

Georgia Case Study
Part II: Internally Displaced Persons Viewed Externally

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The problem of internally displaced persons (referred to commonly as IDPs) and international refugees is as old as the problem of war itself. As a special report of *The Jerusalem Post* notes, “Wars produce refugees” (Radler n.d., par. 1). The post-Cold-War conflicts in Georgia between Georgia, Russian, and Georgia’s South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions displaced roughly 223,000 people, mostly from the Abkhazia part of the conflict, and the recent fighting between Georgia and Russia/South Ossetia/Abkhazia of August 2008 created 127,000 such IDPs and refugees (UNHCR 2009a, par. 1). A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) mission even before the 2008 fighting “described the needs of Georgia’s displaced as ‘overwhelming’” (Ibid., par. 2). This paper will discuss the problem of IDPs in Georgia, particularly as related to the Abkhazian part of the conflicts of the last few decades. It will highlight the efforts of one international organization (IO), the UNHCR, and one non-governmental organization (NGO), the Danish Refugee Council.

i. **Focus of Paper and Definitions**

The UN divides people as uprooted by conflict into two categories: refugees and internally displaced persons; the first group refers to people who are “forcibly uprooted” and flee from their nation to another, the second to people who are “forcibly uprooted” and flee to another location within their nation (UNHCR 2009b, par 1). Although there are also IDPs and refugees resulting from the fighting in South Ossetia, this paper will focus on the IDPs from the fighting in and around Abkhazia; refugees from or in Georgia will not be dealt with specifically because the overwhelming majority of people uprooted from their homes in relation to Georgia’s ethnic conflicts ended up being IDPs (close to 400,000 total current and returned) and less than 13,000 people were classified as refugees from these conflicts (UNHCR 2009a, par. 3). This can be confusing, because even though the UNHCR has the word refugees in its title, it is also the agency tasked with dealing with IDPs. Furthermore, though IDPs are not referred to as refugees, the word refugee is often used to describe people who are technically IDPs. From a technical definitional standpoint, this paper operates under the non-recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent nations, with only three UN Member States giving such recognition, as discussed in Part I. Also, the way events would play out was in many ways a result of the fact that “[u]nlike South Ossetia, where ethnic Ossetians constituted a majority of the population, ethnic Georgians were a plurality in Abkhazia” (Areshidze 1997, 27). This would mean that though in both theatres, Georgians would lose and would be displaced, the number of displaced would be dramatically larger from Abkhazia than from South Ossetia.

The “conflicts” in Georgia, for the purposes of this paper, will be defined as the Georgian-Abkhaz war of summer of 1992 into the spring of 1994, and the Georgian-South Ossetian war from the beginning of 1991 into the summer of 1992. All subsequent fighting, including the hostilities of August 2008 involving Russia, will be discussed as brief resumptions of these two prior conflicts, with the focus being on the Georgian-Abkhaz dimensions.

A. **Conflict and the Materialization of IDPs**

As is clear from Part I of this Case Study, Soviet authorities had a general monopoly of violence in Georgia from the 1930’s onward and, with only a few exceptions, until 1989. As Glasnost and Perestroika accelerated the development of both Georgian and Abkhaz nationalism, violence between ethnic Georgians and Abkhaz in Abkhazia began sporadically, but it was not until the “opening weeks” of the hostilities in the summer of 1992 in Abkhazia that violent action on the part of Georgian forces initiated violence directed towards ethnic cleansing and displacing people from where they lived based on their ethnicity (Mooney 1996, 200). Ethnic fighting occurred previously at a grassroots level and was not directed from above or organized on a mass level; before Georgia declared formal independence in April of 1991, the conflict between Abkhaz and Georgians was generally confined to competing protests directed against the Soviet authorities, often in relation to concern about Georgian nationalism for Abkhaz

and Abkhaz nationalism for Georgians, with a similar situation for Georgians and South Ossetians in relation to each other (Zürcher 2005, 89-98; Suny 1994 322-326; Goltz 2009, 16-20).

