

# Georgia

<b>Response to Information Request Number:</b>	GGA00001.ZNY
<b>Date:</b>	25 May 2000
<b>Subject:</b>	Georgia: Information on the Treatment of Ethnic Russians
<b>From:</b>	INS Resource Information Center
<b>Keywords:</b>	Georgia / Minorities / Russians / Discrimination / Mistreatment / Police Protection / Chechnya / Language

## Query:

Are ethnic Russians in Georgia (excluding conflict zones) subject to mistreatment, beatings, or harassment? Is police protection available to ethnic Russians? Has there been a development of anti-Russian sentiment in reaction to the war in Chechnya that could adversely effect the Russian population of Georgia?

## Response:

A review of publicly available information did not uncover any evidence of systematic mistreatment of ethnic Russians in Georgia. The United States Department of State reports that the government of Georgia generally respects the rights of minorities and allows instruction in languages other than Georgian (*Country Reports 1999 2000*). Although the Constitution of Georgia designates Georgian as the official language, government officials will accept from citizens official applications written or spoken in languages other than Georgian (United Nations 28 Mar. 2000). The Russian language is designated as a national minority language in Georgia (*Novoye Vremya* 22 Feb. 2000). The government also supports the operation of Russian-language schools, Russian-language theatres, Russian and Russian-Georgian cultural centers, and the collection of minority language literature in its libraries (United Nations 28 Mar. 2000).

A Staff Advisor with the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe stated that he has never heard of any instances of mistreatment of ethnic Russians in Georgia. He continued that most ethnic Russians are very well integrated in Georgian society, many of them speaking fluent Georgian. When asked whether police protection would be available to an ethnic Russian should an instance of harm befall him, the CSCE staff member responded that Russians would experience the same difficulties confronting all Georgian citizens in obtaining police protection, and not any unique treatment on account of ethnicity (CSCE 23 May 2000).

The Executive Director of the London Information Network on Conflicts and State-Building, a partner of the non-governmental organization "Caucasus LINKS" based in Tbilisi, echoed the sentiment of the CSCE. He stated that he has never heard of any instances of discrimination of ethnic Russians in the majority of Georgia and that Russians and Georgians have long lived respecting each other in Georgia. (His assessment does not include the unique circumstances of ethnic groups located in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.) He added that the escalation of hostilities in Chechnya has not instigated any anti-Russian sentiment directed at the Russian population of Georgia. He characterized any disapproval of the war as political in nature and directed at the Russian authorities, not focusing on the Russians in Georgia (LINK 24 May 2000).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC 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.

**References:**

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1999*. 2000. United States Department of State. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office. [Internet] [http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/1999\\_hrp\\_report/georgia.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/georgia.html) [Accessed on 24 May 2000].

Executive Director. London Information Network on Conflicts and State-Building (LINKS), London. 24 May 2000. Telephone Interview.

*Novoye Vremya* [Yerevan, in Russian]. 22 February 2000. "Armenia Threw the Baby Out with the Bath Water by Banning Russian Teaching, Paper Says." (BBC Worldwide Monitoring 24 February 2000/NEXIS).

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United Nations. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, High Commissioner on Human Rights. 28 March 2000. (HR/CESCR/NONE/1999/15). *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties in Accordance with Article 16 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (25 April-12 May 2000)*. [Internet] <http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/MasterFrameView/1908cfa8f6e47fc9802568b0005b6993?Opendocument> [Accessed on 24 May 2000].

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