Committee: Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (GA4)

Topic: Enhancing the Legal Protection of Internally Displaced People from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region

Student Officer: Tristan Spanopoulos

Position: Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Tristan Spanopoulos and I am a 12th grader at Pinewood the American International School of Thessaloniki. It is my utmost honour to serve as one of this year's Co-Chairs of the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (GA4) at the 9th DSTMUN.

First off, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all delegates attending this year's DSTMUN. Whether or not this is your first time attending a MUN conference, I hope this will be an enjoyable conference filled with fruitful debates. However, beyond just the committee sessions, MUN offers far more; it acts as a gateway to further develop your research and public speaking skills, while also forming bonds with your fellow delegates from a range of ages and backgrounds.

This study guide will focus on the first topic of the GA4 agenda, namely "Enhancing the Legal Protection of Internally Displaced People from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region". This guide will examine a persistently complex issue of the 21st century, one that is at the intersection of international law, human rights, and territorial disputes. What I hope to achieve with this guide is to provide you with the appropriate background knowledge surrounding this issue, and prepare you for a hearty debate.

While this guide is thorough, and will provide you with sufficient information to act as a useful foundation, I strongly encourage you to pursue your own research, namely you must familiarise yourself with your country's position and policies. The more you prepare for this conference, the more you will enjoy it.

Should any issues arise, or if you have any questions regarding the topic, feel free to contact me at any time at; spanopoulos.t@pinewood-school.gr.

Best Wishes,

Tristan Spanopoulos

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1991 was the catalyst for pandemonium across the South Caucasus, one that would have immense consequences for the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Namely, in Georgia, after the Nationalist Party took over in 1991 with the collapse of the central Soviet authority, it resurfaced long-suppressed ethnic tensions in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, tensions that were once held in check through Soviet authority and unity. These tensions were rooted in decades of Soviet demographic engineering, fights of self-governance and feelings of under-representation from the two ethnic regions of Georgia. What followed almost immediately after the dissolution of the USSR were two brutal wars between Georgia proper and its two regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia resulting in the loss of 1,000 lives, the internal displacement of 23,000 Georgians, and 100,000 native Ossetians fleeing to Russia [Sammut et Cvetkovski][1]. Then similarly in Abkhazia which resulted in a more brutal 10,000 casualties per side, and the 250,000 displaced Georgians from Abkhazia, those of whom were expelled, or fled due to the systematic ethnic cleansing from Russian and Abkhazian troops [Cogent][2]. The conflicts do not cease there however, as in 2008, the Russo-Georgian War, leading to a further 138,000 people being displaced, and culminating in Russia's unilateral recognition of both regions as their own sovereign and independent states [UNHCR][3]. Yet even now, these conflicts have rooted themselves deeply within Georgian Society, the consequences are still so blatantly seen, and remain unresolved. To this day, there are 2999,172 officially registered IDPs within Georgia proper, with the inability to safely return to their home villages in the Tskhinvali Region and Abkhazia, because although the two regions might be recognised as Georgian territories under International Law, they are controlled by Russian-backed de facto authorities [UNHCR][3]. These people in contrast to refugees, have never crossed an internationally recognised boundary, because although there is an administrative boundary line (ABL), it is not recognised as an international boundary, thus, these displaced people have never left Georgia, remaining classified as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), caught in a legal and political limbo. These aforementioned ABLs have been transformed into physical borders, guarded with barbed wires via borderisation rendering the frozen conflict an ongoing issue.

Furthermore, there exist legal frameworks meant to protect these displaced individuals, namely the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Yet they are not fully legally binding, thus the practical application of these 'frameworks' is undermined

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[1] Sammut, Dennis, and Nikola Cvetkovski. *CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*. 1996.

[2] Shalva Kikalishvili. "Russian Intervention in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: A History of Tensions and Turmoil." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 17 June 2023, 10.1080/23311983.2023.2220216.

