

International Monitoring Group
REPORT
on



THE CONDITIONS OF THE CIVIL POPULATION
DURING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN
the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and GEORGIA

September 2008

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1. Introduction

FLARE Network sent a monitoring mission to Georgia in order to understand what are the conditions of the civil population and displaced persons in the northern part of the country, especially in the break-away territories of South Ossetia. From 25 to 27 of August an independent observatory mission of the civil society made of Italian, Russian, Georgian and Ukrainian NGOs, sent by the European network against organized crime visited the areas where the situation is most critical. Due to the recent armed conflict between Georgia and Russian Federation, and due to the limited amount of information concerning the conditions of the civil population, FLARE Network (Freedom Legality and Rights in Europe) formed a delegation composed by

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Eka Gvalia – Cultural Humanitarian Center for Abkhazia, Georgia

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The monitoring mission involved eight organizations and was aimed at seeking independent information upon the conditions of the local population in Georgia. Additionally, the mid-term objective was to attempt to establish dialogue between Russian and Georgian civil societies in order to go over the conflict, given also the unique representation in the delegation of – amongst others – Russian and Georgian persons.

Unfortunately, data about the conflict still are uncertain. Mr. Sozar Subari, Ombudsman of Georgia (www.ombudsman.ge), met on August 26 by the Monitoring group, said that up till now there are about 250 Georgian soldiers killed, 69 victims among the population, 9 Georgian prisoners and about 100 civilians in Ossetian hands, plus an undefined number of people missing. These data, that obviously change every day, seem to be extremely under dimensioned if compared to the testimonies heard by the monitoring group and, above all, to information from the sources of the Public Movement Multinational Georgia.

We want to underline that the Monitoring group was not able to access the territory of South Ossetia, which is now under control of the administration of Eduard Kokoity, as well as those territories of Georgia that are controlled by the Russian Federation military forces and accessed from time to time by Ossetian militia. On August 27 the Monitoring group made an attempt to get there. However, it failed, because it was not granted access even through the road-block of the Russian military forces in the Karaleti Village. However, we have a commitment towards visiting Tskhinvali and adjoining villages no later than at the end of September 2008 in order to explore



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humanitarian conditions, to check the information that comes from there, as well as to combat any unfair information and propaganda disseminated by different political forces in different countries.

Mission is not making any political conclusions or those related to the activities of any kind of military forces, except those directed against civil population. Our primary goal was to explore how the civil population can be assisted immediately and in the nearest future.



2. Chronology of the visit

25th August

- working meeting with the representatives of the Cultural and Political Center of Abkhazia;
- meeting with representatives of the Ossetian community of Georgia - journalists and public acitivists - Nino Popiahsvili and Naira Bepieva (Public Broadcaster TV and Radio representatives);
- working meeting with the representatives of the Public Movement Multinational Georgia.

26th August

- visit to the collective centers and interviewing of the displaced persons from the Eredvi, Tamarasheni, Zemo Achabeti and other villages of South Ossetia and Gori District;
- meeting with the Ombudsman of Georgia Sozar Subari and Head of the Civil Integration Department of the Ombudsman's Office Beka Mendingishvili;
- meeting with the residents of the suffered villages of the Gori region (Pkhvenisi, Nikozi, Megrevkisi) organized by Megi Bibiluri (NGO "Bridge of Friendship-"Kartlosi").

27th August

- visit to Gori (overview of the destructions in the city; visiting of the IDPs tent camp; meeting with representatives of the UNHCR and Red Cross; visiting of the Russian "Peacekeeping" Forces block-post near village Karaleti).

28th August

- meeting with the representatives of the Georgian National Committee of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Mamuka Gachechiladze and Georgian Mine Action Center Giorgi Lekishvili;
- meeting with the hostages released from Tskhinvali;
- press-event.

3. Findings

3.1. Conditions of the displaced persons

a. General outline of the situation

Forcedly displaced persons are allocated by the Georgian authorities into civil units of social purpose. The monitoring group visited three places of allocation of forcedly displaced persons in Tbilisi (e.g. building of the military hospital, school # 11, kindergarten # 56, tents camps in Tbilisi and Gori). Conditions of allocations are different.

Thus, e.g., around 900 people are placed in the military hospital building, constant medical aid stations are organized and the doctors take their duty shifts. At the same time, shortage of sleeping berths and stationary cooking places is obvious.

Civil organizations conduct monitoring of the needs of the forcedly displaced persons and try to react to the most acute of them. Despite the effort of the government and civil organizations, it is difficult to assert (at the moment of the monitoring visit) on the existence of an adjusted system to assess the needs of forcedly displaced persons, or of a well-conducted coordination of assistance activities, and we can still state that the humanitarian missions are present insufficiently.

A number of allocation places for forcedly displaced persons is situated in the social units that ought to be used according to their primary purpose (namely, school # 11, etc.), which means that within upcoming days the people should be placed into other facilities. One of the presupposed facilities is a tent camp in Gori.

Several estimations cause clear signs of apprehension regarding allocating to the camp persons who lost their houses, since it is very difficult to predict how the question of their future accommodation will be solved. The office of the Ombudsman conducts independent monitoring of the situation with temporarily displaced persons, and the data included into it is reliable. The Ombudsman also conducts explanatory work that is directed towards protection of the refugees' interests.

Representatives of the Cultural and Political Center of Abkhazia claim the official data given by the government are sufficiently reliable. The Georgian Minister of refugees and accommodation (www.mra.gov.ge) says there are over 160.000 refugees. Of these, about 27.000 are from villages in South Ossetia, 3.500 from Kodori area (Abkhazia) and the rest from Gori. It seems however that houses in Gori have not been damaged heavily, whereas the villages around the city have been completely smashed down. Therefore, the refugees from Gori might be able to go back to their houses soon, whereas those from the neighboring villages do not have a house anymore.

