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Forum: Social Cultural And Humanitarian Committee (GA3)

Issue: Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region

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INTRODUCTION

Georgia's internally displaced persons (IDPs) have faced an ongoing struggle for rights and recognition in Georgia since being forced to flee Abkhazia or South Ossetia during the wars in the early 90s. Over a quarter of a million Georgians displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia have retained IDP status. While some 20 percent resides in state-owned collective centers and thus visible on the fringes of mainstream society, the majority live in private accommodation with host families, friends, in rental properties or have purchased their own homes.

Despite improved policies adopted by the Saakashvili government, most of the displaced population continues to be affected by high rates of unemployment and a lack of access to housing, health, education and social services, to a greater extent than the mainstream Georgian society. In the face of a general assumption that IDPs living in the private sector are better integrated, some are actually in great need of support and particularly neglected, since they do not benefit from aid programmes provided in collective housing. IDPs are also politically marginalized with insufficient opportunities for participation in decisions affecting their lives. IDPs therefore have often come to feel powerless and apathetic about their situation.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

IDP(Internally Displaced Persons): A term used to address persons who were displaced from their own residences to another part of their country due to extreme circumstances.

Stereotype: A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Xenophobia: Dislike or prejudice against strangers.

Russo-Georgian War: A war between Georgia, Russia and Group of Self-Proclaimed Separatists which took place in August 2008 and referred as the first European War of 21st Century.

IDMC (Internal Displacement Monitoring Center- NGO): The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is the world's authoritative source of data and analysis on internal displacement. Since its establishment in 1998 as part of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the center has offered a rigorous, independent and trusted service to the international community. Their mission is to inform states regarding their policy and operational decisions that improve the lives of the millions of people living in internal displacement, or at risk of becoming displaced in the future.

OCHA: A Governmental Organization which is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also ensures there is a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort.

De-Facto Independence:

This phrase is used to characterize an officer, a government, a past action, or a state of affairs that must be accepted for all practical purposes, but is illegal or illegitimate.,

OHCHR: A branch of UN named “Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights”.

UNHCR: A branch of UN named “United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”.

GID(Geneva International Discussions):The Geneva International Discussions (GID) are international talks, launched in Geneva, Switzerland.



GENERAL OVERVIEW

The number of IDPs in Georgia has hit 290,000 in past few decades and is constantly rising due to the discriminative attitudes exposed by both Russian Military Forces and Native Citizens of Georgia. The stereotype created by Native Citizens expresses IDPs as “belligerent” which is placing

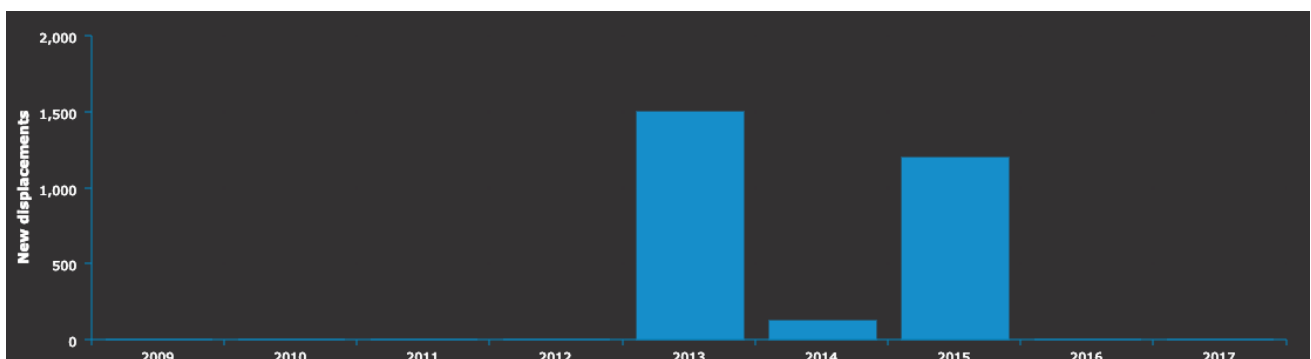
a huge obstacle on the way through solving the on-going issue. The chaos emerged in the both Abkhazia and South Ossetia firstly in August 2008. The Russo-Georgia war took place and caused many citizens to flee from the conflicted region. The war started to settle down as the Soviet Union began to fall apart and Georgia declared its independence in 1991. After the war and collapse of the Soviet Union, a war between the aforementioned separatists and Georgia left parts of South Ossetia under the control of Russian-Backed but internationally unrecognized Separatist. Following the war, a joint peace keeping force of Georgian, Russian, and Ossetian troops were stationed in the territory. A similar stalemate developed in the region of Abkhazia, where Abkhaz separatists had waged war in 1992–1993. The war resulted positive for Georgia and re-placements of IDPs were about to be implemented. All of a sudden in 2000, Vladimir Putin as known as “change of power” was elected as the President of the Russian Federation. Election of Putin deteriorated the relationship between states Georgia and Russia, reaching an alarming crisis by 2008. By 1 August 2008, South Ossetian separatists had begun shelling Georgian villages, with a sporadic response from Georgian peacekeepers in the area. Artillery attacks by pro-Russian separatists broke a 1992 ceasefire agreement. To put an end to these attacks and restore order, the Georgian Army was sent to the South Ossetian conflict zone on 7 August. Georgians took control of most of Tskhinvali, a

