

12 November 2008

Russian Federation: Displaced people still struggling to lead a normal life

Up to 136,000 people remain displaced in Russia more than fifteen years after the beginning of armed conflict in the republics of the north Caucasus. Hundreds of thousands of people fled their homes as a result of an inter-ethnic conflict in North Ossetia in 1992 and separatist and counter-terrorist conflicts in Chechnya in 1994 and 1999. While large-scale warfare has ended and the situation in Chechnya has stabilised, the north Caucasus remains insecure throughout as hostilities continue between government forces and rebels. In the absence of political resolutions to the conflicts, human rights abuses including abductions and enforced disappearances persist and the rule of law remains weak.

Durable solutions for the remaining internally displaced people (IDPs) are blocked mainly because of the lack of adequate housing, difficulty in securing personal documents and differential treatment of ethnic Chechens. Housing remains a major problem for IDPs as many live in inadequate conditions despite government efforts. Unable to secure personal documents such as residence registration, internal passports and employment records, IDPs cannot access public services, they receive a lower old age pension than what they are entitled to and they have difficulties finding rental accommodation. Ethnic Chechen IDPs living outside the north Caucasus have been attacked and face particular difficulties in securing housing, personal documents and jobs, and in moving freely without police controls.

Number of IDPs by Republic (2008)

Chechen Republic.....	54,842	(UNHCR, Sep. 2008)
Republic of Dagestan.....	399	(Federal Migration Service, FMS, Jan. 2008)
	- 3,829	(UNHCR, Sep. 2008)
Republic of Ingushetia.....	12,512	(FMS, June 2008) - 48,000 (Government of Ingushetia, June 2008)
Republic of North Ossetia-Alania.....	7,874	(FMS, Sep. 2008)
Elsewhere in Russia.....	40,000	(UNHCR)
Total.....	115,627 - 154,545	



More maps are available on <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

Background of displacement

Internal displacement in Russia is largely a result of armed violence and conflict in two south-western republics, Chechnya and North Ossetia.

In Chechnya, armed violence and two rounds of conflict between militants and government forces have caused more than 600,000 people to flee their homes since 1991 (IDMC/Memorial, 10 October 2006). Troops of the Russian Federation first entered Chechnya in 1994 to quash the republic's independence movement, and withdrew in 1996 after a ceasefire agreement was signed between Russian president Boris Yeltsin and Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov. Federal troops returned in 1999 as part of a "counter-terrorist operation" after apartment buildings in several Russian cities were bombed and militants staged an incursion from Chechnya into neighbouring Dagestan to support militants calling for an independent Islamic state. The government maintains the situation in Chechnya has normalised although militant attacks and government special operations continue to be reported (Jamestown Foundation, 24 April 2008).

A briefer inter-ethnic conflict over the disputed Prigorodny district in North Ossetia also displaced thousands of people in 1992 (HRW/Helsinki, 1 April 1996). Both ethnic Ingush and Ossetians claim Prigorodny as their own, and a 1991 federal law allowing for the return of land to peoples repressed under Stalin sparked the conflict. While the district was part of Ingush territory until 1944, it was ceded to North Ossetia following the deportation of Ingush and other groups to Central Asia. Although the 1992 conflict

lasted only a week, about 500 people were killed and up to 64,000 ethnic Ingush and Ossetians were displaced, mainly within North Ossetia or to Ingushetia (HRW/Helsinki, 1 April 1996). In the absence of a resolution to the dispute, Prigorodny district remains within the borders of North Ossetia, the Ingush continue to claim their right to return and a climate of mistrust prevails.

IDP numbers

Recent estimates of the total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in Russia range from 85,000 (Government of the Russian Federation, 8 February 2006) to 136,500 (UNHCR, 1 December 2007). The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has combined figures from government and non-governmental sources to arrive at its total, while the government has reported the number of people with forced migrant status as defined in the 1993 law on forced migrants, and those registered as beneficiaries of assistance from the Federal Migration Service (FMS).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) usually report the number of people still displaced regardless of whether the government registered them. As a result of the narrow definition of "forced migrant" in the 1993 law and increasing de-registration of beneficiaries of government assistance, NGOs have tended to report higher figures than the government.