Christoph Zürcher points out that “neither the Abkhazians nor the Georgians had an organized capacity for violence” in 1989 (Zürcher 2005, 89). With the departure of Soviet authorities, the provocative nationalist leader of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, even before formal independence from the USSR was declared, moved his “new, untrained, and inexperienced” National Guard military forces into South Ossetia, resulting in a war lasting well over a year and many thousands of people becoming displaced (Areshidze 1997, 22). Gamsakhurdia “apparently believed in a romantic ethnic theory that the Abkhaz, along with the Chechens, were ‘real’ Caucasians [referring to the mountains], just like the Georgians” but unlike the South Ossetians; thus, he reserved his harsher policies for South Ossetia and moved aggressively against the Ossetians but not the Abkhaz (Areshidze 1997, 22). After Gamsakhurdia was overthrown, Eduard Shevardnadze was invited to take nominal control over Georgia, but “real power” was with Georgia’s “ragtag” military and its commanders, including Tengiz Kitovani, who led Georgia’s National Guard; after several Georgian government officials were kidnapped by pro-Gamsakhurdia rebels and brought to Abkhazia, Kitovani took his forces into Abkhazia ostensibly to pursue them, yet violence became far less targeted (Areshidze 2007, 26-29; Zürcher 2005, 96-96; EURII 2009, 76; Zverev 1996, part IV par. 2; ICGAT 2006, 5). Human Rights Watch (HRW) (1995) reports that it was these forces under Kitovani’s command and accompanying irregulars which unleashed the dimension of ethnic cleansing and into this conflict, which created a spiral effect of much stronger intensity when pro-Abkhaz units responded in kind:

The combination of indiscriminate attacks and targeted terrorizing of the civilian population was a feature of both sides’ deliberate efforts to force the population of the other party’s ethnic group out of areas of strategic importance. The practice was adopted first by the Georgian side, in the second half of 1992, and later, more effectively, by the Abkhaz side. The parties terrorized and forced the enemy ethnic population to flee, or took members of the enemy population hostage for leverage in later bargaining over population swaps. The Abkhaz conflict stands out in that in some cases entire villages were held hostage on the basis of the ethnicity of their population. Once Abkhaz forces had gained control of Abkhazia and the fighting died down, they prevented the free return to Abkhazia of displaced persons, who are overwhelmingly Georgian. (HRW 1995, 5)

In addition, “[b]ecause of the ethnic make-up of the population, both Georgian and Abkhaz forces were operating among both hostile and friendly population groups. This fact inevitably figures in the pattern of human rights abuses committed over the course of the conflict, because it establishes both parties’ incentives to drive civilian populations from one place to another.” The genesis this issue during this conflict is confirmed by numerous other sources (UNHCR 2009a, par. 1; Redmond 1994, par. 7-9; Wilkinson 1999, par. 4; ICGAT 2006, 5; Mooney 1996, 200; EURII 2009, 224). Thus, the problem of IDPs from Abkhazia was created during, and did not exist prior to, the 1992-1994 war between Georgian forces one side and Abkhaz Russian, Caucasian, and other regular and irregular pro-Abkhaz units on the other.

B. The Process of Creating IDPs During the Conflict

As mentioned in the last section, Kitovani’s Georgian National Guard forces and accompanying irregulars began the process of displacing people from their homes in August of 1992. HRW elaborates more fully on this, noting that shortly after Sukhumi, the Abkhazian capital, was taken by Kitovani’s forces a few days into the fighting, and “as additional Georgian forces flowed into the city... a pattern of vicious, ethnically based pillage, looting, assault, and murder emerged. Although some of the victims in Sukhumi were Georgian, the city’s Abkhaz residents were the main victims during this period of the conflict. No one disputes that all sides engaged in high levels of criminality” (HRW 1995, 22). Armed

men would enter Abkhaz homes, rough the people up, vandalize, and tell them to leave or be killed in events described as “typical” (Ibid.). A

pattern...of gross intimidation by Georgian forces for the purpose of terrorizing, robbing and driving the Abkhaz population out of their homes [emerged]. While the Georgian forces appeared to be operating under no particular command, they did seem to have a clear agenda. They roamed through the city at will, especially at night, looting and pillaging. While political negotiations took place in Moscow, armed Georgian men poured daily into Sukhumi, intoxicated by a heady mixture of nationalism and privateering.