[3] "Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia. | UNHCR US." *Unhcr US*, 2026, https://www.unhcr.org/us/media/status-internally-displaced-persons-and-refugees-abkhazia-georgia-and-tskhinvali-region-south.

by the de facto authorities. These IDPs, due to the legal arbitrations of the de facto powers, face constant challenges, such as documentation, lack of employment, access to adequate housing, and exercising their right to return.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Administrative Boundary Line (ABL)

An Administrative Boundary Line (ABL), is a line that distincts 2 territories under different administrative control, but unlike borders, they are not necessarily constituting an internationally recognized state border. In Georgia for example, the ABLs separate the 2 areas of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region from Georgia proper. [Amnesty International][4]

Autonomous Oblast

"An autonomous oblast constitutes a federal subject of the Russian Federation, equivalent in status to oblasts and krais but historically designated to afford limited cultural and administrative autonomy to a specific ethnic minority group." Even though they had some form of autonomy, overarching rule and final authority laid in the hands of the USSR. [Wikipedia][5]

Borderisation

Borderisation is the process of erecting physical barriers through the installation of barbed wire fencing, checkpoints, surveillance equipment, border patrol, and signs. It is the Russian and de facto authorities who transformed the Administrative Boundary Lines surrounding Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region into heavily controlled physical borders through the aforementioned methods. Again, they are not recognized internationally, however it still led to significantly restricted freedom of movement, the separation of families and communities and limited humanitarian access. [Amnesty International][6]

De Facto Authority / *De Facto* Control

De Facto, Latin for in fact, is "an action taken without strict legal authority to do so, but recognized as valid nonetheless. The action is considered something that acquires validity based on the fact of its existence and tradition." Basically, it refers to a situation,

[4]"Georgia/Russia: Post-Conflict Boundary Splits Communities, Leaving Thousands in Limbo." Amnesty International, 3 July 2019,www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/07/georgiarussia-post-conflict-boundary-splits-communities-leaving-thousands-in-limbo/.

[5]Wikipedia Contributors. "Autonomous Republics and Oblasts of the Soviet Union." Wikimedia Foundation, 4 May 2026.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_republics_and_oblasts_of_the_Soviet_Union

[6] "Georgia/Russia: Post-Conflict Boundary Splits Communities, Leaving Thousands in Limbo." *Amnesty International*, 3 July 2019, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/07/georgiarussia-post-conflict-boundary-splits-communities-leaving-thousands-in-limbo/.

authority, or control that exists in practice regardless of its legality, in this case the governments in Abkhasia and Tskhinvali regions. [LII][7]

De Jure

"De jure is the Latin expression for "by law" or "by right" and is used to describe a practice that exists by right or according to law. In contemporary use, the phrase almost always means as a matter of law." In this context, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region remain De Jure as part of Georgia according to international law and recognition of countries, even though it is under *de facto* control. [LII][8]

Ethnic Cleansing

"Ethnic cleansing is the systematic and forced removal of a specific ethnic or religious group from a territory, often justified by the belief that the targeted group is undesirable (...) Ethnic cleansing may involve various tactics, including forced emigration and population exchanges, and is frequently associated with state-sanctioned acts such as murder and land confiscation. Historically, it has been employed for political, strategic, or ideological reasons, as well as in the context of ethnic or religious discrimination." [EBSCO][9]

Frozen Conflict

"Frozen Conflict is a term used to describe protracted disputes that remain unresolved, often manifesting in a state of neither peace nor active warfare. These conflicts typically resist diplomatic resolutions, leading to periodic military escalations. They are characterised by a lack of formal peace treaties, resulting in ongoing tensions and instability in affected regions. Such conflicts can have significant implications for regional security and international relations, influencing geopolitical strategies and alliances." [TRT][10]

Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border." [UNHCR][11]

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

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[7] "De Facto." *LII / Legal Information Institute*, Jan. 2022, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/de_facto.
[8]Cornell. "De Jure." *LII / Legal Information Institute*, June 2021, www.law.cornell.edu/wex/de_jure.
[9] "Ethnic Cleansing | EBSCO." 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/ethnic-and-cultural-studies/ethnic-cleansing
[10] Bakar, Ergun. "Frozen Conflicts: Definition, Conceptual Context & Why It Matters - TRT World Research Centre." *TRT World Research Centre*, 4 May 2026, https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/dictionary/frozen-conflicts/
[11] UNHCR. "IDP Definition." *UNHCR*, 2024, emergency.unhcr.org/protection/legal-framework/idp-definition.

