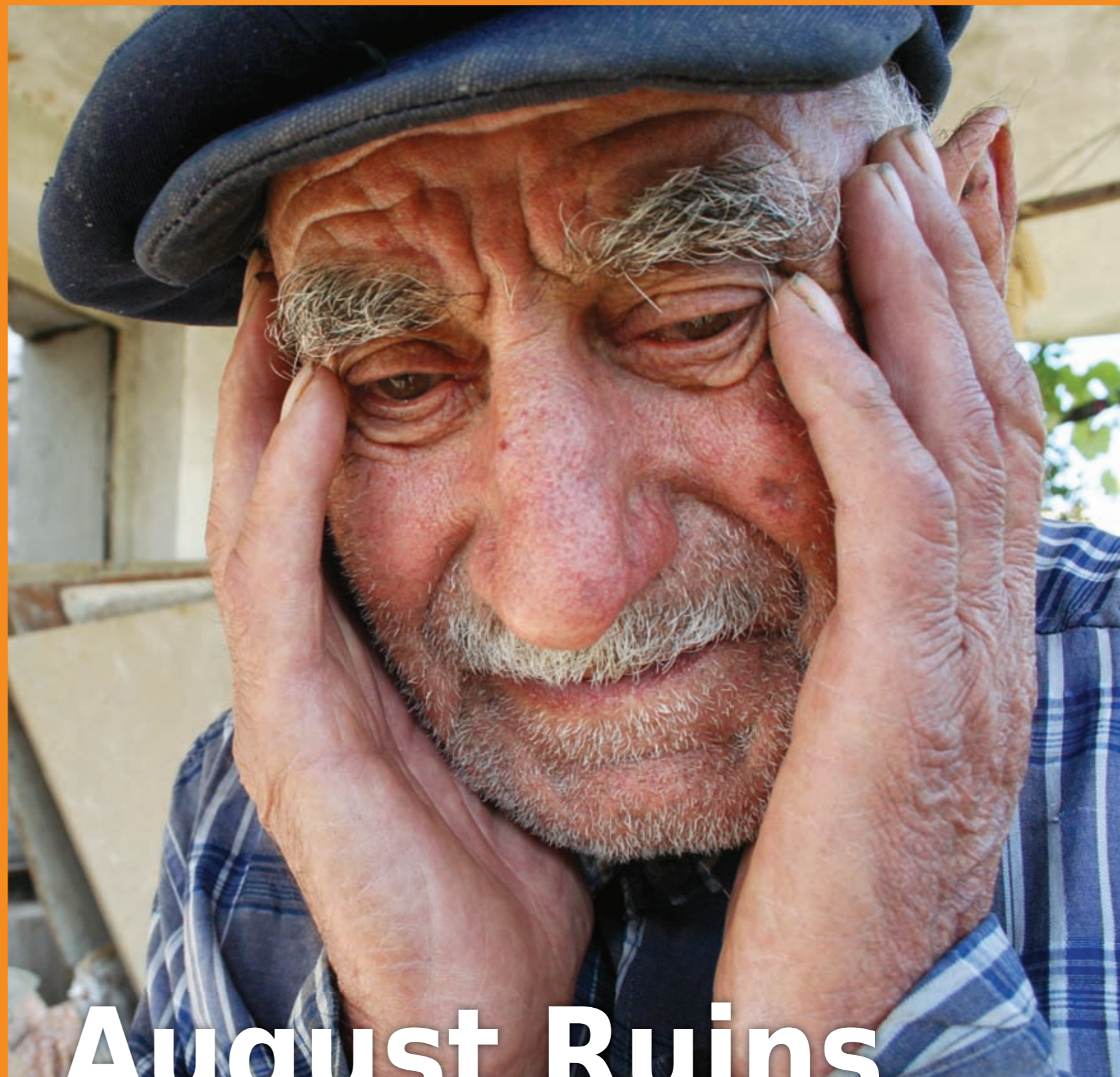




August • 2008

AUGUST RUINS



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Report of the Georgian Non-Governmental Organizations
on Violation of Fundamental Human Rights &
International Humanitarian Law
August War, 2008



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on Violation of Fundamental Human Rights &
International Humanitarian Law
August War, 2008**

Participating Non-Governmental Organizations:

Georgian Young Lawyers' Association

„Article 42 of the Constitution“

Human Rights Center

„21st Century“

Center for the Protection of Constitutional Rights

TBILISI 2009



OPEN SOCIETY GEORGIA FOUNDATION
ფონდი ღია საზოგადოება საქართველო

The report has been prepared and published with the support of "Open Society - Georgia Foundation"

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Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deep gratitude to all those young people who went to the villages in the conflict zone and the declared “buffer zone,” just after the hot phase of the war and despite the potential hazards, met the victims of the violence. They were the first people to begin collecting information and evidence to determine the circumstances of the crimes. They collected information both in the IDPs settlements and in the villages where the population returned after the Russian military forces had left. Those young people are:

Nino Khaindrava, Natia Katsitadze, Sopo Japaridze, Shorena Latatia, Ketevan Bebiashvili, Ketevan Abashidze, Nino Jomarjidge, Eka Meshveliani, Mariam Maisuradze, Tamar Abazadze, Mariam Takaishvili, Ketii Aghoshashvili, Sopo Tsakadze, Giorgi Dvaladze, Vakhtang Janazashvili, Tamta Mikeladze, Eka Lomidze, Simon Papuashvili, Tea Tedliashvili, Tamar Gabisonia, Vanda Jejelava, Tamar Shotadze, Dimitri Khachidze, Rusudan Mchedlishvili, Tamta Tepnadze, Tsira Javakhishvili, Kakhaber Kakhaber, Ani Tvaradze, Neli Japaridze, Beka Kvitsiani, Natia Tsalani, Nika Legashvili, Sopo Aleksidze, Rati Abakelia, Lasha Chincharauli, Ana Loria, Kakha Kvashilava, Aleksandre Noselidze, Koba Bochorishvili, Besik Kaishauri, Nino Tsereteli, Paata Gachechiladze, Vazha Eradze, Ana Chapide, Soso Janashia, Akaki Samkharadze, Emzar Paksadze, Davit Metreveli.

We wish to express special thanks to all those people who could create the photo and video evidences of the war and its results during the hardest days of August. Unfortunately, the names of those people are unknown to us in many cases. During the preparation of this report all that photo and video material, found by us online, had great importance as a visual evidence to many stories told us by our respondents. Since in most cases the names and surnames of the authors of those photo material are unknown to us, once more we would like to thank each of them for installing their work into on-line open resources and their availability.

Finally, we would like to express gratitude to all the persecuted people who, in spite of the great pain, found strength in themselves to talk to us about their grief. We also thank the inhabitants of Ergneti village, whose help was of great importance for the checking up facts and filling in the lacking information in the final stage of the work.

Methodology

The report of the 2008 August war transpired as a result of material collected by the Georgian non-governmental organizations Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Human Rights Center, "Article 42 of the Constitution", "21st Century", Center for the Protection of Constitutional Rights, and researchers they selected. Preparing the report would have been impossible without an ardent desire to restore justice, an attitude clearly discernable among those persons who have survived the war. Their assistance was crucial in establishing the facts and verifying information.

The work is also significant in that it is the result of rapid and organized actions of Georgian human rights groups committed to documenting the breach of norms of human rights and humanitarian laws immediately after the end of the war, in a coordinated manner. Remarkably, organizations involved in this project continue to defend the interests of up to 1,000 war victims in the European Court of Human Rights.

All available methods for documenting war crimes and preparing similar reports were used in the preparation of this document. For a year and half we have endeavored to maximally collect and fully analyze the materials that chronicle the 2008 conflict. To this end, data was processed based on a special methodology we have developed and by applying fact-comparison technology.

The first part of the report describes the conditions leading up to the August 2008 events and is based on multiple-sourced research and literature about the Georgian -Ossetian conflict. We applied academic research methodology where the aim is to comprehensively evaluate the problem, establish the origin and conflict dynamics. We have introduced a broad spectrum of issues and reasoning to interested parties.

The remaining chapters of the report are based primarily on personal accounts and interviews with IDPs. We created a platform for those persons affected by the conflict to describe their own tragedies, as the conflict dynamics, motivation of the parties, and scale of the tragedy, are best illustrated in the stories of conflict victims. All other materials that were obtained through open resources were used to verify these very stories and identify the facts.

The main objective during the research was to use all available means to verify each fact and detail communicated to us during the interviews. To this end we analyzed several materials:

- 21 reports published by various Georgian and international non-governmental and interstate organizations after the conflict;
- Various documents and information published by the Government of Georgia over year and a half;
- Daily reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
- Spot-reports of the OSCE Observer Mission available on-line;
- Media reports of the conflict by the Georgian, Russian, and Western media outlets, as well as media-analysis;
- Documentation, testimonies, and final reports submitted with the "Interim Parliamentary Commission Studying the Military Aggression and Other Actions of the Russian Federation to Undermine Territorial Integrity of Georgia" of the Parliament of Georgia;

- The report and attached documentary materials of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, set up under the aegis of the European Union. With the objective of acutely understanding population movement and internal migration processes, we performed a full-scale research of available statistical data.

- Annual reports and census data from the State Department for Statistics of Georgia;
- The Ossetian on-line sources;
- Post-2002 data of various elections held in Georgia, including big portion of the territories under the Russian control currently;
- Demography and statistical data available at various internet sources on the migration processes on the territory of former South Ossetian Autonomous District;

And finally, for verification purposes, we have extensively employed satellite imagery, maps and surveys available on-line, in addition to representative images of the conflict territories.

On publicly available on-line resources, any interested person can survey the town of Tskhinvali and the condition of its neighboring villages after the war. Upon the request of **Amnesty International**, research was conducted by the Human Rights Department of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, whose photographs, maps, and analysis are combined in the report published on 9 October 2008 “**High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and the Conflict in South Ossetia**” Additionally, similar comparative analysis of satellite imagery was conducted by the UN specialized organization **UNOSAT**, whose information, including the attached imagery and maps, is also available on-line.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science conducted its research on approximately 1,000 square kilometers, including the town of Tskhinvali and its neighboring 24 villages. The objective was to assess the degree of demolition and destruction of the civil infrastructure. The southern and eastern parts of Tskhinvali fell within the cover zone. Satellite materials were obtained in full from the two dates: 10 August 2008, when the Georgian armed forces withdrew, Tskhinvali and its adjacent territories had already been abandoned and fighting no longer occurred, except for very minor occasional clashes. The second date is 19 August 2008, when the cease-fire agreement was already in force and theoretically, any violence should have ceased. However, authors of the study noted that this analysis is not reliable as cloudy conditions over portions of the territory prevented a true picture from being accurately distinguished. As a result, the analysis of a number of villages, including Tkviavi, Shua-Khelchua, and Karbi was partially conducted. Nevertheless, it can be concluded by the analysis of 24 settlement points by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and inspection of available factual material, that between 7 August 2008 (when military hostilities fully commenced) and 19 August, 626 objects were destroyed in the Tskhinvali Region. Out of these, only 202 were destroyed before 10 August, including 182 in the town of Tskhinvali, while 424 objects were destroyed between the 10-19 August, when the Georgian troops were no longer present in these territories and military activities had terminated.

Similar information is contained in the second satellite material, which was released by the UN ad-hoc organization **UNOSAT**, and which will be discussed in detail during the description of respective villages.¹

¹ www.aaas.org/international/geotech/ge/georgia.kml;Futher, www.unosat.org

These documents are of crucial value for the purposes of our report, as they enable us to verify the testimonies given by the IDPs and compare concrete, visual materials with other pieces of information at our disposal. Accordingly, these two documents will be used numerously in the present report when discussing the respective villages and the damage inflicted to them.

Regrettably, we must state that our work only concerns the events that occurred in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and its adjacent territories in the Shida Kartli Region and does not extend to the events of the Kodori Gorge during the August 2008 war, due to the scarcity of information.

Furthermore, restricted movement in the conflict zone, prevented us from accessing facts, evidence and information from the Ossetian side. For this very reason, the present work concerns only those facts and events that we were able to verify and specify. Yet, if the opportunity should present itself, we are prepared to visit the other side of the conditional border, interview eye-witnesses, examine the facts and verify them through all available means and resources, and offer an impartial analysis to the interested audience.

By August 15, when hostilities terminated, our researchers visited the temporary IDP settlements and began researching and gathering the initial information. A special questionnaire was developed during the first phase of the project: "Questionnaire for systematization of information in the interviews conducted with the victims for description of damage inflicted to the population as a result of the August 2008 conflict" (**see Attachment #1**), which allowed us to consolidate the information into a unified system and, consequently, verify the facts contained therein.

However, despite the standardized structure of the questionnaires, information in a number of cases is incomplete. For instance, the date and location of interviews are missing, names and nicknames are not specified. On some occasions, information is very scarce and contains only general knowledge of the start of war and the damage inflicted to a village, while the story of a particular family will be missing. There are cases when owing to the severe stress and shock caused by the war and its consequences, people exaggerate the facts. It must also be stressed that one reason flawed materials were obtained is that at the first stage of information gathering, each organization was focused on existing issues, which led to an abundance of information in a particular area. For these and other similar reasons, it is of paramount importance that each fact in the present document was fundamentally verified through all available factual materials and sources. To this end, our researchers and consultants visited the affected villages on many occasions to verify the facts (obviously only those territories which are accessible to the citizens of Georgia). At the final stage of the study, in October-November 2009, several additional visits were paid to the conflict zone to specify final details and verify the known facts with eye-witnesses.

Interviews with approximately 1,294 families were recorded during the first stage of the study. It constitutes the personal stories of 4,721 persons. Initial interviews were recorded mainly in the centers of compact settlements, which is why they are relatively chaotic and very emotional.

At the second stage of the research, namely from March through October 2009, the majority of interviews were specified and more detailed information was obtained. Therefore, the study was based on the stories of 1,055 families, as verifying 239 interviews proved to be impossible.

Distribution of claimants by the organizations²

Organization		Number of Questionnaires	Percentage
1	Georgian Young Lawyers' Association	343	32.51%
2	"Article 42"	323	30.62%
3	Human Rights Center	83	7.87%
4	Center for the Protection of Constitutional Rights	87	8.25%
5	„21 st Century“	214	20.28%
99	Others	5	0.47%
TOTAL		1055	100%

We have combined the problems identified by persons we interviewed under several major categories, which are recounted in the present work. These are:

- Deprivation of life;
- Bombardment of villages and civilian population;
- Destruction of property;
- Destruction of villages;
- Persecution and expulsion on ethnic grounds;
- Captivity and treatment during the captivity.

Preface

Under the 3 September 2008 data, the Civil Registry Agency of the Ministry of Justice of Georgia registered 125,819 IDPs. In accordance with the data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, approximately 36 thousand persons have crossed the Georgian-Russian border and found a shelter in North Ossetia.³

Much has been written about the August war and it will be discussed for many years. Even more will be written and debated about the Georgian versions, Russian versions, Ossetian versions, European and American perspectives of causes and consequences, geopolitics, strategic interests of others, Georgia's mistakes, the imperial ambitions of Russia; however, increasingly less will be mentioned about the human tragedy of the tens of thousands of IDPs who have lost their homes, means of sustainability and sense of security.

It is impossible to confine the tragedy of thousands of people solely to the information war, in which eloquent commentators periodically remind each other of August 2008 and purportedly

2 Tables demonstrate that three organizations are responsible for more than 80% of the total number of filled questionnaires GYLA, "Article 42 of the Constitution", and "21st Century". These organizations are leaders in respect of the number of potential respondents as well, however the distribution is somewhat different. GYLA distinguished among leader organizations by "lossless" work, completing 99% of potential respondents' questionnaires, providing full information. The major reason other organizations failed to fill in the questionnaires was because it was impossible to get entire testimonies of victims during the initial visit, Repeated visits were paid to only those who had consented to apply to the court. On several occasions, victims refused to allow their interviews to be used in the present work as they were attempting to recover losses through court.

3 According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, total of 163 thousand involuntarily displaced persons were registered as a result of the August conflict. Among them, 36 thousand went to North Ossetia and by 3 September 2008 their vast majority returned back. Out of the remaining 127 thousand IDPs, who were accommodated in various regions of Georgia, as of September 2008 68 thousand returned back after the Russian troops left Georgian territories beyond the conflict. After the repair of demolished houses or building of new houses and return of second wave of IDPs, Georgian authorities assume that approximately 31 thousand IDPs will be unable to return to their houses and villages for indefinite period of time. For full information see the report of the Chairman of Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, at an informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Council of Europe member states. New York, 24 September 2008.

point at committed crimes that have yet been officially recognized, nor any one held responsible for. We believe it would not be fair to reflect the tragedy of the Shida Kartli population in official documents only, where truth and human tragedy often become victims of geopolitical reasonability or political correctness.

The report of the International Fact Finding Mission states: “It is extremely difficult to confirm and verify the truth”.⁴ We strongly believe that the search for truth is an absolute imperative for peace and unavoidable future co-existence. Furthermore, the August war is the result of an untold truth about the wars of 1990s, impunity for those crimes, and nearly 20 years of injustice. Ending this cycle will provide grounds for a real guarantee of peace and security not only in Georgia, but the entire region.

Precisely with this aim and motivation, we began working immediately after hostilities ended. Our objective was to secure the accounts of August tragedy, based on the stories of thousands of witnesses interviewed by our researchers, to reconstruct the tragedies which occurred in Big and Small Liakhvi and Prone Gorges and the Gori District. This report enables us to provide humanity with numerous accounts, facts, and various documentary material on cruel and inhuman actions committed massively in the territory of Georgia. These acts turned Georgian villages into rubble, deprived hundreds of people of life, left tens of thousands of families without a legacy, and burned the prospect of neighborly relations between Georgians and Ossetians down to ashes for a long period of time..

Pursuant to the assessment carried out by our researchers in 2008-2009 and based on the documentary material obtained, we have come to the conclusion that **the goal of the so-called “peace enforcement operation” carried out jointly by the Russian and South Ossetian authorities was to clean Georgian villages on the territories of South Ossetia from the ethnically Georgian population**

Ethnic cleansing we witnessed in August 2008 was carried out in a well planned manner, systematically and successfully. It did achieve the planned result.

This is why we address International Criminal Court to start full-scale investigation of crimes against humanity committed on the territory of state party - Georgia. August was the result of 20 years of impunity and it can be stopped on by the international justice.

From the beginning we shall also state that all other crimes committed on those territories against Georgians, whether during the active phase of the conflict or afterwards, served the same purpose as ethnic cleansing.

People were tortured and executed in the presence of their neighbors, for the purpose of inciting fear to force them to flee an unavoidable death

Elderly men were beaten, abused and tortured. All served the same purpose - to frighten people to flee. The detention of an elderly men and women of Georgian nationality, who posed no threat to either Russians or Ossetians, served the same purpose as well. People were found hiding in the basements of their houses, were detained, some held hostage, later packed in trucks and then transported to Gori or other cities of Georgia proper..

4 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Volume I, September, 2009

Massive bombardment of residential houses, agricultural lands, orchards, schools and entire city/village civilian infrastructures by Russian aircraft, followed by the burning of houses and the annihilation of the entire villages by the Ossetian military and irregulars is further proof of ethnic cleansing operations.

Thorough research provided us the opportunity to present a schematic picture of violence carried out on the territory of the former District of South Ossetian. Based on the interviews of 1055 people, we can classify the damage. Most importantly, we have focused on the issues respondents identified as most the significant problems, and which inflicted the biggest damage. Thus, the following tables demonstrate schematically the problems identified by the victims, and provide subjects exercising violence by the institutional and ethnic origin

Diagram # 1: *Volume of Physical and moral damage incurred by the respondent*

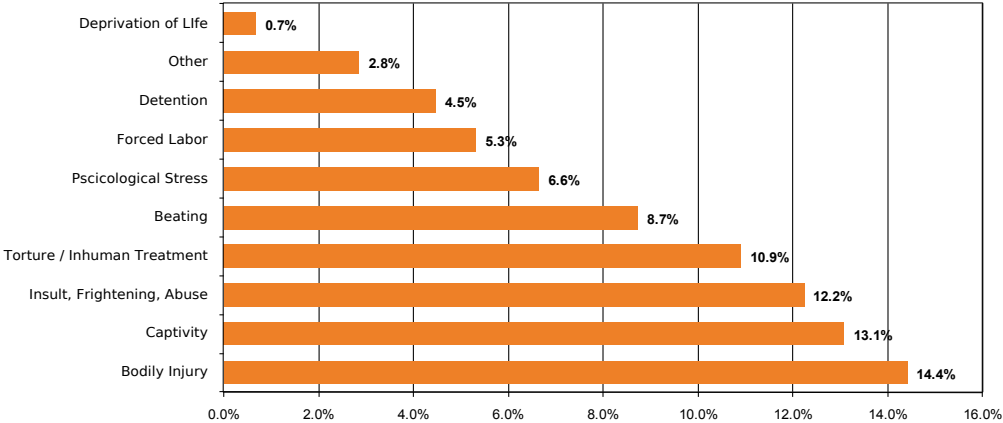


Diagram #2: *Volume of damages of immovable property incurred by the respondent*

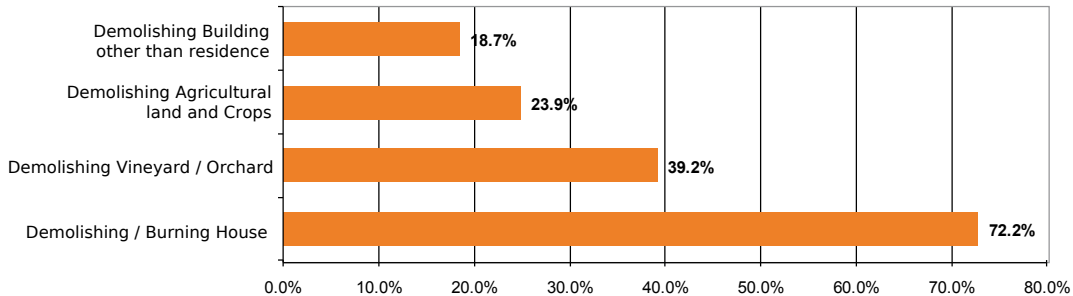
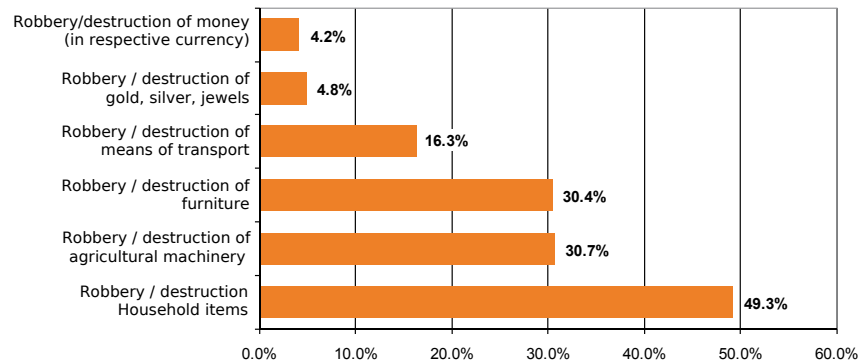


Diagram #3: Volume of damages of property incurred by the respondent



There were 137 cases of death identified by the people we interviewed⁵.

By analyzing the data available to us, we have acknowledged the damage identified personally by our respondents and their family members in those villages where the damage was most substantial. The highest rate of damage was confirmed in Tskhinvali, however it shall be noted that the damage acknowledged there pertains mostly to the torture and ill-treatment of POWs. Unlike Tskhinvali cases, witnesses reveal a high rate of bodily injuries, abuse, the torching of houses and property, dispossession of livestock, murder, etc. in numerous Georgian villages.

Diagram #4: 20 most quoted villages identified by the respondents

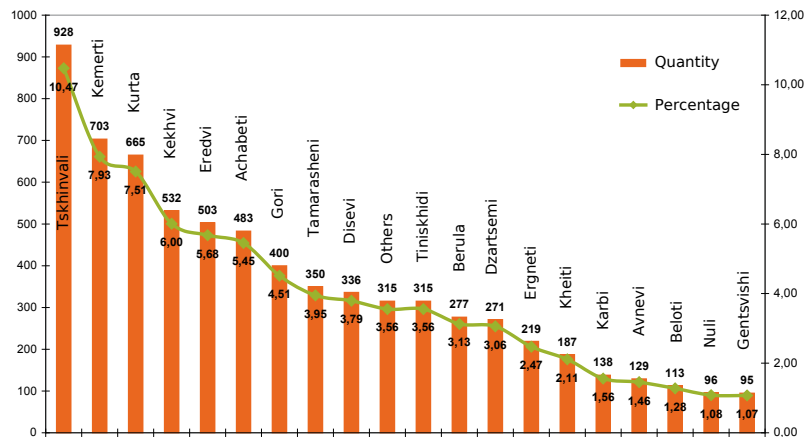
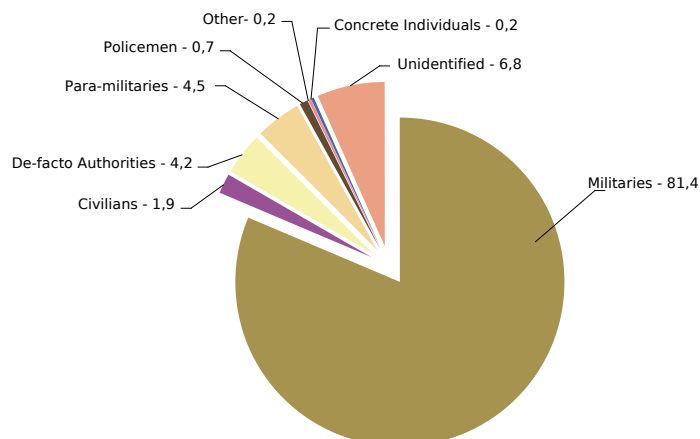
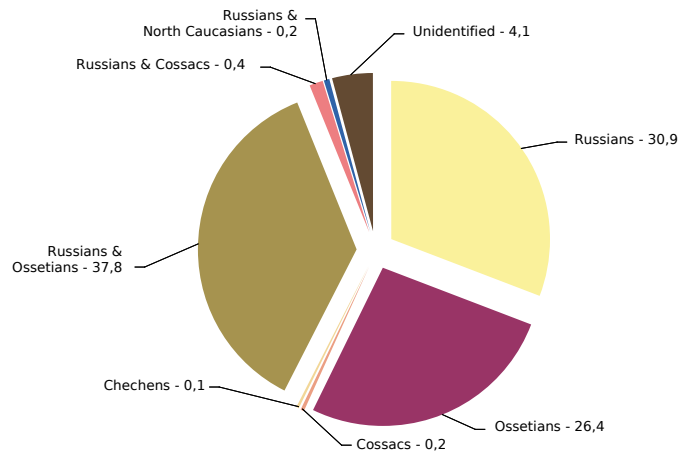


Diagram #5: Violators identified by the respondents by institutional belonging



5 **Attachment #5.** List of the perished persons identified backing upon the data obtained through NGOs' Questionnaires

Diagram #6: *Violators identified by the respondents by ethnic origin*

Ethnic Cleansing was confirmed by the satellite photos, videos available to us and witness statements. Looting and torching of houses abandoned by Georgians carried on for long even after the end of hostilities. During the visit in Tskhinvali and its outskirts, the representatives of the International Fact-Finding Mission got personally familiar with the situation and stated in the report published in September 2009:

"North of Tskhinvali, on the road linking Tamarasheni, Achabeti, Kurta and Kekhvi, the IFFMCG experts witnessed that all of these ethnic villages had been burned down and were completely uninhabited".⁶

In its report, the Mission confirms on numerous occasions that arson, looting, persecution and ethnic cleansing particularly intensified after the completion of the armed stage of the August 2008 conflict. This means that after the cease-fire agreement was signed and the Russian Federation established control over these territories, the situation had strained even further in the outskirts of Tskhinvali and villages in the "buffer zone." One clear example of this assertion by the EU Fact-Finding Mission and many other organizations is the case of the Akhalgori District, where combat had not occurred, but the population was nevertheless persecuted.

Georgia is a small country both in territory and population. Shida Kartli is but an indiscernible dot on the map. For this reason, the scale of our tragedy can never compare to the genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, and the tragedies of Darfur and Cambodia. Yet, it is unjust and inconceivable to legitimize anyone's absolution from responsibility due to the size of the territory or population.

If a crime has been committed, issues of liability have to be addressed. International law and the protection mechanisms set up by the democratic world must be applied equally in each instance, regardless of the size and influence of a particular state.

Undermining the world order and operating under double standards will eventually lead mankind to much graver consequences than depriving tens of thousands of afflicted Georgian IDPs a possibility to establish their own truth and restore their rights.

⁶ Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September, 2009, Volume II, p. 392.

| INTRODUCTION · CHRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT |



- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Positive Dynamics - Main Bait
- 1.3. Status of South Ossetian Autonomous District within the state of Georgia
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1

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

By August 2008, the “frozen conflicts” in the South Caucasus left many politicians, journalists, and researchers feeling the cold war had resumed as many problems forgotten and abandoned in the past reemerged, together with new challenges and threats.

During and following the five-day August war, articles emphasizing international threats took the dominant position in the world media. Here are some portions of media coverage of the 2008 August war, for demonstration of dominant mood of those days.

The French **“Le Monde”** wrote on 12 August that “this was Russian revenge”, which revealed the weaknesses of Europe.

The left-liberal Austrian daily **“Der Standard”** wrote on 9 August: “In South Ossetia the stakes are no less than the defense against a post-soviet imperialism”, while on 16 August it rang the alarm bell by writing “the Baltic states and Ukraine will be the next”.

In the 11 August edition the Swiss conservative newspaper **“Neue Zürcher Zeitung”** directly pointed to Russia’s actions in South Ossetia by saying “we recognize this from Chechnya”.⁷

On 25 August, 2008 Journal **“Times”** addressed the issue of Russian-Georgian war with an article of Zbigniew Brzezinski, “How to Stop a New Cold War. What does the Russian invasion in Georgia tell us about today’s world?”⁸ On 12 August **“Time”** published several articles - “Continuation of Cold War”, “Russia Starts Fighting”, and on 27 August - “New (Old) Russian Imperialism”, while on 22 August it was asking in an alarming tone “Are Russians Coming or Going?”

“The Economist” wrote about Russian imperialism on 16 August as well: “Once Georgia was a pearl of its empire, and Russia psychologically never managed to accept it as a sovereign state. Nostalgia for the Soviet Empire is a long-term leitmotif of the Russian ideology”.

The **“Washington Post”** criticized Russian politics and wrote on 11 August: “at least now the West will know who Vladimir Putin is”. An article of similar content published on 15 August was written by one of the leaders of the Russian opposition, Garry Kasparov, in **“The Wall Street Journal”**, “How the West Fueled Putin’s Sense of Impunity”⁹. The same newspaper wrote on 29 August in the article “Russia and the New “Axis of



7 See, Prof. Hans-Georg Heinrich, Kirill Tanaev: „Georgia & Russia: Contradictory Media Coverage of the August War“, *Caucasus Review of International Affairs*, From Vol. 3 (3) - Summer 2009 at http://www.cria-online.org/8_2.html

8 See, Zbigniew Brzezinski, “How to Stop a New Cold War”, August, 25, 2008, at <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20080825,00.html>

9 See, Garry Kasparov, „How the West Fueled Putin’s Sense of Impunity“, August 15, 2008, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121876037443642795.html>

Evil” - “With Russian tanks now presiding over the dismemberment of the Republic of Georgia, can a lame-duck Bush administration -- weary from its long drubbing by critics over Iraq and eyeing the exit door -- rise to the challenge Russia has chosen to pose to the Free World?¹⁰

On 14 August **“Time”** wrote “large states dislike strengthening of other large states. A trap was set up in Georgia”. In the author’s opinion, Russia set this trap up in Georgia for the US.¹¹

The US **“New York Times”** wrote on 11 August: “The list of ways a more hostile Russia could cause problems for the United States extends far beyond Syria and the mountains of Georgia”.¹² In the same article, the newspaper sent a warning to Western leaders: “Russian troops stepped up their advance into Georgian territory on Monday, attempting to turn back the clock to the days when Moscow held uncontested sway over what it considers its “near abroad,” and arousing increasing alarm among Western leaders.”

Following Russia’s invasion in Georgia, many analysts asked directly whether the world was on the verge of a new cold war.¹³ Western media immediately started comparing the August War to Brezhnev’s “Prague Spring” and Hitler’s operations carried out in 1938. **“The Economist”** magazine wrote on 16 August - “brutal and effective action was Vladimir Putin’s victory over not only Georgia, but the West as well”. Obviously, the West was more concerned after the President Medvedev’s statement of 26 August - “we are not afraid of anything, including the prospect of a new Cold War”.¹⁴

This is a very brief overview of the materials that appeared in western media in August 2008 and throughout the following autumn. The absolute majority of articles stressed the threats that the five-day war created for the rest of the world, Russo-American relations, and vast geo-political interests

It would be unfair not to mention that there were articles of different type as well, which considered the analogies of a “Cold War” and the aggression of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe as excessive.¹⁵ Nevertheless, such material was clearly dominated by reviews and analyses with distinctly anti-Russian tendencies. Critiques and questions towards the Georgian side were heard here and there in August-September but intensified later in October-November when mili-

10 See, Arthur Herman, “Russia and the New Axis of Evil”, The Wall Street Journal, August 29, 2008; at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121997069397081905.html>

11 “Vladimir Putin’s mastery checkmates the West. Russia has been biding its time, but its victory in Georgia has been brutal - and brilliant” by Michael Binyon at Time, August 14, 2008.

12 See, Helene Cooper, „Russia Steps Up Its Push; West Faces Tough Choices“, August 11, 2008, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/12/world/europe/12dipl.html>

13 “The End of the Frozen Cold War?“, by Vladimer Papava, at Caucasus Review of the International Affairs, vol. 3 (1) - Winter, 2009.

14 *Georgia: the war in words*, Key quotes from the crisis, by IISS, at www.iiss.org/dtratcom

15 See the statement of the President of Czech Republic Klaus: “I refuse to accept this widespread, simplified interpretation which paints the Georgians as the victims and the Russians as the villains. “, He has publicly rejected all comparison with the events of Prague in 1968. „Czech political scene split over Georgia,“ 15-08-2008, by Daniela Lazarová, <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/107261>

tary confrontation halted and journalists and analysts were given a possibility of more in-depth thinking and analysis.

Regardless of the tendency towards historical analogies and threats of a resumption of the cold war, and despite the spirit of the discussion and diverse account of threats, one thing that virtually everyone agreed with was that the five-day war **"drove the Russo-American relations to its lowest scale after the toughest days of the cold war"**.¹⁶ Real and in-depth discussions concerned these Russo-American relations. Geopolitical complications and the possible expansion of the conflict that emerged in the Caucasus Mountains became the subject of disquiet and concern of the world, which made the European leaders visit Tbilisi one by one, whereas the conflict itself, the human tragedy and devastated villages, turned into a second-rank problem or a necessary damage accompanying the war. On 14 August 2008 *"Times"* magazine wrote - **"From the day that the Russian tank brigade raced through the tunnel into South Ossetia, Russia has not made one wrong move. ... The attack was short, sharp and deadly - enough to send the Georgians fleeing in humiliating panic, their rout captured by global television. The destruction was enough to hurt, but not so much that the world would be roused in fury. The timing of the cease fire was precise: just hours before President Sarkozy could voice Western anger."**¹⁷ This perspective was typical of the reporting and international perspective.

There is a Georgian saying, "one can see the road only when the cart flips over." Unfortunately, the conflict that unraveled in the territory of the former South Ossetian District only became the center of attention of world media and the global political stage after "the cart tragically flipped." Interest in what had been labeled "frozen conflicts" remained minimal prior to that. The territorial woes of post-Soviet Eurasia only rose the eyebrows of a small set of mid-level government policy specialists and academics. The region's unrecognized republics were places the world could conveniently ignore so long as "no one was being killed to defeat,"¹⁸ says Charles King in article "The Five-Day War".

It is hard for an objective and more or less informed not to agree with such an assessment on the conflicts in South Caucasus. Before those hot August days, few in the West realized there were dormant but exposed places continually ignored, where the search for solutions was constantly postponed (left for local players to solve), yet would surely become active at the result of even the smallest stimulus. It was the same attitude that existed after the events of the summer of 2004 when the situation in the territory of South Ossetia became explosive, following the first significant clashes in a decade, resulting in a number of casualties. An improper assessment of the threat, ignorance of the problem, and groundless reassurance by

16 The Five-Day War, managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis, by Charles King; at *Foreign Policy*, November/December, 2008.

17 *"Vladimir Putin's mastery checkmates the West. Russia has been biding its time, but its victory in Georgia has been brutal - and brilliant"* by Michael Binyon at *Time*, August 14, 2008.

18 The Five-Day War, managing Moscow after the Georgia Crisis, by Charles King; *Foreign Policy*, November/December, 2008.

the international community, taught all major players a bitter lesson as this apathy led the civilized world to the verge of a cold war in 2008.

1.2. POSITIVE DYNAMICS - MAIN BAIT

The conflict in the former South Ossetian Autonomous District should have been one of the most engaging in terms of studying and analyzing due to its dynamics. In the 15 years since the end of hostilities in 1991, progress and recession, tensions and ostentatious peace interchanged, but the most significant difference between the situation in Georgia and similar conflicts was likely that prior to the events of the summer of 2004, war, bloodshed, confrontation, hatred and resentments, had diminished among the local population in their daily life, replaced by tendencies of mutual understanding and satisfying mutual needs.

Georgians and Ossetians attempted to live side-by-side again; they returned to a single classroom, underwent treatment in a single hospital (be it in Gori or Tskhinvali), they traded together, while the mixed ethnic composition of many villages was recovering. Traveling across administrative borders in either direction was mainly safe. Consistent peaceful politics pursued by Georgian authorities and appropriate attempts of the international community could have yielded efficient results. Yet, the warm human relations, confidence-building, and intense attempt of Georgian and Ossetian villagers to peacefully coexist turned out to be the bait which distracted everyone's attention and shifted more emphasis towards a more complex conflict in Abkhazia.

International organizations, academic and analytical centers paid less attention to the problems in Tskhinvali. The same can be said of their Georgian colleagues. We could say that the positive dynamics of everyday life became a tempting lure for Georgian authorities as well, as they led us to the verge of war, first in the summer of 2004 and then in 2006, until later in August 2008 when the full-scale war erupted.

The current situation is different in principle and the conflict has entered a new phase. In August 2008, the frozen conflict entered an active military phase just in few days and then turned into the occupation of a sovereign state by Russia. Result of 15 years of work for the resolution of the conflict in South Ossetia was brought by combination of various factors: ignorance of the difficulty of a political content of the conflict; inconsistent actions of the Georgian government; non-existence of long-term plans; insufficient attention to the conflict from the "friends of Georgia" internationally; arbitrary actions of the Russian "peace-keepers"; Russian imperialistic politics and actions in South Ossetia and finally, lawlessness on the side of South Ossetian irregulars throughout the frozen phase of the conflict.

Despite the end of hostilities, past experience prompts us that the authorities and the international community and society need to undertake huge efforts in order to keep the situation under control and avoid even graver outcomes.

1.3. STATUS OF SOUTH OSSETIAN AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT WITHIN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

This present work does not aim to draw a detailed analysis of the Georgian-Ossetian centuries-old relations. Nevertheless, in order to achieve a complete understanding of the 2008 August events, its results, and legal structure, it is important to outline which preconditions existed in the Soviet Georgia, how it developed in the South Ossetian Autonomous District; the dynamics of the conflict after the end of the first war of 90ies; the pre and post events of the summer 2004; and the period directly preceding the five-day war in August 2008.

a) Geography

The South Ossetian Autonomous District was set up within Georgia in 1922. Defined in detail at the time were the Autonomous District's frontiers, authorities, their competencies, and relations with Tbilisi (**See Attachment #2**).

The South Ossetian Autonomous District is located at the northern border of Georgia, on 3,700 thousand sq.m. of the southern slope of the Caucasian Range, and borders Russia, specifically the Autonomous Republic of North Ossetia to the North. South Ossetia is connected to Russia through the Roki Channel, which was built in 1985 by the Soviets. The population is located mainly along the rivers and before the conflict, density was high as the most of the territory is mountainous.

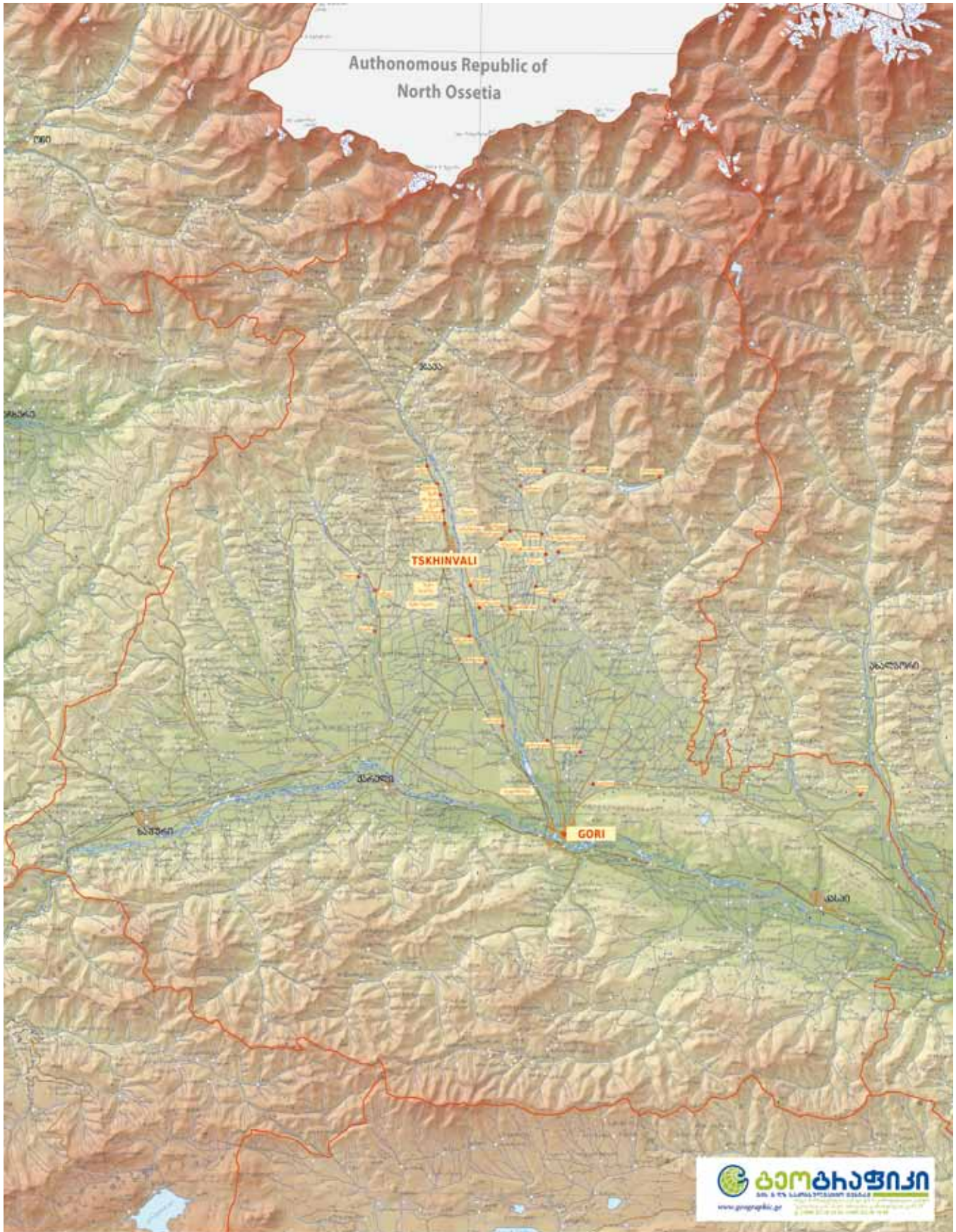
The capital city of the former Autonomous District of South Ossetia is Tskhinvali. It remains the most important city in the region today. The ethnic composition of the city was mixed and most significantly, was surrounded by ethnically Georgian villages from all sides.

Prior to the conflict in the 1990s, approximately two-thirds of the District population was ethnically Ossetian. Georgians, who made up 30 percent of the population, resided mainly in the eastern part of the District, the Akhalkgori District and its adjacent territories, around Tskhinvali and in the villages adjacent to the Gori District, in the southern part of South Ossetia. The Ossetians generally lived in the central and western territories. North of the District, mountainous territories were less populated. Yet, this division was still conditional, as Ossetians and Georgians lived together in the same villages, same neighborhoods and often in mixed families, both here and elsewhere in Georgia..

During the last full-scale census conducted in Georgia in 2002 it was impossible to fully cover the territories of the former South Ossetian Autonomy, due to political conditions. Therefore, when discussing the statistics and demography, various researchers often use the data of the former Soviet census from 1989.

However, the same 2002 census provides important information about some territories of the former District, which was then under the control of Georgian authorities, including nearly all of the Akhalkgori District, which was fully integrated in Georgia proper and was administratively attached to the Mtskhe-

Shida Kartli, Georgia (including South Ossetia)



ta-Mtianeti Region by 2002. Pursuant to the data of the same census, villages under Georgian control around Tskhinvali and elsewhere in South Ossetia were allocated administratively to the Gori and Kareli Districts.

Statistical data on population, which we use in the present materials, are based on the results of these two censuses (1989 and 2002). On one hand we tried to compare these two statistical bases, while on the other, we additionally used the data of various national elections held after 2002 as a complementary tool to demonstrate the dynamics of demographic changes.

Table #1: *Data of population census conducted in the South Ossetian Autonomous District of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic by years and ethnic belonging*¹⁹

Nationality	1926 Census	1939 Census	1959 Census	1970 Census	1979 Census	1989 Census
Ossetian	60,351 (69.1%)	72,266 (68.1%)	63,698 (65.8%)	66,073 (66.5%)	65,077 (66.4%)	65,200 (66.2%)
Georgian	23,538 (26.9%)	27,525 (25.9%)	26,584 (27.5%)	28,125 (28.3%)	28,187 (28.8%)	28,700 (29.0%)
Russian	157 (0.2%)	2,111 (2.0%)	2,380 (2.5%)	1,574 (1.6%)	2,046 (2.1%)	2,128 (2.1%)
Armenian	1,374 (1.6%)	1,537 (1.4%)	1,555 (1.6%)	1,254 (1.3%)	953 (1.0%)	871 (1.21%)
Jew	1,739 (2.0%)	1,979 (1.9%)	1,723 (1.8%)	1,485 (1.5%)	654 (0.7%)	648 (0.9%)
Other	216 (0.2%)	700 (0.7%)	867 (0.9%)	910 (0.9%)	1,071 (1.1%)	1,400 (1.4%)
Total	87,375	106,118	96,807	99,421	97,988	99,000

Comparing the results of the last three censuses provides interesting insight into various ethnic groups, including the Ossetians, living throughout Georgia. As the second table demonstrates, only 40 percent of Ossetians residing in Georgia lived in the territory of the former Autonomous District. The remainder were spread all over the country, including in the capital city Tbilisi.

¹⁹ Yearly Journal of the Department of Statistics: 1989 “Data of population census conducted in the South Ossetian Autonomous District of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic by years and ethnic belonging”

Table #2: *Ethnic composition of the population of Georgia by population censuses data*²⁰

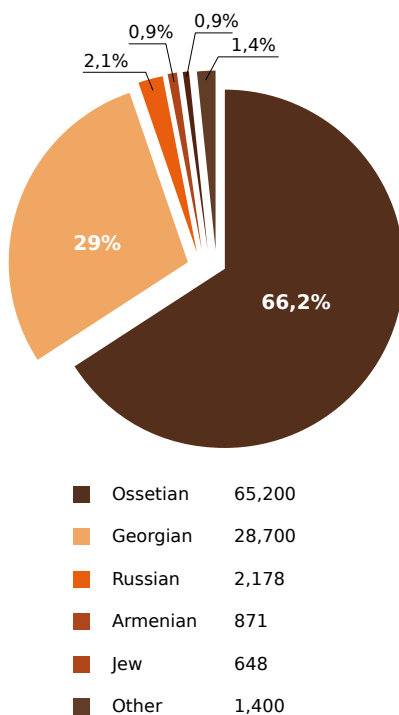
	Thousand persons				Percent in respect of total population			
	1959	1979	1989	2002	1959	1979	1989	2002
Total population	4044,0	4993,2	5400,8	4371,5	100	100	100	100
Georgian	2600,6	3433,0	3787,4	3661,2	64,3	68,8	70,1	83,8
Abkhazian	62,9	85,3	95,9	3,5	1,6	1,7	1,8	0,1
Ossetian	141,2	160,5	164,1	38,0	3,5	3,2	3,0	0,9
Russian	407,9	371,6	341,2	67,7	10,1	7,4	6,3	1,5
Ukrainian	52,2	45,0	52,4	7,0	1,8	0,9	1,0	0,2
Azerbaijani	153,6	255,7	307,6	284,8	3,8	5,1	5,7	6,5
Armenian	442,9	448,0	437,2	248,9	11,0	9,0	8,1	5,7
Jew	51,6	28,3	24,8	3,8	1,3	0,6	0,5	0,1
Greek	72,9	95,1	100,3	15,2	1,8	1,9	1,9	0,3
Kurd	16,2	25,7	33,3	20,8	0,4	0,5	0,6	0,5

20 Yearly Journal of the Department of Statistics: 2002

b) Population in the Territory of Former Autonomous District – Pre-War Statistics

Demography Before the War

To identify the crimes committed in August 2008, it is absolutely necessary to demonstrate the full picture of ethnic composition. It is important to answer simple questions: what part of the population was ethnically Georgian, what forced them to leave and was their flight from the homeland result of persecution, forceful, illegal actions on ethnic grounds or a revenge for the first war of 90ies only against small part of the population.



Pursuant to the last Soviet census in 1989, which at the same time a last full-scale census was conducted in the territory of the South Ossetian Autonomous District,²¹ the District population amounted to a total of 99 thousand. Among them, the rural population constituted 49,074 thousand people. The District comprised approximately 478 villages, out of which were 246 villages in the Akhagori District only. According to the data of the same census, 66.2% of population was ethnically Ossetian, while the Georgians constituted 1/3 of the population, i.e. 29%.

Territories under the control of Authorities of South Ossetia

According to various sources, including Ossetian information relating to population composition varies prior to the 2008 August war. According to Ossetian sources, 72,000 people lived in the District territory controlled by the separatists. Of these about 80% were ethnic Ossetians.²² By comparing various data, we estimate that before the war, the entire population of the territory under control of South Ossetian authorities was approximately 70,000 people, among which the majority, about 47,000 (i.e., 67%) were ethnic Ossetians; 17,000, (i.e. 25%) were Georgians, and the rest represented other nationalities such as Russians, Armenians etc.

Territories under the control of Georgian Authorities

Under the 2002 census data, which partially covered the former District territory, 5,281 people resided in the Akhagori District, which at the time was under Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region's jurisdiction.

21 Due to obvious reasons, the 2002 census conducted in Georgia did not cover the territory of the former autonomous district. Exceptions in this respect were almost entire Akhagori (former Leningori) District, which was attached to Mtskheta-Mtianeti and was controlled by the Georgian state, and those Georgian villages, where the Georgian control was exercised also and which were merged with the Gori and Kareli Districts. For example, the Beloti, Berula, Artsevi, Ksuisi, and other Sakrebulo of the Gori District. Further, a small part of the Java District, particularly villages of the Sinaguri village council: Perevi, Sinaguri, Tedeleti, Jalabeti, Khakheti, Zemo and Kverno Karzmani and Tbeti.

22 See, <http://presidentrso.ru/republic/>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SouthOssetia>; Information about the ethnic composition of South Ossetia is often confusing. According to the information disseminated by "Ria Novosti" in August 2008, 80,000 Russian citizens resided in this territory, a figure that seems exaggerated when compared to other sources. According to the BBC, this population did not exceed 70,000. For more information see <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20080811/115961365.html>; as well as Regions and Territories: South Ossetia, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/countryprofiles/3797729.stm>

According to the Department for Statistics of Georgia, as of 1 January 2009, 7,600 people were registered in the Akhagori municipality and 14,500 people in the Tighvi (Prone Gorge), Kurta (Big Liakhvi Gorge), and Eredvi (Small Liakhvi Gorge) municipalities²³. This was the very municipality which was part of the interim administration.

By the municipalities:

7,100 people lived in Big Liakhvi Gorge, Georgian villages within the Kurta municipality – Tamarasheni, Zemo Achabeti, Kvemo Achabeti, Kurta, Kekhvi, Kermerti, Dzartsemi, Kheiti, Sveri. Slightly less, 5,900 lived in the Small Liakhvi Gorge, Georgian villages of the Eredvi community – Eredvi, Berula, Disevi, Ksuisi, Vanati, Beloti, Ergnet-Mamisaant District, Zemo Artsevi, Charebi, Satskheneti. The smallest number of the population – a total of 1,500 people – resided in the Prone Gorge, i.e. Georgian villages of the Tighva Municipality – Avnevi, Nuli, Arkneti, Mtiliana, Akhalsheni, Khunda District, Kvemo Okoni, Lopani.

As a result of the August war, 13,260 IDPs were registered in the Civil Registry Agency out of these three municipalities, which means that a vast majority of Georgians left their homes.

State of Georgian Population during Hostilities and in Coming Days and Months

Oppression, forced departure from homes and persecution of Georgians continued even after the official cease fire and completion of the hot phase of the conflict. This fact is affirmed in the report by the International Fact-Finding Mission on the conflict in Georgia. Satellite imagery used in our report, coupled with the interviews of the IDP population and the photo-video material obtained in September-November, These provide convincing evidence to this conclusion.

Russian military forces, separatist militia and representatives of various formations forcefully put hundreds of Georgians – especially the elderly who refused to leave native hearth and villages – into trucks and left them on the other side of the control check points, or, under a worse scenario, took them to Tskhinvali as hostages to exchange with the war prisoners.

The information released on 26 August from the “Reports of Lawlessness, Creating New Forcible Displacement in Georgia” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reads:

“Approximately 400 people gathered in the center of Gori throughout the day, who were forced to leave their homes today (August 26, 2008. Author). The newly displaced said that some had been beaten, harassed and robbed, and that three persons had reportedly been killed. The marauders were re-

23 “Population size in Georgia according to self-governing units (by January 1, 2009).” Information bulletin of Statistics Department of Georgia, 2009

portedly operating in the so called buffer zone established along the boundary line with South Ossetia.’²⁴

The BBC channel informed us of a similar story, but on 25 August. Finnish Foreign Minister and Chairman in office of the OSCE **Alexander Stubb** stated:

“Russian emergency troops brought in two lorries full of elderly people’ from ‘southern Ossetia who had been torn away from their homes. They are clearly trying to empty southern Ossetia of Georgians.”²⁵

Chairman-in -Office of the European Union and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France **Bernard Kouchner** has stated the following in his interview with Euronews:

“I just want to say, here’s the map of South Ossetia, and here’s a town called Akhagori, and I’ve been told that tonight Russian troops are sweeping through it pushing Georgians out and over the border. It’s ethnic cleansing, creating a homogeneous South Ossetia. That is unacceptable, we can’t accept everything.”²⁶

Even one year after the conflict, when a part of Georgian population still remains in the Gali and Akhagori Districts, a constant fear persists that even under the slightest tensions these people may be subject to violence similar to the one in August-September 2008. The reports of various International organizations make our, as well as the population’s assumptions, more reasonable.

The report of Amnesty International reads as follows:

“All who remain in South Ossetia ... in parts where fighting has taken place, are vulnerable to ethnically motivated attacks”.²⁷

The **International Fact-Finding European Mission on conflicts in Georgia** points to the same hazard:

“The situation is tense and dangerously explosive and many people fear the resumption of hostility... in the Gali district of Abkhazia and the upper Kodori Valley, rights [of ethnic Georgians] as a minority seem to be endangered”.²⁸

The Mission report was published one year after the end of open hostilities. In September 2009 it was still informing the world about the ongoing dangers:

24 See, UNHCR, Georgia Crisis: “Reports of lawlessness creating new forcible displacement in Georgia”, 26 August 2008.

25 See, BBC news, “South Ossetia emptied of Georgians”, 25 August, 2008; at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7581282.stm>

26 See, „Kouchner claims ethnic cleansing in Georgia”, 27 August, 2008. EURONEWS, <http://www.euronews.net/2008/08/27/kouchner-claims-ethnic-cleansing-in-georgia/>

27 See, Amnesty International, ‘Continuing Concern for civilians after Hostilities in Georgia’, 22 August 2008

28 See, Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, volume I, p. 26, September 2009



Foreign Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb and the Foreign Minister of France Bernard Kushner, Gori 11 August 2008.

“Even at the time of the writing of this Report, the situation in the Akhagori district at the southeast end of South Ossetia continues to be a matter of concern, as ethnic Georgians are still leaving the region.”²⁹

In the November 2008 report, the OSCE also indicates the dangers taking place in the territory of the conflict zone:

“Clearly, the *de facto* authorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have not created the conditions necessary to enable and encourage displaced persons to return to their former places of residence. Worse, as set out in the sections below, the *de facto* authorities in South Ossetia have made statements and taken steps that indicate they do not intend to let displaced persons return.”³⁰

The same report states:

“In Akhagori region, which has been recently submitted to the *de-facto* government of South Ossetia, people live in permanent fear”.

²⁹ See, Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, volume I, p. 28, September 2009

³⁰ See, Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the conflict in Georgia, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 17-18

1.4. LEGAL OVERVIEW

Officially, the South Ossetian Autonomous District was set up within Georgia under the 20 April 1922 Decree³¹ of the Central Executive Committee of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Council of National Commissars. However, the term "South Ossetian autonomy" appears in political documents earlier, by the end of 1917. At the time the "congress of South Ossetian delegates" elected the "South Ossetian National Council" and demanded from the effective Georgian authorities to set up a respective district ("Mazra") - administrative unit.

On 28 March 1920 the South Ossetian National Council established the "South Ossetian Revolutionary Committee". In October of the same year the "Revolutionary Committee" demanded the Caucasus Bureau of Russia's Communist (Bolshevik) Party to grant autonomy status to South Ossetia.³² This issue was on the agenda of the new, Bolshevik authorities after the forceful Sovietization of Georgia (in February 1921).

On 31 October 1921 the Caucasus Bureau adopted a resolution, which "granted the rights of the autonomous district to South Ossetia" and "requested the Revolutionary Committee of Georgia to define the borders of the District together with the South Ossetian Executive Committee".³³

Unlike Abkhazia and Adjara, whose autonomy was based on political-historical grounds and traditions and was recognized by the independent democratic republic of Georgia, the Ossetians at the time in Georgia were considered as a national minority with constitutionally guaranteed rights, but without the right to territorial or any other type of autonomy.³⁴ For instance, under the 13 September 1918 Law on Representation of National Minorities in the National Council of Georgia, 26 seats were allocated to the minorities in the Council: 10 to Armenians, 4 - Azerbaijanis, 3 - Abkhazians, 2 - Russians, 2 - Ossetians, 1 - Georgian Israeli, 1 - Jew, 1 - Greek, and 1 - German.³⁵

Many researchers see the establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous District as a kind of gratitude towards the Ossetian Bolsheviks, who fought³⁶

31 See the 20 April 1922 Decree #2 of the Soviet Central Executive Committee of Georgia and the Council of National Commissars of Georgia "On Arrangement of the South Ossetian Autonomous District". See the status of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian autonomous regions within Georgia (1917-1988). Collection of political-legal acts; Regionalism Research Center, 2004. See Annex #1 for the full text.

32 Source (book): Ossetian issue, collection of articles, Tbilisi, publishing house "Kera-XXI", 1994, pp. 244-246.

33 *ibid*, p. 301.

34 Chapter 11, the 21 February 1921 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. In addition, such approach was preconditioned by the fact that ethnic Ossetians lived not only in Shida Kartli, but in entire Georgia, including Tbilisi, Kakheti, Racha, etc.

35 Collection of legal acts of Democratic Republic of Georgia of 1918-1921, Tbilisi, 1990.

36 The most dramatic of these battles was the 1920 revolt. To crush it, Georgian authorities used the regular army and national guard units, which carried out a punitive operation in the Ossetian villages after quashing the revolt. According to Ossetian sources, 5,000 Ossetians died in this battle, while 13,000 died as a result of famine and epidemics. See Danish Association for Research on the Caucasus, Nikola Svetkovsky, "The Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict"..

against the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and even declared independence from Georgia.³⁷

The issue of Tskhinvali was given a special importance in the formation of the South Ossetian Autonomous District. On 12 December 1921 the Central Executive Committee of Georgia gave a special order to transform the attitude of the Georgian population of the Tskhinvali Region. In 1922 the ethnic balance there was significantly in favor of Georgians. In particular, 1,436 Georgians, 613 Ossetians, 765 Armenians, 64 Russians, and 1,651 Jews lived in Tskhinvali.

The 1922 Constitution of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic already mentioned the South Ossetian Autonomous District within Georgia.³⁸

Another essential issue that deserves special attention is the idea of unification of South Ossetia and North Ossetia, which in addition to the formation of the South Ossetian autonomy was considered by the Soviet authorities at various levels in 1925-1927. In 1925 the assembly of the South Ossetian Councils demanded the unification. The decision was welcomed by the assembly of South Ossetian Councils. The decision of the latter noted that such unification should have taken place within Georgia. In the same year this idea was approved by the Central Executive Committee of Georgia, additionally consented to by the Central Executive Committee of Transcaucasus. On 12-16 March 1927 the seventh assembly of the South Ossetian Councils raised this issue once again and having approved the steps undertaken towards unification, urged the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia to work more vigorously in this direction. Yet, the history ends here. Obviously the Kremlin was not in favor of unifying of South Ossetia and North Ossetia within the state of Georgia.³⁹

1.5. CHRONOLOGY OF CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT

Dissolution of an empire is usually controversial and the Soviet Empire has been no exception. The break-up of the USSR was accompanied by numerous ethnic conflicts and unfortunately Georgia was among the victims. Mines laid down by the Soviet authorities from the first days of the Sovietization of Georgia became active immediately after the proclaiming of independence. At the end of 1980s, conflicting national interests of various nations appeared in equal setting over the entire Soviet domain, and military hostilities were avoided in exceptional cases only. From the end of 1980s Moldova, all three republics of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, and Russia itself were involved in endless conflicts, which

37 CRS report for Congress: Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for US interests, by Jim Nichol, updated October 24, 2008.

38 In terms of administrative arrangement of South Ossetia and determination of competence of its bodies, the 12 November 1980 Law of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic on the Autonomous District of South Ossetia is one of the last and the most detailed documents.

39 See the 1925-1927 decrees, session shorthand records, and other materials in the collection of political-legal acts, status of autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the state of Georgia (1917-1988), published in Tbilisi in 2004 by the Regionalism Research Center.

brought the death, mass involuntary displacement of population, breakdown of infrastructure, stagnation of state institutions, and minimization of developing potential.

a) 1989 - 1990: War of Laws

It has been established that abolition of the status of the South Ossetian Autonomous District by the Supreme Council of Georgia on 11 December 1990 triggered the South Ossetian . Consequently, 11 December 1990 is identified in the works of many researchers as the starting point of confrontation. Nevertheless, historical facts do not prove the veracity of such judgment. Even in light of the significance of this decision, in the following several sub-chapters we will try to remind the reader and society briefly about the “war of laws”, which occurred between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, and also between Moscow and Tbilisi during 1989-1990. One of the central issues here was the subject of autonomies.

b) Issue of State Language

Resolutions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Presidium of the Supreme Council of Georgian SSR, and the Council of Ministers of Georgian SSR were published on 15 August 1989 “Concerning the State Program of the Georgian Language”.⁴⁰ The program defined the constitutional status of the Georgian language as the only state language of application in all kinds of party-related, Soviet, administrative, scientific-scholarly, cultural, economic institutions and enterprises, and public organizations of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. Furthermore, special provisions regulated the introduction of mandatory teaching of Georgian language in non-Georgian schools of the republic, and ensured universal application of the Georgian language in daily and informative spheres.

A remarkable wave of tensions in the South Ossetian Autonomous District followed the very document of 15 August 1989. “Adamon Nikhas”, a newly established separatist movement in the South Ossetian Autonomous District, used this as a foundation for its further actions. The first rallies were organized.

In response to the 15 August document, on 4 September 1989 the South Ossetian District Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia and the Executive Committee of the District Council of National Deputies adopted a resolution on the “State Program for the Development of the Ossetian Language”. The resolution stipulated that the State Program of the Ossetian Language was developed and approved by the general public. The resolution was sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, and the Presidium of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Georgian SSR. The Ossetian side demanded to reflect the respective provisions of the Program for Development of the Ossetian Language in the South Ossetian Autonomous District in Paragraph 1 of the State Program of the Georgian Language. The main demand of the “State Program for the Development of the Ossetian Language” was to grant

⁴⁰ Newspaper “Communist”, #196, 25 August 1989.

the constitutional status to the Ossetian language in the District territory. Ossetian, Georgian, and Russian languages were declared as the state languages in the South Ossetian Autonomous District.⁴¹

On 26 September 1989 the eleventh assembly of the District Council of National Deputies of South Ossetia made a decision to bring amendments to the Constitution of Georgia, pursuant to which the following paragraph should have been added to Article 75 of the Constitution of Georgia: “Ossetian language shall be the state language in the South Ossetian Autonomous District”.⁴²

By the end of September 1989 the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia Givi Gumbaridze and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Otar Chitanava visited Tskhinvali and met with the District population and party nomenclature. However, the Communist leadership of Georgia did not have counter proposals and the agreement did not occur.

On 10 November 1989 the XII special assembly of the Council of National Deputies of the twentieth calling of the South Ossetian Autonomous District adopted a second decision “on the State Program for Development of the Ossetian Language” and declared the Ossetian language as the state language in the territory of the South Ossetian Autonomous District; However, using Georgian language was not prohibited and its “free and equal functioning” was determined pursuant to the rules of the language policy of the USSR.⁴³

c) Status of Autonomy

A big wave of rallies commenced in the South Ossetian Autonomous District beginning in October 1989, when Tskhinvali and Tbilisi engaged each other in the so-called war of laws. This was when the first large-scale rallies were held, followed by transfer of additional Georgian militia to the town.

Formalization of the “war of laws” took place at the 12th special assembly of the Councils of National Deputies of South Ossetia, when on 10 November 1989 the assembly adopted the decision on:

- The abolition of the South Ossetian Autonomous District;
- Raising the status of South Ossetia; and
- Establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous Republic.

The assembly called for the Supreme Council of the Georgian SSR and the Supreme Council of USSR to examine the issue of granting the status of the autonomous republic to the South Ossetian Autonomous District.

