

## Peace Process Endangered as Civilians Shelled in S.Ossetia

/ 21 Sep.'05 / 14:06  
Civil Georgia

### Independence' Celebrations

These two incidents in the conflict zone coincided with celebrations which were underway in Tskhinvali on September 20 marking the 15th anniversary of South Ossetia's de facto secession from Georgia. A military parade in Tskhinvali, as well as the presence of officials from neighboring Russia triggered protests from Tbilisi.

A military parade in Tskhinvali was attended by delegations from breakaway Abkhazia, led by Abkhaz leader Sergey Bagapsh, as well as by officials from Transdnestria and Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian parliamentarians Konstantin Zatuli and Mikhail Markelov, as well as President of Russia's Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Mustafa Batdyev, were also among the invited guest.

Two days earlier, on September 18, Leader of Russia's North Ossetian Republic Teimuraz Mamsurov and South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity signed a bilateral agreement in Tskhinvali saying that North and South Ossetia aspire "to preserve the unity of the Ossetian people."

These developments in Tskhinvali triggered the Georgian Foreign Ministry, Parliamentary Chairperson and State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues to make separate statements condemning Russia's role.

"The Georgian Foreign Ministry estimates the moves by the North Ossetian leader as an unfriendly step [taken by] the Russian side, which backs separatism in the region," reads a statement issued by the Georgian Foreign Ministry on September 21.

Georgian State Minister for Conflict Resolution Issues Giorgi Khaindrava and Parliamentary Chairperson Nino Burjanadze mainly focused on the military parade which was held in Tskhinvali, with the participation of tanks and armored vehicles. Established ceasefire agreements ban the presence of heavy armament in the conflict zone.

"The military parade in Tskhinvali was a violation of all agreements, which have been signed since 1992 - it was a celebration of illegality, a humiliation of the world community and ignorance of the peacekeeping forces," Nino Burjanadze, Parliamentary Chairperson, said at a news conference on September 20.

State Minister Khaindrava said that presence of military hardware in Tskhinvali indicates that the Russian peacekeepers in the conflict zone are incapable of preventing a violation of agreements. "We should put forward issue of change of the current mandate of the peacekeeping operation," Khaindrava said at a news conference on September 20.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Georgian parliamentary Committee for Defense and Security Givi Targamadze announced on September 21 that the Georgian side plans to convene an international conference on South Ossetia to discuss a peace solution to this conflict. This kind of conference was already held once, in June, by the Georgia authorities, but no progress has been observed in the process of confidence building between the two sides since then.