"International humanitarian law (IHL) is a set of rules that seeks, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. It protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and imposes limits on the means and methods of warfare". The IHL provides legal protection for civilians that have been affected by the countless conflicts that have ravaged the region, and supposedly covers IDPs as well. [LII][12]

Passportisation

Passportisation is the process in which a state distributes citizenship and passports to residents of a foreign country's territory. In the context of this topic, Russia issued passports to over 90% of residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, in order to increase political dependence on Russia, and using it as justification for military intervention. [EUI][13]

Right of Return

"Displaced persons have a right to voluntary return in safety to their homes or places of habitual residence as soon as the reasons for their displacement cease to exist (...) The right to return applies to those who have been displaced, voluntarily or involuntarily, on account of the conflict and not to non-nationals who have been lawfully expelled." [ICRC] [14]

UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement consist of 30 principles, those of which were presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights; these 30 principles outline the rights and protections of internally displaced persons, during, before, and after the displacement. However, these principles are not legally binding, although they are widely recognized as the framework internationally used for the protection of IDPs. [UNHCR][15]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Soviet Administration

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[12] INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS. "What Is International Humanitarian Law?" *International ,Committee of the Red Cross*, International Committee of the Red Cross, 30 Dec. 2014, www.icrc.org/en/document/what-international-humanitarian-law.

[13] Jacob-Owens, Timothy. "Passportization: Russia's 'Humanitarian' Tool for Foreign Policy, Extra-Territorial Governance, and Military Intervention - Globalcit." *Globalcit*, 25 Mar. 2022, https://globalcit.eu/passportization-russias-humanitarian-tool-for-foreign-policy-extra-territorial-governance-and-military-intervention/.

[14] ICRC. "Rule 132 Return of Displaced Persons." *Icrc.org*, 2022, ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule132.

[15] UNHCR. "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement." *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/media/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.

The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (Georgian SSR) was formed after the Soviet Annexation of Georgia in 1921, and it was established as one of the constituent republics making up the Soviet Union. Within the Georgian SSR however, there were 2 largely autonomous republics, those being Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who had been granted autonomous status to differing degrees. On one hand, Abkhazia had more internal control, being designated as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), being granted its own Supreme Soviet, yet ultimate authority fell with the Georgian SSR and the central Soviet government in Moscow. On the other hand, South Ossetia while still being granted autonomy, it was to a lower status of an Autonomous Oblast, having less autonomy as opposed to Abkhazia [Constitution of the Georgian SSR][16].

Throughout the Soviet Union there were many regions enveloped in ethnic tensions, thus the Soviet Government would largely suppress ethnic tensions through centralized governance. Yet even still, many grievances were unresolved beneath the surface. A prime example of this would be in Abkhazia, where Soviet nationality policies, enforced under Stalin's rule, significantly altered the region's demographic composition. In 1931, Stalin changed Abkhazia's political status, downgrading it to an ASSR, and suppressing the Abkhaz language, along with forceful relocation of Georgians into the region. This resulted with ethnic Georgians constituting approximately 45.7% of Abkhazia's population by the final Soviet Census in 1989, further exacerbating the long-standing grievances amongst the Abkhaz people [Florida and Torun][17].