Against the background of expanding separatist movement and tensions, the central authorities of Georgia, by the resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council dated 16 November 1989, “owing to the fact that the procedure

41 Newspaper “Soviet Ossetia”, #170, 5 September, 1989.

42 Newspaper “Soviet Ossetia”, #188, 28 September, 1989.

43 “Central state archive of newest history of Georgia”, 1165, reg. 8, case 2852, pp. 62-54.

of convening and holding the assembly was grossly violated and the issues beyond the competence of the District Council were examined”, decisions of the assembly of the Council of National Deputies of the South Ossetian Autonomous District were declared null and void, as inconsistent with the law.⁴⁴

The party comrades of the Georgian SSR concluded that on 10 November the Executive Committee of the District Council of South Ossetia made the decision to convene the assembly under the threat and influence of representatives of “Adamon Nikhas” and therefore, it examined only procedural, i.e. formal issues and did not touch upon the substantial side of the problem. Tbilisi did not find it necessary to explain and justify its position and to respond to the fear and interests that triggered the adoption of such a decision in the autonomous district. Georgian authorities did not even consider the proposals of Ossetians and did not take their actions and statements seriously. In the case of each tension they sent additional police troops to Tskhinvali and based on formal grounds, without examining the matter and due comprehension of the problem, declared their every resolution or decision null and void. During the entire year Tbilisi and Tskhinvali acted against each other as if on spite, like incited children. Blood has already been shed by this time. The first internally displaced persons appeared on both sides.

Instead of identifying the allies, Tbilisi was losing its last backing in South Ossetia. Since 1990 the superior party nomenclature of the South Ossetian Autonomous District joined the positions of “Adamon Nikhas” also and became the mouthpiece of radical demands of this organization,⁴⁵ when several months earlier the demands and assessments of “Adamon Nikhas” itself and its leader Alan Chochiev personally were still moderate. For instance he stated: “We understand that in a given moment raising the issue of restoration of Ossetia’s status is premature and ill-considered”.⁴⁶

d) Moscow’s Reaction to the War of Laws

Parallel to these tensions Moscow was setting up a legal basis for fostering ongoing ethnic confrontations in the republics even further. On 3 April 1990, a new law was adopted in Moscow on the procedure for leaving the USSR by the member republic, which enhanced further development of separatist attitudes in the autonomous units. The USSR law determined the procedure related to secession by the member republic in the following manner:

“Article 3: In a member republic, in whose structure there are autonomous republics, autonomous districts, or autonomous divisions (“ok-rugs”), a referendum shall be held in each autonomy separately. Peoples of the autonomous republics and autonomous formations shall enjoy the right to independently decide on the issue of affiliation with the USSR or a seceding member republic, as well as to raise the issue

44 The Gazette of Supreme Council of Georgian SSR, 1989, #11, pp. 7-8.

45 Aleko Aslanishvili’s publication, “7 Days”, 2 November 1990.

46 Newspaper “Literary Georgia”, 20 October 1989.

of its state-legal status..."

The reaction in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali did not make itself wait long, and in July, the Supreme Council of Georgian SSR adopted the resolution "on the Guarantees of Protecting the State Sovereignty of Georgia", while on 20 September 1990 the District Council of National Deputies of the South Ossetian Autonomous District adopted the declaration "on the Sovereignty of South Ossetia", which proclaimed the right of the Ossetian people to self-determination. The Declaration stipulated that "the full independence was the obvious and crucial condition for further development" of the Ossetian people; that "South Ossetia was proclaimed to be the subject of international law and the USSR treaty". In particular, the assembly determined:

1. The South Ossetian Autonomous District was transformed into the South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic;
2. The Supreme Council of the USSR was asked to recognize South Ossetia as an independent subject of the Federation within USSR; and
3. USSR republics were asked to enter into the agreements of friendship, mutual cooperation, and mutual assistance with South Ossetia.

Thus, the Council of National Deputies of South Ossetia unilaterally (in absence of due competence within the constitutional framework) adopted the decision on factual secession from Georgia. On 21 September 1990 the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Georgian SSR declared this resolution null and void.

e) Elections and Abolition of District

The Supreme Council elections were held in Georgia on 28 October 1990. A majority of ethnically Ossetian citizens of the South Ossetian Autonomous District boycotted these elections.

On 22 November 1990 the newly elected Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia annulled the 20 September 1990 decision of the Council of National Deputies of the South Ossetian Autonomous District on transformation of the autonomous district into the so-called "South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic" and respectively, all of its decisions, including the appointment and conduct of elections.⁴⁷

On 28 November 1990 the so-called 16(2) assembly of the Council of National Deputies of the South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic appointed the elections to the Supreme Council of South Ossetian Soviet Republic for 9 December.⁴⁸ According to official sources, 72% of population voted in the elections.

By the end of 1990, the war of resolutions, which gradually accompanied increasing signals of a "hot war", culminated on 11 December 1990 by the law the Supreme Council of Georgia adopted, which abolished the South Ossetian

⁴⁷ On 16 October 1990, the 15th assembly of the Council of Autonomous District in Tskhinvali adopted the interim regulation "on the Elections of the Supreme Council of South Ossetian Soviet Democratic Republic and the Local Councils of South Ossetia".

⁴⁸ Newspaper "Soviet Ossetia", #226, 1 December 1990.

Autonomous District⁴⁹ and relevant state structures. In addition, the 9 December 1990 elections of the Supreme Council of the so-called "South Ossetian Soviet Republic" and its results were annulled.⁵⁰

The following arguments leading to the abolition of the South Ossetian autonomy were: (1) in 1922 the South Ossetian autonomy was established contrary to the will of the indigenous Georgian population and to the prejudice of Georgia's interests; (2) Ossetian people enjoy their own statehood in the territory of the USSR; and (3) only a small portion of Ossetians living in Georgia reside in South Ossetia.

On the same day, the Supreme Council of Georgia declared a state of emergency on the territory of the former autonomous district and adopted the "Law on the Emergency Rules".⁵¹

Abolishing South Ossetia's autonomy from the political map of Georgia reflected the dominant attitude in Georgia at the time. The Supreme Council Law was marred with emotional nationalism, rather than rational vision and legal correctness.

Obviously, the South Ossetian leaders' decisions were incompetent and legally flawed, but Tbilisi's response was totally disproportional as well. Tbilisi failed to estimate the gravity of circumstances and engaged in the escalation of events instead of searching for compromises, and the escalation distanced the parties from a common starting point consistently and purposefully, which could not have resulted in anything other than further escalation of the conflict

f) 1991 - 1992: Active Conflict Phase

As tensions increased, Georgian authorities declared a state of emergency and tried to subdue the insurgent autonomy by force and in January 1991, Georgian armed forces entered the territory of South Ossetia, followed by a year of bloodshed and chaos. War raged mainly in Tskhinvali, its surroundings, and along the main highway. Fighting was totally chaotic, as neither Georgia nor the South Ossetian autonomy was in control of any kind of well-organized regular army. Confronting each other in South Ossetia were armed formations representing various political orientations and goals, a majority of which were linked to criminal ties. Accordingly, there was an absence of any coherent plan, strategy or fighting tactics. During the war, atrocities and crimes became the object of critique of many international organizations and human rights activists.⁵² Yet, no one has been ever punished because of this war.

49 Republican David Berdzenishvili was the only Deputy of the Supreme Council of Georgia, who did not vote for this decision, which in itself demonstrates the dominant standing and attitude at the time in Georgia towards increasing tensions and unawareness on conflict results.

50 The Gazette of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia, 1990, #12, pp. 10-12.

51 Newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika", 12 December 1990.

52 See "Bloodshed in the Caucasus; violation of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights in the Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict", Human Rights Watch report, 1998.

There were several attempts at regulation of the conflict in the course of the war. A notable effort was the 23 March 1991 meeting between the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Republic of Georgia Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic Boris Yeltsin in borough Kazbegi. Back then, a jointly signed protocol stipulated:

"As a result of agreeing the joint steps for stabilizing the situation in the region of former South Ossetian Autonomous District, the parties declare the following: ... prior to 10 April, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian SFSR and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia shall set up a joint militia troop which shall disarm all illegal armed formations in the territory of former South Ossetian Autonomous District".⁵³

However, several days later the assembly of National Deputies of the Russian Federation demanded from the Georgian authorities to restore the South Ossetian autonomy. In addition, the assembly addressed the Supreme Council of the USSR to undertake measures to restore a normal situation in the "South Ossetian" territory. This document was also signed by the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic Boris Yeltsin.

Conflict was still unfolding. It was accompanied by the overthrow of Gamsakhurdia's government, but this had less impact on the Georgian-Ossetian relations. Interestingly, the military council annulled many decisions adopted during Gamsakhurdia's rule, but maintained the same position in respect of "South Ossetia".

The so-called hot phase of armed conflict ended in June 1992. By that time neither the Soviet Union nor the Gamsakhurdia's government existed, and the effective State Council in Georgia was headed by Eduard Shevardnadze. On 14 June, 1992, in Sochi Shevardnadze and Yeltsin signed the agreement on principles of regulation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict. Extremely significant outcome of the agreement was:

- Cease-fire in the conflict zone;
- Division of the conflict zone into Georgian and "South Ossetian" control zones;
- Creation of the Joint Control Commission (JCC), a quadripartite body with participation of Georgia, "South Ossetia", Russia, North Ossetia and patronage of the OSCE;
- Determination of a format of the Control Commission. This was a universal format and included all aspects of conflict resolution.
- A tripartite contingent of united peacekeeping forces - with participation of Georgia, Russia, and South Ossetia - was set up under the same document.

⁵³ Newspaper "Sakartvelos Respublika", #58, 27 March 1991.

g) Conflict Prior to the Rose Revolution

After termination of hostilities and implementation of the cease-fire, the struggle continued at the diplomatic table with numerous agreements and protocols of mutual understanding. Meanwhile, the population started to gradually return and economic and trade relations were restored. In 1996 the hope of full-scale conflict resolution had emerged when on 17 April the parties initialed a draft memorandum on full-scale resolution of the conflict.

Throughout the history of the conflict in 1996-2002 many documents and meetings were recorded. In these years, the positions of various parties nearly converged numerous times and according to expert assessments, fundamental breakthroughs should have been possible as well.⁵⁴

Frequent meetings between Shevardnadze and Chibirov were especially promising - in Vladikavkaz in 1996, in Java in 1997, and in Borjomi in 1998. These very meetings gave rise to political dynamics, as the parties discussed all topics, including the return of IDPs, economic development of the region, joint security of the population in the conflict zone, etc.

In 1996 Ergneti Market opened, which at the initial stage was perceived as a significant function and a tool for the rapprochement of people and confidence-building from the Georgian side.

The election of Eduard Kokoity as President in South Ossetia and Georgia's official statement on affiliation with NATO spurred a relapse to negative sentiments. Right after Georgia delivered the official statement at the NATO Prague Summit in 2002, on membership in the alliance, Russia began to affix special stamps in the Soviet passports of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian population, while Russian passports have been massively distributed under simplified procedures since 2003.

Along with political considerations, many experts linked the logics of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict to the phenomenon of "war economy", when tensions and confrontations become a fecund ground for illegal business (trafficking illegal weapons, humans, drugs, smuggling).⁵⁵ When the economic interests intertwine with the conflict and occupy a dominant position in the relations of the parties, groups will appear that benefit from a continuation of the conflict. It is widely held that the war economy significantly nourished both conflicts in the territory of Georgia throughout the years. However, an inadequate and exaggerated assessment of the significance of this very factor led the country to the tragedy in summer of 2004.

54 For a complete overview of conflict dynamics in 1996-2002 see Zakareishvili, Darchiashvili, Khaindrava, Khidasheili, Kublashvili, Gogia, Jorbenadze, Shergelashvili, Mirziashvili, Toklikishvili, Maisashvili: "On the Causes, Dynamics, Searching Ways of Solution, and Potential Trends of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict", Tbilisi, 2005.

55 See International IDEA, "Democracy Building in Georgia", Discussion materials #9, Darchiashvili, Tevzadze, "Ethnic Conflict and Reclusive Regions in Georgia", May, 2003.

1.6. AFTER THE ROSE REVOLUTION

a) Ergneti Market and the Summer of 2004

After the success of the Rose and Adjara Revolutions, the conditions for conflict appeared to be exhausted at the level of daily life. The Kokoity regime, however, remained the only problem. It survived mainly by smuggling and did not enjoy much clout among the local population. This was basically the attitude a majority of the political and public elite in Georgia had towards conflict resolution in South Ossetia.

According to research conducted by Georgian experts in 2004, the situation around the Ergneti Market was extremely alarming and contained high risks to the security of Georgia, the authors asserted. Additionally, the Georgian economy was incurring huge financial losses due to the illegal transportation of various types of goods (estimates fluctuate between 200 million and one billion GEL) including weapons, drugs, and other prohibited items, which reached the country through the very Ergneti Market⁵⁶. Pursuant to the research, 150 vehicles crossed the conditional border into the remaining territory of Georgia on a daily basis. Each vehicle likely paid an unofficial "tariff", i.e. bribe, to the regulators on both sides in proportion to its size and cargo.

The authorities pursued clear-cut tactics. They could not put up with such a huge gap in the Georgian economy. With the reorganization of the Georgian tax system underway and a growing budget authorities could not tolerate what amounted to the legalized smuggling of goods in the country. So they closed down the Ergneti Market, which eradicated the major source of income for Kokoity's regime. Meanwhile Tbilisi pursued a "humanitarian storm" and tried to win the hearts of the population in the Tskhinvali region and gain their loyalty. The government proudly reported to the people and parliament on the measures undertaken successfully:

"Georgian law-enforcers began undertaking effective measures to prevent the flow of smuggled goods. They closed down all roads and paths used by the criminals. As a result of these measures, the Ergneti Market was closed down, which eradicated the main source of nourishment to the smugglers and their protégés".⁵⁷

A simple tactic at first glance turned out to be wrong, as the "war economy" was not a decisive factor, despite its important presence in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict.

In Adjara, the confrontation between the local population and the regime correlated with, a full integration with Georgia. The Ossetians living in the former

56 Alexandre Kukhianidze, Alexandre Kupatadze, Roman Gotsiridze "Smuggling through Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia", published by American University, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) Georgia Office, Tbilisi, 2004; further, see the Report of the Government of Georgia on Full-scale Aggression of Russian Federation against Georgia, Tbilisi, August, 2009, p. 27.

57 Report of the Government of Georgia on Full-scale Aggression of Russian Federation against Georgia, Tbilisi, August, 2009, p. 26.

District territory, however, regardless of how opposed they should have been to Kokoity and his politics, and regardless of how great their relationships should have been with Georgian co-villagers, did not and should not have trusted Tbilisi for obvious reasons. The gaining of trust is a durable process and perhaps Tbilisi's efforts could have been fruitful, but government was in a hurry. Impatience and underestimation of the Russian factor led us to the crisis and bloodshed that occurred in the summer of 2004. Note the report of the Government of Georgia:

“Russia actively engaged in **renewed conflict**, and Russian media launched a propaganda war. North Caucasian volunteers were hastily brought into the region.”

At the same time, if Georgian law-enforcers were undertaking anti-smuggling measures to close down the Market, it is unclear why the Georgian police were occupying strategic heights which, according to the Government Report, the Georgian side had to leave immediately:

„To avoid escalation, the Georgian side transferred the strategically important positions occupied by the Georgian police to the „peacekeepers“ and withdrew additional troops of MIA from the region“.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, this unsuccessful campaign had a positive consequence in terms of the reappraisal of chosen tactics and an acknowledgement that a peaceful resolution of the conflict requires a durable and consistent approach. In any case, statements by Georgian authorities made in the fall of 2004 provided grounds for such optimism.

b) Peace Initiatives of Georgian Authorities

During the speech at the 59th session of the UN General Assembly on 22 September 2004, President Saakashvili raised the issue of a step by step resolution for the conflicts. This was a sequential plan and, in parallel to confidence-building, included broad guarantees of decriminalization, demilitarization, and security.

This was followed by a meeting between Prime-Minister of Georgia Zurab Zhvania and the de-facto President of South Ossetia Eduard Kokoity in Sochi in November 2004, where an agreement on demilitarization was signed. The parties also agreed on the need to implement joint economic projects.

In January 2005, president Saakashvili publicized the government's initiatives on peaceful regulation of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict from the tribune of the Parliamentary Assembly of CoE in Strasbourg, which aimed to unify Georgia peacefully. The plan included broad autonomy, constitutional guarantees, official status of the Ossetian language, and the allocation of special funds for rehabilitation, as well as for the education and cultural heritage of the region. Furthermore, the plan discussed the restitution of property lost as a result of the con-

⁵⁸ Report of the Government of Georgia on Full-scale Aggression of Russian Federation against Georgia, Tbilisi, August, 2009, p. 27.

flict. Finally, the plan envisaged the creation of a joint, mixed Georgian-Ossetian police, which would secure the safety of population.

At an international conference in July 2005 in Batumi, the President stated that Tbilisi was ready to provide South Ossetia with the broadest autonomy and safeguard a high degree of its self-governance and privileged tax and economic regimes.⁵⁹

A broader and more concrete version of the Georgian peace plan was announced at the OSCE Ljubljana Ministerial in December 2005, where Georgian Prime-Minister Zurab Noghaideli presented a conflict resolution action plan set out in specific time-frames.⁶⁰ Three stages of issues were identified under this plan: demilitarization of the conflict zone, socio-economic rehabilitation, and final determination of the status of South Ossetia.

With Georgia offering peace plans to the international community the Ossetians' response was inevitable, especially since the plan was adopted unanimously at the OSCE Ministerial, inclusive of Russia's consent. The response came shortly after. A letter from the de-facto President of South Ossetia, Eduard Kokoity, sent to presidents Putin and Saakashvili, as well as to the heads of OSCE member states, was quite promising, where he stressed the need to develop a joint peace plan. Kokoity's counter proposals backed the same three-stage approach to conflict resolution and put forth an initiative to develop a joint plan of actions within the framework of the Joint Control Commission. Kokoity's letter was so analogous of Georgian initiatives that the current Prime-Minister of Georgia, Zurab Noghaideli, told the Georgian press that "[Kokoity] had copied it from us".

Nevertheless, all of these peace initiatives and plans had one serious problem. Georgian authorities were in a hurry and realization of each of these initiatives was confined under very restricted time-frames. For instance, all three stages of the plan announced at the Ljubljana Ministerial should have been completed by September 2006, which undermined its actual implementation.

Despite such tight deadlines, Tbilisi delayed taking effective steps which would have turned the declared peace plan initiatives into reality. After Kokoity's response, the Parliament of Georgia could have acted and initiated legislation to support the respective peace initiatives. One such law would have concerned the status of the Ossetian language, as a late response to the demand of the Ossetian people and effort to reinvigorate relations from the point of its termination. Obviously, at the beginning such an act would have carried a symbolic meaning only, but conflicts and confidence-building are the collection of such symbolic

59 See, "Tbilisi Pushes South Ossetia Peace Initiative at Batumi Conference", Tbilisi, July 10, 2005. at <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=10192>; also, "Tskhinvali Comments on Batumi Conference", Tbilisi, July 12, 2005. at <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=10205&search=>

60 See, „PM Urges Cabinet to Follow South Ossetia Peace Plan“, Tbilisi, July 13, 2005. at <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=10210&search=>; GEORGIA'S ACTION PLAN ON SOUTH OSSETIA: A TEST FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 2 Issue: 219, November 22, 2005, at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=31149](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=31149); REMARKS OF H.E. MR. ZURAB NOGAIDELI, PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA, OSCE Permanent Council, VIENNA - 27 OCTOBER, 2006

acts and gestures, a multitude of which produce over time a qualitative difference. Secondly, such a law should have concerned the restitution of property, which would have restored the rights of Ossetian victims living in the territory controlled by Georgia immediately after the adoption of such law. Unfortunately, this law was adopted on 29 December 2006, almost two years after the announcement of the peace plan on 26 January 2005. Moreover, no effective steps to implement the Law were taken following its adoption.

Each peace plan was in effect dubious and unconvincing as officials in Tbilisi often regarded South Ossetia with contempt and used threatening language while making promises of rapid restoration of territorial integrity. Such rhetoric culminated in the statement of the former Minister of Defense, Irakli Okruashvili, who promised all Georgia would celebrate the 2007 New Year in Tskhinvali.

c) Interim Administration

In 2007 the Parliament of Georgia adopted the Law on Establishment of Appropriate Conditions for Conflict Resolution in the Former South Ossetian Autonomous District, in which the interim administrative territorial unit and its interim administration was set up⁶¹. Law granted the interim administration the strongest function of the negotiations – “to hold negotiations on determination of the autonomy status for the former South Ossetian Autonomous District”⁶². This is a somewhat paradoxical provision, because it is unclear who should have been the subject and object of negotiations and who should have negotiated with whom the status of autonomy. Report of the Interim Commission of Parliament of Georgia provides an indirect response to this question: “Dimitry Sanakoev started negotiating with the Georgian authorities with the purpose of a peaceful resolution of the conflict”⁶³ i.e. Dimitry Sanakoev’s administration loyal to the central authorities were identified as a party to the conflict?!

The problem was unmasked in its entirety during the elections, when 2 elections and 2 referendums were held on the same day on the territory of the former autonomous district. In all four cases the results exceeded 90 percent. On one hand, 99 percent of voters voted for the independence of South Ossetia, while on the other side 95 percent of voters voted for federalization within Georgia. Kokoity and Sanakoev (also an ethnic Ossetian) were elected on both sides with the same majority of votes.

61 Interim administrative unit and its administration were set up pursuant to the two acts issued under the Law: 8 May 2007 Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia on Establishment of Interim Administrative-Territorial Unit and the 10 May 2007 Decree of the President of Georgia #296 on the Procedure and Functioning and Scope of the Administration of Interim Administrative-Territorial Unit on the Territory of Former South Ossetian Autonomous District”.

62 Law of Georgia on "Establishment of Appropriate Conditions for Conflict Resolution in the Former South Ossetian Autonomous District", 13 April 2007, Article 4(b). Of interests as well is Sub-paragraph "d" of Article 4 of the same Law, which lists among the powers of interim administration "development of relevant plans and projects aimed at peaceful resolution of the conflict and securing the engagement of local society in the process of their elaboration"; society and experts perceived this provision as a transfer of liability by central authorities to the new entity.

63 See the Report of the Interim Commission of the Parliament of Georgia on Study of Military Aggression and Other Acts of Russian Federation against the Territorial Integrity of Georgia, 2009.

The electoral battles on 12 November 2006 clearly demonstrated that an administration elected by the population of Georgian villages in the former District territory created another reason for confrontation and increased tensions. One thing that was clear throughout the entire history of the conflict is that the central authorities of Georgia never experienced problems with the Georgian villages of the District and that hostilities had never occurred between ethnic Georgians. Hence, the regulation, negotiations, meetings, and confidence-building measures were required with the mainly Ossetian citizens on the other side of the conditional border. This mission, in the hands of the interim administration elected by the Georgian villages and of its head, despite his ethnic origin, was surely destined to fail.

1.7. YEAR 2008 - MOUNTING CONFRONTATION

a) Increase of Tension between Russia and Georgia, Spring 2008

A confrontation between Russia and Georgia reached a peak in the early spring of 2008.

On 6 March 2008 Russia unilaterally denounced the Decision of the Council of the Heads of States of the Commonwealth of Independent States on "Measures for Settlement of the Conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia", which practically implied lifting the economic sanctions imposed on Abkhazia following the conflict. Humanitarian interests of the population living in the territory of Abkhazia were put forth by Russia as a main argument in justification of this denunciation, in light of the fact that by the spring of 2008 the majority of Abkhazia's population were Russian nationals already.

Georgia assessed Russia's action extremely negatively and declared it was the start of Abkhazia's complete militarization. The majority of politicians and experts in Georgia stated that prior to the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Russia had sent a clear-cut signal to the entire world.

After the 6 March 2008 decision Russia started taking proactive steps and in the coming months Russian-Georgian relations transformed into a war of words and information full of mutual accusations.

On 21 March 2008 the Russian Duma adopted a resolution, which recommended the executive authorities of Russia to recognize the independence of the regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali.⁶⁴

On 16 April 2008 President Putin signed a decree on direct legal ties and relations with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Pursuant to the same Decree, representative missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia were opened up in Tskhinvali and Sokhumi. South Ossetian de facto authorities apprehended the

⁶⁴ "Georgia Condemns Duma's Call for S.Ossetia, Abkhaz Recognition", 24 March, 2008, Civil Georgia, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17433>; *Russia Moves to Legalize Ties with Abkhazia, S.Ossetia*, 16 April, 2008, Civil Georgia; at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17638>

16 April Decree as an indirect confirmation of its independence. The decision was condemned by the international community, including the EU, OSCE, NATO, the United States of America, Great Britain, France, and Germany. International community demanded that Russia revoke this decree and normalize relations, although it was in vain.⁶⁵

On 31 May 2008 the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation deployed #76 Unit of the Volgograd Railway Forces to Abkhazia, which consisted of 400 soldiers.⁶⁶ The motivation was humanitarian once again - to rehabilitate the Sokhumi - Ochamchire railway destroyed in the war. This project was not agreed on with Georgia. Moreover, the Georgian side consistently expressed its concerns over the rehabilitation of the railway and opposed it, as that was always associated with the increased capacity to transport military equipment from Russia to Ochamchire and, consequently, increase Abkhazia's military potential and simplify the movement of Russian troops "upon necessity".

Along with the laws, resolutions, and statements, the situation in the conflict zones was becoming more and more tense, peacekeepers, policemen, and civilians were dying, and the property of dozens of people was being destroyed.

b) 20 April 2008, Destruction of an Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the territory of Abkhazia

At 10:00 am on 20 April 2008, a fighter-plane from the territory of the Russian Federation downed the Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) "Hermes-450" over the village of Gagidi in the Gali District, Georgian authorities informed.

The UN Mission, investigated this incident upon the request of both sides, and clearly indicated in the Report concerning the 20 April, 2008 incident that pursuant to the Moscow Agreement on the Separation of Forces and Cease-Fire in the Georgia-Abkhazia Conflict, "the CIS PKF and no one else is to perform the separation of forces. From a strict peacekeeping perspective, therefore, the Mission considers that enforcement action by third parties - in this case the Russian Federation - in the zone of conflict is fundamentally inconsistent with the Moscow Agreement and undercuts the cease-fire and separation of forces regime".⁶⁷

In the same Report the UN Observer Mission indicated the Georgian side breached the agreement as well: "However legitimate this purpose may seem to the Georgian side, it stands to reason that this kind of military intelligence-gathering is bound to be interpreted by the Abkhaz side as a precursor to a military operation, particularly in a period of tense relations between the sides. A cease-fire regime has a major advantage - preventing war. It does however im-

65 *Reports: Russia will not Revoke April 16 Decision, 11 July, 2008, Civil Georgia, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18753>*

66 *Increase in Troops by Russia in Abkhazia 'not Wise' - Solana 29 April, 2008, Civil Georgia, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=17724>*

67 *Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April involving the downing of a Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the Zone of Conflict, para 35.*

pose, in return, limitations on the freedom of the sides, including the undertaking by one side of measures that can and will be perceived as threats by the other side".⁶⁸

It is noteworthy that in the same report UNOMIG reminded Georgian authorities of the letter sent to the Minister of Defense of Georgia on 7 April 2008, which pertained to with a similar occasion⁶⁹ on 18 March 2008 when the Mission stated that Georgia's reconnaissance mission by a drone in the conflict zone could have been considered as a military operation for the purposes of international law, which contravenes the principles of the Agreement in effect between the parties.⁷⁰

c) Increase of Tension in the Tskhinvali Region - Spring 2008

In July the situation in the Tskhinvali Region strained even further.

On 3 July 2008 Georgian media reported that an attack had taken place on the Eredvi-Kheiti by-pass road: "A car of the Head of South Ossetian provisional administration Dimitry Sanakoev hit a remote controlled mine, followed by a gun fire at his convoy, in which three body-guards had been injured".⁷¹ Sanakoev himself escaped safely. Georgian side assessed this fact as an attempted terrorist act.

In the morning of 3 July as well, attack on Sanakoev was preceded by the blowing up of **Nodar Bibilov**, the Police Chief of the Ossetian village Dmenisi. Nodar Bibilov had died on the spot. South Ossetian de facto authorities accused Tbilisi⁷² of masterminding the 3 July morning blast and assessed it as a terrorist act.

Another blast took place in the conflict zone on 4 July. "One policeman died and one civilian was injured during the night shoot-out, and in particular as a result of attack on the militia post of village Ubiati", - representative of the de facto authorities has stated in an interview with Georgian media means.⁷³



The car of Dimitri Sanakoev damaged by an explosion, 3 July 2009.

68 Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April involving the downing of a Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the Zone of Conflict, *para 36*.

69 Remarkably, the Georgian side does not confirm the downing of a Georgian drone by the Abkhazians at the Ochamchire coast on 18 March 2008. Nevertheless, as a result of the examination conducted with the experts invited specially for this purpose, the UN Mission established that the debris of the downed drone belonged to a reconnaissance plane of the very Georgian armed forces.

70 Report of UNOMIG on the Incident of 20 April involving the downing of a Georgian Unmanned Aerial Vehicle over the Zone of Conflict, *para 3*.

71 "Dimitry Sanakoev's Convoy Was Attacked", 3 July 2008, News Agency "Civil Georgia"; <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=18692>

72 "Dimitry Sanakoev's Convoy Was Attacked", 3 July 2008, News Agency "Civil Georgia"; <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=18692>

73 "Two Killed in Shooting in the Tskhinvali Region", 4 July 2008, News Agency "Civil Georgia"; <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=18695>

The 3 and 4 July incidents were the beginning of an escalation and for one month, Georgian and Russian media broadcasted mutual accusations and victims' stories and numerous concerns expressed on behalf of the world community.

On 8 July 2008, during the visit to Georgia by Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the USA, four Russian military jets violated Georgian airspace once again. In recent years Georgia has often expressed concerns over the violation of its airspace. The 9 July incident was different as it did not turn into another exchange of accusations as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation actually confirmed it occurred.⁷⁴ "This action was aimed at cooling the hot heads in Tbilisi", - the 10 July 2008 official statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia states.⁷⁵

Russia's behavior was more than strange. Many analysts stated then that by acknowledging the violation of airspace of a sovereign state during the visit of the US State Secretary, the Russian Federation was sort of testing the international community for a reaction, particularly from the EU and the United States.

Today one can boldly state that the concerned statements various tribunes expressed fell short to stop Russia. Along with such statements, the international community spared no efforts to bring the sides to the table for dialogue, but these efforts were futed⁷⁶

d) Military Exercises

Large-scale military exercises "Caucasus-2008" were underway in the North Caucasian Military District from 15 July to 3 August 2008.⁷⁷ Exercises took place the Roki and Mamisoni Passes, directly at the Russian-Georgian border.

74 "Russia Confirms its Aircraft Intruded into Georgia", 10 July 2008, Civil Georgia, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18748>

75 Russia Admits Violating Airspace in the Tskhinvali Region", 10 July 2008, News Agency "Civil Georgia"; <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=18768&search=>

76 Separatists reject the peace plan on Abkhazia developed with the mediation of Germany and refuse to participate in the talks planned in Berlin, see "Sokhumi Refuses to Meet the Group of Friends", 4 August 2008, News Agency civil.ge; EU tries to organize peace talks, which the separatists do not attend (22-24 July 2008): EU tries to hold talks in Brussels with participation of representatives of the South Ossetian Region, Government of Georgia, separatist regime of Tskhinvali and the Russian Federation. Representatives of de facto authorities refuse to participate. Originally they justified this by pointing at the position of the State Minister of Reintegration Issues, Temur Iakobashvili. To neutralize this cause, Mr. Iakobashvili was granted the authority of President's special representative. Separatists refused to participate in the talks once again, this time without stating any justifications. This was followed by the OSCE peace talks initiative. De facto authorities rejected this initiative as well (end of July 2008) in the beginning of August 2008. OSCE Chairman, Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Stubb, put forth another initiative to hold talks between the separatists and the Government of Georgia, this time in Helsinki. Yet, the de facto authorities rejected this proposal also. See the chronology of Russian aggression in Georgia, document of the Government of Georgia, 21 September 2008, Tbilisi; Further, for chronological information see the 2008 archive of the Georgian News Agency www.civil.ge

77 *Russian Military Practices Peace Enforcement in Conflict Zones*, 15 July 2008, Civil Georgia, at <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18782>

8,000 soldiers and 700 armored vehicles were involved in these exercises mainly from the North Caucasian Military District,⁷⁸ including landing troops, air forces, antiaircraft units, Black Sea and Caspian Sea fleets, Federal Security Service (FSB), and the internal troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Concurrent with the exercises, brochures were distributed in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region stating "Know Your Enemy", obviously implying Georgia. According to the Government of Georgia, after completing the military exercises, participating units did not return to where they originated.

On 15 July, 2008, joint Georgian-American military exercises "Immediate Response - 2008" also took place in Georgia and lasted three weeks. 1,650 servicemen participated in these exercises. These were mixed exercises with the 1,000 American, 620 Georgian, 10 Ukrainian, 10 Azerbaijani, and 10 Armenian officers.⁷⁹

Later, these exercises became the subject of accusations and speculations on behalf of the Russian information services and politicians, concerning the direct involvement of the USA in the conflict.

1.8. GEORGIA - AUGUST 2008

Against the background of political tensions, from 1st of August, casualties were increasing on both sides among the civilian population numerous sources stated. Georgian press intensely covered the conflict zone and revealed blown up cars, wounded peacekeepers, and victims, almost on a daily basis.

Incidents were widely covered on 1, 2, and 3 August.

On 2 August 2008 the News Agency "Civil Georgia" reported that 6 people died as a result of shoot-out in the territory controlled by the de facto authorities and 7 Georgians were wounded. However, Georgian national information remained silent on the losses of the Ossetian side.

According to the South Ossetian de facto authorities, "6 people died and fifteen were wounded after the Georgian side opened fire on Tskhinvali and nearby Ossetian villages late on night of 1st of August and at the dawn of 2nd of August. Georgia stated that seven people were wounded, including one policeman, as a result of shelling of Georgian villages".⁸⁰

78 "Chronology of Russian Aggression in Georgia", document of the Government of Georgia, 21 September 2008, Tbilisi; further, http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=461&info_id=7097&date=2008-07-23&new_month=07&new_year=2008

79 "President of Georgia Attended Georgian-American Military Exercises", 21 July 2008, News Agency "News Georgia", <http://newsgeorgia.ge/geo1/20080721/42279663.html>

80 "Kokoity Talks about General Mobilization", 2 August 2008, News Agency www.civil.ge

On 4 August 2008 the Russian newspaper "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" continued to report about escalations in the conflict zone since the first days of August.⁸¹ The newspaper confirmed the deaths of 6 people and the wounding of 13 in South Ossetian territories not controlled by Georgia. Notably, as to the 1-3 August 2008 incidents, numerous reports and publications by Georgian authorities concerning the preconditions of the August 2008 conflict omit any information regarding casualties among the Ossetian side and accordingly, on opening fire (even if in return) by the Georgian side.

For instance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia⁸² at the request of the Interim Parliamentary Commission, prepared a detailed information package on the escalation of the situation in the conflict zones after 6 March 2008. Paragraphs #31 and #32 "Attacks in the Tskhinvali Region" concern the very events of 1-3 August. The document states that Georgian villages of Avnevi and Nuli, as well as Ergneti and Nikozi had been fired at from Tskhinvali. The document also states that six civilians had been wounded and it ends there.

a) 6th of August

On 6 August 2008, South Ossetian de facto authorities and the Russian peacekeepers reported heavy shoot-outs. Statements were made that the "Georgian forces attempted to occupy the heights near the village Nuli, which overlook Ossetian villages".⁸³ Georgia denied this. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Eka Zghuladze stated: "It is quiet in the region and none of the incidents is being reported".⁸⁴

A few hours after above mentioned statement, the Georgia "confirmed the shoot-out, but noted that the incident had been resolved already".⁸⁵ At the same time, the assistant to the Commander of Peacekeeping forces, Vladimir Ivanov, disseminated the information. He told "InterFax" that "heavy clashes were taking place between the Georgian and Ossetian sides in the outskirts of villages Avnevi and Khetagurovo".

Georgian IDPs also confirm intense shoot-outs on 6 August. IDP from village Avnevi **Tania Tasoeva-Durglishvili**⁸⁶ recalls: "On 6 August the Ossetians opened fire at the Georgian peacekeepers located in Avnevi. They fired from the Ossetian village Tsunari directly towards the mast. Tsunari is the same as Khetagurovo. Two Georgian peacekeepers died and two others were wounded as a result of the shoot-out. Georgian soldiers left the mast and ran immediately. I saw how they brought the dead out. They brought the dead in a wheel barrow by

81 See "Is Tbilisi Able to Carry the Ossetian Burden?", Rossiyskaya Gazeta - Central Issue #4720, 4 August 2008, at <http://www.rg.ru/2008/08/04/gruz.html>

82 See "Russian Aggression in Georgia - 2008", Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, prepared specially for the Interim Parliamentary Commission, Tbilisi, October 2008.

83 "MIA Denies Information on Shoot-out in the Tskhinvali Region", 6 August 2008, 16:38, News Agency www.civil.ge

84 "MIA Denies Information on Shoot-out in the Tskhinvali Region", 6 August 2008, 16:38, News Agency www.civil.ge

85 "Tskhinvali and Russian Peacekeepers Report "Heavy Shootings", 6 August 2008, 18:19, News Agency www.civil.ge

86 Interview with Tania Tasoeva was recorded by the GYLA on 29 May 2009 in Tbilisi.

my garden. They were approximately 19-year-old guys". **Gurgen Durglishvili** from Avnevi also confirms the shoot-out on 6 August.

IDPs from the village Nuli remember that morning as well. "At dawn on 6 August 2008 the Ossetian side started firing heavy caliber shells towards villages Nuli and Avnevi. That day police units and the houses of the policemen in the village were bombarded. Apart from the police buildings, a shell hit the house of resident of Nuli Simon Zhamerashvili as well. Bombardment was carried out from the village Ghvertevi, controlled by the Ossetians, which is located approximately a kilometer and a half north of village Nuli. The police units present in the village resisted the attack of the Ossetian side. On 6 August there was no Georgian army in the village of Nuli", - **Ramaz Tsertsvadze** stated.⁸⁷ The situation was so complicated that according to Mr. Ramaz, on 6 August the majority of women and children had left the village. Children and grandchildren of Mr. Ramaz himself left for Tbilisi on 6 August.

Residents of other Georgian villages also report of the extreme deterioration of the situation at the dawn on 6 August. Ramaz Tsitsiloshvili from the village of Vanati told us, "they started firing in the gorge on the night of 5 August 2008. That night bullets were fired towards Vanati as well, but a major attack was unfolding on the village of Eredvi. On the 6th they fired from the Ossetian village Dmenisi, where a vast amount of military equipment had been brought in, as well as from the Ossetian villages Sarabuki and Ortevi. A house was hit by a shell and it was destroyed entirely".⁸⁸ Inhabitant of the village Kvemo Achabeti, Giorgi Sherazadishvili, told us a similar story: "There was such a heavy shoot-out that started on the 6 August we spent three entire days in a neighbor's basement. We were unable to go outside during the day. The Georgian army entered on 6 August".

Head of the Analytical Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Shota Utiashvili, repeated in the evening of 6 August that it was relatively quiet in the region: "There have been no significant clashes in the region since 2 August. There were small shoot-outs, but no major clashes. As it seems, the Russian media and the separatist authorities are trying to create a virtual reality and illusion of war, as if something major is underway there", Utiashvili told "Civil Georgia"⁸⁹.

In the morning of 7 August the Georgian side confirmed the attacks on villages Eredvi, Prisi, Avnevi, Dvani, and Nuli. According to the same information, two Georgian peacekeepers had been wounded. At the same time, according to a statement of by South Ossetian de facto authorities, 18 people had been wounded during the bombardments of Ossetian villages Khetagurovo, Dmenisi,

87 Interview with Ramaz Tsertsvadze was recorded by the GYLA on 11 December 2008 in the IDP Compact Settlement Center in borough Surami, in the building of a former professional-technical school.

88 Interview with resident of Vanati Ramaz Tsitsiloshvili was recorded by the GYLA.

89 "10 People Injured in the Tskhinvali Region Shooting", 7 August 2008, 10:58, News Agency www.civil.ge

Sarabuki, Ubiati, and the outskirts of Tskhinvali. Media means disseminated this news from the morning of 7 August.⁹⁰

Other news disseminated on 7 August was about an attack on a Georgian armored personnel carrier (APC). We bring to your attention the original news disseminated by the Agency "Civil Georgia" at 15:56 on 7 August 2008.

"Three Georgian soldiers were wounded after Ossetian separatists blew up an APC belonging to the Georgian Peacekeeping Battalion", - the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia stated on 7 August. "The incident took place in village Avnevi", Shota Utiashvili told "Civil Georgia". "The Georgian APC was hit by a rocket-powered shell fired by Ossetian separatists". On 6 August South Ossetian de facto authorities were reporting that the South Ossetian forces destroyed a Georgian APC during a clash near the village Nuli. However, this information was denied by both the Georgians and Russian peacekeeping forces".

There were numerous mutually exclusive news reports on the situation in the Tskhinvali Region on 6 August 2008, as well as frequent contradicting statements made by the representatives of authorities also.

b) 7th of August

On 7 August war broke out in the Tskhinvali Region.

South Ossetian de facto authorities stated on 7 August that "Georgia launched a large-scale aggression against South Ossetia".⁹¹

On 7 August Georgia reported mass bombardments of Georgian villages and denied additional deployment of forces in the conflict zone.

In the same evening, at 19:10 Tbilisi time, President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili issued a cease-fire order. "Several hours ago, in my capacity as Commander in Chief of Georgia, I issued a very painful order directing all Georgian police forces and other units under our control not to return fire, even if they face intensive bombing. Please, stop firing immediately. We do not have the will to respond. We have been tolerating this and have not been responding for so many years. Do not test the Georgian state's patience. Let us stop the spiral of violence. Let us give peace and dialogue a chance".⁹² On August 11, a similar statement was made again by the president of Georgia. "The Wall Street Journal" published opinion of Mikheil Saakashvili where we read: "We had no choice but to protect our civilians and restore our constitutional order."⁹³

90 "Tskhinvali Reports Intense Clashes", 7 August 2008, 17:36, News Agency www.civil.ge published the statement of the Secretary of the National Security Council of the South Ossetian de facto authorities, Anatoly Barankevich.

91 Full text of the 7 August 19:10 p.m. appeal of President Saakashvili is available on the web site of News Agency www.civil.ge

92 "Kurashvili: "Restoration of Constitutional Order" is Underway in the Tskhinvali Region", 8 August 2008, 01:04, News Agency www.civil.ge. Statement made by Mamuka Kurashvili, Chief of the Georgian Peacekeeping Battalion, is meant: "Late night on 7 August we made a decision to restore constitutional order in the entire region".

93 "The War in Georgia Is a War for the West", opinion by Mikheil Saakashvili, August 11, 2008 The Wall Street Journal, at http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB121841306186328421.html?mod=Election2008_Opinion

In the same address Mikheil Saakashvili stated in respect of Russia: "We are in constant contact with the leadership of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry tells us Russia is trying to stop the separatists from engaging in armed action, but without any success".

However, the same night shooting from both sides resumed which was when the well-known statements of "restoration of constitutional order" were made.⁹⁴

In the morning of 8 August the Prime-Minister of Georgia stated that the "Georgian forces are carrying out measures to establish guaranteed peace in South Ossetia. Currently governmental forces are undertaking actions for restoring and establishing guaranteed peaceful resolution, where the peaceful population of the region will no longer face threat". (**See Attachment #3: Decree of the President of Georgia #402 from August 9, 2008 on "the Declaration of State of War and General Mobilization over Entire Territory of Georgia)**⁹⁵. Remarkably in this statement Prime-Minister Gurgenedze mentioned the entry of volunteers through the Roki Tunnel on 8 August.

- On 9 August 2008, 2 days after the outbreak of hostilities, first the President and then Parliament declared a state of war. The major reasons for declaring war were formulated as follows: Mass violations of human rights and freedoms and armed attacks and facts of violence on a peaceful population were taking place on behalf of the separatists. These actions result in casualties among the civilian population and peacekeepers;
- Actions undertaken by the separatists in the territory of Georgia have been actively supported by the Russian Federation. In particular, hundreds of servicemen and military equipment entered Georgia from the Russian Federation through the Roki Tunnel on 8 August;
- Throughout the day on 8 August, military aircraft of the Russian Federation continually violated Georgia's airspace and carried out bombardments;
- **Therefore, there is a need to use force, which will be proportionate to attacks carried out on Georgia and which will be directed at halting the armed attack and avoiding the escalation of situation.**

Later, at the end of November 2008, **Mikheil Saakashvili** stated in front of the Parliamentary Interim Commission: "Yes, we made the decision to carry out military operations in the Tskhinvali Region to defend our homeland and protect the security of our citizens".⁹⁶

94 "Peace Enforcement Measures are Carried Out in South Ossetia" - Gurgenedze, 8 August 2008, 10:41, News Agency www.civil.ge

95 See the Order #402 of the President of Georgia on Declaration of Military Activities and General Mobilization in the Entire Territory of Georgia, 9 August 2008, Tbilisi.

96 President Saakashvili's testimony to the Interim Parliamentary Commission, 29 November 2008, Tbilisi, www.parliament.ge

On 9 August Georgian armed forces started withdrawing and on 12 August, with the mediation of the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, the war formally ended after the parties signed a cease-fire agreement.

The objective of our study has not been to analyze who started the war, however, we believe that the overview of events in this region of Georgia during last two decades is of utmost importance for understanding the August 2008 events.

**Infringement of Fundamental
Human Rights and Freedoms**

**Breach of Fundamental Norms of
Humanitarian Law and Laws of War**

During 2008 August War



DEPRIVATION OF LIFE
ETHNIC CLEANSING
TORCHING • DEMOLISHING ETHNIC GEORGIAN VILLAGES
CAPTIVITY



2.1. Deprivation of Life as a Result of Bombing

2.1. Deliberate Killing, Murder



2

„The material collected describes 16 alleged cases of killings of civilians (excluding deaths resulting from cross fire, bombing and shelling at the time of large scale military operations, and accidents with unexploded ordnance), in areas controlled by Russian forces, many of which seems to be instances of summarily executions.“*

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

* „Georgia-Russia conflict: Ethnic Cleansing Continues in South Ossetian Conflict Zone in Georgia“, by Aage Borchgrevink, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 24 October, 2008

2.1. DEPRIVATION OF LIFE AS A RESULT OF BOMBING

Along with looting and the torching of houses and the persecution the population, beating, insulting, intimidating, and threatening people was a common occurrence in August-September 2008. Moreover, there were numerous cases of the deprivation of life. Our witnesses recall with grave pain how they saw the corpses of killed neighbors or relatives while fleeing their villages. Some became victims of bombardment, some of stray bullets, but there were cases when humans were murdered deliberately, in front of eyewitnesses to threaten them even more. (**See Attachment #5.1:** List of victims of Russian aggression provided by the Administration of Government Representative in Shida Kartli).

Before becoming familiar with the present materials, it would be advisable to examine the official position of the Russian Federation in relation to the civilian population's right to life in August 2008 in South Ossetian territory. Pursuant to the official information sent by the Russian authorities to the International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia:

- During the conflict there were NO losses among the civilian population.
 - The attitude of the Russian authorities is categorical and excludes bombardments or firing at villages and territories settled with civilians.
- Below please find several extracts from the mentioned document.

"Throughout the operations, military units of the Russian Federation ... were firing at ... actually identified targets only, which excluded losses among the civilian population.

During the active phase of the operation, Russian military leadership used a host of effective measures directed at protecting the civilian population and their property from damage. Gunfire and bombardments were planned and carried out in spots significantly distanced from civilian settlements, shot at actually identified targets.

The civilian population and objects were not fired at. Gunfire would stop after withdrawal of Georgian units from occupied positions. Russian aviation ... would hit positions of the Georgian army, weapon emplacements, and columns of military equipment on the move.

Aviation did not attack targets located within the borders of settlements and nearby.

Applied means excluded civilian losses."⁹⁷

In the following pages we describe the stories of eyewitnesses, examine photos and video footage, expert examinations of the dead, as well as reports by international organizations in our possession that describe a reality very different from the official position of Russian authorities.

97 See, Report of the International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September 2009, Volume III, "Views of the sides on the conflict, chronologies and responses to questionnaires", Russia, Response to Question #3, pp. 464-465.

For instance, the 2008 **OSCE/HRAM** report indicates that numerous villages were bombarded. In addition, based on the visit paid to the occupied territories on 7-10 November 2008, the Mission proved with factual evidence the damage caused to Georgian villages was a result of air strikes.

"The reports presented below are extensive and numerous, but are important to present the widespread and systematic nature of the attacks on villages in South Ossetia. The evidence indicates indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing resulted in the deaths of numerous civilians and in some instances the deliberate targeting of civilians. In the context of the conflict, these cases provide prima facie evidence of war crimes and potentially even crimes against humanity. The pattern suggests a deliberate plan, through the commission of various criminal acts against the civilian population, to drive out all civilians of Georgian nationality from the region of South Ossetia. In a short time, this is exactly what was accomplished."⁹⁸

BOMBARDMENT OF DIDI EREDVI (EREDVI-BERULA-ARGVITSI)

In August 2008 the village of Eredvi was heavily bombed. Attacks were carried out several times a day. The biggest damage and casualties among the Didi Eredvi population occurred as a result of the 8 August bombardments. These very bombardments emptied the village of the population.

Contrary to the claims of the Russian authorities, Georgians who escaped death from the Liakhvi Gorges relate stories of the killings of their neighbors and relatives:

- "A bomb hit my neighbor's house",
- "The church fence was bombed",
- "A bomb hit my house",
- "Shell shrapnel hit him in the yard of his own house",

Eyewitnesses recall many other similar phrases.

According to the stories of village inhabitants, approximately **twenty people** were killed in Didi Eredvi as a result of aerial bombardments or direct fire.

"Eredvi was heavily bombarded when we drove by. The dead were lying by the road, near the house. Houses were hit by a bomb."⁹⁹

Guliver Tarielashvili remembers the Eredvi



Citizens of Georgia killed as a result of bombardment, 14 August, 2008

98 See, "Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia", OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, pp. 34-35.

99 On 8 August 2008, resident of village Achabeti Anzor Babutsidze escaped bombardments from Kvemo Achabeti and watched the unfolding events in other villages on the run. Eredvi was among them. Interview with Anzor Babutsidze was recorded by the GYLA.



Russian Army Vehicles carrying Ossetian Para militaries with white armbands along the road crossing Georgian villages.

bombardment well:

*"Eredvi was bombed for the first time on 8 August. **Mzia Bortsvadze, Seiran Ozgebiashvili, Nino Kristesiashvili, Gogi Zhuzhniashvili, Tsiala Tarielashvili** were killed during this bombardment. Many were wounded, approximately 10 people. 2 jets were bombing. They were colored in white and greenish. They flew very low."*¹⁰⁰

Mevlud Beruashvili also saw how a shell killed his neighbors. Berula village resident, Elnar Vakhtangashvili was another eyewitness to the 8 August bombardment:

*"It was around 11am-12pm on 8 August 2008 when a bomb landed 200 meters from my house. The house was shaking. All the windows were broken. Then Eredvi was bombed also. 8 people were killed."*¹⁰¹

Gela Tsozniashvili's father was also a victim of the 8 August bombardment.

"Eredvi was bombed at approximately 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. on 8 August 2008. 2 jets flew over us in half an hour and when it dropped bombs in the gardens, we knew they were Russian jets. They were silver jets. At this time I was in a lower district. Another bomb was dropped before I went home. A total of 3 bombs were dropped near my house. There was smoke around when I entered the house. When I went up to the second floor another bomb was dropped near my house. The pressure threw me from one room to another. I was stupefied for a while. The roof

*came down, and roof slates and veneers broke. When I went down to the first floor my father had fallen by the stairs. I did not know it then but it turned out he had injured a leg. He was operated on in Hospital #5 in Tbilisi, but died two weeks after the operation from injuries."*¹⁰²

100 Interview with Guliver Tarielashvili was recorded by the GYLA, at the temporary settlement of significant part of the Eredvi-based IDPs, Koda, Building #2, Entrance #2, 3rd Floor, Apt. 21.

101 Interview with resident of village Berula Elnar Vakhtangashvili was recorded by the GYLA, Gori, 1 Tkviavi St., at the "sacred spring", Apt. 30.

102 Interview with Gela Tsozniashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori. Unfortunately father's name is not discernible in the interview. At the moment of drafting this document Mr. Tsozniashvili could not be contacted.

Davit Kristesiashvili from Eredvi told us about another district damaged by the 8 August bombardment:

*"I was approximately 30 meters away from the church fence, when a bomb was dropped, and the pressure threw me to the ground. I had fainted and I don't know how long I was in such condition for. When I came to my senses there was a smoke all around. Across the road, where a bomb had hit, was a ravine and I saw how the wounded were taken out of that ravine. These were: Lasha Beruashvili - wounded in the head; Paata Zhuzhniashvili - wounded in the shoulder; Soso Tarielashvili - wounded heavily in a leg; Giorgi Mamisashvili - worked in Sanakoev's guard; Malisha Romelashvili was wounded in the liver. **Nino Kristesiashvili and Gogia Zhuzhniashvili** had been killed. In about 15 minutes a second bomb hit residential houses."¹⁰³*

Amiran Maisuradze and **Valentina Bestavashvili** recall surnames of other Eredvi-based victims of the 8 August bombardment:

*"Air strikes began on 8 August, at approximately 5 p.m. After the bombardment, **Mishiko Taboshvili, Nikoloz Beruashvili, and Jumber Maisuradze** were found dead."¹⁰⁴*

Unfortunately, we could not identify the stories related to everyone from Eredvi who died during the bombardments. Several names and surnames still remain unknown to us. Nevertheless, we believe the stories of eyewitnesses shed sufficient light on the August 2008 murders in village Eredvi.

Killing of Mzia Bortsvadze

81 year-old inhabitant of village Eredvi **Bagrat Bortsvadze** told us what he had seen:

*"It was 8 or 9 August, I don't remember exactly. My niece Mzia Bortsvadze died from the bombardment. **She was hit by a shell splinter and died in the yard of her house.**"¹⁰⁵*

Vazha Kristesiashvili also witnessed Mzia Bortsvadze's death and recalled how he found two dead bodies after the bombing of a church fence, those of Mzia Bortsvadze and Nino Romelashvili. Nodar Tsojniashvili told this story in detail as well.¹⁰⁶

103 Interview with David Kristesiashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement, village Koda, Building #10.

104 Interview with Valentina Bestavashvili and her spouse Amiran Maisuradze was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement, Tbilisi, Moscow Ave. #9/a.

105 Interview with Bagrat Bortsvadze was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, Nadzaladevi District, 8 Sanerge St., in attendance of his sister-in-law Gulnazi.

106 Interview with Nodar Tsojniashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, 12 Kandelaki St., building of the Border Defense Department. In addition, during the bombardment Nodar Tsojniashvili saw the bodies of Seiran Ozgebishvili, Nino Kristesiashvili, Gogi Zhuzhniashvili, Tsiala Tarielashvili.

Killing of Seiran Ozgebishvili

Resident of Eredvi **Spiridon Kristesiashvili** recalls that on 8 August they had gathered in the center of village Eredvi together with other villagers.

*"Approximately at 10 a.m. I saw 2 jets flying over the village, following which one jet, belonging to the Russian military forces, stormed the civilian population of village Eredvi. Bombs dropped in 500 meters from us, resulting in destruction of houses and killing of villagers: Seiran Ozgebishvili, Tsiala Tarielashvili and others. I don't know surnames of all of them."*¹⁰⁷

Giorgi Vakhtangashvili, who found Seiran Ozgebishvili **dead in the yard of his house**, recalls the same bombardment: *"the poor man was hit by a bomb splinter"*.¹⁰⁸ **Vazha Kristesiashvili** also witnessed the death of Seiran Ozgebishvili and Tsiala Tarielashvili.¹⁰⁹

Neli Ozgebishvili also recollects her father's death.

*"During the first bombardment on 8 August a bomb hit the neighbor's house and my mother and father were sitting on a bench by the house. My father Seiran Ozgebishvili died and mother, Alexandra (Shura) Khubaeva was wounded. On 9 August I went to Gori to bring my mother and we were under bombardment there as well, then the Verkhvebis' district was bombed in Gori. Early morning on the 11th I returned to Tkviavi, as I had learned that my nephew, who was a soldier and served in the army, was in the mortuary. We buried him on the same day."*¹¹⁰

Killing of Tsiala Tarielashvili

On 8 August, by 4 p.m. in the afternoon, **Tsira Tsotniashvili** had left the house for about 10 minutes when a bomb hit her house and killed her 75 year-old grandmother.

*"Two big military planes flew, dark green, I haven't noticed anything on them, neither a flag, nor any signs. They started bombarding. A bomb hit my house. I left the house and went to a neighbor about 10 minutes ago. Grandmother was alone in the house. I looked out because of the noise and it seemed the house did not stand there anymore. It was all demolished. Grandmother wasn't in the ruins of the house. She was lying in the ditch. It seems the pressure threw her out. I saw her dead together with the neighbors."*¹¹¹

107 Interview with Spiridon Kristesiashvili was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office in Tbilisi, Kindergarten #112.

108 Interview with Giorgi Vakhtangashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement, village Koda.

109 Killing of Seiran Ozgebashvili was eye-witnessed also by Durmishkhan Midodashvili, interview with who was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, kindergarten located on the Ikalto Hill.

110 Interview with Neli Ozgebashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement in Koda, Building #9, 3rd Floor, Apt. 17.

111 Interview with Tsira Tsotniashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, Building I of the former Russian hospital building.

Killings of Niko Beruashvili and Jumber Beruashvili

Mikheil Vakhtangashvili was one of the last to leave the conflict zone. Regardless of the danger, the old man walked around the village on a daily basis and witnessed almost every single tragedy. The entire village was burnt down and his neighbors were killed in front of him.

*"I saw dead men. In the mornings I used to go to Eredvi to see the torched houses. I saw the following people dead in the yards of their own torched houses: **Niko Beruashvili, Jumber Beruashvili, Natela Kristesiashvili, Tsiala Tarielashvili, Tengiz Tarielashvili.** Dogs were eating Niko and Jumberi as they lay in the road. I couldn't approach the dead bodies. I saw from the road that they were dead in their yards. I saw 5 dead Georgian soldiers by my yard. They wore our military uniforms. Villagers who died were eaten by the dogs, there was no one to bury them."¹¹²*



The bombed house described by Mikheil Vakhtangashvili.



BOMBARDMENT OF ENTRANCE ROAD TO VILLAGE EREDVI

Not only was the village bombed on 8 August, but the entrance road to Eredvi as well, from which Georgians fleeing the village tried to escape. **Robizon Nebieridze** attempted to escape from massive bombing of the village on 8 August.

*"My cousin Kristo and I left the village in a Zhiguli (car) through the forest. When we entered Eredvi, Russian military jets started bombing. We stopped the car immediately and laid down in the channel along the road. Two women, **Marika Kakhniashvili** and **Tina Avaliani-Kakhniashvili** died behind us in the car. Several others were wounded."¹¹³*

Malkhaz Kakhniashvili from Kekhvi confirms this fact also. "A shell landed on Tsveriakho mountain and two women have died. Their husbands were my cousins, Nodar and Mito Kakhniashvili."¹¹⁴

Inhabitant of the village Kheiti **Otar Gochashvili** recalls the bombardment of the same entrance road to village Eredvi.

"The village population was on the road, some by cars, and some on feet. Before entering Eredvi, suddenly in the open, the column of civilians was bombed from the air, three cars blew up in front of me. We

112 Interview with Mikheil Vakhtangashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi.

113 Interview with Robizon Nebieridze was recorded on 8 December, 2008, by the HRC in Tbilisi, in the hospital at 22 Budapest St.

114 Interview with Malkhaz Kakhniashvili was recorded by the GYLA.



Bombarded entrance road to the Eredvi village.

*tried to leave the place rapidly, there was smoke and big mess around. Several people died during the bombardment, as there was shooting and our lives were at risk, helping them in any way was impossible."*¹¹⁵

A resident of the village Kurta, **Venera Dughadze**, fled the bombardment in her village and was on the same road:

*"A shell from a jet hit the car behind us, killing two women in the car, while the driver was wounded heavily. The bombardment started after 7 p.m. on 8 August and I don't remember how long it lasted."*¹¹⁶

KILLING DURING THE BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE ZEMO KHVITI, 11 AUGUST

The village of Didi Eredvi, which was targeted by Russian aircraft and gunfire, was no exception. Residents of Khviti, Kere and many other villages told us about the bombardment of the village and casualties.

Paata Mchedlidze remembers the arrival of the Russian army and bombardments very well:

*"On the 10 or 11 (August 2008) the Russian army entered Zemo Khviti by tanks, helicopters, infantry fighting vehicles. Immediately upon entering they warned us to leave the village as the Ossetians were about to come. When the Georgian army was leaving the territory, it was bombed, 12 people died. Only one of them was a soldier, the others were civilians, residents of village Zemo Khviti. I buried them in the village. There were 2 old women among the dead."*¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, Paata Mchedlidze could not remember the names and surnames of the dead. Yet, based on inquiries among the population and numerous interviews we managed to revive the stories of not all, but several of the 12 dead.

Killing of Alexander Gogishvili

Villager of Zemo Khviti **Manana Gogishvili's** husband Alexander Gogishvili was killed during the August War.

"My husband died on 11 August. A house was bombed. He was

¹¹⁵ Interview with Otar Gochashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, kindergarten #90.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Venera Dughadze was recorded by "21st Century" on 15 August, 2008

¹¹⁷ Interview with Paata Mchedlidze was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office on 16 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, 22 Dadiani St.

wounded in the stomach."¹¹⁸

Amiran Esiashvili witnessed the death of Alexander Gogishvili, Mr. Esiashvili was also wounded, and would have bled to death if not helped by neighbors.

"On the 11th we were at Ale's family. We hid there. Shells and bombs fell. Massive bombardment began at 3 p.m. Ale went out in the yard for a minute. He turned around immediately and fell to the ground under the balcony. I saw him fall. He had a perforated wound in the left side of the stomach. I ran out with bloody hands. A shell splinter hit me on the neck, from the right side. I wanted to bring Ale back in the house, but two other pieces of shrapnel hit me in the shoulder and leg."¹¹⁹

Nineli Doijashvili saw Alexander Gogishvili dead in the house basement:

"Ale was lying in the cellar on boxes. He had a perforated wound in the stomach. Amiran Esiashvili told me a shell had hit him."¹²⁰

Killing of Jemal Gogishvili

"On the 11th I heard the bombardment. My house was destroyed then. When my house was destroyed, my cousin Zaza Gogishvili looked inside and saw my father who was wounded from the bombardment. He brought him out of the destroyed house in the yard and went to look for me. My father, Jemal Gogishvili, was wounded in the stomach and head. A neighbor Nineli Doijashvili cleaned his wounds with vodka. Neighbors took him to Zaza's house and where died from wounds in Zaza's basement on the third day. Nineli and Vova Gogishvili found him dead and buried him. Everyone was afraid and no one could look after him and he died."¹²¹

Tamaz was detained on the same day, on the 11th. During a search they found the reservist's ID on him and beat him brutally. He was taken to the military base, where he was beaten, insulted, and released by the end of the next day.



Georgian civilian detainees Tamaz Gogishvili and Zaza Gogishvili

118 Interview with Manana Gogishvili was recorded by the GYLA in village Zemo Khviti.

119 Interview with Amiran Esiashvili was recorded by the GYLA in village Zemo Khviti.

120 Interview with Nineli Doijashvili was recorded by the GYLA in village Zemo Khviti

121 Interview with Tamaz Gogishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 30 May, 2009.

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE KERE

Villagers claim, neither the militia, nor the peacekeeping troops were ever present in Kere after the first conflict in the 90th. Georgian military units did not enter during the August events either. Therefore, they were relatively calm and did not leave the village despite increasing tensions and shooting. However, on 9 August a bomb was dropped at the entrance to the village and villagers started moving out gradually.

Zhiulon Elikashvili told us:

"On 11 August, around noon, I brought a cow out to pasture. There is a river near the house and I sat there by the channel. There were two of us, my neighbor Arsena Elikashvili and I. I sat under the wall nut tree, and Shota stood 3 meters away. Suddenly I did not know what happened, but something exploded nearby. I saw Arsena's cattle split in two. My cow lay dead on the ground also. I looked down at my leg and couldn't get up. It was torn off. I was wounded in the right eye and the right arm as well. They amputated my left leg in Gori. I lost my right eye and my arm was sutured also."

Zhiulon Elikashvili was not the only victim of this bombardment. **Arsen (Shota) Elikashvili** was injured during the 11 August bombardment too. After Zhiulon was wounded he went home for medical supplies to help his friend:

"By the house door something hit me again in the stomach area. It burnt my veins. After the 11 August bombing I can't see well. I fall from time to time like a giddy hen. I can hardly make my legs follow me."¹²²

Killing of Robizon Elikashvili

Nazibrola Lomidze left the village together with her family on 10 August, but her spouse Robizon Elikashvili returned back to Kere to guard the house and assist the neighbors. She has never seen her husband after that again.

"On 11 August a jet bombed village Kere and my husband died from shrapnel."

Eyewitnesses, his neighbors, recall the killing of Robizon Elikashvili. **Guram Bestavashvili** remembers:

"On 11 August I saw my neighbor Robizon Elikashvili standing in the yard of his house mending a mobile phone, which was connected to a battery. I live in the house next to his. I went over and sat in the car. He had the radio turned on and I listened. It was probably one o'clock. Suddenly something burst and I saw smoke in the direction of the channel. I hid in the car. When I got out of the car Robizon was lying

¹²² Interviews with residents of village Kere Arsen Elikashvili, Zhiulon Elikashvili, Nazibrola Lomidze, Guram Bestavashvili, and Gulnara Mchedlidze were recorded by the GYLA

on his back on the ground. He was not alive anymore. There was a bloodu puddle, his brain was pouring out, bomb shrapnel had hit him in the temple."

Gulnara Mchedlidze also saw Robizon Elikashvili die during the bombardment:

"There was so much smoke that nothing around was visible. I saw Robizon lying on his back on the ground by his car. He had his hands up. He was wounded in the right arm and was bleeding. In addition, bomb shrapnel hit him in the right temple. His head was all smeared with brain, and his face was horribly yellow."

Ivane Dzabakhidze barely escaped death himself:

"I saw with my own eyes how a splinter hit Robizon Elikashvili in the temple during the aerial bombardment and he died."¹²³



BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE KARBI

The bombardment of Karbi, is one more dreadful page in the history of murders in August 2008. Eight peaceful citizens died, many people were injured and numerous houses were damaged during the aerial bombardment carried out on 9 August 2008 in village Karbi. Eyewitnesses recall the tragedy in Karbi in detail. Their stories are identical, whether spoken together or separately. Only the number of shells is different. Some of them recall only one shell, while the others four. Nevertheless, factual circumstances and casualties are identical. **Lasha Bidzinashvili** remembers that day well.