It is also pointed out that many of the Georgians in these units and committing the abuses, and many of the worst abusers, were Georgians who had been living in Abkhazia; in the years before the USSR broke up, the small minority of Abkhaz in Abkhazia had been given disproportionate power by Soviet authorities in Abkhazia, using it to discriminate against the much larger ethnic Georgian population of Abkhazia and denying them access to power (HRW 1995, 22-23). These violent policies on the part of Georgia’s military and paramilitaries would set the stage for the Georgians’ own demise in Abkhazia, as “[t]he ethnically-based policies initiated by the Georgians in Sukhumi created simultaneously refugees and a core of fighters determined to regain lost homes;” the majority of the Abkhaz in Sukhumi fled their regional capital “during the last two weeks of August (HRW 1995, 23; Mooney 1996, 200).

Georgia’s newly created, non-professional army was unable to discipline its own troops nor stem the rise of its ethnic Georgian paramilitaries, as noted above. Expanding on HRW’s notation of the lack of control over Georgian forces, Erin Mooney (1996) remarks that Georgia’s then president, Eduard Shevardnadze, did not even try to dispute that the atrocities on Georgia’s part had occurred, and he “attributed the attacks to the government’s lack of control over troops from the Georgian National Guard” and paramilitary units, especially a group known as the Mkhedrioni; orders from above and even the “redeployment of Georgian troops from South Ossetia to...Abkhazia to protect civilians from the rampages of Georgian troops proved ineffective” (Mooney 1996, 200)

Soon after Kitovani entered Sukhumi, Abkhazia mobilized all males aged eighteen to forty, and throughout the conflict Russian soldiers, various Caucasian people from the Russian Federation’s North Caucasus (including Chechens and Ingush), diaspora Abkhaz, Cossacks and mercenaries fought on behalf of the Abkhaz; discipline was generally low among the mercenaries and volunteers, some of whom committed the “worst pillage” (HRW 1995, 20, 50; Goltz 2009, 24-26; EURII 2009, 252; Aves 1996, 27; Zverev 1996, part IV par. 7-11). Some Abkhazian Armenians, with their own history of discrimination suffered at the hands of Georgians, fought too for the Abkhaz, and an Armenian unit called the Bagramyan Battalion engaged in ethnic cleansing against Georgians (START 2008, par. 1).

The first few weeks of the conflict would prove to be the high-water-mark for the Georgian offensive and Georgian efforts at ethnic cleansing; “[b]y the fall of 1992, the Abkhaz had changed roles from the victims to the violators...in a mirror image of the events of August, [they] waged campaigns of terror against the resident Georgian population with the vengeful intent of displacement” (Mooney 1996, 201). HRW details that

The fierce combat that characterized the Abkhaz drive up the coast was compounded, on the night of October 2, by the flight of thousands of Georgian refugees....Their flight was the mirror image of the flight of Abkhaz refugees in August when Georgian forces seized Gagra. Unsurprisingly, many of the violations of human rights in October matched those in August. Many fighters on the Abkhaz side were Abkhaz refugees who had fled Georgian forces earlier, and it is evident from refugee accounts that they took revenge for what they themselves had been forced to endure. (HRW 1995, 26)

October saw “all of the territory from the Gumista river [sic] to Georgia’s border with the Russian Federation” fall to the Abkhaz and this “was accompanied by systematic human rights violations which induced the flight of a reported 40,000 Georgians” (Mooney 1996, 210). As the Georgians fled from there and other areas, Abkhaz who had earlier been displaced by Georgians moved into their houses (HRW 1995, 27; Mooney 201). HRW also described how hostages and population exchanges were also common occurrences, that “the practice of mass hostage-taking gradually became synonymous with population exchanges aimed at producing ethnically homogeneous zones.” (HRW 1995, 29).

While the Abkhaz pushed Georgians out of other parts of the country, Georgian forces managed to hold onto Sukhumi through the winter of 1992-1993, and as 1993 continued, so did “[t]he forced movement of populations and the mass taking of hostages;” but Shevardnadze was finally able to remove Kitovani from his post in early May and removed Kitovani’s ally Jaba Ioseliani, commander of the especially brutal Mkhedrioni (HRW 1995, 39; Zürcher 2005, 97). The Russians were able to organize a cease-fire in July of 1993, which prompted the return of “thousands of the Georgians who had been uprooted by the fighting of the previous fall and winter to their homes,” but around the same time, Gamsakhurdia’s Georgian rebels reappeared and destabilized the rear of the Georgian positions, attacking them from the rear from the border of Abkhazia with the rest of Georgia; in mid-September, the Abkhaz violated this cease-fire and made a concerted push for Sukhumi, and took the city back in just a few weeks as the Georgians were pressured from two sides by two enemies, but this would bring Russia in to aid Shevardnadze against Gamsakhurdia, who was defeated by the end of the year (HRW 1995 39-41; Mooney 1996, 201; Areshidze 2007, 27-28; Zürcher 2005, 96; Goltz 2009, 25-27). But defeated also were the bulk of Georgian forces in Abkhazia, and tens of thousands of Georgians fled, including the Georgians who had just recently begun returning; Abkhaz are even described as killing many ethnic Georgians in “a wave of atrocities” after taking over Sukhumi; not only Abkhaz, but also some of their allies took part (HRW 1995, 42; Mooney 1996, 201).