Figure 1: Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic [Wikipedia][18]

[16] EBSCO. "Constitution of the Georgian SSR (1978)" *EBSCO,* https://rrc.ge/law/Gkon_1978_04_15_e.htm

[17] Florida, South, and Nevzat Torun. *Soviet Nationality Policy: Impact on Ethnic Conflict in Abkhazia Soviet Nationality Policy: Impact on Ethnic Conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and South Ossetia*. 2019. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=9169&context=etd

[18] Wikipedia. "Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic." 1 Nov. 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic

Tensions in South Ossetia were similarly prevalent. Even though South Ossetia was formally under the Georgian SSR, many of the ethnic Ossetians had much closer cultural and political ties with the Neighboring SSR of North Ossetia, who had become an independent republic in 1936 within the Russian SFSR. This recognition of independence sparked a chain reaction, because in the 1980s, Ademon Nykhas, which was a nationalist organisation, began advocating for the reunification of North and South Ossetia; yet it is important to note that at the same time, there were heavy nationalistic movements and sentiments in the Georgian SSR, which eventually entered North Ossetia to challenge their sentiments and claim of joining North Ossetia. Combining these tensions with past historical grievances, such as the massacre in South Ossetia by Georgian hands in 1918, the competing nationalisms created an increasingly hostile political environment by the end of the Soviet Era [EBSCO Research] [19].

Collapse of the Soviet Union

Throughout the late 1980s, the Soviet Authority began to weaken, which led to a resurgence of the Georgian Nationalist movement, and was similarly seen across the Soviet Union. The catalyst for the later independence of Georgia was on April 9 1989, when Soviet troops brutally suppressed a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi, resulting in 21 deaths. This incident, which is now referred to as the Tbilisi Massacre, led to the discrediting of the Communist Party of Georgia, and accelerated support for the Georgian independence movement [Carnegie Endowment][20].

On the 9th of April 1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the nationalist Georgian party, was voted into power and declared independence following a referendum with 98.9% being in favor. While this marked the beginning of Georgian independence as a sovereign state, Gamsakhurdia's policies were very seclusive, with minorities being viewed as foreigners, which led to the further exacerbation of existing minority grievances [Carnegie Endowment].

These tensions were abundantly clear in South Ossetia, as in 1989 authorities in South Ossetia declared sovereignty in response to the rising notions of nationalism in Georgia. This led to the subsequent abolition of South Ossetia's autonomous status in December 1990, further escalating the very prevalent tensions between the 2 sides, and was

[19] "South Ossetia | Military History and Science | Research Starters | EBSCO Research." *Ebsco*, 2023, https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/military-history-and-science/south-ossetia.

[20] Sartania, Katie. "Struggle and Sacrifice: Narratives of Georgia's Modern History." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 27 Apr. 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/04/struggle-and-sacrifice-narratives-of-georgias-modern-history.

the predetermining factor for the outbreak of armed conflict the following year [Princeton.edu][21]

The South Ossetian Conflict (1991-1992)

The South Ossetian Conflict was the first armed conflict following Georgia's independence. The revocation of South Ossetia's autonomous status in December 1990 was the leading cause for the conflict, armed hostilities broke out between the 2 forces in January 1991, with Georgian forces entering Tskhinvali, marking the start of the conflict. The conflict lasted till June 1992 with the Sochi Ceasefire marking the end of the year-long conflict. Although the conflict lasted merely a year, it had still claimed an approximate 1,000 lives, and started the waves of displacement, with roughly 100,000 ethnic Ossetians fleeing to Russia, and approximately 23,000 Georgians being internally displaced after losing their homes in South Ossetia. [Sammut and Cvetkovski][22]

The War in Abkhazia (1992-1993)