Concerning the refugees from South Ossetia and from Abkhazia, it seems they do not have a chance at all to go back to their houses neither in a short- nor in a long-term period of time: their territories have been completely “evacuated” and have been gone under the control of the two self-proclaimed republics: to return home is a vain hope for them.

Representatives of the Cultural and Political Center of Abkhazia say the refugees’ situation is truly dramatic. In Tbilisi for instance there are only 641 locations available for them (schools and kindergardens, more often tents) where hygienic conditions are terrible.

b. Conditions of the IDPs in Tbilisi and other cities

In Tbilisi the Monitoring group visited the following sites:

* A former military hospital, now hosting 1.500 refugees, with 30 babies, 200 children and 300 under the age of 18. The building was long abandoned, now it is open again due to the emergency. Refugees here live in a literally dramatic situation: there is a lack of all basic services, there is one restroom for every 150 people and there are no showers. Several NGOs and the CHCA (affiliated with FLARE) do their best especially about hygienic and medical matters.

* School No.11, hosting 260 persons, among which there are 4 newborn babies, 21 children under 10 and 27 other minors. The structure, being an open school, is good, the teachers are working really much with the NGOs, but the people have no beds and must sleep on the ground. Besides, in the latest days food was missing. It is feared that soon they will have to leave the school and be transferred to the tent cities in Gori.

* The nursery school attached to the school No. 11, hosting about 160 more persons, in a situation very close to that of the school.

Representative of the Cultural and Political Center of Abkhazia also says humanitarian aid is already entering the country but is not adequately organized as it is not an homogeneous distribution of assistance: many refugees do not – for instance – receive any assistance at all. On the other side, very efficient seems to be the support given by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), which has created special commissions for primary needs (water, food, medicine etc.) in tight collaboration with local NGOs. Eka Gvalia is also noticing a sort of tendency by the Georgian government to push refugees to return home, more for strategic – it seems – rather than for humanitarian reasons. Eka’s feeling is that the government is not doing everything in their power to ease the situation, in a way maybe that the humanitarian dimension of the matter is used as propaganda for the conflict.

As for now, thanks to the help of the International Rescue Committee and of the Dutch Refugees Foundation, CHCA is assisting nearly 2.000 families. The assistance given is mainly psychological and medical. They will soon distribute over 2.000 hygienic kits consisting of detergents, soaps and more. In the coming days, over 1.000 families will be given a minimum monetary help of about 100 Lari (50 Euro). This kind of support is given starting from the most urgent cases, therefore primarily for disabled people, elderly, and families with more than 3 children. In a mid-term period, they are

thinking of opening 15 centres for medical and psychological assistance: 10 in Tbilisi, 3 in Gori and 2 in Kutaisi.

Eka, Nucri and Tea cannot explain the reasons why the conflict flared. They do know however that the population has been completely taken unprepared and unaware. Now the situation relatively improved but in the past days they all have thought the worst, fearing that the capital Tbilisi would be bombed too. According to Eka, the international presence and the support given by the European Union has been crucial for the situation not to collapse. Eka is clearly worried about the aid to Georgia from the USA and Germany (respectively, 1 billion \$ and 1 million €). She fears that the Georgian government will use these resources to rebuild the infrastructure and the military, leaving refugees and civilians empty-handed.

The Monitoring group collected lots of data, especially thanks to direct testimonies from Georgian refugees evacuated from the villages in South Ossetia, nearby Tishanvali and north of Gori. Through such testimonies, the reasons for such a high number of refugees become clear. What also emerged distinctly is that whereas refugees from Gori are now returning to their houses, for those coming from territories under Russian control it is now impossible to go back, mostly because in fact the conflict is not over yet. According to the Ombudsman, there are about 40.000 of them: 25.000 from the villages in South Ossetia, 3.500 from Abkhazia and over 10.000 from the villages north of Gori.

c. Visit to the city of Gori

On August 27 the Monitoring group visited Gori and its surrounding area. The intention was to verify the damage in the town, to check the information received from some refugees on August 26 and also to visit the villages north of Gori and try to reach Tskhinvali.

We could visit Gori, accompanied by a representative of the local authority, who showed us the damage due to the bombings.

The general sensation is that, in contradiction to the declarations by the Georgian officials talking about the complete destruction of the town, the town does not seem to be seriously damaged.

However, during the visit to the IDP camp it was possible to state that civil objectives have been attacked, and restricted weapons were used, namely cluster bombs.

As of August 27, 2008 the camp was being actively equipped with tents. However, the infrastructure vitally important for the life sustenance was completely absent. According to a number of statements, most of the temporarily displaced people will be allocated to the above-mentioned camp in the nearest future.

Several sources during the previous days had expressed concerns that the Georgian government has an intention of moving to the Gori area all the refugees who could not go back to their places (that is 40,000 persons as estimated by the Ombudsman). Both the FLARE partner CHCA and the Ombudsman himself confirmed this.

Such strategy, responding to strategic and communication exigencies of the Tbilisi government rather than to the real needs, was opposed by the Georgian NGOs the Monitoring group has been in contact with. Gori is a town with 50,000 inhabitants, and it would be literally invaded by refugees.

From the visit to one of the first 4 tent cities being set up, one can conclude that the living standards are very low. The tent city is mounted in an area obtained from a sand playground, with the tents mounted directly on the sand. In this phase it is still impossible to say what services will be granted. We had a chance to speak with Alessandra Morelli, responsible of the UNHCR Georgia emergency mission, who we exchanged information with, especially concerning the villages north of Gori and the possible arrival of new refugees from that area. She confirmed that during the latest 2 days numerous people arrived from the areas south of Tskhinvali, which they had fled due to forced displacements and plundering.

The current plans envisage the preparation of as many as 4,000 beds in tents, and later of equipped spaces. From a conversation with representatives of the Italian Red Cross, it came out that their role is to provide food to the refugees. For this reason, 2 field kitchens are arriving from Italy, able to prepare up to 10,000 meals a day. Their presence is planned for the next 6 months. This leads to suppose it will not be possible to overcome the emergency situation before then, and therefore the refugees hosted there will have to spend winter in tents in unpredictable conditions.

