

# **Russian Invasion of Georgia**

## **Facts & Figures**

5 December, 2008

Regular updates can be found on the Georgia Update website:

[www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge](http://www.georgiaupdate.gov.ge)

### **CONTENTS**

<b>RUSSIAN ATTACKS: SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CURRENT CIVILIAN, MILITARY AND JOURNALIST CASUALTY FIGURES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THE FACTS ON ETHNIC CLEANSING OF GEORGIANS DURING THE RUSSIAN INVASION AND OCCUPATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>IMPACT ON GEORGIA'S EDUCATION.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>DAMAGE TO CULTURAL HERITAGE .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ATTACK ON BAKU-SUPSA PIPELINE.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>BREACHES BY RUSSIA OF THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT: CHECKPOINTS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>RUSSIAN CYBERWAR ON GEORGIA .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A CREEPING CASE OF ETHNIC CLEANSING: THE SITUATION IN THE GALI DISTRICT OF ABKHAZIA .....</b>	<b>21</b>

## Russian Attacks: Summary

### Air attacks

Georgia's territory was subjected to aerial bombardment over 75 times, with five fully confirmed rocket attacks from the Tochka-U (SS-21) and Iskander-M (SS-26) class of missiles. The bombs and missiles were dropped during at least 84 illegal incursions into Georgia's airspace.

As of 18 September, 255 unexploded aviation bombs were discovered and disposed of. Among them: BTK 500, FAB 500, FAB 1000 and FAB 1500 types of bombs. Some of the bombs exploded deep under the surface, so it is not possible to identify their type. Also, dozens of rockets and missiles were used, including cluster bombs.

The areas bombed far exceeded the putative conflict zone of the region of South Ossetia. Georgia is not a big country – East to West, it measures about 598 km, and North to South 192km. Yet the distance between the two most distant bombing targets was a mere 456 km.

At least 36 areas were bombed, of which 24 are villages (or areas near villages) including those in the Upper Abkhazia, 6 are towns (or areas near towns), one administrative unit (massive attack of the whole territory of Upper Abkhazia) and key elements of the national infrastructure.

Of 12 Georgia's regions nine were bombed:

- Kakheti Region;
- Shida-Kartli Region;
- Kvemo-Kartli Region;
- Samegrelo-Zemo-Svaneti Region;
- Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo-Svaneti Region;
- Imereti Region
- Adjara Autonomous Republic
- Upper Abkhazia
- Tbilisi

### Bombing runs before Georgian ceasefire offer

The list below indicates the areas bombed, and the minimum number of times each was bombed:

#	Area	Name of Area	Number of Bombings Distance from Tskhinvali and Tbilisi (Direct Distance) <sup>1</sup>	Time and Date of Bombing
1	Village	Shavshvebi (Gori District)	2/31/57	09:30-09:44 – 08.08.08 10:29-11:04 – 09.08.08
2	Village	Variani (Kareli District)	1/17/74	10:23-10:43 – 08.08.08
3	Village	Tkviavi (Gori District)	1/12/76	10:50-11:04 – 08.08.08
4	Village	Azhara (Upper Abkhazia)	2/208/295	14:26-14:39 – 09.08.08 06:02-09:15 – 10.08.08
5	Village	Chkhalta (Upper Abkhazia)	5/211/298	14:26-14:39 – 09.08.08 22:20-22:30 – 09.08.08 06:02-09:15 – 10.08.08 12:22-12:26 – 10.08.08 13:51-13:55 – 10.08.08

<sup>1</sup> The distances are approximate

6	Village	Komandeli (Oni District)	1/58/145	16:04-16:14 – 09.08.08
7	Village	Gentsvisi (Upper Abkhazia)	2/200/287	22:20-22:30 – 09.08.08
8	Village	Urta (Zugdidi District)	1/176/255	06:02-09:15 – 10.08.08
9	Village	Tsedisi (Oni District)	1/48/135	11:25-11:27 – 10.08.08
10	Village	Knolevi (Kareli District)	1/17/95	15:09-15:24 – 10.08.08
11	Village	Anaklia (Zugdidi District)	2/197/274	15:40-15:50 – 10.08.08 16:20-16:35 – 10.08.08
12	Village	Omarishara (Upper Abkhazia)	1/200/287	14:03-14:11 – 09.08.08
13	Gorge	Jechora (Oni District)	3/53/141	17:39-17:50 – 09.08.08 18:00-18:10 – 09.08.08 18:24-18:34 – 09.08.08
14	Administrative Unit (Gorge) Precise location unknown	Upper Abkhazia (Kodori Gorge)	4/207/293	13:42-13:50 – 09.08.08 15:05-15:15 – 10.08.08 16:09-16:14 – 10.08.08 17:21-17:55 – 10.08.08
15	City	Gori	5/30/63	10:50-11:04 – 08.08.08 18:29-18:58 – 08.08.08 09:52-10:24 – 09.08.08 10:21-10:46 – 09.08.08 15:29-15:39 – 10.08.08
16	City	Marneuli	2/109/29	15:50-16:20 – 08.08.08 16:39-17:06 – 08.08.08
17	City	Bolnisi	1/104/44	15:50-16:20 – 08.08.08
18	City	Senaki	1/155/232	23:50-00:23 – 08-09.08.08
19	City	Tbilisi (Vaziani + Airplane Factory)	2/100/0	15:07-15:21 – 08.08.08 23:44-00:36 – 08-09.08.08 05:27-05:47 – 10.08.08
20	City	Poti	3/189/261	23:50-00:23 – 08-09.08.08 23:50 - 08.08.08(Tochka-U) 00:41-01:04 – 09.08.08
21	Infrastructure	Kopitnari Airport (Near Kutaisi)	1/110/187	09:23-09:45 – 09.08.08
22	Oil Pipeline	Baku-Supsa Oil Pipeline (KP 25; KP 26)	1/117/31	05:27-05:47 – 10.08.08
	<b>Total Number of Bombardments</b>		<b>43</b>	

### Bombing runs after Georgian ceasefire offer

At 17:30 on 10 August, the Georgian Foreign Ministry handed a diplomatic note to the Russian Embassy offering an immediate Georgian ceasefire. Yet the Russian Air Force continued its bombing runs for three more days, as indicated in the list below:

#	Type of Area	Name of Area	Number of Bombings Distance from Tskhinvali and Tbilisi	Time and Date of Bombing
23	Village	Shavshvebi (Gori District)	1/31/57	23:54-00:00 – 10.08.08
24	Village	Gentsvisi (Upper Abkhazia)	1/200/287	22:03-22:09 – 10.08.08
25	Village	Chkhalta (Upper Abkhazia)	1/211/298	02:09-02:40 – 11.08.08
26	Village	Sharabidzeebi (Khelvachauri District)	1/201/258	02:44-03:20 – 11.08.08
27	Village	Kapandidi (Khelvachauri District)	1/201/258	02:44-03:20 – 11.08.08