separatist stronghold, in hours. Russian troops had illicitly crossed the Russo-Georgian state border and advanced into the South Ossetian conflict zone by 7 August before the Georgian military response.

Russia accused Georgia of "aggression against South Ossetia" and launched a big land, air and sea invasion of Georgia on 8 August with the pretext of "peace enforcement" operation. Russian and South Ossetian forces fought Georgian forces in and around South Ossetia for several days, until Georgian forces retreated. Russian and Abkhaz forces opened a second front by attacking the Kodori Gorge held by Georgia. Russian naval forces blockaded part of the Georgian coast. The Russian air force attacked targets beyond the conflict zone, in undisputed parts of Georgia. This was the first war in history in which cyber warfare coincided with military action. An information war was also waged during and after the conflict. Nicolas Sarkozy, the President of France, which had the presidency of the European Union, negotiated a ceasefire agreement on 12 August.

Russian forces temporarily occupied the Georgian cities of Zugdidi, Senaki, Poti and Gori, holding on to these areas beyond the ceasefire. The South Ossetians destroyed most ethnic Georgian villages in South Ossetia and were responsible for ethnic cleansing of Georgians.

Russia recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia on 26 August and the Georgian government severed diplomatic relations with Russia. Russia mostly completed its withdrawal of troops from undisputed parts of Georgia on 8 October. Russian international relations were largely unharmed.

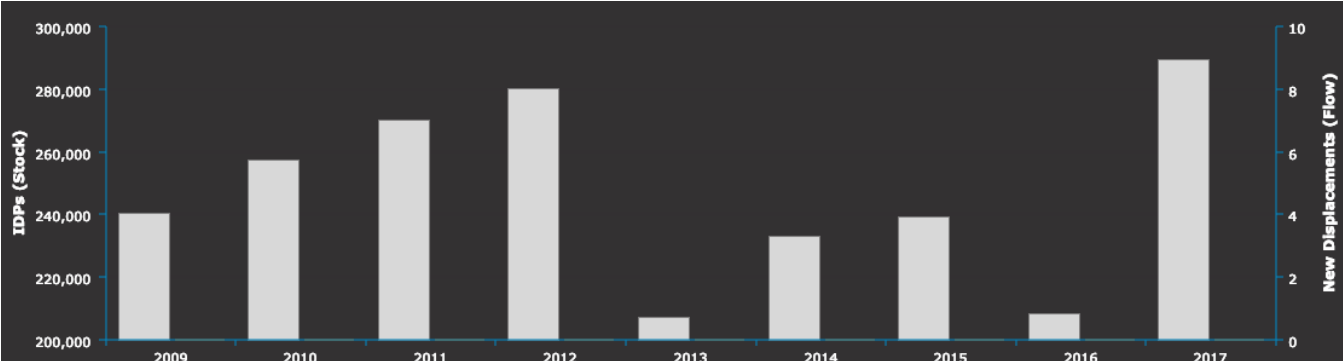


Current Situation of The Region

All the chaos in the region displaced 192,000 people and while many returned to their homes after the war, 20,272 people, mostly ethnic Georgians, remained displaced as of 2014. Since the war, Russia has occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia in violation of the ceasefire agreement of August 2008. There are two existing Russian-Backed Countries called "Abkhazia" and "South Ossetia" in the both regions recognized by Russian Federation in the first place and a few more UN states. Both of the countries are not recognized by UN and evaluated as Separatists. The situation of IDPs resembles to refugee crisis however; they can not be called as refugees since they were displaced in their own country. Thousands of the IDPs do not have access to sufficient food, aid and medical assistance.