3.2. Conditions of the civil population from the Georgian villages of the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) and Gori district

a. General outline of the situation

Population of the South Ossetia is not ethnically homogeneous. There are Ossetian villages, Georgian villages and villages with the mixed composition of the residents. Georgian villages are located to the South of Tskhinvali, closer to Gori and out of the territory controlled by the administration of the Eduard Kokoity. However, some of them are considered to be part of the conflict region. The population of these villages is considered to be a part of the South Ossetian community divided by the violent conflict in the early 90s.

During the current military conflict, following the retreat of Georgian armed forces towards Tbilisi, Georgian villages included in the conflict zone defined by the Joint Control ComMonitoring group and Georgian villages included in the buffer zone marked by the Russian Military forces (*as shown on the Chart 1*) have been left under control of the Ossetian militia and the Russian military forces. The Russian military forces undertake responsibility to provide public order and security in the zones under their control.

The Georgian police and public authorities do not have access to the mentioned zones in the extent necessary for the provision of the public order and administration of justice.

Within the zone of conflict, entire villages of Eredvi, Avnevi, Nuli, Kurta, Achabeti, Tamarasheni, Kekhvi, Disevi have been deliberately burned and destroyed. Some of the villages such as Patara

Liakhvi and Didi Liakhvi, Pkhvenisi, Nikozi, Megrevkisi have also been accessed by the groupings of the Ossetian militia, according to the reports by the local residents.

Part of the villages in the area have also been subjected to bombings on August 8-10 (Eredvi, Kurta, Achabeti, Tamarasheni, Kekhvi, Tkviavi, Patara Liakhvi and Didi Liakhvi, Pkhvenisi, Nikozi).

More than 27 000 thousands of the residents of the given villages are now displaced¹. Many of them lost their houses and other ownership and are not able to return to the places of their residence. Most of them are concentrated in the tent camps in the city of Gori (*for more information please check the Section “Conditions of the displaced persons”*)

b. Displacements and repeated displacements

Forcedly displaced persons – children, women, men – cover all age groups, from toddlers to the elderly. One should understand that people displaced from the Gori region are village inhabitants oriented towards agricultural lifestyle. Farm work is the basic (and often the only) source of income of the prevailing majority of forcedly displaced persons. The present time is a traditional period of harvest. Thus, the people are giving evidence that they are left without means of subsistence as a result of being divested the possibility to stay in their residence areas.

People’s concern is further aggravated by the information about the robbery of agricultural equipment, cattle and household items. People point out cases of purposeful arson of two wheat fields and a forest.

Prevailing majority of the interviewed temporarily displaced persons are looking forward to the possibility to go back to their normal way of life: their villages, abandoned houses, in spite of the possibility of their destruction.

c. Cases of looting and evidence of the ethnic cleansing

Besides, temporarily displaced persons reported that formally they can go back, and some of them actually do so, but the overall atmosphere was contaminated by fear caused by the cases of marauding, use of physical violence, cases of assault on civilians, arson of the houses, and cases of missing persons. There have been occasions when adult men, having made attempts to go back to the abandoned houses, were returning to the places of temporarily stay and ascertaining the fact of utmost danger preventing from staying in the villages.

Civil population reportedly states that the main obstacle for the return of people is their apprehension for personal security that people connect to:

- the possibility of resumption of hostilities on the mentioned territories;
- the “raids of the Ossetian citizen soldiers” that are not suppressed by the Russian military;
- absence of law and order bodies responsible for security of the population and their belongings.

¹ Meeting with the Ombudsman of Georgia, Sozar Subari on 26th of August 2008.

According to numerous statements made by civilians, the sign and a precondition of their return to the deserted places of living will be “withdrawal” of the Russian military from the mentioned territories.

Before the war, **Megi Bibiluri** used to work for a NGO called “Bridge of Friendship” that operated locally attempting to promote dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian villages. Their work was supported by numerous mixed families in the region. According to Megi, the situation before the conflict was peaceful and critical episodes among the population occurred rarely. «Unfortunately – said Megi – South Ossetian militia continuously provoked Georgian villages by means of small thefts, random attacks and short kidnappings». In Tbilisi, the Monitoring group met four other witnesses who all come from the villages south of Tskhinvali in the region of Gori (therefore outside of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia): Niqosi, Pkhvenisi, Shindisi, Megrevkisi, Mereti, Achabeti.

In some of the above-mentioned villages, Megi says violence continues today. Her father remained in the village and through him she understood that two days ago Russian army abandoned the little town and retreated to its outskirts, leaving free way to Ossetian militia who began to rob the houses and to burn them down thereafter. The name of the village is **Megrevkisi**. No inhabitants are left there at the moment. Few days before Russian army entered Mjurekisi, **Zauri Edishivashili** was arrested and taken to Tishanvali where he was forced to work removing rubbles and cleaning the town. On August 25th he was released and now he is in Cazxepi village.

In a village nearby **Pkhvenisi** the situation is very similar. Given the proximity of the village to Georgian troops, Pkhenisi was bombed for 3 days (9, 10, 11 of August). During the bombing, according to Megi many were the victims among civilians but neither Megi nor other refugees can put a number to them. On 11 and 12 of August the villages were again taken by the Russian troops, that set up their military stations. On August 25th, the military moved out of the village allowing Ossetian militia to occupy it. Squads of unarmed women were with them: as the troops were checking 25 inhabitants left in town – beating them and also killing in cold-blood **Amiran Razmadze** and badly hurting his wife **Nunu Chkhaidze** – those women would systematically sack all houses. After the operation was over, house would be burnt down. One civilian is still there – **Givi Ilariani** – too deeply wounded to evacuate the village.