The Chechen authorities consider there are no IDPs in Chechnya. All of those remaining on the FMS list were de-registered in October 2007, and so lost all the associated entitlements and benefits. However, according to UNHCR, as of

late 2008 there were 3,526 IDPs still residing at 15 temporary collective shelters located in Grozny and 1,316 at five temporary collective shelter outside Grozny (UNHCR, 30 September 2008). There are also an estimated 50,000 IDPs living in the private sector, mainly with relatives and friends.

Figures on the number of IDPs living in Ingushetia vary. Estimates of IDPs from Chechnya range from 4,000 according to FMS (FMS, 14 November 2007) to 12,437 according to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC, 30 September 2008) and 38,000 according to local authorities (Kavkazskii Uzel, 24 April 2008; Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 20 June 2008).

There is also a range of figures for the number of IDPs from Prigorodny district in North Ossetia living in Ingushetia: 8,512 according to FMS (FMS, 30 June 2008), 10,000 according to local authorities (Kavkazskii Uzel, 24 April 2008; Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 20 June 2008) and 18,000 according to the Moscow Helsinki Group (KU, 24 April 2008).

According to FMS there were 7,874 IDPs from Prigorodny district with forced migrant status in North Ossetia (FMS, 30 September 2008). In Dagestan, there were 3,829 IDPs from Chechnya (UNHCR, 30 September 2008), while FMS reported 399 people from Chechnya with forced migrant status there (FMS, 31 January 2008).

Physical security in the north Caucasus

The overarching objective of militant groups has increasingly strayed from the independence of Chechnya towards the

establishment of an Islamic state across the North Caucasus (HRW, 25 June 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2008; Hughes, James, June 2007; RFE/RL, 21 September 2007; ICG, 3 June 2008). Corruption, economic hardship and disaffection of young people have also fuelled the violence. As it has become increasingly difficult for the militants to operate in Chechnya (HRW, 25 June 2008; Prague Watchdog, 25 June 2008), they have gradually moved into other neighbouring republics. At the same time, there has been an increase in the frequency and scale of violent incidents in the region, and the government has deployed more troops to the region in response (RIA, 26 March 2008; Russian Analytical Digest, 5 June 2008).

While observers generally agree that Chechnya is recovering from conflict, accounts of the security situation in the republic differ. Some claim the situation has become more peaceful since 2006 with fewer militants, a drop in the number and magnitude of violent incidents and only sporadic targeted violence (ECHO, 5 December 2007; ACCORD, 22 April 2008; Sagramoso, Domitilla, 4 July 2007; Russian Analytical Digest, 5 June 2008; Moscow Times, 22 May 2008). Others agree that violence is targeted, but still consider the situation unstable due to an increase in reported armed clashes, including in civilian areas and the capital city Grozny (Memorial, 16 April 2008; AI, June 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 24 April 2008 and 11 July 2008; Russian Analytical Digest, 5 June 2008; Prague Watchdog, 5 July 2008). Human rights organisations have noted an improvement in the situation (Memorial 16 April 2008), but they report that human rights abuses nevertheless con-

tinue (AI, 28 November 2007; NHC, 30 April 2008).

The security situation in neighbouring Ingushetia significantly deteriorated in mid-2007, making it the most insecure republic in the region according to observers (RFE/RL, 19 September 2008; Memorial, 31 January 2008; HRW, 25 June 2008). While the situation had been steadily worsening since 2002, the number of attacks on security personnel increased sharply in 2007, and in 2008 shootings, bombings and abductions were taking place every day (HRW, 25 June 2008; Memorial, 31 January 2008; RFE/RL, 19 September 2008). Other destabilising forces seem to be at work in addition to the militants. Unidentified armed men have committed several attacks, including the killings of several ethnic Russians, Koreans and Roma in late 2007 which reportedly led some 30 Russian families to flee Ingushetia (RFE/RL, 21 September 2007; Memorial, 31 January 2008; Gazeta.ru, 19 September 2007; ACCORD, 22 April 2008).