Following the South Ossetian conflict, the war in Abkhazia began in August 1992, when Georgian forces entered Abkhazia due to increased political instability in the region threatening Georgian authority. In response, Abkhaz separatist forces, with covert assistance from Russia, launched a prolonged counter-offensive overwhelming the Georgian troops. Although Russia officially claimed neutrality, numerous reports count that Russian military equipment, logistics, and personnel were given to the Abkhaz separatist forces, which were decisive for the Abkhaz victory. The conflict culminated on the 27th of September 1993 with The Fall of Sukhumi, when Abkhaz forces captured the regional capital after months of conflict, marking the defeat of Georgian forces. This defeat triggered one of the largest forced population movements in post-soviet europe, with approximately 250,000 Georgians being expelled from Abkhazia, and an estimated 10,000 casualties for both sides. [Cogent Arts & Humanities][23]

Following the victory of the Abkhaz forces, came a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing and widespread human rights violations were committed against the remaining Georgian population. Abkhaz forces tactically moved throughout the captured Georgian towns, with the aim of executing ethnic Georgians, and burning their homes, leaving nothing to return to. This campaign was so disturbed that later the OSCE recognized this campaign as an ethnic cleansing, and heavily reprimanded the Abkhaz at multiple summits. The campaign resulted in the largest case of forced displacement at the time, with the vast majority of

[21] Wolff, Stefan. "Georgia: Abkhazia and South Ossetia." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination*, 2008, https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/706.
[22] Sammut, Dennis, and Nikola Cvetkovski. *CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*. 1996.
[23] Shalva Kikalishvili. "Russian Intervention in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: A History of Tensions and Turmoil." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 17 June 2023, 10.1080/23311983.2023.2220216.

expelled Georgians unable to return to Abkhazia due to the Abkhaz *de facto* control of the region, being forced to stay in Georgia proper without a home and proper documentation. [Human Rights Watch; Cogent Arts & Humanities][24]

Russian Political and Military Involvement

Throughout the 1990s, Russia had heavy involvement in the uprising of the 2 regions in Georgia. While acting as a peacekeeper following the ceasefire agreements, Russia was repeatedly accused of providing covert military assistance to separatist forces in both regions, and they steadily increased both political, military, and economic influence. Following the 2 conflicts, subsequent peacekeeping missions were carried out by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), but were consistent of mostly Russian troops, thus giving Moscow permanent military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Beyond military assistance, the 2 regions were also heavily reliant on Russian funding, because by 2006 Russia provided substantial financial support to the de facto governments; South Ossetia's budget consisted almost entirely of Russian funding. [Gerrits and Bader][25]

Russia continued to extend their influence in the 2 regions during the early 2000s through a heavily invasive policy, often referred to as passportization. The passportization campaign entailed that Russian citizenship and passports were distributed to residents of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, despite regional control still being attributed to Georgia. This passportization created a legal pretext for future military intervention, as the 2 regions' citizens were made de facto Russian citizens. By 2006, over 90% of the 2 regions' population held Russian passports. Thus, alongside the immense financial aid that Russia provided, this policy profoundly increased the regions' dependence on Russia, thus giving even more political leeway to Moscow during future military interventions. [Gerrits and Bader; GlbalCit][26]

The 2008 Russo-Georgian War

The fragile ceasefire that was established after the 2 regional conflicts in the early 1990s, came to its inevitable end in August 2008, after intensifying tensions along the South Ossetian conflict zone escalated into full blown warfare. Georgian villages within South

[24] "Georgia/Abkhazia: Violations of the Laws of War and Russia's Role in the Conflict | Refworld." *Refworld*, 2023, https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/hrw/1995/en/22166.

[25] Gerrits, Andre W. M., and Max Bader. "Russian Patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Implications for Conflict Resolution." *East European Politics*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2 July 2016, pp. 297–313, 10.1080/21599165.2016.1166104.

[26] Jacob-Owens, Timothy. "Passportization: Russia's 'Humanitarian' Tool for Foreign Policy, Extra-Territorial Governance, and Military Intervention - Globalcit." *Globalcit*, 25 Mar. 2022, https://globalcit.eu/passportization-russias-humanitarian-tool-for-foreign-policy-extra-territorial-governance-and-military-intervention/.