28	Village	Makho (Khelvachauri District)	1/201/258	02:44-03:20 – 11.08.08
29	Village	Ganmukhuri (Zugdidi District)	1/190/269	07:10-07:20 – 11.08.08
30	Village	Anaklia (Zugdidi District)	1/197/274	07:10-07:20 – 11.08.08
31	Village	Ruisi (Kareli District)	1/15/93	01:30-02:00 – 12.08.08
32	Village	Agara (Khashuri District)	1/32/91	Approx 14:00 – 12.08.08
33	Village	Sakorintlo (Kaspi District)	1/40/48	Approx 14:15 – 12.08.08
34	Village	Sakasheti (Gori District)	1/20/73	In the morning, Exact time unknown – 13.08.08
35	Village	Okami (Kaspi District)	1/52/36	In the morning, Exact time unknown – 16.08.08
36	City	Tbilisi (Tbilisi Int. Airport; Radar Station)	2/100/0	18:42-19:16 – 10.08.08 04:12-04:50 – 11.08.08
37	City	Gori	3/30/63	05:25-06:15 – 11.08.08 09:30-10:55 – 12.08.08 Approx. 12:00 (Iskander M SS-26) 12.08.08
38	City	Senaki	2/155/232	19:40-20:05 – 10.08.08 07:10-07:20 – 11.08.08
39	City	Kaspi Railway Station	1/50/38	01:30-02:00 – 12.08.08
40	Administrative Unit (Gorge) Precise location unknown	Upper Abkhazia (Kodori Gorge)	5/207/293	19:40-20:05 – 10.08.08 20:23-20:27 – 10.08.08 00:19-00:39 – 11.08.08 03:03-03:29 – 11.08.08 19:05-19:10 – 11.08.08
41	Infrastructure	Shiraki Airfield (Dedoplistskaro District)	1/208/124	04:12-04:50 – 11.08.08
42	Oil Pipeline	Baku-Supsa Oil Pipeline (KP 27)	1/117/31	11:30 – (Iskander M SS-26) 12.08.08
43	Infrastructure	Kaspi, Heidelberg Cement Factory	1/50/38	01:30-02:00 – 12.08.08
44	Village	Karbi, Tskhinvali Region	1	Date of Bombing Unknown controlled by separatists
45		Oni district	1	Tochka U=SS-21, the Date Unknown, Found Unexploded
46	Village	Sinaguri	1/7 km from administrative border between Imereti region and SO	Tochka U=SS-21, the date Unknown, Found Unexploded <a href="http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/318493.html">http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/318493.html</a> Controlled by Ossetian militia and Russians troops.
	<b>Total Number of Bombardments</b>		<b>32</b>	

### Occupation of Georgian towns and villages

After fanning out across the conflict zone in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russian troops occupied the following cities, towns and villages prior to the ceasefire agreement signed by Presidents Medvedev, Saakashvili and Sarkozy:

Zugdidi

11.08.08

Village Beloti near Eredvi, Tskhinvali district	11.08.08
Village Shindisi, Gori district	11.08.08
Senaki	11.08.08
Gori, the major motorway between East and West of the country blocked	11.08.08
Village Khaishi, Samegrelo Zemo-Svaneti region	12.08.08
Upper Abkhazia	12.08.08
Abkhaz militia enter demilitarized zone (Village Ganmukhuri)	12.08.08
Additional troops enter Gori	13 - 14.08.08
Village Atotsi, Kareli district	13.08.08
Village Pakhulani, Tzalenjikha district	13.08.08
Additional troops enter Zugdidi twice	14.08.08
Village Mejvriskhevi, Gori district	14.08.08
Villages Ruisi and Tzveri, Kareli district	14.08.08

### **Tbilisi Intrusion Threat:**

12 August

15 August

### **The day when the ceasefire was signed**

On August 15, the ceasefire agreement was signed, but Russians kept occupying Georgian settlements:

Crossed river Abasha towards the City of Abasha, 40 km away from the second largest city of Kutaisi

Village Igoeti, Kaspi district, 40 km away from Tbilisi

Khashuri, 30 km west from Gori

Surami, 5-8 km west of Khashuri

### **Occupation of towns and villages after French-mediated ceasefire**

The ceasefire agreement signed 15 August committed Russian troops to withdraw to the positions occupied before 7 August.

Instead, Russia deepened its occupation of Georgia, entering and occupying more towns and villages far away from the conflict zones:

Sachkhere, Imereti Region	16.08.08
Akhalgori, 40 km North-West of Tbilisi	16.08.08
Additional Russian troops entered Senaki military base	17.08.08
South Ossetian militia enter Akhalgori	17.08.08
Russian armored vehicles advanced towards the Supsa oil terminal, near Poti	17.08.08
Russian troops again block the major highway near Kaspi	18.08.08
Russian troops advance towards Sachkhere	19.08.08
Russian troops enter Poti port again	19.08.08
Russian troops open checkpoints on the outskirts of Poti	20.08.08
Russian troops occupy village Chogha in the Chkhorotsku district	20.08.08
Russian troops occupy village Perevi, Sachkhere district	20.08.08

### **Landmines, use of explosives and cluster bomblets**

On August 17, Russian troops mined roads in the Svaneti region and on the old Gori road south of Kaspi.

On August 18, Russian troops used explosive devices to destroy military installations in Senaki.

On August 23 and 24, Russian troops used explosive devices to destroy military installations in Osiauri.

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

The widespread distribution of Russian landmines and bomblets left over from cluster bombs attacks poses an ongoing threat to civilians, especially in Gori district. On 24 August, a woman was killed in Gori by a landmine in her garden, and a man injured in Tirdznisi village.

Mines of the “frog” type have been found in civilian gardens and orchards in Gori. These are anti-personnel mines that, when stepped upon, jump into the air and explode at chest- or head-height.

#### **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.

## **Current civilian, military and journalist casualty figures**

The number of dead and wounded is based exclusively on the human remains received by the Health Care System, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. It does not include those held, buried, burned or otherwise disposed of within the area under Russian control. For the convenience of readers, figures for those areas, sourced from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch data are provided at the end of this document.

### **Citizens of Georgia killed**

<b>Total</b>	<b>413</b>
<b>Military</b>	<b>170*</b>
<b>Civilian</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>Policemen</b>	<b>16</b>

\*among them the bodies of 9 soldiers are missing

### **Citizens of Georgia wounded**

<b>Total</b>	<b>1745</b>
<b>Military</b>	<b>1198</b>
<b>Civilian</b>	<b>547</b>

### **Journalists**

<b>Killed:</b>	<b>3 (1 foreign, 2 Georgians)</b>
<b>Injured:</b>	<b>6 (3 foreign, 3 Georgians)</b>
<b>Detained by Russians/Ossetes:</b>	<b>10 (8 foreign, 2 Georgians)</b>
<b>Attacked by Russians/Ossetes:</b>	<b>3 (2 foreign , 1 Georgian)</b>
<b>Robbed by Russians/Ossetes</b>	<b>12 (all foreign)</b>

### **Casualties in Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia**

Based on reports by Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights. The estimate the Commissioner received from the Russian authorities on confirmed deaths was 133 people. The number of wounded attended to in Tskhinvali was 220 people. In Vladikavkaz, 250 patients were treated.

Tatiana Lokshina, a Russian researcher for the U.S.-based group Human Rights Watch who visited the region, said trips to a hospital, a cemetery and conversations with residents said the number of civilians who died appeared to be "fewer than 100."