In response to the deterioration of security in Ingushetia, the federal authorities tripled the number of law enforcement troops there in 2007 (TOL, 25 February 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 27 March 2008; RFE/RL 26 January 2008). Some observers reported that the arrival of federal troops in Ingushetia had made the situation worse because it led to an increase in counter-insurgency operations that reportedly involved human rights abuses including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, extra-judicial executions and acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (HRW 25 June 2008; Noviy Izvestiya, 22 September 2008; RFE/RL 21 September 2007;

AI, October 2007; IWPR, 27 September 2007). In its analysis of the situation in Ingushetia, Human Rights Watch concluded that Russia has failed to respect or adhere to national and international human rights and humanitarian law in exerting its right and duty to take effective measures to prevent terrorist attacks on its territory (HRW, 25 June 2008).

The situation in Dagestan is also volatile (ACCORD, 22 April 2008; RFE/RL, 21 September 2007; Caucasian Knot, 2 July 2008). Violence between security forces and militants has continued for years, but from 2007 the number of reported clashes increased (IWPR, 13 December 2007). Local and federal security forces, public officials and journalists have been attacked, and the militant organisation Shariat Jamaat has claimed responsibility for most of the violence (ICG, 3 June 2008; Memorial, 16 April 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 1 August 2008 and 14 February 2008). The government has responded by carrying out special operations targeting suspected militants (ICG, 3 June 2008; IWPR, 9 January 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 10 January 2008 and 24 April 2008). Other special operations have led to civilian casualties and disappearances, including of young male Muslims and journalists, though these were fewer than in other republics in the region (ICG, 3 June 2008; Memorial, 16 April 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 27 March 2008 and 14 February 2008).

Rule of law

Perpetrators of human rights abuses in the North Caucasus still enjoy general impunity (AI, June 2008). Despite the presence of police forces and courts of law in Chechnya, state agents are rarely

convicted of human rights violations, and victims who report cases face inadequate investigations, a lack of effective remedies and pressure to withdraw their claims (WITNESS/Memorial, 2007; AI, 19 September 2007, p.2; NHC, 30 April 2008; Memorial, 31 August 2007). Likewise, security agents and police officers reportedly responsible for human rights violations in Ingushetia have not been held to account (HRW, 25 June 2008). As reports of disappearances and torture continue and local residents lose their confidence in the authorities to administer justice, civilian support for the insurgents is increasing (Memorial 31 January 2008; HRW, 25 June 2008; Novaya Gazeta, 6 February 2008; Demos, 24 November 2007; RFE/RL, 26 January 2008 and 21 September 2007). Young people have reportedly been joining the militants in increasing numbers, despite knowing their relatives may suffer retribution from government agents (NYT, 29 September 2008; HRW, 2 July 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 1 August 2008; Memorial, 31 October 2007).

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) remains the only judicial body before which applicants from Chechnya have obtained compensation for violations of their rights (CoE, 12 June 2007; CoE 15 November 2007; EHRAC 3 July 2008). After 37 judgments finding Russia responsible for human rights violations in Chechnya, ECHR has yet to dismiss or rule against a Chechen applicant (EHRAC, 3 July 2008). However, some applicants to the ECHR, as well as their relatives and lawyers, have reported harassment and intimidation on account of applying to the Court (CoE, 2 October 2007; HRW, 30 September 2007 and 25 June 2008; Commissioner for Human

Rights in the Russian Federation, 31 January 2007; Jamestown Foundation, 8 May 2008;). Applicants from Ingushetia have also reported being threatened after applying to the Court (Memorial, 25 July 2008).

In response to the rulings, the federal government has paid compensation on time and in full, including over \$5.1 million (4 million euros) in 2007 alone (TOL, 8 October 2008), and opened new investigations into criminal cases. However, the investigations have yet to bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice (Memorial, 31 October 2007; AI, 19 September 2007). In addition to acknowledging deficiencies in the country's justice system, including slow court proceedings, corruption and the non-enforcement of decisions, the government is currently devising a compensation scheme to pay those whose cases of human rights violations during counter-terrorist operations in the North Caucasus were not investigated effectively (UN, 29 May 2008; IHT, 15 July 2008).

