



A woman and her nephew in the single room which they share in Moscow, the Russian Federation, after being displaced from the Republic of Chechnya  
(Photo: Nadine Walicki, IDMC, March 2008).

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## Internal displacement in Europe and Central Asia

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# Internal displacement in Europe and Central Asia

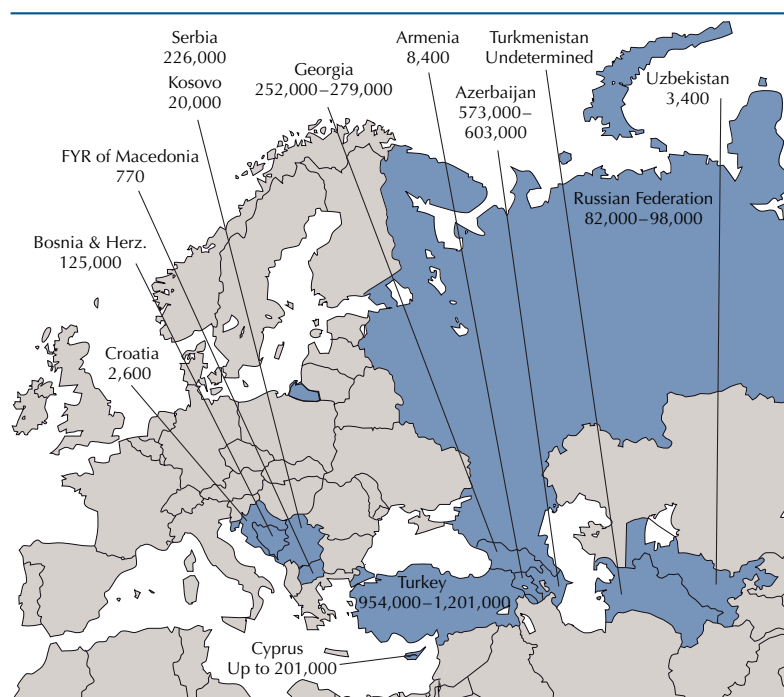
Around 2.5 million people are internally displaced in Europe and Central Asia. Most fled their homes more than 15 years ago as a result of violence and armed conflict, and are living in situations of protracted displacement. Turkey, with one million IDPs, has the largest displaced population in the region, while Georgia was the only country in the region that experienced new displacement in 2008. Some 128,000 people fled to other parts of Georgia when conflict broke out between Georgia and the Russian Federation in August 2008; about 68,000 had returned before the end of the year. The situation remained more or less static in the other countries of the region, which include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Kosovo, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Internal displacement in Europe has been protracted by the lack of political resolutions to most of the conflicts, and inadequate support to durable solutions in the face of declining attention and donor interest. The various country situations share several characteristics. Most IDPs now live in towns and cities: many initially fled to the relative safety of towns, while others subsequently moved to urban areas in search of jobs, services and better living conditions. As the IDPs who were able to do so have returned to areas of origin or integrated in another area, those still displaced are often the most vulnerable: they are generally living without support, assets or livelihoods in inadequate shelters which were only intended for temporary occupation. IDPs with specific needs include people who are traumatised, disabled and chronically ill, female heads of household, children, the elderly and minorities such as Roma, Chechens and Kurds.

Internal displacement in Europe is also characterised by the continued impunity of original agents of displacement. As a result of corruption, political obstacles, ineffective investigations and biased trials, most perpetrators of human rights abuses and crimes committed during the armed conflicts remain at large, and many IDPs are still seeking justice and information on the fate and whereabouts of disappeared relatives.

Certain governments do not exercise effective control over their entire territory. The existence of breakaway regions has led to parallel and non-cooperative legal systems, limiting IDPs' access to their rights. Lack of progress in peace negotiations and the absence of reconciliation mechanisms have prevented durable solutions.

Most governments in the region have overwhelmingly prioritised the return of IDPs to their place of origin over other durable solutions, even when return has been blocked by the lack of peace agreements. Despite these efforts, only some 25 per cent of IDPs have gone home and the percentage may be even lower since some returnees were forced to move again after returning, by the lack of jobs, inadequate housing and insufficient reintegration assistance there. The remaining IDPs who do not want



to or cannot return mostly receive little or no support to assist their local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country, so they have not been able to make a free and informed choice about their settlement preference. In order to bring displacement to an end in Europe and Central Asia, governments must exhibit a new political will to overcome the remaining obstacles that perpetuate internal displacement, they must support local integration and settlement in another area of the country in addition to return, and monitor the process by which people arrive at these solutions, to ensure their sustainability.

Many IDPs in the region still face issues related to their displacement. At the end of 2008, 390,000 IDPs were still living in temporary shelter and collective centres in desperate conditions, often without security of tenure. Many had not secured a remedy for lost property where their homes have been destroyed or occupied, as they never had property titles, property claims were awaiting a peace agreement, or restitution or compensation programmes had been compromised by political resistance, corruption, inadequate resources and an excessive burden of proof on claimants.