"The Georgian army had not been present in the village either before or after that. The Georgian army were in the gardens, approximately 1,5-2 kilometers from the bombardment. Following this bombarding, the village was almost entirely emptied."¹²⁴

Izo Bidzinashvili recalls:

"From 7 August we heard the terrible noise of shooting. Jets started flying in from the direction of Tskhinvali on 8 August from 7 a.m. They flew at low heights. Two bombs were dropped in the village center approximately at 7 a.m. on 9 August too, as a result of which Tsatso (Dodo) Unapkoshvili was heavily wounded."¹²⁵

123 Interview with Ivane Dzabakhidze was recorded by the Association of School Directors on 14 August, in Tbilisi, public school #118.

124 Interview with Lasha Bidzinashvili was recorded on 15 August, 2008 by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, Public School #115.

125 Tsatso (Dodo) Unapkoshvili, also known as Dodo Mariamidze. Unapkoshvili is her husband's surname. Therefore, some of the neighbors call her by her maiden name and others by her spouse's surname. That Tsatso Unapkoshvili's death was a result of the bombing was confirmed also by Karbi village resident, Tengiz Tevdorashvili. Interview was recorded by the GYLA in the village.



Crater after bombardment in the center of Village Karbi, 9 August 2008.

Otar Bidzinashvili also confirms the first bombardment of the village in the morning of 9 August:

"At around 7:30 a.m. on 9 August a shell hit the center of village Karbi and exploded. At the impact spot Tsatso Unapkoshvili died, Soso Gno-lidze's house was demolished, Otar Mariamidze's house was terribly damaged and he was also wounded, Valiko Unapkoshvili's house was damaged and he himself got wounded, the cattle was slaughtered."¹²⁶

However, the morning bombardment of the village was not a one-time deed, as Otar Bidzinashvili recalls:

"A blast was heard again in 1-2 hours. Another shell landed in the village center, the Bidzinaant neighborhood."

Lasha Bidzinashvili, who is the son of one of the killed, Anzor Bidzinashvili, will never forget the shells in his district.

"On 9 August, around 11 am, bombing had started in the Bidzinaant district. Russian jets flew from Tskhinvali's direction, they flew extremely fast and low and dropped the bombs in seconds, probably 4 of those, which exploded immediately."

As a result of the 11 a.m. bombardment, according to the story of **Otar Bidzinashvili**, which was confirmed by many other eye-witnesses,¹²⁷ **Amiran Tevdorashvili** and **Irakli Tevdorashvili** died on

the spot, while **Giorgi Mariamidze** was wounded but died the next day.

"Also, approximately 30-50 meters from me, **Nazo Tevdorashvili**, **Tsiala Bidzinashvili**, **Anzor Bidzinashvili**, **Valiko Shevardenidze** died on the spot, and Tengiz Tevdorashvili, Guram Tevdorashvili, Davit Rcheulishvili,

126 Interview with Otar Bidzinashvili was recorded by the GYLA.

127 Our researchers interviewed many people concerning the bombardment of Karbi and its casualties. All other interviews are identical to the information Otar Bidzinashvili provided. Interview with Nana Maisuradze was recorded by GYLA, in Tbilisi, in the republican hospital, on 15 August, 2008. Her house was damaged by bombardments; interview with Merab Bidzinashvili was recorded on 15 August, 2008, by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, Public School #115. His father died during the bombardment; interview with Nino Gno-ladze and Eldino Gno-ladze was recorded on 15 August, 2008 by the Association of School Directors of Georgia, in the Tbilisi Public School #115. They lost their house; interview with Archil Sidamonidze was recorded on 15 August, 2008 by the Association of School Directors of Georgia, in Tbilisi Public School #115. He lost his house. The case of the village Karbi was elaborated by "Article 42", which presented the case of victims of bombardments of the village Karbi to the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg.

Rusudan Rcheulishvili, and Mediko Aniashvili were wounded on the spot. The bombing injured both my legs, tore a toe off and wounded my right elbow and chest."

Mediko Aniashvili from Sveri remembers 9 August clearly, as she received numerous wounds as a result of the bombings.

"An neighbor called me around 10 o'clock. I was talking to her and suddenly heard the sound of a jet. I thought it had flown over, but I heard the horrible noise of a falling bomb when right by my side, and in front of me, two people, neighbors, Valiko Shavardenidze and Anzori Bidzinashvili were killed on the spot. I was injured from this bomb as well. Shrapnel hit me in the stomach, I had a perforated wound and had my entire body was bleeding. I was in such a shock that I could not even feel the pain. I ran around like a madman, there in front of me I saw dead people lying on the ground. I wanted to run away, but there was such a mist in the yard I could see anything. The entire yard is in holes from shrapnel."¹²⁸

Killing of Tsatso (Dodo) Mariamidze - Unapkoshvili

Tsatso Unapkoshvili, also known as Dodo Mariamidze, died from wounds received during the 7 a.m. bombardment.

"A shell hit at 7 in the morning the house of Tsatso (Dodo) Mariamidze, resulting in the death of Dodo Mariamidze and wounding Valodia (same as Valiko) Unapkoshvili and Otar Mariamidze."¹²⁹

His daughter, **Tamar Unapkoshvili** recalled:

"On 9 August, at approximately 6 to 7 a.m. a cluster bomb hit the house. My mother was in the house at this time. My mother (Tsatso Unapkoshvili) was severely wounded: her hands were cut, the area around heart and lungs was torn out, extremities and bones broken. She was taken to the Gori hospital, but she died before getting there."

Killing of Anzor Bidzinashvili

Izo Bidzinashvili, wife of the deceased told us they were frightened from the first bombardment and left the house and searched for the shelter:

"I was afraid, as there was a repeated sound of blasts. My husband paused at the Shevardenidze house, in the Bidzinaant district. Just then a third shell fell. I ran out as soon as I heard the explosion, as my son Lasha and husband Anzor were outside. There was horrible smoke, I couldn't see anything, and I couldn't reach where the explosion occurred. My son was running towards the house and saw his father, Anzor Bidzinashvili, whose right limb was entirely cut off. He died on spot from the wounds."

¹²⁸ Interviews with the resident of village Karbi Mediko Aniashvili were recorded by the GYLA in village Karbi.

¹²⁹ Koba Mariamidze is the son of killed Giorgi Mariamidze, interview with him was recorded by the GYLA.



The House of Tamar Unapkoshvili after the bombardment of village Karbi, August 2008.

Lasha Bidzinashvili:

"My father was standing on the road together with other neighbors, very close to the house. There were total of 20 people, of which 8 died and approximately 10 were wounded. Shells cut my father's leg off. He died on the spot."

Killing of Giorgi Mariamidze

Koba Mariamidze, son of another victim of the 9 August bombardment, Giorgi Mariamidze, recalls that on August 9 he was in Gori, when he was informed about death of his father. At this point in time Gori was bombed as well. At 1:30 p.m. village trustee **Vasiko Tevdorashvili** informed him that his father, Giorgi Mariamidze, had been wounded in head and was taken by ambulance to the Tkviavi

hospital, from where he was taken by reanimation ambulance to Tbilisi.

"As my father had lost consciousness and was registered as an unknown person, we searched around all hospitals and found him in the reanimation department of hospital #8. He was attached to a medical ventilator, and died at approximately 8 a.m. on 11 August."

Killing of Valiko Shevardenidze

The same shell that landed in Bidzinaantkari killed 75 year-old Valiko Shevardenidze, who was standing by the gates of his house, talking to neighbors.

According to **Marina Shevardenidze**, the old man "was seriously wounded in the cardiac area. He died on the spot, we couldn't hospitalize him in time."¹³⁰ **Sopio Giorgishvili** also witnessed the death and confirms that Valiko Shevardenidze died from that very bombardment together with his other neighbors. Marina Shevardenidze herself suffers from the degradation of eyesight and hearing. She lost the residential house.

Killing of Tsiala Bidzinashvili

Piruz Bidzinashvili, witnessed his wife's death and destruction of their home in the 9 August bombardment.

"I heard a terrible blast. The sound came from above. It happened in seconds. My wife, Tsiala Bidzinashvili was in the yard of our house. After the blast, shrapnel hit her in the stomach area, the fingers on both hands were torn off and both arms were injured, almost torn. She died on the spot. A shell splinter hit me in the left thigh, right arm, and tore off four toes on my right foot."¹³¹

130 Interview with Marina Shevardenidze was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, on 15 August, 2008

131 Interview with Piruz Bidzinashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, in the republican hospital on 15 August, 2008

Killings of Nazo Tevdorashvili, Amiran Tevdorashvili, and Irakli Tevdorashvili

During the explosion, **Guram Tevdorashvili** was standing in front of Piruz Bidzinashvili's house together with other villagers, listening to the radio. He escaped death, but was severely injured and was treated for months.

"We were 7-8 people. At one point I heard a terrible blast. Then I don't remember anything. I lost consciousness. As I know from the people who were with me, I was crying for them to take care of my mother. The bombs injured both my lower legs. I still suffer intense pain, and have difficulty moving. I lost some of eye-sight in both eyes. They first took me to the Tkviavi and then the Gori hospital, and finally they brought me to (village) Ateni, to my wife's family.

At the time of the blast, my 75 year-old mother, Nazo Tevdorashvili, was coming to my place from her house. After the explosion she was seriously wounded, and was first taken to Tkviavi hospital, then to Gori. She died shortly after arriving in the Gori hospital.

Giorgi Mariamidze, Amiran Tevdorashvili, and his brother Irakli Tevdorashvili stood by me. All three of them died from the blast."¹³²

Amiran Tevdorashvili's daughter, **Natia Tevdorashvili** told us that after the bombardment of the Bidzinaant district of village Karbi the population fled massively and could not pay due respect to the dead.

"Women looked after their dead and buried them right there in the yard in pits dug with their own hands."¹³³



Wounded Georgian after the bombardment of village Karbi, on August 9, 2008.

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE ACHABETI

Just like many of his neighbors, **Anzor Babutsidze** left Achabeti on 8 August 2008 during the three-hour cease fire. A humanitarian corridor was announced from the gun-fire bombardments. However, he remembers pretty well how shooting resumed while he was driving.

"On 8 August, after 6 o'clock the cannon fire resumed. 20 bombs fell in the village. They fired at the bypass road and the bridge, where

¹³² Interview with Guram Tevdorashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, on 15 August, 2008

¹³³ Interview with Natia Tevdorashvili was recorded by the GYLA, in Tbilisi, on 15 August, 2008

people were on the run."

Shmagi Babutsidze also recalls the bombardment of the bridge:

"On 8 August, at 7:30 in the evening my parents, neighbors, sisters and I left the village in our car. We were crossing over the bridge. This was the only bridge connecting the Eredvi road to the bypass road. They shot at us from everywhere on the bridge but didn't get us. They shot at us from howitzers and mortars. There is an Ossetian settlement, called Dampaleti, it's on a high hill and they shot at us from there. Only civilians fled on that bridge."¹³⁴

These very bombardments caused the most victims and casualties in the village. Unfortunately we were not able to verify all the stories of the Acha-beti inhabitants who were killed. We can only provide a list of those people that IDPs told us of throughout numerous interviews. One of them is **An-ichka Mindiashvili**, whose story we will relate in We will tell the story in the following chapter. Others killed in this bombardment are **Omar Chovelidze, Levan Razmadze, Nodar Otiashvili, Omar Babutsidze, Elene Babut-sidze** and **Giorgi Babutsidze**.¹³⁵

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE VANATI

Gunfire was nothing new to the residents of Vanati, thus the attack on the 5th of August was accepted as ordinary by the locals. Eye-witnesses recall that shots from large-caliber cannons from the Ossetian side had happened before as well. On 7 August the Basishvili family house was destroyed from such violence. **Vazha Jojishvili** from Vanati told us about the tragedy of his village. He witnessed the killing of Shermadin Basishvili's wife, Jujuna Basishvili. We believe that information disseminated by the Georgian government on 7th of August about the causality among the Vaneti civilian population was about Jujuna Basishvili.

Vazha Basishvili recalls:

*"On 7 August a missile hit the house of village resident Vanati Sher-madin Basishvili. The house was demolished completely. **His wife died.**"¹³⁶*

On 8-9 August aerial bombardments were carried out and the village was targeted. The population fled en mass from their houses. Bombs exploded in the gardens and yards of the civilian population.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Interview with Anzor Babutsidze and Shmagi Babucidze was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement, Department of Geology, Tbilisi, 24 Mosashvili St.

¹³⁵ The murder of Giorgi Babutsidze by Ossetians in military uniforms was told to our researchers by Alexi Chlaidze, resident of Zemo Achabeti. Additionally see the chapter Ethnic Cleansing: Zemo Achabeti.

¹³⁶ Interview with Vazha Jojishvili was recorded by the HRC on 25 December, 2008

¹³⁷ For more detailed information about damage of the village Vanati see the chapter on Ethnic Cleansing: village Vanati

Vazha Jojishvili:

"Russian military jets flew over. They dropped bombs. One of the bombs hit my neighbor Otar Jojishvili's garden. At this moment I was in the garden as well. I was frightened and laid down in the water channel. There was a smell of smoke and gunpowder."

Other victims of the Vanati bombing, according to witnesses were **Meri Babashvili** and **Vladimer Jojishvili**. Although we have verified their death due to the bombing (by death certificates and official information from the municipality in charge), we were not able to find out the exact details and circumstances of deaths.

**BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE SHINDISI**

Giorgi Arabashvili from Shindisi recollected the details of the bombardment of the village with our researchers. According to eyewitnesses, Shindisi, just like virtually every other Georgian village in the area, was heavily bombed by Russian aircraft. Houses and infrastructure were destroyed. **Ivane Gogidze** from Shindisi was killed from one such bombing raid.

Giorgi Arabashvili told us that during the bombing strange explosive devices were falling. Many did not explode and fields were covered with them. His brother, **Ramaz Arabashvili**, found one such device.

"He was returning home from his plot of land when he found a strange object in the field. He brought it with him to show me. He called me out of the house and we inspected it. It didn't seem to be dangerous. He showed it to fellow villagers as well, saying that there were some other objects out in the field. He wanted to put it away, went a bit farther away, and suddenly it exploded. It killed him on the spot. We couldn't help him in any way. I can't tell you what type of a mine it was, as we didn't touch these devices until later, when after the war Georgian deminers took them out. Iliia Bedianashvili was also blown up from a mine in (village) Pkhvenisi and died."¹³⁸

Anzor Abramishvili was in the village while it was being bombed.

"During the bombardment we were at home. We were very afraid. An explosion occurred near the house. They tossed nice objects out of the Russian jets - neighbors picked them up. One suddenly exploded. 2 people died and 4 were heavily



Crater from village Shindisi bombing.

138 140 Interview with Giorgi Arabashvili was recorded by "21st Century" on 15 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, in Public School #115.

wounded. Those objects were fancy balls, which were activated by hand temperature. Afterwards none of us touched them, although they threw out quite a lot of those in various places."¹³⁹

The second person mentioned by Anzor Abramishvili is **Ivane Gogidze**, who died during the bombardment of Shindisi.

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE VARIANI

Russian aerial bombardments killed Variani inhabitants, **Malkhaz Bedoshvili** and **Omar Bedoshvili**.

Nana Labadze recalls

"On 8 August the village of Variani in the Gori District was under aerial attack. The village was also targeted by various weapons. During the bombardment, 15 people were wounded and the father and son, Malkhaz Bedoshvili and Omar Bedoshvili, were killed. Several children were wounded during this bombing also."¹⁴⁰

Vano Natsvlishvili, resident of the same village, confirmed the killing of father and son in an interview with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association. Another eyewitness, **Giorgi Makishvili** from Variani, told us about other victims:

"During the aerial bombardment, it was around 9-10 o'clock, when a bomb dropped in Variani. This happened at the front of the village, killing a local resident father and son. Makho Bedoshvili was the name of the son. 8 people were wounded: Ilia Aduashvili, Temo Aduashvili, Beka Giorgishvili, Nikoloz Kereselidze, Mikheil Khizanishvili, 12-year-old Vako Urjumelashvili, and 11-year-old Tsira Urjumelashvili."¹⁴¹



Remains of car left after bombardment, Road to the village Variani

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE PKHVENISI

Killing of Ilia Bedianashvili

Karaman Bedianashvili watched the death of his father, 78 year-old Ilia Bedianashvili, in his yard in the village Pkhvenisi.

"My father, Ilia Bedianashvili died because of various traumas and wounds resulting from the military activities of August 2008. Our

139 Interview with Anzor Abramishvili was recorded by "21st Century" on 15 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, in Public School #115.

140 Interview was recorded on 15 August, 2008 by "21st Century", in Tbilisi in kindergarten #76.

141 Interview was recorded on 16 August, 2008 by "21st Century", in Tbilisi in Public School #32.

house was totally destroyed by shells dropped by the Russian air strikers."¹⁴²

The bombardment occurred on 8 August 2008 and is when Ilia Bedianashvili died. Neighbors helped his son in bury the body: **Azo Nadiradze**, **Vakhtang Nadiradze**, and **Noshre Nariashvili**, moved quietly through the gardens, because Russian soldiers and tanks were already in the village. They confirmed the killing of Ilia Bedianashvili and its concrete circumstances. Karaman Bedianashvili remained in the village throughout the entire conflict. He stayed in hiding and became the victim of inhuman treatment.

Giorgi Arabashvili from Shindisi also recalled in an interview with us that Ilia Bedianashvili's death was a result of the bombing.¹⁴³

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE MEGHVREKISI

Killings of Hamlet Maisuradze and Otar Maisuradze

A resident of village Meghvrekisi, **Roman Nadiradze**, told us that on 8 August, at approximately 6 o'clock, the village became under attack.

"So-called cluster bombs and 3 meter rockets came from several jets. Four people were wounded in several seconds. Cattle was wounded and killed. More than 20 houses were damaged and destroyed.

Many people died. We don't know anything about many of them. A majority of the houses in Meghvrekisi were burned and raided and whoever they met there, including the old men, they killed."¹⁴⁴

Another respondent **Ramaz Maisuradze** told us about people killed during the same bombardments:

*"My father, Hamlet Maisuradze and my cousin, Otar Maisuradze, died from aerial bombing. Neighbors helped bury them in the house yard."*¹⁴⁵



Bombarded house in Meghvrekisi village.

¹⁴² Interview with Karaman Bedianashvili was recorded by "Article 42".

¹⁴³ Interview with Giorgi Arabashvili was recorded by "21st Century" on 15 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, Public School #115. Ilia Bedianashvili's death was mentioned by Giorgi Arabashvili in the sub-chapter on bombardments of village Shindisi

¹⁴⁴ Interview was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office on 15 August in Tbilisi, Public School #176. Unfortunately, the interviewers had not recorded the names and surnames of persons, about whose deaths Mr. Roman Nadiradze relates.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Ramaz Maisuradze was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office on 15 August in Tbilisi, in Public School #191.

At the last stage of preparing the present work, we re-interviewed the people who had returned to the Meghvrekisi. Villagers grieved recalling the death of Hamlet Maisuradze and Otar Maisuradze, as they could not pull them out of the bombed out house and save them.

Murder of Olia Kasradze

Villagers also recalled the killing of the elderly woman, Olia Kasradze, whose house was demolished in the air raids. Wounded and horror-stricken, she was running out to save herself when she bumped into Ossetians and Russians in uniforms. Ms. Olia Kasradze was an ethnic Ossetian but was punished for raising Georgian children.

She was strangled right there in the village brook.¹⁴⁶



BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE TORTIZA

Nino Berdznishvili told our interviewers that on 7 August she left Gori together with her family and went to Tortiza for safety reasons, however, she witnessed even a graver tragedy in the village and had to leave for Tbilisi on 12 August.

"Eight bombs were dropped in this small, very old village. Three of these exploded. I saw with my own eyes how the fellow villagers collected the parts of the neighbor's woman's body and buried them right there in the garden. My cousin's child died on the spot. There were other dead and wounded. My daughter and niece, Lana Pilishvili and Izabela Berdznishvili, barely escaped death, but received light body injuries. Our house was damaged as well."¹⁴⁷

According to **Zhana (Eugenia) Bezhanishvili**, Tortiza was bombed by jets on 12 August.

*We hid from bombs in the cellars. It's impossible to convey in words what we've seen and felt. The village is destroyed, houses are completely demolished, but who cares about these... I don't know how many lives were lost by the bombing on that day. A neighbor's 17 year-old son, **Nugzar Akhalkatsi**, received a lethal wound in front of our eyes in the neck area from the splinter of a jet bomb. Being heavily wounded, they rushed him to Tbilisi because Gori was severely bombed as well, but he died soon on the way. On this ill-fated day, another of our neighbors - **Eter Merebashvili** - died in front of us also.¹⁴⁸*

Maksim Akopian needed help, but we couldn't assist anymore, as

146 Interviews were recorded on 24 October, 2009 in village Meghvrekisi, by the author of present work, Tinatin Khidasheli.

147 Interview with Nino Berdznishvili was recorded in Tbilisi, Public School #89. Unfortunately Ms. Berdznishvili does not indicate the names and surnames of the killed persons in the village.

148 Death of Eter Merebashvili as a result of bombardment is confirmed by Lali Gogidze, interview was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, Public School #100.

*we had difficult times ourselves and were trying to somehow escape from the bombing. My husband covered the dead body in a blanket and buried it in the yard by the well."*¹⁴⁹

On 12 August, another village resident **Lali Gogidze** also witnessed the bombing of this same district of Tortiza. She confirmed Zhana Bezhanishvili's story and told us about other victims as well.

*"One of the first bombs fell on my house. First, the house was destroyed and then fire emerged. It burned down entirely. The second shell hit neighbor **Eter Merebashvili's** gate. She was in the yard and died instantly from the bomb blast. Another shell hit another neighbor, **Kristine Merebashvili's** house. She was wounded, while the other neighbor, **Maksim**, I don't remember his last name, (she refers to Maksim Akopian) died on the spot, while he was talking to her. One more shell hit my neighbor Nugzar Akhalkatsi's house and killed his 16 year-old grandson **Nugzar Akhalkatsi**. Shelling continued for half an hour. The village was bombed from three planes simultaneously."¹⁵⁰*

*Unfortunately, we are not aware of names of people Nino Berdznishvili mentioned in her interview. However, we can assume that she is talking about this same bombardment. According to the verified information we gathered at least four people were killed during the Tortiza bombing raid on 12 August: **Maksim Akopian, Shalva Vanishvili, Eter Merebashvili** and **Nugzar Akhalkatsi**. Two people were severely wounded as well: Zaza Akhalkatsi and Venera Akhalkatsi.*

Shalva Merebashvili, husband of the deceased Eter Merebashvili, recalls:

"I spent three days and night next to the graveyard. I ate a small portion of bread daily and that was all my food. On the third day, when it was calm, I dug her out with my own hands and buried her next to the village church".¹⁵¹

Kishvardi Vanishvili spoke to us about the bombardment of 12 August, when on that day he lost his father **Shalva Vanishvili**. Mr. Vanishvili had moved his family out of the village but stayed throughout the military



Shalva Merebashvili at the grave of his wife killed after bombardment. The remains of the ordinance in the front garden of Merebashvili's House.

149 Interview was published in magazine "Post Factum" #3/2008; interview was recorded in Tbilisi, kindergarten #201; interview is available at www.psroots.org

150 Interview with Shalva Merebashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, on June 1, 2009.

151 Interview with Lali Gogidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, Public School #100

engagement with his parents, who refused to leave. He told us that bombardment of the village on 12 August was carried out in the morning.

"It was around 11 in the morning on 12 August, when my father went out in the yard. The yard is approximately 20 meters from the house. There was a calf tied up in the yard and he went to look after it. He was gone for less than 5 minutes when I heard the explosion. It was a rather loud noise. Windows broke from the explosion. I rushed outside immediately. I thought my father might have been hurt. I noticed jets in the sky. I think there were two of them. When I went out in the yard I saw my father lying on the ground. His T-shirt was all bloody. He couldn't talk anymore. He was wounded in the stomach area. He was bleeding strongly. He died approximately 10 minutes after we brought him home." ¹⁵²

BOMBARDMENT OF THE VILLAGE ZEMO NIKOZI

The resident of village Zemo Nikozi, Ivane Dzamukashvili recalls, that there was an intensive shelling and bombardment on 9th of August. Those who stayed, were hiding in basements, and in the evening village was basically emptied. Ivane Dzamukashvili was one of them as well. As a result of bombing lots of houses were demolished, people have died. Our witness recalls:

*"My neighbor, **Marine Mindiashvili** has died while bombings of 9th of August. She was in her yard, when the bomb hit her house. Marine Mindiashvili was wounded in head and it caused her death. Her husband, Davit Mindiashvili buried her in the backyard of their house."* ¹⁵³

Amiran Mchedlidze has dies in village Nikozi after the bombardments as well.

Head of church, **high priest Isaia** recalls bombardments in an interview with our researchers:

"There were five shells dropped on the territory of the house of worship. As a result priests chambers have been destroyed completely, as well as other premises for liturgy. The worst was the destruction of X century Cathedral Palace, that has been fundamentally renovated just recently.

We have witnessed massive bombardment of the Nikozi on 11th of August. Only the Church survived bombardment, all other supplementary



Building of Nikozi Eparchy damaged during the bombardment.

152 Interview with Kishvardi Vanishvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, on 10 September, 2009

153 Interview with Ivane Dzamukashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, at the kindergarten #90

buildings and premises have been ruined. There were 32 bombs dropped on the territory all together. The church itself, that stands in Nikozi from the 6th century has been looted. Thefts entered the church from the windows and stole sacred items and all valuable supplies for liturgy."

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE SVENETI

Killing of Vasiko Ganjelashvili

Maia Saatashvili left the village on 9 August after Georgian troops had entered the village - she escaped the constant bombardment of the village.

"I eye-witnessed personally, how Russian jets bombed our territory. My neighbor Vasiko Ganjelashvili died after an explosion of a very bomb."¹⁵⁴

BOMBARDMENT OF VILLAGE KEKHVI

The **OSCE/HRAM** November 2008 report contains a significant amount of information on people killed during the bombardment of Kekhvi. Eyewitnesses provided the mission with information on 2 women who were killed in a car when it was hit, as well as three other village victims of the aerial bombardment.. Unfortunately, the OSCE report contains vague information and does not provide names and surnames of victims.

Suliko Kakhniashvili from Kekhvi told us that Vaso Kakhniashvili and Grisha Kakhniashvili were killed during the bombardment of village Kekhvi. Apart from this, Suliko Kakhniashvili told us about the women killed in the car.

"When the bombing stopped, I went outside and saw right there, close to the house, some of my fellow villagers on the ground unconscious. I approached and saw they were dead. That day we couldn't even bury them. The killed people were: Grisha Kakhniashvili and Vaso Kakhniashvili.

As I learned from the villagers later, Tinatin Avaliani and Marika Kakhniashvili had also been killed as a result of the 9 August bombardment in a car near village Eredvi (when they left the village).¹⁵⁵ We buried the dead on 10 August..."¹⁵⁶



Destroyed Village of Kekhvi after the bombardment.

154 Interview with Maia Saatashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 14 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, Secondary School #39.

155 See detailed information on killings of Tinatin Avaliani-Kakhniashvili and Marika Kakhniashvili in a sub-chapter on the bombardment of entrance road to village Eredvi.

156 Interview with Suliko Kakhniashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 5 May, 2009, in village Koda

BOMBARDMENT OF GORI



Bombarded
Khakhutashvili
Street, Kombinati
settlement, Gori.

9 August, Bombardment of Industrial Settlement

Killings of Maia Vazagashvili and Giorgi Muradashvili

Tsitsino Kushashvili lost a daughter during the bombardment of Gori on 9 August. She remembers that morning well, seeing three jets from her apartment.

"Before the bombing the jet came so close that I even saw the pilot from the balcony, he was Russian. Later I recognized that pilot in a photo published in the Georgian newspaper "Kviris Palitra". The pilot was captured by the Georgian Army, treated in Tbilisi and later exchanged for Georgian POWs."¹⁵⁷

According to Tsitsino Kushashvili and confirmed by her other neighbors, the first bomb hit the Gori tank unit, while the other landed in the yard of the apartment block. "There were women sitting and they all were killed." She tried to escape with her daughter and a grandchild, but the bombing continued. "I saw my daughter had fallen, and a grandchild too. I ran to them. Maia

157 Interview Tsitsino Kushashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 9 September, 2008 in Tbilisi, the Zhvania Children's Hospital.



Maia Vazagashvili killed during the bombardment of the Kombinati settlement, also in the picture her mother Tsitsino Kushashvili and son Giviko Tserava.

passed away in 5 minutes." Her grandchild was rushed to the hospital and her leg was operated on. Fortunately she survived.

Giorgi Muradashvili was also killed in this bombing raid. His neighbor, Lili Kerdikoshvili left Gori on 9 August, after the morning bombing. She said:

*"At this point 15 people had been killed. Shell shrapnel hit my neighbor **Giorgi Muradashvili** straight into the heart."¹⁵⁸*

Killings of Merab Mchedlidze, Natela Mchedlidze, and Natela Skhirtladze

Levan Mchedlidze lost his parents **Merab Mchedlidze** and **Natela Mchedlidze** during the bombardment of the Gori Kombinat Settlement on 9 August 2008.

At the time of military operations he was in Gori with family. Since it was relatively quiet in the city, many displaced from the villages found a shelter in Gori, and Levan also hosted relatives from the villages Kheiti and Nuli. In the morning on 9 August he was standing on the balcony of with his friend's grandmother **Natela Skhirtladze** when he first heard of rumble and then saw the jets. Gori Residents were encouraged hopeful, thinking they were Georgian jets and than they heard the blast.

¹⁵⁸ Interview was recorded by "21st Century" on 15 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, Public School #22.

*"I don't remember what happened after the blast, but my brother told me later that he found me standing near the house, and I don't remember going down the stairs and how I got outside. I was wounded in the knees, head, and left arm. My middle finger on the right hand was almost torn off. I was taken to hospital in Gori, then to Tbilisi. I didn't know anything for a week. Then my neighbor told me in hospital that my parents had been killed. They had been completely torn to pieces. I hadn't seen any of them and didn't attend their burial, as my family members didn't know which hospital I was in. Later, I learned that my friend's grandmother who had been standing with me on the balcony that morning was also killed."*¹⁵⁹

Killings of Vera Kekoshvili, Merab Kekoshvili and their relatives

Tsira Khuroshvili lost her mother Vera Kekoshvili, her brother's grandson 13 year-old Merab Kekoshvili and relatives on 9 August during the bombardment of Gori. She wasn't in Gori, but learned the details of the tragedy from neighbors. 4 people died that day in her mother's apartment.

"During the 9 August bombardment shells hit my mother's house and my nephew's. There were guests visiting my mother from Tamarasheni - my aunt and cousin's spouse. My brother's grandchildren, Merab and Lika, also happened to be in the house. They were all together, eating. Then there was an explosion and everyone was killed except Lika. Lika was badly injured. She was burned. Her eyes were closed shut from the burns. When I entered the ward, I was shocked. Her face, hands, legs were burnt. There was "shrapnel" all over her body.

We couldn't find the bodies of any of my relatives or my mom. We only buried one of my mother's leg and also a foot below the ankle of my brother's grandchild. My nephew Shurman buried these parts of the body right there in the yard in front of the house prior to my arrival in Gori.

*As I learned later, the shell hit the very point where all five of them sat and that's why we couldn't even find their corpses; the bodies were probably totally disintegrated and were scattered around."*¹⁶⁰



The only surviving member of the Kekoshvili family, After bombardment of Gori on 9 August 2008.

159 161 Interview with Levan Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, on 5 November, 2009

160 Interview with Tsira Khuroshvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, on 10 November, 2009

Killing of Mimoza Lotsulashvili

On 9 August 2008 **Maia Kurtauli** was approximately 3-4 meters away from the Gori School #7 when she met the mother of her daughter-in-law Mimoza Lotsulashvili and discussed the existing situation. Right then she heard a noise. "Suddenly it got dark" – Maia Kurtauli recalls.

"A bomb fell that second. Then I don't remember anything. When I opened my eyes I was lying on the ground. Metal things and rocks were flying in the air. There was a terrible dust and smell. I looked to the side. I pushed my daughter-in-law's mother with my arm and said, 'girl, I think I'm dying.' It turned out she had already been killed.

My face and jaw bled like a fountain. Then two boys, reservists, grabbed me and rushed me to the road - Mshvidoba (peace) Street."¹⁶¹

Reservists took Maia Kurtauli to a hospital.

12 August, Explosion at the Central Square of Gori

Killing Givi (Gocha) Sekhniashvili

A majority of eyewitnesses of the 12 August bombardment had gathered in the yard of Municipality to receive humanitarian assistance. Right then, at half past ten in the morning, another bombardment was carried out. **Avtandil Tetvadze**, who was severely injured, told us that he was on Stalin Street.

"I left the house in slippers. I was standing by the Bank of Georgia. Suddenly some noise and yelling was heard. I remember strong waves coming and some bright objects falling. I thought it was my imagination. These waves probably stupefied me. I didn't feel the pain, and don't even know how I got wounded in the leg. I lay on the asphalt for some half an hour. I felt something in the left leg, looked down and I was bleeding. I had a fracture near the ankle and on the sole. [...] A woman ran out from the yard crying and yelling, I asked her to call an ambulance. She was saying there were wounded in the yard. I looked at the square and on a sidewalk in the corner in front of the Municipality; a poor man was lying in blood. I think he was already dead. When I was going towards the Municipality yard, I remember noticing this man; he sat on the window-sill of the Municipality window.



Givi (Gocha) Sekhniashvili killed after the bombardment of the Main Square in Gori.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Maia Kurtauli was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, on 5 August, 2009

*After the explosion he was lying on the ground motionless. The **man was already dead.**"¹⁶²*

Eye-witnesses who escaped death during the 12 August bombardment of Gori recalled that day in detail in interviews with us. **Alexander Akopov** is one of them:



Dutch Journalist, Stan Storimans killed during the bombardment of Gori Central Square August 12, 2008

"When we went down to the square, there were quite a few people. Nodar and I stood right by the underground, in front of the gold shop, (i.e. to the left of the Gori Municipality building), approximately 50 meters away. Suddenly I heard a horrible roar. It was the sound of an explosion, although I hadn't seen a jet in the sky. A huge wave threw us to the ground, the pressure lifted me up in the air and then I fell to the ground right on Nodar Mchedlidze. Nodar had fainted. Bomb shrapnel hit me from the left, penetrating through."¹⁶³

The **Nodar Mchedlishvili**, who Alexander Akopov mentioned, was going home by Stalin Street at half past ten in the morning when he was gravely wounded and saw people killed by the bombardment.

"I noticed old men in the Municipality yard there standing and waiting to receive humanitarian assistance. Then a Toyota taxi stopped in front of me. A foreign journalist came out who spoke Russian well. Two other foreigners followed him. There was a jeep, a white two-door Mitsubishi car. The driver of the Jeep offered foreigners a ride to the site of bombardment. [...] Suddenly I heard the sound of an explosion. It was a terrible noise, as if the earth shook. Rustling and rumbling was heard. I didn't notice the jet or hear its sound. It was just the sound of a blast, as if something had hit the ground and blew up. The pressure lifted me up in the air and I crashed into the wall of the gold jewelry shop located on Stalin Street, next to "Khareba Pharmacy." After the crash I fell right there on the ground and lost consciousness.

I was probably in shock and don't remember how and when they took me out. I didn't feel the pain, but when I looked at my right leg, I saw my trousers were punched in three places and I was bleeding.

One of the dark-skinned foreign journalists was wounded. He also hid behind the Toyota car during the explosion, but from the other side. A second journalist, Dutch, was lying

162 Interview with Avtandil Tetvadze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, in the traumatological hospital located on the Ushangi Chkheidze Street. The person referred to by Avtandil Tetvadze is Gocha Sekhniashvili.

163 Interview with Alexander Akopov was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 22 October, 2008

to the right of me, approximately one meter and a half from the car with his face down. The third took a camera in his hands and shot everything that happened there in front of the Municipality.

*I noticed **Merab Tatulashvili** right there, who was wounded as well. I am friends with Merab and that's why I recognized him immediately. Temur Boghrashvili was with him, a former investigator. He was wounded also.*

*At this point, **they laid down three dead bodies in front of me on the sidewalk.** Afterwards the ambulances came as well. They took the severely wounded."¹⁶⁴*

Ghvtiso Sekhniashvili's brother, **Givi (Gocha) Sekhniashvili**, was killed during the bombardment of the Gori central square.

"We heard the sound of a terrible blast. I called my brother immediately. He didn't answer after two tries. Someone replied the third time and ... told me he had died. It was around noon. He was standing in front of the Dutch journalist, about 30 meters away."¹⁶⁵

Soso Bolotashvili was with Gocha Sekhniashvili on the square when the explosion occurred. *"It was like an earthquake. The pressure lifted me up in the air and threw me into a wall,"* he told us recalling his friend's death.

"I felt Gocha falling on me from above. Shortly after I managed to turn him over, he was all in blood. Another man asked for help right there, half a meter away, and a bit further away, a women. There were many people around me before the explosion, waiting for humanitarian assistance, and in 15 seconds most were swimming in blood on the square. I had my head close to his and heard him whisper, "help me". He didn't say anything anymore."¹⁶⁶

Sofia Samurganova, who was also wounded, recalled:

"I saw a boy laying under the Municipality wall in the corner, about 20 meters from me. There was a lot of blood around him and he was



Vaja Bestavashvili, Avtandil Kerdikoshvili and Amiran Kurtanidze killed during the bombardment at the Gori Central Square.

164 Interview with Nodar Mchedlishvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 28 August, 2008

165 Interview with Ghvtiso Sekhniashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the church of Gori on 29 August, 2008

166 Interview with Soso Bolotashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 29 August, 2008



Vaja Bestavashvili and Avtandil Kerdikoshvili killed during the bombardment of the Gori Central Square

probably dead already. He was very far from me and I couldn't recognize him right away, but as I learned later, this boy was Gocha Sekhniashvili.

After these events I saw Sekhniashvili's father. He came to my pharmacy, dressed in black. I asked him why he wore black. He told me his son had died during the bombardment and when he described the circumstances and the place, I understood it was the dead boy I saw."¹⁶⁷

Killings of Vazha Bestavashvili and Avtandil Kerdikoshvili

Marekh Baliashvili and her family were in the village Boshura of Gori District on August 2008 as it was relatively quiet. On 11 August their neighbor died in the village and Marekh Baliashvili's husband, **Vazha Bestavashvili**, and **Avto Kerdikoshvili** the son-in-law of the deceased neighbor, went to Gori for gasoline.

"They spent that night at home and went to town the morning of the 12th. Shortly later I heard the explosion. At the time I didn't know where my husband was exactly. [...]"

The neighbor's boy, Kakha Kitiashvili, drove by a car at twenty past twelve. I went out from the yard and headed towards Kakha's car. People had gathered around. Suddenly I saw a mother of another boy, Avto Kerdikoshvili, on the ground. My brother-in-law was standing right there and I asked what had happened and he told me Vazha was no longer alive. It turned out that Kakha drove dead Vazha and Avto by a car.

When the explosion happened on the central square in Gori, they were wounded and died on the spot. My husband had a perforated wound through the heart to the back by bomb shrapnel. His nose was also broken and forehead scratched. It seems he fell on his stomach as a result of the explosion. Avto was all torn in pieces."¹⁶⁸

Killing of Amiran Kurtanidze

During the first bombardment of Gori, **Tamar Kurtanidze's** house was damaged:

"Windows were broken, bathroom wrecked, lights went out, water went off and the roof was damaged. It was impossible to stay there."

For that reason, the entire family first moved to Ms. Kurtanidze's husband's house and after, due to constantly increasing tensions, they left for

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Sofia Samurganova was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 19 May, 2009

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Marekh Baliashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 19 May, 2009

Borjomi. However, they couldn't convince her father Amiran Kurtanidze to agree. Tamar recalled talking to her father the last time on 12 August, asking him to leave Gori. Amiran Kurtanidze replied, "I won't leave and will even die if needed." This was their last conversation.

Amiran Kurtanidze died during the explosion in the Gori center on 12 August. Tamar Kurtanidze's brother-in-law notified her about her father's death.

"We were out for food and humanitarian assistance. Right then a bomb exploded in the center of the town and the bomb shrapnel hit him."¹⁶⁹

Daughter and son-in-law buried the old man on 14 August.

Killing of Victor Khaduri

Vera Khaduri was in her house with her spouse, Victor Khaduri, and a son. *"We listened to the 11 o'clock news and then went down to the basement, as we were afraid of bombardments", - Vera told us. "Everything happened in seconds. Victor stood up and headed towards exit, when he fell down after 3-4 steps."¹⁷⁰* **Sergo Khaduri** remembers that morning very well:

"I was moving a chair in the basement and suddenly this pressure threw me away. My father was standing next to me and he also fell. Everything continued for about 15 seconds probably. An enormous window broke. We all were at home. When I approached him, he was still breathing, bleeding from the back. He was wounded in the chest area, perforated on the back. He died in seconds, write there, in my hands."

Killing of Zavena Anesashvili

Tsisana Anesashvili was going to catch a taxi in the center of the town together with her spouse **Zavena Anesashvili** in the morning of 12th of August, saying they *"wanted to visit their children in Kheltubani"*, when they heard the first explosion from the Verkhvebis Ubani (district of asps, current Sukhishvili Street).

"I was frightened and my husband went to town alone. I went home in about 15-20 minutes. Suddenly I heard the big noise of a shake, I thought the building was brought down. I ran out scared, but met no one. I returned back and switched on the TV. I think it was TV company "Rustavi 2", at 11 o'clock. They announced that a bomb was dropped in the Gori center, killing one



Amiran Kurtanidze killed during the bombardment of the Gori Central Square, 12 August, 2008

169 Interview with Tamar Kurtanidze was recorded by the GYLA on 28 May, 2009

170 Interview with Vera Khaduri and Sergo Khaduri was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, Ketevan Tsamebuli Street, on 29 August, 2008

civilian and two journalists, but I learned later that there were more casualties. [...] I learned about my husband's death from a stranger. Apparently he was trying to help her in starting the engine when the explosion took place and shrapnel hit my husband in the back. [...] I saw this Zhiguli type car after the body was transferred from the mortuary, all in ashes in front of the "Aversi" drugstore. Its tires were even burned. The woman's husband was died there as well. [...]

He was wounded in the shoulders, perforated in the chest area. The wound was deep from the back, kind of perforated in front. His medical reference says he had numerous gunfire wounds as a result of the bomb explosion."¹⁷¹

Killing of Ana Dokadze

Nino Dokadze recalled that on 8 August, when Gori was bombarded for the first time, the entire family moved in with her aunt, as she had a basement and they felt much safer. Nevertheless, due to repeated bombardments on 9 August they left the town and fled to village Ateni. The old grandmother refused to leave the town and stayed in her own house in Gori.

Nino Dokadze and her mother returned to Gori on the 22nd and discovered that Ana Dokadze was on the central square in Gori during the August 12 bombardment. *"She had left my aunt's place and wanted to walk by the Gori Municipality to receive humanitarian assistance."*

On 23 August, Ana Dokadze's body was found in the Barnovi Hospital where they learned from the doctors that she had died on 17 August.

"My mother was told in the Gori hospital that my grandmother was brought to the hospital on 12 August after the bombardment of the Gori center and she was registered as wounded. Bomb shrapnel hit her in the stomach. She also had a head trauma, caused probably from the fall."¹⁷²

Giorgi Malkhaziani stood right there as well, in the queue of the humanitarian assistance. He was heavily wounded after the blast. He recalled in an interview with us:

"I saw an old lady about 5 meters away from me lying on the ground. I don't know whether she was alive or not. Later the boy, who gave us the buckwheat, put me and that wounded old lady in a car and took us to the military hospital. Later Nodar Mchedlishvili told me that this woman died, bomb shrapnel had hit her in the stomach and all her guts had been cut."¹⁷³

171 Interview with Tsisana Anesashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 13 December, 2008, at #30 Shindisi Str.

172 Interview with Nino Dokadze was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 12 May, 2009

173 Interview with Giorgi Malkhaziani was recorded by the GYLA on 11 May, 2009

As **Nodar Mchedlishvili** later clarified, the elderly woman was Ana Dokadze.

Killing of Avtandil Tsertsvadze

Merab Tatulashvili was in Tbilisi but in the morning on 12 August his brother had a car accident in Gori center and he arrived there immediately to help him. At this point Gori was bombed. He escaped death despite wounds, but right there he saw his acquaintance Avto Tsertsvadze, who was killed from the bombardment.

"There was one acquaintance on the central square, Avto Tsertsvadze, whom I learned later had died. Avto is my spouse's cousin and I knew him thereof. I even spoke a couple of words with him. He asked me, uncle Merab how are you, do you need any help? I told him everything was fine. I inquired about him that very evening on 12 August. I saw him at central square just a couple of seconds prior to the explosion. I called him on mobile, but he didn't answer. Then I called Avto's brother, Soso Tsertsvadze, and told him that I saw Avto in front of the post office on the central square of Gori during the bombardment of the Gori center in the morning, and asked him how he was. That very day Soso went to Gori, but couldn't find Avto anywhere. I advised him to look for him in the hospital. In about 2-3 hours I called Soso and he told me he had found Avto in Gori in the mortuary, and that he had been killed."¹⁷⁴

In the morning on the 12th, **Lali Tsertsvadze** tried to reach her husband by phone but it was in vain. Later in the evening they found Avtandil Tsertsvadze in the hospital dead.

"My spouse had two wounds, one from the right side. This was a perforated wound, coming out on the left. He had small pieces of bomb shrapnel that hit him on the arm and leg as well from the right. His death certificate says he had died from wounds caused by the barrage during the bombardment."¹⁷⁵

Killing of Karlo Abuashvili

83-year-old **Karlo Abuashvili** was in Gori throughout the August war. He didn't follow his family to Kvishkheti. He preferred to stay in his own house to the end.

On 12 August a neighbor called his grandchild, **Neli Abuashvili** and informed that *"grandfather was wounded from the bombardment in the Gori center and that a neighbor doctor, Ira Ispriants, gave him first aid."* Neighbors brought Karlo Abuashvili to the Gori hospital, and from there to Tbilisi.

"He died in the morning of 28 August, with numerous wounds caused

174 Interview with Merab Tatulashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 19 May, 2009

175 Interview with Lali Tsertsvadze was recorded by the GYLA on 28 May, 2009

by shrapnel on the lower left extremity, as well as with his left ankle bone broken from gunfire."¹⁷⁶

After returning to Gori, the family learned from the neighbors that they had seen Karlo Abuashvili wounded during the bombardment of the central square in Gori, that two young boys aided him and brought home.

Killing of Alexander Bazandarashvili

Mzia Bazandarashvili well remembers the awful morning of 12 August. Her husband Alexander Bazandarashvili was on duty the night before.

*"A terrible blast was heard. There was such a noise that I thought a bomb dropped in my yard. There was a horrible rumble, as if the sky roared."*¹⁷⁷

Afterwards she remembers looking after her husband. There was no one anymore on the central square of Gori and she looked for him in the hospital. They couldn't find the spouse among the dead either and then someone told her that *"he was wounded and taken to the Ghudushauri Hospital in Tbilisi."*

Mzia Bazandarashvili could not go to Tbilisi that day, but her daughter and relatives had fled to Tbilisi and they looked after the father. Doctors told them:

"His organism is boiled to such an extent that we couldn't suture him, flesh is decomposing, it will be a miracle if he survives."

Aleksandre Bazandarashvili was alive for another 9 days in the hospital and died on 22 August.

2.2. DELIBERATE KILLING, MURDER

In addition to the deaths caused by indiscriminate and disproportionate bombing, there is evidence also of direct and deliberate murders of civilians during the conflict. In many cases the victims were civilians, women, the elderly and children. These numerous cases further demonstrate a plan, executed by committing of a range of crimes, to cleanse South Ossetia of the entire Georgian population. It is the combined effect of these crimes that resulted in the displacement of virtually every Georgian from the region.

Before we chronicle the account of murders in the conflict zone, we would like to recall an extract from the official communication from **Russian**



Alexander Bazandarashvili killed during the bombardment of Gori Central Square.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Neli Abuashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 19 May, 2009

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Mzia Bazandarashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 1 May, 2009

authorities to the Fact-Finding Mission:

*"Pursuant to the data of the Inquiry Committee appointed by the Russian Federation Prosecutor General's Office, during the implementation of the peace enforcement operation in Georgia, **NO** instances have been identified where servicemen of Russian Armed forces took part in murders, rape, violence, inhuman treatment of civilians, looting, arson, and destruction of civil buildings.*

From day one of the operation, the Russian military command undertook exhaustive measures to prevent pillaging, looting and acts of lawlessness with respect to the local Georgian population.

Russian troops, jointly with the South Ossetian law enforcement and military units, provided round-the-clock protection of homes and land allotments that remained undamaged in Georgian villages, at the same time ensuring safety and security of the South Ossetian residents regardless of their ethnic background."¹⁷⁸

Outside the Russian authorities' official statements there is a truth which remains in the ashes and ruins of houses and villages of ethnic Georgians in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District. Villages are still branded by the trail of marauding, looting, arson, destruction of buildings and murder. Even a year and a half after the end of the conflict, once thriving villages are now a horrible thing to see.

The real war stories, which rest in the memories of eyewitnesses, are much more profound and very different from the official statements of the Russian Federation.

A resident of the village Tirdznisi, **Zaira Lalashvili**, remembers exactly that when the war broke out, the Georgian army wasn't in the village.

"Only on 10 August, when they fled from Eredvi, they entered our village on the way back and advised us to flee as well. After the Georgians fled, the Russians drove only on the central road, the highway. I remember one armored personnel carrier which drove with a white flag. Russian soldiers sitting on it were saying they were peacekeepers. This is when all the horrifying actions started."¹⁷⁹

Extract from the statement of another resident of Tirdznisi, **Mikheil Demurov**:

"In the morning on 12 August, a Russian military column entered the village. [...] There were cars of Ossetians mixed with the military column of Russians. In the column, Ossetians drove their cars among the Russian tanks. [...] After the entrance of the Russian column in the village on 12 August, there was total lawlessness in Tirdznisi for about

178 Report of the International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September 2009, Volume III, "Views of the sides on the conflict, chronologies and responses to questionnaires", Russia, Response to Question #5, pp. 468-469.

179 Interview with Zaira Lalashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 18 October, 2008

2-3 days. [...] From 12-15 August Russian soldiers moved frequently by tanks and armored personnel carriers on the road in the village, destroying everything on their way. On around the 15-16 August, Russian soldiers and tanks were positioned at the entrance of the village along the bank of Patara (small) Liakhvi River. There were about 200-300 tanks in this place. Russians stayed there until September 2008.

[...] It was still dangerous, as Ossetians would still enter the village and loot and raid us. Every day at 9 a.m. the Russians would drive by and right after that the Ossetians would start coming in. Ossetians moved on a central road by cars stolen from us, with the plates removed. Russians didn't tell Ossetians anything really. Even in September 2008 the Ossetians would still enter the village occasionally.¹⁸⁰

Inhabitants of village Tirdznisi also told our researchers many stories of violence and murder.

Murder of Natela Kaidarashvili

Natela, sister of resident of Tirdznisi **Tinatin Kaidarashvili** died in the village.

*"It was the **end of August** probably. That day, at about 12:00 or 12:30 she went outside her house. She was deaf and dumb. She returned home one or two hours later.*

Poor lady, she looked awful: her mouth was bleeding, she couldn't open her eyes, they were terribly swollen. She didn't tell me anything and I didn't asked anything either. I laid her down. All day long I put cold cloths on her face. Her shoulders were all bruised as well. Later that day I learned that there was the Red Cross in the village. They came with an interpreter and when they saw Natela the doctor told me she had a rib and a jaw bone broken. We didn't follow them to the hospital.

I took care of my sister for two days all alone. I couldn't close my eyes, I was afraid that she would pass away alone. On the third day, around 2 o'clock at night she died."¹⁸¹

Jemal Lapachi, her neighbor, eye-witnessed the violence used against Natela Kaidarashvili. He describes in detail how the soldiers jumped off the armored personnel carrier and brutally beat Natela Kaidarashvili. Jemal Lapachi recalls, that there was a Russian flag on the armored personnel carrier and the Russian soldiers cursed in Russian.

"At this point I hid in the gardens behind the Trinity Church located on the other side of the road, in front of the village school. That place where Natela was beaten is in approximately 50 meters from the

180 Interview with Mikheil Demurov was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on 13 December, 2009

181 Interview with Tinatin Kaidarashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 17 October, 2008

gardens. [...] I heard the sound of cursing and shouting. They cursed in Russian. There were about 3-4 cars - armored personnel carrier, Ural, Vilis. A Russian flag hung on the top of the armored personnel carrier. As I saw, all of them wore colored military uniforms. There were many soldiers, armed with machine-guns. One of them even had a bazooka on his shoulder.

I saw soldiers jumping from the armored personnel carrier and beating Natela. They gathered around Natela, approximately 4-5 people who beat her. I saw they hit her with the machine-gun butts. At the same time they cursed in Russian. I don't know exactly but Russians and Ossetians might have been together."¹⁸²

Her neighbor, 82-year-old **Tamar Razmadze** witnessed violence against Natela Kaidarashvili as well:

"I walked around the village. I wasn't afraid. I would walk down, look at my son's house, feed the cattle and return back. And then once I was going to my son's house down the village. It was around noon. I don't remember the date. I believe I saw 4 military cars near the school/bakery. When I approached I saw 8 Ossetian soldiers. Natela Kaidarashvili was dumb and they beat her. The rest were watching. One hit her in the head with something, Natela fell. I told them she was dumb and to leave her alone. They told me in Georgian mind your own business, grandma."¹⁸³

Her neighbors **Tariel Samadashvili** and **Leila Edisherashvili**¹⁸⁴ also confirm the brutal murder of Natela Kaidarashvili.

Murder of Ivane Lalashvili

Ivane Lalashvili's wife, **Zaira Lalashvili**, recalls 14 August as follows:

"Ossetians entered the village on 14 August. My husband Ivane Lalashvili and I hid in the orchards. It was around 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. An old lady and man who escaped from Eredvi entered our orchard. It turned out they were on the road for two days and asked for water. We gave them water. Then I told my husband to see them off. A little while later I heard the sound of shooting, it was terrible. It was around 11:00 o'clock. The shooting lasted about 20 minutes.

After the shooting stopped, I waited for my husband for a while, and when he didn't appear, I went to look for him. I found him in the neighbor's garden, close to my house. He was kneeling, resting on his hands. I thought from far away that everything was fine, but when I went close, I saw his head was all open and brains split over. He then

¹⁸² Interview with Jemal Lapachi was recorded by the GYLA in village Tirdznisi on 24 October, 2009

¹⁸³ Interview with Tamar Razmadze was recorded by the GYLA on 18 October, 2008

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Leila Edisherashvili and Tariel Samadashvili was recorded by the HRC in Gori on 8 September, 2008, in kindergarten #13.

fell on the ground and I saw his forehead, neck, heart, and wrists were all pierced."¹⁸⁵

One of the witnesses from village Tirdznisi told us that on 14 August 2008, it was at 11 or 12 o'clock when they noticed a white "Niva" without car-plates.

"There were four sitting in military uniforms, wearing white armbands on left arms. The deceased and Nika Demurishvili saw off the elders, showed them the way. This Niva drove in right then. They started shooting directly from the car, aiming at them, I hid in the ditch. They then came out of the car, two of them ran after shooting, and the third followed them quietly. "Sava" and "Tame" - that's how they called each other. Murder took place 300 meters from my house. There is a ditch near my house and I was hiding in there. Ivane first hid, but they found him and killed him in 5 meters from me, emptying the entire charger on her. Two of them were shooting. The poor thing was very distorted. Then they pillaged everything and left."

Nukri Demurov clarified that the deceased mentioned above was Ivane Lalashvili.

*"It was 14 August, the Ossetians entered the district with a white "Niva" without car plates. We sat in a lower spot, Vano (Ivane Lalashvili), Malkhaz Kabulashvili from Vanati, Severa and I. As soon as we saw the Niva we ran away. We ran towards the gardens and two with machine-guns ran after us shooting. I was in front and they couldn't catch up with me. I hid in the orchard. I heard their voices nearby. They called each other "Sava" and "Tame". In about half an hour I returned and met Vano in one of the orchards. He was lying on the ground, all shot. His brains were scattered on the ground. Skull, shoulders, hands were all shot."*¹⁸⁶

Murder of Teimuraz Khmiadashvili

Lamazo (Ira) Khmiadashvili from Tirdznisi found her spouse Teimuraz Khmiadashvili dead in his own house on 13 August 2008.¹⁸⁷

"It was 8 August probably. The bombardment started and the village soon emptied. On 10 August, the Georgian army drove by in front of my house heading for Gori. When the Georgian army left the village, a Russian military column followed them immediately. I don't remember exact date when this happened. After the Russians, Ossetian marauders started coming into the village.

It was 13 August and the Ossetians were walking around the village. There were Russians as well, protecting the Ossetians. Ossetians drove in a white Niva. [...] All of us were hiding in the orchards, and I was hiding

185 Interview with Zaira Lalashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 18 October, 2008

186 Interview with Nukri Demurov was recorded by the GYLA on 2 November, 2008

187 Interview with Lamazo (Ira) Khmiadashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 17 October, 2008

too. I went home quietly to see my husband, who hadn't followed me to hide. When I got home, the door was left open. I entered and saw my husband lying prone, bleeding, his face was covered all in blood. His nose and head were broken. When I entered he opened his eyes and took one breath. I thought he would survive. I brought him water but couldn't save him. I called him Temo, Temo, but he couldn't hear anything anymore. He was dead. We buried him on the 15th.

I alone followed the coffin carried by the four people. No one else had come to the burial, everyone was afraid, hiding."¹⁸⁸

Murder of Jamlet Bortsvadze

Inhabitant of village Eredvi **Gulnaz Bortsvadze** told us the story of her spouse murdered by the Russians in military uniforms:

"They were shooting all over in the village. We were bombarded. We were hiding. On 8 August I went to my brother. After that I searched for Jamlet and Hamlet all the time and several times I visited the Red Cross, City Hall, Ministry of Refugees. I walked among the IDPs in orchards and took pictures with me to show them around if someone had seen him. I visited mortuaries. If I learned somewhere that 2 brothers had been murdered. I would inquire as to who, where, and how. I lost them both, I was told thousands of things and visited thousands of places. I went through hard times.

Makharashvili called me on 23 or 24 September. I don't know the name. He told me he worked in Gori and met someone named Zakro Archuadze from village Kitsnisi, who told him that they had buried an unknown body in the entrance to Kitsnisi, who might have been their relative.

Red Cross assisted me. They transferred the body on the same day: there was nothing... bones were in the sack... it wasn't a corpse anymore."¹⁸⁹

Our researchers found **Zakro Archuadze**, eyewitness of the murder identified by Gulnazi Bortsvadze.

"A car came out of neighbor Gia Naochashvili's house. It was just a common civilian "car 06". Two came out of the car, wearing greenish Russian uniforms. There was a distance of 100 - 150 meters between us. There are bushes there and a spruce tree and that spruce was covering me. They first came out and then shot. I went back 20 meters, crawling. On the side of the central road, Jamlet was lying dead on a sidewalk. It was on 12th or 13th."¹⁹⁰

188 Interviews were recorded on 2 November 2008 by the researcher of the GYLA with the residents of village Tirdznisi. Lamara Tsamalashvili and Otari Khmiadashvili confirm the murder of Teimuraz Khmiadashvili.

189 Interview with Gulnaz Bortsvadze was recorded by the GYLA on 30 July, 2009

190 Interview was recorded by the GYLA in October 2009.

Murders of Tengiz Tarielashvili and Natela Kristesiashvili

Venera Arbolishvili witnessed numerous occasions of brutality in her village. Her husband escaped bombardment, but only to become a victim of the invaders.

"Eredvi was bombarded for the first time on 8 August at 4 p.m. A bomb was dropped in the center of the village. There were residential houses only, even the militia building was far away. On the other side the Didi (big) Liakhvi Gorge was bombed. When village Eredvi was bombarded, there were no Georgian soldiers in the village. The army was located in the woods at the posts. The local militia was in the village on 8 August.

My husband and I were in the house during the bombardment. While we were standing in the yard, a small white car drove by. It was the morning of 13 August. It stopped by the gates. I thought they were Georgians and would help us. Suddenly, the car drove back to the gate and shot from there. They shot even without opening the car doors. Everything happened in seconds. They shot twice: one at me and the other at my husband. After the first shot my spouse bumped into the front of me, I couldn't keep on my feet and fell. They thought they had killed us both, but the second bullet hit my husband. The bullets hit him in the shoulder and head.

When they left us they shot and wounded Gaioz on the road and murdered his wife - Natela Kristesiashvili."¹⁹¹

Following her husband's death, Venera Arbolashvili tried to commit a suicide. *"I wanted to commit suicide, and first cut the vein on the wrist, and then the artery on my arm (by the elbow)." Neighbors saved her.*

Gaioz Tarielashvili remembers the murders of Tengiz Tarielashvili and his wife Natela Kristesiashvili in details also. He remembers well that armed persons drove around the village on 13 August in cars, shooting in all directions.¹⁹² Four armed men drove near Mr. Gaioz in a white Volga and shot at him, but the wounded found a shelter in the neighbor's house and escaped.

"I saw from the open gate of Tengiz Tarielashvili's house that Tengiz Tarielashvili and his wife - Venera - were lying under the balcony. Our neighbor, Tamaz Tarielashvili, stood nearby. I told Tamaz that Venera was alive. I also told him the Ossetians had wounded me. While I was talking to Tamaz I heard three bullets shot. I asked Tamaz immediately to come to my place. When Tamaz and I entered the yard of my house we saw my wife - Natela Kristesiashvili - lying backwards dead. Her mouth was bleeding.

Those who wounded me had murdered Tengiz Tarielashvili and my wife. On the previous day, on 12 August, the very same four persons came

191 Interview with Venera Arbolashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the IDP settlement, village Koda.

192 Interview with Gaioz Tarielashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on 25 May, 2009

by in white Volga, when they burned the entire village down. The murder of Tengiz and Natela and my wounding occurred at the same time, with short intervals in between, before 10 a.m. on 13th of August."¹⁹³

Murder of Otar Tsotniashvili

Otar Tsotniashvili's son, **Gia Tsotniashvili**, witnessed the death of his neighbors during the bombardment on 8 August. However, his father was not a victim of this bombardment.

*"My father, Otar Tsotniashvili, was murdered on 12 August. He had died in the orchard. My neighbor, Bichiko Tsotniashvili saw him on 9 September. I went to the village on 10 September and buried him. He was in a strange position, as if they'd tied him to the tree."*¹⁹⁴

Murders of Amiran Mchedlidze and Suliko Mchedlidze

Resident of village Khviti, **Manana Mchedlidze**, dressed in mourning black like many women, recalls her story::

"We lived in Khviti. When the bombing started my children, grandchildren and I left the village. I had a husband named Amiran Mchedlidze. He died in the morning on 12 August. The poor man was lying in front of the Kolotov's house. Then soldiers walked by. They thought he might have been alive and once again shot bullets into him. Two days later, the neighbors brought the priest, transferred his dead body into our yard and buried him right there."

Mrs. Mchedlidze's son-in-law also died on 9 August, though he was a soldier in the Senaki battalion.

Neighbors **Leila Ergemlidze** and **Ketevan Ergemlidze**, eyewitnesses of Amiran Mchedlidze's murder, told us:

"On 12 August we saw Amiran Mchedlidze coming. Then we entered the house and shortly after we heard some sound, as if a shell had blown up, and then we heard Amiran crying to help him, but we were afraid and could not look out. We looked out only after 15-20 minutes, when Natasha Gogishvili and Nineli Doijashvili had come to Amiran's dead body. Amiran was all in blood, already dead. We put a paper bag over him and went home. No one went to the dead body since."

Nineli (Zhuzhuna) Doijashvili helped many of her injured fellow villagers. What she said about Amiran Mchedlidze's murder was:

"He was wounded in the head and leg. When I saw him for the second time he was shot in the heart also. Probably those three armed men in

193 Researchers of the GYLA interviewed about the murder of Tengiz Tarielashvili and Natela Kristesiashvili Tamaz Tarielashvili as well, who confirmed information available to us previously. Interview was taken in Koda on 20 May, 2009

194 Interview with Gia Tsotniashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi; neighbors Grisha Ozgebishvili and Ivane Zhuzhniashvili told him about father's murder.

uniforms, who were standing nearby, shot him. I hid when I saw them."

Frightened, they ran towards the house of their neighbor Suliko Mchedlidze to hide, but "*when we saw the house, it was demolished. Eldar and I started looking for Suliko and we found him headless.*"¹⁹⁵

Murder of Elguja Okropiridze

Disevi village inhabitant, **Giorgi Okropiridze**, recalled that the Ossetians reappeared in the village on 13 August. At this point half of the village was already burned down. First they would loot the houses and then set them on fire. The remaining village population was hiding in the woods.

"On 15 August 70% of the houses in the village were torched. I saw the process from the forest. Everything was seen well from the heights where I was. Elguja Okropiridze was murdered exactly on 15 August."

Giorgi Okropiridze recalled that Elguja Okropiridze contested the burning. He was asked them not to burn down his house, and in return they fired 4 bullets in him.¹⁹⁶

His neighbor **Shota Okropiridze** also confirms the murder of Elguja Okropiridze. He saw the dead body by his house.

Vakhtang Okropiridze told us that 70 year-old Elguja Okropiridze begged the Ossetians not to burn his house and "*he was brutally murdered. 4 bullets were shot at him. They got him in the face.*"¹⁹⁷

Lili Mamisashvili also confirmed that her neighbor Elguja Okropiridze was murdered right when he opposed the burning of his house.¹⁹⁸

Otar Okropiridze also confirmed that they would shoot anyone who opposed them. "*That's how the Ossetians murdered my fellow villager Elguja Okropiridze, and burned one woman - **Nato Okropiridze**¹⁹⁹ - in the house."*

Murder of Victor Gagvishvili

The Russian army was already in the village of Ergneti on 12 August. There were just several old men left. Victor Gagvishvili was in his own house when soldiers approached his gate. They demanded him to leave the village. The old man hesitated and had a hard time to leave his home. Having watched the insult and brutal beating of his neighbor, he got scared and tried to run away from the intruders, who shot him in the back. Neighbors buried him quietly right there in the yard. Only after returning to the village, family members transferred his body to a graveyard.

There were many eyewitnesses of Victor Gagvishvili's murder, as the old

195 Interview with Nineli (Zhuzhuna) Doijashvili was recorded by the HRC.

196 Interview was recorded by the HRC on 15 December, 2008, Tbilisi, in kindergarten located at 51 Tsoetne Dadiani St.

197 Interview was recorded by the HRC on 10 December, 2008.

198 Interview was recorded by the HRC on 12 January, 2009, in kindergarten #107 in the Gldani Micro District #6.

199 Nato Okropiridze's murder is described in the Chapter on Ethnic Cleansing, sub-chapter village Disevi.

men remaining in the village were hiding together in the basement of Valiko (Burda) Kasradze's house in the Kasradziant district. That day they were together also, and Victor Gagvishvili went over to his house for several minutes to feed the cattle. The tragedy occurred then.