Access to documents

Residence registration remains one of the main problems for IDPs from Chechnya (Moscow Helsinki Group, 16 July 2008). In Chechnya, IDPs in Grozny have the greatest difficulty obtaining residence registration as there are restrictions on migration to the city.

Many IDPs living outside of the North Caucasus still face barriers when registering their residence. These include the reluctance of landlords and the authorities to register them as residents, and unlawful requirements such as the payment for

utilities one year in advance and approval from the local Federal Security Service office (IDMC, 30 June 2008). In contrast, IDPs in Ingushetia have been able to obtain and extend their residence registration. While citizens do not theoretically need residence registration to exercise their rights, in practice the lack of residence registration restricts IDPs' access to public services, social security, government jobs, rental accommodation, and creates a risk of housing eviction (IDMC, 30 June 2008; UN CERD, 20 August 2008).

By creating forced migrant status, the government has helped many IDPs gain access to basic rights. Among other benefits, IDPs with forced migrant status are entitled to financial and housing assistance, job placements and free medical care. However, many IDPs face barriers to obtaining and extending this status, and to the enjoyment of the corresponding entitlements. Those displaced within a subject of the Russian Federation where they have permanent registration are not eligible for forced migrant status. Therefore, people displaced within Chechnya do not qualify. The main barriers faced by IDPs outside Chechnya include the inconsistent interpretation and respect of the law by local officials and courts, and differential treatment of applications from ethnic Chechens. About 162,000 IDPs who fled Chechnya during the first conflict received forced migrant status, and most were ethnic Russians (UNHCR, February 2003). The local authorities in Dagestan continue to refuse forced migrant status to IDPs from Chechnya, though FMS granted the status to some who arrived before 1999.

Many displaced pensioners from Chechnya receive a lower pension than they are entitled to because the necessary documents and their archives were destroyed during the conflicts and no mechanism has been put in place to rectify the issue. According to the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, as of 2003 there were around 40,000 internally displaced pensioners from Chechnya who were in this situation, and the number was rising (Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, 1 February 2008). Pensioners in Chechnya who do not have the documents required to receive the pension they are entitled to can appeal to the local court and they may also receive a financial supplement from the government of the Chechen Republic based on their work experience (Government of the Russian Federation, 10 May 2006). While some displaced pensioners outside Chechnya have managed to receive their entitled pension through the courts, most decisions have left claimants with only a minimum pension and no reparation. The majority of them therefore continue to seek work to make ends meet.

Housing in the north Caucasus

The lack of adequate housing is another major problem for IDPs in Chechnya (UNHCR, 17 April 2008; WFP/UNICEF, 3 April 2007). Some 98,000 families are in need of housing since their homes were damaged beyond repair during the conflict (Government of the Russian Federation, 25 January 2008). The government has acknowledged the need for housing and has financed housing construction and repair mostly in and around Grozny (Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, 1 Feb-

ruary 2008; Memorial, 7 April 2008; ACCORD, 22 April 2008; Grozny Inform, 1 November 2007; NYT, 30 April 2008). International organisations have also rebuilt damaged homes and provided temporary accommodation to returnees (UNHCR, 31 December 2007; DRC, 2008). However, the situation remains poor in villages, with houses destroyed, water and sanitation systems ruined, and no proper waste disposal (ACCORD, 22 April 2008).

Since 2006, the authorities in Chechnya have been closing temporary accommodation centres (TACs) and relocating IDPs mainly to their home districts (ACCORD, 22 April 2008). The process was sped up in 2007 after the government verified the status of these IDPs' residence registration and other details (Kavkazskii Uzel, 23 June 2007; Grozny Inform, 1 February 2008). People leaving the TACs were offered various housing alternatives: accommodation in other TACs, new housing or abandoned apartments, land plots, a one-off payment of \$700 (18,000 roubles) to rent temporary accommodation for six months, and letters of guarantee for a priority place on the list of those in need of housing. Private sector accommodation was offered to IDPs with residence registration in Grozny and land plots were offered, mainly to those who had previously lived in villages. However, it is not clear what criteria were used to offer other types of housing, or if these criteria were being applied consistently. It is also not clear to what extent the government consulted IDPs about their relocation or whether IDPs participated in the planning of the relocation process.