Bejani Khikhoshvili and **Leo Gulo** are stuck in **Achabeti** village too, too old to escape. From the nearby village of Mereti, earlier that day a group of civilians tried to escape heading to Gori. The bus they were on was pulled over (it is not clear whether by Russian soldiers or Ossetian militia), passengers got off the bus, six men were taken to Tskhinvali and arrested. The only woman there was beaten up and later released, therefore becoming the only eye-witness.

Very interesting was also the testimony from a woman together with Megi. She had come from **Niqosi** village, south of Tskhinvali. Through her deposition it was possible to understand the dynamics that brought to such escalation of the conflict.

She says violence began on the night of August 4th. Some artillery shots were fired from Tskhinvali reaching Niqosi village, without – however – causing any damage or victim. This happened

between 5 and 5:30am. She cannot say whether those were the only episodes of violence, but she did eye-witness them. The day after, many bursts of machine guns were fired in both directions, day and night. On August 6th, the Georgian army entered Niqosi villages with several heavy weaponry and vehicles and began its attack on Tskhinvali.

On August 8th, Russian aircrafts began to fly over the city and from the day after they started bombing Georgian army positions heavily, also in Niqosi village. Later, the village was considered a “strategic spot” by the Russian army, therefore partially safeguarded. But only until August 24th, when Russian troops began making use of alcohol and violence. Yet, the refugee from Niqosi clearly could not explain herself how all this could have happened. She kept on saying nobody would have ever expected something like this to happen.

Very similar but from a completely different territory are the stories the Monitoring group was told in 3 of about 640 camps where refugees were hosted in Tbilisi.

All the refugees the delegation met in these places come from the Georgian villages in the South Ossetian territory, especially north of Tskhinvali. Between these, particularly significant and complete were the testimonies from the Eredvi village, a large village that counted about 300 families and over 1,000 inhabitants before the war, with more than 70% mixed – Georgian / South Ossetian – families.

Starting from August 7th, a Georgian army contingent installed itself in the city. It was then heavily bombed starting from August 9th, first by the Russian air force, and later also by the Russian artillery by then established in the area. Clearly, the civilians, sheltered in their houses, shared the same fate.

On August 11th the Georgian contingent withdrew, bringing part of the civilian population with them.

On August 12th, the Russian troops entered the city along with Ossetian militia and unidentified Cossack and Tchechen units. This is what told by the elder **Zuzuna Vaktangashili**, who, chased away from her house, saw it first plundered and then demolished in front of her. Zuzuna, about 70 years old, hid in the woods nearby, going back to her house seeking for warm clothes. Since then, for her an endless calvary began, as Zuzuna wandered by foot for 9 days before finally reaching Gori, from where she was transported to Tbilisi.

A similar story was lived by another elder woman, **Nora Hidashvili**, who ran away together with her husband **Laurenti Kalashenti** on August 15th, hoping to be able to save her house and her belongings. Nora says it took the occupants several days to finish with the plundering and destruction of all the houses, and when she was forced to leave, it was still going on. Nora saw the Ossetian militia killing in cold blood some persons who were trying to defend their houses; **Maisuradze Jumberi** (40), **Nikla Beruashvili** (70) and **Tengizi Tarelashvili** and his wife (both around 50). Nora was helped in her flee by a Russian military convoy that transported her to Gori.

The last to leave the village was **Sardion Pervuashvili**, who fled for the first time on August 12th when the Russian troops entered it; he went back there on August 15th in order to find out what had

been of his house and to take care of his animals; he lived almost alone in Eredvi until August 21st, when – during the nth plundering by the Ossetian militia – he was found, deprived of his animals and forced to leave. He said that on the same day two young people were found in a nearby house: **Gia Cherkezishvili** (25) and **Vaso Gochashvili**. The latter was sick and for this reason he had not been able to leave the village. The two were violently beaten – such that they were not able to walk after – and brought somewhere else. Sardion said he was afraid they had been killed. He insists in telling about how the plundering happen in the presence of irregular troops, and says he could tell by their language they were, besides Ossetians, also Tchechens and Cossacks. He defined the latter particularly interested only in the booty.

As much dramatic is the story of an Ossetian refugee, **Lika**, who begs not to reveal her family name as she fears reprisal. By pure chance, instead of fleeing toward Vladikavkaz she fled with a group of Georgians toward Tbilisi. She said that in her village, Beloti, the regular Russian troops arrived on August 11th, but they did not stop to guard the village. It was occupied right away by militia, arriving on any kind of vehicles: cars, trucks, SUVs. She swears she saw among them some Cossacks. Those stole all her belongings from her, in spite of her attempt to get by thanks to her Ossetian nationality.

Another interesting story, between many others, is that of 2 mixed – Georgian and Ossetian – families from the **Satzaneti** village. **Nazi Kepashileva**, Ossetian, and her husband **Vakhtangi**, lived with **Jumberi** – Vactangi's brother – and **Julia Kepashiliva**, also Ossetian. On August 8th, when the war had started, an acquaintance of them, an Ossetian soldier, came from the nearby village of Tmenisi and tried to kill Vakhtangi in an attempt to steal his car. They were all forced to flee, leaving everything, in order to escape certain death. They still cannot understand how such a thing could happen.

d. Access to the Information and Assistance

Access to information about the conditions of people who stayed in their residence areas is highly complicated. In many cases people try to find out information themselves and transmit it “by word of mouth”. We did not come across sources of systematic and centralized information. There are reports about bad health conditions of individuals and lack of possibilities to use medical aid. Particular tension is caused by cases when there is no connection with the people who stayed in their residences.

The interviewed state that humanitarian aid does not reach these territories.

e. Russian military forces

On August 27 a monitoring group made an unassisted attempt to get to the mentioned territories by passing through a roadblock of the Russian military in the village of Karaleti. We were denied the right to move over the territory of the roadblock.