Displaced Roma people continue to struggle to access services and benefits offered to registered IDPs, as they have often been unable to register while living in informal settlements without identification documents. In several countries, displaced pensioners receive only a minimum pension as their work documents have not been recognised or have been lost during conflict. Poverty has caused some internally displaced students to drop out of school, as has the further internal

migration of their families. Some internally displaced children are still being educated in damaged or inadequate buildings, displaced children need more support to integrate into general schools in Georgia, and separate schooling remains an issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina for returnee children. This situation affects the capacity of these children to integrate in the community and compromises reconciliation between groups.

In contrast to Europe, IDPs in Central Asia have been displaced by the government or the army, not by conflict, and they continue to be blocked from returning to areas of origin. Limited access and the lack of current and reliable information on IDPs in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan make it difficult for international organisations to identify and address their outstanding needs.

| Country                                   | Number of IDPs (rounded) | Government figures   | UN figures  | Other figures   | Comments   |
|---|--------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Armenia                                   | <b>8,400</b>             |  |   | 8,400 (NRC, 2005)                                       | No more recent figure available.   |
| Azerbaijan                                | <b>573,000–603,000</b>   | 572,531 (April 2008)   | 603,251 (UNHCR, December 2008)  |   | Government figure includes those displaced to areas under its control, and includes around 200,000 children since born to male IDPs.   |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina                    | <b>125,000</b>           | 124,600 (September 2008)   |   |   | UN agencies use government figures.  |
| Croatia                                   | <b>2,600</b>             | 2,579 (September 2008)   |   |   | UN agencies use government figures.  |
| Cyprus                                    | <b>Up to 201,000</b>     | 200,457 (Republic of Cyprus, 2008)   | 210,000 (UNFICYP, May 2003)   | 0 ("Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", October 2007) | The figure reported by the Republic of Cyprus includes those displaced to areas under its control since 1974, and includes around 54,000 children born since to male IDPs. The "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" considers that displacement ended with the 1975 Vienna III agreement. |
| The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | <b>770</b>               | 772 (September 2008)   |   |   |  |
| Georgia                                   | <b>252,000–279,000</b>   | 247,000 displaced before 2008 (February 2007), 32,000 displaced by August 2008 crisis still displaced at the end of the year (December 2008) | 220,000 displaced before 2008 (UNHCR, 2007)   |   | According to the UN, close to 128,000 people were internally displaced during the 2008 crisis. The government estimated that 15,000 had resettled in government-built settlements by the end of the year.  |
| Russian Federation                        | <b>82,000–98,000</b>     | 82,200 (Federal Government, February 2006)   | 58,000 in the north Caucasus (UNHCR, December 2008); 40,000 outside the north Caucasus (UN, 2004) |   | Government figure includes forced migrants registered in Ingushetia and Chechnya. There is no recent figure for IDPs outside the north Caucasus.   |
| Serbia                                    | <b>226,000</b>           | 205,861 (September 2008)   |   | 20,000 (UNHCR/Praxis, March 2007)                       | UNHCR/Praxis figure is an estimate of unregistered Roma IDPs in Serbia.  |
| Kosovo                                    | <b>20,000</b>            |  | 20,000 (UNHCR, September 2008)  |   |  |
| Turkey                                    | <b>954,000–1,201,000</b> | 953,680 1,201,200 (Hacettepe University, December 2006)  |   | Over 1,000,000 (NGOs, August 2005)                      | Hacettepe University survey commissioned by the government.  |
| Turkmenistan                              | <b>Undetermined</b>      |  |   |   | No estimates available.  |
| Uzbekistan                                | <b>3,400</b>             |  |   | 3,400 (IOM, May 2005)                                   | No more recent figures available.  |

# Azerbaijan

## Quick facts

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Number of IDPs                  | 573,000–603,000 (including children of male IDPs)               |
| Percentage of total population  | 6.7–7.1%  |
| Start of displacement situation | 1988  |
| New displacement in 2008        | 0   |
| Returns in 2008                 | 0   |
| Causes of displacement          | International and internal armed conflict, generalised violence |
| Human development index         | 97  |



The situation of most of Azerbaijan's IDPs has been at a standstill as a result of continued political deadlock over the future of Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan claims the territory as its own, while Armenia supports self-determination of the region. Meanwhile, the 650,000 Azerbaijanis originally displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and surrounding districts since 1988 are prevented from claiming their properties and returning to their homes. The Azerbaijani government has nevertheless been pushing for the return of IDPs as a priority over local integration and resettlement. Some IDPs have rebuilt their lives in displacement, but many remain dependent on direct government assistance and have yet to find a durable solution to their plight.

IDPs still struggle to access adequate housing, livelihoods and services such as health care and education. Many IDPs continue to live in accommodation that fails to provide warmth, ventilation or privacy, and puts them at a higher risk of falling ill. Medical services are unaffordable and inadequate, as is the psychiatric and social support of which many are reportedly in need. Many IDPs have left their families and moved from areas of displacement and resettlement to cities in search of jobs, but have struggled to register their new residence and have therefore been unable to access formal employment or government assistance, entitlements and services. The quality of education is also a problem, and some displaced students have dropped out of school because of poverty, movement of families and early marriage.