## **The Facts on Ethnic Cleansing of Georgians during the Russian invasion and occupation**

**Since the start of Russia’s invasion and occupation of Georgia, the international community has confirmed ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the villages of Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, of the Gori and Kareli Districts, as well as in Kodori Gorge, Upper Abkhazia.**

As of 9 October, the Civil Registry Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia has registered 131,169 internally displaced persons forced to leave their homes by Russian attacks and bombings, which were followed by widespread looting, deliberate destruction of civilian property, harassment of civilian ethnic Georgian populations in South Ossetia, in adjacent regions, and in Upper Abkhazia<sup>2</sup>. The UNHCR has estimated number of IDPs 192 000, including 35 000 in North Ossetia.<sup>3</sup>

Before August 2008, the central government of Georgia controlled 21 Georgian villages in the “South Ossetia” conflict zone. All ethnic Georgian residents of these villages left the conflict zone. The Civil Registry Agency registered 18,806 IDPs from Tighva (Prone Valley), Kurta (Didi Liakhvi Valley) and Eredvi (Patara Liakhvi) municipalities as of 9 October 2008.

There were an estimated 1,900 inhabitants in Azhara municipality (Upper Abkhazia) as of 1 January 2008, according to the Department of Statistics. The Civil Registry Agency had registered 1,740 IDPs from this municipality as of 9 October 2008.

The policy of ethnic cleansing orchestrated by the Russian military, acting in concert with separatist militias, now threatens tens of thousands of ethnic Georgians in villages near the districts of Gori and Akhgori. These villages are currently under Russian occupation.

<sup>2</sup> <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/08/13/georgi19607.htm>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “UNHCR chief visits South Ossetia”, 22 August 2008, *available at*: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/48aef0dc4.html>.

Such policies, combined with the August 26 recognition of the separatist regimes by the Russian Federation, now make it impossible for ethnic Georgians to exercise their right to return to their homes.

### **Ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia**

---

The Russian troops and separatist illegal armed formations deliberately targeted the civilian population of Georgian villages in the Didi Liakhvi Valley, the Patara Liakhvi valley and the Prone Valley:

- Human Rights Watch, journalists, and eyewitnesses report mass destruction of Georgian villages in the region nearby areas. The policy of destroying and looting civilian property has transformed formerly ethnic Georgian areas into ghost towns.<sup>4</sup> Satellite images provided by UNOSAT clearly demonstrate the damage inflicted upon several Georgian villages around the city of Tskhinvali.<sup>5</sup>
- The execution of ethnic Georgian men and women has been reported by international organizations, international media, as well as eyewitnesses, including ones recently rescued from the notorious hostage camp in Tskhinvali.
- Number of cases of rape also have been reported (one female victim, a 22-year-old ethnic Georgian, testified of being raped by four militaries while being held in the Tskhinvali hostage camp);
- Elderly villagers who were physically unable to flee the ethnic cleansing have been captured in large numbers and held as hostages (later handed over in exchange for prisoners of war).
- Houses owned by ethnic Georgians have been looted and burnt down, following a policy of ethnic cleansing of Georgians that has been “proudly” acknowledged by the separatist leader Eduard Kokoity; he declared that the goal of the ethnic cleansing is to purge Georgian enclaves in the region so as not to allow ethnic Georgians to return to their homes.<sup>6</sup> As Human Rights Watch observed, deliberate attempts by the Russian government to exaggerate the number of people killed in the conflict also provoked revenge attacks on Georgian villagers.<sup>7</sup> Characteristically, the chairman of the separatist parliament Gassiev declared: “Georgians will no more return here—we burned all their houses in the enclaves.”

### **Ethnic cleansing of Georgians outside of the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia**

---

After Russian troops and separatist illegal formations destroyed Georgian villages within the conflict zone, expelling and killing ethnic Georgians, they extended these brutal activities to nearby Georgian villages in the Gori and Kareli districts; these areas, which were away of the conflict zone, have now been deemed by Russia as being in a so-called “security/buffer zone.”

On 16 August, Russian army detachments entered Akhagori district, which has never been under separatist control and where Georgian and Ossetians were living in peace. Russian occupying forces threatened local population of expulsion if they did not accept Russian citizenship and reject their Georgian citizenship. As a result, 3,597 ethnic Georgians have fled Akhagori district as of 7 October, out

---

<sup>4</sup> Photos from Human Rights Watch. [http://www.hrw.org/photos/2008/georgia\\_galleries/](http://www.hrw.org/photos/2008/georgia_galleries/)

<sup>5</sup> <http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/>

<sup>6</sup> Interview of Eduard Kokoity with Russian newspaper “Kommersant” from 15.08.08; No144, and Interview with the speaker of separatist parliament Znaur Gasiev with newspaper “Komsomolskaia Pravda” from 22.08.08.

<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?fromsearch=ef093ba1-b275-41da-8576-5d73596075da&docid=1011783> and <http://kp.ru/daily/24150/366813/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/14/georgia.russia1>

of a total population of 7 894 (of this number, about 7,194 are ethnic Georgians and 700 are ethnic Ossetians). These IDPs are now mostly in Gori IDP camps.

### **Ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Kodori Gorge/Upper Abkhazia**

---

Approximately 42,000 ethnic Georgians in the Gali district of Abkhazia region are under the threat of expulsion. Reports received from residents of Gali—which is now isolated from the rest of Georgia due to the closure of the administrative border at the Enguri Bridge—suggest that they are being harassed, attacked, and threatened of expulsion if they do not accept Russian passports.

There were an estimated 1 900 inhabitants in Azhara municipality (Upper Abkhazia) as of 1 January 2008, according to Department of Statistics. The Civil Registry Agency had registered 1,740 IDPs from this municipality as of 9 October 2008.

### **Russian attacks on civilian populations & use of cluster bombs**

---

**ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN POPULATIONS:** On 8-11 August, Russian military aircrafts bombed residential areas in Gori, killing 45 civilians and injuring many more. As a result of these bombings, eight apartment buildings were destroyed in Gori, leaving about 500 families homeless. The subsequent blockade of the city of Gori by the Russian troops prevented Georgian doctors from assisting wounded soldiers and civilians in the war zone, causing prolonged suffering and death among civilians.

Up to date 220 civilian deaths have been reported by Georgia’s healthcare system; however, it is impossible to estimate casualties in numerous villages, so the total number of casualties remains unknown. More than 60 civilians have been reported dead in the villages of the Gori and Kareli districts following the Russian occupation of this area. At present, Russian occupation forces prevent local administration from entering those villages in the so-called “security/buffer zone,” so they are unable to identify the corpses. The situation is worse in the formerly ethnic Georgian villages within actual conflict zone. Many corpses have been secretly buried by locals inside houses (usually in basements and yards), as there have been cases of killings by Russian-allied militias during outdoor burials.