This effectively ended the war except for fighting in the Kodori Valley, which continued until the final cease-fire was signed in spring of 1994, but after the fall of Sukhumi, 230,000 to 250,000 people fled Abkhazia, including 50,000 from Sukhumi alone, suffering through terrible winter conditions, some not surviving, while those Georgians who remained were subject to continuing atrocities and attacks; February saw the Abkhaz take “brutal punitive action against the remaining Georgian residents of Gali, displacing anywhere between 3,000 and 15,000,” and some displacement continued even after the cease-fire was signed allowing for IDP and refugee repatriation (HRW 1996, 43-45; Mooney 201-202; EURII 2009, 78; ICGAT 2006, 6-7). Areshidze called it “the most gruesome act of ethnic cleansing in the former Soviet Union” and noted it was “the only case of a plurality nationality being ethnically cleansed by a small minority;” (Areshidze 2007, 27-28). Over one-quarter of a million ethnic Georgians were displaced during this conflict, while thousands of other non-Abkhaz also fled (Wilkinson 1999, par. 4).

C. The Issue of IDPs Post-Conflict

The agreements signed in the spring 1994 by Georgian and Abkhaz under UN and Russian auspices formally ended the fighting, provided specific and extensive provisions for the return of IDPs and refugees, including guarantees for safe return and outlines for compensation of property damage, and also provided for the creation of a Quadripartite Commission with one member each from Georgia, Abkhazia, the UNHCR, and the Russian Federation (EURII 2009, 78; ICGAT 2006, 6; LGUNSC 1994, 4-9). Post-war negotiations were focused on the issue of resettlement until mid-1997; yet the landscape of Abkhazia had shifted dramatically in the five years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, as a 1989 Soviet census showed that within Abkhazia Georgians were 45.68% of the population, or 239,872 people; Abkhaz were 17.76% of the population, or 93,267 people; Armenians were almost as numerous as the Abkhaz themselves, at 14.58% of the population or 76,541 people, with Russians right behind them at 14.27% of the population, or 74,913 people, out of a total of 525,061 people (EURII 2009, 65, 82.). By February of 1995, Georgians went from being over 45% to just 5% of the population, while the Abkhaz minority

increased its proportion to 50% and the other 45% were Russians, Armenians, and Greeks (Mooney 1995, 198). “[S]trenuous efforts” on the part of Russia and the UN to move forward on the issue of resettlement have not been very productive, as

Only a few more than 300 Georgian refugees/IDPs returned to Abkhazia in 1994 - 1995 in accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement. Further orderly UNHCR-sponsored return of refugees/IDPs was largely hampered by the prevailing insecurity in the area, the undefined political status of Abkhazia and the unresolved Georgian-Abkhaz dispute over the pace of the return. At that time, the Abkhaz side was ready to consider the repatriation of up to 200 people a week (i.e. 800 a month), while the Georgians regarded this figure as too modest⁶⁹, arguing that at such a pace the whole return process for some 250 000 Georgian refugees/IDPs, if continued, would take at least 25 years, a time span hardly acceptable to their public opinion or, in particular, to the destitute refugee/IDP community (EURII 2009, 82).

Mooney corroborates the extremely low level of repatriation, noting that only initially 1.4 % of applications were approved, and even then only a fraction of those were settled in the months thereafter, with the non-Georgian ethnicities given priority over the Georgians (Mooney 1998, 211-213).

Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi (1998) sums up the Abkhaz arguments against resettlement and the problems with them:

The Abkhaz side uses two main arguments to counter the Georgian demand for the refugees to return soon to Abkhazia. According to the Sochi protocols of April 1994, any Georgians who took part in military action should be prohibited from returning – economic difficulties and the risk of spontaneous violence are used as a second argument against their return. Neither of these arguments is convincing. The first is incompatible with any respected legal tradition: of course, war criminals should be prosecuted notwithstanding their ethnic origin, but to instigate proceedings against all those who have carried weapons is a very different matter. It is not only unfair, as people should not be prosecuted for taking one side or another in a civil war, it is also technically impossible to have independent legal bodies check the behaviour of the entire Georgian population during the war. The argument that the economic situation is unfavourable is not a very strong one either: technical and financial terms can be agreed by both parties in order to make the return of the IDPs possible. Neither of the two arguments can be invoked in relation to the return of refugees to the Gali region, which has a homogeneous Georgian population and where the return of IDPs is already an irreversible process. According to various estimates, the number of Georgians in Gali is about as high as the number of Abkhaz in Abkhazia (the latter number continues to decrease, creating a further imbalance). (Tarkhan-Mouravi 1998, 92)

Yet Tarkhan Mouravi also writes that “[n]o progress achieved on the question of political status would be of much value to the Abkhaz if the pre-war demographic balance were restored,” and fresh in the historical memory of the Abkhaz was the fact that that Stalin’s Abkhazian-born ethnic Georgian henchman Lavrenty Beria had “tens of thousands” of ethnic Georgians, Russians, and others settled in Abkhazia during the Stalin era, part of what the Abkhaz see as a “Georgianisation” of Abkhazia (Tarkhan-Mouravi 1998, 93; EURII 2009, 67-68; ICGAT 2006, 4; UNPO 2009, 4-5) Abkhaz have hoped that by stalling negotiations, they would have a chance to gain international legitimacy and draw some of their Muslim brethren who fled in the nineteenth century from the ethnic cleansing of the Tsar’s armies, and while some miniscule diplomatic recognition has come in late 2008 and 2009, the diaspora Abkhaz have not responded to attempts to bring them back (Tarkhan-Mouravi 1998, 93). Mooney notes that for the Abkhaz, “the elimination of all other ethnic groups from the territory to which they lay claim was, if

not an overriding aim of their war strategy, then a not unwelcome effect. The creation of an ethnically homogeneous area...[served to] strengthen their bid for secession on the pretext of self-determination...[they have] since resisted, often violently, the...agreed return of' IDPs;" Mooney also notes that the Abkhaz often forced those whom they were pushing out to sign a statement saying that they were choosing to leave and would never return (Mooney 1998, 198, 204). Dov Lynch (2002) adds onto this view of the Abkhaz position, that

The Georgians in Abkhazia did not flee their homes as an indirect consequence of the war: they were a target of the conflict. One of the forces driving the Abkhaz was a fear of the extinction of Abkhaz culture, and eventually the Abkhaz people. Thus 'citizenship' of the self-declared Abkhaz state cannot be allowed to include the displaced Georgian population, as this would leave the Abkhaz once again as a small minority in their own region. The tight link between ethnicity and land in such conflicts makes the return of refugees and IDPs problematic for the de facto state. (Lynch 2002, 838)

Martin Theo Jans (1998) remarks that "[t]he Georgian insistence on the return of refugees and IDPs prior to an overall political, settlement, meanwhile, disregards basic Abkhaz anxieties" (Jans 1998, 122).

January of 1995 would see Kitovani make a brief comeback and challenge the authority of Georgia's government; he sought to cross into Abkhazia "with 700 lightly armed supporters in a bid to retake Abkhazia," but he and his followers were arrested by Georgian police (Zürcher 2005, 97). The problem of militias acting on their own or with partial government support would not be over with Kitovani, however. 1996 would see elections in Abkhazia; Shevardnadze's response was to hold a vote among the Georgians displaced from Abkhazia, in which apparently 99% voted to express the view that the elections in Abkhazia were illegitimate (Chirikba 1997, par. 31).