About half of all IDPs still live in difficult conditions in improvised shelters and collective centres. These are often the most vulnerable IDPs since those able to do so have moved into better housing and improved their lives. Elderly displaced people reportedly have additional and more serious health problems than elderly people who had not been displaced, because of difficulties adapting to new environments, lower family income and less care from their children. According to a 2007 UNHCR assessment of IDPs, children and adolescents needed more privacy, while disabled people, single mothers and orphans had little hope they would achieve living conditions that met their specific needs. Feelings of insecurity and isolation due to war and uncertainty about the future stood in the way of the self-reliance of these vulnerable IDPs.

Despite dim prospects for durable solutions for most IDPs, the government's response to the displacement situation has been positive and considerable, especially in the last few years. In addition to providing regular direct assistance, it has closed the worst settlements and is resettling some IDPs in new homes until return becomes possible. While resettled IDPs have noted an improvement in their housing conditions, the villages are located in isolated and economically depressed areas with infertile land, sometimes close to the line of contact where there are still exchanges of fire between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. An improved national response would entail efforts to ensure the participation of IDPs in decisions that affect them, and acknowledgement of the right of IDPs to freely choose between returning and settling elsewhere. It would also entail improved implementation of programmes to combat poverty and unemployment.

In recent years, humanitarian assistance has largely focused on micro-credit programmes, skills training, food distribution, housing and infrastructure construction and repair. Many humanitarian organisations have gradually reduced their activities for IDPs following decreasing donor support. However, in 2008 the World Bank committed an additional \$15 million to assist 150,000 IDPs with infrastructure reconstruction and shelter repair, and UNHCR and the Danish Refugee Council continued to be the main international organisations assisting IDPs. National NGOs continue to provide legal assistance, skills training and micro-credit loans, as well as inform IDPs of their rights and advocate towards the government for improved protection. An improved humanitarian response would only follow increased donor interest, which itself depends on greater prospects for durable solutions.



# Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Quick facts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Number of IDPs                          | 125,000  |
| Percentage of total population          | 3.2%   |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1992   |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 1,000,000 (1993)   |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0  |
| Returns in 2008                         | 1,500  |
| Causes of displacement                  | International and internal armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations |
| Human development index                 | 75   |

In the early 1990s generalised violence and armed conflict between Yugoslav, Croatian and Bosnian armed forces and militias, accompanied by massive human rights abuses and violations, led to the displacement of over a million people and the creation of ethnically homogeneous areas within the newly independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. By 2008, almost 600,000 people had returned to their places of origin, and the government reported that 124,600 people remained as IDPs.

Thus protection issues in Bosnia actually affect a larger number of returnees than IDPs. The vast majority of people moved to areas where they would be among the ethnic majority and therefore not subject to discrimination. However the discrimination returnees face as members of a local ethnic minority in return areas affects their livelihood opportunities and access to services. In addition, the fragmentation of the social welfare system in Bosnia results in lower pensions and other social benefits in certain areas, increasing the vulnerability of elderly people, while the lack of cooperation between the health insurance schemes in Bosnia's two political entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Sprska – makes it harder for pensioners and returnees in general to access health care.

Those still displaced are in many cases among the most elderly or vulnerable, who require specific assistance to access adequate housing, livelihoods, psychiatric and social care and treatment for chronic diseases. These people are over-represented among the 8,000 people who continue to endure very difficult conditions in collective centres with no prospects of improving their situation.

During 2008 the situation changed little and only a few hundred people returned, reflecting the continuing dependency of remaining IDPs and the decrease in reconstruction funding available over the past few years. However, increased funding efforts from the government in 2008 might lead to a slight improvement in 2009. At this stage local integration is the most likely solution for the most vulnerable IDPs. However almost all expressed their intention to return when re-registering as IDPs, since this intention is a pre-condition to claim assistance for the reconstruction of their pre-war home.

Under Annex VII of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, support to durable solutions has focused almost exclusively on the return of displaced people to their places of origin to the exclusion of other durable solutions, as any support to local integration was perceived as cementing the effect of the war and the “ethnic cleansing” which motivated the displacement.

In 2003, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees took over from the international community the responsibility to implement Annex VII, and elaborated a National Strategy for Implementation of Annex VII which still focused mainly on return. In 2008 however, the Ministry revised this strategy, and from 2009, though the emphasis remains on return, it recognises the need to compensate people for lost property (instead of a sole focus on restitution) and to assist the most vulnerable who cannot or do not want to return, thereby providing de facto support to local integration.

The Ministry increased financial support to returns in 2008 and improved the scope of the assistance provided by adding income-generating activities and rehabilitation of infrastructure to reconstruction aid. These more comprehensive programmes combined with greater support to local integration are likely to lead to a more effective response.

Despite the impressive international humanitarian commitment which followed the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a few organisations remain in support of IDPs, mainly OSCE, UNHCR and UNDP. The EU has also played a major role in influencing government policy in favour of IDPs through the accession process. The European Commission's progress reports on Bosnia also have a continuing role in promoting policy initiatives of benefit to IDPs, such as the harmonisation of social welfare benefits across the country. The Council of Europe Development Bank has provided significant loans to UNHCR and Bosnian authorities to facilitate the return and reintegration of IDPs and refugees still accommodated in collective centres.

