



Recommendation 1570 (2002)¹

Situation of refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Recommendation 1263 \(1995\)](#) and [Resolution 1059 \(1995\)](#) on the humanitarian situation of the refugees and displaced persons in Armenia and Azerbaijan, [Recommendation 1305 \(1996\)](#) on the humanitarian situation of the displaced persons in Georgia, and [Recommendation 1335 \(1997\)](#) on the refugees and displaced persons in Transcaucasia.
2. The Assembly is concerned by the fact that a decade after so-called ethnic conflicts that plagued the region after the collapse of the Soviet Union, still more than one million people remain displaced in the South Caucasus. Many of them live in refugee camps in alarming conditions, and are fully dependent on the presently insufficient humanitarian assistance available, with no prospects for the future.
3. These conflicts, initially perceived as short-term, remain unresolved today. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the efforts of Georgia and the Georgian refugees to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Abkhazia and urges the government to continue peaceful negotiations with the parties concerned. Although it is clear that a final solution of the refugee situation, and in particular the possibility for their return to home areas, depends on a peace settlement of the various conflicts, certain issues of a humanitarian nature should be resolved irrespective of political considerations.
4. In particular, the Assembly stresses that under no circumstances should the displaced populations be used as an argument for political aims. Durable solutions, including integration for those who wish to integrate, should be elaborated and implemented without further delay in full co-operation with the international community.
5. In this respect, the Assembly notes with satisfaction some positive developments in the national policies of the countries concerned. In particular, the New Approach in Georgia and the National Programme in Azerbaijan indicate the change in the attitude of the Georgian and Azeri Governments.
6. The Assembly is fully aware of the difficult economic situation in the three republics, and in particular of a high rate of unemployment which – to a great extent – concerns primarily the local population. The Assembly recognises the need for foreign investments and assistance to revive national economies in the region.
7. In this context, the Assembly is concerned by the considerable reduction in international humanitarian aid as a result of “donor fatigue”. While recognising that it is important to avoid creating dependence on this aid, it believes that the withdrawal should be offset by its replacement by development programmes aimed at promoting self-sufficiency among displaced as well as local vulnerable populations.
8. The regional parliamentary co-operation, launched in September 1999 by the Speakers of the Parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and the President of the Assembly, could provide a useful forum for defining solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced persons. Therefore, the Assembly calls

1. Assembly debate on 27 June 2002 (23rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 9480](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mrs Vermot-Mangold). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 June 2002 (23rd Sitting).



on the parliaments of these three countries to enhance their co-operation, in particular by organising joint parliamentary seminars on issues of common interest and by sharing experiences on successful assistance programmes.

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

urge the member states of the Council of Europe:

- a. *to continue providing humanitarian aid to the countries in the region, and to ensure that it will not be phased out before it is replaced by development assistance;*
- b. *to contribute generously to the funding of the programmes and projects relating to housing, education and job-creation for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs);*
- c. *to give their financial and technical support as well as their expertise to the elaboration of vocational training schemes, in particular for women and young people;*
- d. *to offer the necessary expertise and manpower for the de-mining of the region.*

urge the three republics concerned:

- a. *to continue their sincere efforts towards peaceful settlements of the conflicts in the region with a view to the return of all refugees and displaced persons who so wish to their places of origin;*
- b. *to refrain from instrumental use of refugees and displaced persons for political aims;*
- c. *to elaborate and implement, in co-operation with the international community, overall strategies for durable solutions;*
- d. *to provide refugees and IDPs with comprehensive and clear information on their rights and on their choice between return and integration;*
- e. *to provide every refugee with the opportunity of local integration, and to take measures to facilitate this process;*
- f. *to review their domestic law with a view to amending any provisions likely to hinder the process of integration;*
- g. *to seek international funding for the implementation of concrete projects in the field of housing and income-generating activities for refugees and internally displaced persons;*
- h. *to ensure access to health care and transparency, and exercise better control over the distribution of international aid and medicaments;*

urge the Armenian authorities:

- a. *to facilitate access to land for IDPs and refugees, but not in occupied territories;*
- b. *to include displacement as a factor of vulnerability in the government-run vulnerability assessment system (Paros) used to determine eligibility for the payment of state family benefits;*
- c. *to solicit international assistance, and to draw the attention of the Armenian diaspora to the alarming living conditions of refugees and IDPs;*
- d. *to seek international assistance for the establishment of a special fund which would provide refugees and IDPs with basic health care and medicines;*

urge the Azeri authorities:

- a. *to improve the living conditions of the displaced population in refugee camps;*
- b. *to encourage and sponsor self-sufficiency among refugees by the introduction of income-generating programmes;*
- c. *to increase the involvement of relevant non-governmental organisations and representatives of refugees and IDPs in the elaboration of concrete projects;*

urge the Georgian authorities:

- a. *to refrain from any hasty repatriation of the Chechen refugees before the security conditions in Chechnya allow for safe returns in dignity;*
- b. *to grant the right to vote in national and local elections to the displaced Georgian citizens;*

- c. *to ensure the access of the displaced population to land under the same conditions as the local population;*
 - d. *to adopt and implement the law on the return of Meshketian Turks in compliance with the commitment undertaken by Georgia upon its accession to the Council of Europe;*
 - e. *to enforce the property rights of potential returnees of Ossetian origin.*
10. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
- ensure the continuation of the involvement and commitment to the political dialogue and confidence building within and between the three republics;*
 - step up concrete programmes that are within its remit;*
 - promote the long-term solutions in regard to refugees and displaced persons in the region;*
 - invite the Council of Europe Development Bank to respond positively to the projects submitted by the three republics.*