

Q1 Humanitarian/ Reference 5: <http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/georgia-interview-150808>

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Georgia/Russian Federation: civilians in need in conflict affected areas

The humanitarian situation of thousands of civilians affected by the conflict in Georgia remains extremely serious. As far as the security situation allows, the ICRC is responding to the crisis by providing medical supplies and emergency assistance items, as well as providing water and improving living conditions in shelters for the displaced. The head of the ICRC's Eastern Europe department, Pascale Meige Wagner, explains.



Pascale Meige Wagner

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What is the latest on the humanitarian situation?

Throughout the region, tens of thousands of people have been displaced by the fighting and the situation is extremely serious for many civilians forced to flee their homes. They are in need of medical assistance, shelter, food, water and basic items such as cooking pots and soap.

What is the ICRC currently doing to help those affected?

The ICRC has already flown in almost 100 tonnes of relief supplies to the affected region, including medicines, medical supplies, items such as blankets, jerry-cans and hygiene kits, food supplies as well as materials to provide the population with safe drinking water. The ICRC will transport 320 tonnes more in the next week or so. An ICRC surgical team is in place to help treat the war wounded and a field hospital managed by the Norwegian Red Cross should be operational in the next few days. On Thursday 13 August, ICRC teams continued to provide help at shelter centres in and around Tbilisi. We have rehabilitated water systems in 1 collective centre for around 900 people and given emergency assistance such as blankets and hygiene kits to around 1,000 persons. On Friday, ICRC engineers were working to reconnect the water supplies to these centres, many of which are located in buildings that were abandoned, and to ensure proper sanitary conditions by installing toilets. This is crucial as people are still arriving at these shelters in numbers and many haven't had access to a proper toilet for five days.

In North Ossetia, the ICRC continues to work with the Russian Red Cross to help thousands of people from South Ossetia uprooted by the fighting. Hygiene kits, blankets and clothes have been provided to the Russian Red Cross which is distributing them to those in need. The ICRC has also provided war wounded kits to different hospitals for the treatment of the war wounded.

What about South Ossetia?

At the moment, the situation on the ground does not allow the ICRC to have access to South Ossetia but ICRC teams are ready to go and are awaiting the necessary security guarantees to become operational. Access to areas within South Ossetia and some areas of Western Georgia, where insecurity remains a problem, is crucial to allow us to evaluate needs and start delivering assistance.

Is the ICRC visiting those taken prisoner in the conflict?

In accordance with the ICRC's mandate, the organization has officially requested access from both the Russian and Georgian authorities to all persons arrested or captured in connection with the conflict. We remain in contact with both sides on the issue.

The ICRC has been visiting two wounded Russian pilots being detained by the Georgians since Monday. The visits are carried out in accordance with normal ICRC working modalities and the meetings take place in private. Each of the pilots has been given the possibility of exchanging news with their families by means of a Red Cross message. We are told both soldiers are doing fine.

The ICRC continues to seek access to all people captured or arrested in connection with the conflict.