# Georgia

## Quick facts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Number of IDPs                          | 252,000–279,000  |
| Percentage of total population          | 5.7%–6.3%  |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1992, 2008 (South Ossetia); 1994 (Abkhazia)  |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 380,000 (old and new caseload), 2008   |
| New displacement in 2008                | 128,000  |
| Returns in 2008                         | 96,000   |
| Causes of displacement                  | International and internal armed conflict, human rights violations, generalised violence |
| Human development index                 | 93   |



The majority of IDPs in Georgia have been displaced since the early 1990s. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, Abkhazia and South Ossetia demanded their independence from Georgia. The fighting that followed caused the displacement of some 300,000 people, the majority from Abkhazia, of whom between 220,000 and 247,000 were still displaced in 2008. Since the conflict, the two regions have claimed their independence and until 2008 a shaky ceasefire was in place.

In August 2008, conflict broke out between Georgia and the Russian Federation over the fate of South Ossetia. Hundreds of people were killed and at least 158,000 ethnic Georgians and South Ossetians fled their homes. 128,000 of the people displaced were ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia, but also from Abkhazia and Georgia proper. In addition, 30,000 ethnic Ossetians found refuge temporarily in the Russian Federation. An internationally-brokered ceasefire came a week later, and Russia recognised the independence of both regions following the crisis, complicating further the return process.

Some 32,000 Georgians had not been able to return as of the end of 2008, due to the destruction of their villages close to South Ossetia, or because they were not allowed to return to their homes by South Ossetian de facto authorities. Close to 15,000 were accommodated in government-built settlements.

Georgia's longer-term IDPs were in 2008 dispersed across the country, with around 70 per cent living in cities, primarily in collective centres and private accommodation in Zugdidi, Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

These IDPs are still facing barriers to the enjoyment of economic and social rights. They are not able to regain their properties in conflict areas as the Georgian government has no effective control of Abkhazia or South Ossetia. IDPs have struggled to find work, and many inhabitants of collective centres remain extremely poor.

Elderly IDPs and female-headed households face particular difficulties; they are less likely to have an income or support for maintaining their homes in collective centres, and often live in unhealthy dwellings. Children in collective centres still live in inadequate cramped conditions, and are often seen as outsiders by other children and their families.

Since 1996, a comprehensive law on IDPs has offered some support including the use of public utilities free of charge, and modest monthly financial allowances. However it was not effective in lifting most IDPs out of poverty. In 2007, the government adopted a national strategy on IDPs, developed by the Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation (MRA) with the assistance of the international community. Following the August 2008 crisis, the government has indicated its plan to modify the strategy to reflect new developments.

However, the Georgian government's prompt response in support of the new IDPs should be recognised, especially compared to its response in the 1990s during previous waves of displacement. It registered new IDPs following the August crisis, and the MRA is in charge of managing the new collective centres. Other ministries have also been involved, particularly the Ministry of the Interior which is building the new IDP settlements.

UN agencies, national and international NGOs have provided assistance to IDPs in collective centres for many years, including shelter repair, employment projects, legal and social assistance, and education. Over the past years, most of them merged activities targeting IDPs into wider programmes, but in the wake of the 2008 crisis, they mobilised quickly to bring urgently-needed assistance to those newly displaced. Under the new cluster approach, protection improved at the operational level for new IDPs.

Following the August 2008 crisis, the return of IDPs to their homes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia seems more distant than ever. Local integration and resettlement are thus the most likely durable solutions for them, and indeed the government has already started to change its policy in this respect, stating that it would support the provision of permanent accommodation for all IDPs by 2011.

A donor conference in Brussels in November 2008 raised \$4.7 billion, part of which is planned for the improvement of housing conditions of the old and new caseloads and their medical costs. As of the end of 2008 however, programmes had only benefited the new IDPs, causing tensions between them and many of those displaced since the early 1990s.



# Russian Federation

## Quick facts

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Number of IDPs                          | 82,000–98,000   |
| Percentage of total population          | 0.1%  |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1992 (North Ossetia); 1994 (Chechnya)   |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | North Ossetia: 64,000 (1992); Chechnya first war: 500,000 (1996); Chechnya second war: 350,000 (2000) |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0   |
| Returns in 2008                         | 1,500 to Chechnya; 700 to North Ossetia   |
| Causes of displacement                  | Internal armed conflicts  |
| Human development index                 | 67  |

Up to 98,000 people remained displaced in 2008 due to the inter-ethnic and separatist conflicts which have affected two republics in the north Caucasus since the early 1990s.

In Chechnya, an estimated 850,000 people were displaced by successive conflicts which broke out in 1996 and 2000. They fled within Chechnya, to other republics in the north Caucasus and to western areas of the Russian Federation. Conflict in North Ossetia in 1992 displaced an estimated 64,000 people, mostly into neighbouring Ingushetia.

