Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1305 (1996)[1]

Humanitarian situation of the displaced persons in Georgia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls and reaffirms its Resolution 1059 (1995) and Recommendation 1263 (1995) on the humanitarian situation of the refugees and displaced persons in Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in particular their references to Georgia.

2. Georgia continues to suffer from grave economic and political dislocation since its independence in 1991. Like Armenia and Azerbaijan it faces the burden of housing and feeding a great many displaced persons arising from ethnic conflicts. The majority of these are ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia and South Ossetia

3. There are currently between 250 000 and 300 000 displaced persons in Georgia. They are housed in hotels, hospitals, public buildings, with relatives and host families. A government registration scheme is under way with assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Legislation has been drafted to define the rights and entitlements of displaced persons and refugees. United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been operating in the country since 1992.

4. It is clear that international funding for United Nations programmes is far from adequate. The vast majority of the displaced persons remain unemployed; their living accommodation and conditions, especially for children, are unacceptable; health services are deficient; and there is a rising threat of ethnic tension with the local population.

5. Evidence is growing of "donor fatigue" on the part of the international community towards further funding of humanitarian aid to the Caucasus. In Georgia the risk of bread shortages is growing daily as a result of a lack of response to the latest appeal by the World Food Programme and as farmers revert to subsistence farming encouraged by the end of the state subsidy for bread.

6. Despite the cease-fire agreement of 1994 there remains no early prospect of a negotiated political settlement with Abkhazia which would provide for the return home of 200 000 ethnic Georgian displaced persons unless Russia, as the "protecting power", can be persuaded to place greater pressure on the separatist authorities.

7. Moreover, in addition to refusing to allow the peaceful return of the displaced persons, the Abkhaz authorities hamper the operations of the United Nations agencies. They have, however, permitted ICRC access and the establishment of a United Nations/Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (UN/OSCE) human rights monitoring unit.

8. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

8.1. provide every possible co-operation and assistance to Georgia, now that its parliament has special guest status with the Assembly, including the drafting of legislation on refugees and displaced persons to take account of international standards and Council of Europe conventions;

---

1. Assembly debate on 24 September 1996 (27th Sitting) (see Doc. 7629, report by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Atkinson). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 September 1996 (27th Sitting).

8.2. firmly insist that the Government of Georgia accede without delay to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol;

8.3. invite the member states:

a. to urge the Abkhaz separatist authorities to allow the return home of all displaced persons without threat or hindrance, and to allow the United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organisations to operate without hindrance with a view to providing the displaced persons with the necessary aid and assistance;

b. to urge the Abkhaz separatist authorities to abstain from holding elections or referenda prior to the return of all refugees and displaced persons;

c. to maintain and, if possible, increase their generous responses to further appeals for funding humanitarian assistance to Georgia, and especially to the World Food Programme appeal to avert a bread shortage and to that of the UNHCR;

d. to support the implementation of the programme of action adopted by the regional conference to address the problems of refugees, displaced persons, other forms of involuntary displacement and returnees in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and relevant neighbouring states (Geneva, 30-31 May 1996);

e. to give renewed consideration to the creation of a unified United Nations agency for the Caucasus along the lines of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA);

8.4. invite the Russian Government, now that it has accepted obligations as a full member of the Council of Europe, as a matter of urgency, to urge the Abkhaz authorities to accept the considerations in paragraph 8.iii.a and to promote a negotiated settlement which will encourage reconciliation, reconstruction and a return to stability.