The ones lucky enough to find a host house accommodate with people in the safe region however; majority of them is homeless or accommodate in IDP centers. IDPs are also politically marginalized with insufficient opportunities for participation in decisions affecting their lives. IDPs therefore, have often come to feel powerless and apathetic about their situation.

It is often logistically challenging to provide humanitarian assistance to IDPs. A majority of them do not live in camps, but are dispersed among local communities, making it difficult to identify IDP populations and their needs. IDPs may also be inaccessible to humanitarian organizations due to factors such as their fear of being identified by authorities, or their continuous movement from place to place. In an attempt to make IDPs more active and leader in their decision-making both NGOs and Governmental Organizations are founded. OCHA, IDMC and OHCHR are few of them which work actively on the field. To summarize the whole issue, since the rigid policy implemented by involved states it is difficult to say that the matter is getting better. Further actions must be taken to improve the status of IDPs in Georgia.



MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

Russian Federation:

The ongoing issue of East European Politics to Russia’s involvement with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the two quasi-independent states in the South Caucasus. Through this re-conceptualisations of the developments in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, combined with new empirical insights, the Russia itself asserts that they aim to increase the understanding of the conflicts in the region, of the involvement of the Russian Federation in particular, and consequently of the prospects of international conflict resolution.



Compared to other political entities in the former Soviet Union and Russian Federation, Abkhazia and South Ossetia represent an extreme case of Russian linkage and leverage. Russia focuses on the period after the Russian–Georgian war in 2008, when Russia recognised the regions’ (Abkhazia and Ossetia) independence and effectively turned them

into Russian protectorates. The rigid and imperialist policy followed by Russia caused the internal displacement of thousands. An effective resolution may not be achieved without the utmost input of Russian Federation.

Georgia:

Georgia is the predominant host country of 290.000 IDPs and has the biggest responsibility to present a safe environment for the people facing displacement. The IDPs, despite being natives of their country, are the victims of stereotypes and discrimination. State's citizens have a shocking prejudice against people who were forced to leave their home-lands. The Georgian Government seems to be neglecting IDPs' status and neglecting all the suffer IDPs are going through. Georgian-Russian relationship has reached a point in which a development on the matter can not be considered. Georgian Government should be highly encouraged to have a huge positive impact on the issue.



Abkhazia:

The conflict between Georgians and the Abkhaz people in Abkhazia, de facto independent, partially recognized republic. In a broader sense, one can view the Georgian and Abkhaz conflict as part of a geopolitical conflict in the Caucasus region, intensified at the end of the 20th century with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The conflict, one of the bloodiest in the post-Soviet area, remains unresolved. The Georgian government has offered substantial autonomy to Abkhazia several times. However, both the Abkhaz government and the opposition in Abkhazia refuse any form of union with Georgia. Abkhaz regard their independence as the result of a war of liberation from Georgia, while Georgians believe that historically Abkhazia has always formed part of Georgia. Georgians formed the single largest ethnic group in pre-war Abkhazia, with a 45.7% plurality as of 1989 but as of 2014 most Georgians left in Abkhazia want to remain independent of Georgia. The state is known to be Russian-Backed however; it has not been recognized by UN.



South Ossetia:

The Georgian–Ossetian conflict is an ethno-political conflict over Georgia's former autonomous region of South Ossetia, which evolved in 1989 and developed into a 1991–1992 South Ossetia War.

Despite a declared ceasefire and numerous peace efforts, the conflict remained unresolved. In August 2008, military



tensions and clashes between Georgia and South Ossetian separatists erupted into the Russo-Georgian War. The South Ossetians’ involvement on the matter has also sparked to displacement of thousands since both nations tend to have aggressive policies. The South Ossetia region plays a key role for IDPs and their welfare.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Dates:	Events:
1990s	IDPs fled secessionist conflicts in the two break-away regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the early 1990s due to up-coming war.
2008	The second wave of displacement swept over Georgia in August 2008 as armed conflict broke out between Russian and Georgian troops over South Ossetia. Reportedly the total number of the persons displaced during the August conflict reached 138 000 .
2008	108,600 persons returned to their places of origin while approximately 30, 000 remained to face possible long-term displacement.
2009	The IDP Action Plan for Implementation of State Strategy for IDPs, which at the time of drafting this report has been adopted by the Government of Georgia
2009-2016	Various measures were debated by both Georgia and Separatist but no agreement was achieved in an attempt to improve living standards of IDPs
2017	The “State Strategy” engagement was drafted by the Georgian Government to enhance living Standards of IDPs.
2018	The “State Strategy” started to be implemented in the certain territories specified by Georgian Government.
2019	The total number of IDPs has reached 290.000.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (the “Ministry”) is providing the Internally Displaced Persons as a result of armed conflicts (the “IDPs”), Eco-migrants, Returned Georgian migrants and Asylum seekers with long-term as well as temporary housing solutions. As a result of armed