Many people who left the TACs remain without adequate housing. Some of those who returned to where they were registered do not have habitable housing and cannot afford to repair or build anew. Those who were given land in villages often do not have access to water, gas or electricity. Some who were transferred to other TACs found worse conditions. IDPs report the money offered to rent an apartment in Grozny is not enough and there are few apartments available for rent in Grozny (Memorial, 29 August 2008). Recipients of abandoned apartments found them in need of repair, already occupied or with multiple owners (Memorial, 6 July 2008). The court is reviewing cases of contested ownership, but in the meantime the current occupant can be evicted since the apartment is on a list of dwellings rejected by their original owner (Memorial, October 2007). This is creating a new group of vulnerable people and increasing social tensions.

IDPs and human rights organisations have expressed concerns about the process of relocation from the TACs. These include pressure to sign a form taking away IDPs' right to government assistance, relocations taking place on short notice, the disruption of electricity and gas supply prior to the relocation, and the lack of a court order or offer of alternate housing (Prague Watchdog, 24 January 2008; Kavkazskii Uzel, 17 January 2008, 8 April 2008, 12 July 2008 and 26 December 2007; Memorial, 7 April 2008). In response, the Chechen president has ordered a government official and a representative of Memorial to verify reported human rights violations of IDPs during the relocation process (Memorial, 7 April 2008).

In Ingushetia, most IDPs live in the private sector while others live in some 70 temporary settlements. In either case, most IDPs live in inadequate conditions. Since 2003, the government in Ingushetia together with international organisations has built housing for 380 families from Chechnya. In 2007 they built 94 cottages for IDP families, and planned on building an additional 40 cottages in 2008 (Vesti Severni Kavkaz, 8 February 2008). According to the federal authorities, 1,499 displaced families from North Ossetia were still in need of housing at the beginning of 2008 (Government of the Russian Federation, 25 January 2008).

Property compensation

In 2008, compensation payments resumed for residents of Chechnya whose property had been destroyed, after being on hold for more than a year (Prague Watchdog, 8 September 2008). The Chechen prime minister announced that 39,118 applicants would receive \$1300 (350,000 roubles) each, and some 4,000 claimants at the top of the list would receive their compensation before the end of 2008 (Grozny Inform, 4 September 2008 and 15 September 2008). According to NGO Memorial, almost 85,000 families received compensation between 1997 and 2007 for property destroyed as a result of military activities in Chechnya (Memorial, October 2007).

However, this compensation has proven an ineffective remedy to the housing problem of IDPs (MHG, 31 January 2008). The compensation amount has become increasingly insufficient for IDPs to buy or build housing (PW, 8 September 2008). Most IDPs have spent the money on rent, or repaying debts and

buying essential household items. Payments have also been suspended several times since 2003 because of theft and corruption (PW, 8 September 2008). Hundreds of criminal cases have been filed and all of those that went to court led to convictions (Gazeta, 7 February 2008), including of the head of the government compensation payments commission who had reportedly embezzled more than \$700,000 (18 million roubles) (PW, 8 September 2008).

Acknowledging the insufficiency of compensation paid to IDPs from Chechnya, the government has included people with forced migrant status in a new federal housing programme (Government of Russian Federation, 26 January 2008). Set to run until 2010, regional government agencies issue housing certificates to entitled citizens, who use them to purchase housing within nine months of receipt. The amount of the certificates is based on the average cost per square metre of housing and the size of the family. However, as IDPs lose forced migrant status when they accept compensation, many who are still in need of permanent housing are ineligible for the programme.