We certify that there is no clear procedure and rules that would ensure access to the territories. We could not get an answer to the question about the procedure and the documents needed to get the



permission to move around the mentioned territories. Taking photos and videos was not allowed, filming was offered to be made at the territory 100 meters away from the territory of the roadblock.

Apart from this it should be mentioned that the Monitoring group saw cases of unimpeded crossing of the roadblock by the representatives of other monitoring groups. This leads us to the conclusion that decision-making each time is made self-reliantly within the framework of the hierarchy of the people who make decisions and are on duty at the roadblock at each given moment.

Together with this we could observe movement of civil persons through the roadblock. These relocations are not approached in a unified way (e.g. on the presence of a special document, upon showing a passport). There is an impression that the roadblocks do not create substantial barriers for the movement of the local population. The soldiers at the roadblock act according to their own discretion and if they have no doubts that those are local inhabitants who are moving across, they allow them to come through. Moving vehicles are selectively visually examined. The group witnessed a movement of an emergency rescue automobile through the roadblock after the inspection of the ID papers.

At the same time the monitoring group witnessed a denial of crossing of the roadblock for the special representatives of OSCE who then had to leave the territory of the roadblock. Besides, the coordinator of the UNHCR emergency Monitoring group said that even their personnel and vehicles were denied access, and the only ones who could pass so far – and in exceptional cases only – were the Red Cross transports.

According to the evidence received, Russian military personnel do not conduct systematic patrolling of the roadblock territories. After the conversation with the military on the roadblock it became obvious that they don't have objectives to protect the civil population nor their belongings. This question surprised them and caused incomprehension.

3.3. Threat of interethnic confrontation

a. General outline of the situation

Georgia is the most multi-ethnic country in the South Caucasus and as such has had to face a more complex situation in regards to ethnic minorities on its territory. In Georgia, according to the 2002 census, minorities make up 16% of the population (as opposed to one third in 1989). The main ethnic groups are: Azeris (284,000 today, compared with 308,000 in 1989); Armenians (249,000 today, compared with 437,000 in 1989); Russians (68,000, compared with 341,000 in 1989); Ukrainians (7,000, compared with 52,000 in 1989); Greeks (15,000, compared with 100,000 in 1989). Since 1997, however, ethnic group is no longer recorded on identity cards.

The main gaps with regard to the minority policy in Georgia bringing isolation and marginalization of the minority communities are:

- Absence of the comprehensive policy approach to the minority issue and consequently absence of adequate legal frameworks ensuring minority participation and civil integration;



- Solid lack of political representation of minorities on national and to some extent on local levels;
- Lack of the appropriate skills and capacities of those representatives of the ethnic minority groups who have been elected to the local self-government bodies necessary for the adequate fulfillment of their powers and representation of the ethnic minorities within local self-government authorities;
- Lack of culture of political participation and extremely low level of legal literacy among representatives of minority groups;
- Informational vacuum in the areas of the compact settlement and lack of attention to the problems of minorities leading to isolation of minority groups from the society;
- Previous one-sided language policies which contributed to the lack of knowledge of the official state language by ethnic minorities and thus to the isolation, employment problems and inadequate law enforcement.

Mentioned trends might become especially dangerous right after the cease of the violent conflict, which caused feelings of confrontation and deep stress among citizens of Georgia.

b. Proliferation of the hate speech and actions

Conflict situation gave birth to the wide proliferation of the hate speech, war propaganda and unbalanced coverage of the situation by both sides. Coverage was all the time accompanied by the underlining of the ethnicity, e.g. “Georgian fascists”, “Russian aggressors”, “Ossetian marauders”. According to the monitoring of the Public Movement “Multinational Georgia” the most unbalanced information has been produced by the following mass-media entities:

Internet mass-media

- www.lenta.ru (RF)
- www.nr2.ru (RF)
- www.regnum.ru (RF)
- www.interfax.ru (RF)
- www.apsny.ge (Georgia)
- www.newsgeorgia.ru (Georgia)
- www.osinform.ru (South Ossetia)
- www.rosbalt.ru (RF)

Other print and electronic mass-media

- ORT-TV Broadcaster (RF)
- TV Broadcaster “Vesti”(RF)
- Newspaper “Izvestia” (RF)
- Newspaper “Komsomolskaya Pravda” (RF)
- Newspaper “Asaval-dasavali” (Georgia)

Certain mass-media entities from time to time apply hate speech formulations, among which TV Channels “Rustavi-2” and Public Broadcaster of Georgia (Georgia), newspaper “Kommersant”



(RF), newspaper “Podrobnosti” (RF), newspaper “24 hours” (Georgia), news agencies “RIA Novosti” (RF) and “Interessenews” (Georgia).

In accordance with monitoring many politics and public figures were using hate speech and war propaganda in their speeches, including rude and offensive formulations. One of such cases is the statement of Irina Gagloeva, Ossetian Administration spokesperson, who accused Georgians in “ritual killings of Ossetians”. Both sides were inclined to such kind of statements.

In Georgia the public campaign “Stop Russia” based on the ethnic intolerance has been launched and carried out, allegedly supported by the government. Please see campaign materials in the Annexes to this report.

One of the cases of concern is also demonstration of the offensive video clip “Russia-2008” at the Georgian TV Channel “Rustavi-2”. Given video was aimed at criticizing the current Russian political regime, however contained formulation which might be perceived as offensive to all Russian people. It caused immediate reaction of the Ombudsman of Georgia and of the Public Movement Multinational Georgia, that called upon immediate halt to demonstration of this video clip on TV.

Mutual accusation in the ethnic cleansing also contributed to the proliferation of hate speech and actions.

c. Potential aggression towards certain ethnic groups

After the conflict certain trends appear, showing that in the country there is a certain amount of the aggression and confrontation potential between different ethnic groups. E.g. according to the data of the Ministry of Interior (**Ekaterina Zgidadze and Natia Gazava**) and according to the monitoring conducted by the Public Movement “Multinational Georgia” there are three cases of the violence on the basis of the interethnic hatred since 15th of August observed in Tbilisi, including one attack on the shop, one beating and one word offence, all these actions allegedly have been accompanied by the mentioning of the “Russian ethnic origin” of the victim in offensive way. However these facts are now being checked by the MIA and NGOs.