conflict, the first and the largest wave of internal displacement in Georgia took place in the beginning of 1990s, followed by the displacement as a result of Russian-Georgian war of 2008. 20% of the territory of Georgia is occupied and therefore as of October 2017, there are 277,398 registered IDPs (89,169 families). To this day they live in protracted displacement as there is no progress in terms of the implementation of their right to return in dignity and safety to their places of origin.

The Government of Georgia provides IDPs with long-term accommodation. As of October 2017, there are 18,804 registered Eco-migrants (4,433 families) and the Ministry is also implementing housing program for them. In 2013-2016 365 Eco-migrant families were provided with accommodation. Since, many Eco-migrants are originally from Adjara region, the Autonomous Republic of Adjara also implements housing programs for Eco-migrants. Additionally, the Ministry is offering a temporary accommodation to returned Georgian migrants, who have been living abroad irregularly for more than one year. As for asylum seekers, the Government of Georgia fully finances the service of two Reception Centers designated for 132 persons. In the reception center, asylum seekers are provided with appropriate living conditions and shelter before the decision on international protection is made.

RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS AND TREATIES

Chairs' Note: Some of the resources are underlined to demonstrate prioritization. Delegates are highly advised to read them comprehensively.

1-Georgian Government'S IDP State and Housing Strategy:

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/HousingStrategies/States/Georgia_1.pdf

2-The action plan of “State Strategy” for engagement:

[http://www.gov.ge/files/225_31228_757599_15.07.18-ActionPlanforEngagement\(Final\).pdf](http://www.gov.ge/files/225_31228_757599_15.07.18-ActionPlanforEngagement(Final).pdf)

3- Detailed explanation of “State Strategy” by Georgian Government:

[http://www.gov.ge/files/225_31228_851158_15.07.20-StateStrategyonOccupiedTerritories-EngagementThroughCooperation\(Final\).pdf](http://www.gov.ge/files/225_31228_851158_15.07.20-StateStrategyonOccupiedTerritories-EngagementThroughCooperation(Final).pdf)

4- Documentation of “Housing Strategy” by OHCHR:

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/HousingStrategies/States/Georgia_1.pdf

5- Gap Analysis of Protection of IDPs in Georgia by UNHCR:

<https://www.unhcr.org/4ad827f59.pdf>

6- Georgian-Russo War's Insights:

<http://www.wikizeroo.net/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvQWJraGF64oCTR2VvcmdpYW5fY29uZmxpY3Q>

7-General Information Regarding IDPs:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/idpersons/pages/issues.aspx>

8- Useful Graphs and Insights about IDPs in Georgia:

<http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/georgia>

9- GID in October 2008, IDPs and Their Status:

<http://www.wikizeroo.net/index.php?q=aHR0cHM6Ly9lbi53aWtpcGVkaWEub3JnL3dpa2kvR2VuZXZhX0ludGVybmF0aW9uYWxfRGlzY3Vzc2lvbnM>

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- The resolution must be particularly important given that the situation in terms of human rights in the occupied territories is difficult and there is a lack of international monitoring mechanisms, which serves as another obstacle for the safe and dignified return of IDPs.
- The resolution on the matter must condemn the forced demographic changes in the occupied regions and underline the importance of the inviolability of property rights. It should also highlight the importance of humanitarian activities in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.
- On the other hand the resolution should call on the parties involved in the UN to strengthen their efforts to ensure the security and improvement of human rights protection in the occupied regions of Georgia.
- No solution can be achieved without the involvement of Ossetia and Abkhazia hence; delegates are highly suggested to come up with solutions in which both sides are satisfied and enthusiastic for the implementation.
- It is more than clear that the “State Strategy” of the Georgian Government in the occupied territories should be enhanced and improved with higher details and input. Delegates may re-build the aforementioned Strategy.

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