**CLUSTER BOMBS:** Human Rights Watch researchers documented the use of cluster munitions by Russia in the civilian populated areas, refuting Russia’s earlier denials that it had used such weapons. Human Rights Watch photographed unexploded sub-munitions from cluster munitions in and around the villages of Shindisi and Pkhvenisi, in the Gori district. There are still hundreds of unexploded sub-munitions in the area.<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch confirmed that on 12 August, Russian aircraft dropped RBK-250 cluster bombs, each containing 30 PTAB 2.5M sub-munitions, on the village of Ruisi in the Kareli district. Three civilians were killed and five wounded in the attack. On the same day, a cluster strike in Gori city center killed at least eight civilians and injured fifteen. A Dutch journalist, Stan Storimans was among the dead and an Israeli journalist Zadok Yehezkeli was among the injured.

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/08/20/georgi19660.htm>

## Refugees and displaced persons

### Overview of IDP situation

The Georgian Agency for Civil Registration has to date recorded a total of 131 169 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), of which 56% are female and 44% male.

As of 27 October, 35 495 IDPs were still unable to return to their homes. Over two-thirds - 20 047 persons - are sheltered in Tbilisi, while the remainder (15 448 people) have found shelter in the rest of the country.

The process of returning IDPs to their homes started 10<sup>th</sup> October, when the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation declared 48 villages to be sufficiently safe for them to return. This list includes the following villages in the Gori and Kareli districts:

- Gori district: Brotsleti, Meghvrekisi, Karaleti, Didi Garejvari, Satemo, Kitsnisi, Dzevera, Shertuli, Variani, Varianis Meurneoba, Sakasheti, Shindisi, Marana, Kelktseuli, Kvemo Khviti, Zemo Khviti, Zemo Nikozi, Kvemo Nikozi, Tkviavi, Tergviti, Karbi, Kere, Plavi, Plavismani, Arbo, Korti, Ditsi, Mere, Kvemo Artsevi, Akhaldaba, Tirdznisi.
- Kareli district: Kvemo Artsevi, Sherteuli, Ptsa, Tamarasheni, Dirbi, Dvani, Takhtisdziri, Tseronisi, Satikhuri, Brekha, Avlevi, Atotsi, Knolevi, Koda, Abano, Chvrinisi, Kvemo Sakasheti.

Transport is being handled by the Tbilisi municipal authorities, whose buses are being used to carry displaced persons home. To date, since 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 16 000 people have left the capital and 4 000 more - other regions, and returned to those villages.

Many IDPs are going back only to find that their house has been damaged, burned or looted while the village was under Russian control. The area to which they are returning is a rural one, and is renowned for the quality of its fruits and other produce; this now lies fallen and rotting, since the period of Russian occupation coincided with the harvest season.

Consequently, many returning IDP will need help to repair and refurbish their houses, to reclaim their fields (many are still littered with unexploded ordnance, including Russian cluster bombs), and to feed themselves during the coming winter. To better assess needs and prioritize the distribution of assistance, a specially constituted state commission has begun to evaluate the damage to infrastructure and housing.

### IDP shelters

448 IDP shelters are still in operation across the country. The majority of them, 296, are in Tbilisi.

Public schools, kindergartens, research institutions, higher education institutions and student dormitories are typical of the buildings pressed into service to help.

Initially, 202 of Tbilisi's public schools sheltered IDPs. These were later transferred to other buildings, including kindergartens, freeing up 164 schools. A further 24 establishments have been partly vacated. It has not been possible to vacate every school; to date, sixteen of them are still used as emergency accommodation.

Schools are not designed to act as emergency accommodation. Classrooms had to be converted to family dwellings overnight. Furniture and school supplies were damaged in the process. Consequently, the freshly vacated schools are all in dire need of renovation.

### **Construction and reconstruction of houses for IDPs**

IDPs will need solid, warm accommodation for the coming winter. A crash construction programme has been performed. So far, 4 542 new houses have been built in Kvemo Kartli, Shida Kartli, Mtskheta-Tianeti and Kakheti regions. Besides, many other apartments have been renovated, which will also shelter the IDPs still unable to return to their homes. 603 Families already moved in to the newly constructed houses and many others will move in the nearest future.

Displaced farmers will be given financial aid to buy cattle and agricultural supplies. Other programmes are being put in place to restart local economies; for example, vocational training centers are to be opened in the villages of Tserovani and Koda.

### **Gori**

As there are currently over 2 843 IDPs in Gori, the Ministry of Refugees and Resettlement set up a task force there to directly supervise IDP-related operations.

The tent camps have been dismantled in Gori. Some of the IDPs returned home; others have been transferred to kindergartens. Currently, 1 774 IDPs are sheltered in a number of administrative buildings and kindergartens, and 1 069 more in private apartments.

The delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gori is coordinated by the government and supported by UNCHR and the Red Cross. A soup kitchen run by the Georgian and Italian Red Crosses is serving two hot meals a day, while the Polish Humanitarian Mission of the Order of Malta is offering medical services.

### **Russian obstacles to IDP return**

Elizabeth Spehar, the director of the Americas and Europe division of the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Security Council, has stated that remaining Russian military checkpoints north of Gori, close to the administrative boundary to South Ossetia, constitute a major obstacle to humanitarian relief efforts. She added that the Russian checkpoints also prevent people from returning to their homes.

## **Impact on Georgia's education**

The Russian invasion and subsequent military actions has had serious consequences on Georgia's education system.

The start of the academic year 2008-09 has had to be postponed for the first time in many areas, and many schools and other educational institutions have been damaged or looted, especially in the zones

within or close to South Ossetia. The widespread use of landmines and cluster bombs by the Russian army meant that many buildings were unsafe and needed to be carefully defused.

Hundreds of various schools, from kindergartens to higher education institutions, were turned overnight into emergency accommodation for displaced civilians. Thousands of students and their teachers have been displaced. Many children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety crises, and depression. Children with special needs and those from socially deprived backgrounds are particularly exposed to hardship.

In the longer term, additional problems are likely to arise. Displaced children are at higher risk of academic failure—the ratio of those who drop out of school is much higher among displaced populations.

The Ministry of Education and Science has been compelled to terminate or suspended a number of education and research programmes. If other programmes have to be suspended or terminated as well, the entire future of Georgia’s education reform agenda could be put at risk.

<b>Number of educational institutions destroyed or damaged:</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Total number of educational institutions with settled IDPs:</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Total number of IDPs settled in the educational institutions:</b>	<b>42 801</b>
<b>Total Damage Inflicted to the Education system:</b>	<b>over 19 000 000 Euro</b>

## **Damage to Cultural Heritage**

### **Monuments, Churches and Museums**

The information below is accurate to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to verification. It is based on reports from local inhabitants and museum staff, data compiled by the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport of Georgia, and UNOSAT satellite-based damage assessment for cultural heritage monuments, available at [www.unosat.org/shared/georgia/UNOSAT\\_Cultural\\_Monuments\\_Damages\\_v1.pdf](http://www.unosat.org/shared/georgia/UNOSAT_Cultural_Monuments_Damages_v1.pdf). [www.unosat.org/shared/unosat/georgia/UNOSAT\\_Cultural\\_Monuments\\_Assessment\\_UPDATE\\_v2.pdf](http://www.unosat.org/shared/unosat/georgia/UNOSAT_Cultural_Monuments_Assessment_UPDATE_v2.pdf) [Update1\\_UNOSAT\\_Damage\\_Review\\_of\\_Monuments.pdf](http://Update1_UNOSAT_Damage_Review_of_Monuments.pdf) (757KB)

The Ministry of Culture's inventory lists about 500 registered historical monuments and archaeological sites in the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia..

