



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Russia - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Monday 14 May 2009

Treatment of Georgians by Russians - particularly deportations simply by reason of nationality, recent treatment and also dating back to 2006 (and older information if available)

A report by the *US Department of State* under the heading '2008 Human Rights Report: Russia' subheading 'Freedom of Movement within the Country, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, Stateless Persons' states:

"Georgian diaspora groups in Russia reported no major campaign against their communities in response to the August conflict over the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. An anti-Georgia campaign following the 2006 diplomatic row between Russia and Georgia resulted in the deportation of approximately 4,000 ethnic Georgians, three of whom died in detention." (US Department of State (25th February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Russia*)

It also states under the heading National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

"During the August conflict with Georgia, in contrast with the 2006 diplomatic dispute between Russia and Georgia, Russian authorities did not open a campaign against the approximately one million ethnic Georgians living in Russia. At the time of the 2006 dispute, Russian officials stepped up actions against ethnic Georgians. Approximately 4,000 persons were deported, and there were raids on Georgian businesses, police demands for lists of Georgian students, and an interruption in transportation and postal links." (ibid)

A report by *UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)* under the heading 'Draft Report Of The Working Group On The Universal Periodic Review Russian Federation' states: (pg 12)

"Georgia recommended that Russia de-occupy the territories of Georgia – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region including South Ossetia, and until remaining in the territories in question, to comply with the obligation incumbent upon the occupying power by the rules of the international humanitarian law. It further recommended to comply with the provisional measures prescribed by the International Court of Justice and recommended to implement in good faith relevant provisions of the Resolution 1648 (2009) adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It recommended halting forced distribution of passports certifying Russian citizenship among ethnic Georgians in the occupied territories controlled by the Russian armed forces. It recommended putting an end to all practices limiting and/or violating the human rights of ethnic Georgians in the territories controlled by the Russian armed forces – including, but not limited to, access to education in Georgian language, freedom of movement of ethnic Georgians and right to freely choose the place of their residence." (UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC))

(6 February 2009) *Draft Report Of The Working Group On The Universal Periodic Review Russian Federation*)

A report by *Human Rights Watch* under the heading 'Up In Flames Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia' states: (pg 10)

"Residents of Akhagori district—an area in the east of South Ossetia populated mostly by ethnic Georgians and currently occupied by Russian forces—face threats and harassment by militias and anxiety about a possible closure of the district's administrative border with the rest of Georgia. Both factors have caused great numbers of people to leave their homes for undisputed Georgian territory."(Human Rights Watch (23 January 2009) *Up In Flames Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia*)

It also states (pg 11)

"The permanent forced displacement of thousands of people cannot be countenanced. As it exercises effective control over South Ossetia, Russia has an obligation to provide security to all persons living there, regardless of ethnicity; this is especially urgent in Akhagori district. Ethnic Georgians displaced from South Ossetia should be allowed to voluntarily return."(ibid)

A report by the *UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)* under the heading 'Compilation Prepared By The Office Of The High Commissioner For Human Rights, In Accordance With Paragraph 15(B) Of The Annex To Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 Russian Federation' subheading 'Minorities and indigenous peoples' states:

"CERD noted with concern reports about searches of Georgian businesses, police demands for lists of names of Georgian students, identity checks, destruction of identity papers, detention in inhumane conditions, deportations under a simplified procedure and other repressive measures against Georgian nationals and ethnic Georgians in 2006".(UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) (22 December 2008) *Compilation Prepared By The Office Of The High Commissioner For Human Rights, In Accordance With Paragraph 15(B) Of The Annex To Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1 Russian Federation*)

An article by *BBC News* under the heading 'Georgians deported as row deepens' states:

"Few of the returnees seemed happy to be back in Georgia Russia has deported a planeload of Georgians, amid a deepening diplomatic row sparked by Georgia's recent arrest of four alleged Russian spies. An aircraft carrying about 130 Georgians touched down in the capital, Tbilisi, at about 1700 (1300GMT).

The deportations were part of a series of punitive measures taken by Russia." (BBC News (6 October 2006) *Georgians deported as row deepens*)

It also states:

“Some said they felt they had been deported because they were Georgians, not because they were illegal immigrants, our correspondent added.” (ibid)

A report by *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* under the heading *Georgian foreign minister comments on relations with Russia, NATO states*:

“Georgian Foreign Minister Gela Bezhuashvili has condemned Russia's treatment of Georgian deportees. Speaking in a newspaper interview, he alleged that the "majority" of expelled Georgians had the correct documents and were deported illegally. Bezhuashvili added that the Georgian government would provide assistance to deportees and was in fact encouraging other Georgians to return home.” (BBC Worldwide Monitoring (24 October 2006) *Georgian foreign minister comments on relations with Russia, NATO*)

It also states:

“Bezhuashvili] I would start with why they are being deported and how they are being deported. I still fail to understand the way in which citizens of Georgian nationality are being treated in Russia. People are being taken in on the basis of their nationality, being held in detention centres for weeks, and are then expelled as criminals.”(ibid)

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.

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