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## **Georgian government must secure future for displaced**

*I have spent 20 years of my life in this tiny room in terrible conditions... I and my husband are still waiting and no one has told us anything. I may not have many years to live, but I want to spend at least the rest of my life in decent conditions.*

Izolda, 69-year-old woman in a collective centre in Tbilisi

(Tbilisi) The Georgian authorities must do more than the bare minimum to provide adequate housing, employment and access to health care to those displaced in conflicts in the 1990s and the war with Russia in August 2008, Amnesty International said in a report published today.

In the waiting room: Internally displaced people in Georgia, documents how thousands of people displaced during the conflicts struggle to access basic services.

“Displaced people need more than just roofs over their heads. They need the government to ensure employment, access to health care and benefits. They also need to be consulted and be able to make the choices affecting their lives,” said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director.

“Displaced people have the right to return to their homes in dignity and safety. However, the government has the obligation to those who cannot or do not want to do so to integrate or to resettle them in other parts of the country.”

About 6 per cent of the population of Georgia (some 246,000 people) are displaced within the country. About 220,000 of these left their homes during conflicts that took place in the early 90s.

Another 128,000 people fled South Ossetia and the Kodori Gorge of Abkhazia during and after the Georgian-Russian war in August 2008. The majority of them have since returned to their homes, but close to 26,000 people are still unable to return, and will not be able to do so in the foreseeable future.

In 2007, the Georgian government began to devise and implement programmes to provide durable housing to those displaced with international assistance.

However, many of those who fled their homes nearly two decades ago are still living in hospitals or military barracks that lack basic hygienic conditions and privacy. Some of the new settlements are located in rural areas lacking essential infrastructure.

Government assistance has yet to reach those who live with family members or in rented flats. Many complain that they have not been consulted about measures directly affecting their lives.

“All those displaced are still suffering from the consequences of war. Displaced people need durable solutions and they need them fast so that they can claim their lives back,” Nicola Duckworth said.

Displaced people suffer from high unemployment, and there are still no comprehensive government programmes targeting this issue.

Poor living conditions and poverty undermine the health of displaced people while the lack of information and the costs for medical treatment make it even more difficult for them to get health care.

“The Georgian government has taken important steps, but housing solutions have to go hand in hand with health care, employment and livelihoods opportunities. This is the only way to fully integrate the tens of thousands of its citizens still living in limbo,” Nicola Duckworth said.

As Iza, displaced woman in a collective centre in Kutaisi, told Amnesty International:

“Seventeen years ago, when the war broke out, I was a student of foreign languages at the state university, but never finished. Now my son is in high school, but I do not have any means to afford his university education. I can not rebuild my future any more, maybe I no longer have the prospects of ever finding employment, but I ask the government to at least give more prospects to my children so they have a better future.”

**See also:**

[\*Civilians in the aftermath of war: The Georgia-Russia conflict one year on\*](#), August 2009

[\*Georgia/Russia: Civilians in the line of fire: The Georgia-Russia conflict\*](#), November 2008