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Georgia Human Rights

Russia - Georgia Conflict

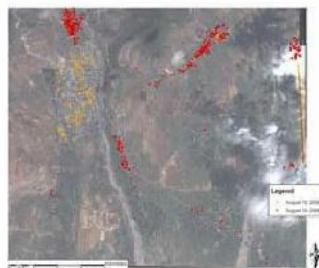
Information collected in the course of four fact-finding visits by Amnesty International to the region in August 2008, together with other sources including satellite imagery, indicates that all parties to the conflict committed serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, both during the course of the conflict and in its aftermath. The findings suggest that both Georgian and Russian forces as well as South Ossetian militias committed serious human rights violations, including carrying out indiscriminate attacks – which resulted in the death and injury of many civilians – and extensive looting and damaging of property of ethnic Georgians in and around the conflict zone.

Georgia Human Rights

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Damage assessment of South Ossetia based on satellite imagery



©2008 GeoEye. Overview of damage to Tshkinvali region by date. Analysis shows initial destruction concentrated on Tshkinvali and damage more widespread to surrounding villages on August 19

» [Video about the Georgia-Russia conflict](#)

In order to gather additional evidence of destruction in the conflict area, regional experts at AI identified places of potential damage in the conflict zone and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) acquired high resolution satellite imagery of South Ossetia. AAAS conducted a damage assessment of 24 villages around Tshkinvali, based on imagery from August 10 and August 19, 2008.

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CASES

VICTORIES

The satellite images show that the majority of the damage in Tskhinvali was sustained on or before August 10 – likely during the intense fighting between the Georgian and Russian militaries around August 8. The images also support Amnesty International assessments on the ground that more than 100 civilian houses in Tskhinvali were hit by shelling during the initial Georgian bombardment. Much of this damage was caused by *Grad* rockets, which are known to be unsuitable for attacks on civilian-populated areas due to their limited accuracy.

Kazbek Djiloev told Amnesty International about his experience of the attack on his house in a residential area in Tskhinvali on the night of August 7:

"I was drinking tea and suddenly I heard gunfire followed by tanks, artillery...we all went downstairs. Two hours later I heard explosions, the house shook, the roof exploded and GRAD missiles fell on our house. The sofa and other stuff caught fire. We heard an airplane and it aimed at us and started firing at us with a machine gun. My brother and I hid downstairs again. After a while another GRAD fell and half of the house was destroyed. I was in shock. The Georgians claim that they fired at positions of Russian soldiers. This is a lie. There was no soldier here. They were firing at peaceful citizens. There was nothing military here. I was here with my brother and mother ... Now I don't have a house. The weather is fine right now and I can sleep in the garden, but I don't know what to do when the rain comes. Nobody is helping me. I'll never be able to restore the house because I don't have the money."



Ruined buildings on Thälmann Street in Tskhinvali, 24 August 2008. © Amnesty International, all rights reserved

A number of villages near Tskhinvali (to the east and south) show additional damage on August 19, after major hostilities ended. The satellite image also shows fire damage sustained by infrastructure in villages. This damage supports eyewitness accounts – documented by Amnesty International–of arson attacks by South Ossetian forces, paramilitary groups and privately armed individuals on property owned by ethnic Georgians. During these attacks, several residents were threatened; some were killed. Amnesty International is concerned that Russian forces failed to take effective measures to protect civilians and their property from such abuses in areas under their control.

A woman from Kurta village in South Ossetia told Amnesty International:

"Men in military uniform were going through the gardens. They were Russian-speaking but not Russian. I took them to be Ossetians, Chechens, some Asians, maybe Uzbeks and Cossacks. They were all wearing the same military uniform and they were armed with Kalashnikovs. They burnt about 15 houses in Kurta, and took the livestock away on trucks. As we were leaving Kurta we saw two neighbors being abducted, they were pushed into a car boot by the marauders. We left Kurta on 13 August by foot. We went to Eredvi via Kheiti. In Eredvi we saw dead bodies, a man, woman and two children. We continued walking and reached the village of Ditsi [outside of South Ossetia]. I saw no dead bodies in Ditsi and some of the houses were burnt down, but not all of them. We passed Ditsi and reached Trdnisi. There we also saw many burnt houses and property thrown around in the streets. We stayed the night there and moved on to Tqivi. We saw many more dead bodies there, under cars and vans. All the dead bodies were civilians, I didn't see any dead Georgian soldiers..."

The village of Tamarsheni, which was mostly inhabited by ethnic Georgians before the conflict, shows no damage at all on August 10. Nine days later, the satellite imagery analysis identified 152 damaged structures, a large proportion of the total number of structures in the village.



Compare and contrast startling before and after satellite images and aerial photos of places where serious human rights violations occurred in places like Sudan, Chad, Zimbabwe and Kyrgyzstan.

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©2008 ImageSat Subset of image covering Tamarsheni, South Ossetia on August 19. Damage is apparent, as the image shows that the roofs of buildings have collapsed, exposing interior walls. Widespread damage is easily visible to nearly all the buildings in the area

Amnesty International calls on the parties to the conflict to agree to, and the international community to deploy, a full fact-finding mission to carry out a thorough investigation of all allegations of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the course of the conflict.

Amnesty International calls on the Russian and Georgian authorities as well as the de facto South Ossetian administration to guarantee the security of all persons in areas affected by the conflict, without discrimination. Furthermore, the authorities in all conflict affected areas should ensure that free and full access is provided to those assessing the need for and providing humanitarian assistance, and ensure the necessary conditions for the voluntary, safe and durable return with dignity of all displaced persons.

» [High-Resolution satellite imagery and the conflict in South Ossetia, Georgia \(AAAS Report\) PDF](#)

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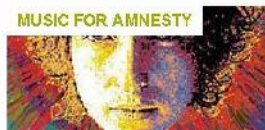
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