*"About 10-15 minutes after Victor left, we heard the sound of shooting. One or two minutes later Victor entered Valiko's yard. He asked for help, saying he was dying, sat right there on the stairs in the yard and passed away in a minute."*²⁰⁰

In several minutes three armed men with white armbands entered the room where the old men were. *"Then they made us stand by the fence. Then they checked the shoulders of those who were relatively younger, to see if they were soldiers. Then they went upstairs and searched the house"* - recalled Tariel Kasradze. One lady among them, **Liana Champuridze**, was ethnically Ossetian and she was on her knees begging the armed men to spare the lives of the elderly. *"Miracle and Liana's begging saved us"*, the eye-witnesses stated.

Victor Gagvishvili's murder was reported in the **OSCE/HRAM** 2008 report as well.

*"In Ergneti, for example, a villager described how he saw a group of ten "Ossetians" in Russian uniforms hit an 80 year old man in the back and then shoot him. The victim crawled into a building, and said "I've been shot," and then fell down and died."*²⁰¹

Another old man whose beating is talked about in the village is **Gaioz Kasradze**. 80-year-old **Tamar Doijashvili**, who left Ergneti by the end of September with the help of the Red Cross, is an eye-witness of almost every brutality that had occurred in the village.

Gaioz Kasradze was beaten just in front of her: *"He was smeared all in blood, with his head broken. They thought he was dead and threw him in the channel"*²⁰², said Tamar Doijashvili, who watched everything from the basement. Gaioz Kasradze escaped death then, but died several weeks later in displacement.



The grave of Victor Gagvishvili in the front garden of his house, village Ergneti.

200 Interview with Tariel Kasradze about the murder of Victor Gagvishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 10 September, 2009 in village Ergneti.

201 See "Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia", OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 23.

202 Interview with 80 year old Tamar Doijashvili was recorded by Tinatin Khidasheli in village Ergneti on 24 October, 2009

Murder of Giorgi Kasradze

In Ergneti, Mamisaantubani, people were leaving the village as Russian armed forces advanced. Yet, like in many other Georgian villages, several old men stayed until the very last day. 93 year-old Giorgi Kasradze also was in the village and was not going to leave his home. Neighbors heard nothing about him after 12 August, but later they found him dead in the debris of his own burned house. Unfortunately, we could not find eyewitnesses of this drastic murder, but during the visit in the village we talked to his grandchild, **Makvala Kasradze** and his neighbors, who saw Mr. Giorgi Kasradze's corpse and managed to bury him.²⁰³

On 22 August 2008 Giorgi Kasradze's son **Vakhtang Kasradze** managed to enter the village, who was the first to see the remains of his father burned in the house:

"Because father was chained to the bed, I headed to his room straight away, on the first floor of the house. Father wasn't there. The room was entirely burnt. My father's bed was made of wood. Only its ashes remained. When I turned around, I noticed a spine bone on the floor in the middle of the room, about two meters from the bed. It was about 30-40 centimeters long, shaped like a spine, with part of the ribs on it, protruding from the sides and I guessed from that it was a spine bone. This spine bone was reduced to coal and I didn't touch it. Russian soldiers followed me nearby and I showed it to them too and told them not to touch it. My father was chained to the bed, and so I thought those were my father's bones, I knew he couldn't have escaped from there.

About a week later I decided to go to Ergneti again, I wanted to bury my father. I met the same Russian soldiers at the Meghvrekisi block post. When I told them where my house was located, one of them told me that he was there himself and buried my father. He had taken digital pictures. In the pictures, I recognized the grave site, in the yard next to the house, it was dug on the eastern side."²⁰⁴

Murder of Giorgi Kobaladze

Simon Tsereteli from Ergneti was continually in the village. He went to Gori just for a couple of days and then returned back. In the morning he hid in the garden with several neighbors; they wanted to at least save the cattle. He told us that the same day he and his neighbor Giorgi Kobaladze were together.

"I went home for a while to look after the cattle and a military car stopped at his gate. They probably came to loot. Shooting started,

203 His grandchild and relatives told Tinatin Khidasheli about the death of Giorgi Kasradze on 17 October, 2009 in village Ergneti.

204 Interview with Vakhtang Kasradze was recorded by the GYLA on 24 June, 2009 in village Ergneti.

*and then fire was blazing. I was scared and ran downstairs."*²⁰⁵

When Simon Tsereteli returned to his neighborhood in the village, he found Giorgi Kobaladze dead in his house yard.

There were Russians and Ossetians walking around in the village and it was dangerous for the old men to move freely. Afterwards they entered Giorgi Kobaladze's house several more times. Later, when entering the village had become more or less safer, the old man was buried in his own yard. Eyewitnesses confirm that Giorgi Kobaladze's burned corpse had a knife,²⁰⁶ which was confirmed later by the expert examination also.

Shota Jokhadze saw Giorgi Kobaladze's body several minutes after the murder.

"Giorgi was lying unconscious at the bottom of the two-step stairs of the room. I went close, turned him around and saw that he had a wound on the left near the neck and he was bleeding. I knew he was dead. I left the corpse there and went outside; I wanted to call people for help. At this time the house was already on fire. As soon as I went outside in the yard, I saw three soldiers coming out of the front door of the first floor of the house. They were in greenish military uniforms, two of them had military hats on. They were holding machine-guns. One of them told me in Georgian with an Ossetian accent, not to touch the house or else they'd kill me as well. Then all three of them walked past me. One of the soldiers hit me with a knife in my right elbow. Giorgi also had a knife wound; it was probably the same Ossetian who cut hit him with a knife in the neck."²⁰⁷

Murder of brothers Mikheil Melitauri and Shakro Melitauri

Gulnara Iosebidze²⁰⁸ and Mikheil Melitauri, who were over 70, stayed in the village Tkviavi even after the bombardment. *"We weren't inclined towards leaving the village, I preferred dying here to begging for life"*, Gulnara Iosebidze told us. On the 12th, her brother-in-law Shakro Melitauri also re-



The house where Giorgi Kobaladze was killed and his grave in the yard, village Ergneti.

205 Interview with Simon Tsereteli was recorded by Tinatin Khidasheli in village Ergneti on 24 October, 2009. According to Simon Tsereteli's story, Giorgi Kobaladze was displaced during the first war and is from Tskhinvali and after 1990s lived with his daughter in Ergneti. Resident of Ergneti, Simon Tsereteli, is on the cover of the this report.

206 Interview with Tinatin Tsereteli was recorded by Tinatin Khidasheli on 27 October, 2009 in Tbilisi.

207 Interview with Shota Jokhadze was recorded by the GYLA in village Ergneti on 25 June, 2009

208 Interview with Gulnara Iosebidze and her son Badri Melitauri was recorded by the HRC in village Tkviavi on 9 September, 2008.

turned to the village and was visiting them.

*"At around 5 o'clock I heard knocking. We didn't open the door and they **fired an antitank shell at us**. It had a terrible sound. A door opened up and 2 of them in civilian clothes rushed, in speaking Ossetian. I saw them beating someone, saying "that's what the Georgians deserved". When I went out from the kitchen, I saw my husband and brother-in-law lying low under the table. I thought they were hiding but it turned out that they'd killed them. They were leaning on each other bleeding, their faces were swollen.*

Then they drove the "Jiguli 06" out of the garage and took it away. They also took the hand tractor with them. I took care of the bodies to prevent a cat from eating them. I had one bucket of spirit and vodka; I was dipped a bed-sheet in it and then put it on them to keep the insects away."

Their neighbor **Zaza Razmadze** recalls meeting Gulnara Iosebidze, after he heard of his neighbors' murder.

"I was standing by Zura's house. They had already gone inside. One of the armed men in military uniform saw me and shot at me with a machine-gun. I ran, crawled over the fence and hid in the orchards. Late at night I went back home and then I met Gulnara, who asked me to help her bury her murdered Shakro and Misha.

When I entered the house I saw corpses in blood on the balcony. I saw Shakro and his brother had been shot by several bullets. Each of them had 6-7 bullets in them, if not more."²⁰⁹

Another elderly women from Tkviavi, **Zina Merebashvili**, remained in the village throughout the entire war. During the bombardments she hid in the basement, and later tried to help remaining villagers.

*"Ossetians were looting everything, burning everything, they even murdered my neighbors; the Melitauri brothers, Shamil Okropiridze, Nodar Buturi, Gela Chikhladze, **Koba Jashiashvili**. There was another man in the village also, but I didn't know who he was".²¹⁰*

Giorgi Razmadze, who also witnessed the torching of the Melitauri house, informed us about another murder:

*"I saw how they set the houses of Tamaz Kapanadze, Zaza Razmadze, and Misha Melitauri on fire. They first murdered Misha Melitauri, **Gorgia Chokheli**, Shakro Melitauri and then set the house on fire. They*

209 Interview with Zaza Razmadze was recorded by the HRC in village Tkviavi on 9 September, 2008

210 Interview with Zina Merebashvili was recorded by the HRC in village Tkviavi on 9 September, 2008. Ms. Zina herself is the first war IDP from Tskhinvali.

*also burned the house of Demetrashvili."*²¹¹

Unfortunately, we could not obtain additional information about the murders of Koba Jashiashvili and **Gogia Chokheli**, as villagers could not recognize them by name. They told us in the village that they probably were not from the Tkviavi. Those days people fled from their own villages and found shelter wherever they could, so it is possible that several such displaced were still remaining in village Tkviavi as well.

Murder of Jaba Jalabadze

Apart from the story of the Melitauri family, in village Tkviavi our researchers learned about six other horrifying murders.

Eyewitnesses recall how 25 year old Jaba Jalabadze, who had hearing problems, was murdered. When ordered to push the car, Jaba turned around and tried to get away from the Ossetians in white armbands. He was shot dead on the spot as if due to disobedience.²¹² **Vladimer Givnishvili** told us about the murder of Jaba Jalabadze:

*"Tanks and soldiers were coming in, they burned houses and raided the people, murdering some and looting, taking any kind of belongings. In village Tkviavi they murdered the resident of Plavi, Jaba Jalabadze."*²¹³

Murder of Gela Chikhladze

Gela Chikhladze was locked up in the wine cellar of his house. After looting the house, men set the house on fire and despite his desperate crying and begging they closed the door on him. Gela Chikhladze's half-brother **Givi Kapanadze** recalls that on 12 August they were hiding in the orchards about 30 meters from the house and from there he saw how a dozen soldiers entered the house, followed by armed men in uniforms in several minutes.

"I saw them getting a hold of Gela. Two Ossetians with machine-guns ran towards me too and made me raise my hands up. I was with my father-in-law Giorgi Turashvili. They threw us in the pigsty. Both Ossetians were guarding us with machine-guns. Nothing could be seen from the pigsty. I only



The house after bombardment, village Tkviavi.

211 Interview with Giorgi Razmadze was recorded by the staff of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia in Tbilisi on 15 August, 2008, in the Secondary School #191.

212 Interview was recorded by "21st Century". Young respondent asked not to disclose his identity due to security reasons.

213 Interview with Vladimer Givnishvili was recorded by "21st Century", in School #32 of Tbilisi on 15 August, 2008.



The bombed house of Nodar Butauri.

remember that I hardly heard the sound of shooting. I also heard my brother's wheeze. When they left, we ran to the orchards. At about 10 p.m. my friend Zaza Razmadze and I left the orchards and went to my brother's house. The house was on fire. The fire was almost burned out and there was a terrible smoke and smell. Ossetians moved all around. We looked for my brother with a phone light, but couldn't find anything."²¹⁴

At dawn neighbors found the burned body of Gela Chikhladze.

"I went over to Gela Chikhladze's house. I don't remember the exact date, probably it was 18 or 19 August. There was a dog at the door. There was a terrible smell in the house. I entered the kitchen and from there one can see the front room. I recognized Gela's boots. I looked into the room from a window. I saw a hand with white fingers. I couldn't see anything else, he was so burnt."²¹⁵

According to **Tamara Surameli**, Gela Chikhladze was buried in the yard of his own house with the help of Russian soldiers dispatched in Tkviavi.

"Gela was so decomposed that they put him on a table by a shovel. There was nothing left, he was entirely burned".

His relative **Shota Chikhladze** also confirmed this drastic story. "On 11 and 12 August the family relatives died. My father's uncle was murdered."²¹⁶ They were saying in the village that Gela Chikhladze had been decapitated and thus murdered. However, eyewitnesses and neighbors who found the dead body did not corroborate this story. A resident of village Meghvrikisi, **Roman Nadiradze**, told us:

"My uncle (Gela Chikhladze) was decapitated in the village Tkviavi".²¹⁷

The case of Gela Chikhladze's murder made it to the pages of the American newspaper "CHICAGO TRIBUNE"²¹⁸, where an eye-witness of Givi Chikhladze's murder described his story in detail.

According to witnesses and relatives of Gela Chikhladze, the reason he was brutality treated was because of his friendship with the Former Minister

²¹⁴ Interview with Givi Kapanadze was recorded by the GYLA.

²¹⁵ Interview with Tamar Malisheva-Surameli was recorded by the GYLA in village Tkviavi on 15 October, 2009.

²¹⁶ Interview with Shota Chikhladze was recorded by "21st Century", in School #32 of Tbilisi on 16 August, 2008

²¹⁷ Interview with Roman Nadiradze was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office on 15 August in Tbilisi, Public School #176.

²¹⁸ "Georgians flee as friends die and villages burn; Pro-Moscow fighters make the region a netherworld of lawlessness", by Alex Rodriguez, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 14 September, 2008.

of Defense of Georgia Irakli Okruashvili.

Murders of Nodar Butauri and Shamil Okropiridze

56-year-old **Shamil Okropiridze** was shot dead in front of his house for resisting the pillaging of his house. 10 bullets hit Okropiridze. Our respondent recalled that following days were relatively quiet and they buried the dead.

Tamar Surameli recalls that when she found Gela Chikhladze's corpse, she learned about Shamil Okropiridze's murder as well. .

"Our neighbor Shamil Okropiridze's daughter-in-law was going around the village asking for help to dig the grave. She came to our neighborhood and when she saw me she told me that Shamil had been murdered, that her hands were sore, she couldn't get the earth out because it was hard and that she didn't know what to do. Then Tsitso took boys with her to bury Shamil."

Eugenia Naskidashvili-Okropiridze found her brother-in-law dead in his house in the morning of 13 August.

"When I entered Shamil's yard, I saw his corpse lying there by the yard entrance. On 12 August 2008, village boys sneaked into the yard from the orchards and laid Shamil's dead body in his house yard. When I lifted the cloth up he had wounds on the face and his body was full of holes. His house windows had been shot and a wall was broken out." ²¹⁹

On the same day Tamar Surameli learned about another murder.

"My neighbor Tamaz Kapanadze let us know that Nodar Butauri had died. He found him dead and put him in the blanket, he had been all in blood."

Then they buried the body with the help of the young guys, who were still in the village. *"But apparently they hadn't dug deep enough and then dogs messed it up and Nodar was seen"*, recalls the grievous Tamar Surameli.

Ossetian para-militaries wanted to take away the car (Kamaz) from Nodar. He was murdered for showing verbal resistance.

Murder of Ioseb (Soso) Odiashvili

Residents of Tkviavi tell about another murder.

IDPs told us that 25-year-old Ioseb Odiashvili was abducted by Ossetians together with other Georgians on 12 August and taken in captivity. **Levan Giguashvili** recalled that after getting into a minibus he looked around at Georgians in there; they were mainly neighbors from other villages; however there were also several people from Tkviavi, including Soso Odiashvili whom

²¹⁹ Interview with Eugenia Okropiridze was recorded by the GYLA on 17 July, 2009, in village Tkviavi of the Gori District.

he recognized. Neighbors also said that Soso jumped out of the car and tried to run. He was shot dead on the run by a machine gun.

We inquired further about Soso Odiashvili's murder and discovered that the minibus in which Soso Odiashvili and other detainees had been transferred got into an accident on the Tirdznisi road, leading to casualties. In the accident, the driver, an Ossetian national whose name is unknown to us, died on the spot, as did a detainee from Mereti, **Tamaz Makharashvili**. Eyewitnesses recall:

*"One of the Georgians was stuck under the minibus. It seems he flew out the window and the minibus flipped over and crushed him."*²²⁰

Giorgi Khabazishvili took the fellow wounded villager to his house and cleaned his wounds, but couldn't save him. Giorgi Khabazishvili told us that at noon on 12 August, they found the young wounded man and with his neighbor ,Amiran Lapachi, took him to Tkviavi.

*"Soso was wounded in the right arm and stomach area close to the navel. He had deep wounds in both stomach and the arm. He was bleeding a lot. Soso kind of fainted in my house. He told my wife that Ossetian soldiers put him and other residents of Tkviavi in a Georgian minibus to take them towards Tskhinvali. On the way, just outside of Tirdznisi, they had an accident and right then Soso and several other Georgians ran away. Ossetian soldiers fired at them and that's when he was wounded. He didn't say anything else."*²²¹

A similar story was told by his father **Vladimer Odishvili**, who stayed with his son until his death. Soso Odishvili died on 13 August. But because soldiers were still in the village, they didn't dare taking him to the graveyard and therefore buried him right there in the garden in front of the house.²²²

Former detainees in the Tkviavi minibus relate also how the Ossetians shot dead one young man there, but unfortunately no one knew his name. Levan Giguashvili and Tamaz Chalauri told us similar stories. **Tamaz Chalauri** told us:

*"There was a skinny boy by my side. It seems he'd been moving around and the Ossetian hit him in the head with the butt once or twice. When he hit him he got me with the butt on the right side near the hip. Then Suddenly, the Ossetian soldier charged the machine-gun and shot at this boy twice in the head. They murdered that boy on me, blood spilled all over me. At the moment I thought they would shoot me as well and I was awaiting death."*²²³

Levan Giguashvili confirms this story and remembers how the Ossetians

220 Interview with Levan Giguashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 15 October, 2008.

221 Interview with Giorgi Khabazishvili was recorded by the GYLA in village Tkviavi on 16 October, 2009

222 Interview with Vladimer Odiashvili was recorded by the GYLA in village Tkviavi on 16 October, 2009

223 Interview with Tamaz Chalauri was recorded by the GYLA on 13 October, 2008

got rid of the corpse:

"Ossetian driver stopped the minibus and they took that boy's corpse out to the road. They shot another bullet at him outside also, and then we continued our journey. This event occurred in the vicinities of village Brotsleti."

Murder of Aleksandre Bibilashvili

"Armed people without uniforms were shooting on 13 August In the village Karaleti, not sparing anyone who resisted them. That's how they murdered one of my fellow villagers Alika Bibilashvili. He hadn't even resisted the Ossetians, just stood at the so-called village "birzha" (place for socializing, gathering) where he was shot at." ²²⁴

The case of Alexander Bibilashvili's murder was told by **Bidzina Sukhitashvili**.

The spouse of murdered Aleksandre Bibilashvili, **Zoia Bibilashvili**, told us the following:

"At 4 or 5 p.m. on 12 August Alika went outside to buy cigarettes. On the way back he saw men sitting at the so-called village "birzha" and approached them. He was going to sit down when they fired at him from the brown, "Zhiguli" type car. They were Ossetians. Russians had not entered yet and they didn't wear uniforms. They fired from a machine-gun. My spouse died on the spot." ²²⁵

Zoia's neighbor **Izolda Tadiashvili** confirmed Aleksandre Bibilashvili's murder.

"Alika had left home. He was holding bread in his hand. When he got to the "birzha", Vasiko was sitting there, our villager, Zaalishvili is his surname. He went there and sat too. It was 12 August, I remember well. There was a lot of anxiety that day in our village. Ossetians drove by in a car. Alika called to them, what's up boys. He thought they were Georgian - they didn't wear uniforms. They called back, why are you here? Why haven't you left? Then they shot him twice with a machine-gun. They were shooting as the car drove."

"Our neighbor Maro Samkharadze watched from her window how the Ossetians shot Alika. They were shooting at our villagers Givi and Gela then too. They wanted to take their car. It was just them. These were the same Ossetians who shot Alika. Givi's car was towing Gia's car, and when he saw the Ossetians were after him, he cut the line and ran away. They were furious that they couldn't catch Givi and take his car away. Givi was wounded then. Then they went up and

²²⁴ Interview with Bidzina Sukhitashvili was recorded on 4 December, 2008 by the HRC.

²²⁵ Interview with Zoia Bibilashvili and Izolda Tadiashvili was recorded on 4 December, 2008 by the HRC.

*were shooting spontaneously. When they saw Alika at the "birzha" they gunned him down."*²²⁶

Presumably, the OSCE/HRAM 2008 report talks about this murder as well. Although the report does not indicate the name and surname of the victim, the story and circumstances of the murder are identical. The report also describes the shooting from the car packed with Ossetians.²²⁷

Murder of Moris Papuashvili

The murder of Moris Papuashvili, resident of village Akhaldaba, is recalled by his colleague **Merab Khekhelashvili**, with who he went to the Gori TV-radio transmitter station of village Akhaldaba on 12 August to fulfill his official duties.



The car of Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili where Moris Papuashvili was killed.

"At approximately 11 o'clock the aerial bombardment renewed. They didn't drop bombs on the antenna directly, but around 100 meters from the antenna, in the woods. That place was all in smoke. The bombardment continued for about 20 minutes with some pauses in between. Moris Papuashvili and I were afraid that the jets would bomb the station, and left the TV-radio station building and got away from there. We found shelter right there, in a former dump in the territory next to the station."

Soon the director of the TV-radio station Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili went up to the Akhaldaba antenna and to try rescue Moris and Merab in his "Zhiguli" car. Merab Khekhelashvili told us what happened:

*"We didn't even go one kilometer when we saw tanks moving towards the TV-radio station. When the tanks approached us about 20-30 meters away, the soldiers sitting on them opened intense fire at us. We hid in the passenger compartment."*²²⁸

Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili himself recalls in detail the moment when he immediately appeared in front of the tank:

"Suddenly, we heard a noise. A tank unexpectedly appeared from around the turn. First I only saw one tank. There were soldiers sitting on the tank, wearing greenish military uniforms and armed with machine-guns. There

226 Story similar to the murder of Aleksandre Bibilashvili was told by resident of Karaleti Eldar Gogishvili in an interview with the representative of the Public Defender's Office, recorded on 16 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, Public School #169.

227 See "Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia", OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 23.

228 Interview with Merab Khekhelashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 12 October, 2008

were approximately 7-8 soldiers sitting on the tank. Some of the soldiers on the tank fired at our car. This tank was about 40 meters from us. Soldiers shot at us with machine-guns. As soon as I saw the tank I stopped the car right on the path. Nevertheless, soldiers continued firing at us."²²⁹

Afterwards everything happened quickly. The wounded waited for the last soldiers to pass by and then tried to crawl out of the car. At this very moment they discovered that Moris Papuashvili was lying on the ground smeared in blood.

"A bullet hit Moris in the throat, he was bleeding a lot from there, and soon he fainted. Giorgi Khosruashvili, who was visiting us, was also wounded like Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili, with a relatively lighter wound."²³⁰

Those who stayed alive went to look for medical aid to save the wounded and their own lives. After they returned they found Moris Papuashvili already dead about 200 meters away from the car.

*"Moris's knees and arms were entirely torn, as it seems he crawled a lot to finally reach that place. There was a blood trail all along", told us **Vasil Papuashvili**.*²³¹

It was strange that Moris already had two wounds:

"One on the left in the throat where he was bleeding from and two bullets in the forehead, shot above the eyes."

Vasil Papuashvili assumes that *"he probably crawled when the soldiers noticed him and fired at him", as when his friends had left him he had only one bullet in the throat.*

Giorgi Giorgashvili told us about the new bullet trace as well.

*"The bullet hit him in the forehead above the right eye, which had come out slightly and was visible."*²³²

Murder of Valiko Jojishvili

Not everyone managed to leave village Vanati due to the patrolling by the occupying forces. Part of the population remaining in the village was taken into captivity, and therefore even after the end of bombardments the elderly staying in the village were hiding in the basements, and those who dared to resist, were murdered on the spot.

Vazha Jojishvili recalled with regret one of the very elderly who stayed

229 Interview with Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 27 October, 2009, in village Akhaldaba of the Gori District.

230 Interview with Merab Khekhelashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 12 October, 2008

231 Interview with Vasil Papuashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 29 October, 2009

232 Interview with Giorgi Giorgashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 2 October, 2008. Information on Moris Papuashvili's murder and incident at the TV-radio transmitter is confirmed also in the interview given to the GYLA by Giorgi Khosruashvili, Vakhtang Shavdatuashvili, and Vasil Papuashvili.

in the village:

*"My uncle, Valiko Jojishvili was unable to leave the village with me, and was murdered by the Russian soldiers on 13 December."*²³³

Murder of Alichka Mindiashvili

Gia Babutsidze left village Achabeti together with the family on 8 August. However, he could not return to take out his 70 year old mother. Later, during the occupation he managed to enter the village with the assistance of Russian soldiers and buried the corpse of her mother burned in the debris of her own house in the yard.

"I noticed from the car that the absolute majority of houses were burnt down. When I approached my house, I asked the Russians to stop the car so I could look for my mother, who had difficulties getting around and so I assumed I would have found her somewhere in the grounds next to the house. My house and everything else in the yard was all burned. When I couldn't find my mother around the the house and my hopes to see her alive had vanished, I decided to enter the burned house to at least find her corpse.

*As soon as I entered the house I headed to her bedroom, because she rarely left this room. Upon entering the bedroom, I saw a horrible sight; there were my mother's bones and ashes on the bed. Although the house and all the furniture in it were totally burnt, I noticed my mother's bones and ashes on the steel bed very well. It became obvious that she couldn't find her way out of the blazing house."*²³⁴

Murder of Vasil Mekerishvili

Russians appeared for the first time in village Dvani on 12 August. Just like everywhere else, the Ossetians followed the Russians and started looting the houses and intimidating and raiding the remaining population.

"On 13 August, we were in the village center when Vasiko was murdered", **Giorgi Mekarishvili** told us sadly. He is physically disabled and therefore couldn't leave the village. In the afternoon he was in the village center when a car stopped and three Ossetians armed and drunk got out. All three of them wore uniforms and had weapons. One of them demanded others to kiss the crosses on his chest.

"I believe there were three crosses, white, red, and black. They talked to us in Georgian but with Ossetian accents. They had met Aliosha Kokoshvili in the village earlier. He told me personally that they had put a gun in his mouth and ordered him to kiss the crosses. They went to Vasiko and demanded the same, but were refused. He was mentally ill

233 Interview with Vazha Jojishvili was recorded by the HRC on 25 December, 2008

234 Interview was recorded by the HRC on 24 November 2008 in Tbilisi, Kindergarten #117, 42 Zhvania St.

*and instead of kissing stood up and cursed at them. He even pushed one of them. In return, the soldier put a gun to Vasiko's throat and shot. He died that very second."*²³⁵

Temur Kopadze also confirmed the murder of Vasiko Mekerishvili. Although Temur does not remember exactly whether it was 12 or 13 August, but he clearly remembers murder of a man in the village center well.

*"They demanded a kiss from them. Vasiko probably didn't get it simply what they'd wanted. He was mentally ill. They shot him and killed him. Then they threw him there and left."*²³⁶

Murder of Ervand Bezhashvili

Temur Kopadze stayed in the village until 16 August. On 11 August people of various nationalities gradually started entering the village and setting houses on fire. Someone called his neighbor Vazha Kokoshvili and said "his house was on fire". They got out of the basement to check the house. This was when they heard a woman crying.

*"I followed the voice and I saw Nato Bezhashvili. **Ervand Bezhashvili**, her husband, was dead. Nato told us that she'd seen how her husband had been shot and murdered by a group of marauders consisting of Ossetians and Russians, who had returned from the 'ceremony' of rising the Russian flag on a village church. I still don't understand why they'd murdered him."*

Manana Gogaladze-Ivanishvili also told us about the murder of Ervand Bezhashvili. She recalled the story neighbors told about how he refused to kiss the Ossetians' flag and that's why they shot him. We could not verify this particular reason of murder, but the fact the murder occurred was confirmed in numerous other interviews.²³⁷



TEDOTSMINDA EXECUTION

Murders of Rolandi Burnadze and Tariel (Beglar) Gogishvili

Natela Chovelidze fled Tskhinvali during the first war and was living in village Khviti in displacement together with her husband. Roland Burnadze was murdered during the August 2008 war.

"I had a husband Rolandi Burnadze, who died from the Russian aggression. Already on 7 August they started firing shells. At this point in time the Georgian army had already gone. On 9 August my spouse took my mother and myself out of the village. My son Giorgi had already gone away. My spouse returned to the village."

²³⁵ Interview with Giorgi Mekarishvili was recorded by the HRC in village Dvani on 23 October, 2008.

²³⁶ Interview with Temur Kopadze was recorded by the HRC in Gori on 11 September 2008, at the bus station.

²³⁷ Interview with Manana Gogaladze-Ivanishvili was recorded by the HRC in Gori on 8 September, 2008, Kindergarten #10



Roland Burnadze killed in his own car, near to Village Variani, August 12, 2008

Village Khviti was under a mass bombardment on 12 August. Rolandi and his cousin Taniel Gogishvili got scared and decided to leave. They drove by my spouse's car, white "Jiguli-07", with the state plate number BOY 041. The soldiers shot them by Variani, a bit far away from the Kareli turn.

I don't know exactly if they were Russians or Ossetians. I learned about their murder from **Merab Duashvili** from Variani and **Roin Omadze** from Pkhvenisi. They were there at the time. Soldiers pilaged the car and torched it. Bodies been lying dead like this for four days, and then their bodies were transferred with the Patriarch's assistance."²³⁸

Paata Mchedlidze eye-witnessed the result of this appalling fact on 14 August, when he was leaving the village.

*"We entered the turn towards farming. We saw "Jiguli-07" car, in which three people were shot dead. All windows were broken. The body of the car didn't seem to be damaged. The car had gone off the road."*²³⁹

Our researchers found the persons mentioned by Natela Chovelidze and interviewed them. **Merab Aduashvili** was detained by Russian soldiers together with his neighbors and eye-witnessed the shooting at the white "Jiguli-07" right then.

*"It had just dawned on 12 August, when a white 07 turned in from Shindisi. We still were lying with our faces down. Russian soldiers didn't warn or anything and started firing. They fired from two check-points simultaneously. The car passed the first check-point, the second, and went off the road. They kept shooting even after the car went off, and shot at least hundred of bullets. Soldiers laughed and chuckled during the shoot out. When the car drove off, soldiers haven't even looked after the dead."*²⁴⁰

Roin Omadze, who was also detained by Russian soldiers together with Merab Aduashvili, eye witnessed the same story.²⁴¹

We were told about the murder of Taniel (Beglar) Gogishvili by his wife **Lamara Gogishvili**,²⁴² although she had only obtained information from

238 Interview with Natela Chovelidze was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 23 July, 2009.

239 Interview was recorded by the representatives of the Public Defender's Office on 16 August, 2008 in Tbilisi, 22 Dadiani St.

240 Interview with Merab Aduashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 21 August, 2009, village Variani of Gori District.

241 Interview with Roin Omiadze was recorded by the GYLA on 23 August, 2009, in village Variani of Gori District. Please see the detailed story of Roman Omiadze himself, Merab Aduashvili and several other detainees in the stories on the accident of the Tkviavi minibus and the captivity.

242 Interview with Lamara Gogishvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori on 23 July, 2009

neighbors and confirmed what we knew from the statements of eyewitnesses.

The cars shot on 12 August were also seen by Nikozi village resident **Teimuraz Lazarashvili**, who was bringing his mother-in-law and father-in-law back with his brother-in-law to Nikozi from Gori.

"On 12 August [...] near the Russian military column - in about 50 meters away there was a shot up "Jiguli-07" car, with the state plate number 041. The driver, Rolandi Burnadze, was leaning on the driver's seat dead and his neighbor was dead also. Both of them were from village Zemo Khviti. I knew both of them closely, because we studied together in the Kvemo Nikozi secondary school. The car had gone off the road on the right side.

Right by the block post of Russians, a "Vaz 24-10" bulldog type of car, so-called "Volga" had crashed into the tank. The owner Amiran Razmadze from village Pkhvenisi was also dead in the car."²⁴³

The Georgian non-governmental organization "21st Century" recorded the story of the priest of the Gori St. Trinity Church **Father Constantine**, who after the liturgy on 12 August 2008 was on the way to the village Shindisi together with his mother and three other female fellow villagers. Right then he became both the witness and victim of the tragedy that occurred in Sakasheti.

Father Constantine said, Russian soldiers fired at them even though the women and priest were clearly seen sitting in the car.

"The occupier was shooting continuously. 12 bullets hit the car: in the front windshield, both front door windows, right door, rear windshield and the roof."

During the shoot out father Constantine was severely wounded, and his mother **Nora Babiashvili** and another person **Pikria Mazmishvili** received five wounds.

"They didn't stop firing even when I managed to turn the car around. We were bleeding and they kept firing at us. They probably infuriated



Transfer of bodies of Roland Burnadze and Taniel Gogishvili after execution of the road to Variani

²⁴³ Interview was recorded by the GYLA on 19 May, 2009

*that we were still alive. We miraculously reached the Gori hospital swimming in blood"*²⁴⁴

Murder of Tinatin Giorgadze

During the August war, people were often deliberately murdered by direct targeting, and the cars shot near the village Tedotsminda in the Gori District is a continuation of these very tragic accounts.

Paata Giorgadze from Gori, left the conflict zone on 11 August, however, after the bombing of Gori he decided to return and take his old mother to the village Arashenda. In the morning of 12 August, on the way to Arashenda, he encountered a rain of bullets.

"We were driving along a row of houses in Tedotsminda. On the left side of the road we noticed a shot up Zhiguli. Its windows were broken and no one seemed to be around. As soon as we passed this car, an unexpected rain of bullets was fired at us. I couldn't determine immediately from where they were shooting from, as I couldn't see anyone. The first bullets hit the front windshield, so they shot from the north. However, the bullets ricocheted off the windshield and we escaped. At this point neither of us were wounded as we got away.

Right there along the road, on the Tedotsminda ascent, I noticed one infantry fighting vehicle, or armored personnel carrier. They fired at us continuously, probably from machine-guns. A rain of bullets. Suddenly, I felt I was wounded in the left leg. A bullet penetrated the driver's door and then hit me in the left leg. I could barely drive the car anymore. I was shouting for help. I crawled out of the car. They continued shooting. Then the car caught on fire. I saw my mother. She also crawled out of the car, moaned once and put her head on the ground. Mother was wounded on the left side, near the stomach.

*Father transferred my mother's body to village Arashenda and buried her there, in the village cemetery on the third day, 14 August."*²⁴⁵

Paata managed to hide and then villagers



Photos from video, Shooting civilians nearby village Tedotsminda, August 12, 2008

244 Interview with the priest of the Gori St. Trinity Church father Constantine was recorded by "21st Century".

245 Interview with Paata Giorgadze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 June, 2009.

brought him to the Gori hospital. By chance he met his classmate **Mamuka Berkatsashvili**, who told him a similar story. Mamuka's car was fired at on the same day in the same place, by village Tedotsminda, as a result of which two women sitting in his car were killed and he himself barely survived.

Murders of Dodo Garsevanishvili and Nino Abramishvili-Katsiashvili

The two women mentioned to Paata Giorgadze by his classmate Mamuka Berkatsashvili were Dodo Garsevanishvili and Nino Abramishvili-Katsiashvili.

Mamuka Berkatsashvili is from Variani and worked as a taxi driver. During the military operations he helped transport the population. On 12 August he picked up two women by the village Ortasheni, who were going to Variani. On the Tedotsminda ascent their car came under intense fire.

"They fired machine-guns from the north. I tried to turn the car to the left, but I didn't have enough power and crashed into the hill. I was already wounded by then. One bullet hit me on the side of the heart, while the other hit me first in the right shoulder and from there hit the right side of my face. I lost eye-sight rapidly. I opened the door and crawled out of the car. When I got out of the car I couldn't see the passengers, especially since I could hardly see with my right eye anymore. Then they shot the bazooka at the car. It hit the car on the right side, on the front door, where Dodo Garsevanishvili was sitting. The explosion lifted the car in the air and I flew into a rock. Shell and window fragments hit me in the face and left hand. When the shooting stopped, I looked up a bit and saw the soldiers.

I couldn't hear women's voices in the car anymore.

Then a Russian soldier approached me. I recognized that he was Russian by appearance. He wore a camouflaged military uniform and hat. He was very surprised to see me alive and pointed his machine-gun at me. He turned around and shouted to those who shot us "I found alive!" and then left. That Russian soldier soon returned and three others followed him. They asked me "can you crawl?" I replied "I'll get away somehow, just don't shoot me." I leaned on the car and stood up. I was interested in the state of those women. I looked into the car and both of them had been killed. I didn't any breathing or moaning and when I saw their faces, I got scared. I turned around and left."²⁴⁶

On his way back Mamuka Berkatsashvili saw two other cars, which had also been shot up.

246 Interview with Mamuka Berkatsashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 12 June, 2009

Murder of Amiran Razmadze

Merab Aduashvili from Variani returned to his village on 11 August and saw that the village was almost empty. Following three-days (8-10 August) of intensive bombardments, up to sixty men remained in the village but they were leaving as well. Merab Aduashvili, together with his neighbors, went to the village cemetery in the evening on 11 August to see a fellow wounded villager when the Russians detained him and three others from Variani.

*"There were approximately 15 soldiers, at least. There was some cloth similar to a Russian flag attached to the arm of uniforms of some of them. Soldiers surrounded us, pointing their guns, and gave a sign to follow them."*²⁴⁷

They were taken to place where other Georgians from village Pkhvenisi and two young men from Kutaisi were detained. Here, they witnessed the Russians murdering Georgians fleeing from villages.

"It was around one o'clock at night when a black car -Volga - appeared. When this car passed the cemetery where a 2nd tank was positioned, they fired at it from there without any warning. The car continued on its way and soldiers sitting at the gas station opened fire on it as well. The car was somewhere between the first and second block posts when it was shot at from both sides and it finally crashed into the tank positioned towards Variani. Soldiers continued to shoot the driver and then took the dead body and threw it out. There was a willow tree. They cut some branches off and threw them on the body. There was also a woman in the car (she was the wife of the dead man) who they took out and laid down 5 meters away from the where her husband had been thrown.

The woman was wounded. She was lying there all night. She cried throughout the whole night and asked for help in Russian or in Georgian. At dawn they made us lay the woman on the tank and they drove her away towards Tskhinvali by tank."

The woman Merab Aduashvili spoke about is **Nunu Chlaidze**, wife of the late Amiran Razmadze. She told our researchers that something blew up in the car and then she fainted and remembers nothing. When she opened her eyes, her husband was lying dead on the ground and she was sitting by the gas station wall.

*"I was covered in blood. I was wounded in the shoulders, bottom, right leg, and my right wrist was broken and I had also hit my forehead."*²⁴⁸

Nunu Chlaidze was taken to the field hospital by tank, which she left immediately after receiving first aid and walked to the Gori hospital.

247 Interview with Merab Aduashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 21 August, 2009, in village Variani of the Gori District.

248 Interview with Nunu Chlaidze was recorded by the GYLA on 13 October, 2009

Mikheil Ghoghadze, who was also detained at the Russian military block post, witnessed this as well.

"Russian soldiers opened fire on a 'Vaz 31', without any warning. They didn't even order them to stop the car. At the end of the shooting I could scarcely hear some shouting. The car crashed into a tank. Soon after the crash, shooting was heard again. Russian soldiers went up to the car and shot inside it. Then they inspected the car, although I heard Russians say also that a soldier had been killed as well."²⁴⁹

Merab Aduashvili told us also that during the shooting of a black Volga, they accidentally shot and wounded their own soldier and threw him right there into a ditch and afterwards, nobody asked about his fate.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Mikheil Ghoghadze was recorded by the GYLA in village Pkhvenisi on 21 August, 2009

- 3.1 Statements made by the Representatives of the South Ossetian de-facto Government on Ethnic Cleansing
- 3.2. Position of Russia regarding the annihilation of Georgian villages
- 3.3. Destruction of Georgian villages in Statements by International Organizations
- 3.4. Destruction of Georgian Villages in the Report by the International Fact-Finding Mission on the conflict in Georgia
- 3.5. Destruction of Georgian villages in the International mass media
- 3.6 Attack on Georgian Villages - Ethnic Cleansing



Village Tamarasheni
Villages Avnevi and Nuli
Village Kekhvi
Village Vanati
Village Kurta
Village Beloti
Village Disevi
Village Atsriskhevi
Village Zemo Achabeti
Village Kvemo Achabeti
Eredvi - Berula - Argvitsi
Village Eredvi
Village Berula
Village Kheiti
Village Karaleti
Village Gugutiantkari
Village Ksuisi
Village Zardiaantkari
Village Satskheneti
Village Tortiza
Village Karbi
Village Ergneti



3

“Now in Georgia every eleventh person is displaced”

Thomas Hammarberg*

“Ethnic cleansing was really carried out in regard to ethnic Georgians on the territory of South Ossetia during August 2008 conflict and after it.”

Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia**

Stories in the ethnic Georgian villages of South Ossetia are equally shocking. Military formations enter villages, fill cars and boots with everything valuable, then burn houses and make their way towards next villages”

RFE/RL, Brian Whitmore, 30 September 2008.**

“The policy of robbing and destroying of civilians’ property turned former Georgian villages into ghost towns”.

„Human Rights Watch“****

“Despite the fact that there is no generally acknowledged interpretation of ethnic cleansing, during such attempts it is agreed that its purpose is to displace population so that the ethnic composition of the given territory changes and we get ethnically homogenous, i.e. “clean” territory.”

William Schabbas*****

“Ossetians were telling to us: None of the Georgians should stay here. If elderly people stay here, youngsters will come back as well and this is why you shall leave.”

Nodar Demetrashvili, IDP from Village Beloti

* "Human Rights in the Areas Affected by the south Ossetia Conflict", September 2008

** Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, September 2009

*** RADIO FREE EUROPE - „Rights Groups Say South Ossetian Militias Burning Georgian Villages“, by Brian Whitmore 30 September 2008

**** *Up in Flames*, Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch, January 2009

***** William Schabbas, *Genocide in international law: the crime of crimes*, Cambridge University Press, 2000

3.1. STATEMENTS MADE BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SOUTH OSSETIAN DE-FACTO GOVERNMENT ON ETHNIC CLEANSING



On 15 August, 2008, de-facto president of the Former Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia, **Eduard Kokoity**, replied to a journalist's question from the Russian newspaper "*Kommersant*" "What is currently going on in the territory of Georgian enclaves?" – "**Nothing, everything is demolished; the borders of South Ossetia are defined**". In the same interview, the de-facto president persistently repeated "***we do not intend to let anyone ever return. Currently there are approximately 18 thousand displaced from Georgia in North Ossetia and they are the ones who should be returned to South Ossetia***".²⁵⁰

It was not the only statement by the de-facto president, Eduard Kokoity, and the representatives of the de-facto administration of South Ossetia. They regularly and voluntarily informed the world of their decision "**to destroy the housing of the civilian population to prevent the return of the ethnic Georgian population**".²⁵¹

Newspaper "*USA Today*", on August 19, 2008 also noted Eduard Kokoity's statements:

*"Eduard Kokoity, the South Ossetian separatist leader, says Georgians shouldn't bother returning. He said their villages would be given to ethnic Ossetians."*²⁵²

250 Interview with the South Ossetian separatist leader Eduard Kokoity with Russian newspaper "*Kommersant*" from 15.08.08; No 144. [Http://www.kommersant.ru/](http://www.kommersant.ru/)

251 See, "Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia", OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p.47

252 See, "Homecoming may be impossible for Georgians" by Jeffrey Stinson, 19 August, 2008, *USA Today*, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-19-georgia_N.htm



Eduard Kokoity inspecting destroyed Georgian villages

“Everything is demolished; the borders of South Ossetia are defined”

Eduard Kokoity
„Kommersant“, 15 August, 2008

“We do not intend to let anyone return ever”

Eduard Kokoity
„Kommersant“, 15 August, 2008

“Georgian enclaves in South Ossetia are liquidated. The villages Kekhvi and Tamarasheni are totally destroyed now as a result of a military operation”

Eduard Kokoity
REGNUM.RU, 22 August, 2008

In his interview to the Russian edition of *“Komsomolskaia Pravda”* on 22 August, 2008, the Chairman of the de-facto Parliament, **Znaur Gasiev**, acknowledged the ethnic cleansing, though at the same time he tried to assert its inevitability:

“There will be no war any more... We have carried out cruel acts, I know. But Georgians will not return here. We have burnt down all their houses in the enclaves territory. There was no other way to stop the war and undo the knot”.²⁵³

On the same day, 22 August 2008, the Russian agency “Regnum” printed another interview with Eduard Kokoity, where his attitude had not changed a bit: **“Georgian enclaves in South Ossetia are liquidated. The villages Kekhvi and Tamarasheni, which were uncontrolled [by South Ossetian separatist authorities], are totally destroyed now as a result of a military operation”**.²⁵⁴

253 See, “South Ossetia is won. What to do next?” by Dimitry Steshin, “Komsomolskaia Pravda”, 22 August, 2008, retrievable at <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24150/366813>

254 See, “Georgian Enclaves no longer Exist in South Ossetia” - interview with Eduard Kokoity, “Regnum” agency, 22 August. Reprinted on the same day by www.civil.ge

Later, the vice-chairman of the de-facto council of Ministers of South Ossetia, **Eleonora Bedoeva**, in her interview with OSCE Human Rights Assessment Mission (OSCE/ODIHR HRAM), which was in the conflict zone after the ceasing of hostilities, said:

“If a Georgian, who stays in the territory of South Ossetia, doesn’t justify our expectations we shall drive him away... I don’t need Georgians returning to northern villages Tamarasheni and others, and they won’t have such an opportunity”.²⁵⁵

Additionally, on 13 August, 2008, the Head of Security Council of South Ossetia, Anatoli Barankievich, acknowledges in his interview with the Russian paper “Rasiiskaia Gazeta”, accusations against them of pillaging and the annihilation of Georgian property, but justified these acts by saying: “War is war”.²⁵⁶

Another proverbial attempt to justify these acts was in an interview the Human Rights Center “Memorial” had with the Head of the Mass Media Committee, **Irina Gagloeva**. Ms. Gagloeva explained and justified the violence committed in Georgian villages by stating:

“They cooperated with Tbilisi and the Georgian military - in contrast to Georgian villages controlled by Ossetian Administration - and that’s why, they got exactly what they had been preparing for themselves during last 18 years.”²⁵⁷

We consider that such statements need no further comments and analyses. They answer all the questions concerning the motivation of the de-facto authorities.

The authorities’ motivation is one thing and the actions of those ordinary people who eagerly fulfil orders is another. When it comes to investigating the crimes, the perpetrators, and the causes, one must not forget the statement by Human Rights Watch representative, **Anna Neistat**. On 14 August, 2008 she told the British newspaper “The Guardian”:

“The torching of houses in these villages (meaning Georgian villages) is in some ways a result of the massive Russia propaganda machine which constantly repeats claims of genocide and exaggerates the casualties. That is then used to justify retribution”.²⁵⁸

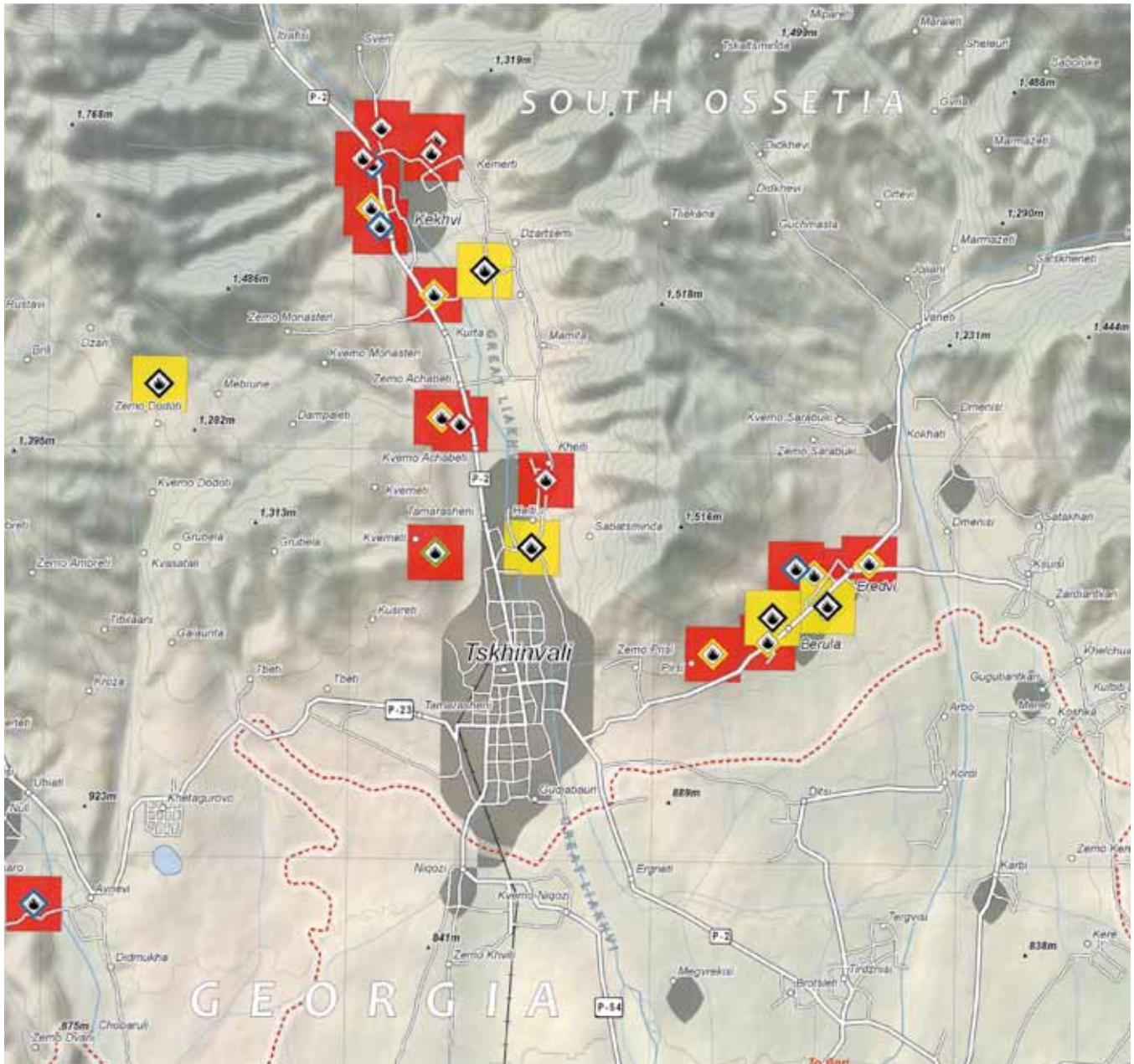
255 See, “Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia”, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p.48.

256 See, “South Ossetian Authorities acknowledged cases of looting: ‘war is war’”, August 13, 2008, at www.newsru.com/world/13aug2008/maroderstvo.html

257 See, Up in Flames, Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the conflict over South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch, January 2009, p. 152

258 See, “Human Rights Watch: Russia inflating casualty figures”, on 14 August, 2008, by Tom Parfitt, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/14/georgia.russia1>







Active Fires in South Ossetia, 7-24 August 2008 (Satellite 1)



Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 24 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Map shows active fires in South Ossetia north and east of Tskhinvali both during the conflict and afterwards. 7-24 August, 2008. This photo gives factual evidence to the accounts our witnesses recalled about the fires in various villages after August 22, 2008.

Active Fires by Date

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | ... 10 August 2008 |  | ... 17 August 2008 |
|  | ... 12 August 2008 |  | ... 19 August 2008 |
|  | ... 13 August 2008 |  | ... 22 August 2008 |

Human Rights organizations were not the only ones who asserted the violence carried out in Georgian villages was retribution for invented “genocide” by the Georgian side. We often heard such reasoning and arguments during our talks to the IDPs. One of them is a resident of Zemo Khviti village, a former captive, Tamaz Gogishvili, who remembers the accusations of Ossetians who entered his village:

*“Ossetians talked to us in broken Georgian, they said we had to be executed, as our people had killed their 12-year-old children in Tskhinvali”.*²⁵⁹

3.2. POSITION OF RUSSIA REGARDING THE ANNIHILATION OF GEORGIAN VILLAGES

In contrast to South Ossetian officials’ statements, Russian authorities flatly denied the incidents of “burning, robbery and destruction of civilian property” and “forcible displacement of ethnic Georgian population” in the official communication sent to the independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the conflict in Georgia.

“Russian military forces along with South Ossetian law-enforcement authorities and military units ensured twenty-four-hour guarding of abandoned houses and plots of land in Georgian villages. Moreover, they ensured protection and security of the South Ossetia population in spite of their ethnic origin.

Moreover, the Russian Federation in the same communication claimed that “no case of international humanitarian or human rights violations were revealed during the period of the peace enforcement operation against Georgia”.²⁶⁰

Despite the assertions of the Russian Federation officials, accounts of displaced Georgians and other available evidence point to radically different circumstances, which backs Eduard Kokoity’s statement. A resident of Tamarasheni, 31-year-old Davit Dzadzamia, captured on 10 August, passed by Georgian villages on his way to the Tskhinvali detention center and recalled what he saw in his interview with our researchers:

*“On 10 August, on the road to Tskhinvali, I saw, how they pillaged and burned the houses. The neighborhood was all in flames, from Acheti to Tamarasheni. Otar Tegashvili’s house was the first to burn down in Tamarasheni. Avto Gogidze’s house was already burned to ashes and no longer smoked. Olina Datashvili’s and Kartlos Datashvili’s houses were burning and their store was on fire too”.*²⁶¹

259 Interview with Tamaz Gogishvili is recorded by the GYLA in Gori, on 30 May 2009

260 See, Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Volume III, September, 2009. p.484-486

261 Interview with Davit Dzadzamia is recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009



Russian armed forces, Achabeti village (South Ossetia), August 2008

“Russian military forces along with South Ossetian Law-enforcement authorities and military units ensured twenty-four-hour guarding of abandoned houses and plots of land in Georgian villages. Moreover, they ensured protection and security of the South Ossetia population in spite of their ethnic origin.”

Answers of the Russian Federation

“Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”

Moreover, the Russian Federation in the same communication claimed that “No case of international humanitarian or human rights violations were revealed during the period of peace enforcement operation against Georgia”

Answers of the Russian Federation

“Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia”

3.3. DESTRUCTION OF GEORGIAN VILLAGES IN THE STATEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Contrary to official statements by Russian Federation Authorities , the destruction of Georgian villages has been confirmed by everyone who managed to see with their own eyes the ruins of Georgian houses, after August 2008.

Human Rights Center “Memorial”:

“Presently the Georgian villages (the ones we have visited – Kekhvi, Kurta, Achabeti, Tamarasheni, Eredvi, Vanati, Avnevi) have been virtually fully burnt down. Presently, a month after the end of warfare, the last houses are being burnt – everyday we witnessed new fires set in these villages”.²⁶²

Human Rights Watch:

“When we visited Tamarasheni, Zemo Achabeti, Kvemo Achabeti, Kurta, and Kekhvi in August, our researchers saw first-hand these villages being looted and torched. When we returned in September, the villages had been almost fully destroyed. In Kekhvi, the debris of some houses along the road appeared to have been bulldozed. Also in September we visited Eredvi, Vanati, Avnevi, and Nuli, which by that time had been almost completely destroyed by burning. In November we visited Beloti, Satskheneti, Atsriskhevi, and Disevi, also almost fully destroyed.

Our observations on the ground and from these interviews have led us to conclude that the South Ossetian forces sought to ethnically cleanse these villages: that is, the destruction of the homes in these villages was deliberate, systematic, and carried out on the basis of the ethnic and imputed political affiliations of the residents of these villages, with the express purpose of forcing those who remained to leave and ensuring that no former residents would return”.²⁶³

Ad hoc committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe:

“Their actions can be confirmed by the visit of the delegation to Qsuisi village. The village is totally looted and destroyed. The delegation has got the information that in some cases villages were bulldozed and wiped off the face of the ground.”²⁶⁴

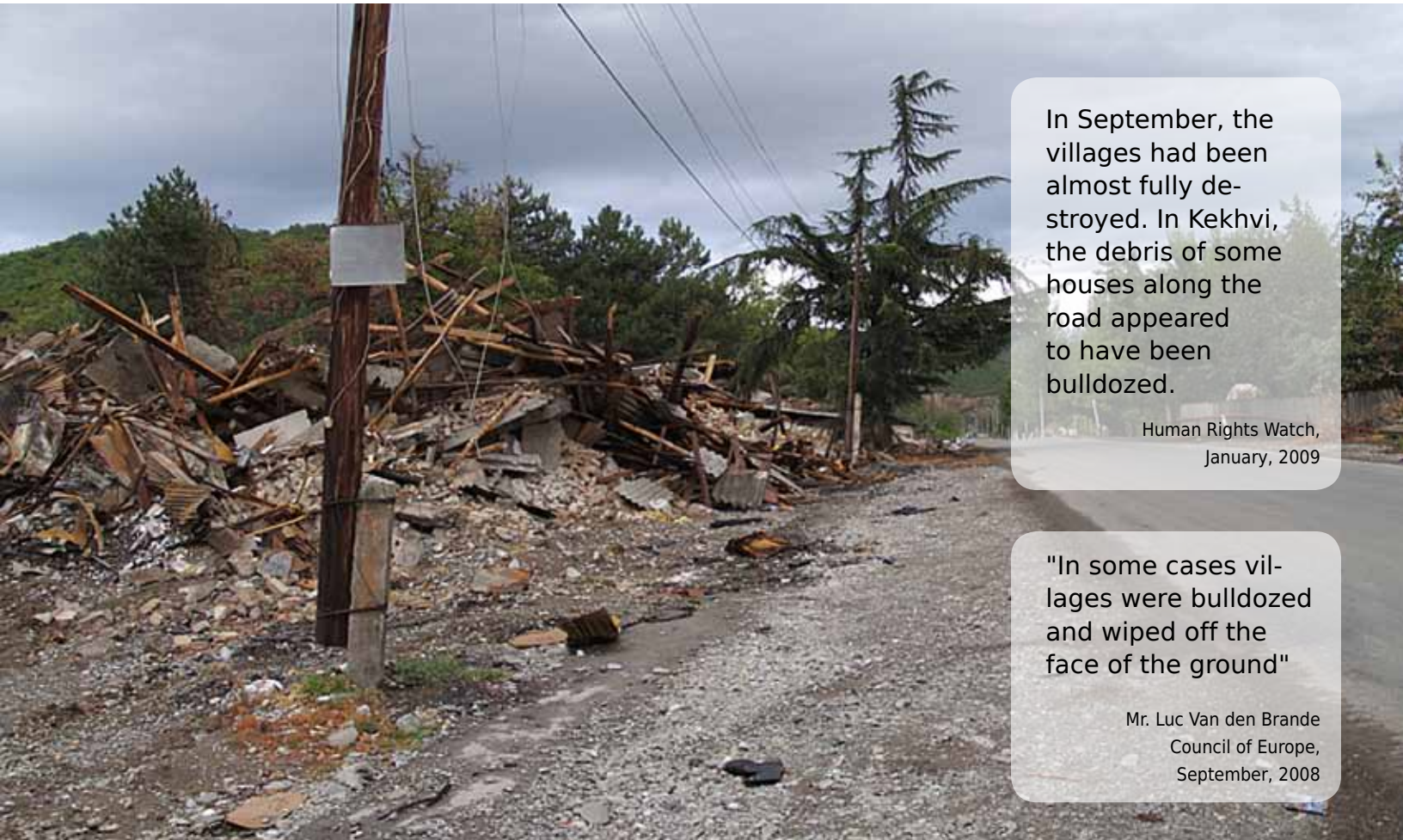
Amnesty International:

The satellite photos, which are available on-line, leave no possibility of

262 Special press-release by the Memorial HRC: “A Month after the War, Violations of Human Rights and Norms of Humanitarian Law in the Conflict Zone in South Ossetia”, September 11, 2008

263 See, Up in Flames, Humanitarian Law Violations and Civil Victims in the conflict over South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch, January 2009, p. 131

264 See, Memorandum: The situation on the ground in Russia and Georgia in the context of the war between these countries, *ad hoc* Committee of the Bureau of the Assembly, prepared by Mr. Luc Van den Brande (Belgium, EPP/CD), 29 September 2008. Doc.11720 Addendum II



In September, the villages had been almost fully destroyed. In Kekhvi, the debris of some houses along the road appeared to have been bulldozed.

Human Rights Watch,
January, 2009

"In some cases villages were bulldozed and wiped off the face of the ground"

Mr. Luc Van den Brande
Council of Europe,
September, 2008

an alternative interpretation.²⁶⁵ "These images don't lie", said the representative of Amnesty International Ariela Blatte.²⁶⁶ Despite the fact that satellite material depicting the first days of war was blocked in virtually every on-line source²⁶⁷, it is still possible to discover the condition at the end of the conflict. The satellite photos, which are available, depict the damage suffered by Georgian villages during and after the military actions. We have had the opportunity to compare photos of 10 August and 19 August, where the degree of damage increased considerably. Amnesty International noted these very facts.

265 See, www.unosat.org; and www.aaas.org/international/geotech/ge/georgia.kml

266 See, "Amnesty International Satellite images Reveal Damage to the South Ossetian Villages after Major Fighting Ended"; Amnesty International Press Release. October 9, 2008. At http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2008/1009geospatial_georgia.shtml

267 "Satellites Operated by Major Commercial vendors (GeoEye, DigitalGlobe, and ImageSat International) were fully booked, preventing the tasking of a new image by AAAS for the duration of this conflict. Therefore, AAAS was forced to rely upon imagery requested by other entities to meet the needs of the project. Fortunately, it was possible to acquire imagery of the region surrounding Tskhinvali, one of the major sites of damage upon areas of civilian infrastructure, with a time scale concurrent to the conflict in the region. Specifically, AAAS acquired satellite imagery of the region for the dates of August 10 and August 19, 2008 to establish whether satellite imagery analysis supported AI's witness reports", High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and the Conflict in South Ossetia, Summary Report, October 9, 2008, American Association for the Advancement of Science and Human Rights Program

19 August, 2008, Tamarasheni village, Satellite image (Satellite 2)

Source:
*High-Resolution
 Satellite Imagery
 and The Conflict
 in South Ossetia,
 Summary Report,
 October 9, 2008*

“These images
 don’t lie”

Ariela Blatter

Amnesty International
 October 2008

“Additional destruction is evident in the period from 10 to 19 August and it should be found out by all means who is responsible for protection of civilian population from militia attacks.”²⁶⁸

OSCE/ODIHR Human Rights Assessment Mission

The OSCE-ODIHR Human Rights Assessment Mission visited the conflict zone in November 2008 and had an opportunity to have a look at and review all the stories they were told in the refugee camp by those Georgians who had fled for their lives. The Mission stated in its report:

“We all were in this village and confirmed destruction. In some villages houses were razed to the ground by bulldozers or other heavy machines”.

In the same report we read:

“Many Georgian villages situated nearby Tskhinvali and inhabited mainly by ethnic Georgians are totally annihilated in South Ossetia. After Georgian troops had left, those houses were first looted and then burnt; as it turned out, de-facto authorities didn’t respond to such acts. Presently there are left very few inhabitants in these villages and they are under grave conditions”.²⁶⁹

268 See, “Amnesty International Satellite Images Reveal Damage to the South Ossetian Villages after Major Fighting Ended”; Amnesty International Press Release, October 9, 2008

269 See, “Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia”, OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 18, 43

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Statement made by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee is also important. “Ethnic cleansing continues in South Ossetia conflict zone”, states the press release issued on October 24, 2008. The importance of this statement is raised by the fact, that NHC researchers personally visited South Ossetia and witnessed many unlawful actions.

“Yet, this material strongly suggests a pattern of systematic attacks against the civilian population that continues today. The acts are seemingly aimed at changing the ethnic composition of the population in South Ossetia. During the first phase of the armed conflict (which continued for about five days from 7 August until 12 August), both parties seem to have committed war crimes in the form of indiscriminate bombings and disproportional use of force against mixed or civilian targets. In the second phase of the conflict the civilian population were specifically targeted in those areas effectively controlled by the Russian armed forces. These actions have lead to ethnic cleansing.

The practice of large-scale looting was accompanied by killings, rape, taking of hostages, deprivation of liberty, beatings, and threats. In several villages the burning of houses and destruction of public and private civilian property had a systematic character. The material collected describes 16 alleged cases of killings of civilians (excluding deaths resulting from cross fire, bombing and shelling at the time of large-scale military operations, and accidents with unexploded ordnance), in areas controlled by Russian forces, many of which seems to be instances of summarily executions.”²⁷⁰

In it's conclusions, international organization “**FLARE**” also mentions different accounts that “prove ethnic cleansing”.

“Within the zone of conflict, entire villages of Eredvi, Avnevi, Nuli, Kurta, Achabeti, Tamarasheni, Kekhvi, Disevi have been deliberately burned and destroyed. Some of the villages such as Patara Liakhvi and Didi Liakhvi, Pkhvenisi, Nikozi, Meghvrekisi have also been accessed by the groupings of the Ossetian militia, according to the reports by the local residents.

Part of the villages in the area have also been subjected to bombings on August 8-10 (Eredvi, Kurta, Achabeti, Tamarasheni, Kekhvi, Tkviavi, Patara Liakhvi and Didi Liakhvi, Pkhvenisi, Nikozi).”²⁷¹

270 See, “Georgia-Russia conflict: Ethnic Cleansing Continues in South Ossetian Conflict Zone in Georgia”, by Aage Borchgrevink, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee, October 24, 2008, at <http://www.nhc.no/php/index.php?module=article&view=784>

271 See, International Monitoring Group of Freedom, Legality and Rights in Europe (FLARE) “Report on the Conditions of the Civil Population during the Conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia,” September 2008; p.10 at http://peace.yhrm.org/files/EUreport_final.pdf

3.4. DESTRUCTION OF GEORGIAN VILLAGES IN THE REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE CONFLICT IN GEORGIA

Ethnic cleansing of Georgians in the territory of former South Ossetia is acknowledged by the International Fact-Finding Mission on the conflicts in Georgia:

“With regard to allegations of ethnic cleansing committed by South Ossetian forces or irregular armed groups, however, the Mission found patterns of forced displacements of ethnic Georgians who had remained in their homes after the onset of hostilities. In addition, there was evidence of systematic looting and destruction of ethnic Georgian villages in South Ossetia. Consequently, several elements suggest the conclusion that ethnic cleansing was indeed practised against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia both during and after the August 2008 conflict.”²⁷²

Besides establishing systemic ethnic cleansing, in its report the Mission acknowledged Russia’s responsibility, since according to the standards of International Law, the forces having effective control in territory just after warfare are entrusted with the task to defend the civilian population.