The new federal housing programme has so far proven unreliable in providing IDPs with adequate housing. The budget from 2006 to 2010 should be sufficient to provide certificates to around 5,000 families, or around 30 per cent of forced migrants listed as in need of improved housing (Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, 1 February 2008; Government of the Russian Federation, 1 July 2008). However, in 2006 and 2007 only 1,654 housing certificates were issued to forced migrants (Commissioner for Human Rights in the

Russian Federation, 1 February 2008), and no housing certificates will be paid in 2008 according to the Chechen prime minister (Grozny Inform, 15 September 2008).

A 2008 decree extended the deadline to 1 July 2008 for IDPs from North Ossetia to submit an application for property compensation. As of mid-2008, 4,500 IDP families had applied for compensation, 2,339 families had been approved to receive compensation, 885 families had received compensation, and 745 families had been refused (FMS, 30 June 2008).

Return

Between 57,000 and 150,000 IDPs have returned to Chechnya (Swisspeace, 3 May 2007; ACCORD, 22 April 2008). The government reported in 2006 that some 60,000 people had returned (Government of the Russian Federation, 23 October 2006). The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) reported that 4,225 IDPs returned from Ingushetia to Chechnya in 2007 (DRC, 31 January 2008).

Several sources maintain that Chechnya is unsafe for return (ECRE, March 2007; CRI Project, May 2007; ACCORD 22 April 2008). Many non-Chechen IDPs, in particular ethnic Russians, fear their personal safety and that of their children would not be guaranteed in Chechnya (IDMC, 30 June 2008; ACCORD, 22 April 2008; Jamestown Foundation, 26 July 2007). While the overall security environment is still discouraging the return of some IDPs to Chechnya, other important reasons include the lack of housing and jobs (UNHCR, 17 April 2008, 1 December 2007 and 1 June 2008; DRC, 28 February 2007; Kavkazskii

Uzel, 21 June 2007; Memorial, October 2007). In Dagestan, DRC found that 64 per cent of surveyed IDPs planned to return to Chechnya, but had not yet done so for these reasons (DRC, 28 February 2007).

The scale and terms of compensation for lost housing and property represent a form of undue pressure on IDPs to return to Chechnya. Displaced people who choose to return and settle permanently in Chechnya receive up to \$15,000 (350,000 roubles) as compensation for lost housing and property according to federal law No. 404 of 4 July 2003, while those who do not return to Chechnya receive a maximum of \$5,000 (120,000 roubles) according to federal law No. 510 of 30 April 1997. The 1997 compensation law states that those who do not return to Chechnya must renounce all rights to their housing and property, while it can be inferred from the 2003 law that those who return to Chechnya retain these rights. Those settling outside of Chechnya may be eligible for compensation regardless of the state of their property or housing, while those opting to return to Chechnya are only eligible for compensation if their property or housing is at least 80 per cent destroyed. This differential treatment of citizens on the basis of their residence may influence the return and resettlement decisions of IDPs and questions their free choice of residence in the Russian Federation.

From 1994 to 2007, 24,245 IDPs returned to North Ossetia, including about 1,000 in 2007 (Government of the Russian Federation, 14 November 2007). The majority of returnees have been ethnic Ossetians despite government decrees to return Ingush IDPs (HRW, 25 June

2008). IDPs have returned to seven locations, but were obstructed from returning to others: Terk and Chernorechskoe are closed for return since they are zoned as water conservation areas, and Ingush are not returning to mainly Ossetian towns such as Yuzhni, Oktyabrskoye and Ir because of the hostile atmosphere between Ossetians and Ingush (Memorial, 23 October 2007; CRI Project, May 2007).

Settlement in other areas

Ingushetia has been hosting IDPs from both Chechnya and North Ossetia since the first outbreak of conflict. Up to 3,800 IDPs in Ingushetia plan to stay there permanently (UNHCR, 1 July 2008; Vesti Severni Kavkaz, 8 February 2008). Some 2,500 families have made requests for housing and the local government has agreed to allocate land plots to the most vulnerable IDPs as part of an integration programme set to run until 2010 (UNHCR, 31 December 2007). However, the lack of federal funds has reportedly limited the ability of the local government to meet the needs of IDPs (UNHCR, 17 April 2008).