A number of monuments in and around the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and in Gori have been damaged by bombings raids, ground attacks, arson and looting carried out by Russian troops and separatist illegal formations. Conducting of a precise survey of the damage is not possible because the experts of the Ministry of Culture are not allowed into the Russian occupation zones.

The following list is therefore highly provisional.

#### **Archangel church (19<sup>th</sup> century)**

This church located in the village of Kheiti, was damaged following shelling on 12 August. Severe damage has been confirmed by the UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart, based on WorldView-1 satellite imagery recorded on 19 August 2008.

#### **Ikorta Church (12<sup>th</sup> century)**

The church located in the village of Ikorta was damaged by shelling on the 9 and 10 of August.

#### **Ivane Machabeli Museum (19<sup>th</sup>)**

The museum located in the village of Tamarasheni, north of Tskhinvali was heavily bombed and damaged. UN's UNOSAT Damage Assessment chart confirms possible damage to roof of northern section, 8 adjacent buildings destroyed/severely.

#### **Archbishop's Palace (10th/11th centuries)**

One of the most important examples of palace architecture from the late medieval period located in the village of Nikozi. It was recently restored, and has now been burned and destroyed. The Archbishop's residence and the monastery adjacent to palace were bombed on 9 August. The resulting fire engulfed the Palace, too, according to eyewitnesses.

Assessment Mission of the CoE confirmed 10<sup>th</sup> century Bishop palace was damaged badly by bomb last. Religious community members were in the building at the time of the blast.

#### **Wooden Church of St. George (19<sup>th</sup> century)**

A rare example of wooden architecture located in the village of Sveri. The church was completely burnt. UNOSAT lists the building as "confirmed severe damages/destroyed".

#### **Kemerti St. George Church (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

This church was bombed on 10 August. Satellite images do not reveal direct damage, but the building is located within 100m of buildings whose damage is visible from satellite (see UNOSAT chart). Local inhabitants report that the grounds of the church have been mined.

#### **Ksani Gorge Museum Reserve (Eristavi Palace)**

The museum located in Akhlagori, is being occupied by separatist illegal formations. Sporadic looting attempts have been reported.

#### **The Kurta and the Kekhi offices of Didi Liakhvi Gorge Museum Reserve**

About 1500 exhibits of bronze and medieval age where preserved, are looted. According to UNOSAT satellite imagery Kurta office is "destroyed, arson probable". Kekhi office is likely "severely damaged, with possible impact crater in roof".

According to staff and Georgian ICOM National Committee, the museum was looted in 10 August.

#### **Monuments located within 100m from bombing or shelling**

According to preservationist experts and architects, an explosion within 100 meters of an ancient building risks inflicting significant damages to the structure. UNOSAT satellite imagery lists the following monuments as being less than 100 meters from shelled or bombed areas:

- **Church of St. George in the village of Kekhvi (17<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **Church of St. George in the village of Kurta (9<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **Fortress in the village of Achabeti (16<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **Church of St. Nicolas in the village of Achabeti (18<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **Giorgi Machabeli Palace in the village Kurta (19<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **St. George in village of Dzarcemi (9<sup>th</sup> century)**
- **St. Estate Church in the village of Achabeti. (8-9<sup>th</sup> century)**

### **Attack on Baku-Supsa pipeline**

„After the war, when the Russian fighter aircraft bombed an oil pipeline important for the western interests and only scarcely missed, worries had risen that Russia could also go forward in future against infrastructure projects which are designed like Nabucco to decrease dependence of Europe on Russian energy delivery.”

**Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 5.11.2008**

During the August 2008 conflict, BP closed down its Baku-Supsa oil pipeline as a precautionary measure to prevent an oil spill in the event that the pipeline was damaged. The pipeline that was bombed on 10 and 12 of August, has been reopened in early November

#### **10 August**

Between 4 and 5 am, two Russian fighter jets flew over the KP<sup>9</sup> 25 and KP 26 of the pipeline for about 30 minutes.

---

<sup>9</sup> KP (Key Point) is equal to kilometer and represents distance of the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline from Georgian Azerbaijan border to Black Sea

After assessment of two possible UXO (Unexploded Ordnance) close to the pipeline section running to the east of Vaziani base the following was concluded:

1. The two suspected UXO sites were close to points KP25 and KP26. The suspected UXO site at KP25 was 7 metres from the pipeline; the suspected UXO at KP26 was 50 metres from the pipeline.
2. Both suspected UXO sites formed part of a line of large, open craters caused by conventional aircraft bombs, most likely a FAB-500 with 500 kg of TNT-trotline, or equivalent.
3. The two sites were suspected because they were not open craters but mounds of earth.



KP25



4. Initial visual inspection suggested inconsistencies with a typical entry hole and crater caused by an unexploded aircraft bomb. The amount of soil displaced upwards suggested a subsurface explosion.
5. The area was then searched using a Magnex bomb probe which has a search depth of up to 6 metres. The probe indicated small scattered signals in and around the mound consistent with fragmentation, but no large metallic objects consistent with an unexploded aircraft bomb.
6. A 3 metre deep protective trench was then dug between the suspected UXO site and the pipeline as a precautionary measure.
7. An excavator was then used to open a 3m deep, 10m wide pit at the suspected site. The soil structure during the excavation was consistent with a sub-surface detonation. The pit was further checked using the Magnex bomb probe and no evidence of remaining unexploded ordnance was found.

From their silhouettes, the jets initially were recognized as being either Sukhoi-24s or Sukhoi-25s. But FAB-500 can only be carried by Sukhoi-25 bomber. The bombed area is rural. There are no military facilities there, and no significant infrastructure apart from the pipeline.

### **12 August**

At about 11:30 am, a rocket was fired at the pipeline at the KP 27 sections, about 2 kilometers from the 10 August bombing run.

The rocket used was of the ISKANDER SS-26. It exploded just 40 meters away from the pipeline. The rockets' electronics were found within 300 meters of the explosion area.

The targeted area is also rural, and does not boast military facilities or significant infrastructure apart from the pipeline.

## Environmental Destruction in Georgia Caused by Russian Aggression

“WWF called on all parties capable of helping put out forest fires in central Georgia to work together to extinguish them. The fires, centred in the Borjomi-Kharagauli area about 70 km to the west of Gori, threaten protected and Priority Conservation Areas in the Caucasus...”

WWF – 20.08.09

“The World Bank notes with grave concern the reports of forest fires in the Borjomi area of Georgia. This area includes the first National Park in Georgia, which possesses a unique ecosystem and biodiversity of global value, cultural heritage and other natural resources”

World Bank – 20.08.08

**“An independent investigation on the environmental consequences of the war (Russian-Georgian) is necessary (as has been after the intervention in Kosovo) to assess the damage and to see where assistance can be given.”**

**Istanbul 2008 Statement of the  
Seventh Meeting of Black Sea Greens  
31st of October- 1st of November 2008, Istanbul**

The Georgian people suffered greatly from the recent conflict – but so did the unique natural landscape of the country. The population of the region of Borjomi will never forget the terrifying sounds of Russian aircraft swiftly followed by a catastrophe and ecological disaster as incendiary devices lit up an old-growth forest suffering from an unusually prolonged drought. A few days after these dramatic incidents, the spectacular Ateni gorge near Gori was firebombed too. It quickly burnt to a crisp.