“Beyond those acts committed during the five days of hostilities from 7/8 to 12 August, additional acts were perpetrated after the cease-fire came into effect, raising serious concerns about the shared responsibility of those forces in control of the situation, whose duty it was to protect the civilian population.”²⁷³

3.5. DESTRUCTION OF GEORGIAN VILLAGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL MASS MEDIA

There is a consensus on this subject in world mass media outlets. Much was said and written about those days. Our report will not include a full review of the August-September 2008 world media coverage, but we shall present some passages for illustration.

“The proof of the ethnic cleansing of Georgians is evident... Many villages surrounding Tskhinvali were burnt down and most of the houses were destroyed” – writes “the Economist” on 22 August, 2008.

On 25 September, 2008, “**The Economist**” again notified the world:

“Systematic destruction, looting and ethnic cleansing of the Georgian villages is still going on inside South Ossetia as well as outside its limits”.²⁷⁴

272 See, Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, volume I, p. 27, September 2009

273 See, Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, volume I, p. 26, September 2009

274 See, “Coping with the fraught aftermath of August war, Georgia and Russia – Tense times”, The Economist, 25 September 2008



„The proof of the ethnic cleansing of Georgians is evident...

“Forward to Tbilisi” is written in Russian on the gates of one of the burnt houses”

„*The Economist*”, 22 August, 2008.

On 4 September, 2008 British **“The Guardian”** wrote:

“As you read this, another corner of Europe has been ethnically cleansed. That means young men murdered, old women driven out of their lifelong homes, villages plundered and torched.

“We did carry out cleaning operations, yes,” the militia leader “Captain Elrus” told “The Guardian’s” Luke Harding. These violent crimes have been committed under the noses of Russian troops, now unilaterally rebranded peacekeepers by the simple expedient of being given blue helmets. This ethnic cleansing has extended to the buffer zone around South Ossetia that Russia has unilaterally established.”²⁷⁵

On 12 August, 2008 the **“Associated Press”** correspondent reported that he had seen with his own eyes at least ten burning Georgian houses and had witnessed numerous looting in the region.

“The New York Times” wrote on August 14, 2008: Addendum

“As the conflict between Russia and Georgia enters its second week, there is growing evidence of looting and “ethnic cleansing” in a number of villages throughout the area of conflict. The attacks — some witnessed by reporters or documented by a human rights group — include stealing, the burning of villages and possibly even killings. {...} The identities of the attackers vary, but a pattern of violence by ethnic Ossetians against ethnic Georgians is emerging and has been confirmed by some Russian authorities. “Now Ossetians are running around and killing poor Georgians in their enclaves,” said

275 See, “Only a combination of deterrence and detente can meet this challenge”, by Timothy Garton, The GUARDIAN, 4 September, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/sep/04/russia.eu>

Maj. Gen. Vyacheslav Nikolaevich Borisov, the commander in charge of the city of Gori, occupied by the Russians.”²⁷⁶

Another US newspaper “**Washington Times**” published similar material on 15 August, 2008. “Washington Times” was reporting about the ethnic cleansing as well.²⁷⁷

US based newspaper “**USA Today**” reported on 29 August, 2008:

“Since the warfare between Georgia and Russia in early August, “Associated Press” reporters have witnessed burning homes and looting in villages in the region. Another AP reporter saw burning and looting of Georgian homes in at least six separate areas from August 22 through Thursday: the villages of Achabeti, Kekhvi, Tamarasheni, Ksuisi and Eredvi, as well as near the capital Tskhinvali. With most Georgians gone, there seems to be an effort to erase even the memory of their presence here. On Thursday, a South Ossetian policeman knocked down a sign with the name of the Georgian village of Tamarasheni, written in both Georgian and Latin scripts, as bulldozers razed the last remaining houses. At least three more Georgian villages have been bulldozed in South Ossetia, witnesses said.”²⁷⁸

3.6. ATTACK ON GEORGIAN VILLAGES – ETHNIC CLEANSING

Virtually every international organization that managed to enter the conflict zone during and after the war unanimously acknowledges that in August 2008 a purposeful attack was carried out on the Georgian population, in the Big Liakhvi, Small Liakhvi, and the Prone Gorges, as well as in the Kodori Gorge. Researchers, journalists, and most importantly eye-witnesses relate numerous accounts of pillaging, the burning of villages, forcible displacement, killings, looting, humiliating treatment, intimidating, and torturing of the population.

VILLAGE TAMARASHENI

Satellite imagery of Tamarasheni provides explicit means to corroborate the stories of witnesses interviewed by us and exposes the degree of damage inflicted on the village.

Provided below are two satellite images of Tamarasheni. The first one is taken on 10 August, 2008 and it demonstrates that the village is still mostly

276 See, Sabrina Tavernise and Matt Siege, „Signs of Ethnic Attacks in Georgia Conflict“, August 14, 2008, New York Times, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/15/world/Europe/15ethnic.html?_r=1

277 See, Kelly Hearn „Georgia claims ethnic cleansing, U.S. envoy cites credible reports of violence by 'irregular forces“, August 15, 2008, The Washington Times, at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/aug/15/georgiacclaims-ethnic08>

278 See, “AP IMPACT: Georgians uprooted in South Ossetia“, By Yuras Karmanau, on 29 August, 2008 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-29-3937720385_x.htm

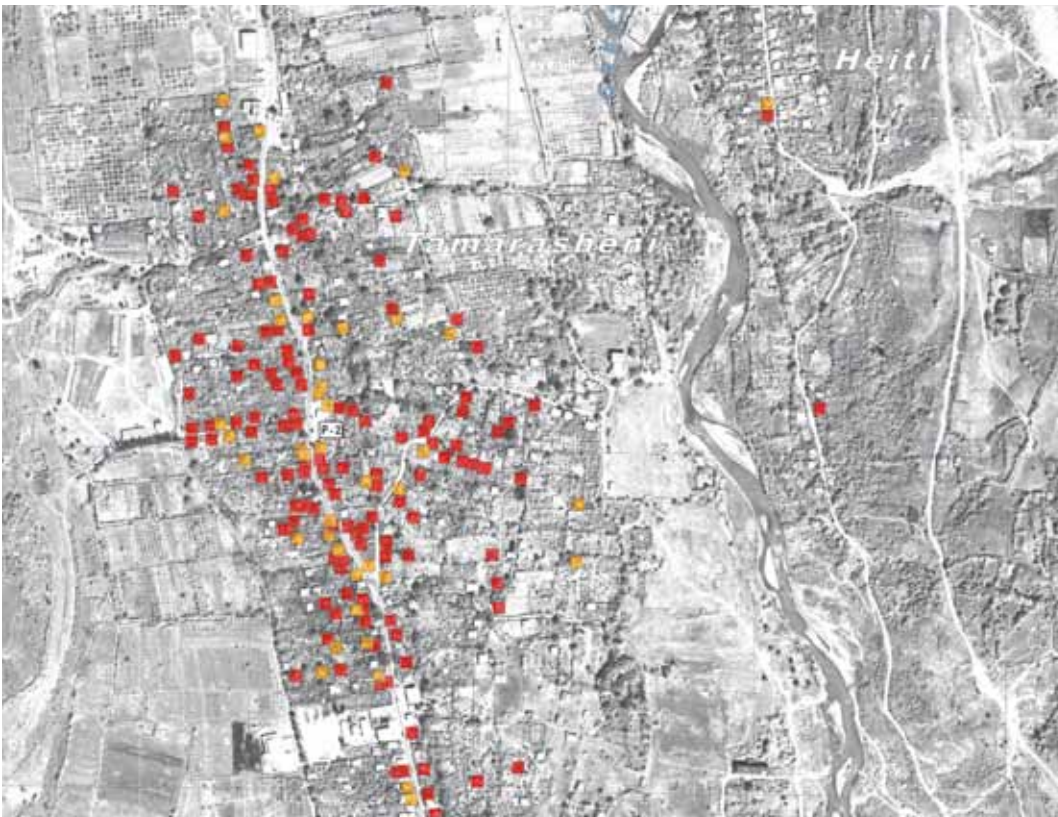
10 August 2008, Village Tamarasheni, Satellite image (Satellite 3)



The photo taken on 10 August 2008 clearly reveals that the village is not yet damaged

Source: High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and The Conflict in South Ossetia, Summary Report, October 9, 2008, AAAS, Science and Human Rights Program

19 August 2008, village Tamarasheni, Satellite image (Satellite 4)



The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August are already destroyed, the objects in yellow - severely damaged. In total 152 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

unharmful. Satellite images of 10 August do not display traces of extreme violence, massive bombardments, or any other serious military operation, there are no fires noticed. As the stories of witnesses later prove pillaging, torching, and destroying of the village started exactly on 11 August, 2008.

The second image was taken on 19 August. A detailed analysis of the satellite image clearly demonstrates that virtually everything is destroyed, a total of 152 objects. *“In the village of Tamarasheni, for example, 152 structures that were intact on 10 August seemed to have been damaged by 19 August.”*²⁷⁹ Since the examined item is a village, obviously the torched, destroyed, and bombarded objects are residential houses and buildings, constructions clearly belonging to the civilian infrastructure.

On 9 October, 2008 Amnesty International, relying on the very satellite imagery of Tamarasheni village, announced worldwide:

*“The village of Tamarasheni, for example, which was mostly inhabited by ethnic Georgians before the conflict, shows no damage at all on August 10. Nine days later, the analysis identified 152 damaged structures, a large proportion of the total number of structures in the village.”*²⁸⁰

UNOSAT material, a second source of satellite imagery, provides similar information. Pursuant to their data, there are 205 damaged objects in Tamarasheni. Witnesses state that the Georgian houses were up in flames until the end of September.

Statistics provide one more proven example of ethnic cleansing, persecution of Georgians, and the eradication of former Georgian households.

Under the data of the census conducted in 2002, 241 families lived in village Tamarasheni. According to the 1989 census data, which provides information on ethnic composition, Georgians comprised 63 percent of the population, while Ossetians comprised 35 percent. Following the conflict in the 90s, Tamarasheni

in fact remained within Georgian jurisdiction for the entire period, and the separatists viewed it as one of the major “Georgian enclaves”. Respectively,



Village Tamarasheni, August 2008

279 See, “AAAS Analysis of Satellite Images Finds Hundreds of Structures Damaged in South Ossetia Fighting”, 9 October 2008, at http://www.aaas.org/news/releases/2008/1009geospatial_georgia.shtml

280 See, “Amnesty International Satellite Images Reveal Damage to the South Ossetian Villages after Major Fighting Ended”, Amnesty International Press Release, October 9, 2008

one of the highest degrees of damage is chronicled in this village.

Assuming that 241 families are the number of Georgian households; 205 destroyed houses captured on 19 August on the UN satellite images, the statements of witnesses (including representatives of international organizations who had visited Tamarasheni already in September) about burning houses in September, as well as photo and video material in our possession, are all proof of the total destruction of Tamarasheni. Eduard Kokoity proudly stated the village was entirely ethnically cleansed of Georgians, and the trace of their existence wiped out.²⁸¹

As mentioned previously, we possess a videotape recorded in the village which follows a main village road and demonstrates clearly that none of the villages populated by Georgians survived on territory north and south of Tskhinvali. Most of the area was simply bulldozed.

Village inhabitant **Alexi Nasuashvili** and his wife **Eter Datashvili**²⁸² were in fact the last to leave Tamarasheni. Owing to grave illness, Alexi Nasuashvili could not move, therefore the elders stayed in the village, hoping to additionally save their life-time earnings. However, their hopes were not fulfilled as neither did they save their house nor help anyone else. They witnessed crimes, pillaging, and the massive arson of Georgian houses in their neighborhood.

81-year-old Eter Datashvili remembers that the Ossetians appeared in the village for the first time on 11 August after columns of Russian troops passed by. Forays into Georgian houses followed immediately. Various groups visited them for several days. First they searched for weapons, but then on 11 August approximately five Ossetians and Russians in uniforms approached them. With sick Alexi Nasuashvili in the house, they set the second floor on fire and left laughing.

*“One Ossetian guy was holding a bottle full of kerosene in one hand and matches in the other. The Russian asked me in Russian whether we were alone. I said yes, me and my sick husband. **Why did you stay, we should burn the house, and he rushed to the second floor. Two other Ossetians followed him. This Russian continued talking: go to Tskhinvali, they will feed you there. Another Russian stood by this Russian. Suddenly those Ossetians ran down the stairs, they were leaving the yard when one of them turned at the gate***



Burnt shop of “Elit Electronics” in Tamarasheni

281 See, Eduard Kokoity’s interview with Russian agency “Regnum” on 22 August 2008, “Georgian enclaves do not any longer exist in South Ossetia”, “Georgian enclaves in South Ossetia have been liquidated. Villages Kekhvi and Tamarasheni which were uncontrolled as a result of military operations, now have been totally destroyed”- the interview was reprinted by civil. ge on the same day, 22 August.

282 Interview with Alexi Nasuashvili and Eter Datashvili-Nasuashvili was recorded by GYLA, 5 December, 2008

and told me in Georgian: do not go upstairs or I will shoot you. I asked these Russians whether the house was on fire. They said no and left. I nevertheless rushed upstairs. They had lifted the blankets, spilled kerosene on mattresses, and the mattresses were on fire. I took a pillow and started putting out a fire. Then I ran to another room: moistened the cloth and put it on blazing places. I finally put out the fire. When I went outside on the balcony I saw that my neighbors' houses were already on fire. These were the houses of Ivane Nasuashvili, Ioseb Datashvili, Zezva Gagnidze, Samson Datashvili, Elza Elbakidze, Robinzon Datashvili. Heat, smoke, and soot choked me and my husband.

It was probably on 12 August when I saw from my balcony that the houses of my brother Guram Datashvili and nephew Gocha were burning. At the time Ossetians and Russians in military uniforms burned the houses. Sometimes I saw Ossetians without uniforms burning the houses also.

On 13 or 14 August I was interested in the fate of my son Merab Nasuashvili's house. I went out to my neighbor Samson Datashvili's house and saw from his garden that the houses of Merab, my nephew Alexander and neighbors the Gochashvilis' and Maisuradzes' were already in flames".

Another witness, **Ramaz Mindiashvili** left the village on 15 August. Along the way he was captured, but was released several hours later. "They had a lot to steal and that's probably why they didn't have time for us" the victim recalls.

"I watched how they started pillaging the Elit Electronics store. They took the consumer goods out and loaded it in the cars. They looted the neighboring drugstore as well. I saw how the public school in Tamarasheni was bombarded.

*Afterwards they started burning the houses. First they torched the house of **Davit Datashvili**, Head of Liakhvi Administration, and then the rest followed".²⁸³*

Ana Datashvili remembers that she stayed in Tamarasheni until 14 August. The 75-year-old woman did not intend to leave the village. After her house was burned down she was held in a Tskhinvali detention cell for 8 days before she was released.

"I stayed in the village until 14 August. I watched the houses being looted. First they drove away abandoned cars or tractors. Then they would enter the houses and take everything out. Finally they would burn the houses. They would shoot something, that sounded like a rocket, black smoke would go up and the house would start burning entirely.

283 Interview with Ramaz Mindiashvili was recorded by "21st Century", February 7, 2009

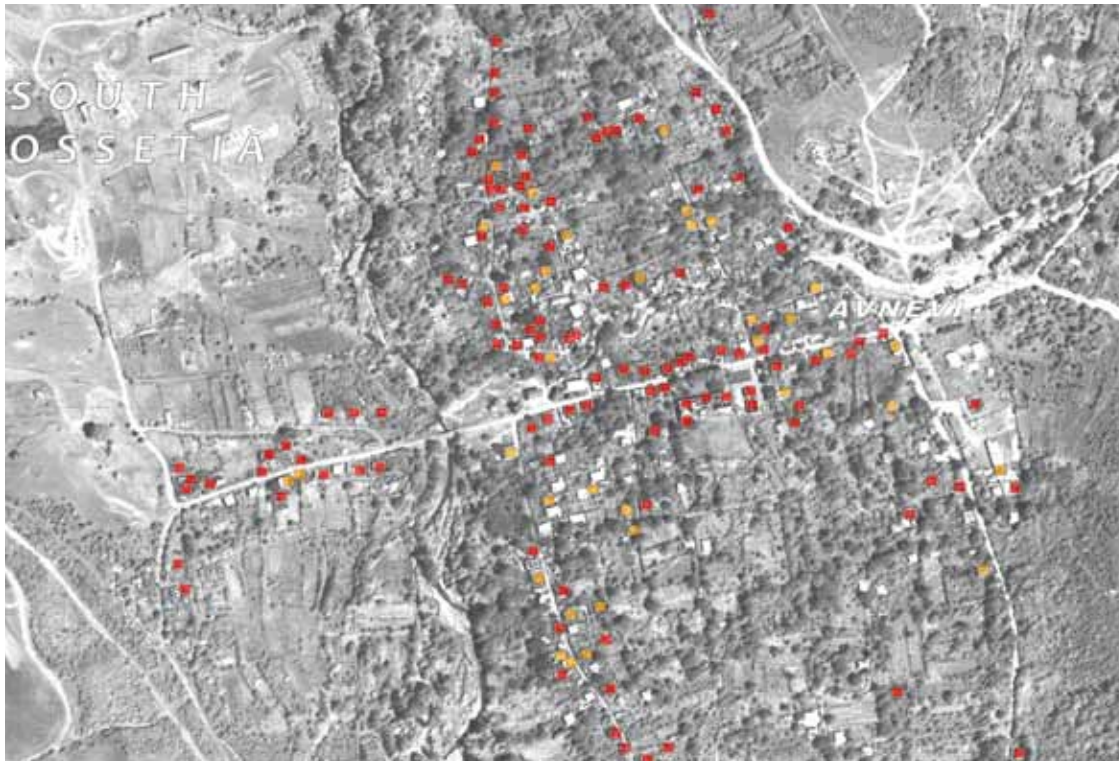
*Two armed Ossetians came on the 14th. They told me to leave the house and go with them. I refused. He went up to the second floor and started shooting inside. Then the flames went up and the house started burning. They forced me to leave”.*²⁸⁴

VILLAGES AVNEVI AND NULI

The story of the villages Avnevi and Nuli is another grave tragedy in the chronology of the August war. An inhabitant of Avnevi, ethnic Ossetian **Tanya Tasoeva-Durglishvili** remembers that *“on 13 August Kokoity drove by to have a look at the torched villages. My mother and he are cousins. He walked beside me and looked at me mockingly. He was pleased”.*²⁸⁵

Satellite images taken by UNOSAT on 19 August provide documentary evidence of the unprecedented demolition of villages. The images demonstrate clearly that damage was inflicted on virtually each residential house. Based on a preliminary analysis, the document shows that 153 buildings were damaged in the village Avnevi and 119 in the village Nuli.²⁸⁶ Unfortunately, we did not have access to imagery from a later period, which would factually verify the information on houses torched in September. It is also impossible

19 August, 2008, village Avnevi, Satellite image (Satellite 5)



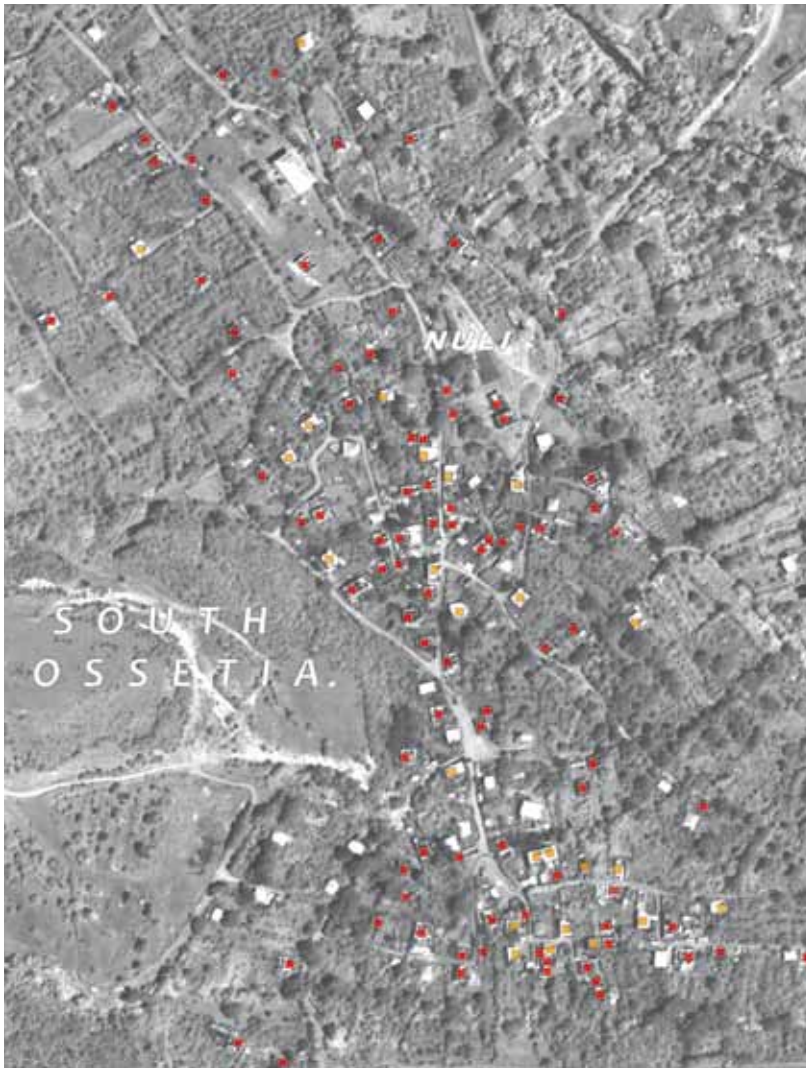
The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow - were severely damaged. In total 153 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with World-View-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

284 Interview with Ana Datashvili was recorded by the GYLA, on 5 January, 2009 in Tbilisi at the Kindergarten #149

285 Interview with Tanya Tasoeva was recorded by GYLA, 29 May, 2009, in Tbilisi

286 See, High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and the Conflict in South Ossetia, Summary report, October 9, 2008, American Association for the Advancement of Science and Human Rights Program

19 August 2008, village Nuli, Satellite image (Satellite 6)

The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow – were severely damaged. In total 119 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with World View-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

to visit the villages Avnevi and Nuli, since they are situated in the occupied territory and are closed to Georgian citizens.

Here one significant factor should be noted. Before August 2008 both villages were controlled by Georgian authorities and, accordingly, census was conducted there in 2002. According to the data of Statistics Department in 2002 there were 265 families in Avnevi and 124 – in Nuli. Relying on the information of satellite sources concerning damage, there was total destruction of Nuli and considerable destruction of Avnevi.

Two months after the war Ms. Tasoeva managed to enter her village and saw that the entire village was demolished – *“Around the middle of October 2008 I sneaked into Avnevi and saw the whole village was burnt down. Only 4 houses remained. There were still Zalina Bestaeva's and Ana Kokoeva's houses”*, she says.

Constantine Katselashvili

told us similar story of the village. He left Avnevi on the 1st of September:

*“The entire village was burned. I saw only torched and flaming houses. My house was burned while I was there. I stood in the yard and watched it burn. Then they killed my fellow villager **Shura Javakhishvili**, in front of his cousin Kalpeza Javakhishvili”.*

Tanya Tasoeva-Durglishvili lived in the village for more than 50 years and had extreme trouble leaving it. Though her husband and children are Georgian, she herself is Ossetian, which is why she knew almost everyone who entered the village and pillaged, and ravaged it. Thus she recalls in detail what she felt and saw over a month period. A group of marauders who came to her home reassured her at hearing her surname (i.e. her Ossetian origin): *“Don't be scared, stay here, we shall do you no harm”.*

Another group came up to her gate on 14 August.

“Ossetians came at midday. There were four of them by Jiguli. They got out of the car and entered the house. They had white armbands. Those Ossetians recognized me – I am an Ossetian from Muguti village. They also were from Muguti. One of them appeared to be my namesake. They told me to write the Ossetian surname on the door, it might save the house from being burnt”.

Nevertheless, her house did not escape arson. Ms. Tasoeva explained that “My son is Georgian and also a policeman, maybe that’s why they didn’t take into account that I am Ossetian and burnt the house anyway.” She recognized her son’s classmates among the marauders, who apparently knew what her son, Petre Durglishvili, was engaged in. Tanya Tasoeva recalls:

“An Ossetian boy in a Russian military uniform, a stained green one, began scolding me: where is your assassin boy.”

The fact that in the first days houses were destroyed on a selective basis is confirmed by other accounts and details. For instance, the same Tanya Tasoeva tells us that during the bombardment Ossetians were sitting next to Russian pilots in the plane showing them which houses had to be bombed.

“We saw an Ossetian from Znauri, Tibilov, sitting in the aircraft. Evidently he was showing which houses to bomb. There were two of them. The pilot was Russian as well as the aircraft. First they bombed my brother-in-law’s son’s house, who used to work in Znauri and knew Tibilov”.

The selective destruction of Georgian houses in the beginning was confirmed by another witness, **Gurgen Durglishvili**:

*“Ana Kokoeva’s house was not burnt because she is Kokoity’s relative. Zalina Bestaeva’s nephews are fighters, the whole village knows it. During the war in 2008 Ossetians had the headquarters in Zalina’s house”.*²⁸⁷

Those houses were still intact in October.

Many factors indicate that in the case of those two villages we see a purposeful policy of ethnic cleansing.

It is also confirmed by **OSCE-HRAM** mission that visited village Avnevi and described in its report:



Village Avnevi, August 2008

287 Interview with Gurgen Durglishvili was recorded by the GYLA 29 May, 2009, in Tbilisi



Village Nuli, August 2008

“Avnevi... is virtually all burnt down”.²⁸⁸

Tanya Tasoeva gives us full details of the story she witnessed and suffered from:

“On 9 August Russians and Ossetians entered Avnevi together. Groups of 5-6 persons would enter a house, they would first take the stuff out and load it in cars: there were silver Kamazs with open bodies and RAFs of khaki and cream colors. Then they would set the house on fire.

On the 14th, at 7 p.m., those three Ossetians came who shot Gurgen in the feet on 13 August. I stood by the gate when a cream-colored car “RAF” came. It was congested with furniture. I recognized them, they were our neighbor’s grandchildren - two brothers and their cousin. They were Pavle Kochiev’s grandchildren. One of the brothers suddenly hit Gurgen with the butt of a machine-gun in the head so hard that he fell. When he tried to strangle the fallen man, the other brother kicked him. The one who kicked him hit me with the butt on the shoulder as well.

Then they ran up to the second floor. They torched a blanket and started smashing things. While they were on the second floor Gurgen and I ran to the forest. From there we saw our house ablaze and how the roof had fallen. They looked for us in orchards, walked around shooting, and cursed us in Ossetian. They would have killed us if they had found us because we had recognized them.

Salome’s house was burned down on 9 August. I saw how they burned the houses of Salome Durglishvili, Hamlet Kapanadze, and Seiran Davitidze. Seiran Davitidze’s house was torched on 13 August by those who burned our house down”.

Inhabitants of Avnevi, as well as many other villages, talk mainly about pillaging and the cruelty of the Ossetians. However, what most of the escaping Georgians say about the armed forces of the Russian Federation should be taken into account also. **Gurgen Durglishvili’s** words may be regarded as an expression of their opinion:

“While Ossetians were looting and burning houses, Russians were standing by tanks in the middle of the village. Russian tanks were posted there during the time Ossetians were in the village. They used to take food and drinks while Ossetians were stealing stuff. They put chickens on the tanks, took

²⁸⁸ See, Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the conflict in Georgia”, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 43



Village Avnevi,
August 2008

vodka”.

Inhabitants of village **Nuli** recall similar stories.

In his talk about the village tragedy, Nuli resident, **Ramaz Tsertsvadze**, tried to explain the actions of the Ossetians he witnessed:

*“During the first war in 1990s Ossetians were upset about Nuli being Georgian village and now they managed to occupy it. We are no longer permitted to enter it”.*²⁸⁹

Iasha Toroshelidze is one more representative of a numerous army of IDPs from Prone Gorge. They not only burnt his household, but also beat violently an old man for bickering.

*“I don’t remember a date, but when the war broke out I was at home with my cattle. Approximately in a week the Ossetians came in with various big and small cars. They entered my yard and wanted to drive the cattle away. When I refused, they brutally beat me with weapon handles and told me to leave the village. They had been ordered to clean the village from Georgians. “Leave or Die” was the condition. Then they spilled gasoline on my house and burned it down. I left the village and went to Kareli together with my sister, who is 75-year-old”.*²⁹⁰

Ramaz Tsertsvadze’s house was also burnt down. He knows the names and surnames of the people who raided his village and enjoyed looting and torching the houses. According to the information by the inhabitants of Nuli, their majority was from the neighboring village Ubiati.

289 Interview with Ramaz Tsertsvadze was recorded by GYLA, 11 December, 2008, in the compact settlement center of refugees, Surami, building of former technical school

290 Interview with 75 years old Iasha Toroshelidze from Nuli village was recorded by the GYLA, in Gori 2nd kindergarten, 7 September, 2008

“After the arrival of the Russian soldiers, Ossetians from the neighboring Ossetian village Ubiati used to come, loot and torch houses. I know who those Ossetians are, since the village Ubiati is very close to Nuli. It is the first village to the north from Nuli and people know each other. The majority of the young men living in Ossetian villages were members of Ossetian military units, so called “Opolchenie”, for a number of years. They wore military uniforms, had guns and a quite high salary. They had “Rossia” written on the sleeves of their uniforms.”

Residents of village Nuli – **Glakho, Zina and Nina Chavchavadzes; Tinatin Qsovreli; Roman, Davit and Vazha Tkemaladzes; Ramaz, Zaza, Zurab and Valiko Tsertsvadzes** – relate severe accounts of mass bombardment, property destruction and insult.²⁹¹ Their houses were looted and torched, they were forced to leave their village under threat of death. As the inhabitants of Nuli say, there was nothing left but graves and memories in the village. These people all recount the same stories. They were all ousted and their houses were looted and then torched.

Later, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, **Thomas Hammarberg**, wrote in his report that

*“They all were compelled to flee”.*²⁹²

The **International Fact-Finding Mission** to the Conflict in Georgia, which also visited the conflict zone and had an opportunity to talk to the IDPs as well as to the population remaining in the villages, noted that:

*“Looting and burning of houses and property was the reason why Georgians from the villages surrounding Tskhinvali fled. Especially when it concerns persons who decided to stay despite the war, but then were compelled to flee”.*²⁹³

VILLAGE KEKHVI

80-year-old lady **Makvala Elbakidze** told us about the tragedy of the village Kekhvi.

“On 8 August one could hear from the morning the noise of helicopters; bombardments continued throughout the entire day. I saw blazing houses, how the villagers rushed into the houses trying to put out the fire. Many houses were torched due to these bombardments. From my house I saw the blazing houses of Kolia Kakhniashvili, Nodari

291 Interviews were recorded by the GYLA and “Article 42” after October, 2008. The cases of the residents of Nuli village Glakho, Zina and Nina Chavchavadzes, Tinatin Qsovreli, Roman, Davit and Vazha Tkemaladzes, Ramaz, Zurab and Valiko Tsertsvadzes have been sent to the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg

292 See, Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Human Rights in the Areas Affected by the south Ossetia Conflict, Special Mission to Georgia and Russian Federation, 22-29 August, 2008, CommDH(2008)22, 8 September 2008, para 31

293 See, Report of the International Fact-Finding mission on the conflict in Georgia, volume II, p. 392, September, 2009



Tsitsino Gagnidze –
“there were so many tanks they could cover the whole Georgia. The tanks were green with Russian flags on top”.

Kakhniashvili, Koba Kakhniashvili, Elijan Ghonghadze, and Laura Nebieridze.

Malkhaz Kakhniashvili also recalls that bombardment continued till the 12th of August:

“Shelling was carried out from both the mountain tops and by the jet, day and night. Bombing would start in the morning and then go on and on. They were bombarding from Java. Four helicopters and a fighter were flying low. Afterwards, the jets followed. The helicopter and jets had red stars on the wings. Both of them were a dark grass color.”

Malkhaz Kakhniashvili saw women killed by the bombing. “A shell fell on the Tsveriakho mountain and two women died, their husbands were my cousins Nodar and Mito Kakhniashvilis.”

Bombardment did not leave a family untouched. **Malkhaz Kakhniashvili’s** mother was also heart by the bomb dropped near the yard of their house. She died from bleeding same day.

“On the 11th I started digging the grave in the yard, but I had to run to the field for three times as the village was bombarded”, added Malkhaz Kakhniashvili.²⁹⁴

Nazi Beruashvili also told us about bombardments from the mountain tops.

“On the 6th the bombardment started from the tops of Tliakana, Tsveriakho, Kitsina, Zaldada, and Itrapisi (Ossetian villages towards

²⁹⁴ Interview with Malkhaz Kakhniashvili was recorded by GYLA, 4 July, 2009, in Tbilisi



Village Kekhvi, August 2008

North). It lit and demolished everything. On the 7th and 8th the bombs were dropping from the sky. There was massive screaming and we didn't look outside. A shell was dropped somewhere 100-150 meters away and the neighbors' windows were all broken. The bombardment lasted the whole day".

Another witness **Merab Kasradze** confirms intense bombardment in the first days as well. He escaped the bombs "flying from the air like hail" on 8 August.

"Bombs were dropped on 8 August through the whole night. It kept on permanently. Sometimes there was a 10 minute, half an hour, or sometimes one hour interval. It wasn't as massive in the night of the 7th. But, after 6 p.m. constant bombardment started again. It was as intense as it was the night of 7th. Several houses were damaged during the August 7th bombardment, including those of Robert Zangaladze and Goderdzi Bliadze".²⁹⁵

Tsitsino Gagnidze worked in the Kurta hospital as a nurse, and therefore she was constantly on the road taking care of the wounded. She left the village on 14 August and remembers clearly that intense bombardments lasted until 12 August. Then it subsided and land forces and Ossetians with and without uniforms entered the village. At this point Tsitsino was already hiding in the forest and watched the bombardment of not only Kekhvi, but the village Ditsi as well.

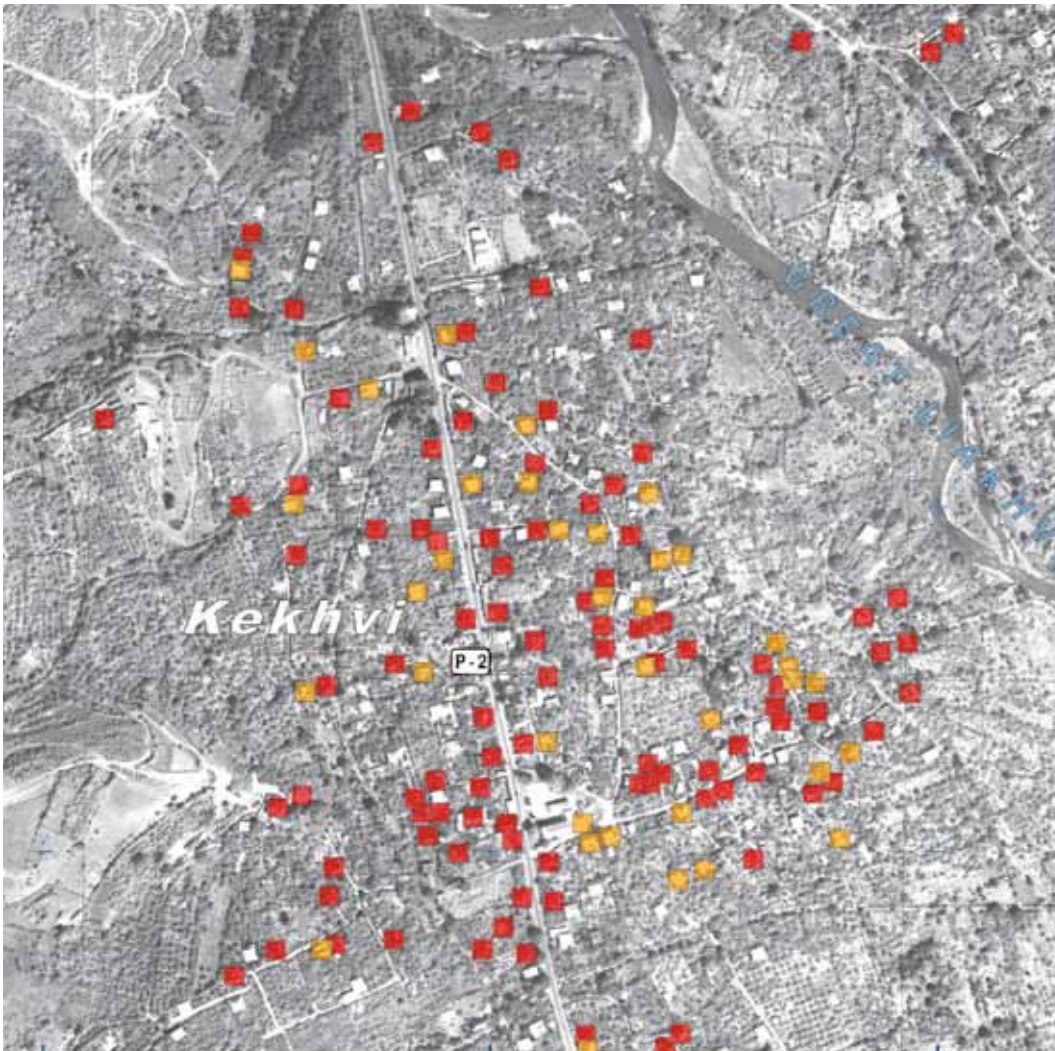
Makvala Elbakidze told us about the invasion of the Russian army in the evening of 9th of August:

"Tanks and the land forces came in. There were all kinds of people. Tanks were followed by Russians, and then people of other nationalities. Soldiers were all in uniforms, holding the machine guns. There were a lot of them. They went up and down the village".

Tsitsino Gagnidze was saying "there were so many tanks that they would have covered entire Georgia. They were of green color, flying Russian flags".

As witness accounts demonstrate, a large part of Kekhvi was probably destroyed during the bombardments. This may also explain the multitude of damage depicted on the 19 August satellite imagery. According

295 Interview with Merab Kasradze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on April 27, 2009

19 August 2008. Village Kekhvi, Satellite image (Satellite 7)

The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow – were severely damaged. In total 252 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with World View-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

to the satellite image taken on 19 August, 2008, 44 percent of the village buildings had been destroyed.

A majority of village inhabitants recall in interviews that looting and house torching started in the evening on 11 August.

Tsitsino Gagnidze

“In the evening on the 11th (I was hiding in Makvala Nebieridze’s garage) I saw that they were looting Nazi Beruashvili’s house. A small Kamaz (truck) was by the house. When I glanced again a while later, the house was on fire.

In the evening on the 12th I saw from the shed (my house is 50 meters away) that 6-7 persons entered the house. Kamaz stood on the roadside and they loaded things into it. When they finished I had a sigh of relief hoping they wouldn’t burn the house. I turned back and didn’t watch them leave. In 2 hours I looked outside and

it was already in flame”.

Makvala Elbakidze

*“We were in the neighbor’s house. When we went back, my child saw that smoke was coming out of our house. He was crying, horrified as his house was on fire. When I opened the house door, flames erupted, everything was burning inside. I still rushed in, hoping to save something. My left leg was burned while I was in the house”.*²⁹⁶

Davit Kasradze left the village on August 23. As he recalls, “at the time there were no more Georgians in the village except my wife and I”.

“On 14 August a tank came up from the Tskhinvali direction. It drove through my neighbor Gode Kakhniashvili’s house and brought down the roof. Then the tank left Gode’s house and crashed through Nodar Kakhniashvili’s house. It brought down that roof also. These houses are opposite my house and I saw everything perfectly from my balcony.

Two green tanks and two bulldozers were standing by the shop at the village entrance. I didn't see any inscription or flag on the tank. A shop and the houses around were all destroyed.

*On August 15 I went down to Merab’s house and saw soldiers standing by my brother’s house, approximately 10 men with white armbands. They stood by the house and watched my brother’s house burn. I walked by my other brother's house Valodia Kasradze, which was destroyed at the time but not torched yet. Merab’s house was burnt down on the 19th”.*²⁹⁷

Malkhaz Kakhniashvili watched the destruction of the village from 200-300 meters away.

“It was probably 12-13 August when a special vehicle was driven in from the Roki tunnel, with something like a bomber on it, which was shooting fire. They torched the entire village with it. I watched how they burned the village. Heavy machinery followed this vehicle (Russian soldiers and Ossetian gunmen). They first looted the houses and then torched them.

I saw how they robbed and burned the houses of Nugzar Kakhniashvili, Raman Kakhniashvili, Geshilo Meranashvili, Gia Zangaladze, and Goga Kakhniashvili”.

Red Cross brought **Juleta Maghaldadze** and her husband out on 19 August. They couldn’t flee from the village due to the spouse’s illness. She recalls “*I heard the noise of shooting and then the house was on fire”.*

“On August 12 when I got up I went over to my daughter's and her house

296 Interview with Makvala Elbakidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi in October 2008

297 Interview with Davit Kasradze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on April 29, 2009

was already burned. Second daughter (Mzia) lives there too. I picked up a stick and went on. Mzia's house was already burned as well.

Houses were blazing while I was there. My house wasn't torched yet. They burned it on September 5. My neighbor saw it. They torched everything".²⁹⁸

Human Rights Watch confirmed the burning of houses in Kekhvi on 12th of August, 2008.

"In the village of Kekhvi, many houses were set on fire between 6.30 p.m. and 7.30 p.m. on August 12 – they were ablaze as Human Rights Watch researchers moved along the road."²⁹⁹

Meri Karelshvili and her husband did not intend to leave the village. They did not want to leave their child's grave. When the bombardments started their house was under attack also. *"Bombs were coming from above and the mountain tops also. Something huge would blast, tearing up the trees".* Old men tried to escape from bombs and looked for safe places. They hid in gardens.

"Something hit our house. A wall was broken out in front. After a while we saw my house was on fire. We couldn't put out the fire, it totally burned."³⁰⁰

In August 2008 **Dali Bagalishvili** remained in her village but after numerous acts of looting, men came to burn her house.

"They came and began breaking doors and windows. I ran up to them in tears – 'my child is in the hospital, take pity on me, haven't you child or mother, don't you fear the God when committing this evil deed'. They hit me twice on my back with the handle of a machine-gun and left cursing".³⁰¹

Yet, the hardest days for Ms. Bagalishvili were still ahead. On the next day the second group of Ossetians took her prisoner and she found herself in Tskhinvali "concentration camp".

Her house was burnt to ashes.

298 Interview with Juleta Magaldadze was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, at the IDP residence, Cottage #21, September, 2008

299 See, "HRW: Georgian Villages in South Ossetia Burnt, Looted", August 12, 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/08/12/georgian-villages-south-ossetia-burnt-looted>

300 Interview with Meri Karelshvili was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, Kindergarten #17, in September 2008

301 Interview with Dali Bagalishvili was recorded GYLA on 14 August, 2009, in Gardabani, compact settlement of IDP

VILLAGE VANATI

“It was on 9th or 10th when my husband warned me “it’s time to leave” and we decided to go, but at this point the Russian and Ossetian troops had already entered the village. Approximately 13 tanks and 6 trucks full of Cossacks had entered. We ran to the forest and stayed there for 14 days, and from there we saw everything that happened in the village.

Thieves followed the army. The first group came in 4 cars: one Opel, one old and one new Russian military SUV, and one truck. They moved from house to house. They first shot into the houses and then started looting. They filled the truck. Then they would return with petrol and burn a house.”

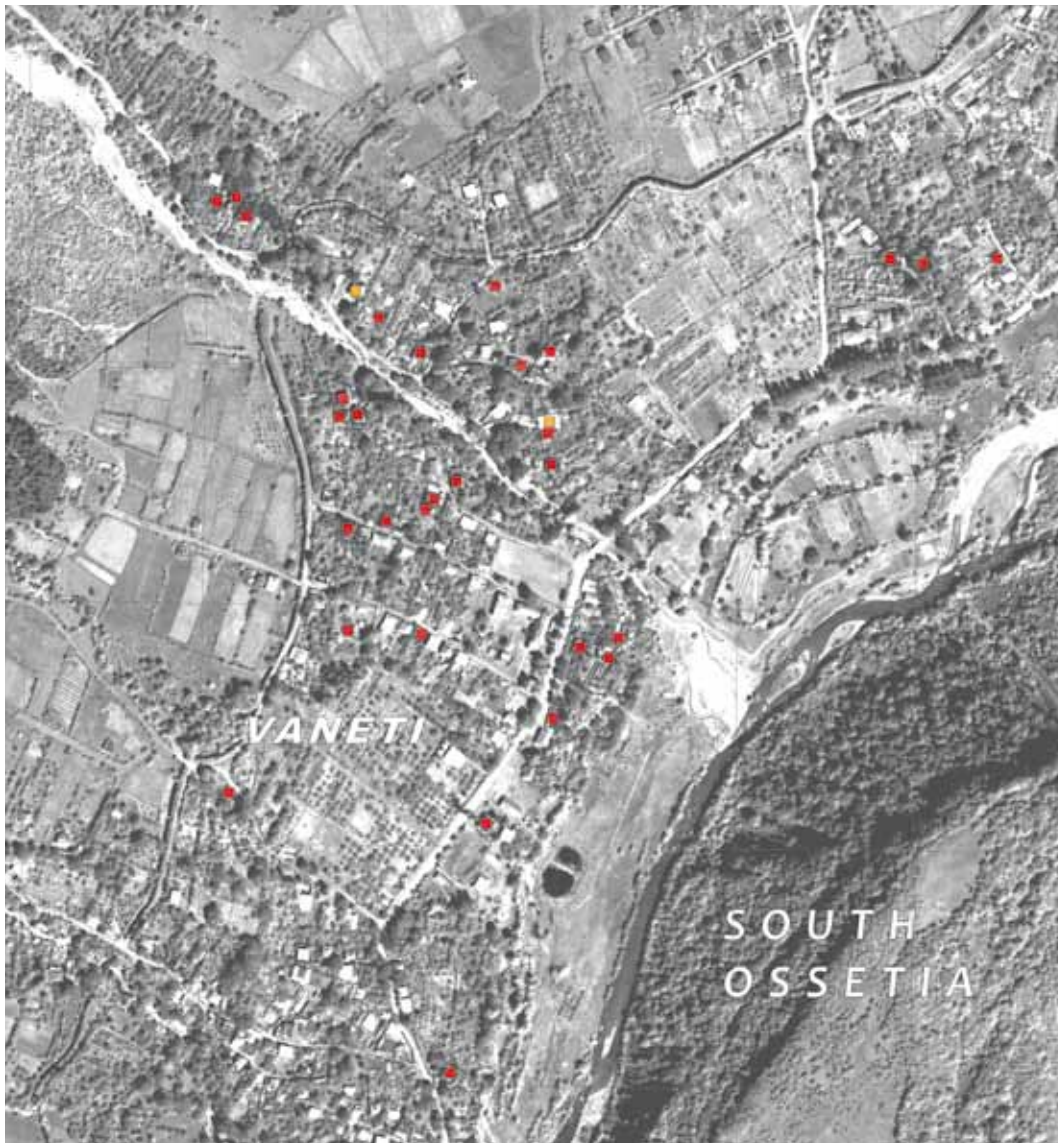
The same story was repeated every day.

“The first place they torched was the police building, followed by the village administration and the school. As a rule, looting would start at 1 p.m. and last until 8-9 p.m. They burned all pillaged houses in the same evening.

There were approximately 15 persons in the group. The first group would mainly take valuables, while smaller items were left for the second group. They gave the order to burn to various groups. However, as a rule, another group would carry out the torching. Only the houses of Ossetians were left unburned, which were garnished with special white strips.



Russian military vehicle in the burning Georgian village

19 August 2008, Village Vanati, Satellite image (Satellite 8)

The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August 2008 were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow – were severely damaged. In total 42 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with World-View-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Russian soldiers were at the entrance and exit of the village. During the looting and throughout the following days they would move in village territory. They couldn't care less about the robbers.

The only thing that the Russian soldiers would do is shooting in the direction of the forest, to threaten the village population hiding there.

*There were approximately 50 houses in our village Vanati. Our village, just like other Georgian villages on this road, along the Small Liakhvi River, **Satskheneti, Atsriskhevi, Gojani**, no longer exists. They were all turned to ashes”.*

The story of the village Vanati, which is not much different from the stories of other Georgian villages, was told to the researchers of Human Rights Center on 8 September, 2008 by a couple approximately 65 years of age, who found shelter in the IDP settlement at a Gori kindergarten #13. They

refused to disclose their names and surnames.

Tsiala Zakaroshvili, inhabitant of the same village recalls that the Georgian army did not enter her village, but Russians and Ossetians had come anyway and torched houses from approximately 9-10 August.

*“When I saw the fire for the first time, the council and police buildings were burning. Everything was burning down that line. My house is right at the entrance of Vanati, after you cross the bridge; it’s 150 meters away from Ramaz’s house. On the 11th I saw from my house a big truck (canvas covered) parked by Ramaz’s door. There were armed men in uniforms. The house was set on fire. On the 12th I watched my house being robbed. I was in the garden; a relative and I were hiding there. They were in uniforms. They robbed others’ houses also. They did not talk at all. They had something to shoot and that’s how they started fires. My house was torched around the 14th-15th”.*³⁰²

Ramaz Tsitsiloshvili was rather brief describing the tragedy of his village:

“Village is demolished. It is razed to the ground”.³⁰³

Stories told by village inhabitants are corroborated by the UNOSAT satellite images taken on August 19, 2008. Revealed by this source, 42 buildings were demolished. “Primary analysis demonstrate that a distinctive residential district is heavily damaged”.³⁰⁴

According to the 1989 census data, when the ethnic composition of villages was also registered, 59 percent of the village population was Georgian, and 40 percent Ossetian. Though, after the war in 90s, the ethnic balance in the villages controlled by Georgia altered, the minority Ossetian population still remained in some Georgian villages. It may be assumed that the 42 demolished buildings in the satellite image during the first phase of the conflict, coincide exactly with the Georgian populated area of the village.

302 304 Interview with Tsiala Zakaroshvili was recorded GYLA in February 2009 in Tbilisi, Military Hospital IDP shelter

303 Interview with Ramaz Tsitsiloshvili was recorded GYLA in February 2009 in Tbilisi, Military Hospital IDP shelter

304 306 See, Village Damage Summary: Vanati, South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1& Formosat -2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All, at www.unosat.org

VILLAGE KURTA



Destroyed village of Kurta. August 2008

A horrifying story of mass expulsion of Georgians and destruction of property also occurred in the village of Kurta. The interim administration set up by the Georgian authorities in 2006 was located in Kurta, thus inciting the Ossetians' aggression. Residents of the village had already experienced serious problems in 2007 when the Ossetians closed the road to Gori and for the rest of the year the village used a dirt by-pass road to connect with the rest of Georgia.

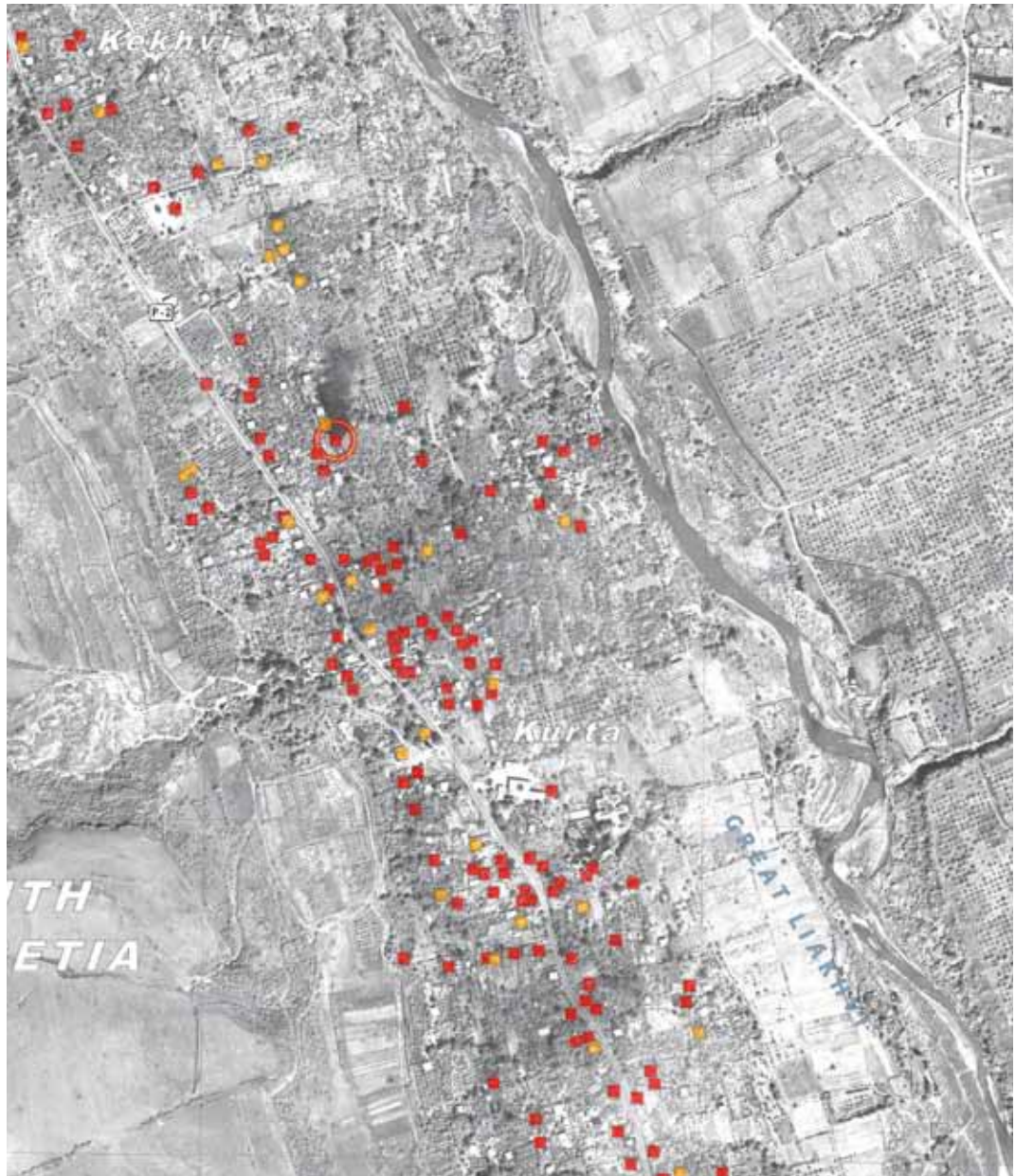
The bombardment of Kurta was described in the **OSCE/HRAM** report as well.

“Kurta, where the residence of Dimitry Sanakoev, the head of Interim administration of Tskhinvali region, was located, came under heavy bombardment. Especially the neighborhood surrounding Sanakoev’s residence suffered.”³⁰⁵

Givi Guchmazashvili, resident of the village recalls that Dimitry Sanakoev's residence was constantly shot at.

"The situation in Kurta was becoming tense throughout all of May to August. They were permanently shooting from Tskhinvali and other territories controlled by the Ossetians. During this period civilians were wounded. My neighbor Mevlud Chulukhadze was wounded when a column of cars moving on the by-pass road was shot at. The 3-4 August shooting made things more intense towards (villages) Avnevi-Nuli. Houses were destroyed in the villages and the

305 See, "Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia", OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 41

19 August 2008. Kurta village, satellite image (satellite 9)

The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August 2008 were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow – were severely damaged. In total 166 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

population started to leave".³⁰⁶

According to the satellite imagery, 166 buildings were destroyed in Kurta by 19 August, whereas pursuant to the 2002 census, a total of 269 families lived in the village. This means that more than half of the buildings no longer existed when active hostilities ended. On the same image of 19th August, active fire spots are still apparent, which is evidence to witness accounts. Like many other Georgian villages, the annihilation of Georgian households in Kurta was carried out to their total liquidation, further proof Mr. Kokoity was keeping his promise entirely.

Stories of our respondents revive the events developing from 6 August,

³⁰⁶ Interview with Givi Guchmazashvili was recorded by the GYLA in February 2009, in village Burbuki

2008 in village Kurta and describe the tragedy of this small and beautiful Georgian village.

Gocha Khetaguri told us that:

*"Bombardment continued until 9 August. **Bidzina Kochishvili** and **Ksenia Chibirova** died from the bombing".³⁰⁷*

At this point people were leaving the village massively. **Gocha Khetaguri** managed to bring 50 people out his car. **Guram Khachapuridze** recalls that shooting began on 6 August: *"Explosions and shooting were heard in the village"*, then he adds, *"such a situation often occurred in the Liakhvi Gorge, that's why we didn't pay much attention to it"*.³⁰⁸

Yet, witnesses tell us that shooting intensified on 7 August, and on 8 August jets appeared and shelling was accompanied by air raids. **Temur Kaulashvili** remembers well that Russians entered the village on 10 August.

"I stood in the street, at the corner of the district. The tanks appeared, many of them, with a lot of soldiers. Flags were flying on the tanks: blue, white and red. They shot from the tanks in all directions. Several groups of Ossetians followed also."

Omar Khutsinashvili also recalls:

"On 10 August at 4 a.m. Russian tanks came from Java and moved towards Tskhinvali. There were about 300 tanks and numerous land forces. The tanks (armored) were green with red stars. On 10 August the Russian army was followed by Ossetians. All Ossetians wore military uniforms and were armed. They came by vehicles, both trucks and Soviet cars. My house and garden was situated at the edge of the road and everything could be seen well from there. It differed between Russians and Ossetians. Russians mainly followed the military column, there were tanks as well as infantry, and they wore military uniforms. Ossetians moved in groups, their uniforms were like guardians' ones."³⁰⁹

Omar Khutsinashvili, who spent the first months of displacement in the military hospital of the Ministry of Defense, recalls the first hours of the Russian and Ossetian invasion.

"At 11-12 at night on the 10th I heard a rattling noise of a crack. I was on the second floor of my house. I saw Meri and Gusein (Guram)

307 We don't have additional information concerning Bidzina Kochashvili and Ksenia Chibirova, killed during the Kurta bombardment, that Gocha Khetaguri related. Ksenia Chibirova's death is also confirmed by Gusein Maisuradze, "we were still in Kurta, walking along the road, when we saw Ksenia Kochieva's torn dead body on the second floor of her house. She was seen from the road", though the exact circumstances of her death are unknown to us.

308 Interview with Guram Khachapuridze was recorded by the GYLA on 4 November 2009, in Gori, in Karaleti-Tsmindatskali settlement

309 Interview with Omar Khutsinashvili was recorded by GYLA, 4 November, 2009, in Tbilisi

Maisuradzes' house on fire. On the same night I saw the houses of my cousin -Avto Khetaguri and his son Gogita Khetaguri were burnt. Their houses were situated close to mine. Avto's house was 15 meters opposite mine and his son, Gogita's, was about 50 meters away."

Frightened, he ran and watched in hiding how the houses of his other relatives and neighbors – Gogita Khetaguri, Emzar Elbakidze, Gia Kochishvili, and Leri Jokhadze – were burned. He left on the 11th.

"When you come down from the top there is Eredvi. It was entirely destroyed" he states.

Temur Kaulashvili witnessed the burning of the houses.

"On the 11th I left the house and they were already burning them. Several people approached Gocha Khetaguri's house. I was hiding in the orchard. My house was about 100 meters from Gocha's. There were around 5-6 people, all of them armed, holding machine-guns. They entered the house and the flames went up after they'd left.

They left Gocha's house and went to the Geronti's. Geronti Jokhadze's house was a bit closer to mine. 5-6 men in military uniforms entered Geronti's house. In 5 minutes Geronti's house was ablaze".



Tariel Basishvili, village Kurta, September 2008

Guram Khachapuridze returned to Kurta on 12 September 2008 with the help of Russian soldiers. They looked his friend Joni Basishvili's father, Tariel. **Tariel Basishvili** stayed in the village during the war and there was no information about him.

Before entering Kurta they had to pass by Big Liakhvi villages.

"We passed by Big Liakhvi villages – Tamarasheni, Kvemo and Zemo Achabeti. The villages were abandoned and houses burnt. In Kurta village I saw all the houses were burnt. Only two houses remained in Kurta – Moris Basishvili's and Vale Zoziashvili's. They were near the church and I thought that was the reason they had not been burnt. All other houses were burned down. As far as I know, later those houses were also burnt. Ossetians made Vale Zoziashvili's mother, who was still in the village, set the house to fire with her own hands and then sent her away. My house was also burnt in my district".

Joni Basishvili re-entered the village the first time on 18 August.

"Then I saw Nodar's house. It's in the entrance of the village. I entered personally to check it out. It was blazing. One or two houses were hit by bombs as far as I know and the rest were torched because the walls were still standing and I guessed from there".³¹⁰

Gusein Maisuradze worked as a Deputy Minister of Economic Development in the South Ossetian Administration. He left the village on August 10.

"We went up to the forest on the mountain and my house was burned, I saw the houses of Avto Khetaguri and Emzari Elbakidze. I watched this from Tsveriakho. Everything was seen perfectly: Tamarasheni was in flames, as well as Kekhvi. All remaining houses were ablaze in the Elbakidze district. All of them were in flames".³¹¹

VILLAGE BELOTI

"After the outbreak of the war the Ossetians used to come to our village everyday and take anything that had any value. In my neighborhood alone, they took 200 cows and many pigs. They totally burned the house of 60 families".

The story of destruction and expulsion was remembered by 75-year-old **Nadia Terashvili**, who lives in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camp in Gori.³¹² Ms. Terashvili is Ossetian and which is why she stayed in the village until 8 September. She saw a how they torched her daughter's, Ira Terashvili's house. **Irina Terashvili** was a public official in Beloti and therefore she was a target for murder.

310 Interview with Joni Basishvili was recorded by GYLA, 4 November, 2009, in Gori

311 Interview with Gusein (Guram) Maisuradze was recorded by GYLA, 8 August, 2009, in Tbilisi

312 Interview with Nadia Terashvili was recorded by HRC on 9 September, 2008, in Gori



Bombarded house, village Beloti, September 2008

"I was hiding in the forest until 28 August, 2008. For ten days, half-starved I was lying on the ground motionless, watching my house get ransacked".³¹³

Ms. Nadia Terashvili spotted the leaders of the Beloti robbers, who she says were from the Ossetian village Elturna - the Siukhaev brothers, about 30-40 years old. "They were the ones controlling everything in our region", she says.

Vaso Archvadze, of Beloti, tells the same story and confirms Nadia Terashvili suspicion of the identification of the Ossetian para-militaries:

"One Ossetian started walking around the houses. He warned us to leave or they would torch us all. He was from Ertula, named Robe. He was wearing a guard's uniform, a kind of green uniform that the militia wear. I was acquainted with this Robe, he was our neighbor and used to come over. He was from Ertula, about two to three kilometers from Beloti.

My wife and I lived in a new house. It was a two-story house, with a yard of 800-900 sq.m. in front.

I had up to 5,000 sq.m. of land separately, where I grew corn, beans, grapes and fruit, apples. We all earned our living from the gardens. We used to take the goods to Tskhinvali and sell there. In our house we had furniture, kitchenware, 700 liters of wine, 90 liters of vodka. Gar-

den harvests of potatoes, beans, corn. We kept everything there and couldn't take anything with us. We had 10 pieces of cattle, 10 goats and sheep, 5 pigs with their piglets.

Our grandchildren told us that our house was torched. They saw the house burning but couldn't put the fire out because there was no water around".³¹⁴

Other Beloti inhabitants recall duplicate tales. Two elders, Nodari Demetrashvili and his Ossetian wife, Zhenia Demetrashvili, were interviewed in Shavshvebi village by GYLA, and provide further clarity on the tragedy.

Nodari:

"On the first day they set 5 houses on fire.

313 Interview with Irina Terashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, in the publishing house "Samshoblo", 14 Kostava st..

314 Interview with Vaso Archvadze was recorded by the GYLA on February 7, 2009 in Gori, kindergarten #5

When they came the first time they threw a hand grenade in our house and destroyed the front corridor entirely. We continued to live there for another month to save the house. They kept coming, saying they were still going to torch this house and that no Georgian should be staying there. They said if elders remained, then the young would come back, and that's why we had to leave. Our cattle were driven out entirely while we were there."

Zhenia:

"When we saw Ossetians, neighbors would run to the forest. I am Ossetian and I stayed home. When they'd enter my house I'd speak to them in Ossetian. I stayed in the house so that they wouldn't torch it. I'd sit in the yard and wait for them to appear.

Then others came. They say they had received the order to burn the entire village and that we had to leave.

Some Ossetian soldiers took care of Ossetian women remaining in the village. Once they told us to tie white bands on our arms so that no one would shoot us. Once they told me even to hang a white bed-sheet on the house.

A lot of houses were torched while we were there, and we watched the houses blaze. We tried to save our house but in vain. We could not reap the harvest at all, and pigs, hens, and cattle remained there."

Nodari:

"They burned my brother Giorgi's house on 20 August. I watched it smoke from nearby. We couldn't try to put the fire out because we were afraid of being killed. On the next day the house was completely torched. Numerous cars would come everyday, they emptied the houses and then set them on fire."

Zhenia:

"Ossetians would come everyday, lots of them by cars. They greeted us in Russian when they met me, but I would reply in Ossetian so that they would know I was Ossetian.

On 7 September Red Cross moved us out. The village was already entirely torched. We learned after we left that our house had been burnt down as well".

Other residents of the village recall virtually the same accounts. **Jemali Rtveladze** and his spouse **Zinaida Sabanova**, who were interviewed in an IDP shelter in Shavshvebi by GYLA, recollect the same details of that village's tragedy. They recall how Ossetians threatened to kill everyone who refused to leave the village and that it had been decided to burn down every house. Ossetians in the village were supposed to tie white ribbons to their clothes and houses for protection. People hid in the forest and from there watched the marauders' activities. "When they came to us, they set the houses on fire

straight away, first Gurami Chipchiuri's house, then Gogia Pisadze's house, and then ours", the elders recall.

"Ossetians came everyday in groups, emptying the houses, and then setting them on fire. There were 4-5 persons in each group. They wore military uniforms and were armed. Some of them even had masks on their faces; the majority of them were from neighboring villages.

One day we watched Robinzon Demetrashvili's house burn, it was probably the 23 August.

The village was almost entirely torched before we left. We watched from the forest how they emptied the houses and then set them on fire. Fire would flare up suddenly, they would throw something in, and then fire would burst".³¹⁵

VILLAGE DISEVI

Inhabitants of Disevi, who now live in the Gori IDP camp, also tell stories of raids, looting, cruel treatment, and killings.³¹⁶

"On 9 August the Russian army entered our village on numerous tanks and opened up military check points. Representatives of Ossetian paramilitary units followed them and started looting and burning the houses. They pillaged the entire village.

They used to come almost every day. As far as I know, only 20-25 houses out of 300 in our village survived torching. They burned 3 more houses even yesterday (meaning 10 September).