In contrast to the almost non-existent official resettlement in other parts of Georgia, the Gali district of Abkhazia on its border with the rest of Georgia, and within a UN-monitored DMZ zone as set up in the spring 1994 cease-fire agreements, saw "spontaneous" return of thousands of IDPs such that by 1998, roughly 40,000 had actually returned (EURII 2009, 82-83). A major outbreak of violence in May of 1998 in Gali, though, would change this as two Georgian paramilitary groups, the White Legion and the Forest Brothers, with links at some level to the Georgian government, "cross[ed] the cease-fire line and Abkhazian forces...undert[ook] a security operation against them;" hundreds were killed, over 1,500 houses were "destroyed" (including a large number of which had been rebuilt by the UN), and 20,000 to 40,000 of the those that had resettled fled, though many of these would soon return (Antonenko 2005, 223-224; EURII 2009, 86). Still, throughout the postwar period, "lawlessness and insecurity," and also "partisan and terrorist activities" in the DMZ area, especially in the Gali area, made resettlement even more difficult and precarious than it already was (EURII 2009, 83, 85).

In the beginning of 2001, Abkhaz officials "virtually" boycotted the UN-sponsored negotiating framework, and this "impasse...contributed to the rising tension in the conflict zone" (EURII 2009, 88). October of that year would see militant Chechens who had fled from the ongoing Russian-Chechen war, possibly coming from within Georgia, try to take over an Abkhaz village in the Kodori part of Abkhazia; Abkhaz units held the town and the Abkhaz claimed the Chechens shot down an UNOMIG (United Nations Observer Mission In Georgia) helicopter, killing all on board, and Russia blamed Georgia in part because they were not able to prevent the Chechens from travelling through Georgian territory; however, UNOMIG later said there was no evidence that it was Chechens who shot down its helicopter (Wines 2001; BBC 2001; EURII 2009, 88; Nygren 2008, 143-145; INA 2001). It is still unclear who was responsible, on various levels, for the incident (Antonenko 2005, 230; Helly and Godia 2005, 293-294; Gordadze 2009, 42).

The year 2002 would begin a process of significantly improving the overall situation, beginning with increased security and economic investment in the regions where IDPs were returning, and then in 2003 to a resumption of high level negotiations and an improvement of the Georgian-Russian relationship in which Shevardnadze agreed to the railroad route between Georgia and Russia that ran through Abkhazia in return for a Russian commitment to work to return Georgian IDPs to Abkhazia, especially to Gali (Antonenko 2005, 240-243; EURII 2009, 88-89). Shevardnadze had also set up a government-in-exile for Abkhazia, both as a political statement and as a way to service the quarter-million Georgian IDPs from Abkhazia, complete with “eleven ministries, thirteen state committees, nine general offices and five inspectorates” (Lynch 2002, 843-844). IDPs also voted and had representation in Georgia’s parliament (UNDP 2005, 1-37). While Mikheil Saakashvili’s coming to power during the “Rose Revolution” saw a more assertive Georgia cease support for paramilitaries in Abkhazia and improve security in the Abkhaz border region by “eradicating” a rogue Georgian militia’s presence in the Kodori valley in 2006, bringing that region under control, tensions were concurrently increased when he moved the Georgian Abkhazian exile-government into that part of Abkhazia (ICGAT 2006, 19; EURII 2009, 89-90)

Overall, the situation would deteriorate in the spring of 2008 in a security and political sense, but Saakashvili attempted serious, high-level negotiation; at the same time, he had made reintegration a priority and this was totally against Abkhaz desires; Saakashvili obtained a UN General Assembly resolution which acknowledged all IDPs as having the right to return to their place of origin, but by the end of August, 2008, after a costly war for Georgia, the entire presence of the government of Georgia in Abkhazia, including in the Gali and Kodori regions, was ejected by Russian and Abkhaz troops, and a almost 2,000 additional IDPs from the Kodori region were created (EURII 2009, 90, 224; Smith 2009, 136; ICGAT 2006, 16). Tens of thousands of new IDPs from the South Ossetia region mean that there are even fewer resources to go around, and most IDPs in Georgia haven been surviving on only “meagre state benefits” since the early 1990’s, with 220,000 of them still remaining (EURII 2009, 224; IDMC 2009, 1).

D. International Organization: UNHCR

Here will be discussed the history and IDP-related efforts on IO.