According to **Naira Bepieva**, representative of the Ossetian Community of Georgia and journalist, some cases of threats and aggression towards Ossetians residing in Kakheti region were reported.

According to **Eka Skhiladze**, resident of the city of Borjomi and grass-root public activist, there were also permanent rumors (in her view disseminated on purpose), according to which local Ossetians during the military confrontation helped to set on fire the Borjomi National Park.

However these trends didn't not become major yet and there is time for effective prevention and combating of the unfair propaganda describing that Russians and Ossetians, as well as other ethnic minorities, as endangered in Georgia.

However, this propaganda - in line with the cases of aggression towards persons of Georgian ethnic origin in Russia (case of the Movement Against Illegal Migration calling upon deportation and physical violence against Georgians; cases of violence towards Georgians in Moscow, Nizhniy Novgorod and St-Petersburg) - might further promote interethnic confrontation.

d. Regions with the compact settlement of the ethnic minorities

In Georgia there are regions with compact settlements of ethnic minorities, e.g. Samtskhe-Javakheti region with the compact settlement of ethnic Armenians.

In relation to this region, certain mass-media, such as Regnum and Georgia On-line on August 19 have published materials describing separatist attempts conducted by the radical groups in the region. Only timely reaction of the civil society and of the regional community has helped to prevent this provocation and a possible outburst of interethnic confrontation, which could be easily promoted by manipulations with information and public consciousness.

4. Recommendations

Among main recommendations formulated by the International Monitoring group, in accordance with the main directions described in the report above, are as following:

- To ensure intensive presence of humanitarian and other responsible international organizations on the whole territory, affected by conflict and creation of the possibilities and mechanisms monitoring the conditions of civil population, which will unite local and international subjects.
- To provide for sufficient presence of the representatives of humanitarian missions delivering humanitarian aid and support to the all parts of the zone affected by conflict
- To create system of monitoring of the ownership of the displaced persons and promote safety of their property, where it is still exists
- To improve the level of information exchange and coordination of humanitarian organizations in order to minimize the negative outcomes, as well as to create system for the monitoring of needs of people who are left on the territories, where violence towards civilians is reported because of their age, health conditions or other reasons, in order to ensure their safety and humanitarian needs
- To ensure participation of the displaced persons in the taking of decisions about their destiny
- To guarantee observance of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
- To ensure access of the Georgian police and other responsible bodies to the territories controlled by the Russian Military Forces (if Russian military presence still kept) in order to guarantee public order and prevent looting and violence against civilians in line with creation of the clear and open mechanism for receiving of permissions for access to this zones for the international and national civil society organizations for monitoring purposes;
- To promote exchange of information on prisoners of war and those kidnapped in the conflict area, facilitated by all three sides of the conflict, in line with prevention of the new cases of kidnapping, responsibility for later should be shared by the Georgian law enforcement and Russian Military Forces in the areas of their control (if Russian military presence still kept)
- To support organization of the international humanitarian mission and creation of the special working group consisting of the human rights protection activists, representatives of the international networks and organizations, which will provide for the independent analysis of the situation, help to eliminate concrete human rights violations and will act as a guarantee within the process of the conflict resolution, stopping of violence and rehabilitation of those



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who suffered, as well as provide evaluation of the situation in accordance to the international law.

- To support strong informational campaigns both in Russian Federation and Georgia aimed at the elimination of the hate speech, war propaganda and enemy image and dissemination of the fair and balanced information about the conflict
- To promote creation in both Russian Federation and Georgia of the coordination bodies consisting of the both civil society based and government based stakeholders responsible for the monitoring and prevention of the hate crimes and hate speech
- To support contacts between civil societies of Russian Federation and Georgia as a potential resource for the peaceful resolution of the conflict.



About the Monitoring group

ABOUT FLARE Network

FLARE - Freedom, Legality And Rights in Europe - is a network made of civil society organizations for a common struggle against mafias and transnational organized crime. Those who adhere to the FLARE Programme are associations for youth promotion and non-governmental organizations whose members' age ranges between 18 and 35. They are ideally active in fields such as youth promotion, fight against women and child sexual exploitation, environmental protection, human rights defence, fight against corruption, support to migrants and refugees. Such organizations come from the areas of Europe, Mediterranean basin, Russian Federation, Caucasus and Balkans. For more info, visit www.flarenetwork.org.

ABOUT ORGANISATIONS, that joined the Monitoring group

PUBLIC MOVEMENT “MULTINATIONAL GEORGIA”, Georgia

Public Movement “Multinational Georgia” (PMMG) – civil movement which has been created in 1999, uniting citizens of Georgia representing different ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups residing in Georgia. PMMG – is umbrella organization which provides resource support and cooperates with the representatives of more than 18 diaspora and 56 grass-root NGOs working in the field protection of rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups residing in Georgia.

www.pmmg.org.ge

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, Russian section

Youth Human Rights Movement, established in 1998, is a community of people from different countries, for whom Human Rights and Human Dignity are crucial values, who are united in a Network to defend and promote these values and support each other, to share ideas and to arrange joint actions in order to form a new generation of human rights activists. The International Network – Youth Human Rights Movement brings together several thousand young activists from over 30 countries.

www.yhrm.org

FOUNDATION FOR LEGAL TECHNOLOGIES DEVELOPMENT, Belarus

Foundation for Legal Technologies Development is a group of professionals who in a joint effort and applying juristic, research and education methods ensure free realization and effective protection of human rights and basic freedoms.

