and ethnic diversity in school ([2019](#));
- Guide for authors of Georgian language and literature, history and civic education public school textbooks ([2018](#));

Manual for Local Government: Standards of Freedom of Religion ([2018](#));



Public Events and Meetings

Lectures, trainings and seminars

TDI frequently hosts lectures, educational workshops, seminars, and discussions in Tbilisi and various regions of Georgia with the aim of enhancing civic consciousness of various target audiences, including youth, imparting knowledge about integration, tolerance, and human rights.

International Day for Tolerance

Annually, TDI observes the International Day for Tolerance on November 16 through customary celebrations featuring a range of activities. We organize exhibitions, presentations, online campaigns, and discussions. These events underscore the significance of tolerance and diversity, highlighting the accomplishments and influences of diverse religious and ethnic communities in Georgia's history and culture. Furthermore, we advocate for the perspectives of Georgian authors and both religious and secular figures on matters of equality, tolerance, and cultural diversity.



Meetings, round tables and discussions

In the pursuit of safeguarding and promoting freedom of religion or belief, as well as the rights of religious and ethnic minorities and migrants, TDI routinely organizes a variety of closed and public discussions, round-table events, and workshops in both Tbilisi and the regions. These activities often attract participation from state agency officials, civil servants (including those at the local level), members of political parties, media professionals, representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals from religious and ethnic community organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

TDI's Partners and Donors

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

The European Endowment for Democracy (EED)

Embassy of the Netherlands in Georgia

East-West Management Institute (EWMI)

United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG)

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR), University of Oslo

Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)

Council of Europe (CoE)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Coalition Memberships

TDI actively cooperates with local human rights coalitions and platforms. We are a member of:

Coalition for Equality

No To Phobia!

Information Integrity Coalition

Coalition for an Independent and Transparent Judiciary