Return to Chechnya continues to be hindered by the lack of jobs and housing, and continued skirmishes in the absence of a political resolution. The Government of Chechnya de-registered the remaining IDPs in the republic in 2007 and IDPs subsequently reported being put under pressure to leave collective centres there. Despite government offers of alternative accommodation, many remain without adequate housing. Although some stayed in collective centres, most live in private housing and mainly with relatives and friends.

While some 700 IDPs returned to North Ossetia from Ingushetia in 2008, displacement has continued for other IDPs from North Ossetia, for some because return has been blocked as their home areas have been declared part of water conservation zones, and also because there has been no reconciliation between ethnic Ingush and Ossetians over the contested Prigorodny district in North Ossetia.

The Law on Forced Migrants has facilitated IDPs' access to basic rights, including government benefits and services, and the Federal Migration Service (FMS) made transport, housing and food assistance available to IDPs during the first years of displacement. Though some IDPs still enjoy housing assistance, most report that the FMS has been of little use to them.

The principal concerns facing remaining IDPs throughout the Russian Federation include achieving an adequate standard of living, particularly of housing, and accessing documents, services, livelihoods and pensions. Compensation is offered for lost housing, but payment has been interrupted several times and the amount has increasingly become insufficient to enable IDPs to buy property and so most live in rented accommodation. The government acknowledged this and included

some IDPs in a federal housing programme, though it has so far proven unreliable.

Access to documentation such as residence registration, forced migrant status, pension documents and internal passports is essential to IDPs and their absence presents problems: for example IDPs who have lost documents of their working history do not receive the pension to which they are entitled. As a result, some 40,000 displaced elderly are living on a minimum pension and sometimes working odd jobs to make ends meet. Ethnic Chechens have also faced discrimination which has made it harder for them to get jobs, find accommodation and move freely outside Chechnya.

There are few NGOs with an explicit IDP focus, but some with wider human rights mandates have given important legal and medical assistance to IDPs, and provided an important advocacy voice in criticising the government's response. UN agencies and international NGOs have also had an important role in identifying and addressing protection risks faced by IDPs not covered by government programmes.

IDPs' situations will not be resolved until there is long-term security in Chechnya and the wider north Caucasus, ethnic Chechens are treated equally throughout the Russian Federation, their access to adequate housing, jobs, documentation and public services is more consistently realised, and the rule of law has a stronger hold, with perpetrators of human rights violations in the north Caucasus facing judicial process. A government approach based more on individual human rights would benefit from greater consultation with IDPs and the organisations working with them.

# Turkey

## Quick facts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Number of IDPs                          | 954,000–1,201,000                                |
| Percentage of total population          | 1.3%–1.6%  |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1984   |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0  |
| Returns in 2008                         | Undetermined                                     |
| Causes of displacement                  | Internal armed conflict, human rights violations |
| Human development index                 | 84   |



Around a million people became displaced from towns and villages in south-eastern Turkey during the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the insurgent actions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the counter-insurgency policies of the Turkish government. Over 60 per cent were forced from their homes between 1991 and 1996. The conflict has abated since 1999, but low-level violence between the PKK and security forces, which may have led to further displacement, continued in 2007 and 2008.

In 2005, 75 per cent of IDPs were found in urban centres, both within affected provinces and elsewhere in Turkey. Most were in 2008 living on the edges of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Adana, and in cities in the south-east such as Batman, Diyarbakir, Hakkari and Van. IDPs had settled among the urban poor, sharing with other migrants the problems of acute social and economic marginalisation and limited access to housing, schools and health facilities.

It is not clear whether IDPs, who are mainly of Kurdish origin, face specific forms of discrimination, but they do lack access to government programmes which target poor segments of the population and do not take into account the specific needs related to their displacement. Problems which IDPs have particularly identified include prevalent psychological and emotional trauma, low levels of education, and high unemployment among adults and particularly among displaced women. Displaced children have also had limited access to schooling, and child labour is reported as a problem in urban centres with significant displaced populations.

Most IDPs have not returned to their areas of origin, due to security concerns involving the continuing presence of mines and local militias belonging to the government's "village guard" system, and due to the lack of economic opportunities, social services and basic infrastructure (including clean water, electricity, telephone lines, schools and roads) in rural south-eastern Turkey. Others have returned only temporarily, usually in the summer months, commuting between cities and their villages of origin.

The government's response has evolved steadily. In 1994, it launched the "Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project" to facilitate the return and rehabilitation of IDPs. It passed a

special compensation law in 2004, and in 2005 sponsored a comprehensive national survey on migration and displacement. The Van Action Plan, launched in 2006, provided a concrete model for addressing IDPs' and returnees' needs at the provincial level.

The government has made important progress in the past four years towards improving the overall national policy, and identifying and facilitating return to places of origin for Turkey's displaced. However, return programmes have been criticised for the lack of support which they offer to returnees, and in the past for lacking transparency, consistency, consultation and funding. NGOs have called for a government review of the national return programme in consultation with civil society, and commitment to reconciliation and reparation initiatives to address past human rights violations against IDPs.

