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Information on difficulties facing Ossetians living in Georgia. Information on difficulties for people in mixed marriages (i.e. Georgian/Ossetian) and their children in Georgia and Ossetia.

Information on the current situation of Ossetians living in Georgia was scarce among sources available to the Refugee Documentation Centre.

The Georgian newspaper *Rezonansi* reported a government statement denying any persecution of Ossetians in Georgia as follows:

“Georgian officials and NGOs have denied Russian and Ossetian media reports on the persecution of Ossetians in Georgia proper and on the Ossetians leaving their homes throughout Georgia because of the persecution. They consider it ‘not true’, suspecting that the Russians and separatists are disseminating such reports ‘to justify ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Tskhinvali region’ carried out by the Tskhinvali puppet regime and the Russian occupation troops.” (Rezonansi (6 November 2008) *Officials, NGOs deny persecution of Ossetians in Georgia proper*)

In a section titled “Moscow trying to justify ethnic cleansing of Georgians” this report states:

“With the help of Russian news channels, the Tskhinvali puppet regime is deliberately spreading untrue information about the persecution of ethnic Ossetians and the misappropriation of their property’, today’s statement by the Ministry of State for Reintegration reads. ‘They make up fact and then report as if lots of ethnic Ossetians were leaving Georgia. I declare that these so-called ‘facts’ are not true and aim to justify ethnic cleansing of Georgians in Tskhinvali region carried out by Russia, the Tskhinvali puppet regime, and the occupation troops, and breed strife in the centuries-old, good-neighbourly relations between Ossetian and Georgian people.’ The statement also says that the Georgian government will not allow oppression of the citizens of Georgia according to their ethnicity.” (ibid)

See also report by the Georgian news agency *Kavkas-Press* which states:

“They are circulating fabricated facts as though Georgia’s ethnic Ossetian citizens are massively leaving Georgia. We declare that these so-called ‘facts’ do not correspond to reality,’ the ministry’s statement reads. ‘Neither in Kakheti, nor in Borjomi or any other regions of Georgia, there have been any instances when ethnic Ossetian citizens were forced to leave their homes and leave Georgia. There has not been a single instance when ethnic Ossetian individuals were subjected to persecution, humiliation and suppression on the basis of their

ethnicity,' the document says." (Kavkas-Press (4 November 2008) *Georgia denies allegations of ethnic discrimination against Ossetians*)

The Executive Summary of a *Human Rights Watch* report on the August 2008 conflict states:

"Georgian forces beat and ill-treated at least five of the 32 Ossetians detained in August in the context of the armed conflict." (Human Rights Watch (23 January 2009) *Up In Flames – Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia*, p.4)

In a section titled "Possible Enforced Disappearance" this report states:

"Human Rights Watch received allegations that at least one Ossetian detainee in Georgian custody 'disappeared.' The Georgian government denies that any Ossetians detained during and immediately after the conflict remain in Georgian custody" (ibid, p.85)

In a section titled "Situation of ethnic Ossetians in other parts of Georgia" (paragraph 35) a report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe states:

"According to a report by Memorial 20, the de facto migration service in South Ossetia has registered 35 IDPs from other parts of Georgia. Based on interviews with those IDPs, the experts concluded that there was no indication of any kind of organised anti-Ossetian campaign in Georgia. Nevertheless, an increase in expressions of anti-Ossetian and anti-Russian sentiments following the hostilities, fear of a possible worsening of the situation and memories of events in the past did apparently contribute to the decision taken by some families to leave their current places of residence and relocate elsewhere." (Council of Europe – Secretary General (16 April 2009) *Report on the human rights situation in the areas affected by the conflict in Georgia*)

In a section titled "Human Rights Implications Of The Security Situation" an *Amnesty International* report states:

"Many elderly people, and especially those in mixed marriages who chose to remain in their homes, are deprived of help and support from younger family members who fled and remain on the other side of the ABL as a result of the conflict." (Amnesty International (7 August 2009) *Civilians in the Aftermath of War: The Georgia-Russia Conflict One Year on* AI Index: EUR 04/001/2009, p.18)

A *EurasiaNet* report states:

"To register as an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) with Georgia's Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation, applicants need a residence registration document, a passport and any civil registry document that can verify their address. Registered IDPs have access to 22 to 28 lari (roughly \$13.17 to \$16.17) a month, resettlement in housing with small plots of land, medical benefits and free textbooks for their children. But individuals who lived in separatist-controlled

territory now have no way of securing those documents. Many of them, usually ethnic Georgians or Ossetians with a Georgian spouse or children, would risk their lives if they did return.” (EurasiaNet (17 April 2009) *South Ossetia Diary: Tskhinvali Residents Who Fled to Georgia Left in Limbo* Rimple, Paul

In a section titled “Returns” (paragraph 33) a report by the *Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* states:

“Persons from certain villages previously under Georgian control, such as those directly North of Tskhinvali in the Didi Liakhvi Valley, where the Georgian local administration was based, would appear to be less welcome to return. By contrast, and as an anecdote, one of the remaining South Ossetian villagers in a Georgian village in the Prone valley said ‘It would be nice to see people come back. I lived my life with them. My Georgian neighbours never did anything bad.’” (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) (9 April 2009) *The humanitarian consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia: follow-up given to Resolution 1648 (2009)*, p.10)

In a section titled “Georgians in South Ossetia” (paragraph 35) this report mentions Georgians of mixed marriages as follows:

“The rapporteur was interested in finding out the extent to which there were persons of ethnic Georgian background still remaining in South Ossetia. She met with two ethnic Georgians of mixed marriages in two of the villages she visited. She also met with four ethnic Georgians in the centres for displaced persons she visited. She was informed by one independent source that there were two to three thousand ethnic Georgians (mostly in mixed marriages or elderly) living in Tskhinvali. None of the few ethnic Georgians she met complained about their situation. The rapporteur does not have sufficient information to draw any conclusion on the treatment of the remaining ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia.” (ibid, p.10)

Paragraph 41 of this report refers to the detention of South Ossetians by the Georgian authorities, stating:

“In terms of persons in detention, the rapporteur was informed by the South Ossetian de facto Ombudsman that 15 South Ossetians were being held in detention by the Georgian authorities (4 persons from the hostilities, the remainder from after the end of the hostilities). The Georgian authorities, according to him, have accepted they hold 8 of the persons concerned but indicate that they hold no record of the 7 other persons. Recent reports that 3 of the 7 non identified prisoners have been identified in a Georgian prison have not been confirmed by the Georgian authorities. Your rapporteur understands that clarification on the whereabouts of the 3 persons allegedly found is still underway, also with the involvement of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and she hopes that these and other unidentified persons, on all sides, will ultimately be identified.” (ibid, p.10)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints.

This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

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LexisNexis
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UK Home Office
UNHCR Refworld