

Q6 Legal / Reference 8

Declaration of Klara Khetaguri

My name is Klara Khetaguri. I am 68 years old. I lived in the village of Upper Achabeti. I am Ossetian but married a Georgian. There were no Ossetian families in my village, although there were some families where the men had married Ossetian wives.

My village was occupied by the Russian army and the Ossetian militia for several days. The Ossetians looted and burned the houses in the village, and the Russian army did not try to stop them.

My house was located near two buildings where a group from the Russian army was staying. The Russian army in the village included about six tanks. I had good relations with these Russian soldiers because I gave them food. One of the Russian officers had two stars on his shoulders. He told me he lives in Moscow.

I asked this Russian officer why the Russians were allowing the Ossetian militia to burn down the Georgians' houses. He told me that they didn't have any right to stop the Ossetians. The Russian soldiers tied pieces of white cloth to the buildings they were staying in. Because I was very afraid that my house would be burned down, the officer told me to tie a white cloth on my house to indicate to the Ossetians that my house, like the buildings where the Russian soldiers were staying, should not be burned. The officer told me that these buildings, including my house, would not be burned as long as the Russians remained in the village.

My son had a house not far from mine. I went to my son's house to see what had happened to it. When I got there I saw that an Ossetian was setting fire to my son's house by pouring petrol onto it and lighting a fire. I recognized this Ossetian, and asked him why he was burning my son's house since he knew my son and my son hadn't done anything wrong to him. He said that he didn't know the house belonged to my son and then called Russian soldiers standing nearby to help put out the fire. When the Russian soldiers found out that the house belonged to my son, they also helped put out the fire. They wouldn't help put out the fire unless they knew it belonged to my son. Several days later, my son's house was burned.

The Ossetians burned down all the houses in the village except the houses where the Russian were staying and my house.