The government in 2008 had still to formulate a national IDP plan of action, as it had aimed to do based upon the experience of the Van Action Plan. Some NGOs reported that the implementation of the Van Action Plan had progressed slowly for lack of resources. However, in May 2008, the government relaunched the Grand Anatolian Project Plan, an ambitious programme to provide irrigation and basic infrastructure in the south-east, two years after the European Commission underlined the need for a comprehensive plan to address socio-economic problems there.

Progress for IDPs in Turkey has been influenced by regional and international institutions such as the European Union, European Court of Human Rights and the Council of Europe. The UN's involvement has centred on the office of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs. If IDPs are to find sustainable solutions, the international community should continue to emphasise the need to address the current situation facing IDPs in urban areas the pervasive obstacles to their return, and encourage wider efforts to seek reconciliation on the Kurdish issue.



# Serbia and Kosovo

## Quick facts

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Number of IDPs                          | Serbia (excluding Kosovo): 226,000; Kosovo: 20,000              |
| Percentage of total population          | 2.5% (of combined population)                                   |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1999  |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 228,000 (2004) in Serbia  |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0   |
| Returns in 2008                         | 533 in Kosovo, including 323 from Serbia                        |
| Causes of displacement                  | International and internal armed conflict, generalised violence |
| Human development index                 | 65 (Serbia)   |

*In 2008 Kosovo declared independence from Serbia. The UN General Assembly subsequently voted to refer the independence declaration to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. At the end of the year, 53 countries had recognised Kosovo.*

In 1999, bombardments by NATO forces and attacks by Kosovo Albanians, in response to attacks and arbitrary executions perpetrated by Kosovo Serb paramilitary groups and the Yugoslav army, forced Kosovo Serbs and Roma people to flee into Serbia proper or within Kosovo. In 2008, there were still around 225,000 IDPs in Serbia, including an estimated 20,000 displaced Roma. An additional 20,000 were displaced in Kosovo, mainly in majority-Serb enclaves.

Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 created a new situation of uncertainty for displaced Serbs in Serbia proper and within Kosovo. Despite the non-recognition of independence by Serbia, the situation in Kosovo remained calm, with no major incidents directed at minority communities and no further displacement.

While new displacement was avoided, the rate of return decreased significantly in 2008 from an already low level, as most IDPs waited to evaluate the approach of Kosovo authorities towards Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanian communities.

Prospects for durable solutions are limited. The political, security and economic situation is not conducive to return. Many IDPs also face difficulties in repossessing their property or obtaining legal documentation. Those who already returned to Kosovo struggle to find livelihood opportunities, notably because of widespread discrimination against Serbs and Roma. The Serbian government's position on local integration has evolved, and it has implemented projects supporting the development of social housing for IDPs in recent years, notably in favour of the 5,000 or so people still accommodated in collective centres.

Local integration opportunities for Kosovo Serb IDPs are scarce since they live in complete isolation from Kosovo institutions. Most of them reside in enclaves relying on a parallel system of education, policing, and health care supported by Serbia. Security concerns have prevented them from returning to their repossessed property. Because of their limited freedom

of movement and the discrimination they have faced, IDPs' access to land and employment has been very limited.

The most vulnerable IDPs are Roma people in both Serbia and Kosovo, who have specific protection needs because of their social marginalisation and lack of civil documentation, which prevents them from registering as IDPs and limits their access to housing assistance and other social benefits. As a result many were enduring extreme poverty and poor health in informal settlements without electricity, water or connection to the sewage system.

The lack of agreement over Kosovo's independence has complicated both national and international responses. The Serbian government has decided to stop its cooperation with the Kosovo Property Agency, the body responsible for processing restitution claims, which will limit further IDPs' hopes of durable solutions. Soon after independence, Serbia took control of Northern Kosovo, leading to a de facto partition of Kosovo. International organisations willing to operate in Northern Kosovo therefore need authorisation from Serbia.

In Kosovo, independence seriously limited UNMIK's role and capacity to operate. EULEX (the EU mission focusing on rule of law) has replaced UNMIK on the rule of law, while OSCE is set to increase its human rights monitoring activities. In addition, UNHCR and UNDP focus respectively on protection and return activities.

The Kosovo authorities have given positive signals by initiating in 2008 a \$7.6m project to facilitate return and reintegration of IDPs in cooperation with the European Commission and the UNDP office in Kosovo. But the success of such projects requires that the Kosovo authorities engage strongly and consistently with Kosovo Serbs and other minority communities to prevent further displacement and increase their confidence in the institutions of the new state.

Any improvement in the situation of Serbia's and Kosovo's IDPs requires the establishment of constructive dialogue between the two authorities, without necessarily implying political recognition. For instance, mutual acceptance of documents such as diplomas, driving licences or birth and death certificates would facilitate IDPs' access to pension and property rights and improve their daily lives.