UNHCR Background

The UNHCR envisioned was part of the effort at a new world order to come from the ashes of World War II; created on December 14th, 1950 to help resettle European people displaced from World War II, 1951 would see its guiding legal framework, the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, promulgated on July 28th; after that, its first major challenge was the flow of refugees from Hungary after the 1956 Soviet invasion, and the next decade would see a whole new continent challenge the UNHCR as Africa was decolonized (UNHRC 2009c, par. 1-2). As the century wore on, crises in Latin America and Asia would truly make the UNHCR a global agency, and more wars in Africa and Europe, “turning full circle,” would see its efforts refocused to its original operating locations (Ibid., par.3). For its efforts, it won the 1954 and 1981 Nobel Peace Prizes (Ibid., par. 4).

From its founding year, with a budget of US\$300,000 and 34 staff, the UNHCR now has a budget of US\$2 billion and a staff of 6,650 people in 118 countries, in 259 offices, including a headquarters based in Geneva, Switzerland (Ibid., par 4-5). Today it services over 34.4 million people (Ibid., par. 5). The UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council runs the UNHCR; a 78-person UNHCR Executive Committee makes the major decisions regarding programs and the organization’s budget, as presented by the High Commissioner (who is now currently António Guterres), every two years (UNHCR 2009d, par. 1). As described in its mission statement,

UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, UNHCR strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, and to return home voluntarily. By assisting refugees to return to their own country or to settle permanently in another country, UNHCR also seeks lasting solutions to their plight...

UNHCR seeks to reduce situations of forced displacement by encouraging states and other institutions to create conditions which are conducive to the protection of human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In pursuit of the same objective, UNHCR actively seeks to consolidate the reintegration of returning refugees in their country of origin, thereby averting the recurrence of refugee-producing situations. (UNHCR 2009e, par. 2, 4)

The UNHCR did not originally assist IDPs, “but because of the agency’s expertise on displacement, it has for many years been assisting millions of them, more recently through the ‘cluster approach.’ Under this approach, UNHCR has the lead role in overseeing the protection and shelter needs of IDPs as well as coordination and management of camps” (UNHCR 2009b, par. 2). The UNHCR estimated that there were 26 million IDPs worldwide at the close of 2008, with 14.4 million of them being assisted by the organization in 22 countries, including the nations of Sudan, Colombia, and Iraq, with the world’s three largest IDP populations (Ibid., par 3). The UNHCR also classifies IDPs as those displaced by natural disaster, but the “UNHCR is only involved with this group in exceptional circumstances, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 and 2008's Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (Ibid., par 4).

UNHCR IDP Support in Georgia

Within the documents of the 1994 cease-fire agreements, the UNHCR was given the lead role in organizing the efforts to assist IDPs and refugees, and this was endorsed by the UN Security Council in July of 1994 (Mooney 1998, 210). The UNHCR established field offices in Georgia that summer in Tbilisi and Zugdidi, and began operations in Gali and Sukhumi while also deploying Mobile Field Teams to monitor the overall regional situation and look for more fluid opportunities for resettlement; these teams were regarded as the main aspect of UNHCR’s role as protector of the displaced (Ibid.). UNHCR also has a presence today in Gori, Tskhinvali, and Akhmeta (UNHCRA 2009a, map). The organization’s “main role” in the resettlement process was to act as the liaison between IDPs, their applications for resettlement, and Georgian authorities on one side and Abkhaz officials on the other; non-cooperation on the part of Abkhaz officials, for reasons already discussed, “induced UNHCR to suspend its returnee programme at the end of the year [1994], only a few months into its mandate;” it “returned to its initial role in the area of merely keeping the displaced alive through the provision of assistance and, accordingly, scaled down the size of its presence in Georgia with a reduction of in staff from fourteen to six (Mooney 1998, 211-212, 215; EURII 2009, 82).

Though deteriorating security conditions made work for UNHCR staff more dangerous, and “Georgia is probably the only country in the world where the organization is involved in two simultaneous but separate ongoing conflicts and where the organization participates directly in complicated and prolonged peace negotiations to end the crises,” the resettlement of the Gali district saw UNHCR expand its role again as “UNHCR launched ambitious programmes to kick start the region back to life, rehabilitating agricultural projects, homes, schools and clinics;” these efforts were largely undone in the fighting of the spring of 1998; UNHCR “refuses to help rebuild the region's infrastructure for a second time until a permanent peace is concluded” (Wilkinson 1999, par. 6-14). The organization was heavily involved in trying to restart the negotiations and peace process, and has been frustrated along with every other organization involved (EURII 2009, 89).