The next target of Russian intervention was the ecosystem of the Black Sea. This time, it was a collateral target. The destruction of Georgian warships in the port of Poti released fuel, lubricants and other toxins into the sea, compromising the survival of unique, endemic species in the Kolkheti National Park and on the Black Sea coastline.

### Borjomi and Ateni

On 15<sup>th</sup> of August, Russian occupiers started a fire in the area adjacent to the village of Tsaghveri, in the region of Borjomi, considerably damaging a significant part of the region’s countryside. Taking into account the existing situation (martial law, complex relief conditions and other problems which severely complicated fire-fighting measures), the fire spread quickly from territories around the borough of **Tsaghveri to Borjomi on the right bank of the river Gujarela** (Gujaretiskali) and touched significant areas of the forests in that area.

Despite the huge efforts taken against the fire, it spread over 950 hectares of forest land. An area of 250 hectares was totally destroyed, and 150 000 m<sup>3</sup> of standing trees were lost; 70% of a 700 hectare area was destroyed, and 140 000 m<sup>3</sup> of trees lost. As a result of the fire, the forest’s ecosystem lost its ecological function and commercial value.

In the affected area, endemic and other species were almost completely destroyed, including Himalayan yew, spruce, abies, pine, beech, oak, hornbeam and many varieties of forest wildlife.

The area harbors the highest density of small Caucasus pine forests, as well as the biggest specimens of *Picea orientalis* in Caucasus. Since these are endemic species, found nowhere else, their destruction

reduces the globe's biodiversity. The fires also affected significant stands of temperate old-growth and virgin forest. Since old-growth forests have been felled or cleared almost everywhere else in the planet's temperate zone, the surviving stands also have global significance.

The fauna of the region experienced significant damage as well. The territory damaged by the fires was inhabited by numerous animal species, some which are on the IUCN "red list", including brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), deer (*Cervus elaphus*), chamois (*Repicapra rupicapra*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), whitetail eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), Caucasus cock (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczzi*), Caucasus viper (*Vipera kaznakovi*), Caucasus salamander (*Mertensiella caucassica*), vesper bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), European bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*), and the Caucasian squirrel (*Sciurus anomalus*).

The blaze spread over **Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park**, where four different fires devastated the landscape. The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park is internationally recognized as the most important protected area anywhere in the South Caucasus. Besides the high cost of conservation, it was also a model of natural protection, confirmed by the PAN Parks certificate.

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Russian incendiary devices were dropped in the **Ateni gorge**, in the region of Gori. The resulting blaze raged through over 60 hectares before it could be contained.

### **Poti and Kolkheti National Park**

In the **port of Poti**, five Georgian warships and three coast guard patrol boats were sunk by Russian vessels, releasing about 50 tonnes of oil, diesel fuel and lubricants into the Black Sea. The resulting oil slick at first spread between Poti Sea Port and the village of Anaklia, 20km to the north, before being swept further north, into the marine part of the Kolkheti National Park, by local currents.

**Kolkheti National Park** provides feeding grounds for various species of sturgeons, some endemic to the Black Sea (*Huso huso*, *Acipenser sturio*, *Acipenser nudiventis*, *Acipenser stelatus*, *Acipenser gueldastaedtti*, *Acipenser persicus*) and dolphins (*Phocoena phocoena*, *Tursiops truncatus*, *Delphinus delphis*). A number of smaller rare and endangered species were threatened too.

### **Skra**

On August 24, 2008, a freight train carrying crude oil blew up on a Russian mine near the village of Skra, in the region of Shida Kartli. The train was composed of 34 wagons, each loaded with 60 tons of crude. Twelve wagons and 720 tons of oil burned out on the spot, releasing massive clouds of toxic smoke. About 4,000m<sup>2</sup> were contaminated with crude oil, posing a threat of groundwater pollution.

### **Breaches by Russia of the Ceasefire Agreement: Checkpoints**

**The Russian Army had illegally established 25 checkpoints, contravening the six-point ceasefire agreement brokered by France. Four of them remain in operation outside of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia, while more than 8 000 Russian troops still remaining in these two regions**

There are an estimated 400 Russian soldiers and 30 Armored Personal Carriers stationed at these four checkpoints.

There were an estimated 1,400 Russian soldiers and 209 heavily armored vehicles, including 4 tanks stationed at 25 illegal checkpoints.

#### **Remaining Illegal Russian Checkpoints**

1. Perevi, Sachkhere district: *paratroopers company, 7 APC, 3 trucks, 100 servicemen*
2. Odzisi, Akhagori district: *6 APC, 100 servicemen.*
3. Mosabruni, Akhagori district: *6 APC, 100 servicemen.*
4. Ikoti, Akhagori district: *6 APC, 100 servicemen.*

## Russian Cyberwar on Georgia

The Russian invasion of Georgia was preceded by intensive cyberattacks designed to disrupt, deface or bring down critical Georgian governmental and civilian online infrastructure.

These attacks, which became a massive assault on the eve of the invasion, mark a new phase in the history of warfare. They are the first recorded case in which a land-sea-air-invasion was coordinated with an orchestrated cyber-offensive.

Cyberattacks are becoming an increasingly established form of warfare. The pioneer in this form of warfare has been the Russian Federation, widely suspected of having played a leading role in the first large scale cyberattacks on a NATO member state when, in spring 2007, Estonian servers came under massive Distributed Denial-Of-Service (DDoS) assaults. That attack succeeded in disabling much of Estonia's online infrastructure, with serious consequences for its banks and airports. Following that attack, NATO at its April 2008 Bucharest summit decided to set up the Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn.

In July and August 2008, attacks originating from the Russian Federation resumed, this time directed against Georgia. On 20 July, the website of the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, came under an intensive DDoS attack and was disabled for over 24 hours. This attack, it later turned out, appeared to be a rehearsal for the much larger attacks that were to come.

The full-scale attack started late on Thursday, 7 August, a day before Russia claims it first entered Georgia. A large number of Georgian servers and much of Georgia's Internet traffic were seized and placed under external control. For the first few days of the war, most Georgian government and media sites were either unavailable or defaced. An infamous example was the composite picture portraying President Saakashvili as Hitler which replaced the web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This made it near-impossible for Georgia to communicate with the world, and afforded Russia its initial propaganda victories: global media outlets had no choice but to rely almost exclusively on Russian websites carrying Russian claims about the cause, scope and running of the war.

DDoS attacks of varying intensity continued after the Kremlin announced that it had ceased hostilities on 12 August. Thanks to the efforts of numerous specialists and volunteers, normal traffic was resumed within a week. Most critical websites were hosted outside of Georgia.