# Croatia

## Quick facts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Number of IDPs                          | 2,600  |
| Percentage of total population          | 0.1 %  |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1991   |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 191,000 (1995)   |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0  |
| Returns in 2008                         | 250  |
| Causes of displacement                  | Internationalised armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations. |
| Human development index                 | 45   |

Between 1991 and 1995, 220,000 ethnic Croats and subsequently up to 300,000 ethnic Serbs were displaced by armed conflict in Croatia. Since then almost all the Croat IDPs have returned to their homes, while most of the Serbs displaced have resettled in Serbia or in the majority-Serb Danube region of Croatia. In March 2008, 2,600 people remained displaced in Croatia, over half of them ethnic Serbs in Danube region, and their numbers continued to fall slowly as a result of property restitution or reconstruction.

Since the end of the conflict, only one third of Croatian Serb IDPs and refugees have been able to return and it is estimated



that only 50 per cent of returns have proved sustainable. The main obstacles to their return have been impunity for war crimes, lack of livelihood opportunities, non-restitution of former housing occupancy rights and difficulties accessing full pension entitlements. Progress has been made in terms of minority rights, since the arrival of a more moderate government in 2000, and under EU pressure. This includes the adoption of legislation on minority rights, restitution of private property and reconstruction of destroyed properties, and a review of cases involving Serbs arrested or convicted for war crimes. In 2008, Croatia adopted a procedure which should assist Serb IDPs and refugees in obtaining their full pension rights.

The main outstanding issue preventing durable solutions for Croatian Serb IDPs is the lack of remedy for former holders of occupancy rights. The arbitrary cancellation of these rights during and after the war affected mainly Croatian Serbs. Contrary to the practice in other Balkan countries, Croatia refused to allow restitution of flats held under occupancy rights, and former holders of such rights are only entitled to limited and delayed benefits from a housing care scheme.

# The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

## Quick facts

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Number of IDPs                          | 770                     |
| Start of current displacement situation | 2001                    |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 74,000 (2001)           |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0                       |
| Returns in 2008                         | 0                       |
| Causes of displacement                  | Internal armed conflict |
| Human development index                 | 68                      |

Tensions in Macedonia between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians culminated in violent conflict in 2001 which displaced over 171,000 people, 74,000 of them within the country. Since then, over 99 per cent have returned and only around 770 people remained displaced. Most of those still displaced in 2008 were ethnic Macedonians or Serbs who did not feel safe to return to the Albanian-dominated Lipkovo-Aracinovo area. Among them, over 400 were accommodated privately while more than 300 still lived in very poor conditions in collective centres. The support from authorities was not sufficient for the most vulnerable among them, such as elderly and sick people and single-headed households, to obtain accommodation elsewhere.



The Orhid peace agreement of 2001 addressed the main claim from ethnic Albanians for equal participation in political, social, economic, cultural life. It provided greater protection of the rights of minority groups and set out the framework for the return of the displaced population. The government has largely supported the right of IDPs to return and implemented the reforms required by the framework agreement, but discrimination has continued between the ethnic Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority (who make up 25 per cent of the population) in areas such as education, employment and political participation.

During the 2008 parliamentary elections, electoral irregularities and incidents of violence in Albanian-dominated areas reinforced the reluctance of IDPs to return. Some have struggled to access compensation for property damaged during the conflict, though several IDPs have submitted claims before local courts or to the European Court of Human Rights.

Most organisations, including the EU and the OSCE, have phased out their assistance and monitoring of IDPs to focus on improvement of inter-ethnic relations.



A 2004 survey found over 8,000 people still internally displaced in Armenia, over a

decade after ethnic violence and conflict with Azerbaijan had forced them to leave border areas in the early 1990s. The conflict displaced over 70,000 people within Armenia, but the plight of the larger number of refugees from Azerbaijan and of the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by a massive 1988 earthquake and other natural disasters overshadowed that of conflict-induced IDPs.

Conflict-induced IDPs have remained dispersed in rural areas and in towns and cities, mainly in the capital Yerevan and in Syunik, Tavush and Gegharkunik provinces. Rural and urban IDPs have shared problems of inadequate shelter, and only a small percentage of those originally displaced have been able to buy a home. In urban areas IDPs' lack of suitable skills has led them to work in the shadow economy; displaced households and particularly those headed by a woman have often been unable to afford to send children to school.

Many people returned to their homes following the 1994 ceasefire agreement, but have had limited access to adequate education or medical services due to damaged buildings and the lack of staff. The continuing insecurity and destruction of

## Armenia

### Quick facts

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Number of IDPs                          | 8,400   |
| Percentage of total population          | 0.3%  |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1988  |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0   |
| Returns in 2008                         | Undetermined  |
| Causes of displacement                  | International and internal armed conflict, generalised violence |
| Human development index                 | 83  |

infrastructure have discouraged the return of the remaining IDPs, as have the lack of jobs and continuing presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance. Meanwhile, nearly 20,000 homes damaged or destroyed during the conflict are in need of rehabilitation.

The Department of Migration and Refugees is mandated to ensure the protection of conflict-induced IDPs; however, without a solution to the conflict, the political will to provide them targeted assistance or further funding to rehabilitate border areas, and with no international agencies providing protection or assistance, the difficulties facing this relatively small group are likely to endure.



