

Georgian delegation statement, Warsaw, September 29, 2009, OSCE HDIM, Working Session 3

Mr. Moderator,

I took the floor to speak about appalling human rights situation in the occupied regions of Georgia.

My main focus today will be the Gali district, one of those few places in occupied territories, where ethnic Georgians still remain.

Restriction of freedom of movement, forceful conscription and passportization, permanent breaches of right to education, intimidation, persecution and arbitrary detention on ethnic grounds - the list and number of human rights abuses are striking.

Situation has significantly deteriorated since the deployment of Russian so called "border guards" across the occupation line, for which the fate of both Georgians and Abkhaz is equally irrelevant.

Remaining ethnic Georgian population is deliberately denied the freedom of movement. They are deprived from their rights to see their family members living on the other side of the occupation line. There have been numerous cases of detentions of those still trying to cross the ABL, charged for "illegal crossing of Border line". These restrictions equally apply to those local residents, who try to cross the ABL in order to receive medical treatment. Considering the poor medical equipment and personnel in this region, these restrictions may have fatal consequences.

The right to education on native tongue is violated. The policy, carried out by the Occupying force and its proxies inter alia includes purposeful ban on the use of Georgian textbooks; In Tkvarcheli district, the Georgian language teachers were fired for teaching Georgian. Furthermore, the pupils heading to their schools on other side of ABL, are stopped and impeded to attend the classes. School graduates are given certificates where instead of Abkhaz or Georgian, the Russian language is indicated as the native tongue.

Cases of detentions of ethnic Georgians, followed by questioning and exerting pressure to voluntarily refuse Georgian citizenship are reported frequently. As a result of forceful passportization, male youth automatically fall under yet another policy of compulsion, which is forceful conscription to the Abkhaz army.

Even though the ethnic Georgians are the primary target, Abkhaz and other ethnic groups living on the occupied territories are also exposed to human rights abuses and harassments from the part of Russian militaries. According to our information extremely severe cases of murder, looting, rape occur in these Georgian territories currently under Russian effective control.

Under such circumstances, absence of international watchdogs on occupied territories further aggravates already alarming situation. The absence of international presence inevitably turns these territories into the terra incognita in terms of respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms for international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Indeed, we can not further neglect en masse violations of human rights and ongoing ethnic cleansing in European dimension.

Georgia has been raising these issues at every opportunity, however so far these attempts have not yielded any results. We have been stressing the need to open the crossing points and ensure access to the occupied territories, which is one of the key requirements of the August 12, 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, at every meeting in the frames of international discussions in Geneva. However, despite the numerous proposals elaborated by

thee Co-Chairs of the Geneva Discussions representing the EU, UN and OSCE - we have not been able so far to soften the inhuman position of the representatives of the Russian occupation force and their proxy regimes and to move forward.

Against this background I want to appeal to all OSCE participating States once again to stand up and exert maximum pressure on Russia to allow international observers and human rights watchdogs to enter the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region, Georgia. Their presence is vital to prevent the oppression of remaining ethnic Georgians.

Thank you for your attention.

Some cases of human rights violations in the Occupied Territory of Georgia - Gali district

October 8, 2008. The members of separatists' mountainous battalion fired and robbed Georgians houses

October 16, 2008 The separatists' police robbed and burned the Georgian residents houses in the villages of Zardiaantkari and Gugutiantkari in Gori district.

According to our information on the territory of the village Nabakevi (Gali district) a joint Russian and Abkhaz post is located. They are stopping buses going to village Khurcha (Zugdidi district) and asking for people to pay money for "a pass" and if someone has a large amount of nuts in his baggage soldiers are asking for more money.

June 1, 2009. Sukhumi. Village Eshera. 14 years old Eka Margania was kidnapped by two Russian soldiers. She was raped by them in the woods. The girl managed to call her brother. The Soldiers got extremely upset and executed her. When the girl was founded she had 18 bullets in her body. Artyom Moiva and Andre Zarazov were arrested and interrogated, however later they were released.

June 14, 2009. Ochamchire. Village Jekmuri. 4 drunk Russian soldiers raped 2 women in their house: 19 years old Lana Badzagua and 24 years old Nia Badzagua. Then they (soldiers) tied them and kept in a basement for 6 hours. Lana Badzagua is still treated in Sukhumi hospital for mental diseases.

August 16, 2009. Russian border-guards are trying to control all the roads and bypass roads in Abkhazia. Especially in villages of Gali – Nabakevi, Pichora and Tagiloni. To pass from Abkhazia to Zugdidi, in particular through the Enguri bridge, is possible only via paying a bribe. Those who have Russian passports pay less.

August 21, 2009. Russian soldiers have robbed 2 buses in Gali, heading to Village Nabakevi . Occupants checked passengers and took away money, products and personal belongings. In Village Zemo Bargebi, near the Administrative Boundary Line, Russians robbed Geno Rigvava and took away 2 tons of nuts from him.

The young people can not receive the abkhazian school certificate until they get abkhaz passports. The same applies to the teachers and technical workers. In the beginning of new academic year each person has been threatened to be fired in case they refuse to acquire abkhaz passports. People need to gather many documents for compulsory passportization, which might cost more than 100 US dollars. It is noteworthy that together with forced passportization, persons are forced to sign a questionnaire stating the following "I voluntarily refuse to be a georgian citizen."

August 13, 2009 in the secondary school of Gali lower zone village of Khidi the director of the school together with two administrative employees and one of the teachers have been fired without ground. The reason for this became a video footage of Georgian event held in the school during which children and teachers were singing the Georgian anthem, dancing Georgian dances and saying poems of Georgian poets. It is worth mentioning that the same school would hold events in Abkhaz language, which also was recorded on the same footage. However, this event has been cut.

September 2, 2009 The Tkvarcheli de-facto law enforcers carried a raid related to call up for military service. In result of this raid the two local inhabitants were arrested and forcefully taken to serve in Abkhazian military.

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