More than half of the IDPs in Dagestan wish to stay rather than return to Chechnya (UNHCR, 17 April 2008; DRC, 28 February 2007). Local authorities allocated land plots, bricks and a cash grant of about \$1,800 (50,000 roubles) to 37 displaced families after their settlement Camp Nadezhda was closed in 2007 (Memorial, December 2008). There have also been reports of ad-hoc government assistance including the provision of land plots in Nogayskiy district.

In 2006, the authorities in North Ossetia established a village named Novy for

IDPs. By late 2007, more than 300 displaced families had resettled there and there were 500 requests for resettlement to the village (Vesti, 6 November 2007). Other IDPs have instead insisted on their right to return to their former residences in what is now a water conservation zone, but the government maintains that return to those villages is not possible and is trying to find a compromise based on resettlement, including in apartments or on new land (Government of the Russian Federation, 14 November 2007).

The general population in Russia increasingly associates ethnic Chechens with terrorists, which makes it difficult for them to lead a normal life outside Chechnya. They face particular difficulties in securing rental accommodation, residence registration, forced migrant status and professional jobs outside of Chechnya. They have also endured racially motivated attacks and selective identity inspections by law enforcement authorities, and the police do not guarantee their protection (UN, 20 February 2008; AI, 19 September 2007; CoE, 2 May 2007; IDMC, 30 June 2008; ACCORD, 22 April 2008; Grouping of Russian NGOs, 12 August 2008).

Humanitarian response

Human rights advocates concluded in 2008 that amendments to laws governing civil society organisations in Russia have impeded the work of local and international NGOs, especially those addressing controversial topics such as conflict in Chechnya or human rights (HRW, 20 February 2008; AI, February 2008; MHG/HRWF, February 2008). Some Russian NGOs focusing on the conflicts in Chechnya and human rights have faced

administrative harassment, targeting under the anti-extremism law and closure (HRW, 25 June 2008; UN HRC, 5 March 2008). Individual human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers working in the North Caucasus have also been increasingly subjected to threats and intimidation because of their work (AI, 28 November 2007; NHC, 30 April 2008).

A 2006 meeting of senior representatives from international organisations, governments and NGOs on Russia concluded that the international response to conflict in the North Caucasus has often been “deeply conflicted, ambivalent and ineffectual” and that international organisations needed to increase their accountability in the region (CSIS, September 2007). Participants also agreed that the Russian government continued to make it harder for donors and international organisations to engage in the region. Local governments in the North Caucasus continue to require that humanitarian organisations working there announce their locations in advance and travel with armed escorts (ACCORD, 22 April 2008).

In the North Caucasus, many international organisations are phasing out their activities because of decreased donor support and a general shift towards recovery and development. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs closed its office at the end of 2007, and the World Food Programme in 2008. The Danish Refugee Council also ended food distribution in Chechnya and other North Caucasus republics in 2008, while the International Committee of the Red Cross stopped distributing food and other aid in 2007. Remaining international organisations will continue to focus on the

remaining humanitarian needs, rule of law and capacity building.

European institutions also remain engaged on the human rights situation in the North Caucasus. The Council of Europe concluded in 2008 on the North Caucasus that “it would appear that the human rights situation is by far the most alarming in the whole of the geographical area covered by the Council of Europe,” and emphasised the right of family members to know the fate of disappeared relatives (CoE, 16 July 2008 and 11 April 2008). In 2007, the European Parliament continued to criticise Russia’s conduct in Chechnya, condemning the numerous human rights violations and calling on the federal government to take concrete steps to prevent further abuses and tackle impunity for perpetrators of such violations (EP, 14 November 2007).

For its part, the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) approved a new \$14 million (11 million euros) humanitarian aid package in 2008 for victims of the conflict in Chechnya, including IDPs. While substantial, this is a decrease from past years’ funding. Increased donor assistance is needed for projects that support food security, housing, income generation, independent media and the rule of law.

Note: This is a summary of the IDMC’s Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org.

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