While Turkish Cypriots were displaced in the 1950s and 1960s into ethnic enclaves, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were displaced in 1974 when groups backed

by Greece's military government ousted the Cypriot leader, and Turkey sent troops to the island in response. Greek Cypriots fled south while Turkish Cypriots sought refuge in the north. They have been living separately ever since, divided by the "green line" patrolled by the UN Peacekeeping Force.

Talks to find a diplomatic solution failed and in 1975 the Turkish Cypriots announced the establishment of their own state, later to become the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC), which only Turkey has since recognised. With an estimated 25,000 to 43,000 troops from Turkey stationed in the north, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus considers this occupied territory, and the two sides have yet to reach a political solution.

While the TRNC authorities consider that displacement ended with the population movements achieved within the framework of the 1975 Third Vienna Agreement, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus maintains displacement persists as IDPs continue to be deprived of their right to property and return.

## Cyprus

### Quick facts

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Number of IDPs                          | Up to 201,000 (including children of male IDPs)                             |
| Percentage of total population          | Up to 23%   |
| Start of current displacement situation | 1974  |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | 210,000 (1975) (entire island)  |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0   |
| Returns in 2008                         | 0   |
| Causes of displacement                  | International armed conflict, human rights violations, generalised violence |
| Human development index                 | 28  |

Despite continuing assistance from the Government of the Republic of Cyprus to most IDPs in areas under its control, there is still no mutually agreed mechanism for deciding property claims, and people's choice of residence is limited. The resolution of their outstanding problems depends on continued political will on both sides to reach a compromise and resolve the conflict. Involvement of the displaced people in the peace progress would improve the chances that an eventual agreement would hold.

# Turkmenistan

## Quick facts

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Number of IDPs                          | Undetermined            |
| Start of current displacement situation | 2002                    |
| Peak number of IDPs (and year)          | Undetermined            |
| New displacement in 2008                | Undetermined            |
| Returns in 2008                         | 0                       |
| Causes of displacement                  | Human rights violations |
| Human development index                 | 109                     |

The situation of IDPs in Turkmenistan can only be reported with minimal confidence due to government control of IDPs, the lack of access of humanitarian organisations and the extremely limited freedom of information in the country. The government does not release statistics on the number resettled and does not allow humanitarian organisations to conduct surveys. Information on the extent of internal displacement is also limited by total state control on media, curtailed freedom of speech and the near absence of civil society. As a result, the numbers of IDPs are unknown and the little information that exists is published by civil society outside of Turkmenistan.

The former President Saparmurat Niyazov used forced resettlement as a means of oppressing people viewed as disloyal to his regime and to force ethnic minorities to integrate into Turk-

men life. People were also forcibly resettled to make way for urban development projects and to develop land elsewhere. These relocations were achieved through presidential decrees issued in November 2002 and January 2003, and in 2008 displacement continued as part of the redevelopment of the capital Ashgabat.

While it is not known if IDPs in rural resettlement villages have adequate housing, food, water and sanitation, it is clear that many have not received compensation for property confiscated by the government and are worse off than their non-displaced neighbours. In some cases this is because they have not had formal documentation since Turkmen independence from the USSR. IDPs' letters to government on these issues have gone unanswered.

The current government has not acknowledged any responsibility for the situation of IDPs, supported solutions such as local integration or offered compensation for lost property in line with international standards. International humanitarian organisations face limited access and bureaucratic obstacles which limit their ability to confront the government on its treatment of IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

# Uzbekistan

## Quick facts

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Number of IDPs                          | 3,400                   |
| Start of current displacement situation | 2000                    |
| New displacement in 2008                | 0                       |
| Returns in 2008                         | 0                       |
| Causes of displacement                  | Human rights violations |
| Human development index                 | 119                     |

The situation of people internally displaced in Uzbekistan cannot be reported with any confidence. Because of the government's strict control over its population and the activities of humanitarian organisations in the country, and the lack of public acknowledgement of the internal displacement situation, most information is anecdotal.

Uzbekistan's IDPs were forcibly and, in some cases, violently relocated by the army in 2000 and 2001 on the basis of insecurity in their place of origin, following government-reported incidences of armed incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) from Tajikistan. While IDPs admit that people travelled through their villages and that they sold them food, they insist there were no IMU incursions.

The mainly ethnic Tajik population of nine villages in mountainous regions of Sukhandaria Province was moved over 200

kilometres to resettlement sites in the desert of Kashkadarya Province. Problems such as limited access to water, not being able to bring their tools and animals with them and the lack of knowledge to cultivate the new land have stopped them developing livelihoods. Their harvest is usually poor and as a result they are in debt to neighbouring villagers from whom they must buy food. They have no hope of compensation although the government denies their right to return to their villages of origin.

IDPs need official approval to leave their current residence and resettle in a third location. They receive no government help to integrate locally, and in general the state accepts no responsibility for addressing their needs. There are no specific government bodies, laws or policies to uphold their rights.

The international community has provided very limited assistance to assist Uzbekistan's IDPs with integration. With limited access and information, international agencies have not recently challenged the government on its treatment of IDPs.