US-based Tulip Systems is one of the firms that took over the hosting of Georgian government websites during the conflict. In a recent interview, Tulip Systems executive Tom Burling said its experts had worked frantically to curtail the damage from the hackers, remarking that "they have been attacking Georgia from a cyber standpoint since July". [Bill Woodcock](#), the research director at Packet Clearing House, a California-based nonprofit group that tracks Internet security trends, told Newsweek that the attacks bear the markings of a "trained and centrally coordinated cadre of professionals."

While we do not yet know who wrote the malware that was used to cause Georgian servers to crash, it proliferated on Russian Web sites. Gary Warner, a cybercrime expert at the University of Alabama, told Newsweek that he found "copies of the attack script" posted in the reader comments section at the bottom of virtually every story in the Russian media that covered the Georgian conflict, complete with instructions on how the script could be used to attack a specific list of Web sites. For example, the target list advertised on stopgeorgia.ru ran to 36 entries, including the US and UK embassies in Tbilisi, the Georgian Parliament, the Georgian Supreme Court, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, various news agencies and other media resources, and the Central Election Commission.

An example of Russian efforts to shut the mouse of Georgian media is the story of the Georgian news agency GHN. The first attack against the agency's website occurred in August 2008. Another wave of

cyber attacks started on 8 September. As a result, the GHN news agency website had been paralyzed for 2 weeks. Another Georgian media website that came under consistent cyber attacks after the end of the armed conflict is [www.apsny.ge](http://www.apsny.ge) – website of the Georgia-Online news agency. It is interesting to note that Russian efforts to prevent Georgian Internet media resources from disseminating information continued even after the war.

While the attack on Estonia was the first to come to the world's attention, and the one on Georgia the first to be coordinated with a land assault, it was not the first time Russia had tested this tool. Back in 2006, State Duma deputy and member of the Duma Security Committee Nikolai Kuryanovich drafted a formal parliamentary letter of appreciation to hackers who had taken down several Israeli web sites, stating "In the very near future many conflicts will not take place on the open field of battle, but rather in spaces on the Internet, fought with the aid of information soldiers, that is hackers. This means that a small force of hackers is stronger than the multi-thousand force of the current armed forces."

Cyberattacks are easy to organize, cheap to implement, and difficult to defend against. They disable a country's infrastructure and help an invading enemy win initial propaganda battles. The recent events have graphically illustrated the importance of NATO's efforts to defend its member states against this new form of warfare.

## **A creeping case of ethnic cleansing:**

### **The situation in the Gali district of Abkhazia**

#### **Executive Summary**

Prior to 1992, the Georgian region of Abkhazia was one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-cultural regions of the Caucasus. The first war (1992-1993) resulted in the displacement of almost 80% of the region's population, including almost all of the population of the Gali district (roughly 79 000 people, mostly ethnic Georgians). The sporadic return of these refugees to the district only started in 1999. Since then, about 45 000 people have returned.

#### Situation before the war

Between the first conflict and the Russian invasion this August, the population of Gali had a difficult life, characterized by ill-treatment and terrible living conditions. Issues they had to face included:

- Extremely high crime rates. Separatist authorities tacitly supported organized crime to intimidate the population. Georgian inhabitants were also reported to have been the victims of arbitrary imprisonments, with the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) reporting cases of forced labor.
- No or limited legal access to Georgian-language education. Schools and teachers were either prohibited from teaching in Georgian or this opportunity was strictly limited; those who transgressed these instructions were victims of harassment and prosecution. In 1995, a new curriculum reinforced the teaching of Russian at school.
- Pressure to abandon Georgian citizenship. The population was subjected to strong pressure to abandon their Georgian citizenship in favor of an "Abkhaz" one.

- No freedom of speech. No independent, Georgian-language media were tolerated. Consequently, the district's population had very little access to comprehensive and accurate information.
- No freedom of religion. Georgian Orthodox Churches have been refused the right to operate in the region. Georgian priests refusing to preach in Russian have been ousted.

#### Situation since the Russian invasion

Russian troops are reported to have taken position and opened several new checkpoints in the Gali district. Freedom of movement has been severely curtailed: On 8 October, the separatists imposed a system of "passes", priced at such a high level (5,000 Russian Rubles, or about 140 €, for a 3-month pass) that "legal" travel to neighboring Zugdidi district has become unaffordable for the vast majority of the districts' residents. On 9 October, all roads connecting Abkhazia to the rest of Georgia were closed.

Russian troops started mining the administrative boarder between Zugdidi and Gali districts and exploded all bridges, but the central one across the river Enguri , effectively isolating Gali district from the rest of the country.

#### *International concern*

On 15 October, the International Court of Justice in The Hague found that the ethnically Georgian population of the district (as well as in the rest of Abkhazia, in the region of South Ossetia, and in adjacent areas) was at risk of "irreparable harm" and imposed provisional measures to safeguard their rights.

### **Background**

On 14 August, 1992 war broke out between the government of Georgia and Moscow backed separatists. The war was marked by high levels of violence and the mass abuse of human rights. The military confrontation ended in 1993, when separatists supported by Russian regular army units, and mercenaries from the Russian North Caucasus gained control over almost the whole territory of the region, and expelled most of the pre-war population, including almost all ethnic Georgians. In practice, close to 80% of the region's pre-war population was forced to flee.

The pattern of the abuses committed by the Russian-backed separatist forces during the conflict suggests that they were neither casual nor sporadic, but constituted instead a carefully planned programme of ethnic cleansing, designed to change the ethnic composition of the region by force.<sup>10</sup>

Abkhazians constituted 17,8% and Georgians 46% of the pre-war population of 535 000. Roughly 400 000 residents, including the vast majority of the 270 000 ethnic Georgians, were forced to leave their homes, mostly in a mass exodus at the end of 1993.<sup>11</sup> Most of them still live outside of the region, both in Georgia, or abroad, prevented from returning home.

Almost the entire population of the Gali district, totaling some 79 000 mostly ethnic Georgians, was displaced during the war. Since 1999, an estimated 45 000 persons have returned to the district, living in harsh conditions and subjected to arbitrary separatist rules that strongly discriminate against them on the sole basis of ethnicity.

### **Situation before the Russian invasion**

<sup>10</sup> United States of America, State Department country report 2007

<sup>11</sup> Conflict in the Caucasus: Georgia, Abkhazia, and the Russian Shadow by S. A. Chervonnaia and Svetlana Mikhailovna Chervonnaia.

Those Georgians who managed to trickle back home in the district are being deprived of fundamental rights, including: basic security, the right to study in their mother tongue, or even the right to speak Georgian in public places.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Security situation*

Crime rates were extremely high. Separatist authorities were unable - and often, unwilling - to fight against it. Crimes often had an ethnic component, with criminals preying on ethnic Georgian inhabitants. Kidnappings for ransom became widespread. Local separatist agencies did little to prevent criminal activity. On the contrary, their agents often were involved in criminal acts themselves. A popular extortion racket consisted of picking up Georgian residents, locking them up in Gali "police station" without charging them, and forcing their families to pay ransoms to secure their release. Some of these detainees were subjected to brutal treatments amounting to torture. Victims of the practice sometimes included children. Some victims who attempted to resist their kidnappers or robbers were murdered. These phenomena were documented by international agencies – see for example the UN Secretary General's report of April 2007<sup>13</sup>.