Organization has started its activities in 1996. After several attempts to liquidation of the organization by the Belarusian government, the organization was registered on the territory of Ukraine. The FLTD is the successor of the program activities of the public association Independent Society of Legal Research and Innovation Foundation for Legal Technologies.

www.lawtrend.org



Annexes

Chart 1 South Ossetia and Shida-Kartli region of Georgia

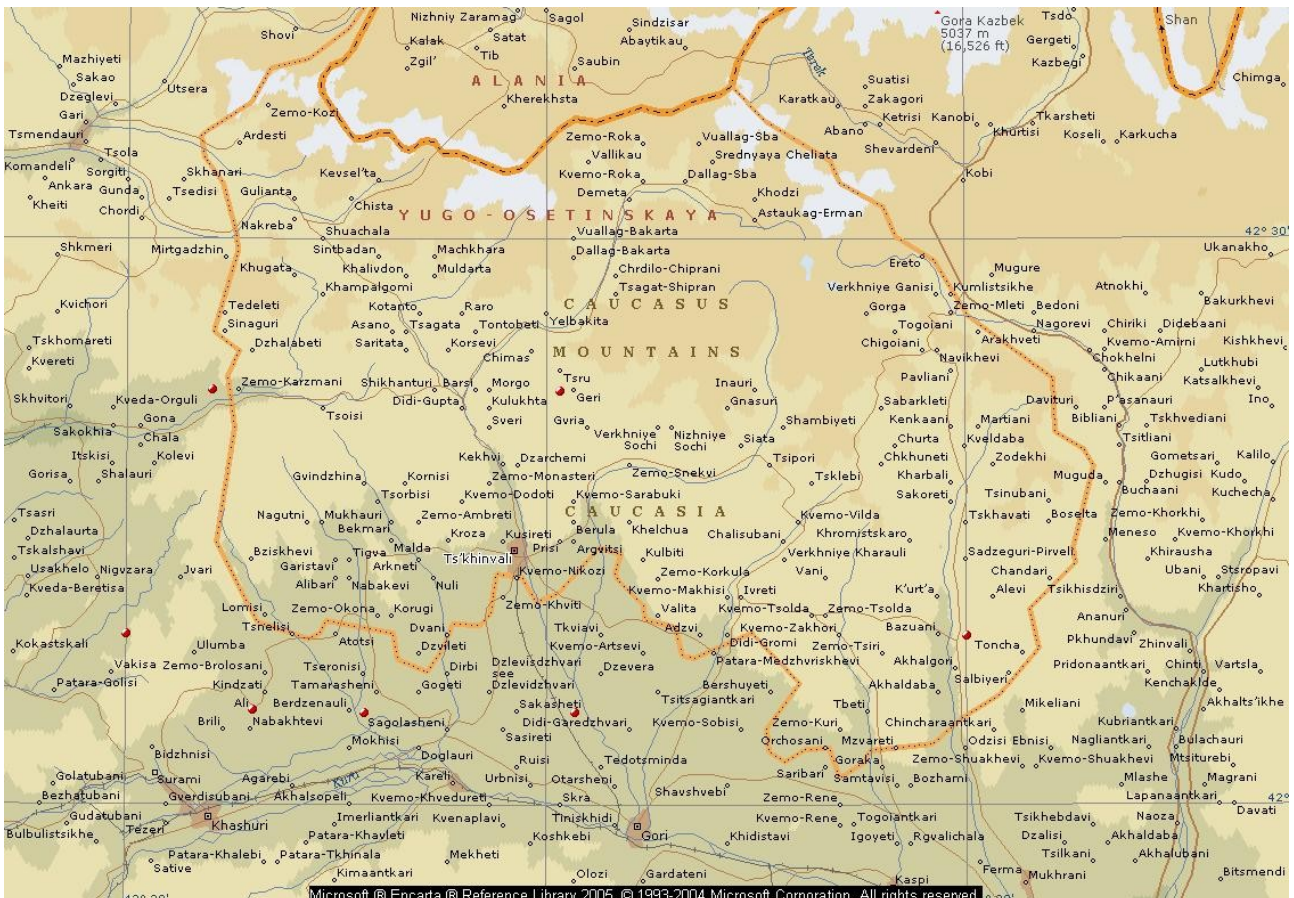
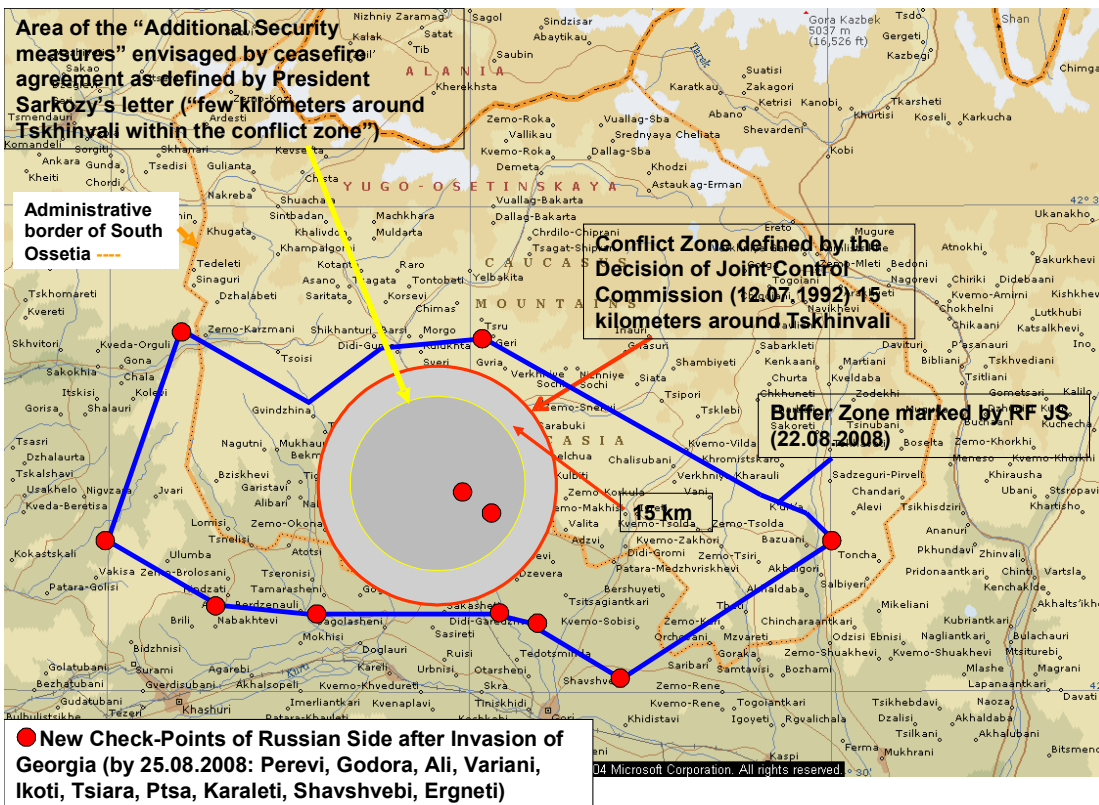