Ossetians first entered in the evening of 9 August. Approximately 20 Ossetians were roaming yard to yard. For the first two days they didn't steal anything, just burned houses one after another. For instance, my house wasn't looted, it was torched straight away.

But, three days ago the Ossetians returned to my garden, collected 150 boxes of peaches and took them away.

*My house is located within 200-300 meters from the Russian military check point and of course they saw everything, but they allowed marauders to do anything. They burned down the house near the military check point themselves. They controlled nothing. **Only now, after 90-95 percent of houses were torched, they started patrolling".³¹⁷***

315 Interviews with Jemal Rtveladze and Zinaida Sabanova were recorded by the GYLA on February 8, 2009 in Gori

316 In the fall of 2009 we were not allowed in Disevi. Disevi is interesting in this respect. One year ago our researchers interviewed people in the village, took pictures and documented conditions. Now the border has shifted and no Georgians are allowed on the Russian controlled territory. However, Disevi is officially outside occupied territory and is considered to be under Georgian control.

317 Interview with the inhabitant of Disevi, 51 year old Vakha Okropiridze was recorded by HRC, 11 September, 2008

Valiko Khelashvili, another resident of the same village who did not leave, and who is presumably the only Georgian in the village, recalls:

"I built my house with my own hands in 20 years. I never left the village even for a day and watched how the entire village was torched. I don't remember figures and I don't care about the calendar.

One day Chechen soldiers came. They were murdering people in the village. They killed one old man and cruelly beat a man around fifty years-old. They poured gasoline on his clothes and set them on fire. He had a heart attack and passed away.

Nato Okropiridze was burned in her own house. Her husband watched it happen.

Houses were torched every day, or rather every night. There was shooting every night. My house is rather distanced from the village and people would come to me, seek shelter, tell me stories about the village, their murdered relatives, and torched houses.

By my calculations there should only be 4 houses in the village that weren't touched".³¹⁸

Recorded interviews of the displaced inhabitants reveal the horrifying events which took place in Disevi. **Otar Razmadze** recalls how Nato Okropiridze was burned by men in uniforms and with white bands.

"On 13 August, shots were heard. He saw a man running towards the forest, and his house was being burned down.

When he returned to his torched house he found the burnt corpse of his wife. She was entirely burnt. Suliko Okropiridze, another neighbor and I helped him bury her in their yard".

Otar Razmadze was one of the most capable family heads in the village. He had 4 houses, 2 Belarus tractors, three small tractors, a Kamaz, and two ZILs in the village. They additionally owned 6 buffalo, 2 cows, a lot of poultry, 4 trucks



Burnt resident house, village Disevi, August 2008

³¹⁸ Interview with 52 year old Valiko Khelashvili was recorded by HRC in Disevi, 20 October, 2008

Representatives of Ossetian paramilitaries while looting Georgian village, 2008



of firewood, and 2,500 wooden boxes for storing apples and fruits.

"On 12 August, when the Russians and Ossetians entered the village, they knew I was rich and came straight for me. We ran away. They burned my houses down and drove the equipment away. The next day they returned and torched the fourth house. Then they robbed my orchard and burned the yard and house. They cruelly beat my wife and her 98-year-old mother and threatened to kill me".³¹⁹

Shota Okropiridze, another resident of Disevi recalls the torching his and other neighbors' houses.

"In the afternoon on 12 August Russian tanks entered the village. Tanks had flags on them with red and white stripes. I was hiding in the forest and watching from there. I don't know whether Ossetians were with Russians or not. My house is near the forest. I was a kilometer and half away from the house. From the forest I saw that red Ikarus-type bus stopped by the door of my house. 8 armed men in uniforms entered the yard. They wore the same uniform, green and parti-colored. Two among those wore white bands on their arms. These two brought items out of the house and then burned the house.

There was a milk processing factory near my house and the rest took everything out of there."

Witness Shota Okropiridze, also remarked that he watched from the forest how the same people looted and torched his neighbors' houses - Shalva Okropiridze, Gela Tukhareli, Simona Okropiridze, Malkhazi Okropiridze, Elioza Okropiridze, Hamleti Okropiridze, Koba Begheluri and Elguja Okropiridze.

Otar Okropiridze left the village mid September. "Before that, I was

³¹⁹ Interview with Otar Razmadze was recorded by HRC in village Mereti, 20 October, 2008

hiding in the forest next to the village and ate whatever I found there". He was home when the looters came and made him watch the pillaging and destruction of his house under the threat of guns. That's why he can identify the looters:

"Ossetian groups, headed by the Gobozovs, were going around. They burnt my house on 14 August. 5-6 men surrounded me. They set my house on fire. They were burning my house in front of my eyes and I could do nothing. They pointed machine-guns at my stomach and ordered me not to move. They said that territory was theirs, not ours, and that they could do whatever they'd like. And that we all should have left.

Having burned everything, they then took whatever was left with them to their village. They even dissembled the gates and took them. I had 5 cows and 2 bulls and they drove them away. I watched how they looted the village".³²⁰



Representatives of Ossetian paramilitaries in a resident house, village Disevi, September 2008

³²² Interview with Otar Okropiridze was recorded by HRC in Gori, on 18 December, 2008

VILLAGE ATSRISKHEVI

Unsurprisingly, Atsriskhevi eye-witness accounts follow the same pattern. When green helicopters with red Soviet stars appeared above the village in the morning of August 9 it was no mystery to anyone that the Russians had invaded. They flew very low and reconnoitered the surroundings, occasionally dropping bombs. **Asiat Bichenov** recalls:

*“When the helicopters entered deep into the gorge towards Tsipori, I heard several powerful blasts. There were about three helicopters. I was hiding in the ‘tone’ (Georgian bakery). Helicopters turned around and almost touched the roof of our house. First one and then the second. Then the third one flew by and bombed the Zonkari reservoir. Our village is on the heights and things can be seen well”.*³²¹

Russian soldiers followed the helicopters, together with armed Ossetians wearing greenish uniforms. Ossetians wore armbands. The events that followed mirrored the same tragedies of other Georgian villages: intimidation, shooting, persecution, pillaging, stealing cattle and poultry, and torching homes.

Atsriskhevi resident, **Gocha Askilashvili**, recalls:

“Being 100 meters away from the village, we saw well how the Ossetians drove my car out of my house, as well as my friend Valeri Gelashvili’s two cars - a, “NIVA” and “VILIS”, and Givi Askilashvili’s “UAZ”. On the same day on August 11 they burned my house. We were standing there watching my house smoke. At this time Vepkhia Askilashvili’s house was on fire as well.

*They escorted my mother, father, and my brother out of the house and made them watch everything from the yard. They hit my father several times and insulted him too. My family members were there also when they burned my neighbor Givi Askilashvili’s house”.*³²²

Marauders stole and destroyed everything – residential areas, orchards, equipment, and consumer items, everything that could have been bought and sold. **Gocha Askilashvili** also recalls how they stole his bees:

“I glanced over our village from the mountain ridge and I saw a “Gazel” parked by my hives and 3 people putting bees in it. It was evening time, we watched them for a while, we had no weapons to go down there with, plus we were hungry and exhausted”.



Helicopter of Russian armed forces with the soviet symbolic over the Georgian villages, August 2008

321 Interview with Asiat Bichenov was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, hotel “Kolkheti”

322 Interview with Gocha Askilashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, at the hotel “Kolkheti”.

Looting and torching accompanied the insults and intimidation of Georgians. Most of the witnesses avoided talking about insults and degrading treatment. However, one villager, **Ilia Askilashvili**, stated during the interview how Russian and Ossetian military treated him:

“They stood me up and shot bullets in front of me. There was pig slush in front of my house. They made me lie in it. They kept shooting into the slush. Then one of them told me in Georgian I would die and they didn’t care about it.”³²³

Another inhabitant of the village, **Jemal Vazagashvili**, went through the same story. He remembers that he met Russians and Ossetians at the center after they had entered the village.

“At this point he shot his machine-gun at my feet. Splinters hit me in legs and stomach. I started bleeding and I wanted to look down to check but he didn’t give me a chance to. He took me away to the forest. They set one house on fire immediately.

They were looking for women.

A second house was already on fire when we came back. They sat me down nearby, 15-20 meters away. They collected 6 cars from the village. One of them shot a gun in my direction. There were 2 pigs in front of me and they killed one.

Afterwards they left, setting another 3 houses on fire. I went up over the mountains and looked down at my house. It still stood but was blazing. It was twenty minutes to three when they set it on fire and in an hour it was burnt down”.³²⁴



Bombarded village Atsriskhevi, August 2008

323 Interview with Ilia Askilashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, at the hotel “Kolkheti”.

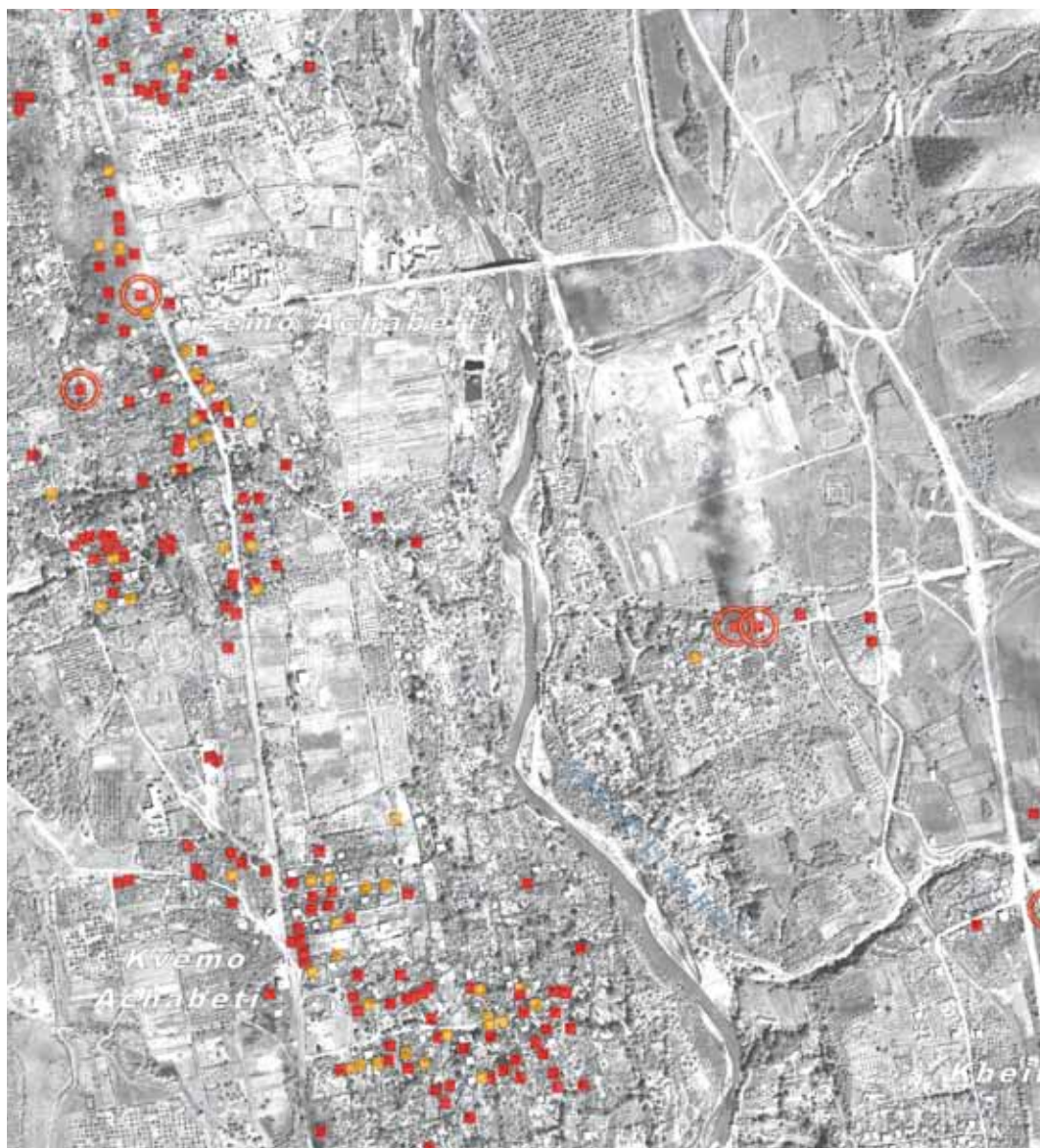
324 Interview with Jemal Vazagashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, at the hotel “Kolkheti”.

ZEMO AND KVEMO ACHABETI

Both Georgian villages Zemo and Kvemo Achabeti were turned into debris after the 2008 August war. Achabeti was first destroyed by bombs, then burnt down and finally, according to witnesses, razed to the ground by special equipment.

UNOSAT satellite imagery presents a grave and brutal picture of the damage inflicted on Zemo and Kvemo Achabeti. Images taken on 19 August clearly demonstrate not only the damage inflicted on these villages, but also the fact that on 19 August, i.e. after hostilities stopped and the cease-fire was signed houses were still on fire. There are 5 places highlighted on the image as active fire spots, which corroborate witnesses' accounts that houses continued to be torched long after the formal end of the war.

19 August, 2008. Village Zemo and Kvemo Achabeti, satellite image (satellite 10)



The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August, 2008 were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow - were severely damaged. Fire spots are highlighted in red. In total 199 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Initial analysis of UNOSAT indicates that the imagery clearly demonstrates that 199 buildings are entirely or partially destroyed. Torching of houses still continued after 19 August, 2008.

2002 data indicates, there were 175 families registered in Kvemo Achabeti, and 160 families in Zemo Achabeti. A substantial part of the population was Georgian. These statistics prove that by 19 August a majority of the houses were already destroyed. Almost one month after taking these images, representatives of the human rights organization “Memorial” stated that village Achabeti, along with other Georgian villages, was entirely torched.³²⁵ There are several photos and videos accessible on-line documenting the total demolition of Achabeti.³²⁶

Resident of Zemo Achabeti, **Alexi Chlaidze**, told us amazed, “*Georgian troops have not entered our territory at all*”, that’s why he was so astonished by the activity of Russians and Ossetians in the village. Mr. Alexi Chlaidze, same as the other residents of Achabeti emphasized that Russians took part together with Ossetians in looting and torching of their villages.

VILLAGE ZEMO ACHABETI

Events in Zemo Achabeti started taking place earlier than in many other Georgian villages. **Ilia Chulukhadze** witnessed a lots of brutality, and finally went through captivity as well. He told his story to our researchers in great detail. Other residents of the same village have later confirmed his story.³²⁷ He recalls that “*there was the Georgian army and the police in the village, but when the Russians invaded on 7 August, there was neither army nor the police*”. Russian soldiers raided his family for the first time on the very 7th of August, at half past six in the evening. They also searched for the weapons and the soldiers. Mr. Ilia Chulukhadze confirms that they were only Russians who entered his house.

“They put weapons to my mouth and urged me to tell them where were our weapons. They battered everything there. They were Russians, wearing uniforms of greenish color. Their look and manner of talk gave them away as Russians. I speak a bit of Russian. They told me they wouldn't have killed me, but the Ossetians were following and they might have had killed us”.

Ilia Chulukhadze also talks about how the Russian army entered the village

325 See, Special press-release by the Memorial HRC: “A Month after the War, Violations of Human Rights and Norms of Humanitarian Law in the Conflict Zone in South Ossetia”, September 11, 2008

326 See videos at http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=277990; also at, http://www.myvideo.ge/?video_id=338027

327 Ilia Chulukhadze’s evidence coincides with Zemo Achabeti resident Neli Mchedlidze story, whose house was also burnt and who had been kept prisoner in Tskhinvali. There are ;pts of similarities with his neighbor Givi Chulukhadze. The same is confirmed by Besik Maisuradze, a resident of the village, who left the village on 8 August together with Georgian troops and the police. Zeinab Basishvili also recalls that Russian troops invaded the village on 8 August. She confirms that Georgian troops were no longer in the village on 8 August.



Bulldozed village Zemo Achabeti, September 2008

"There were all kinds of jets, helicopters, tanks: all flying Russian flags. They had all kinds of weaponry. I thought they wouldn't fit it all on Georgian territory. I saw that from my yard. Part of the column, 2-3 tanks, stopped by the bridge at the corner, others drove towards Tskhinvali. They drove continuously day and night, followed above by the jets. Jets and helicopters flew at the height of houses bombing".³²⁸

Many houses were damaged during these very air bombardments. Bombing were carried out constantly.

A resident of the village, **Besik Maisuradze**, stated his reasons for leaving the village:

"On 9 August Achabeti was bombarded once again from the air. At around noon on 9 August my neighbor and I were standing by the cellar door in my house, when something hit the house and my neighbor and I broke the cellar door under pressure and ran inside. The roof was off the house entirely. The windows were broken".

After that Besik Maisuradze left the village.

Mamuka Maisuradze also told us that on the 9th, at around 1 p.m. he entered the village to get his parents out, and saw the destroyed village:

A bomb landed on Zura Maisuradze's house (30 meters away from my house). Babutsidze's house is also about 50 meters away and a bomb landed on it too, and also Giorgi Khetaguri's house. Two other bombs were dropped in the orchard, about 50 meters from my house.

I went to Gori on a by-pass road. From that road I saw how Khviti, Achabeti, and other villages - Dzartsemi, Kurta, Kekhvi were bombed. These were bombed

from the mountains, not the air attack."³²⁹

Whatever was left undamaged from the bombs was torched purposefully, one after another.

Bagrat Khaladze spent the night of August 10 on top of the stairs.

"They came to my door - 7 Ossetians, and told me in Georgian to free

328 Interview with Ilia Chulukhadze was recorded by GYLA, 8 April, 2009, Tamarashvili st.9, Tbilisi

329 Interview with Mamuka Maisuradze was recorded by GYLA, 17 April, 2009, in Tbilisi

the cattle with my own hands. They slaughtered a calf on the spot, in the afternoon they returned back and took everything out of the house, put in the car. At 5 p.m. they returned, sat me by the water tap and told me to watch my house burn. 7 guys with machine-guns stood at my head. I can recognize all of them if I see them. They entered the house and set some wire on fire. First the beds flared up and then they were totally burnt. I was there until the end, watching".³³⁰

On the same day Bagrat Khaladze and several of his neighbors were arrested and detained in the Tskhinvali prison until 23rd of August.

Zeinab Basishvili recalls that on 13 August Besik Maisuradze's house was burned down as well.

"On 13 August they burned Besik Maisuradze's house. A bomb landed on it before it was burned. There were 3 Ossetian guys up to 22 years old. They wore torn civil clothes. I didn't see guns in their hands. They entered the house and took something out and put in a big car. I saw them holding a 5 liter gas can in their hands. I approached them and told them in Ossetian: please do not burn the house. They replied in Ossetian: get lost if you don't want to be burned yourself.

They first poured the gas on the first floor, and then set the second floor ablaze. They wouldn't leave the yard until the fire had become really strong. They stood there watching.

This is how they torched the houses of Givi Guchmazashvili, Nugzari Otinashvili, and Zviad Karkusovi. This is what I've seen personally".³³¹

Ilia Chulukhadze recounts how on 8 August they already started walking around in groups. During the day various people would enter the Georgian houses several times, searching for weapons.

Various groups came 5 times a day. I asked one of them: "Aren't you Russian?" He told me he was Chechen. They beat me brutally because I didn't have a gun. They wandered in mixed groups: there



Burnt village Zemo Achabeti, August 2008

³³⁰ Interview with Bagrat Khaladze was recorded by GYLA on October 28, 2008 in Tbilisi

³³¹ Interview with Zeinab Basishvili was recorded by GYLA in Tbilisi

were Russians as well as Ossetians. They spoke in Russian, Ossetian, and some of them even in Georgian. They had weapons, wore similar uniforms of greenish and earth color. They differed from each other by appearance and accent. One Ossetian told me we should have all died and that not even one Georgian was worth living.

*Two or three times they beat me so badly that I lost consciousness. Only the Ossetians beat me, not the Russians. **Russians stood by and watched.***

On 9 August, Ossetians began the mass torching of houses in the village. They would take whatever they liked and then burn the houses down. They would pour gas out and then light it with matches. I saw how they burned my neighbor Nodar Chulukhadze's house. They entered his house, poured the gas and torched it.

Then they burned Tristan Chulukhadze's house. First they took everything out and then burned it. They drove two big cows and a pig away.

They didn't leave even one house. Russians saw our houses burn, some of them even took pictures. We later saw the picture of our burned house online.

Something like a subdivision burned the houses. They drove a car full of gas with them. They were five Ossetians in uniforms. These very people burned my house down on 11 August. After burning Tristan's house, they entered my yard. They told me in both Ossetian and Georgian to set the house on fire myself. All five of them were Ossetians. I recognized they were Ossetians by appearance and they told me: "You Georgians shouldn't be alive, no Georgian is worth living". One of them called someone on the phone and asked in Ossetian: "There's one old man here, what should we do?" I speak Ossetian. He was told to take me along. That Ossetian on the phone told the rest to torch the house. They poured gas, lit the matches and torched my house in front of my eyes.

I was in slippers and they didn't give me a chance even to put my clothes on. They threw me in a Vilis and took me to Tskhinvali".³³²

Neli Mchedlidze recalls how her and neighbor Irma Otinashvili's houses were burned. This story is significant because unlike many other villages, the Russians played a major role in the raiding, looting, torching, and active marauding.

"When the sun rose on 10 August I went to my house. Two men in military uniforms entered my yard. One of them was probably Russian: blond and pug-nosed, and the other was probably Kossack: flat nose and thinner higher up. They searched the house.

332 Interview with Ilia Chulukhadze was recorded by the GYLA in 9 Tamarashvili st., Tbilisi,



One of the houses destroyed in Zemo Achabeti, August 2008. Photo shows Russian writing on the wall of the house: "Georgians did not want to live in peace!!! They got what they were looking for."

When they left I saw from the balcony others coming. Six armed men in Russian military uniforms entered. Two of them were holding different machine-guns, as if something was attached to the guns at the end (later I saw that the soldier who burned my neighbor Irma Otinashvili's house was holding the same machine-gun). They were swarthy, didn't look like Ossetians from Tskhinvali. I worked in Tskhinvali for 24 years and I recognize Tskhinvali-based Ossetians even by mimic. They spoke Russian.

They shot their guns when they entered the yard.

They took the TV, household items, and set them on the ground by the yard gate. At this moment my daughter called me on my mobile. The one standing beside me told me in Russian: "Give me the phone. I replied in Russian that everything they had taken was more than enough and threw the phone on the ground. He shot down and picked up the phone.

I asked if I could take one small bag with the drug prescriptions in it. He refused, saying: "There is nothing here that belongs to you, everything is ours". They killed my 4-month old German shepherd.

I heard voices from my neighbor Irma Otinashvili's house. I did not see how many of them were there. There was the sound of shooting and blasts and then the house flared up. When I turned to my house

I saw it ablaze also".³³³

81-year-old **Alexi Chlaidze** told us:

"On 16 August I was in the house, when approximately 10 armed men in khaki uniforms with white armbands speaking Russian had entered.

It was around noon. They inspected the house, summoned a car by radio transmitter, took everything out of the house and left (they took unpacked items with them). Three-shaft cars - "URALS" - stood outside and they loaded them. First they emptied the neighbor's house and then ours.

*They killed **Zhora Babutsidze** (friend, neighbor). His wife came out crying that her husband had been killed. I left. That night they started shooting at me. I ran and hid in the gardens."*

Sokrat Babutsidze, who left the village only on September 5, remembers he was in the yard of his own house on September 2 when armed Ossetians in military uniforms came by special cars.

"Tanks were still there. When Ossetians burnt my house Russians were stood there and said nothing".

Alexi Chlaidze's reply concerning the torching of the houses is short:

"None of the houses had roofs on them, windows were all fuming".



Russian military while burning the house in village Zemo Achabeti, August 2008

333 Interview with Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tamarashvili str. 9, Tbilisi

VILLAGE KVEMO ACHABETI

Residents of Kvemo Achabeti recall there had been shooting since August 6, 2008 in Kvemo Achabeti. Bombardment from the mountains took place after that. Air attacks began only on August 7, at about 11 p.m. and lasted till the morning of the 8th. According to Manana Gelashvili's: "At about 8 p.m. of 8 August the bombardment began again and didn't cease until the morning of 10 August. To my mind, the bombardment had no intervals, it was uninterrupted. We didn't leave the cellar till the morning of 10 August"³³⁴. On 9 August there were Russian tanks in the village already. From the morning of 9 August neither Georgian police nor soldiers stayed in Achabeti any longer.³³⁵

Judging by the stories of Kvemo Achabeti inhabitants, Russian soldiers and Ossetian fighters acted on a sort of premeditated system. They walked in groups and each had its own function. Some of them drove cattle away, others looted houses, the third group was busy taking remaining "trifles" and finally, quite another group would come, burn houses and oust the remaining Georgians from the villages under the threat of guns. Like others, **Sonia Lomsadze** also told us:

"When they entered my yard for the first time I opened the gate myself. I don't remember the date. There were three of them, armed, in military uniforms. They were Russians and probably there was an Ossetian among them. They entered the house, smashed everything and searched. They looked for weapons.

They took away whatever they liked. They put it in a car.

*On the same day another group came also. They took the TV outside in my yard. There were three or four men in uniforms. There were Russians and Ossetians. **Not only Ossetians had entered my house.** When they saw me one of them referred to me in Russian: to get inside, and he hit the butt on the ground. This group also took away everything it liked. I had two cows and they drove them away.*

My son Anzor Babutsidze lived nearby, 100 meters away, and I saw how they drove away the cattle from his house also. I saw them driving tractors out of the neighbors' houses.

One day five of them entered the house, in military uniforms. One of them told me in Georgian to leave as the house was going to be burnt.

When I looked back the house it was already in flames. They set the tone (Georgian bakery) and shed on fire too. One of them was holding something like a mop. He shot it from far away and fire came out.

334 336 Interview with Manana Galegashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tserovani settlement, Mtskheta region, 18th row, cottage # 15, 22 January, 2009

335 Residents of the village Sonia Lomsadze, Tengiz Razmadze, Shmagi Babutsidze, Giorgi Sherazadishvili gave similar testimonies to the GYLA



Village Kvemo Achabeti, August 2008

Then these people went to my son Anzori's house and burned it too. I saw the house all in flames".

Tengiz Razmadze's house was looted and torched on 13 August:

"On 13 August I saw about 5 armed men enter my yard. They were Ossetians, wearing leafed military uniforms, speaking in Ossetian. First they brought the things out of the house. After they got everything they wanted, one of them, holding something in his hand pulled something, and suddenly an object crashed into the house, setting the fire immediately".

Rolandi (Tsatsi) Babutsidze, just like many of his neighbors, witnessed torching of numerous houses, including the one of his neighbor, Shmagi Babutsidze.

"On 12 August I saw six men in military uniforms setting Shmagi's house on fire. They wore Russian-type leafed uniforms. They burned many houses in these uniforms. There was one Russian among these six persons. Ossetians would not wander around alone.

They started burning houses down on the 9th.

They burned 24 houses while I was in Achabeti, I counted. In the morning on 14 August I left the village and later I was told they had burned my house that evening on the same day".³³⁶

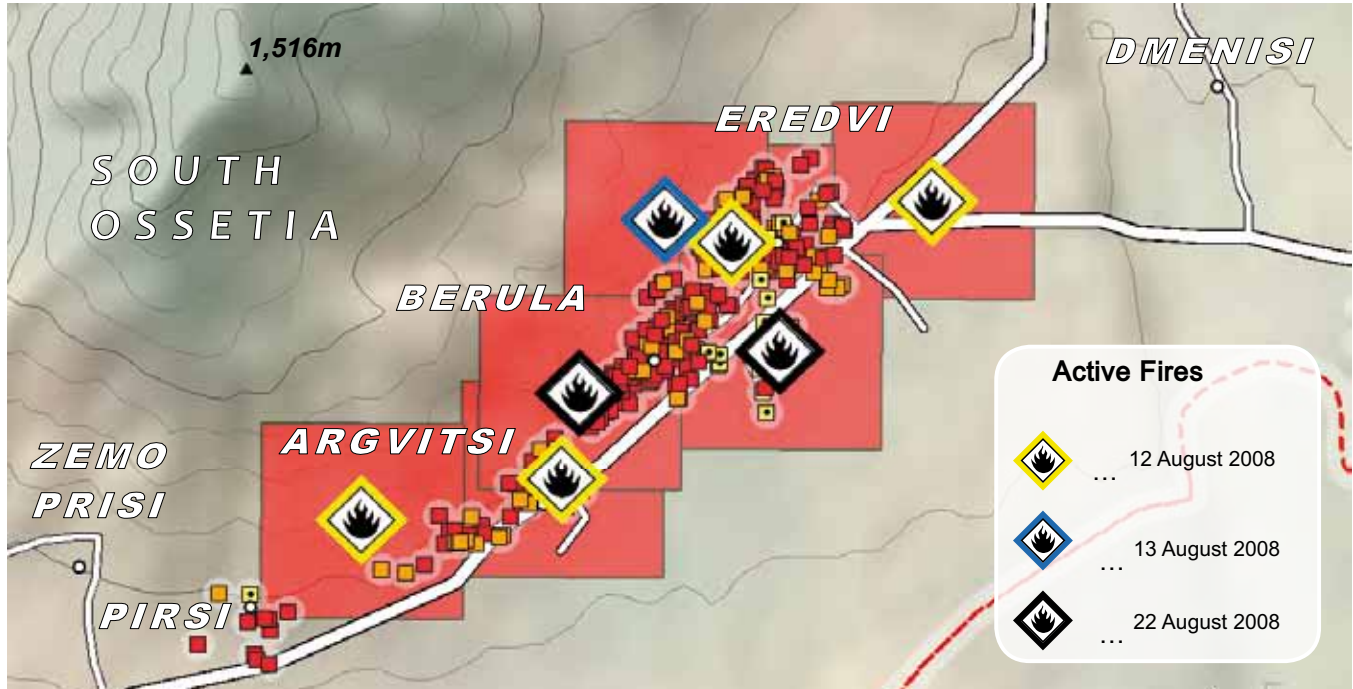
Eduard Babutsidze's house was destroyed during the bombardment of the village on 8 August.

"At around noon on 8 August my house was destroyed. Jets flew very low and I saw they were a green military color, decorated with Russian stars. A bomb was dropped in the yard, destroying three houses apart from mine: those of Nazi Babutsidze, Gia Khochishvili, and Vano Babutsidze. All of us were outside, watching our houses destruct."

336 Interview with Roland Babutsidze was recorded by the GYLA in Rustavi, on April 15, 2009

EREDVI - BERULA - ARGVITSI

1-13 August, 2008. Active Fires: Eredvi, Berula and Argvitsi villages (satellite 11)



Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 1-31 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Nodar Kochishvili was sheltered in the kindergarten #149 in Tbilisi when we visited him. He left the village as soon as Georgian troops had retreated.

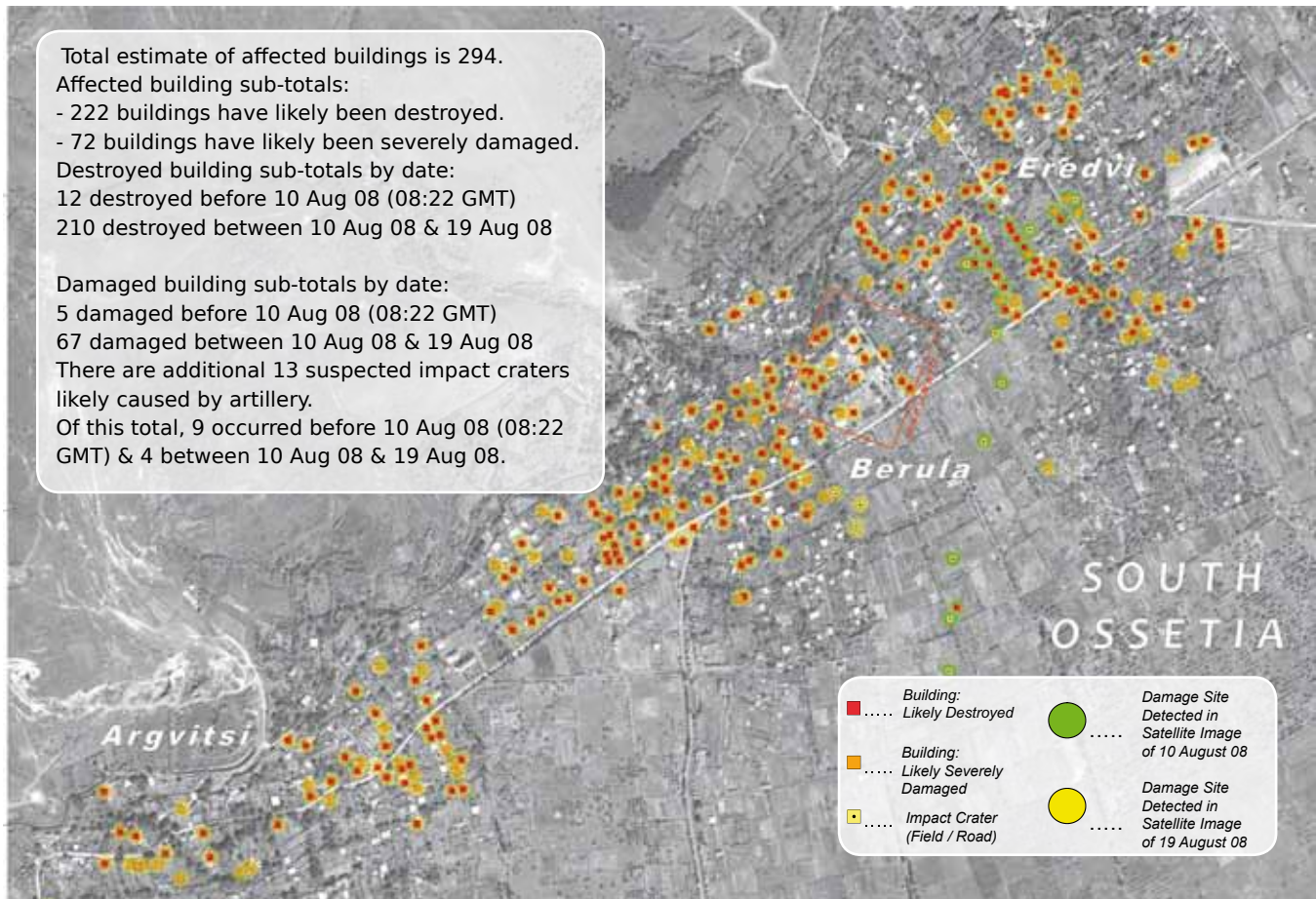
"I left by Kheiti road, Eredvi was being bombed. One jet was dropping bombs. A bomb was dropped on the Niva in front of me, two men were killed".

Another resident of the village Berula **Gela Tsozniashvili** recalls:

"When I was back in Berula, on 10th of August, houses were not burned. Russians and Ossetians had not entered yet".

Satellite imagery depict the same grave situation Nodar Kochishvili's and Gela Tsozniashvili's describe. Satellite data reveals 294 buildings were demolished by 19 August 2008. By 8 am on August 10 only 12 buildings were demolished and five buildings damaged.

Analysis of satellite imagery of the three villages has manifold implications. The annex to the image is of extreme importance, as it provides factual information on continuous fires. (See: *satellite 11*) In particular, active fires are covered for the period of 1-31 August, 2008. The first fires that the satellite shows are dated 12 August and cover from Argvitsi towards Eredvi in all of the three villages. Substantially fewer fires are exposed on 13 August. Afterwards, satellite practically does not show any serious fires until 22 August.

10 August, 2008. Eredvi, Berula and Argvitsi villages (satellite 12)

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 10 & 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Images we possess describes the situation only for 10 and 19 August and accordingly, the damage inflicted to these territories after 22 August is not described. However, the map indicates new fires on 22-24 August (territories in black). As for the fires on 10,12,13,17 and 19 August, they are highlighted on the image in different colors and are easily recognizable. UNOSAT received the information on fires from Maryland University material, based on information obtained from NASA (see: satellite 1 and 11).

A second source of information from the American Association for the Advancement of Science contains analogous information, where the damage inflicted on these three villages is analyzed in detail. The present satellite image (see: *satellite 13*) demonstrates one small fragment of the territory of village Eredvi, disclosing the volume and degree of damage. Damaged buildings in the village are highlighted in red.

Though we have no satellite image-evidence of the damage inflicted in Eredvi after 22 August, the OSCE Human Rights Assessment Mission, which visited the conflict zone in November of 2008, confirmed the stories of the witnesses concerning the total demolition of the village. In particular, the report says:

“The damage to the village from deliberate arson was so complete that one displaced person commented that “now, there is no village called Eredvi.” The HRAM visited Eredvi and confirmed extensive damage to the village.”³³⁷

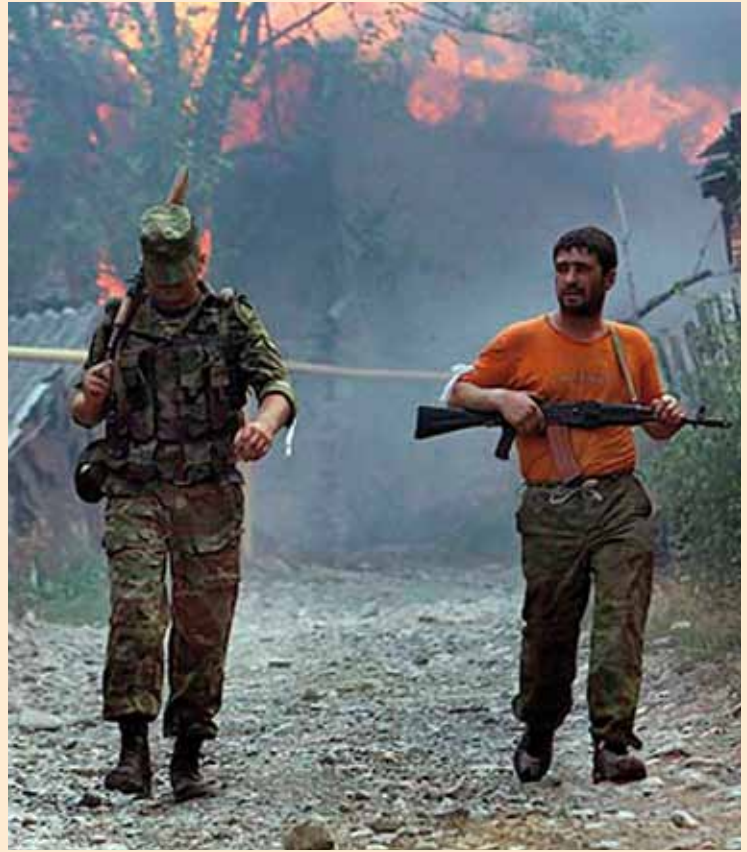
Givi Khaduri left the village on 10 August, but occasionally he returned to see his mother. First on 22 September 2008, then on 26 September, he returned to the village with the help of Russian soldiers, and he tells us:

“The whole village was burnt down: Eredvi as well as Berula. Some of the houses were still smoking; they had been recently torched. My son’s, Zuriko’s, house was ablaze. My house was not torched yet. When I approached Elnar Vakhtangashvili’s house it was also in flames. His house was at the edge of the road.

*We saw Gela Tsozniashvili’s house from the distance. The house was smoking. Three or four armed men in military uniforms stood at the house. They wore Russian military uniforms. In 50 meters from the road I saw Tariel Beruashvili’s house was smoking”.*³³⁸

4-5 days later, Givi Khaduri again returned to the village with the help of Russians. **That was when he saw that his house, which had been intact on 22 September, was burnt down.**

2002 census states 238 families were registered in Eredvi and 209 in Berula, while Argvitsi, is relatively small with 141 families there. Data from the 19 August satellite imagery provides considerable information on the scale of the tragedy, as half of the villages are already burned and destroyed. Thus, the information and satellite evidence on continued fires, supported further by witness accounts reveal another grave page in the history of the ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population from the villages of the former Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia.



Ossetian wearing a white band, burnt village Eredvi, August 2008.

337 See, “Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia”, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, p. 42

338 Interview with Givi Khaduri was recorded by the GYLA in Shaumiani, on June 17, 2009

19 August, 2008. Eredvi village, fragment (satellite 13)

Source: Figure 3C: Subset of Damage to the Eredvi-Berula-Argvitsi Region. Subset of August 19, 2008. High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and The Conflict in South Ossetia, Summary Report, October 9, 2008, AAAS, Science and Human Rights Program

VILLAGE EREDVI

The tragedy of Eredvi is told by numerous witnesses. Our researchers recorded interviews with 30 residents of Eredvi in various temporary settlements. These stories resemble one another, sometimes they fill in the other and specify details.

Davit Kristesiashvili told us the following:

"In the morning of the 8th they bombed the outskirts of Tskhinvali, where our army was located. In the first phase silver jets bombed Eredvi, more by 6 p.m. on the 8th. The first bomb fell by the fence of the St. George Church from the 9th Century. My house is near the church and all of the windows were broken. Kitchen wear, chandeliers, and other items were thrown on the floor from the pressure. I was standing about 30 meters from the church's fence when the bomb was dropped. In 15 minutes another bomb was dropped on residential houses. The next day, August 9, in the evening, they started bombing from silver jets. During the day a dark green helicopter would fly over and bomb the villages".³³⁹

339 Interview with Davit Kristesiashvili was recorded by the GYLA in the settlement of refugees, village Koda, build.

83-year-old, **Mikheil Vakhtangashvili's** account can provide more or less a full sense of the tragedy that took place in Eredvi in the month after 6 August, 2008. Mikheil Vakhtangashvili left the village on 4 September together with some of his neighbors.

“During the bombardment, the roof and windows of my house were broken. Aleksandre Maisuradze's house was damaged during the bombardment too, its roof torn down.

The Ossetians entered along with Russian tanks. There were Ossetian women too, without uniforms. Women entered houses first, took items and the Ossetians torched the houses.

They started burning the houses on the 13th.

They entered my house either on 12th or 13th, I don't remember exactly. There were 10-12 Ossetian men without uniforms. They said they were going to exterminate all Georgians and set the house on fire. They set on fire first the cattle-shed and then the house.

They killed my big pig and drove away my three cows. I was standing in the yard. They hauled out the table, chairs, bed, fridge, and took three TV-sets stolen from my son's house.

First they burned my son's house and then mine.

When they set my house on fire, one Ossetian took my shoes off and threw them in the fire. They told me to get lost or otherwise they would have killed me. Then they left from my gate and started torching other houses.

On the 2nd and 3rd days they burned Aleksandre Maisuradze's house. None of them were suitable for living anymore, only the walls remained.

I used to sleep in the orchard, with bare feet. I had vegetables and all sorts of fruit in the orchard and I ate them. 5-6 days after the house burned, the Russians came into the orchard and took the peaches, apples, and onions. I was there when five of them came. They were in uniform with machine-guns. The Russians treated me well. They asked me in Russian if they could have some fruit and vegetables. I agreed and they gathered the peaches. They didn't call me anything bad. I met many Russians while I was in Eredvi but they did not offend me. But I hid from the Ossetians, as they would have killed me.



Representatives of Ossetian para-militaries while looting village Eredvi, August 2008



Bombarded village Eredvi, August 2008

When my house was burned down Russian tanks were nearby on the road. Russians saw my house burning. Once I was sitting in a chair by the fence crying. One Russian walked by to drink water and asked me:

- *Where do you sleep?*
- *In the orchard.*
- *I'll bring you bread tomorrow.*

The next day he brought me two loaves of bread. I ate them for almost 10 days. When he talked to me in Georgian I praised his knowledge of Georgian and he said his mother was Georgian.

On September 2 Ossetians gunned my chickens down and took them away.

When they burned my house they drove two tractors away. I blocked the road and told them to stop, but they kicked me and went on.

On September 3 I was in the yard. 20 Ossetians came into the yard. One of them said he would cut my head off if he saw me again the next day and put an axe to my head. They weren't wearing uniforms but all of them had machine-guns. "Eredvi is no longer yours", they said.

Everyone's houses are burned in Eredvi. I recognize Ossetians who looted my house by face. I know who the robbers were.

*In the mornings I would go around checking the torched houses. Ossetians would not come up to Eredvi until 9 in the morning. I saw dead people. I saw these people dead in the yards of their own burned houses: **Niko Beruashvili, Jumber Beruashvili, Natela Kristesiashvili, Tsiala Tarielashvili, Tengiz Tarielashvili.** The dogs ate Niko and Jumber, as they were thrown on the road. I could not approach the corpses. I saw them from the roads lying dead in their yards. Dogs ate the dead residents of the village. There was no one to bury them.*

On 4 September I left before sunrise. Russians and Ossetians were still in the village. I no longer had a pig, cow, poultry, and I had nothing to do. I left on bare feet, with a crutch in my hand".³⁴⁰

While the stories of villagers are nearly identical, the volume of damage

340 Interview with Mikheil Vakhtangashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi.

is sometimes different. Otherwise the names and surnames could be interchangeable: **Lia Babut-sidze, Maro Vakhtangashvili, Givi Grzelishvili, Samson Beruashvili, Mania Tuaevi-Beruashvili, Tristan Beruashvili**, and many other elders and youth told us with tears in their eyes about neighbors left unburied in the debris, a lifetime of work and belongings turned into ashes, domestic animals killed with extreme brutality, etc.

Airplanes and shelling were followed by the Russian military and Ossetian para-militaries and everything continued in Eredvi as in all other occupied Georgian villages.

“It was 10th of August. I went up to the vineyard. From there I saw 4-5 men in military uniforms. They wore leafed uniforms, and one or two held something like a hand grenade launcher. They went into Nugzari’s yard, shot that launcher at my brother’s house and it immediately caught on fire.

I went down towards my house. About 80 meters away I saw 3-4 persons in military uniforms entering the house of my neighbor Kolia Ozgebishvili. They had the same grenade launcher. Kolia’s house was ablaze soon after they entered.

*I walked towards the Municipality. The Municipality and the police station were on fire”.*³⁴¹

Venera Arbolishvili was watching her village being destroyed while hiding in her son’s house:

*“On 12 August my spouse and I went up to the house of our son Guliver. Guliver’s house is on the ascent, in the outskirts of the village. When we looked down from there we saw that entire village was on fire. In the evening on 12 August the tanks entered to the village from the upper side. **They stopped in the outskirts of the village, by the graveyard and started shooting towards the village from there.** On the sunrise of 13 August we left by the outskirts of the village and stayed in the field. Tengiz told me he should have seen with his own eyes whether our house had been burnt or not. When he returned he told me to be strong as they had torched the house. When I saw it, I fainted”.*³⁴²



Bombarded village Eredvi, August 2008

341 Interview with Vaja Kristesiashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, on 30 April, 2009.

342 Interview with Venera Arbolishvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, public school # 142

The destruction of her house was only the beginning of Ms. Venera Arbolashvili's personal tragedy. Her husband, Tengiz Tarielashvili, was killed later that same 13 August day.

Village resident, **Gaioz Bortsvadze** witnessed the destruction of homes in Eredvi.

"In our district only five houses were demolished due to bombardments. Mostly the elderly remained in the village. I stayed. On 12 August they started torching the village. Raids in the village continued from 12 to 21 August. My house was pillaged around 12 August. They stole everything that could have been taken away. They burned the house down on the 12th as well.

Before noon on 21 August I was visiting what was left of my home and heard a car approaching. I was afraid and went to the garden. Three men came in. One skinny guy in a military uniform told me in Georgian with a pronounced Ossetian accent: "Get out of there". And he pointed a pistol at me. I crawled towards my house, which at the time was entirely demolished. Since the fire could not do it, they brought it down with towing cables.

I saw a big military vehicle, which had towing cables on it. It seems they ripped the roof down with cables. The house was wiped off the face of the earth. Down the road there were other vehicles destroying the houses of my neighbors".³⁴³

Maro Vakhtangashvili, 84 years old:

A jet was bombing the Mtskhétisjvari forest. Then it flew towards us. The first bomb was dropped on the police building, second on the culture house, and then the residential houses followed. The bomb targeted the bus parked in front of the culture house. The bus was coming from the Big Liakhvi Gorge, it was transporting fleeing people from Kekhvi. The bomb landed on a spruce tree and did not explode.

After noon it started to crack. They came to my yard door, cut a rope on the gate with a knife. When I heard Russians talking I hid in the cellar. A cellar has a window and from there I saw four armed soldiers. Once they opened the door, they would first shoot and then enter. They probably thought someone was in the house. They torched it entirely. The smoke came into the cellar. I ran to my second son's house. I was hiding in the grapes and watched how they burned his house as well. Then they moved to another house and torched it too.

They drove away the cattle while I was hiding. It was impossible to spend the night in the house any more. There was a shed behind the house, where I kept corn and I spent the night there. For one week I

³⁴³ Interview with Bagrat Bortsvadze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, Nadzaladevi district, Sanerge st.. 8, in the presence of his daughter-in-law Gulnazi

ate plums and Tkemali. The Ossetians roamed around and stole. Then they brought out a 200 liter container. They stole hives, honey, and cement from Samson".³⁴⁴

The next day the old men left the village.

VILLAGE BERULA

For some period of time Berula remained hope for old people, however in the beginning of September there were no more Georgians in the village left like in other Georgian villages. Hunger, fear of death, hundreds of houses burnt to ashes before their own eyes – all these compelled them to leave their household and share hard life of IDPs in their own homeland. **Givi Grdzelishvili** did not expect he would have to leave his house, but when there was neither house nor shelter any longer he had to seek hope first in Gori and then in the temporary settlement.

"Ten persons entered my house. They were armed and wore uniforms like Russians. I had a cow and a calf, which I was very fond of. Ossetians wanted to drive them away. One of them hit the calf. I cursed at him and he hit me with the gun butt, I fainted. When I came to, the Ossetians were no longer there. I came to probably 2-3 hours later. The cattle had been driven away.

Next day I walked garden by garden. My house was burned down. I felt bad. First I saw my house, then Tereza's, then Ksenia's, all of them were torched".

Tamar Khaduri, 82-year-old:

"I watched them loot the village. There were Ossetians, Russians, and Cossacks, people with narrow eyes. They stole property in cars. I was hiding in grandchild's cattle-shed. I was afraid of being burnt in the house and spent the nights in the cattle-shed. One day they entered my grandchild Zuriko Khaduri's yard. They were driving the cattle out. I watched from the cattle-shed how they parked the car nearby and pillaged my house".³⁴⁵

Tamar Khaduri's son **Givi Khaduri** recalls, that

"Berula was first bombarded from the air around 1-2 p.m. on 8 August. 3-4 jets flew over. Houses were damaged during the bombardment. Approximately 20 people died in, all from the Big Eredvi".¹⁰³

He left the village on 10 August, but returned periodically to care for the mother. When he returned to the village at the end of September he discovered both villages Eredvi and Berula had been entirely torched:

"I saw from the body of the car that the Ossetians, including the

³⁴⁴ Interview with Maro Vakhtangashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, on 28 September, 2008

³⁴⁵ Interview with Tamar Khaduri was recorded by the GYLA in village Shaumiani, on 17 June, 2009

women, children, and men, were raiding the village. Some of them gathered tomatoes in the gardens, some of them corn, apples. I saw three persons loading hay on a three-shaft car”.

With the assistance of Russian soldiers, another inhabitant of the village **Elnar Vakhtangashvili** saw his and his neighbors’ torched houses one month later. He also recalls that the village shops were burned down as well.

Elene Beruashvili was one of the last to leave the village Berula, and she remembered the last day 28 August.

*“I walked garden by garden and stopped in Lizo Turashvili’s garden because I saw a huge blue truck parked by Elguja Beruashvili’s house and five men in uniforms were loading his furniture into it. When the car left two men stayed. They were Ossetians and spoke in Ossetian. One of them had a cable fixed to his arm, similar to a mobile, and he was holding something with an antenna, he pushed something and the house was already on fire. Elguja’s house was torched just like mine”.*³⁴⁶



VILLAGE KHEITI

Giorgi Kulichishvili remembers well that *“On 6 August at night the village Kheiti was bombarded from the land. On 8 August air bombardment of the village was carried out. 4 silver jets flew simultaneously, they flew low”*.³⁴⁷

The residents of the village whom we met don’t recollect additional Georgian troops entering the village. Moreover, *“Since 8 August neither local militia nor Sanakoev’s security were any longer in the village”*- recalls **Ushangi Sherazadishvili**.

Nonetheless, the village was still being bombarded. On 9 August the village was invaded by Russian troops. *“A column of tanks with three-colored Russian flags came in. Some of them got located in the village Kheiti. They entered the building of Sanakoev’s administration”*, Mr. Ushangi tells us. Russians were followed by Ossetians and on the same day they began torching the village. *“Since 9 August they began torching houses. I was hiding in my garden. It is on the upland. On 9 August in the evening, when it was getting dark, I saw from my garden Giorgi Kulichishvili’s house ablaze”*.³⁴⁸

Tamaz Kulichishvili spent 42 days in the village after hostilities had begun. He was severely beaten and taken out by the Red Cross at the end of September.

“From August 8 I hid in my parents’ gardens some 200-300 meters

346 Interview with Elene Beruashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tamarashvili st. 9, Tbilisi,

347 Interview with Giorgi Kulichishvili was recorded by GYLA

348 Interview with Ushangi Sherazadishvili was recorded by “21st Century” in February, 2009

from the residential district. The garden is on the high-ground and the whole village can be seen well from there.

My house was torched after 10 of August. I watched it from my brother's house. Several men, some of them in uniforms and others without it, would enter houses and take everything. A Russian military truck was outside and they put everything in it. I saw the house already in flames.

I witnessed how many other houses in my district were torched. They would come in groups, women with them.

I don't remember the day, it was after 20 August, the morning. I saw them taking beds and other things out of Zaur Zubalashvili's house. A Russian truck was at the house (covered with a parti-colored canvas). Ossetians don't have such trucks. Some time later I saw smoke coming out of Mr. Zauri's house. They had some little firearms filled with gas, that would whiz and set fire to everything.

Russians were interested only in jewelry. They would come in first and then were followed by Ossetians, who pillaged and torched everything. All kinds of people came, some looked for an iron door, some - for a cattle and others wanted groceries, etc".³⁴⁹

Tamaz Kulichishvili continues about his beating:

"4th days after the Ossetians arrived, they beat me. There were three of them, armed and in military uniforms. They asked: "Are you Georgian?" I said "Yes". They pushed me down and hit me with the gun butt. I fainted. I was came to in the rain at night. My eyes were so swollen, I couldn't see anything.

I returned to my house in Kheiti. I had my iron door locked. An UAZ stopped and some people got out. Armed soldiers rushed in. Ossetians. They didn't say anything, just began beating me mercilessly, spitting at me and kicking and rolling me to and fro. They cursed me with bad words asking how many Ossetians had I killed".

VILLAGE KARALETI

The bombing of Karaleti started on 8 August and lasted four days. **Tamaz Tibilashvili** left the village on the 12th, escaping the "fire flames coming from the sky". Although so many victims shared the same fates, each victim bears the pain of their own personal tragedy. At the outbreak of hostilities, Mr. Tibilashvili had been just operated on for wounds sustained in a car accident. The August events exasperated his condition posing a serious risk to his health and life.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Tamaz Kulichishvili was recorded by GYLA



Bombarded village Karaleti,
September 2009

"In May 2008 my leg was operated on and I wasn't supposed to walk for 6 months. Yet, owing to these events, I had to walk around without crutches. After the doctor examined me, it turned out that my bone was decomposing".³⁵⁰

The house of Karaleti resident of Bidzina Sukhitashvili, like those of many of his neighbors, fell under the brutality of armed men without uniforms.

"On 12 August, armed groups warned everyone to leave the village and then started looting. On the 13th they burned my house and I left the village. As I was leaving I could see the smoke from far away".³⁵¹

Izolda Tedliashvili

"On 13 August, Wednesday, strangers drove by in a car after the sunrise. They shot at fences, probably to scare us. First they put on fire Tazo Sukhitashvili's house. Then they moved in a white-cream-colored Zhiguli towards the house of Vala Sukhitashvili,³⁵² and then they put neighbor Gela's house on fire also and finally went up to Bidzina Sukhitashvili's house. This house is several meters away from us. I went out in the garden and watched in hiding. A cream-colored Zhiguli stopped by Bidzina's house. Four men went out. They weren't in uniforms, they were Ossetians, as at that time no Russians had entered our village yet.

The house burnt down to ashes, splinters did not spread here and then, everything just blew off. When Bidzina arrived he saw that prior to setting the house on fire they had taken the icons out and put them by the tone (Georgian bakery) near the house".

A mother witnessed the torching of **Vladimer (Vala) Sukhitashvili's** and his brother **Vepkhia's** houses. The victims told us about it:

"My mother watched how they burned my house down. My father is blind and couldn't see how my house was on fire. He didn't know for around two weeks that my house and my brother's house were torched. He learned about it by accident, had a stroke and died in a week. According to

350 Interview with Tamaz Tibilashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, public school # 100. The interviewers affirm that Tamaz Tibilashvili is a disabled person

351 Interviews with Bidzina Sukhitashvili and Izolda Tedliashvili were recorded by HRC, 4 December, 2008

352 Is implied Vladimer Sukhitashvili, Vala by nickname. Mother witnessed burning of his house.

my mother, there were three cars driving around, about 15 people in them. First they entered my neighbor's house , then ours, and they kept coming and going. They raided both houses simultaneously. Then suddenly huge smoke burst out of our house. They didn't rob anything, furniture debris were still there when we got up later. They probably searched for valuables. A lot of fire followed the smoke. My neighbor's house and mine were set on fire simultaneously on 13 August".³⁵³

VILLAGE GUGUTIANTKARI

Gugutiantkari is the last village, where Georgians sometimes are given the right to enter. Just through it passes the conditional administrative border and it is formally controlled by Georgian authorities. However, in October 2009 local residents advised us not to go in dark to the village due to the security concerns.

In August 2008 Russian Federation troops got located in village Gugutiantkari, like in many other neighboring villages men with white armbands looted and torched there.

Tina Bidzinashvili:

"On 13 August Ossetians and Cossacks entered the Gugutiantkari. Most of them wore military uniforms. My sister-in-law bumped into them and they started beating her with the butts of their machine-guns. "Tell us where your gunmen are!" they yelled. At the same time they pulled her away somewhere.

*We were hiding in the garden. We saw houses were on fire. Ossetians captured my neighbor **Dato Chalauri** and when they drove him by my house, Dato saw 5 guys in my yard. Two of them were blonds and three of them were Ossetians from Khelchua. I even know their names and surnames. There was something fixed to their machine-guns which they shot at houses, and they blazed them up. This group torched other houses as well. They burned 4 houses in my district. All houses were torched on the 13th.*

We spent the nights in houses that escaped burning. I would go over to my torched house. Once it was the beginning of September and I went over to my house and saw two Ossetians. They were stealing something from my house. When they saw me they pointed a knife at me: "Don't you get that you Georgians shouldn't be here any more?" - they told me".³⁵⁴

Tina Bidzinashvili is still a refugee, a year and a half after the war. Today

353 Interviews with Vladimer and Vepkhia Sukhitashvili were recorded by HRC, 26 January, 2009

354 Interview with Tina Bidzinashvili was recorded by Tinatin Khidasheli, on 24 October, 2008 in village Mereti

it is impossible to return to Gugutiantkari because of security conditions.³⁵⁵

The British newspaper “Daily Telegraph” reported on 15 September, 2008 about the torching of houses and beating of Georgians in Gugutiantkari. There are five described cases of Georgian men being beaten.³⁵⁶

VILLAGE KSUISI

Ksuisi residents spoke with “USA Today” about the Georgian-Ossetian life in South Ossetia during Soviet times:

“In Soviet times, Ossetians and Georgians lived harmoniously in the prosperous village surrounded by corn fields, grapevines and orchards with peaches and apples.”

The journalist after visiting Ksuisi and surrounding villages gives the following description:

“Now the some 400 homes in the hamlet's Georgian quarter appear to have been burned and looted. Of about 700 Ossetian houses, a small number – including a school – bore the marks of damage from Georgian artillery fire.

Many Ossetians say their ethnic Georgian neighbors bear collective guilt for Tbilisi's assault.

“Georgians should lie next to my son,” Yekaterina Doguzova, 70, said bitterly as she grieved alongside her daughter-in-law Zemfira Doguzova, 34.

Pavel Panikaev, 73, angrily recalled how Georgians beat him with rifle butts. “We have a right for revenge,” he said. “We will not leave Georgian houses, orchards, nothing. We will erase them from the face of earth.”³⁵⁷

The Shoshitashvili family:

*“When you enter the village, the very first house is burned and it goes on like that to the end. Kristepore told me that when they started in the morning on 10-11 August, they went on and torched every house”.*³⁵⁸

Ophelia Shoshitashvili left the village on August 10.

355 We made several attempts to get to Gugutiantkari in autumn 2009, but unfortunately, it was impossible. Local residents say sometimes people in Mereti manage visit the village through paths, though due to frequent cases of kidnapping Georgians security measures are more restricted and crossing the conditional border carries serious risk.

356 “British police to join EU peace force in Georgia” by Bruno Waterfield, Daily Telegraph, 15 September, 2008

357 See, “AP IMPACT: Georgians uprooted in South Ossetia”, By Yuras Karmanau, on 29 August, 2008 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-29-3937720385_x.htm

358 Interview with Ofelia Shoshitashvili was recorded in Tbilisi, Gldani IV m/r, house III

*"The most massive attack started on the night of 7 August, all of us were hiding in the cellars. The Georgian army entered the village in the morning on 8 August and on the same day jets appeared and started bombing. Three jets would fly in, make a circle, go around Ossetian villages and start bombing our villages. Then they would fly back to Tskhinvali and bomb there. Those jets were a mustard color, flew very low, some of them were grey and all of them had stars. Bombs would blast in the air, split into pieces and fire came down, some of it would hit the ground and blast afterwards. On the very first day of bombardment, two houses were burned on 8 August: those of **Paata Javakhishvili** and **Olegi Shoshitashvili**. Something also hit the house of Ramaz Shoshitashvili and destroyed it."*

Despite her appeal, her father and brothers did not leave the village and watched as their houses were torched. Ms. Ophelia Shoshitashvili returned to the village two weeks later and saw her and her cousin Kristepore's burned houses. Russians mocked the woman as she walked around the torched village weeping: "Is it your first time?" they asked.

From Ophelia Shoshitashvili's brother Ioseb Shoshitashvili's house, one could clearly see how shells were dropped in the village. "Missiles fell 40 meters from my house and hit my neighbor, 75 year-old Salome Shoshitashvili in the back".³⁵⁹ **Ioseb Shoshitashvili** was assisting the wounded and was taking the people out of the village throughout the day.

As he recalls, on the 8th there was an especially significant number of wounded from the bombing in Charebi village and he spent the whole day aiding them.

"When I entered Charebi, I saw the Lapachi's house burning. Charebi had already been bombed. They told me Vakho Razmadze was wounded. When I entered Vakho's house, one bomb was there. The house was destroyed and Vakho was lying in bed wounded. It hit him on the left side in the head, by the



Bombarded village Ksuisi, December 2008

³⁵⁹ Interview with Ioseb Shoshitashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 9 August, 2009, in Tbilisi, Gldani m/r, house III

chest, and I sat him in the car, took him out and then he ended up in the Gori hospital. Then I returned to Charebi and brought Kakha Lapachi with me".

On the next day his house in Ksuisi was also burned and he left the village together with the neighbors. He returned there only on 25 August. He found the village totally torched.

VILLAGE ZARDIAANTKARI

Residents of the Zardiaantkari affirm that the Georgian army and peacekeepers were not located in their village. The village did not even have a local militia; the Tkviavi militia filled in for them by necessity. Villagers told us that the Georgian army appeared at the entrance of Ksuisi village on 7 August. Ksuisi is a kilometer and a half away from Zardiaantkari. Nevertheless, this Georgian village still could not escape from the shooting and violence.

"On 7 August intense shooting came from the Ossetian villages - Dmenisi and Khelchua - towards village Zardiaantkari. They shot at us from machine-guns. They shot at us massively in the following days also: on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of August".³⁶⁰

On 12 August the village almost emptied from the locals, but after the cease fire people started returning. **Giorgi Gablishvili** returned to the village on 12 September.

"I stayed there until 22nd of September. At the time part of population had also returned to the village, but by the end of September all of those who had returned fled once again. Ossetians raided houses whenever they liked. The population wasn't protected. I was guarding my house so that they couldn't burn it. They torched the houses in the neighboring villages also.

I was at home at 11:30 p.m. on 22 September. I heard shots from the Mereti side. I went out and hid in the Charebula river valley. I watched my house from there, about 60-80 meters away. I saw about 6 gunmen in military uniforms. They spoke in Ossetian. All 6 went into the house. Immediately after they entered, the house began to burn. Afterwards they stood in the yard for about a half an hour. They didn't leave until the fire became quite strong.

*Then they went to cousin **Gela Gablishvili's** house, which is about 60 meters behind mine, and set that house on fire as well.*

When I saw them enter my cousin's house, I ran down to the river. I started putting the fire out in my house. They probably saw me collecting water from the river and started shooting at me. I ran. I haven't returned to Zardiaantkari since then".

³⁶⁰ Interview with Giorgi Gablishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 6 September, 2009, in Tbilisi

According to Giorgi Gablishvili, by the end of September there was only one mixed Ossetian-Georgian family remaining in the village.

VILLAGE SATSKHENETI

Residents of the village assert that the Georgian army has never been present in the village. There was no peacekeeper check-point in the village, they didn't even have their own police and were served by Vanati police. After the first war, the situation in the village was always tense, since Satskheneti is situated in the lowlands surrounded by Ossetian villages above. These villages are: Gvria, Ortevi, Marmazeti, Eltura and Dmenisi. Due to its location the village was often of the scene shootings.

Goderdzi Khaduri recalls that since the beginning of August 2008, shooting intensified.

“They shot every day and from every side. It would start at 6 a.m. and last 20 minutes, then it would repeat in the evening.”

Though nobody was surprised at hearing the shooting, people were hiding in the cellars hoping that everything would revert back to its routine soon. But on 8 August jets started an air bombardment and the population left the village. Goderdzi Khaduri stayed in the village to look after his house and cattle.

On 9 August Ossetians came up to his house. During the search they found some cartridge and that's why they first beat him severely, then detained him after he fainted. They took him to Dmenisi school and kept him locked in the classroom four days. During captivity they neither interrogated nor asked him anything, and released on 13 August as speechless as they had captured him. After being released Goderdzi Khaduri didn't return to the village, since Russian army was already there and the village was entirely occupied by Ossetian marauders. However he knows from his neighbors that both his houses were burnt.

“Nino said she saw my both houses burnt. Only bare walls remained. While in captivity I was told by my Ossetian guard Bibilov that both



*Village Satskheneti, August 2008
It is clearly visible in the photo that the Ossetian house is intact. The fence in front of it has a white band on it.*

my houses had been burnt down".³⁶¹

Giorgi Bidzinashvili stayed in the village in an attempt trying to save neighbors' houses, but couldn't manage.