#### *Deprivation of liberty, prisons*

Georgian residents of the Gali district often became the victim of detentions, being locked up in jail without charge for unlimited periods. Some of the victims were transported to Sokhumi, the regional capital, and kept in harsh conditions and deprived of the right to a fair trial. Courts of the proxy regime in the district reportedly did not make efforts to establish facts or administer justice. Criminals of all stripes paid bribes to local separatist officials to avoid prosecution.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Education*

As pointed in the report of the Parliamentary Assembly on Refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia,<sup>15</sup> education continued to pose a problem in the district, where teaching must take place in Russian.

Ethnic Georgians living in the Gali district had no or limited legal access to education in their own language. As a practical matter, however, teachers who did not speak Abkhaz instructed their students in Georgian. Those who did so were often subject to harassment and prosecution by separatist regime.<sup>16</sup>

The separatists forcibly introduced new curricula and textbooks designed to change the identity of Georgian pupils and students. This phenomenon was particularly notable in history and geography, whose textbooks were rewritten from an extremist perspective and forcibly introduced in September 2007. Teachers and parents protested, and the UN Secretary General expressed his concern about this issue in his report to the Security Council on 18 July 2007.

The most serious issue was language. The 1995 Abkhaz curriculum mandated teaching in Russian and aimed to eliminate Georgian as a language of instruction. Georgian language teaching materials and, in some places, Georgian-speaking teachers were withdrawn. The consequent disruption of teaching protocols and the forcible introduction of Russian-language materials adversely affected the quality of education, convinced some Gali internally displaced persons not to return home, and incited others to move elsewhere in Georgia to ensure their

---

<sup>12</sup> United States of America, State Department Country Report 2007

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. 3 April 2007

<sup>14</sup> United States of America, State Department Country Report 2007

<sup>15</sup> Doc. 10835, 6 February 2006, Refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

<sup>16</sup> United States of America, State Department Country Report 2007 and 2007 report of the Ombudsman of Georgia

children could be educated in Georgian. The remaining population resisted as it could: just before the Russian invasion, 16 of the 30 schools in the district still taught mainly in Georgian.

#### *Citizenship*

The Constitution of Georgia considers all residents of Abkhazia to be its equal citizens, irrespective of ethnicity. The separatists consider all residents of the region to be “Abkhaz citizens”. The population of the Gali district was put under constant pressure to take up an “Abkhaz citizenship” and to abandon their Georgian one. Separatist legislation creates great difficulties and serious administrative hurdles for residents who do not want to accept “Abkhaz citizenship”. UNOMIG expressed its concerns against such practice.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Freedom of speech and association*

Access to information is severely limited in the region. The most important media for the great majority of the population are Russian television and regional separatist run TV. Georgian channels can only be received clearly in eastern districts of the region. No Georgian-language newspapers have ever received permission to publish in the district.

Unlike Russian and Abkhazian language printed media (where some competition and limited media freedom exists), regional broadcasters are run under by the proxy authorities.

It is difficult, and sometimes dangerous, for Georgian journalists to work in the district. For example, on 28 February 2008 r, two Georgian journalists working for Mze TV (Malkhaz Basilaia and David Tsotsoria) were arrested for “illegally crossing the border” and held for 10 days. Foreign journalists, too, are sometimes threatened or worse: on 22 May this year, Marek Chunkevich, a Polish TV journalist, , was badly beaten and robbed by separatist officials.

The right of association is also severely curtailed in the district, a restriction sometimes imposed by force (see for example the cases of Levan Ghachava, Iveri Korshia, and Koba Rigvava, arrested on 1 March this year).

#### *Freedom of religion*

A 1995 decree issued by the separatists that banned Jehovah's Witnesses in the region remained in effect but was not enforced, and the group reported no problems.

Baptists, Lutherans, and Catholics also reported that they were allowed to operate in the region, but the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) reported that it was unable to do so.

The GOC Patriarch expressed his concern over Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) support of separatism in the region. He accused the ROC of subsidizing websites that encouraged secessionist sentiments, and complained that the Moscow Theological Seminary was training Abkhaz priests, despite the fact that the ROC recognizes the country's territorial integrity. On 11 March 2008 , a Georgian priest was ousted from the region by the separatists for preaching in Georgian<sup>18</sup>.

#### *Forced labor*

Georgian residents were obliged to give agricultural products (mainly hazelnuts) in certain amounts to separatist's local officials. They are either not paid or paid very little price for their products.

The proxy law enforcers regularly forced Gali residents to work in the nut plantations owned by representatives of separatist regime. They also regularly target Georgian boys, including

---

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia; 2 April,2008

<sup>18</sup> Report of the Secretary General on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia; 2 April,2008

underage boys, for forcible conscription into the separatist illegal formations (see various reports by UNICEF, UNOMIG and the US State Department, from 2006 and 2007).

### **Situation after the Russian Invasion**

The situation described above has only worsened following the Russian invasion. Russian-backed separatists substantially increased their pressure on the ethnically Georgian population. Russian troops that have recently withdrawn from their illegal checkpoints in the Samegrelo region have stationed themselves in villages throughout the Gali district. They have created new checkpoints in the villages of Pichori, Otobaia, Nabakevi, Chuburkhinji, Dikhazurga, Saberio and Mziuri as well as in the town of Gali. In effect, they have taken every crossing point between the Zugdidi and Gali districts under their control.

On 9 October 2008, the administrative border between the Abkhazia and Samegrelo with the exception of three crossing points was closed. A physical border, consisting of fences, concrete barriers, and checkpoints, is being built by the separatists and Russian troops between the Gali district and the rest of the country.

The *Abkhazia Media Center* reported that the separatists had introduced a system of permits to cross the “border”. A three month permit would cost 5 000 Russian Rubles (about), a six-month permit 10 000 Russian Rubles, and all “illegal” border-crossers would be punished by high fines and prison terms of up to 6 years. For a resident of Gali, an area devoid of industry with a subsistence economy, 140 € comfortably exceeds a month’s income.

The pricing and penalties of the newly introduced permit system are clearly designed to solidify the hold of separatists on the Gali district. Combined with the pressure to accept “Abkhaz citizenship” and the closure of Georgian-language schools, the measures are best understood as a way to ethnically change the composition of the area.

In effect, ethnic Georgians are being given an unpalatable choice: abandon your Georgian roots, or leave the region.

Additionally to these measures Russian troops started mining the right bank of the river Enguri and exploding bridges previously used by Gali residents to get to the Zugdidi district. On 24 October 2008 Russian troops and illegal formations exploded railway bridge connecting village Tagiloni (Gali district) with village Shamgona (Zugdidi district). This railway bridge was not acting, but was used by local civilians to cross the river and get to the Zugdidi district. On 1 November Russian occupying forces exploded three other bridges near villages Khurcha and Nabakevi. Only remaining cross between Zugdidi and Gali districts is central bridge which was closed on 9 October.

Explosion of the bridges and mining the right bank of the river Enguri effectively isolated Gali district, population of which largely depends on the supplies and trade with the neighboring Zugdidi district.