Currently, UNHCR identifies its main goals as follows:

Pursue durable solutions for IDPs from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, assist spontaneous returnees, and provide local integration opportunities for those who are unable to return.

Promote and provide protection and assistance to IDPs, in partnership with international organizations and NGOs.

Move from material assistance activities to supporting a local integration solution within an overall exit strategy for Chechen refugees.

Strengthen local protection capacity, including the legal framework and implementation capacity, on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers.

Improve reception facilities, policies, asylum legislation and practices.

Reduce the risk of statelessness and, in cases where statelessness exists, pursue effective solutions, in particular for the ethnic Meskhetians who wish to return from Turkey to Georgia...

Respond to the needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence or those at risk of it through advocacy for humanitarian access, protection against forced relocation, and registration and documentation.

Support the shelter and non-food item needs of IDPs.

Where conditions permit, provide small-scale shelter assistance to returnees. (UNHCR 2009a, par. 11-19).

To this end, the UNHCR helps: to provide access to legal and social routes that are key to obtaining rights and assistance; to translate relevant documents into Georgian; to assist the Georgian government with crafting policy and laws relevant to IDPs; to streamline procedures and simplify bureaucratic obstacles; and to make sure all IDPs are “registered and documented,” among other specific provisions (Ibid., 20-34). These various programs are conducted for nearly 275,000 people, covering all of Georgia’s IDPs (Ibid., 35). For the year 2009, over \$44 million has been budgeted for operations in Georgia, similar to 2008’s budget (Ibid., par. 49). With UNHCR’s assistance, “Georgia adopted an Action Plan for Internally Displaced Persons,” but has been unable to implement much of it due to the situation on the ground (Ibid., 36, 44-46).

E. International Non-Governmental Organization: The Danish Refugee Council

The section deals with one NGO’s efforts in Georgia.

The Danish Refugee Council Background

The Danish Refugee Council was founded in 1956 as a response to the flight of 1,500 Hungarian refugees into Denmark in the wake of the Soviet invasion of the same year; helping both IDP’s and refugees, it emphasized “protection” of the displaced and “durable solutions.” (UNHCR 2009f, par 1). Headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark, today, it has expanded to work in over twenty countries worldwide on three continents, with “100 international and 3,700 national staff” and a budget in excess of US \$50 million; it defines itself as an “umbrella organization” constituted of 33 linked organizations and is itself led by Andreas Hamm, the Secretary General, with an Executive Committee that makes the major decisions (Ibid., 2-5). Its “Activities cover the full spectrum from relief through to durable solutions supported by developmental interventions,” including “contributing substantially to public awareness

about refugee issues,” and provide “”integration services” for resettled displaced people; the Danish Refugee Council is also networked with many major international agencies, such as UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and the UNDP (Ibid., 5-10). Its main focus is currently on Africa, where its efforts have doubled since 2007, and its top three largest single donors in descending order are the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UNHCR, and the EU (DRCAR 2009, 7-8).

The Danish Refugee Council's Support in Georgia

The Council in Georgia “works to improve the living conditions and support local integration of IDPs from the conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” and

has for years had a focus on being present at both sides of the Inguri River, separating Georgia from Abkhazia. In West Georgia, in particular Samegrelo District, DRC rehabilitates private houses and works on the conversion of so-called Collective Centres into private dwellings belonging to IDPs. The conversions are done through extensive dialogue with authorities and by mobilising and capacitating IDPs to actively take part in decisions influencing their life. (DRC n.d., par. 1, 3)

It also works to support small businesses and focuses primarily on helping returnees to the Gali district, in addition to working in general on housing, food aid and “community mobilization projects” (Ibid., 4-7).

In the aftermath of the August 2008 war, the Danish Refugee Council provided immediate aid for several months to thousands of individuals displaced from South Ossetia; from November 2006 to November 2007, it provided: 600,000 Euros worth of “[s]helter rehabilitation and income-generation programmes” for “1,200 beneficiaries in Abkhazia, [and] 800 in Samegrelo;” “[s]helter assistance” in Abkhazia, Samegrelo, and Imereti, worth 363,000 Euros, from April to November of 2006; and the “[r]ehabilitation of [two] collective centres” in Tskhaltubo worth 210,000 Euros and 310,000 Euros;” it also assisted Georgia in developing its overall refugee/IDP policy (ECHO 2009, par. 6-12; Söderköping Process 2007).

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