*"I was sitting on the balcony of my house. Three Ossetians opened the gate and entered. I knew them, they were Ossetians from neighboring village Dmenisi. Two of them wore civilian clothes and one of them military a striped uniform. They were armed. One of the Ossetians told me in Georgian: "Why are you still here? Why don't you leave?" I told him I was sick and couldn't go and he said: "**Go and die on your Georgia's land, why should you die here?**" And then he kicked me out. Those two went upstairs. They smashed everything. When they came down I saw them pour gas around the house and set it on fire. Then they went on and burned down the houses of neighbors Mtvarisa Janashvili, Loka Kobaladze, Gela Chitashvili, Zura Chitashvili, and Gogita Khaduri.*

The next day they returned and drove the cattle away".³⁶²

They first robbed the house of 78-year-old Nina Janashvili also. *"They stole even pans",* drove away the cattle, and finally did not even pity the old woman. *"They hit me in the head with a chair. I had my head and nose broken, I was all in blood".* And before leaving they threatened her to leave or otherwise she'd be in a worse trouble. When her house was burned, there was nothing for her to do in the village and she left in displacement for Tbilisi via Gori.³⁶³

361 Interview with Goderdzi Khaduri was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, 10 July, 2009

362 Interview with Giorgi Bidzinashvili was recorded by HRC in the settlements of refugees, village Koda, house #10, 1st floor, 11

363 Interview with Nina Janashvili was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, 27 Chubinashvili st, the kindergarten #139, September, 2008

VILLAGE TORTIZA

The Georgian English language newspaper “*Georgian Daily*” reported about the bombardment of village Tortiza on August 12th, 2008.³⁶⁴

Lali Gogidze fled from the village on 9 August. There were victims in Tortiza after the first bombardment, which Lali witnessed. She did not want to stay in the village any more. Her house and all of her belongings were burned and she faced death numerous times. Her neighbors died from shell fragments similar to those that also exploded in her yard. She left the village on 9 August.

"On 8 August, just as the bombing began, one of the first bombs hit my house. The house first was destroyed and then entirely burned. The second bomb hit the main gate in my neighbor Eter Merebashvili's yard. Eter at this moment was in the yard and died on the spot from the shell blast. The third shell hit another neighbor's house, and my neighbor Kristine Merebashvili was wounded, while the other neighbor Maksime, I don't remember his last name, who was talking to Kristine Merebashvili at the time, died on spot. One of the shells hit my neighbor Nugzar Akhalkatsi's house, and his sixteen year-old grandson Nugzar Akhalkatsi died. This bombardment lasted for about half an hour, three jets were bombing the village simultaneously".³⁶⁵

After Tortiza was bombed for several days, the Georgian population left the village almost entirely and joined the growing IDP multitude.

VILLAGE KARBI

Intensive bombardment started in village Karbi on 8 August. The bombardment killed many people, and seriously wounded more, killed livestock and poultry, destroyed houses, orchards, hectares of crops, and the village infrastructure. Shells were dropping everywhere, in yards, collective gathering areas, shops, outskirts, on the road.

Nugzar Bibiluri:

"From the morning of 9th of August shells exploded in the village three times, killing and wounding residents. We didn't leave the family, regardless of the threat".

Bombing destroyed Mr. Nugzar's house and orchards, but the worse was still to come. "My wife had a stroke on 23 August, a result of nervousness and fear, today she is paralyzed, can't talk or move and gets around in a wheelchair".

364 See, „Village of Tortiza is being Bombed“ by InterPressNews, on 12 August, 2008, at http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5720&Itemid=1

365 Interview with Lali Gogidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, public school #100



Tsiala Tevdorashvili also talks about the damage incurred as a result of 9 August bombardments.

"Our house was destroyed by the bomb."

She still lives with a relative. The bomb fell approximately 20 meters from the house, when Tsiala and her husband were hiding in the cellar. They spent the next four days and nights in the very cellar of their destroyed house. Victim had two houses in the yard and both were demolished under the bombardments in August 2008.

Mzia Chemia and **Sopio Giorgishvili** told us about the fear reigning in the village during the bombardments.

"Shots were heard constantly. Jets were flying and bombing us. There was panic and fear in the village".

The women lost everything, their homes were destroyed and burned. Sopio Giorgishvili was wounded in the arm during the bombardment.

Tengiz Tevdorashvili and his wife **Eter Tevdorashvili** were severely wounded. 70-year-old Tengiz Tevdorashvili was wounded with other people during blasts in the Bidzinaant district. Many of his fellow villagers died beside him.³⁶⁶ His wounds were aided first in the Tkviavi and then Gori hospital, but afterwards he underwent treatment for three months at his daughter's home, and then immediately returned back to the village to deal with the house and farming. He found his house destroyed. "Only the walls were remaining. The entire harvest, vineyard, crops were destroyed. My cow and pig were killed."

80 year-old **Otar Mariamidze** lived under the stairs of his demolished house for months. He was wounded in the right leg during the bombing. He underwent treatment in Tbilisi and immediately returned back to the village. He cannot abandon the remains of his burnt house and grave of his wife.

Vladimer Unapkoshvili was recuperating for three weeks from wounds received at a friend's place during bombing in Atskuri.

"I was wounded in the right armpit. I still have a piece of shrapnel remaining in the body".

Many people were killed during the bombardment in Bidzinaant district. Details are given in the chapter on annihilation of life.

³⁶⁶ See the information on people having died during the bombardment in Bidzinaant district of the village Karbi on 9 August in corresponding chapters

VILLAGE ERGNETI

On 7 August **Tariel Kasradze** took his family to Gori and stayed alone in the village to look after the house and cattle. Residents of Ergneti tell us their village was entirely Georgian, only a few mixed families lived there. They suppose that it is the very reason why the whole village was burnt and destroyed.

The shooting became intense in Ergneti on 7 August.

*“Bombing started at about half past eight at night and lasted till eight in the morning. Missiles were shot as well. Jets didn’t appear in the village on that day, but we heard frightening loud blasts”.*³⁶⁷

That is why the village was almost entirely abandoned by the inhabitants. The local residents recall:

*“Only old people remained in the village”.*³⁶⁸

On 12 August Russian troops came in from Tskhinvali, followed by Ossetians in civilian clothes and with white armbands. A lot of Russian tanks and military machines were in the village and, according to the stories of the witnesses, they aimed shots at houses.

*“I saw how Russian soldiers in tanks and BTR-s approached my house. They fired a shell from one tank at my house. The whole house went up in flames. I don’t know whether Ossetians were there at that time. I remember for sure that the tanks had Russian three-color flags on them”.*³⁶⁹

Accounts of Ergneti residents state the pillage and torching of the village began on 12 August and by 17 August the majority of the houses had already been burnt, stated **Meri Dvalishvili**.

“The houses of my neighbors Jemal Doijashvili, Gocha Doijashvili, Nugzar Doijashvili, Nodar Doijashvili, Zaur Doijashvili, Ivane Dvalishvili and Gaioz Dvalishvili were burnt down. Their houses were also



Tamar Doijashvili didn't leave Ergneti during hostilities. Village Ergneti, October 2009

367 Interview with Meri Dvalishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 22 July, 2009, in village Ergneti

368 Interview with Jemal Doijashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 8 February, 2009, in village Ergneti

369 Interview with Tariel Kasradze was recorded by the GYLA on 10 September, in village Ergneti



Bombarded houses, village Ergneti, September 2009

smoking. It was 17 August, we moved from the Doijaant district to the Tseretliant district. We met nobody on our way, the entire village was empty. In the Tseretliant district we stopped for having a rest at Maia Tsereteli's house. Nearly all houses were burnt in that district too, among them those of Maia Tsereteli and Davit Jokhadze".

Her house itself was torched on 12 August.

"The soldiers approached Gocha Doijashvili's house. A bit later I saw a flame burst out of the roof of Gocha's house. Then those soldiers entered our yard. A few women were among them. One of the women said in Georgian with an Ossetian accent that she had been in this house before. I wanted to go out and have a look at her, but my husband didn't let me. Suddenly black smoke burst out of the roof of our house. Then Ossetians tuned to Ossetian songs and began dancing".

Even a year after the destruction of her house she remembers the sharp emotion that overwhelmed her and her husband at seeing their burnt house.

"My house was a dreadful sight. It was totally burnt down. The house was still smoking. My heart nearly broke when I saw the house in such a condition. I began weeping. My husband lapsed into an even worse state, he nearly went mad, was roaring, weeping and shouting, "My house is on fire, bring me water, let me go put the fire out". I could hardly calm him down".

In September of 2009 we visited Ergneti and the best evidence of cruelty is the present state of the village. The remaining houses in the village can be counted on fingers. Moreover, village has been divided and one of its districts is in occupied territory and Georgians who have returned to the village live in constant fear.

Meri Dvalishvili relates how she was at her neighbor Zaur Doijashvili's house at about noon on 11 August.

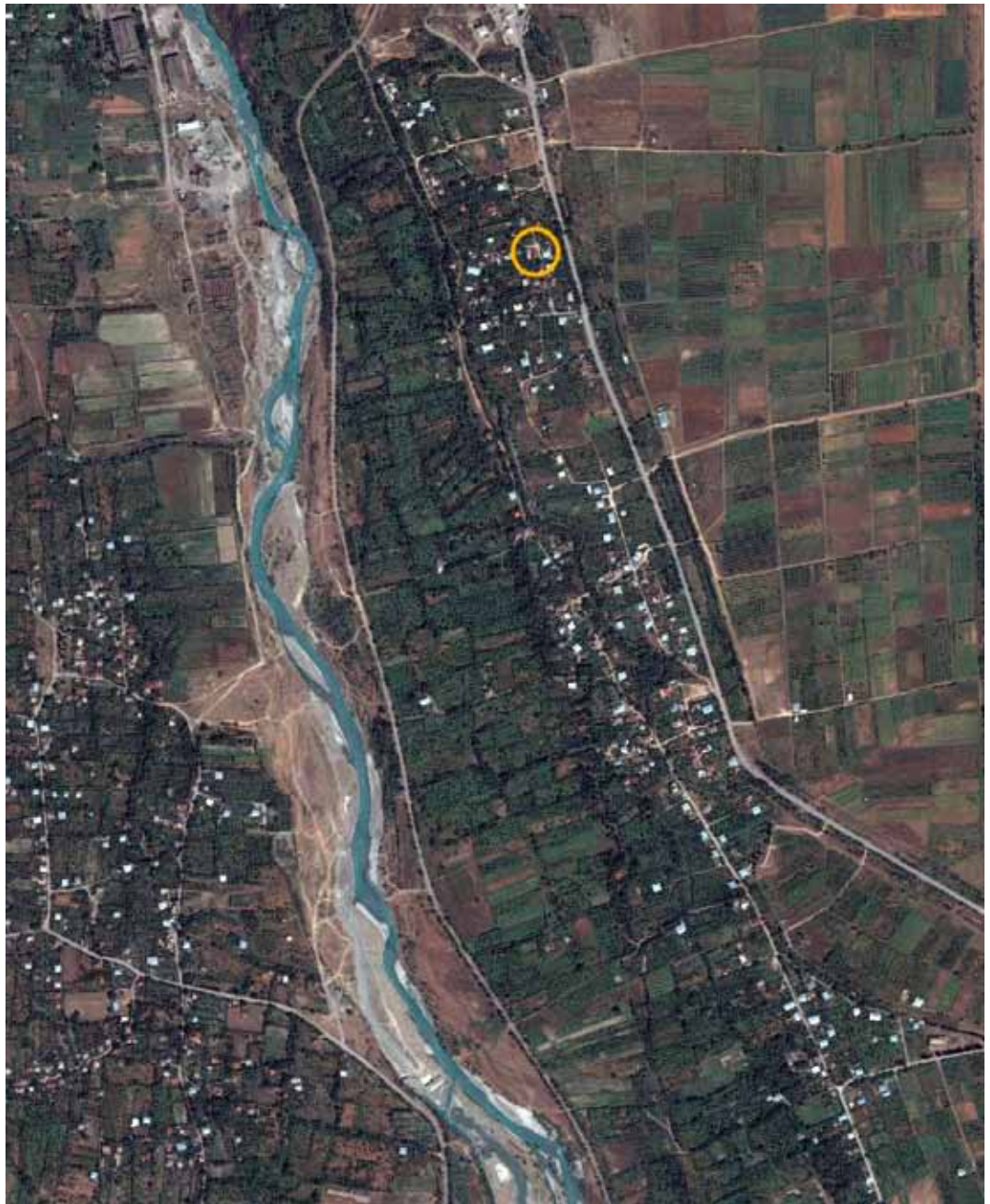
We were standing in Zaur's yard when I suddenly heard a whizzing sound. I felt a sharp pain in my left leg and arm. I glanced down and saw my thigh bleeding. My arm was also bleeding. Zaur wasn't hurt, but his wife and daughter were wounded, Natia in ribs and Nanuli in her head. Wounded, I went straight home. I found my husband wounded too. He didn't find me at home and went to look for me. He walked towards the highway. There was a BTR, soldiers in uniforms were sitting on it shooting aimlessly. My husband asked why they were shooting and they replied in Russian "It's a war, uncle". Guram turned round and suddenly noticed that his left arm was bleeding".³⁷⁰



Bombed house, Ergneti, September 2009

³⁷⁰ Interview with Meri Dvalishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 22 July, 2009, in village Ergneti.

10 August, 2008, Ergneti village (satellite 14)



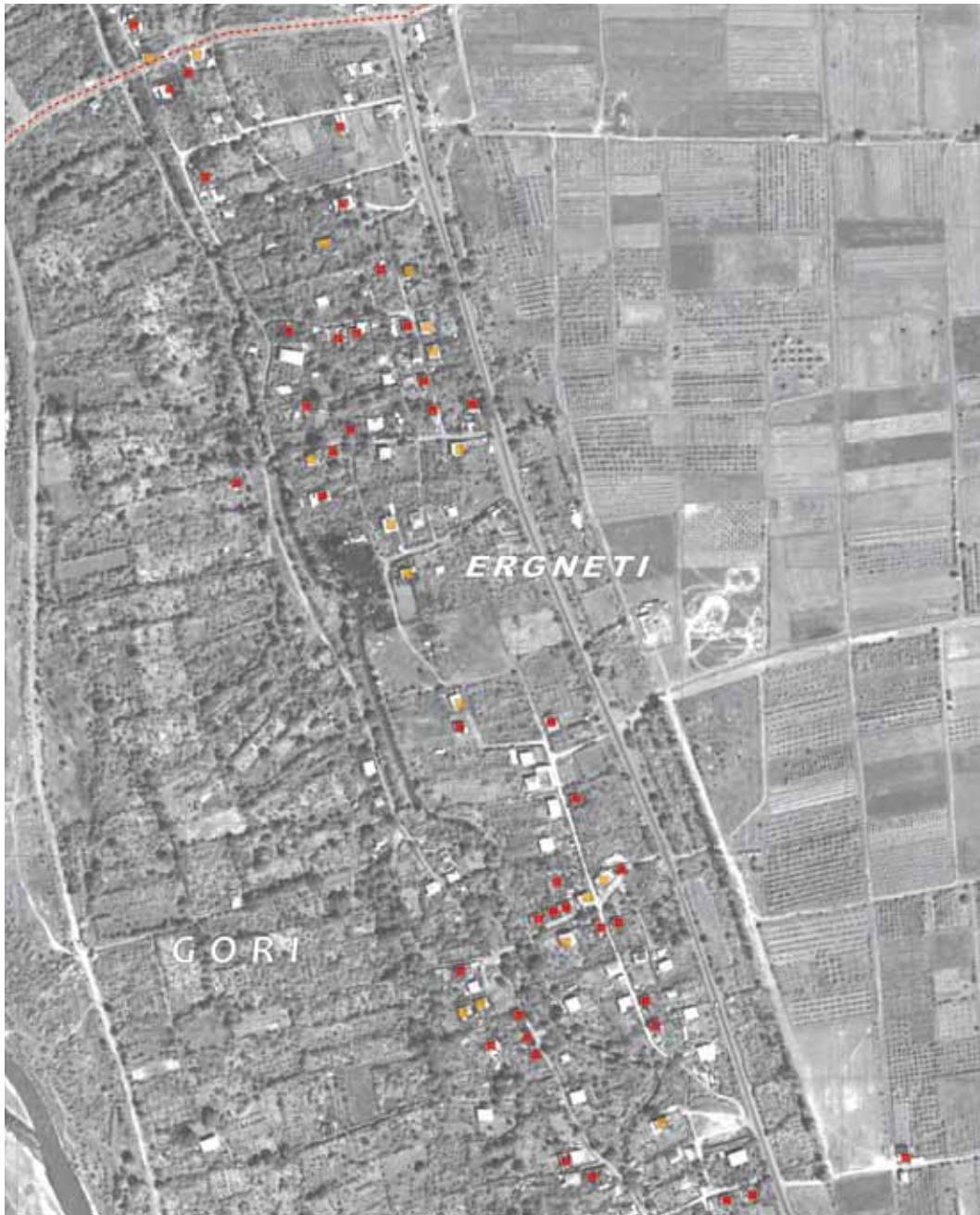
The photo clearly shows that only one building is damaged in the village

Source: High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and The Conflict in South Ossetia, Summary Report, October 9, 2008, AAAS, Science and Human Rights Program

Documents published by Amnesty International clearly show that by August 10, 2008 only one building was damaged in Ergneti (see satellite 14).

The statements of the residents of the village confirm the content of satellite images that no particular violence, fires or burning have occurred in Ergneti before August 11, 2008.

UNOSAT materials reveal the dramatically changing situation in Ergneti. On the satellite image from August 19, 2008 it is evident that 58 buildings are damaged. Among them 41 are fully destroyed, and 17 severely damaged (see, satellite 15).

19 August 2008, Ergneti village (satellite 15)

The objects highlighted in red on the photo taken on 19 August, 2008 were destroyed by that time, while the objects in yellow – were severely damaged. In total 58 objects.

Source: South Ossetia, Georgia. Damage Assessment with WorldView-1 & Formosat-2 Satellite Imagery recorded on 19 August, 2008; UNOSAT, Satellite Solutions for All

Witness accounts note the burning of houses continued after August 19 and into September as well. The current state of Ergneti can be seen by all interested parties, as the village is under Georgian control and easily accessible.

Nowadays, there are only 6-7 houses left in Ergneti unharmed. All the others either do not exist or are seriously damaged.



4.1 Civilian Detainees

4.2 Prisoners of War (POWs)



4

"We begged them to let us call on the phone. In return they turned up the volume of the TV, which was on the first floor, and told us: 'your people don't need you. Look at your state here and listen, they are holding a concert over there.' We endured big misfortune during the first week."

Neli Mchedlidze, Georgian detainee

"Dozens of people were taken hostage, including people who could certainly not be classified as soldiers - women, children and the elderly. The 'lucky' ones were kidnapped, exchanged for Ossetian militiamen and held in a Tskhinvali detention centre. At least we know the exact number of these people. These hostages were used to remove and bury the bodies of Georgian soldiers who had been lying in the August heat for over a week."

*Varvara Pakhomenko**

* See, Varvara Pakhomenko "South Ossetia: fear and loathing in the buffer zone", 15 November 2008, at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/russia-theme/south-ossetia-fear-and-loathing-in-the-buffer-zone>

4.1. CIVILIAN DETAINEES

According to the official data of the government of Georgia there were 163 Georgian civilian detainees on the territory of South Ossetia in August 2008. (See Attachment #6) Public Defender of the South Ossetian de-facto authorities, however, released different data. In an interview with USA Today on August 29, 2008 he said “a total of 182 Georgian civilians were detained for their own protection”.³⁷¹

International media covered the story of civilian detainees of the August war, during and after the conflict. For instance, on August 18, 2008, UK based newspaper “Telegraph” wrote about the 130 Georgian hostages held in the Ministry of Interior of South Ossetia building. “A 12-year-old girl is among the 131 captives, which includes 'guest workers' who were living in the city when it was attacked on August 7. Roughly half of the captives are women.”³⁷² Another British newspaper “The Guardian” referred to the violation of international law:

“The taking of civilian hostages by warring parties is prohibited by Article 3 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.”³⁷³

Despite suffering torture, insult, and violence, former Georgian detainees recall the days spent in captivity in detail. They all have been taken captive differently. These stories have no common characteristics except the national belonging of humans. Taken into captivity were ethnic Georgians or Oss. tians living in mixed families and remaining in the villages.

The interned ethnic Georgians and the ill, degrading, and often cruel treatment towards them is widely discussed in the **OSCE 2008 report**, however, because we don't know the names and surnames of in the people in the report, it is difficult to identify whether these are the same people we interviewed or not. Nevertheless, the OSCE-ODIHR report “Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia” contains critical information, regarding a broad variety of accounts on inhuman and degrading treatment and violence.³⁷⁴



Georgian civilian detainees, among the others Temur Lazarashvili is on the photo

371 See, “AP IMPACT: Georgians uprooted in South Ossetia”, by Yuras Karmanau, on 29 August, 2008 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-29-3937720385_x.htm

372 See, “Georgians held hostage by South Ossetia”, 18 August, 2008, at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/Europe/georgia/2576779/Georgians-held-hostage-by-South-Ossetia.html>

373 See “South Ossetia holds civilian Georgians hostage”, by Tom Parfitt, The Guardian, Monday 18 August, 2008, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/18/georgia.russia>

374 See “Human Rights in the War-Affected Areas Following the Conflict in Georgia”, OSCE-ODIHR, Warsaw, November 27, 2008, pp. 37-40.

84-year-old **Ilia Chulukhadze** told us about his bitter old age with utmost fervor and emotion.

*"I was in slippers and they didn't even allow me to put my clothes on, threw me in a "Vilis" and took me to Tskhinvali. They brought me directly to the militia building. It was 11 August. They held me until the 23rd. The following people were with me in the cell: **Sokrat Khaladze and his wife, Neli Mchedlidze, Andro Gogidze and his wife Shura Khabareli, Asmat Babutsidze, Aliosha Chulukhadze, Givi Chulukhadze, Aleksandre Khetaguri, Enver Babutsidze, Ivane Babutsidze and others.**"³⁷⁵*

Detained fellow villager **Neli Mchedlidze**, who was with Ilia Chulukhadze, when abducted from a neighboring house.

"I went up to the road and saw they had gathered people. I went down to the Khabarelis (family name - author). As soon as I entered, people with machine-guns followed. They were mixed: Ossetians and Cossacks, speaking both in Ossetian and Russian. They threw us out of the house and brought us to the crowd of people. Then we headed towards Tskhinvali on foot. Along the way a white "Soviet Jiguli 07" would drive up and down the road with young men sitting inside and cursing us from the car either in Russian or Ossetian and spitting on us. They would open machine-gun fire at our feet, the elderly would fall on the ground screaming, and we would help them somehow get up and continue walking. They brought us directly to Tskhinvali, in the KPZ (pre-trial detention, author) facility."³⁷⁶

Another detainee **Davit Dzadzamia** left Tamarasheni together with his mother on 10 August and planned to go to Gori via Achabeti. Because there were Russian soldiers, military equipment and Ossetians, they hid along the way. In Achabeti they stopped at Ilia Khabareli's house, where they met his wife Salimat, their daughter Nato Khabareli and neighbors, Asmat Babutsidze, Neli Maisuradze, Marusa Chulukhadze and Asmat Chulukhadze. Later Ramaz Mindiashvili and Givi Mindiashvili from Tamarasheni joined them, in an effort to escape.

*"After a while, two Ossetians entered Ilo's house. They pointed their guns at us and ordered us all outside. There were four other Ossetians outside. They all wore military uniforms but of different types, some wore black, some black T-shirts and camouflaged military pants, some wore light green Russian military uniform and some OMON (emergency platoon) uniforms. They all had white bands on their arms. They brought all of us outside: me, my mother **Valentina Aidarashvili, Tasiko Lashkhi, Ilo, Salimat and Nato Khabareli, Asmat***

375 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Ilia Chulukhadze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on 8 April, 2009, 9 Tamarashvili St.

376 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.



Georgian civilian detainees, Gogita Kotuashvili and Nikoloz Darbuashvili

Babutsidze, Mariam Chulukhadze and Asmat Chulukhadze, Ushangi (Shio) Chulukhadze (very elderly). Shortly afterwards, they brought the brothers **Giorgi, Vigenti and Zhuzhuna Chulukhadze** to the same place."

Detainees were forced to walk to Tskhinvali. A car caught them up with three other detainees in it: **Anastasia (Tasiko) Khetaguri**, her son **Levan Khetaguri** and their neighbor, **Ketevan Chulukhadze**. They were all brought to the militia in Tskhinvali.³⁷⁷

Levan Elbakidze and **Vepkhia Lapachi** from Kurta were apprehended in their attempt to leave the village.

*"They took us to Tskhinvali in a neighbor's car, a Volkswagen. They threw us in the trunk. When they opened the trunk door and threw us out, I saw we were in the militia building. Before putting us in the cell, they beat us in the corridor, yelling, **"we beat you because you're Georgians."** They didn't give us a break and beat us cruelly. I was wearing a T-shirt that had "Italy" written on it. **"Now let Italy and America help you."** My ribs hurt and my lip and nose were broken. Then they threw us in the cell. I think it was 11 August."³⁷⁸*

Ossetians found **Sonia Lomsadze** and **Rezo Babutsidze** on the 12 August in the basement of a burned house and brought them to the Tskhinvali militia just like other Georgians.

"They brought us downstairs to the cell by stairs. There were so many people that the cells were crammed. Rezo and I were brought into an open room. There were bars from above, one could see the sky, it was like a small yard. It was jammed with people, so many that there was no space to put your feet. I spent three entire days and nights there. There was no room to sit down, not to mention to sleep"³⁷⁹

Givi Chulukhadze, who was with Iliia Chulukhadze in the cell, was in his brother's house on 9 August and watched the looting of the village from there. Suddenly Ossetians with white armbands had entered: **"Gather at the bridge, there will be others and we'll take you."** At the bridge in

377 Interview with Davit Dzadzamia was recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009 in Tbilisi. He was released from captivity with others by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg on 27 August, 2008. Ombudsman of the South Ossetian de-facto authorities Davit Sanakoev attended the release also.

378 Interview with resident of village Kurta Levan Elbakidze was recorded by the GYLA on 8 July, 2009 in the IDP settlement in village Koda. He was released from detention on 27 August, by the Red Cross.

379 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Sonia Lomsadze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 April, 2009 in the IDP settlement in Tbilisi, Department of Geology, 24 Mosashvili St. Grandson Shmagi Babutsidze attended the interview. It was the grandson who told us that grandmother was in detention for 10 days and on 22 August, she was released by the Red Cross.

the center of the village Givi several of his fellow villagers, including Davit Dzadzamia was there, as were **Ilo Khabareli, Salimat Khabareli, Nato Khabareli, Maro Khetaguri, Shota Lapachi, Sokrat Khaladze, Marusa Chulukhadze** and others. They took them to Tskhinvali via Achabeti.

*"On the way we were transferred into the white OAZ type of mini-van and brought to Tskhinvali. We could see from the windows that Tamarasheni was on fire. We were taken to the city militia building. When we got out, there were a lot of people in front of the building: soldiers, police officers. **At the entrance to the building, by the stairs they unfolded a Georgian flag and told us to wipe our feet. They made us stand in the line and thus on the flag.**"³⁸⁰*

Bagrat Khaladze managed to escape from Ossetians on 9 August, but the next day they caught him at home. First they drove the cattle away, then they made him watch his own house burn and finally he was taken to the police building in Tskhinvali together with his neighbor in a stolen car. He saw his wife, Darejan Khaladze, there in jail. She was taken captive by Ossetians on the 9th. **Darejan Khaladze** recalls being taken into captivity:

*"On 9 August they gathered 15 of us, brought us to Achabeti on foot. People were assembled there as well, 20-25 of them. They sat us in three RAF type cars and took us to Tskhinvali, in the militia building. We were brought inside. They **unfolded a Georgian flag in front of us and told us to wipe our feet while calling us pigs.** They had weapons and herded us into the building to trample on the flag. They stood on the stairs and laughed at us, saying clap for Saakashvili, this is what he has done to you."³⁸¹*

They forced nearly every detainee to trample across the flag. **Davit Dzadzamia** recalls that when he was brought to the temporary detention cell in Tskhinvali, the Georgian flag was unfurled on the ground and detainees were ordered to "**first spit and then walk on it.**" There were approximately 30 people together.

"Because I refused, they struck my head with a gun butt and then beat me terribly. Their Minister of Internal Affairs, Mindzaev, attended all of this, observing quietly."³⁸²



Agency "Osinform"

380 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Giorgi (Givi) Chulukhadze was recorded by the GYLA in August 2008; additional information was recorded on 26 June, 2009 in the IDP settlement in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.

381 Interview with residents of village Achabeti Darejan Khaladze and Bagrat Khaladze was recorded by the representatives of "Article 42" on 27 October, 2009. The couple was released from captivity by the Red Cross on 23 August.

382 Interview with Davit Dzadzamia was recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009 in Tbilisi.

When the detainees were brought into the building, the young were selected and taken to a separate room, where they were checked if they were soldiers or reservists. 31 year-old **Davit Dzadzamia** was among them.

*"They brought me outside the building and threw the flag of Georgia at the bottom of stairs. Mindzaev was still there. An Ossetian told me: **"Go on, piss on it"**, and I told him **"I couldn't"**. Then he kicked me in front between the legs. I crumpled and they hit me with a machine-gun butt from above. My only thought was not to lose consciousness."*

Another detainee **Ana Datashvili** also recalls Davit Dzadzamia's beating.

"Ossetians were forcing young Georgian detainees to work. Guys were coming back beaten. They were all in bruises. Dzadzamia, who was working at the municipality was beaten up so badly that we could not see his eyes."

On 13 or 14 August, 77 year-old **Nikoloz Kakhniashvili** from Kekhvi was on his way to Gori at midnight after his house was burned when Ossetians apprehended him and took him to Tskhinvali. There were 50 other detainees with him in the "punishment cell" (as it was called). Ossetians were among them, those who had mixed families with the Georgians. Police officers were telling the Ossetians:

"Why did you marry a Georgian? If you're on the Ossetians' side, you wouldn't have married a Georgian then."³⁸³

Aslan Jioev was one such detainee who had a Georgian wife and was detained with other fellow villagers in Kekhvi. Aslan Jioev told us that because he lived in a Georgian village with Georgians, he was sure they'd kill him. Therefore, when he was brought to the police in Tskhinvali, he concealed his surname and registered as Nebieridze. Cossacks and Ossetians detained Jioev and his four neighbors on 12 August. "Tanks were right there with Russian soldiers in them." They were beaten immediately after their arrest by machine-gun butts to the head while threats of killing were shouted at them. Two days after arrest, Jioev and others with him were forced to load furniture stolen from the families. Two days later all four of them were taken to Tskhinvali in a truck and brought to the yard of the police building, on the Khetagurov Street.³⁸⁴

The 92-year-old, eldest of the village Tamarasheni Nikala Papa (grandpa Nikala) could not escape detention either. In the village everyone called Nikoloz Elbakidze Nikala Papa and in the interviews with us fellow villagers called him this way. When the Ossetians entered his house and ordered to follow them to Tskhinvali, the old man resisted.

383 Interview with resident of village Kekhvi Nikoloz Kakhniashvili was recorded by the representatives of "Article 42" on 10 September, 2008 in Tbilisi, kindergarten #150. Nikoloz Kakhniashvili, together with 15 other detainees, was brought on 24 August, to Gori by the Ossetians to be exchanged in Ossetian detainees.

384 Interview with resident of village Kekhvi Aslan Jioev was recorded by the representatives of "Article 42" on 10 September, 2008 in Tbilisi, kindergarten #150. Aslan Jioev was released from detention on 27 August.

"They forced him to leave. They struck his head and broke his clavicle. He had been just operated on and had a probe inserted inside. It fell off in the concentration camp. He was suffering from pain. They fooled him for two days and didn't bring a doctor."³⁸⁵

Nunu Gogidze was taken to the Tskhinvali detention facility from her yard.

"On 10 August I saw three armed men in the yard, one had already entered the house. There were Russians and Ossetians. A Chechen was standing in the door and didn't come into the yard. They ordered me to leave the house and follow them, as there was no place for Georgians.

I argued with them over why I should I follow them, I told them that the house had hosted more Ossetian guests than Georgians, and that they should have been ashamed. He said he didn't care and shot at my feet from his machine-gun, laughing that it scared me."

*When we went out on the road we met my Ossetian relative **Nadezhda Gogidze** who told them in Ossetian to leave me alone. In return they hit her with the butt of a gun and took her with us. On the road they picked up another man, **Kristo Khetereli** also."³⁸⁶*

Davit Dzadzamia recalled other detainees also, who were with him in the cell:

*"At first there were about 10 people in the cell. When I was brought there, three people were already there: father and son **Ushangi Tegashvili** and **Gia Tegashvili** and **Giorgi Datashvili** - all three from Tamarasheni. Other men detained with me in Achabeti were brought in that cell together, and the next day father and son **Tengiz Melanashvili** and **Otar Melanashvili** were brought in. They were from village Kekhvi. Afterwards, **Roman Kasradze** from Tskhinvali and **Mikho Razmadze** from Ksuisi (they'd caught them in Tirdznisi) were brought in - the latter was a 26-year-old boy, severely beaten. He was released from jail before us, several days after the women were released, because he was terribly beaten. Finally they brought in **Akaki Basishvili** (father of MP from the Liakhvi Gorge) and **Aslan Jioev** (who registered as Nebieridze to hide his Ossetian origin). There were total of 15 people in the cell. The next day I saw two other guys from Tbilisi, **Giorgi Monaselidze** (22-23-year-old) and **Nika***



Civilian detainee Nikoloz Elbakidze

385 Story of Nikala Papa (grandpa) was told to our researchers by Davit Dzadzamia.

386 Interview with Nunu Gogidze was recorded by the GYLA on 9 November, 2008 in Tbilisi, in the temporary settlement; additional clarifying information was recorded on 30 June, 2009 in Tbilisi.



Reuters

Georgian detainees Rezo Shavkani and Gogita Kotuashvili near the de-facto Ministry of Internal Affairs building in Tskhinvali. 15 August, 2008

Kharadze (19-year-old), both of them were beaten. They arrived before us. There was also **Koba Kakhniashvili** from Sachkhere and his **12-year-old son Giorgi**. **Temo Barbakadze** was also there, who was a worker in Tskhinvali."

Giorgi Monaselidze is from Tbilisi. On 8 August he went to Tskhinvali to volunteer with his friend Nika Kharadze, but at the reservists' base they were not given weapons and continued hitchhiking. By 9 p.m. on the 8th he was in Tskhinvali. The Ossetians caught him and first locked him up in a private house in town, and then transferred him to the Tskhinvali detention facility together with other Georgian detainees, where he stayed until 27 August. Throughout this entire period Giorgi and Nika were subjected to physical insult most frequently.³⁸⁷

Tamaz Gogishvili from Zemo Khviti was also detained. He was in the village on 11 August during the bombardment and that day he was apprehended.

"A tank was on the way. I made way for it. They stopped. There were ten of them in uniforms, all of them wearing white armbands. They told me in Russian to raise my hands and made me lean against the nearby wall. They searched me and found the reservist's token on the neck. They told me I was

387 He states Giorgi Monaselidze, Tamaz Barbakadze and his nephew Koba were in the house also. Following them, Gio Khunashvili, Lasha Patarkalishvili, and Gogita Beridze from Tbilisi were brought in. All of them were beaten, and Gio's head was split open. The next day all of them were transferred to the Tskhinvali detention facility.



Civilian detainees Tamaz Gogishvili and Zaza Gogishvili from the village Zemo Khviti

a disguised guardsman. One of them beat me and broke my nose and brow. I was covered in blood. [...] Shortly after they brought all of us outside. They took Zaza and I to the field. They told us to put our hands on our heads and run. They chased us. The tank was waiting up there."³⁸⁸

A) IN DETENTION

In detention there were conditions that degraded human dignity and posed threats to human life. Interviews of all detainees attest to this. Our archive contains numerous photos and video materials providing objective information on the condition of the cells and detainees. Detainees recount the same stories and conditions regardless of where they were held. Insult, the lack or non-availability of food and drinking water, cramped cells, disregard to the minimum conditions of sanitation, mixing of men and women in the cells, and degrading labor and beatings prevailed. For weeks, Georgian detainees became victims of unprecedented cruelty in the Tskhinvali detention center, the so-called isolation ward and other places of detention. Treatment was even graver and more unbearable in the cells where the soldiers and reservists were held. Many of them witnessed the deaths of their fellow comrades, while they spent days and nights under the constant fear of death. Based on the stories told by the detainees we will attempt to restore

³⁸⁸ Interview with Tamaz Gogishvili was recorded by the GYLA on 30 May, 2009



Georgian civilian detainees in Tskhinvali Detention Center

more or less a full picture of the conditions existing in the so-called Tskhinvali "concentration camps".

From the stories of eye-witnesses it is difficult to demarcate various forms of criminal offence or cruelty, for example, to draw a straight line between the insult and beating. Therefore, in various sub-chapters, deviations from the main topic are obvious. Nevertheless, we still tried to introduce a more or less conditional system in our work and systematized those pieces of information and accounts at our disposal, which had been provided by our respondents under considerable pain, but with the hope of receiving answers to the major questions.

Virtually every Georgian begins his story of captivity with similar words:

*"They started abusing us verbally at the entrance of the building: **You Georgians are fascists, we should kill you.** In front of the building there were many of them standing in military uniforms, wearing something like a round yellow emblem on their arms. They were mixed by appearance: there were Ossetians, Cossacks, and Russians also. Then they brought us down to the basement, six stairs below the ground floor, and threw us in the cells."³⁸⁹*

According to the stories told by people we interviewed, the volunteers from Tbilisi, **Giorgi Monaselidze** and **Nika Kharadze**, were among the first detainees of the camp of prisoners in the basement of the Tskhinvali police station building. They were detained late night on 8 August and were transferred to the cell by the next morning on the 9th.

"Our cell was the first one on the left to the corridor. There was no one

389 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 July, 2009 in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.

*in the cell but I remember it smelled terrible. We did not interact with other cells, no noise was even heard, we were left to ourselves, each in his own despair. We didn't even talk to each other. **We were the first detainees**, there was no one before us. Later at least 20 people gathered in our cell."³⁹⁰*

Another former detainee **Neli Mchedlidze** describes the conditions of detention in the following manner:

"We were 40 women held in one small room. We were sweating and couldn't breathe anymore. There was a terrible smell: some of them had diarrhea and some had urinated from fear. The steel door had a tiny window and they left it open for us. Being disturbed in the cell, some of us shouted to let us go and some just cried."³⁹¹

B) OVERCROWDING

Ilia Chulukhadze remembers well that "there were total of 9 cells, all nine crammed." **Givi Chulukhadze** recalled that "**a cell was approximately 8 sq.m., With no window. The door had a small sliding window**", and when the supervisors were too disturbed from the crying and shouting of the detainees, they threatened to shut this only source of air. "**Shut up or we will shut this window and kill you so that no one will know**", Neli Mchedlidze remembers this threat very well.

"There were two rows of bunk boards with no covers on them. Those who could not fit on the board were lying on the floor. The floor was made out of wood. In the beginning women and men slept in separate cells, but when they brought detainees in the following days we couldn't fit anymore and all of us used to lie down together. Moreover, when we couldn't fit they opened the cell doors and we were able to go outside into the narrow corridor. There was a staircase in the corridor leading up to the yard, if one could call it so. It was rather an open room. We were in that yard like animals in a cage. It was covered by bars from above. One could see the sky from the squares between these bars. At least we could breathe."³⁹²

390 Interview with Giorgi Monaselidze was recorded by the GYLA on 24 January, 2009 in Tbilisi.

391 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 July, 2009 in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.

392 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 July, 2009 in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.

C) SLEEP**Ilia Chulukhadze:**

"There were no beds or, mattresses to pay on the ground. If I were quick enough I could sleep on the cement in the cell, otherwise on the pebbles outside the cell. I spent five nights like this, my entire body was bruised from pebbles. Then the women felt sorry for me and laid me down at their feet on the cement."

Ilia Chulukhadze was also disturbed that - *"Women and men were together. Approximately 12 people in one cell. It was crammed and overcrowded."*³⁹³

Givi Chulukhadze:

"There were no beds or in the cells, only two bunk boards. These bunks were 2 meters in both length and width. There were old mattresses on the bunks, stinking, but later they took these away also. There were five of us lying on each bunk. Under the bunks three people lay on the cement. That night, on 9 August, there were 8 people in the cell. On the second and third days (on 10th and 11th) they brought the detainees in and there were fourteen of us in one cell, sleeping by shifts."

A mattress was a rarity and wherever one was found, it was thrown away.

Davit Dzadzamia:

*"On 22 August, when they released the women, the bailiff made us throw away everything from the cells. They told us we were about to be released. They made us clean all the rooms, then didn't allow us back in, and we spent the night in the corridor under the staircase. The next day we returned to the cells."*³⁹⁴

D) AIR

Lack of air was one of the biggest problems for the detainees. Virtually every one of them recalled that the cells had no windows.

*"None of the cells had a window with daylight in it. The cell was adjacent to the corridor, which was lit by one bulb only."*³⁹⁵

"It was hard to breathe. It was terribly hot and cramped. People felt sick. I felt bad as well. People went to the door shouting for help."

393 Interview with resident of village Achabeti Neli Mchedlidze was recorded by the GYLA on 16 July, 2009 in Tbilisi, 9 Tamarashvili St.

394 Interview with Davit Dzadzamia was recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009 in Tbilisi.

395 Interview with Davit Dzadzamia was recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009 in Tbilisi.

Supervisors came, asked where the hell would we go and opened the door."³⁹⁶

However, this door led to the corridor, which, did not have a window.

E) FOOD

Nutrition of detainees was not taken into account in the camp. **Neli Mchedlidze** told us:

"The first week they gave us only water and bread. We had neither cups nor plates. After the visit of the Red Cross they gave us buckwheat cereal once a day and brought us plastic plates and cups. The Red Cross visited us on 16 August."

Nunu Gogidze also remembers days when they did not have food and water at all:

*"There were approximately 25 women in our cell. We had neither food nor water for four days."*³⁹⁷

There were similar conditions in the men's cells as well. **Levan Elbakidze** told us:

"During the first week they fed us only bread. They would bring one loaf of bread per 4 people. Then they added dry buckwheat cereal and tea with no sugar, they gave that to us once a day. We didn't have plates and forks. We ate buckwheat cereal from the plastic bottles cut in half and drank water from there also. They would throw cigarettes from above."

Other detainees also remember adding of the buckwheat cereal. **Ilia Chulukhadze**:

"In the mornings and evenings they brought buckwheat cereal, tea with no sugar and a small loaf of bread. I didn't eat anything except the buckwheat cereal. When they would bring the food they'd call us "eat you pigs". In the beginning we ate on paper cartons, and then they brought disposable plates."

Situation in the cell of **Givi Chulukhadze** was similar:

"They would bring one loaf of bread per five people, dry buckwheat cereal, tea, sometimes with no sugar and sometimes slightly sweet. For the first two days they fed us twice a day, and then once a day."

Levan Giguashvili from Tkviavi stated:

³⁹⁶ Interview with Nunu Gogidze was recorded by the GYLA on 9 November, 2009 in Tbilisi.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Nunu Gogidze was recorded by the GYLA on 9 November, 2009 in Tbilisi. Nunu Gogidze was released on 22 August.

"They would throw food at us like at cattle."

Ossetians from neighboring villages served as supervisors in the detention facility. Many detainees recognized them. They even knew their names and surnames.

"Davit Tedeev was a bailiff. He would bring bread in the sack, kick it with his leg, saying "eat you pigs."³⁹⁸

F) DRINKING WATER

The situation was even graver regarding drinking water. All former detainees and current IDP Georgians recalled that the water they gave them to drink was brought directly from the Liakhvi River. **Neli Mchedlidze:**

"The water was so dirty that I couldn't even drink it. I was afraid of getting infected with dysentery. I would only cleanse my mouth with it and spit it out."

Tina Nebieridze from Kekhvi also talked about a yellow, dirty water:

"Drinking water was terribly dirty and yellow, probably from the river."

Detainees did not have any cups or glasses and they had problems even with drinking such water. **Ilia Chulukhadze:**

"Out side the cell there was a small area for moving around, and that's where the water cistern stood, you had to get water from there. We didn't have cups. We drank if we managed to get the bottle. Later they brought disposable cups."³⁹⁹

Davit Dzadzamia:

"Water was in two barrels, one was a rusty iron barrel and other was a plastic one. They brought yellow water in a fire-engine, probably from the Liakhvi river. We could see the fire-engines, as they would park them outside the fenced yard and then pipe the water into the barrels. These barrels stood by the toilet. We supposed to have washed our hands in it as well as drink from there."

G) SANITATION

Terrible sanitary conditions aggravated the unbearable conditions even further.

Givi Chulukhadze:

"There was a toilet 3-4 meters away. It was a common toilet for both men and women. It didn't have a door. When there was a queue, women would wait for their turn right there. We didn't even dare about it

³⁹⁸ Interview with Davit Dzadzamia was recorded by the GYLA on 30 January, 2009 in Tbilisi.

³⁹⁹ Assistance brought by the Red Cross is implied, when they brought disposable plates, cups, several mattresses and other items of primary use to the places of detention.

anymore. There was one toilet only."

Neli Mchedlidze:

"There was one toilet for 160 detainees. There was such a filth and stink in that toilet. It didn't even have a door. One thin plastic sheet was put up. You had to wash hands and face by the toilet. If you were quick enough you could wash your face, otherwise there was hardly any water. They would bring water with a cistern and pour it wherever they wanted."

H) FORCED LABOR AND CRUEL TREATMENT

All more or less able-bodied detainees were forced to work constantly. On August 16, 2008 *USA today* reported in an article "Georgian doing forced labor in South Ossetia":

"On Saturday, three teams of ethnic Georgians were seen cleaning the streets of Tskhinvali. When approached, one worker confirmed that he was being forced to work. One group of about two dozen men was escorted through the streets by armed Ossetians and a Russian officer. "Labor even turns monkeys into humans," the Russian officer said. He threatened to arrest an AP photographer if he took pictures, and would not give his name."⁴⁰⁰

Detainees were subjected to forced labor in absolutely inhuman conditions and environments. **Aslan Jioev** recalled in an interview with us that during the day detainees were subjected to forced labor (were made to bury the dead, clean streets from debris with shovels). He was made to bury 50 dead in one day by himself. While working, Ossetians armed with machine-guns supervised them and threatened to kill them if they disobeyed their orders. Every day was the same. Neither food nor rest was available during the work process.

Davit Dzadzamia:

"They would take us to work at approximately 10 a.m. and return depending on when we completed the work, mainly at around 6 p.m. When working, they didn't give me any food or rest. Only once they fed us bread and tinned fish."

Giorgi Monaselidze:

"Whoever they liked they would take out to work. Often Nikusha, others from Tbilisi and I were taken out to clean the offices and the town. Almost everyday, we would leave at 7 a.m. During the cleaning they would either beat us with gun butts or kick us. Drunk Ossetians would stop their car, curse at us, kick us and leave."

400 See "Georgian doing forced labor in South Ossetia", USA Today, August 16, 2008 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-16-Georgia-forced-labor_N.htm

Rezo Shavkani:

"Young men were taken to the city for work. We cleaned up destroyed buildings. Some of us were burring corpses. I did it once too.

We were taken to work everyday from the early morning to late evening. Some detainees were taken separately. A person would've come saying that his house was destroyed and we were forced to follow him and help.

I was sent to private homes several times. I cleaned up a destroyed building first, than a factory. Sometimes they would give us some food, in other cases none. Some people hated us so much that they even denied us water, don't even mention about the food."⁴⁰¹

Givi Chulukhadze also confirmed that the young were taken out to work more often, including the women.

Neli Mchedlidze:

"They would take young women out and make us work. We cleaned streets, and the Ossetians supervised with machine-guns so that we couldn't run away. The population spit and cursed at us. Some of them even threw stones at us. We worked from the morning until the afternoon."

During the forced labor detainees were routinely beaten and insulted.

Davit Dzadzamia told us that on the second day of detention he was taken to clean the second floor of the same building for the first time.

"They made us kneel down and wipe the floor. We found Giorgi Monaselidze there already, he was cleaning the floors and they beat him at the same time, he was kneeling and they kicked him. At that point 5 men came out of one of the rooms, in uniform, speaking in Russian and Georgian. They asked me some things. Then they started beating me. They beat Levan⁴⁰² as well, telling

*him he was a soldier for sure. All three of us were kneeling and all five of them were kicking us. **Mindzaev** appeared here too- "labor turned a monkey into a human and you Georgians are still the monkeys. Work and maybe you'll save yourselves." **Hamlet Guchmazov**, head*



Georgian detainee Rezo Shavkani collecting dead bodies, Tskhinvali, August, 2008

401 Interview with Rezo Shavkani was recorded by the GYLA in Gori, 3 Khakhutashvili st

402 Levan Elbakidze was also taken out of the cell with Davit Dzadzamia, and told us the account of his very beating. Giorgi Monaselidze also confirmed the beating of Levan Elbakidze.

of the pre-trial detention facility, pointed his boots at me kneeling to clean them. When I hesitated, he hit me strongly, broke my nose and I started bleeding after that for about a week."

Giorgi Monaselidze also told us about this incident:

"There were 6-7 men in military uniforms. They beat me with gun butts and kicked me. Once they hit me in the left eye. It swelled up. When they hit me I fainted and they called me an "actor" and started beating me even stronger. I was lying on the floor. Then they ordered me to clean and made me wipe my own blood. When I cleaned the floor, they brought Levan Elbakidze and Davit Dzadzamia up as well. All three of us cleaned and they beat us at the same time. They started beating Dato especially hard."⁴⁰³

Cleaning the town was especially difficult for Georgian detainees. Ossetians would put up a real show of insult, humiliation, and cruelty. **Davit Dzadzamia** told us of one such "journey":

"On 17 August I was taken to work. They made us walk almost for two kilometers and brought us to Tskhinvali in the building of an old mill. There were about 30 of us. Shortly after, Ossetian women came by and started throwing stones at us, calling us pigs and fascists. The bailiff stood there and did nothing. That evening I started bleeding. I had to go out to clean the town several times, I believe a total of four times. They would take 8-10 of us. In the streets the passers-by would throw bottles and stones at us."

Giorgi Monaselidze and **Nika Kharadze** had to walk through the town where everyone considered them to be deadly enemies.

"When the Russians recognized the independence of South Ossetia on 26 August, we were out cleaning the town. We were gathering broken glass and branches on Heroes Street. People had already returned to Tskhinvali, even were cars driving around. Nikusha was working on the one side of the street, and I was working on the other, there were 10 by 10 of us on each side. Suddenly they started shooting and yelling "independence, independence". We walked around and cleaned, and didn't look into anyone's eyes as we were afraid. They drove around in cars and shot blindly. One bailiff told us they had become independent. At that point I had tears in my eyes and when he saw it he threatened to kill me."



The head of the Tskhinvali Isolator Hamlet Guchmazov on the photo

403 Interview with Giorgi Monaselidze was recorded by the GYLA in Tbilisi on 24 January, 2009



Georgian detainees Davit Dzadzamia, Nika Kharadze and Giorgi Monaselidze while cleaning the Heroes street in Tskhinvali

Georgian soldiers taken prisoner recall even graver episodes of being in the town. Their stories can be read in the chapter on the prisoners of war.

Georgian detainees were obliged to collect and bury the dead. Givi Chulukhadze explained:

"We would wrap the dead bodies in plastic sheets and lay them in coffins. Those dead were mainly Georgian soldiers. When I touched them I sometimes would end up holding a hand or sometimes a leg in my hand."

Davit Dzadzamia was a part of numerous burials together, with his fellow captives.

"On 15 August they made us carry the coffins. The coffins were empty. Towards Nikozi, in the so-called "Shanghai" settlement they made us collect the corpses. They were totally nude, even without underwear, all black from burns. All were men, they didn't have even hair. They were extremely distorted - some of them had no legs, and some were broken in the back. We couldn't even distinguish whether they were Georgians or not, they didn't wear uniforms, but the Ossetians told us they were Georgians. Our group⁴⁰⁴ collected 17 corpses. Ossetians cursed at us saying that Georgians didn't need the dead."

404 According to his account, Zaza Maisuradze, Ushangi Chulukhadze, Levan Khetaguri, man from Rustavi (does not know name and surname), Davit Jarmelashvili and others attended that day the burial of the dead together with Davit Dzadzamia.

I) **INSULT**

As noted earlier, beating and insulting detainees whether in the cells or outside them was routine. It is difficult to draw a categorical line between beating and torture, beating and insult, so to present a complete picture we have attempted to systematize a bit and from the hundreds of stories, choose details that would make drawing a complete picture more or less possible.

Neli Mchedlidze:

"One evening we were in the yard. I was going up the stairs from the yard to the first floor of the police building. From the stairs the Ossetians would look at us sarcastically, calling us pigs. That evening women were out in the yard for some fresh air. Two drunk Ossetians stood on the stairs and spoke in Russian so that we could hear. One told the other: "take whoever you want and have her." The other replied: "It would be pity even for a dog to have these."



Civilian detainees gathering the corpses of Georgian soldiers, Tskhinvali, August 2008

Detainees were under constant fear, increasingly expecting the worse. Especially when, as **Darejan Khaladze** recalled, "one woman Shorena was taken out numerous times and raped by the Ossetians."

Tina Nebieridze told us that although old women were not forced to work and had not suffered as many misfortunes as the men, enough insults had occurred on the spot.

"They humiliated us constantly. They would throw cigarette butts at us, disposable items and razors from above. They threw food from above also, mainly dry bread, spit at us and shouted "eat pigs."

Men recount the humiliation and insult that took place mainly outside the cells.

Levan Giguashvili:

"When taking us out to work, local Ossetians tried to hit us with their car and injure us, but as our heads had been counted, the bailiff protected us so as not to lose count. Yet, they didn't object to their insults and they spat at us and kicked us."

Davit Dzadzamia was a marked man because he had recognized the bailiff.

"Davit Tedeev, the bailiff, stood on the stairs. He was holding a "butterfly" knife in his hand. He had two passport pictures put up on the stair rail and he was sticking holes in them with a knife. He asked me whether I knew the people in the pictures and I replied I didn't. He told me I was a pig and those were pigs as well. He put both pictures into my mouth with his knife and told me to eat them otherwise he would cut my ears off. He stood there waiting for me.

J) **BEATING**

Beating was routine in the detention facility. **Darejan Khaladze** told us:

"They would beat the young men, they'd take them out to a separate room and the sound of footfalls and beating was heard. We heard them shout. There was one boy from Tkviavi. I saw he was bleeding from the head. Several young men were taken out couple of times, beaten and brought them back in. As they later said, they would throw them on the ground and then beat them. They didn't even have the right to lift their heads. Those were Ossetian policemen in camouflage uniforms who did it."

Tina Nebieridze remembers the beaten young men well:

"Young men and those in their 40s and 50s were cruelly beaten. From time to time they were taken to the upper floor and we could hear the terrible sound of beating and shouting from there. Even after work they would usually return beaten and injured."

Levan Elbakidze was one of the young men beaten on a regular basis.

"They would take three or four of us to the police building and beat us. They would tell us to clean and when we'd start cleaning they would beat us at the same time. We were beaten quite seriously, as sometimes noses and other parts of the body were broken. Some would just kick us, and some would just hit us with a hand when walking by. Russians were in the building. They saw we had been beaten, but they didn't prevent it from happening."

Beating represented a constituent part of interrogation as well. Interrogation itself is a rather conditional notion, as the detainees told us, nothing was recorded anywhere and no official documentation had been drawn up, except for several video recordings made by Russian journalists.

Giorgi Monaselidze told us several episodes from his interrogations.

"They brought me to interrogation. There were two Ossetians in military uniforms. They totally stripped me, checking whether I was a soldier or not. They tore my T-shirt off me. They asked me what I was

doing there if I wasn't a combatant. I had a cross, icon, and a ring hanging on a string. Why did you come to kill us if you're Christian, they told me. One of them put a gun in my mouth. Then they slid a knife on my neck, pushing me with a point on the back. Finally they put my head on the table and hit me with a gun butt at least 10 times."

They beat Nika and I for a week because we our testimonies didn't coincide. They beat us at every session either with a butt or by kicks. There was no medical aid at all.

"They brought me to Hamlet's office, the jail chief. I had to transfer money from one Magti number to the other. It was a stolen phone and I had to transfer an amount to Hamlet's number. But the transfer service wasn't switched on. He told me I was cheating him and started beating me. He hit me with a weapon butt at least five times. Then they showed me Kokoity's picture and asked whether I knew him. I said no and was hit for that additionally."

4.2. PRISONERS OF WAR

Amnesty International states, small numbers of prisoners of war were held by both the Russian and Georgian forces during the August 2008 war. According to the Georgian authorities, Georgia detained only five Russian POWs, 27 members of the South Ossetian armed forces, and one combatant from the Russian Federation, while 39 Georgian servicemen were taken captive by Russian and South Ossetian forces.⁴⁰⁵



Georgian prisoners of war Malkhaz Meladze, Murman Dumbadze and Giorgi Ramazashvili on the day of their release.

The photo shows that the right fingers of all three soldiers are injured.

According to the **Amnesty International** report, they are not aware of any allegations that soldiers taken captive by Georgian authorities were treated cruelly. Authorities of the Russian Federation refused to provide any kind of information in respect of this topic. Russia sent the same refusal to OSCE, and accordingly the OSCE report is also silent on the POWs detained by Georgia. Nevertheless, South Ossetian authorities often talk about the persons detained by Georgia after the conflict and the occasions of cruel treatment towards them. The largest piece of information that we could identify about the prisoners detained by Georgia is available in the HRW report,⁴⁰⁶ the latter being accessible on the internet to all interested parties.

As for the facts of torture and violence towards Georgian POWs, **Amnesty International** confirmed these are not only based on stories told by them, but based on the traces of torture

on prisoners' bodies also⁴⁰⁷. The following is from the report:

"Amnesty International delegates spoke to several Georgian soldiers who were recovering from injuries in a hospital in Tbilisi. **The index fingers of their right hands had been burnt to the bone.**"⁴⁰⁸

Stories of Georgian POWs are most fully and clearly told by the former prisoners themselves. We offer you their very stories related in brief.

Kakhaber Zirakashvili⁴⁰⁹ and **Davit Malachin**⁴¹⁰ were taken captive in Tskhinvali together. Both soldiers had been wounded during the

405 See "Civilians in the Line of Fire, The Georgia-Russia Conflict", Amnesty International, 2008, p. 48.

406 *Up in Flames*, Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch, January 2009, p. 79-84.

407 As one of such an evidence, see, the attachment #4 Kakha Zirakhishvili's health reference

408 See "Civilians in the Line of Fire, the Georgia-Russia Conflict", Amnesty International, 2008, p. 48.

409 Kakhaber Zirakashvili provided an explanatory statement to the GYLA on 5 May, 2009 in connection with the individual application to be submitted with the European Court of Human Rights.

410 Davit Malachin provided an explanatory statement to the GYLA on 1 August, 2009 in Tbilisi, in the GYLA office.

bombardment of the so-called "Shanghai" settlement by the Russian jets on 8 August.

Kakha Zirakashvili:

"I was wounded in the right arm, in the shoulder and wrist area. I couldn't barely move my right hand because of the wounds, and I couldn't raise my arm at all. Davit Malachin was wounded too, but lighter. He was wounded in the leg."

Davit Malachin recalled that despite their wounds they were assisting other wounded soldiers together with Kakha and sending them to Gori by car. However, it was becoming impossible to remain in one place as bombing intensified. As the jet was making a second round, the soldiers ran towards Nikozi, where Ossetians ambushed them and took them prisoner. There was another soldier, **Kakhaber Khubulov (Khubuluri)**, with them.

"Malachin, Khubulov and I were thrown into the hiding trench. They took everything away from us. Then they beat us, but this beating was nothing compared to the beatings that followed in the coming days.

*We met four other Georgian POWs in the trench - **Imeda Kutashvili, Giorgi Ramazashvili, Ushangi Sopromadze and Malkhaz Meladze.** Among them was the one who was forced to tell us that we were surrounded and had to lay down our weapons."⁴¹¹*

They brought all seven of them to Tskhinvali crawling. POWs recall that wounded captive soldiers had to move like that for at least one kilometer.

Davit Malachin recalled:

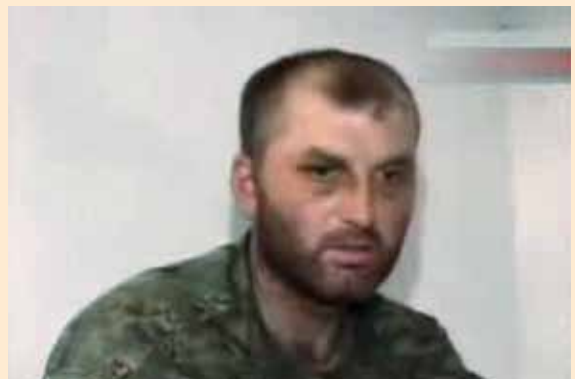
"Ossetian soldiers took us over their trench near the trees. There we saw an additional 20 Ossetian soldiers or so. Every one of them wore a white armband and was armed. They talked among each other in Ossetian, while they talked to us in broken Georgian. We saw four captured Georgian soldiers there - Meladze, Sopromadze, Kutashvili, and Ramazashvili. I only met these guys in captivity. I didn't know any of them before.

We crawled through the trench until we



Georgian prisoner of war, Kakhaber Zirakashvili in the cell

LIFE



Georgian prisoner of war, Davit Malachini in the cell

411 Interview with Kakhaber Zirakashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 5 May, 2009 in Tbilisi, in connection with the individual application to be submitted with the European Court of Human Rights.

got to Tskhinvali. It was a quite long trench, up to a meter in depth. This trench led directly to Tskhinvali, by residential buildings. First we crawled and then they ordered us to walk. We crawled for approximately 10 minutes and it took about the same time to walk to the residential building. Ossetians had some bags and boxes in the trench and they made us carry those. Around 15 people had followed us."

Soldiers spent the first days of captivity in the basement of a residential building. **Kakha Zirakashvili** recalls this very period of captivity.

"In Tskhinvali the Ossetians brought us in the yard of a three or four-storey building. It was a residential building. We were first held in the yard. Then they brought us in one room and locked us up in there. In the evening they brought us down in the basement of the same building.

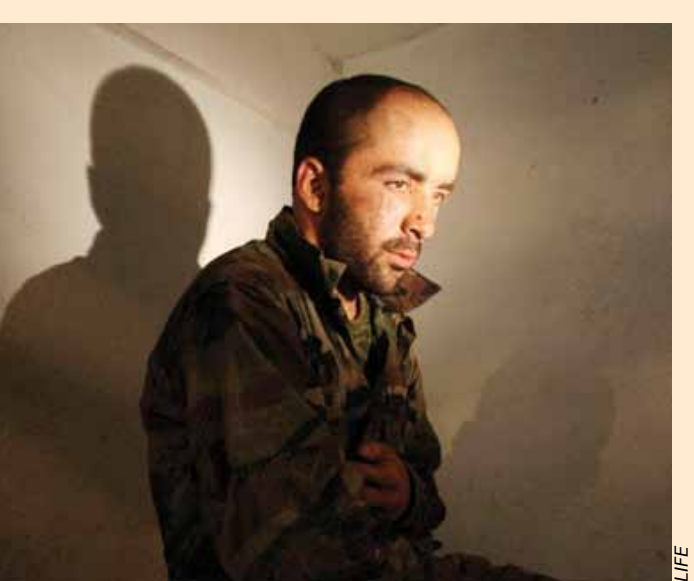
The next day (on 9 August), when they learned that Georgians had been held captive, people started coming from various agencies. 10 people would come in, ask some questions and beat us. Different people would come. Some were dressed in the black OMON (emergency platoon) uniforms, some were soldiers, and some from the police. Some of them spoke fluent Russian, but I don't know whether they were Ossetians or Russians.

Everyone who came beat us and cursed at us. They asked us why we started the war. They threatened to kill us while beating us with butts and sticks.

In the evening on the 9th and early morning of the 10th two other Georgian POWs were brought in. One of them, **Zaza Kavtiashvili**, was severely wounded in the leg and was unable to walk. He apparently had been hiding in the same building where we were and the Ossetians caught him right there. **Murman Dumbadze** was brought early next morning. Murman wasn't wounded."

Our researchers held several interviews with **Zaza Kavtiashvili**, who recalled being taken captive on 9 August in detail. In the outskirts of Tskhinvali, in the "Shanghai" district, his unit directly bumped into a Russian military column.

"There were hundreds of soldiers. Tanks and infantry fighting vehicles were leading the column. Soldiers sat on the tanks, wearing greenish camouflaged uniforms. Tanks bore two flags, a white one and the second Russian three-color flag. Several tanks had an inscription "MC" (peacekeeping forces) on the top. Peacekeepers' tanks led this column, followed by the tanks with two flags. We didn't fire as there was an order not to fire at the peacekeepers. We let part of



Georgian prisoner of war, Murman Dumbadze in the cell

LIFE

*the column, approximately up to 10 infantry fighting vehicles and tanks with the inscription of peacekeepers, pass. They drove towards Nikozi (south), but, as soon as they had passed us, they returned immediately and opened fire at us from the rear. The rest of the column opened fire from the front. At this point the Ossetians had attacked us from the residential buildings on our left and we were surrounded accordingly."*⁴¹²

Soldiers wounded in these clashes found shelter in a building next to them. Zaza Kavtiashvili had severe leg wounds and had trouble moving. He stayed in the building and waited for his friends to find a way out. However, in the basement of this building he *"bumped into the Ossetian soldiers and civilian persons. There were up to 15-20 persons. Some of the soldiers wore Russian camouflaged military uniforms, and some were in civilian attire. I think they wore white armbands, I don't remember exactly. All of them were armed."*

The same evening, another group of Georgian POWs was brought to the basement of the same building, among them were Kakha Zirakashvili and Davit Malachin. That night, 9th of August, everyone spent together.

Zaza Kavtiashvili described the conditions in confinement in detail:

"It was damp and wet around the basement we were in. There was no lighting. There was only a small window through which the light barely came through. The basement didn't have a door. Next to the basement was a corridor where Ossetian soldiers stood guarding us. Once the Ossetians even offered us food. They brought us two packs of "dry rations". It included buckwheat cereal, small cookies, tinned veal, boiled rice and the mixing juice. They handed one of us a bottle of water too."

The next morning the POWs were transferred to Tskhinvali via a bypass road. Soldiers recalled how they had been severely beaten along the way.

Kakha Zirakashvili:

"They came in the morning on the 10th. There were at least 30 people. They brought us out of the basement and made us walk for two kilometers down the streets of Tskhinvali. We had to carry Zaza Kavtiashvili, as he couldn't walk. As we walked through the town,



Georgian prisoners of war Imeda Kutashvili, Malkhaz Meladze, Murman Dumbadze, Kakha Zirakashvili, Davit Malachini and Giorgi Ramazashvili

⁴¹² Interview with Zaza Kavtiashvili was recorded by the GYLA on 13 June, 2009 in Tbilisi.