Chart 2 Control of the territories of South Ossetia and Gori district as to 28th of August

Source: Ministry for the Foreign Affairs of Georgia



Document

Description of the usage of the different kind of weapons in course of the conflict, including against civilian population

During the military conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia the following facts took place:

- The Russian Federation’s nationwide bombing campaign included the use of SS-26 "Iskander" short-range tactical missiles used against the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline. Russian forces also used short-range tactical missiles SS-21 "Tochka-U" on the cities of Poti and Gori. In the villages around the town of Gori, Russian forces used "Hurricane" missiles. Cluster bombs were used extensively in Gori and nearby villages, including Ruisi and Shindisi.
- Altogether, Georgia’s sovereign territory was subjected to aerial bombardment 42 times. The areas bombed far exceeded the putative conflict zone of South Ossetia. The bombs and missiles were delivered during up to 158 illegal incursions into Georgia’s airspace, of which 96 are fully confirmed. At least 165 bombs and missiles were used, including cluster bombs and other weapons banned by international agreements. At least three of the attacks directly targeted civilians in civilian areas.

- Bombing runs before ceasefire. The list below indicates the areas bombed, the minimum number of times each was bombed, their distance from the conflict zone and/or Tbilisi, and the date(s) of the attack(s).

Shavshvebi village	1	30 km	08.08.08
Variani village	1	20 km,	08.08.08
Gori	5	17 km	08-10.08.08
Vaziani Airfield	2	2-3 km from Tbilisi	08-09.08.08
Marneuli	3	20 km from Tbilisi	08.08.08
Bolnisi	1	35 km from Tbilisi	08.08.08
Senaki	1	213 km from Tbilisi	09.08.08
Oni	1		09.08.08
Village Urta	1	330 km from Tbilisi	10.08.08
Tbilisi Airplane Factory	2	Tbilisi	09-10.08.08
Knolevi (Kareli district)	1		10.08.08
Urta (Zugdidi district)	1		10.08.08

- Bombing runs after Georgian ceasefire offer

1. Anaklia (Zugdidi district) 10.08.08
2. Settlements near Batumi (Khelvachauri district), close to Turkish border 11.08.08
3. Shiraki airfield (Kakheti region) 11.08.08
4. Gori, twice 11-12.08.08
5. Senaki military airport 11.08.08
6. Kodori gorge, Upper Abkhazia 11.08.08
7. Senaki military base 11.08.08
8. Kere and Sakasheti (Gori district) 11-13.08.08
9. Kaspi (30 km from Tbilisi) 11.08.08
10. Tkhviavi (near Tskhinvali) 11.08.08
11. Vaziani military base (on the outskirts of Tbilisi) 12.08.08
12. Orchosani (Gori district) 12.08.08
13. Sakoritno (Kaspi district) 12.08.08
14. Ruisi village (Kareli district) 12.08.08

- Mines

Roads in the Svaneti Region were mined on 17.08.08. Road bridges on the old Gori road south of Kaspi were mined on the same date.

A landmine blew up a crude oil train 5 km west of Gori on 24 August. Other mines and buried artillery shells were subsequently found at other spots of the tracks.

Landmines and bomblets left by the departing Russian army are targeting civilians. A blast killed a woman in Gori on 24 August and injured a man in Tirdznisi on the same date. Mines of the “frog” type have been found in civilian gardens and orchards in Gori. Representatives of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Georgian National Committee and Mine action Center Georgia also report usage of the antipersonnel mines PM-1 and PM-2. They also report that there are mined agricultural objects in the Gori district and in the Georgian villages of South Ossetia. However it is currently impossible to check later information because of the low access to the conflict zone and even some villages of the Gori district.

- Cluster bombs

The use of cluster bombs against civilian targets has been confirmed by Human Rights Watch. Cluster bombs explode at altitude in order to scatter bomblets over a wide area. Most bomblets explode on impact. The effect of hundreds of bomblets exploding at the same time is to saturate the targeted area with high-speed shrapnel, killing everything alive. Because the bomblets can be scattered over a wide area, these are among the most destructive antipersonnel conventional weapons. Bomblets that fail to explode on impact become landmines.

Sources of information:





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1. Meeting with Mamuka Gachechiladze, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Georgian National Committee on 27th of August 2008 (in Gori) and 28th of August 2008 in Tbilisi.
2. Meeting with Giorgi Lekishvili, Mineaction Center – Georgia on 28th of August 2008.
3. Visit to the city of Gori by the Monitoring group
4. Ministry of Defense of Georgia (press-releases dated by 24th of August 2008, 25th of August, 27th of August 2008)
5. Ministry of Interior of Georgia (answer to the request of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Georgian National Committee dated by 26th of August 2008)

Photomaterials

1. **Conditions of the displaced persons**
2. **Conditions of the civil population**
3. **Block-road in Karaleti village**
4. **Intolerant parts of the campaign “Stop Russia”**



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