Ossetian civilians cursed us, beat us and spit at us. Two or three cars drove by as well, armed Ossetians came out, hit us with their rifle butts and left. We saw dead Georgian soldiers. One of them was alive, one could hear him moan, but no one could help him.."

Zaza Kavtiashvili:

"We were at the small hill by the Tskhinvali turn when they beat us for the first time. There were too many of them around, all of them wearing greenish military uniforms and holding machine-guns in their hands. The first several men started beating us and then others joined also. They hit us with rifle butts and kicked us. During the beating, we all fell to the ground. I started bleeding from my head. Others were beaten also. Then one man in Russian said to stop and they stopped beating us.

They made us get up and we continued walking towards Tskhinvali. I was carried by the Georgian soldiers again. On the way I noticed that they were recording us with mobile phones. Then I watched these clips in Tbilisi online. You can see in the video how the guys carried me. Meladze was to the left of me and Ramazashvili in front of him. Next to Ramazashvili there are first Khubulov and then Kutashvili. Behind me are Sopromadze, Dumbadze, and Malachin standing. To my right is Zirakashvili. This video was shot after this beating, all of us were so beaten"

Davit Malachin:

"Most of them wore greenish military uniforms. I remember the image of a Russian flag on some of them. When we were taken to that hill, several soldiers approached us. They started beating us. I was hit with a rifle butt in the right ear and close to the eye, the right side of my face was entirely bruised and bloody. I fainted for a second during the blow, as if I was losing consciousness, but fortunately it didn't happen. At this point we were carrying Zaza and he would have fallen down if I had fainted. Then other soldiers came to beat us too and all of them started beating us together. We fell to the ground, and they were still kicking us and hitting us with rifle butts. During this beating I got hit with a rifle butt in right side, in the ribs, and one of my ribs broke. They cursed us and insulted us during the beating."

We obtained the described video material from the



Interview of Georgian prisoner of war Malkhaz Meladze given to Russian journalists at Tskhinvali School #6 described by Kakha Zirakashvili

The third from the left is executed Prisoner of War Ushangi Sopromadze

Internet.⁴¹³ It clearly depicts the signs of battery and violence to the soldiers. Nearly all of them have bruised and blood-stained faces. Apart from this, the Georgian soldiers are targets of continuous insults throughout the filming. Beating and degrading treatment continued long after.

Kakha Zirakashvili:

"Ossetians put us in a Gazel type car and brought us to the center of the city. There were approximately 200-300 people, soldiers, local population, irregular army, all of them armed. Whoever wanted could beat us with rifle butts, steel pipes, chairs, sticks, anything they could grab. When we fainted or fell down, they pissed on us and continued with the beating. I lost consciousness several times in this beating. We were probably there for an hour. Afterwards, if I'm not mistaken, they brought us to another place, where we were beaten again, although I don't remember that exactly"

Then they crammed us again in the car and brought us to some building. As I was told later, this was the Tskhinvali School #6, which the Ossetians used as a temporary military base. There were hundreds of soldiers there. They beat us again outside, right by the building. Then we were brought inside the building, where journalists had come, I believe, from Russian television. They put eight of us up against the wall, while Meladze had to speak in Russian. Meladze said that we all had been reservists, and that we had known nothing about the war and had possessed no information whatsoever. They beat us again after the interview. In general, everyone who wasn't lazy in the school had beaten us.

Then they led us into a tiled room, it was like a bathroom. They beat us bitterly there. Then they moved us to another room. This was a small room, without windows. They threw us on the floor. We spent two days and two nights in that room. During these two days in the school we hadn't been given either food or water, and no doctor had been brought in either. We weren't taken to the toilet, or anywhere else.

On the same day, 10 August, five soldiers came in. They asked whether there had been any member of a tank crew or artilleryman among us. They checked our hands and established that one of us, **Ushangi Sopromadze**, was a tank driver. They brought Ushangi out of the room. **In five minutes we heard the sound of firing from an automatic weapon."**

Davit Malachin:

"They checked the hands of each of us. One of us, Ushangi Sopromadze, was a tank-man. I believe he was a tank driver. They recognized him by his hands. They told Sopromadze in Georgian to follow

⁴¹³ See online media at, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBE54oks2AU&NR=1>; as well as, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L88ctqSQboU&NR=1>



Garden next to the Tskhinvali School #6 and the corpse of executed prisoner of war Ushangi Sopromadze (was identified by his cell mates)

them and took him out of the room. We couldn't see where he had been taken, but in about 1-2 minutes we heard the sound of shooting from an automatic weapon. We heard the sound of shooting extremely close, as if they'd fired right in our room."

Kakha Zirakashvili:

"Several minutes after the shooting they took Malachin, Kutashvili, Ramazashvili and I out right there in the corridor, which was tiled.

In the corridor we saw Ushangi Sopromadze, who was lying on the floor with his head split in two. Sopromadze was lying on a cloth with his face down, he'd been shot in the head from the back and his head had been split in two.

Malachin, Kutashvili, Ramazashvili and I were forced to wrap Sopromadze's body in the cloth and bring it down to one of the gardens located downstairs by the school. This garden was in about 30 meters from the school building, followed afterwards by private residential houses. The next day they took four of us to dig the grave near the railway. We dug in shifts, first Malachin and I and then Dumbadze and Ramazashvili. When we stopped digging the grave, it was very dark already. We simply wrapped the body in the cloth, tied a rope around it and left it there."

Zaza Kavtiashvili confirmed the murder of Ushangi Sopromadze. Video material depicting the digging of Ushangi Sopromadze's grave is also accessible online.⁴¹⁴ In the shots one can clearly see Georgian soldiers digging the grave, as well as their supervising Russian soldiers with guns pointed at them.

According to the soldiers, **Kakhaber Khubulov** was also shot dead during captivity. None of them witnessed this first hand, but that was how the Ossetians had explained his disappearance. Zaza Kavtiashvili and Kakha Zirakashvili remember the day when the Ossetians took Khubulov out.

Kakha Zirakashvili:

*"The guy who was taken captive with me and Malachin, with the surname **Khubulov**, had an Ossetian mother. When they learned about the nationality of this guy in the school building, people kept coming in to see him especially. On 11 August Ossetian soldiers beat him again, calling him a traitor and they took him somewhere on the same day. We never saw him since. **One of the soldiers told Zaza***

414 See online media at, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JNKweCyOhw&feature=related>.

Kavtiashvili that they had murdered that guy, because he was a traitor. This happened in the morning on the 11th."

Zaza Kavtiashvili:

"On 11 August several soldiers came in and took Khubulov out. If I'm not mistaken they told him in Russian that the chief had called him in for interrogation. Khubulov's mother was Ossetian and therefore they constantly cursed him, asking how he could have fought on the side of the Georgians. They called him a traitor and cursed him and beat him. We never saw him since then, he never came back to us. The same evening I asked a bailiff in Georgian about Khubulov's whereabouts, and he replied that they'd cut his head off and that we shouldn't wait for him anymore."

HRW was concerned about Khubulov's case as well. They confirm Khubulov was gunned down. In particular, the 2008 report of the organization contains an interview with a South Ossetian police representative, who stated in the interview with HRW that a Chechen fighter could not hide his indignation upon hearing Khubulov was an ethnic Ossetian in the service of the Georgian army.

"He said that traitors had to be punished, and took him out in the yard and just shot him."⁴¹⁵

Georgian POW Zirakashvili recalls also that civilians had been brought to them. Later, by comparing other interviews we found out that these elderly persons were the husband and wife, **Andro Razmadze** and **Manana Galegashvili**, and **Natela Mchedlidze** and **Suliko Kakhniashvili**. We managed to verify this by the accounts the Georgian soldiers described of the time they had spent together. The elderly recalled similar stories.

Oppression and threats against POWs intensified gradually. Sopromadze's murder has given rise to a special fear.

Kakha Zirakashvili:

"After the murders of Sopromadze and Khubulov we had been told that they would murder one man a day for each day of our stay



Executed Georgian Prisoner of War Kakhaber Khubulov while being taken hostage.



Georgian prisoners of war, Murman Dumbadze and Kakhaber Zirakashvili in the cell

⁴¹⁵ *Up in Flames*, Humanitarian Law Violations and Civilian Victims in the Conflict over South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch, January 2009, p. 190.



Georgian prisoners of war, Imeda Kutashvili and Davit Malachini in the cell

there. But in the second half of the day on 11th the chief of one of the special squads came upstairs to us, Gazeaev, who had been taken captive previously. He appointed the guard for us at night and warned them not to let anyone in. Gazeaev bandaged Zaza's wound and gave him pain killers. Then he was flown to The Russian military hospital in Vladikavkaz. We saw Zaza on the 18th in Tskhinvali, when Georgian POWs were taken there for an exchange.

We spent two nights in the school #6. In the morning of 12 August the Ossetians took us to another place. They interrogated us and severely beat us. There is a video where Meladze is interrogated and beaten. It was shot in one of the police departments. I believe it was the Ossetian special squad. I was taken for an interrogation separately also and during the interrogation one of the Ossetians pointed a revolver at me several times and pulled the trigger, but no bullet was fired."⁴¹⁶

"In the police station I was put in the cell with Dumbadze. There were a total of 5 or 6 cells, I believe. They didn't feed us anything in the police station. They gave us 100-200 grams of water. Once they even brought bread to Ramazashvili and Meladze. There was no toilet in our cell, but we didn't need it much as we hadn't eaten anything for almost a week. We used a small plastic bottle, with which they'd brought water, for urination several times. There were two wooden bunks in the cell. We didn't have a window and the cell was entirely dark.

If we had thought before that we'd been beaten severely, it was nothing compared what we suffered at that place. There were Ossetians wearing identical stars on the belts. They were from the special squad. We had to stay in these cells until 17 August. Ossetians beat us systematically. We were in horrible conditions, they were always torturing and beating us whenever they had the chance. Several people would come into the cell, beat us, then get tired, leave, and come back for the rest. They beat us until we lost consciousness; they hit us with hammers and rifle butts. They hit us especially in the joints of arms, fingers, and elbows.

They beat us in the cell. I personally had my teeth broken on both sides by a rifle butt; they hit me with a hammer on numerous occasions in the chin, nose, forehead, and index finger of the right hand. When they hit me with a hammer in the forehead I lost consciousness. On the right hand my fingers were broken by a hammer, and the joints on the middle and index fingers were damaged. I have burns from cigarette stubs on the face. **They burned our index fingers on the right hand with a lighter so that we could never take up arms against them again. I remember two Ossetians standing**

416 See online media at, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmohP5KRTHQ&feature=related>

on my arm and holding my hand, while the third had burned the fingers. Then they told me that even if I were released, **I would never be able to use my fingers to shoot Ossetians again.** My right ear membrane broke from a hit with a rifle butt."

Davit Malachin:

"We were horribly tortured. Approximately five-six people had entered the room. All of them were in uniform. They hit us in the joints, beating us with the steel pipes. They put plastic buckets on our heads and hit the top with hammers. They put the bucket on my head twice.

They burned the fingers of several of us. **They burned my finger as well. First they had been burning the index finger on the left hand.** But then they stopped and **burned the index finger on my right hand. One soldier put a foot on my finger, the other held a lit lighter and the third had pointed a gun at me and would hit me as soon as I moved.** They held the lighter to my finger for around 1 minute. They stopped when the skin had started smelling. My finger was burned to the extent that the bone was already seen.

This torture continued for a very long period of time. They hit us on the feet and soles with the steel bars, they hit me with a steel bar until it had broken. My feet were in terrible condition, swollen, and I could hardly walk."

Beating and torturing continued day and night. POWs tell endless stories of insult and torture. They used all kinds of weapons during the tortures: hammers, belts, butts, even chairs. For instance, **Davit Malachin** told us that "Kutashvili lost consciousness from the beating, and had cramps."

The case of Giorgi Antsukhelidze

Another Soldier and former POW **Roland Nakashidze** recalls that Russian peace-keepers opened fire on Tskhinvali on August 9th. He was with 35 other Georgian soldiers and **Giorgi Antsukhelidze** was one of them.

"Suddenly we noticed Russian infantry with the sign "MC" (peace-keepers). We had an order, not to shoot, as they were peacekeepers. They opened fired. I was shot in hand. 14 of my soldiers died."

Roland Nakashidze saw Giorgi for the last time there *"he was lying on the ground, about 6 meters away. I think he was wounded in leg, but I'm not sure. He was not moving"*.

The next day Roland Nakashidze was arrested by locals and has not heard anything about Giorgi Antsukhelidze since then. After his release he saw a video on internet and tells to us about it:

"There is one Georgian soldier, sitting on the ground and people in military uniforms are beating him severely." Nakashidze is confident that the soldier in video is Giorgi Antsukhelidze.



Torture of Georgian Prisoner of War Giorgi Antsukhelidze. Photos from Video

The mentioned video has been shown all over the world, by most of the media outlets as a proof of the torture and ill-treatment of Georgian POWs by the Russians. Giorgi Antsukhelidze's sister Khatuna Antsukhelidze was trying to find more information about the video and its full / original version. She told us:

"A journalist told me that she has a video of soldiers being tortured. I asked how she knows that was Giorgi. She referred to the statements of soldiers from the 4th brigade of the Georgian army. The same brigade Giorgi served in. All of them recognized Giorgi and only after that was the video named."

Later, after re-burial and DNA analysis, one of the bodies was identified as Giorgi Antsukhelidze. "According to the official papers Giorgi was killed on the 9th of August in Tskhinvali. Reason of death - "killed in war"- says Khatuna Antsukhelidze.

Exchange of Prisoners of war

On 17 August the Russians transferred the POWs to the former school building in Tskhinvali. Soldiers met other Georgian POWs there, among them **Kakha Makhatadze, Nakashidze, Megrelishvili** and others.

This was a very moment when the Russians gave the POWs an opportunity to have a bath and shave. There they rendered them medical assistance, cleaned and bandaged their wounds, and even permitted to wash the bloody clothes. After the nearly 10 days of starvation, 17 August was the first time the Russians provided them with more or less normal food.

In an interview with us, **Davit Malachin** had especially grave feelings when recalling the story of 17-19 August.

"One Russian soldier came and told us that we had to be taken somewhere, and that we had to be exchanged for Russian POWs. We flew by helicopter in the mountains, where a lot of journalists had been waiting for us. One of a Russian soldiers told us that Saakashvili had abandoned us and refused to receive us. This was the Russian officer, probably 35-40 years old, he had two stars, which indicated his military rank. He gave an interview to journalists and talked to them about us and Saakashvili. One of the journalists was an American probably. All others were Russians.

Journalists took pictures of us when we were standing by a helicopter, In the picture you can see us that guys standing by a helicopter. Besides soldiers, there are Georgian civilians standing also. This was a greenish military helicopter, with a big red star on it. These pictures were taken on the 18th of August. The journalists did not attend the exchange on 19 August."⁴¹⁷

However, the exchange took place the next day, 19 August 2008. This group of POWs was flown by helicopter to Igoeti. That day a total of 13 POWs had been exchanged for five Russian servicemen, two out of whom were pilots and three soldiers.

"I remember they left two Georgians with them, one civilian and the other a soldier, whose ear had been cut off. I believe his last name was Megrelishvili. They were exchanged on the second or third day."



The exchange of Georgian Prisoners of War on 18 August, 2008

The photo shows that the right fingers of all POWs are injured.

417 Interview with Davit Malachin was recorded by the GYLA on 1 August 2009 in Tbilisi, in the GYLA office.

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Attachment #1

Questionnaire for the systematization of the information provided in interviews with victims conducted for the aim to describe damages sustained by population due to the conflict in August 2008

The information in the questionnaire is based only on the evidence existing in already conducted interviews

1. **Questionnaire number** -----
2. **Name** -----
3. **Surname** -----
4. **Patronymic** -----
5. **Date of birth** -----
Day/ Month / Year
6. **Gender (please, circle)**
 - 1 Female
 - 2 Male
 - 99 Information not available
7. **Attained level of education (please, circle one appropriate option only)**
 - 1 Incomplete secondary education
 - 2 Secondary education
 - 3 Vocational secondary education
 - 4 Incomplete higher education
 - 5 Higher education
 - 99 Information not available
8. **Family status**
 - 1 Unmarried
 - 2 Married
 - 3 Divorced
 - 4 Widow
 - 99 Information not available
9. **Living address prior to the conflict**
 - 9.1. District -----
 - 9.2. Settlement -----
 - 9.3. Address -----
 - 99 Information not available
10. **Current living address**
 - 10.1. District -----
 - 10.2. Settlement -----
 - 10.3. Address -----
 - 98 Address is the same
 - 99 Information not available
11. **Total number of family members (prior to the conflict)**
Please, write in -----
99 Information not available

12. **Damage sustained personally by respondent as a result of military actions (circle as many options as apply)**

Code	Type of sustained damage	Measurement unit	Quantity of units	Value of damage (approximate, in GEL)
Destruction of real estate				
1.	Destruction of house			
2.	Burning of house			
3.	Destruction of other building			
4.	Destruction of orchard			
5.	Destruction of seeds			
6.	Destruction of vineyard			
7.	Destruction of other agricultural arable land			
Robbery / destruction of crops				

8.	Grains			
9.	Alcoholic beverages			
10.	Fruit			
11.	Vegetable			
12.	Honey			
13.	Robbery / destruction of other product			
14.	Unreceived income			
Destruction of means of transport				
15.	Robbery/destruction of motorcar			
16.	Robbery/destruction of truck			
17.	Robbery/destruction of minivan/bus			
18.	Robbery/destruction of other means of transport			
Robbery/destruction of agricultural machinery				
19.	Robbery/destruction of tractor			
20.	Robbery/destruction of combine harvester			
21.	Robbery/destruction of manual tractor/ rototiller			
22.	Robbery/destruction of other machinery			
Household items				
23.	Robbery/destruction of electrical appliances (TV set, mobile phone, computer, tape recorder, etc.)			
24.	Robbery/destruction of furniture			
25.	Robbery/destruction of housewares			
26.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic items			
Jewelry				
27.	Robbery/destruction of gold, silver, jewels			
28.	Robbery/destruction of money (in respective currency)			
29.	Robbery/destruction of antique items			
30.	Robbery/destruction of other precious items			
Robbery/destruction of domestic animals and fowl				
31.	Cow			
32.	Pig			
33.	Sheep			
34.	Poultry			
35.	Hive			
36.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic animal/fowl			
Health injuries				
37.	Torture			
38.	Wound			
39.	Beating			
40.	Fracture			
41.	Bruise			
42.	Mental disorder			
43.	Other			
Unlawful detention				
44.	Restriction of freedom			
45.	Captivity			
Other damage				
46.	Rape			
47.	Intimidation, threat, offense, psychological pressure			
48.	Forced labour			
49.	Destruction of life			
50.	Bombing			
51.	Opening of fire			
52.	Torture/inhumane treatment			

99 Information not available →14

13. When does the incident happen?

13.1. 1st incident

13.1.1. Codes corresponding to sustained damages from question 12

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 13.1.1.1. ——— | 13.1.1.6. ——— | 13.1.1.11. ——— | 13.1.1.16. ——— |
| 13.1.1.2. ——— | 13.1.1.7. ——— | 13.1.1.12. ——— | |
| 13.1.1.3. ——— | 13.1.1.8. ——— | 13.1.1.13. ——— | |
| 13.1.1.4. ——— | 13.1.1.9. ——— | 13.1.1.14. ——— | |
| 13.1.1.5. ——— | 13.1.1.10. ——— | 13.1.1.15. ——— | |

13.1.2. Place of incident (write in) _____

13.1.3. Date ----/----/-----/-----/

Day/ month / year time (hour)

13.1.4. Who were the offenders? (circle one appropriate option only)

- 1 Military men
 2 Civilians
 3 Representatives of de facto government (governor, administration employees...)
 4 Illegal paramilitary groups
 5 Police officers
 6 Other _____ (write in the name of victim if you know it)
 98 Not identified
 99 Information not available

13.1.5. What was the ethnicity of offenders? (circle one option only that is appropriate to this specific incident)

- 1 Russians
 2 Ossetians
 3 Abkhazs
 4 Chechens
 5 Cossacks
 6 Georgians
 7 Other north Caucasians
 8 Russians and Ossetians
 9 Russians and Abkhazs
 10 Russians and Chechens
 11 Russians and Cossacks
 12 Russians and other north Caucasians
 13 Russians and Georgians
 14 Not identified
 99 Information not available

14. Damage sustained by other members of a respondent's family (circle as many options as apply)

		Number of persons	Information not available
Destruction of real estate			
1.	Destruction of house		99
2.	Burning of house		99
3.	Destruction of other building		99
4.	Destruction of orchard		99
5.	Destruction of seeds		99
6.	Destruction of vineyard		99
7.	Destruction of other agricultural arable land		99
Robbery / destruction of crops			
8.	Grains		99
9.	Alcoholic beverages		99
10.	Fruit		99
11.	Vegetable		99
12.	Honey		99
13.	Robbery / destruction of other product		99
14.	Unreceived income		99
Destruction of means of transport			
15.	Robbery/destruction of motorcar		99
16.	Robbery/destruction of truck		99
17.	Robbery/destruction of minivan/bus		99
18.	Robbery/destruction of other means of transport		99
Robbery/destruction of agricultural machinery			
19.	Robbery/destruction of tractor		99
20.	Robbery/destruction of combine harvester		99
21.	Robbery/destruction of manual tractor/ rototiller		99
22.	Robbery/destruction of other machinery		99
Household items			
23.	Robbery/destruction of electrical appliances (TV set, mobile phone, computer, tape recorder)		99
24.	Robbery/destruction of furniture		99
25.	Robbery/destruction of housewares		99
26.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic items		99
Jewelry			
27.	Robbery/destruction of gold, silver, jewels		99
28.	Robbery/destruction of money (in respective currency)		99
29.	Robbery/destruction of antique items		99
30.	Robbery/destruction of other precious items		99
Robbery/destruction of domestic animals and fowls			
31.	Cow		99
32.	Pig		99
33.	Sheep		99
34.	Poultry		99

35.	Hive		99
36.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic animal/fowl		99
Health injuries			
37.	Torture		99
38.	Wound		99
39.	Beating		99
40.	Fracture		99
41.	Bruise		99
42.	Mental disorder		99
43.	Other		99
Unlawful detention			
44.	Restriction of freedom		99
45.	Captivity		99
Other damage			
46.	Rape		99
47.	Intimidation, threat, offense, psychological pressure		99
48.	Forced labour		99
49.	Destruction of life		99
50.	Bombing		99
51.	Opening of fire		99
52.	Torture/inhumane treatment		99

15. When the incident happened?

15.1. 1st incident

15.1.1. Codes corresponding to sustained damages from question 14

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 15.1.1.1. _____ | 15.1.1.6. _____ | 15.1.1.11. _____ | 15.1.1.16. _____ |
| 15.1.1.2. _____ | 15.1.1.7. _____ | 15.1.1.12. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.3. _____ | 15.1.1.8. _____ | 15.1.1.13. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.4. _____ | 15.1.1.9. _____ | 15.1.1.14. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.5. _____ | 15.1.1.10. _____ | 15.1.1.15. _____ | |

15.1.2. Place of incident (write in) _____

15.1.3. Date ----/-----/-----/-----/

Day/ Month / Year Time (hour)

15.1.4. Who were the offenders? (circle one appropriate option only)

- 1 Military men
- 2 Civilians
- 3 Representatives of de facto government (governor, administration employees....)
- 4 Illegal paramilitary groups
- 5 Police officers
- 6 Other _____ (write in the name of victim if you know it)
- 98 Not identified
- 99 Information not available

15.1.5. What was the ethnicity of offenders? (circle one appropriate option only)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1 Russians | 9 Russians and Abkhazs |
| 2 Ossetians | 10 Russians and Chechens |
| 3 Abkhazs | 11 Russians and Cossacks |
| 4 Chechens | 12 Russians and other north Caucasians |
| 5 Cossacks | 13 Russians and Georgians |
| 6 Georgians | 14 Not identified |
| 7 Other north Caucasians | 99 Information not available |
| 8 Russians and Ossetians | |

16. Are other incidents known where members of other families also sustained damage? (circle one appropriate option only)

- 1 Yes ↓
- 2 No complete

17. If known, how many people became victims of each type of violence?

		Number of persons	Information not available
Destruction of real estate			
1.	Destruction of house		99
2.	Burning of house		99
3.	Destruction of other building		99
4.	Destruction of orchard		99
5.	Destruction of seeds		99
6.	Destruction of vineyard		99
7.	Destruction of other agricultural arable land		99
Robbery / destruction of crops			
8.	Grains		99
9.	Alcoholic beverages		99
10.	Fruit		99
11.	Vegetable		99
12.	Honey		99
13.	Robbery / destruction of other product		99
14.	Unreceived income		99
Destruction of means of transport			
15.	Robbery/destruction of motorcar		99
16.	Robbery/destruction of truck		99
17.	Robbery/destruction of minivan/bus		99
18.	Robbery/destruction of other means of transport		99
Robbery/destruction of agricultural machinery			
19.	Robbery/destruction of tractor		99
20.	Robbery/destruction of combine harvester		99
21.	Robbery/destruction of manual tractor/ rototiller		99
22.	Robbery/destruction of other machinery		99
Household items			
23.	Robbery/destruction of electrical appliances (TV set, mobile phone, computer, tape recorder)		99
24.	Robbery/destruction of furniture		99
25.	Robbery/destruction of housewares		99
26.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic items		99
Jewelry			
27.	Robbery/destruction of gold, silver, jewels		99
28.	Robbery/destruction of money (in respective currency)		99
29.	Robbery/destruction of antique items		99
30.	Robbery/destruction of other precious items		99
Robbery/destruction of domestic animals and fowls			
31.	Cow		99
32.	Pig		99
33.	Sheep		99
34.	Poultry		99
35.	Hive		99
36.	Robbery/destruction of other domestic animal/fowl		99
Health injuries			
37.	Torture		99
38.	Wound		99
39.	Beating		99
40.	Fracture		99
41.	Bruise		99
42.	Mental disorder		99
43.	Other		99
Unlawful detention			
44.	Restriction of freedom		99
45.	Captivity		99
Other damage			
46.	Rape		99
47.	Intimidation, threat, offense, psychological pressure		99
48.	Forced labour		99
49.	Destruction of life		99
50.	Bombing		99
51.	Opening of fire		99
52.	Torture/inhumane treatment		99

18. When the incident happened?

18.1 1st incident

18.1.1 Codes corresponding to sustained damages from question 14

- | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 15.1.1.1. _____ | 15.1.1.6. _____ | 15.1.1.11. _____ | 15.1.1.16. _____ |
| 15.1.1.2. _____ | 15.1.1.7. _____ | 15.1.1.12. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.3. _____ | 15.1.1.8. _____ | 15.1.1.13. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.4. _____ | 15.1.1.9. _____ | 15.1.1.14. _____ | |
| 15.1.1.5. _____ | 15.1.1.10. _____ | 15.1.1.15. _____ | |

18.1.2 Place of incident (write in) _____

18.1.3 Date ----/----/-----/-----/

Day/ Month / Year Time (hour)

18.1.4 Who were the offenders? (circle one appropriate option only)

- 1 Military men
- 2 Civilians
- 3 Representatives of de facto government (governor, administration employees....)
- 4 Illegal paramilitary groups
- 5 Police officers
- 6 Other _____ (write in the name of victim if you know it)
- 98 Not identified
- 99 Information not available

18.1.5 What was the ethnicity of offenders? (circle one appropriate option only)

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1 Russians | 9 Russians and Abkhazs |
| 2 Ossetians | 10 Russians and Chechens |
| 3 Abkhazs | 11 Russians and Cossacks |
| 4 Chechens | 12 Russians and other north Caucasians |
| 5 Cossacks | 13 Russians and Georgians |
| 6 Georgians | 14 Not identified |
| 7 Other north Caucasians | 99 Information not available |
| 8 Russians and Ossetians | |

Attachment #2

**Decree #2 of the Soviet Central Executive
Committee of All-Georgia and the
Council of National Commissars of Georgia
on the Organization of the South Ossetian Autonomous District**

The Soviet Central Executive Committee of All-Georgia and the Council of National Commissars shall establish:

1. The South Ossetian Autonomous District shall be organized as a constituent part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic; town of Tskhinvali shall be the center of this District.

2. South Ossetian Autonomous District shall comprise territory occupied by the South Ossetian people within the following boundaries:

a) Northern line of demarcation shall extend over the main Caucasian Range, along the southern state border of the Mtiuleti Autonomous District;

b) Western line of demarcation shall commence from the borders of the Soviet Socialist Autonomous District of the Mountaineers, at the origin of river Chanchakhi and its tributaries, cross at the height of 8.872, head along the Tsitelta Range, cross river Chanchakhi, in the mouth of tributary Geske shall continue in south-western direction on the sides of mountain Geske to the west of this river; shall cross mountain Geske, mountain Dzvari, at the height of 6.062, river Gharula below the village Dabla-Kvazha, river Kvedrula, to the east of village Kveda; shall descend on the sides of mountain Veluanti, cross at the height of 7.616; shall extend over mountain Kudevi, slightly to the west at the height of 2.932; shall continue in east-southern direction, at the bottom along the height of 6.013; shall cross right tributary of river Kvirila to north-east of village Perevi, extend to the east of village Perevi; shall cross river Kvirila to the east at the height of 2.170, set against mountain Perangi at the height of 5.201; shall extend to south on the sides of this mountain to the west of mountain Dzirula; shall cross the latter and extend through the Kaprebi-Seri Range, up to the height of 4.172; shall continue to upper stream of river Charat-Khevi and further over the sides of the Kaprebi-Seri Range, to the west of river Lopani;

c) To the South: line of demarcation shall continue by the Chorchan-Tselnelisi road, cross river Lopani, below Tselnelisi, turn north-east; shall extend over village Atotsi, cross river Prona below village Okoni, head south, to the east of village Prona, cross left tributary of river Prona, below village Kvatetri; further shall cross river Prona (Kornisi) above village Dvani; shall extend parallel to the Dvani-Gujabauri road to north-east; shall cross river Didi Liakhvi below town of Tskhinvali and above village Ergneti; shall set against village Eredva;

shall cross river Patara-Liakhvi, above village Arbo, river Charebula, above villages Mereti and Koshki; shall turn south-east, cross river Otreva above village Plavismani and rivers Adzura and Mejuda, slightly above the villages Adzvi and Mejekhiskhevi; shall continue north-east of villages Kirbali and Bershueti, cross river Tartla below village Tsinakari, right tributary of river Lekhuri above village Khurvaleti, circle group of villages: Orchoshani, Abrevi and others; shall cross river Lekhuri north of villages Sakorintlo and Odzisi; shall cross river Ksani below village Odzisi and set against a mountain of the Ipniani Range;

d) To the East: line of demarcation shall turn from a mountain of the Ipniani Range to the north and cross Khnartsvi, extend to west line of village Mikeliantkari, Irmisi, and other villages; shall go around to the north the middle sides at the height of 6.409, cross the latter slightly to the east of the church debris; further shall continue north on the range along river Alevi to the east of this river; shall cross mountain Chartala at the height of 8.283, mountains Sapersheti and Takhti, continue along the line of the range dividing middle tributaries of rivers Aragvi and Ksani; shall cross the heights: Kurkuti, Munjukhi, and the Lomisi Pass by the monastery debris and head up until the Jamuri Pass; shall cross right tributaries of river Aragvi - to the west of Ganisi, Ereti, and other villages; shall continue north-west to upper stream of river Aragvi; shall turn west, cross mountain Lazg-Tsiti and head along the line of the Water-Dividing Range between the tributaries of rivers Tergi and Didi Liakhvi, cross at the heights of 12.117, 11.333, and 12. 572 and set against the mountain Vailk-Parsi.

3. Central Executive Committee and local councils shall be the governing bodies of the South Ossetian Autonomous District.

4. For governance of affairs of the South Ossetian Autonomous District, the following National Commissariats shall be established: a) Internal Affairs, b) Justice, c) Education, d) Health, e) Labor and Social Welfare, f) Farming, g) Food, h) Finances, i) National Economic Council, and j) Workers' and Pheasants' Inspection.

Remark 1. Extraordinary Council of National Commissars of South Ossetia shall not be established and the National Commissariats shall act in the capacity of the departments of the Central Executive Committee.

Remark 2. Foreign affairs and trade shall remain under the domain of central bodies of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Military affairs shall be governed by the Military Commissariat, which shall be directly subordinate to the National Military and Naval Commissariat of Georgia and shall be organized by the latter in agreement with the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia.

Fighting against counter-revolution shall remain within the competence of bodies of ad-hoc commission of Georgia, which shall be organized by the latter in agreement with the Executive Committee of South Ossetia.

5. To protect and organize uniform financial and economic activities over the territory of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Commissariats of the South

Ossetian Autonomous District: Food, Finances, Labor, National Economic Council and the Workers' and Pheasants' Inspection shall remain under subordination of respective National Commissariats of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic; further, each order and activity of the latter shall be carried out by the National Commissariats of South Ossetia through the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia.

Remark: National Commissars named in Article 5 shall be appointed by the respective National Commissariats of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, in agreement with the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia and shall be approved by the latter.

6. National Commissariats of South Ossetian Autonomous District: Internal Affairs, Justice, Education, Health, Farming, and Social Welfare shall have autonomous capacity and be responsible to the central bodies of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, through the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia.

7. South Ossetian Autonomous District shall be supplied with all necessary financial and technical means from the general funds of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, under direct order of the Central Executive Committee of Georgia and the Council of National Commissariats, through the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia.

8. Factual transfer of administrative units, which shall adhere to the South Ossetian Autonomous District, shall be administered by the mixed commission constituted by the representatives of the Central Executive Committee of South Ossetia, Executive Committee of neighboring interested district (mazra), and the central authorities of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

This Commission shall be assigned to complete
its work no later than 1 May 1922.

Chairman of Soviet Central Executive Committee of
All-Georgia, P. Makharadze.

Chairman of Council of National Commissariats of the
Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, S. Kavtaradze.

Secretary of the Executive Committee, T. Kalandadze.
20 April 1922.

(Herald (Moambe) of the National Commissariat of Internal Affairs, #33, 1922, pp 81-84; Central State Archive of Newest History of Georgia, p. 607,1, file 754, page 4).

Attachment #3

Invalidated by the
09/03/2008 #425
Decree of the
President of Georgia

Decree of the
President of Georgia
#402 9 August 2008 Tbilisi

on the Declaration of State of War and General Mobilization
over Entire Territory of Georgia

In recent days the situation over the territory of former South Ossetian Autonomous District has extremely aggravated. The separatists have massively violated human rights and freedoms and have undertaken armed attacks and resorted to violence against peaceful population. These actions have caused casualties among the peaceful population and the peacekeepers. Dozens of persons are wounded. The property of civilian population is destructed.

Regardless of the decision of Georgian authorities - on unilateral ceasefire - and the offered proposal - to hold peaceful negotiations - on 7-8 August the separatists have unfolded a massive attack against the civilian population. The authorities of Georgia have resorted to necessary and adequate means to prevent the armed attack.

Actions undertaken by the separatists over the territory of Georgia have been strongly upheld by the Russian Federation. In particular, on 8 August hundreds of soldiers and military equipment have been infiltrated in Georgia from the Russian Federation through the Roki Tunnel.

On 8 August, throughout the day, Russian military aircrafts have numerously violated Georgia's air space and bombarded Kareli, Gori and their adjacent villages, as well as villages of the Tskhinvali region, Vaziani military base and the Marneuli military airdrome, which has led to casualties among the civilian population and damage of building-constructions. Bombarded later also were the Senaki Airport, military base and railway station, as well as the Poti Port, ship-building yard, and the railway junction. Bombarded on 9 August were the Kopitnari Airport, Gori railway station and residential houses, which has resulted in casualties among the civilian population. In recent hours Russia has started undertaking aggressive actions with respect to Abkhazia also. Majority of these territories lies within 200-300 kilometers from the Tskhinvali Region. Accordingly, aggressive actions of Russia have significantly surpassed the conflict territory and encompassed virtually entire Georgia.

Based on all above-mentioned, we are facing the armed attack on Georgia from the Russian Federation, which carries as indirect, as well as direct nature.

Indirect attack was demonstrated through full-fledge support of the separatist forces, their supply with military equipment and ammunition, and occupation of high

positions (Minister of Defense, Minister of Internal Affairs, Secretary of the Security Council, Prime-Minister) of self-proclaimed South Ossetian Republic by the officials of the Russian Federation. Direct military attack from the Russian Federation was demonstrated through the conduct of active, intense, and enduring military operations, including numerous violations of airspace of the Georgian territory and massive bombardments. Further, the Black Sea naval forces and ground troops were used also. These actions, in light of their nature and scale, are in full compliance with the definition of "armed attack" recognized under international law and should be given this very qualification.

In given conditions, in response to the existing threat, application of the right of defense affirmed by the Article 98 of the Constitution of Georgia, Article 51 of the UN Charter, and international customary law represents a sole and adequate, and hence a necessary measure.

Therefore, there exists the need for use of force, which will be proportionate to the attack on Georgia and will aim at terminating the armed attack and averting the escalation of situation.

In view of existing circumstances, to prevent destabilization, armed attacks on the civilian population and violence, and to ensure the protection of human rights and freedoms in the region, pursuant to Sub-Paragraph "G" of Paragraph 1 of Article 73, Article 98, and Paragraph 1 of Article 100 of the Constitution of Georgia, the Law of Georgia "on the State of War", and Sub-Paragraph "A" of Paragraph 6 of the Law of Georgia "on the Mobilization":

1. State of war shall be declared over entire territory of Georgia.
2. State of war shall be in effect during 15 days.
3. In relation to the state of war, a general mobilization shall be announced and Georgian armed forces shall be used to prevent the armed attack.
4. The Decree shall be immediately made public by the mass information means, and afterwards (during one day) it shall be announced by the Public Broadcaster in every 2 hours.
5. The Decree shall be submitted within 48 hours with the Parliament of Georgia for approval.
6. After the declaration of state of war, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (E. Tkeshelashvili) shall immediately notify the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and the heads of other relevant international organizations and the diplomatic missions accredited in Georgia.
7. Present Decree shall enter into force immediately upon its signature and shall be published immediately in the official print body.

Mikheil Saakashvili

Attachment #4

დავით ტატიშვილის სამედიცინო ცენტრი
DAVID TATISHVILI MEDICAL CENTER

თ. აბულაძის 20, ტელ: 91 31 19; 91 32 42

2009-08-10

SIEMENS SONOLINE ELEGRA

პაციენტი: ზირაქაშვილი

ასაკი: 36 წლის

მუხლის სახსრის გამოკვლევა

მარცხენა მუხლის სახსრის სუპრაპატელარული სივრცეში კვეთისას სინოვიგი არ დაფიქსირდა. მეორე წვივის თავის საპროექციო არეში როგორც კოლაგერალური იოგი, ასევე ბიციუსის გრძელი თავის მყესი სისქეში მომატებულია, ბოჭკოების სტრუქტურა შეცვლილია, რაც ძველი ტრავმის შემდგომ მდგომარეობაზე მიუთითებს. მთლიანობა დარღვეული არ არის.

ლაგერალურად და მედიალურად ბარძაყისა და დიდი წვივის ძვლების კიდებზე ოსტეოფიტები არ ფიქსირდება.

დიდი წვივის და მეორე წვივის ძვლის გვერდითი იოგები ნორმა.

(მარჯვენა კვირისგავის საკუთარი იოგის პროქსიმალური ნაწილი სისქეში მომატებულია, ბოჭკოების სტრუქტურა შეცვლილია, რაც მედაპირული ბოჭკოების ნაწილობრივი გაგლეჯის შემდგომ მდგომარეობაზე მიუთითებს).

ბარძაყის მედიალური და ლაგერალური როკების ძვლოვანი მედაპირები სადა. კიალინური ხრტილის სისქე ნორმა,

ლაგერალური და მედიალური მენისკების წინა და უკანა რქების გამოსახულება ნორმა.

მუხლქვეშა ფოსოში კვლევისას უკანა ჯვარედინა იოგი ნორმა.

ნინო ლუგაძე
ექიმი რადიოლოგი
მულტიპლანარული დოქტორი
895 55 11 44

Attachment #5

**List of the perished persons identified backing upon the
data obtained through NGOs' Questionnaires**

№	Perished persons	Place of perishing	Age
1	Giorgi Abramishvili	Gori, military hospital	41
2	Karlo Abuashvili	Center of Gori	79
3	Maksime Akopiani	Gori region, village Tortiza	68
4	Zavena Anesashvili	Center of Gori	58
5	Nugzar Akhalkatsi	Gori region, village Tortiza	16
6	Vazha Bestavashvili	Center of Gori	41
7	Aleksandre Bazandarashvili	Center of Gori	51
8	Avtandil Tsertsvadze	Center of Gori	41
9	Gela Chikhladze	Gori region, village Tkhviavi	66
10	Amiran Razmadze	Gori region, village Variani	57
11	Erekle Chania	Died nearby Gori	17
12	Ana Dokadze	Center of Gori	79
13	Bidzina Parkashvili	Gori region, village Karaleti (vanished)	44
14	Victor Gagvishvili	Gori region, village Ergneti	78
15	Andro Razmadze	Was detained at the Tskhinvali school № 6, died at a hospital in Tbilisi	59
16	Dodo Garsevanishvili	Gori region, village Tedotsminda	52
17	Tinatin Giorgadze	Gori region, village Tedotsminda	62
18	Gugula Goginashvili	Gori region, village Ruisi	45
19	Tariel Gogishvili	Gori region, village Variani	62
20	Tamaz Makharashvili	Gori region, village Tirdznisi	58
21	Giorgi Kasradze	Gori region, village Ergneti	93
22	Ekaterine Papelishvili	Gori region, village Kekhvi	74
23	Merab Kekoshvili	Gori, Khakhutashvili Street	13
24	Varlo Kekoshvili	Gori, Khakhutashvili Street	77
25	Giorgi Kobaladze	Gori region, village Ergneti	83
26	Amiran Kurtanidze	Center of Gori	78
27	Natela Guraspashvili	Gori region, village Ruisi	79
28	Ivane Lalashvili	Gori region, village Tirdznisi	58
29	Robizon Elikashvili	Gori region, village Kere	41
30	Grisha Nalbandov	Was vanished from the Tskhinvali school № 6	21
31	Eter Merebashvili	Gori region, village Tortiza	60
32	Ioseb Odiashvili	Gori region, village Tkhviavi	41
33	Shamil Okropiridze	Gori region, village Tkhviavi	61s
34	Moris Papuashvili	Gori region, village Akhaldaba	33
35	Natela Kaidarashvili	Gori region, village Tirdznisi	65
36	Maya Vazagashvili	G Gori, Sukhishvili Street	43
37	Gocha Ghaghanidze	Died nearby Gori	38
38	Khvicha Ghaghanidze	Died nearby Gori	32
39	Avtandil Kerdokhashvili	Center of Gori	37
40	Ushangi Sophromadze	Tskhinvali school № 6	25
41	Vasil Smirnov	Died nearby Gori	28
42	Grisha-Giorgi Beruashvili	Was vanished from Gori region, village Berula	74
43	Shalva Vanishvili	Gori region, village Tortiza	81
44	Dodo Chania	Nearby Gori, on the highway	49
45	Tengiz Chania	Nearby Gori, on the highway	50
46	Roland Burnadze	Gori region, village Variani	58

№	Perished persons	Place of perishing	Age
47	Victor Khaduri	Center of Gori	84
48	Teimuraz Khmiadashvili	Gori region, village Tirdznisi	68
49	Kakhaber Khubuluri	Tskhinvali school № 6	20
50	Giorgi Antsukhelidze	Tskhinvali	27
51	Makhvala Mesropashvili	Gori, Sukhishvili Street	29
52	Zviad Tengiz Razmadze	Gori, Sukhishvili Street	34
53	Giga Chikhladze	August 9-10	-
54	Aleksandre(Sasha) Klimchuk	August 9-10	28
55	Omar Babutsidze	Village Kvemo Achabeti	63
56	Marine Gogiashvili	Gori, Sukhishvili Street	47
57	Hamlet Maisuradze	Village Meghvríkisi	-
58	Jaba Jalabadze	Village Tkhviavi	-
59	Ioseb Nebieridze	Village Kekhvi	-
60	Name is illegible, was shot in a tractor, testifies a spouse, Valia Cheban	Village Variani	-
61	Marina Mindiashvili	Village Nikozi	-
62	Name and surname of a spouse is illegible	Village Kvemo Nikozi	-
63	Victor Kakhniashvili	Tsmindatskhali settlement	-
64	Mzia Bortsvadze	-	-
65	Mary Kristesiashvili	-	-
66	Gogia Zhuzhunishvili	Village Eredvi	-
67	Ramaz Papelishvili	Village Sveri	-
68	Severian Ozbegashvili	Village Eredvi	73
69	Natalia Samkanashvili	Gori, 14 Sukhishvili Street	58
70	Sophio Mchedlidze	Gori, Industrial complex settlement	-
71	M Merab Mchedlidze	Gori, Industrial complex settlement	-
72	Ksenia Khochiashvili	Village Zemo Achabeti	-
73	Omar Chovelidze	Village Zemo Achabeti	-
74	Elene Babutsidze	Village Zemo Achabeti	-
75	Shura Javakhishvili	Village Avnevi	70
76	Jimsher Toroshelidze	-	36
77	Khatuna Gogashvili	Gori, 4 Khakhutashvili Street	30
78	Gulchina Megrelishvili	Gori	-
79	Aleksi Giorgi Gherkenashvili	Village Tamarasheni	-
80	Sograt Gogidze	Village Dartzsemi	-
81	Serioja Gundishvili	Village Dartzsemi	-
82	Ervand Bezhanishvili	Village Dvani	-
83	Mishiko Taboshvili	Village Eredvi	-
84	Nikoloz Beruashvili	Village Eredvi	-
85	Jumber Maisuradze	Village Eredvi	-
86	Natela Kristesashvili	Village Eredvi	-
87	Tsiala Tarielashvili	Village Eredvi	-
88	Tengiz Tarielashvili	Village Eredvi	-
89	Marika Kakhniashvili	Village Eredvi, on the entry road	-
90	Tina Avaliani- Kakhniashvili	Village Eredvi, on the entry road	-
91	Aleksandre Gogishvili	Village Kheiti	-
92	Jemal Gogishvili	Village Kheiti	-
93	Anzor Bidzinashvili	Village Karbi	-
94	Amiran Tevdorashvili	Village Karbi	-
95	Irakli Tevdorashvili	Village Karbi	-
96	Giorgi Mariamidze	Village Karbi	-

№	Perished persons	Place of perishing	Age
97	NNazo Tevdorashvili	Village Karbi	-
98	Valiko Shevardenidze	Village Karbi	-
99	Tsiala Bidzinashvili	Village Karbi	-
100	Dodo Mariamize,	Village Karbi	-
101	Anichka Mindiashvili	Village Achabeti	-
102	Levan Razmadze	Village Achabeti	-
103	Elene Babutsidze	Village Achabeti	-
104	Nodar Otiashvili	Village Achabeti	-
105	Giorgi Babutsidze	Village Achabeti	-
106	Zhuzhuna Basishvili	Village Vanati	-
107	Mary Babashvili	Village Vanati	-
108	Vladimer Jojishvili	Village Vanati	-
109	Ilia Bedianashvili	Village Pkhvenisi	-
110	Ivane Gogidze	-	-
111	Malkhaz Bedoshvili	Village Variani	-
112	Omar Bedoshvili	Village Variani	-
113	Otar Maisuradze	Village Meghvrkisi	-
114	Olia Kasradze	Village Meghvrkisi	-
115	Amiran Mchedlidze	Village Zemo Nikozi	-
116	Vasiko Ganjelashvili	Village Sveneti	-
117	Vaso Kakhniashvili	Village Kekhvi	-
118	Grisha Kakhniashvili	Village Kekhvi	-
119	Giorgi Muradashvili	Gori	-
120	Natela Mchedlidze	Gori	-
121	Natela Skhirtladze	Gori	-
122	Mimoza Lotsulashvili	Gori	-
123	Gocha Sekhniashvili	Gori	-
124	Jamlet Bortsvadze	Village Eredvi	-
125	Otar Tsotniashvili	-	-
126	Suliko Mchedlidze	Village Kheiti	-
127	Elguja Okropiridze	Village Disevi	-
128	NNato Okropiridze	Village Disevi	-
129	Mikheil Melitauri	Village Tkhviavi	-
130	Shakro Melitauri	Village Tkhviavi	-
131	Nodar Butauri	-	-
132	Aleksandre Bibilashvili	Village Karaleti	-
133	Vasil Mekarishvili	-	-
134	Ervand Bezhashvili	-	-
135	Bidzina Khochishvili	Village Kurta	-
136	Ksenia Chibirova	Village Kurta	-
137	Zhora Babutsidze	-	-

Attachment #5.1**List of victims of Russian aggression provided by the Administration of Government Representative in Shida Kartli**

1	Abramishvili Goga	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
2	Abuashvili Karlo	Citizen, Gori
3	Akopiani Maksime	Citizen, Tortiza
4	Anesashvili Zavena	Citizen, Kheltubani
5	Arabashvili Nino	Citizen, Shindisi
6	Arabashvili Ramazi	Citizen, Shindisi
7	Avaliani Tina	Citizen, Kekhvi
8	Akhalkatsi Nugzar	Citizen, Tortiza
9	Babashvili Mary	Citizen, Vanati
10	Babutsidze Elene	Citizen, Achabeti
11	Babutsidze Giorgi	Citizen, Kurta - is rechecking
12	Babutsidze Giorgi	Citizen, Achabeti
13	Babutsidze Ilia	Citizen, Tskhinvali
14	Babutsidze Omari	Citizen, Achabeti
15	Babutsidze-Mindiashvili Nano	Citizen, Achabeti - is rechecking
16	BBalakhadze Valeri or Ivane	Citizen, Arashenda - is rechecking
17	Basishvili Zhuzhuna	Citizen, Vanati
18	Bazandarashvili Aleksandre	Citizen, Gori
19	Bazandarashvili Grigoli	Citizen, Karaleti - is rechecking
20	Bedianashvili Ilia	Citizen, Pkhvenisi
21	Bedoshvili Malkhazi	Citizen, Variani
22	Bedoshvili Omari	Citizen, Variani
23	Bezhanishvili Ervandi	Citizen, Dvani
24	Beruashvili Nikoloz	Citizen, Eredvi
25	Beruashvili Victori	Citizen, Berula
26	Bestavashvili Vazha	Citizen, Khidistavi
27	Bibilashvili Aleksandre	Citizen , Karaleti
28	Bidzinashvili Anzori	Citizen, Karbi
29	Bidzinashvili Tsiala	Citizen, Karbi
30	Bortsvadze Jamleti	Citizen, Kitsnisi
31	Bortsvadze Mzia	Citizen, Eredvi - is rechecking
32	Bortsvadze Shalva	Citizen, Eredvi
33	Bugianishvili Nugzari	Citizen, Kheiti
34	Burnadze Rolandi	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
35	Butauri Nodari	Citizen, Tkhviavi
36	Cheban Aleks	G Citizen, Variani
37	Tsertsvadze Avtandili	G Citizen, Zeghduleti
38	Chibirova Ksenia	Citizen, Kurta
39	Chichua Zurabi	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
40	Chikhladze Gela	Citizen, Tkhviavi
41	Chikhladze Grigoli	Citizen, (journalist)
42	Tsozniashvili Otari	Citizen, Eredvi
43	Datuashvili Gela	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
44	Doijashvili Makhvala	Citizen, Zemo Khviti - - is rechecking
45	Dokadze Ana	Citizen, Gori
46	Elikashvili Robizoni	Citizen, Kere
47	Gabaraeva Nadejda	Citizen, Vanati
48	Gagvishvili Victori	Citizen, Ergneti
49	Galavanishvili Mimoza	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
50	Garsevanishvili Dodo	Citizen, Shindisi
51	Gegenava Khatuna	Citizen, Tamarasheni
52	Giorgadze Tinatini	Citizen, Arashenda
53	Gogashvili Valentini	Citizen, Tamarasheni - is rechecking

54	Gogiashvili Marina	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
55	Gogiashvili Marna	Citizen, Kaspi - is rechecking
56	Gogilashvili Ruizani	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
57	Goginashvili Gugula	Citizen, Ruisi
58	Gogishvili Aleksandre	Citizen, Nikozi
59	Gogishvili Beglari	Citizen, Zemo Khviti - is rechecking
60	Gogishvili Jemali	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
61	Gogishvili Tarieli (Bego)	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
62	Gogidze Ivane	Citizen, Shindisi
63	Gogidze Sograti	Citizen, Dzartsemi
64	Gundishvili Serioja	Citizen, Dzartsemi
65	Guraspashvili Natela	Citizen, Ruisi
66	Gurgenashvili Vakhtang	Citizen, Karaleti
67	Gvichiani Samsoni	Citizen, Zugdidi - is rechecking
68	Injgia Meira	Citizen, Senaki
69	Jalabadze Jaba	Citizen, Plavi
70	Jashashvili Gela	Citizen, Tkhviavi - is rechecking
71	Jashashvili Koba	Citizen, Tkhviavi
72	Javakhishvili Shura	Citizen, Avnevi
73	Jikhia Gela	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
74	Jojishvili Vladimeri	Citizen, Vanati
75	Zhuzhniashvili Giorgi	Citizen, Eredvi
76	Zhuzhniashvili Vakhtangi	Citizen, Eredvi
77	Katsadze Gocha	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
78	Katsiashvili Nineli	Citizen, Shindisi
79	Kaidarashvili Natela	Citizen, Tirdznisi
80	Kasradze Giorgi	Citizen, Ergneti
81	Kasradze Teimurazi	Citizen, Ergneti
82	Kavkasidze Gurami	Citizen, Tortiza
83	Kakhniashvili Ekaterine	Citizen, Kekhvi - is rechecking
84	Kakhniashvili Grigoli	Citizen, Kekhvi
85	Kakhniashvili Marika	Citizen, Kekhvi - is rechecking
86	Kakhniashvili Nodari	Citizen, Kekhvi
87	Kakhniashvili Vasili	Citizen, Kekhvi
88	Kakhniashvili Victori	Citizen, Gori
89	Kakhniashvili Victoria	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
90	Kekoshvili Daviti	Citizen, Kheiti
91	Kekoshvili Merabi	Citizen, Gori
92	Kekoshvili Romani	Citizen, Tirdznisi - is rechecking
93	Kekoshvili Varlo	Citizen, Gori
94	Kikalia	Citizen, Zugdidi - is rechecking
95	Klimchuk Aleksandre	Citizen, (journalist)
96	Kobaladze Giorgi	Citizen, Gori
97	Kodoevi Tasia	Citizen, Gori
98	Kurtanidze Amirani	Citizen, Gori
99	Kutkhashvili Natela	Citizen, Ruisi - is rechecking
100	Kvinikadze Nora	Citizen, Koda
101	Lalashvili Ivane	Citizen, Tirdznisi
102	Liklikadze Andria	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
103	Lotsulashvili Mimoza	Citizen, Gori
104	Lomidze Angelina	Citizen, Karaleti
105	Maisuradze Aleksandre	Citizen, Dzartsemi
106	Maisuradze Gulnara	Citizen, Oni
107	Maisuradze Hamleti	Citizen, Meghvrikisi
108	Maisuradze Jumberi	Citizen, Eredvi
109	Maisuradze Lola	Citizen, Eredvi
110	Maisuradze Merguzi	Citizen, Achabeti
111	Maisuradze Natela	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
112	Maisuradze Otari	Citizen, Meghvrikisi

113	Maisuradze Rezo	Citizen, Chedisi - is rechecking
114	Maisuradze Venia	Citizen, Gori
115	Makrakhidze Nanuli	Citizen, Gori
116	Mamatsashvili Viola	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
117	Mamagulashvili Tarieli	Citizen, Dvani
118	Maghaldadze Ana	Citizen, Kemerti
119	Maghaldadze Levani	Citizen, Kemerti
120	Mariamidze Tsiala (Tsatsa)	Citizen, Karbi - is rechecking
121	Mariamidze Giorgi	Citizen, Karbi
122	Mariamidze Varvara	Citizen, Eredvi
123	Makharashvili Tamazi	Citizen, Tirdznisi
124	Mdinaradze Liana	Citizen, Gori
125	Mekarishvili Vasili	Citizen, Dvani
126	Melanashvili Alvina	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
127	Melanashvili Elene	Citizen, Zemo Khviti - is rechecking
128	Melanashvili Mary	Citizen, Zemo Khviti - is rechecking
129	Melanashvili Rebiko	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
130	Melitauri Grigori	Citizen, Tkhviavi
131	Melitauri Shakro	Citizen, Tkhviavi
132	Merabashvili Gurami	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
133	Merebashvili Muradi	Citizen, Kaspi - is rechecking
134	Merebashvili Murazi	Citizen, Gori
135	Merebashvili Shushana	Citizen, Tortiza
136	Mesopashvili (pregnant)	Citizen, Vertkhvichala - is rechecking
137	Midodashvili Natela	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
138	Mindiashvili Anichka	Citizen, Achabeti
139	Mindiashvili Gela	Citizen, Kemerti
140	Mindiashvili Marina	Citizen, Zemo Nikozi
141	Mghebrishvili Konstantine	Citizen, Kareli - is rechecking
142	Mghebrishvili Muradi	Citizen, Dirbi
143	Mchedlidze Amiran	Citizen, Nikozi
144	Mchedlidze Merabi	Citizen, Gori
145	Mchedlidze Sophio	Citizen, Gori
146	Mchedlidze Solomoni	Citizen, Zemo Khviti
147	Mchedlidze Tamari	Citizen, Eredvi - is rechecking
148	Nanava Zurabi (Zauri)	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
149	Odiashvili Iosebi	Citizen, Tkhviavi
150	Okropiridze Elguja	Citizen, Disevi
151	Okropiridze Natalia	Citizen, Disevi
152	Okropiridze Shamili	Citizen, Tkhviavi
153	Otiashvili Nodari	Citizen, Achabeti
154	Ozgebishvili Severiani	Citizen, Eredvi
155	Papelishvili Ekaterine	Citizen, Kekhvi
156	Papuashvili Morisi	Citizen, Akhaldaba
157	Karashvili Ramini	Citizen, Nikozi - is rechecking
158	Kardava Joni	Citizen, Senaki - is rechecking
159	Kardava Rolandi	Citizen, Senaki - is rechecking
160	Kareli Vakhtangi	Citizen, Tkhviavi - is rechecking
161	Kebadze Gaiozi	Citizen, Variani
162	Kerdikhoshvili Avtandili	Citizen, Khidistavi
163	Kokoshvili Nakhida	Citizen, Takhtisdziri
164	Kristesiashvili Dunia	Citizen, Eredvi - is rechecking
165	Kristesiashvili Natela	Citizen, Eredvi
166	Kulichishvili Tamazi	Citizen, Kheiti - is rechecking
167	Ghaghanidze twin brothers	Citizen, Samtredia - is rechecking
168	Ghaghanidze twin brothers	Citizen, Samtredia - is rechecking
169	Razmadze Amirani	Citizen, Phvenisi
170	Razmadze Andro	Citizen, Achabeti - is rechecking
171	Razmadze Levani	Citizen, Achabeti

172	Razmadze Maka	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
173	Razmadze Zviadi	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
174	Revazishvili Olgha	Citizen, Gori
175	Romanovi Vakhtangi	Citizen, Dzevera
176	Romelashvili Ale	Citizen, Eredvi - is rechecking
177	Romelashvili Aleksandre	Citizen, Argvitsi
178	Romelashvili Nino	Citizen, Eredvi
179	Shalutashvili Tamta	Citizen, Breti - is rechecking
180	Samkanashvili Natalia	Citizen, Gori
181	Samkanashvili Natalia	Citizen, Gori - is rechecking
182	Shevardenidze Valiko	Citizen, Karbi
183	Sadzaglishvili Valiko	Citizen, Avnevi
184	Sekhniashvili Gocha	Citizen, Gori
185	Stan Storimans Stanislaus	Citizen, (Dutch journalist), Gori
186	Surameli Ilia	Citizen, Brotsleti
187	Skhirtladze Natela	Citizen, Znauri
188	Taboshvili Mikheili	Citizen, Berula
189	Tarashvili Ramani	Citizen, Kvemo Nikozi
190	Tarielashvili Tsiala	Citizen, Eredvi
191	Tarielashvili Natela	Citizen, Eredvi - is rechecking
192	Tarielashvili Tengizi	Citizen, Eredvi
193	Tenadze Tsatsa	Citizen, Variani - is rechecking
194	Tevdarashvili Nazi	Citizen, Karbi - is rechecking
195	Tevdorashvili Amirani	Citizen, Karbi
196	Tevdorashvili Irakli	Citizen, Karbi
197	Tevdorashvili Nazi	Citizen, Karbi
198	Tochieva Ksenia	Citizen, Kemerti - is rechecking
199	Turava Levani	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
200	Tkhlashidze Ilia	Citizen, Avnevi
201	Tkhemaladze Nadiko	Citizen, Nuli
202	Tkhemaladze Naziko	Citizen, Avnevi - is rechecking
203	Unapkoshvili Tsatso	Citizen, Karbi
204	Vanishvili Elene (Lelo)	Citizen, Gori
205	Vanishvili Shalva	Citizen, Tortiza
206	Vardzelashvili Amirani	Citizen, Ruisi
207	Vazagashvili Maya	Citizen, Gori
208	Chania Dodo	Citizen, Nakipu
209	Chania Erekle	Citizen, Nakipu
210	Chania Tengizi	Citizen, Nakipu
211	Chitadze Temuri	Citizen, Poti - is rechecking
212	Chovelidze Omari	Citizen, Achabeti
213	Chumburidze Elguja	Citizen, Gori
214	Khaduri Victori	Citizen, Gori
215	Khaladze Olia	Citizen, Meghvrikisi
216	Kharkheli Venera	Citizen - is rechecking
217	Khetereli Muradi	Citizen, Kekhvi
218	Khetereli Murmani	Citizen, Sveri - is rechecking
219	Khmiadashvili Teimurazi	Citizen, Tirdznisi
220	Khubashvili (Khubaevi) Jenia	Citizen, Gori
221	Khubulovi Daviti	Citizen, Karaleti
222	Khutsinashvili Shalva	Citizen, Tamarasheni
223	Khazakhashvili Kirile	Citizen, Avnevi
224	Khochishvili Bidzina	Citizen, Kurta
225	Khochishvili Ksenia	Citizen, Kurta - is rechecking
226	Zabakhidze Tamari	Citizen, Tamarasheni
227	Zangaladze Anichka	Citizen, Kekhvi
228	Zubashvili Eliko	Citizen, Tsveri - is rechecking

Attachment #6**List of Detainees**

Chalauri Tamaz
Giguashvili Levan
Gorgisheli Dimitry
Gugutishvili Sergo
Lapachi Vasil
Metskhvarishvili Gerasim
Rcheulishvili Tamaz

Village Tirdznisi

Chutkerashvili Gogita
Demurishvili Otari
Demurovi Anzor
Midodashvili Guram
Tetunashvili Nugzar
Tetunavili Jumber

Village Tamarasheni

Aidarashvili Valia
Gogidze Manana
Gogidze Nadia
Gogidze Nikoloz
Gogidze Nunu
Datashvili Ana
Datashvili Venera
Dzadzamia Davit
Khetereli Guram
Khetereli Maro
Otinashvili Lamara
Turashvili Aza
Turashvili Kola
Gogidze Zakhar
Babutsidze Tariel
Nasuashvili Luisa
Otinashvili Lamara
Khetereli Kristo
Elbakidze Nikoloz
Jalabadze Tsiala
Lursmanashvili Otari
Datashvili Irakli
Tskhovrebovi Ia
Mindiasvili Elza
Khutsinashvili Tamar
Bakhturidze Grisha
Datashvili Izo
Datashvili Irakli

Tskhovrebovi Gia
Tskhovrebovi Elza
Tskhovrebovi Misha

Village Kekhvi

Bagalishvili Dali
Chagelishvili Lida
Tskhovrebovi Zamira
Kakhniashvili Zaurbeg
Kakhniashvili Suliko
Nebieridze Tina
Khetagashvili Nina
Bliadze Dato
Bliadze Tristan

Villages Kurta, Nikozi and Variani

Kebadze Vakhtang
Basishvili Giorgi
Lazarashvili Teimuraz
Otinashvili Tengiz
Lapachi Vepkhia
Basishvili Tariel
Elbakidze Levan
Khutsinashvili Bondo
Tegashvili Zaira
Tegashvili Ushangi
Tegashvili Giorgi
Eremovi Nikoloz
Kebadze Vakhtang

Village Achabeti

Khetaguri Levan
Khetaguri Taso
Khmiadashvili Anzor
Chulukhadze Vigenti
Babutsidze Davit
Babutsidze Omar
Babutsidze Kukuri
Babutsidze Enver
Babutsidze Gaioz
Babutsidze Revaz
Lazagashvili Vazha
Jikhashvili Bezhan
Chulukhadze Nikoloz

Kandelaki Sonia
Chulukhadze Shio
Lomsadze Sonia
Babutsidze Asmat
Khabareli Nato
Khabareli Ilo
Khabareli Salimat
Mchedlidze Neli
Chulukhadze Ilia
Khabareli Shura
Gogidze Andro
Khaladze Sokrat
Khaladze Dariko

Georgian Workers of Java District

Giunashvili Davit
Kotuashvili Gogita
Papalashvili Tamaz
Sekhniashvili Zviad
Sekhniashvili Rezo
Shavkani Revaz

Georgian Workers of Tskhinvali District

Avazneli Tsezar
Berelashvili Davit
Giorgashvili Murman
Stepanashvili Ruben

Guys from Tbilisi

Kharadze Nika
Monaselidze Giorgi

Village Tkviavi

Giguashvili Levan
Lapachi Vasiko
Baindarovi Giorgi

Village Ditsi

Jarmelashvili Teimuraz
Jarmelashvili Davit

Village Ghogheti

Khorguani Nora

Buturishvili Avtandil
Buturishvili Giorgi
Ghvaladze Nino
Shatirishvili Irine

Village Ptsa

Kokuashvili Vazha
Chimchiuri Engur
Pukhashvili Vano

Village Dzevera

Demetrashvili Tariel

Village Mereti

Gorgisheli Dimitry
Metskhvarishvili Gerasime
Chalauri Tamaz
Makharashvili Davit
Kebadze Koba

Village Karbi

Rcheulishvili Tamaz

Village Gugutiantkari

Gugutishvili Sergo
Begheluri Aliosha
Krekhelashvili Givi
Gugutishvili Tristan
Simonishvili Vasil
Gugutishvili Dimitry
Gugutishvili Severian

Village Koshka

Margishvili Amiran

Village Disevi

Okropiridze Givi

Village Tkibuli

Barbakadze Shorena