Ossetia started being bombarded by Ossetian forces, again backed by covert Russian supplies and forces. Georgia responded in full, launching a military campaign against Tskhinvali on 7 August 2008. In turn, this elicited a Russian response in the form of a military intervention, legally backed by the channels set by the passportization. Yet Russian troops did not stop at South Ossetia, but were deployed into Abkhazia and undisputed Georgian territory as well. The conflict lasted 5 days, and came to an end on the 13th of August 2008, with a ceasefire being brokered by the French Presidency of the European Union. [CRS][27]

This conflict, although incredibly short-lived, led to the displacement of approximately 138,000 people, a majority of whom were later able to return, yet even still thousands remained permanently displaced from South Ossetia and surrounding areas. On August 26 2008, Russia formally recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as their own independent states separate from Georgia and backed by Russia. This move came with great international backlash with The US, EU, NATO, Group of 7, and OSCE condemning Russia's recognition of the 2 regions, seeing it as a violation of Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The only outliers in this condemnation were Nicaragua, Venezuela, Nauru, and Syria, following suit behind Russia. As a result, these 2 regions are now under Russian-backed *de facto* control, even though they remain *de jure* part of Georgia, thus creating an even more strenuous environment for the IDPs. [CRS; UNSC][28]

Current Political Situation

The current political state of the area at hand is immensely fragile. The 2 regions, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region, have de facto administrations, ones that depend heavily on Russia both financially and politically, leaving chances of reintegration into Georgia while Russia continues to have immense influence through recognition and military presences are slim to none.

The current situation of the 2 regions has been named a“Frozen Conflict”, this is due to the fact that the international community regards both regions as still Georgian territory under occupation. Yet there is no mechanism to enforce this title, leaving the conflicts frozen because there is no resolution to them, despite the absence of ongoing warfare [Amnesty International][29].

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[27] ‘‘Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests.” *Www.Everycrsreport.Com*, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL34618.html.

[28] “SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFED BY POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACEKEEPING ON GEORGIA DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING 26 AUGUST RECOGNITION DECREES ON ABKHAZIA, SOUTH OSSETIA | UN Press.” *Press.Un.Org*, 28 Aug. 2008, https://press.un.org/en/2008/sc9438.doc.htm.

[29] “Georgia/Russia: Post-Conflict Boundary Splits Communities, Leaving Thousands in Limbo.” *Amnesty International*, 3 July 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/07/georgiarussia-post-conflict-boundary-splits-communities-leaving-thousands-in-limbo/.

One of the most visible manifestations of this frozen conflict is the physical division of the 2 regions through the Administrative Boundary Lines (ABL). To further solidify the De Facto rule of the regions, Russia has started transforming the ABLs that they recognized in 2008 through a process called “borderizations”, further solidifying the entrenchment of the *de facto* separation from Georgia proper. [Amnesty International; Occupied[30]]



Figure 2: Behind Barbed Wire: Human Rights Toll of Borderization in Georgia [Amnesty International][31]

Social and Humanitarian Challenges of IDPs

The issue of IDPs in Georgia is the direct consequence of the conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region as well as the Russo-Georgian war. Collectively, the 2 regions combined make up some of Europe’s largest IDP populations, namely over 250,000 displaced from Abkhazia from 1992-93, about 70k from South Ossetia's early 1990s, and lastly approximately 138k displaced by the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, although many of the latter were later able to return to their place of origin. [UNHCR][32]

Yet, what makes this such a complicated and pressing issue, is once more the legal and practical classification of borders and of the 2 regions. The reason the displaced are classified as IDPs as opposed to refugees is due to the fact that the 2 regions are De Justo

[30] “Occupied - Russian Occupation and Creeping Annexation in Georgia.” *Occupied*, 9 Mar. 2020, https://occupied.eastwatch.eu/ . Accessed 29 June 2026.
[31] Amnesty International. “Georgia: Behind Barbed Wire: Human Rights Toll of ‘Borderization’ in Georgia - Amnesty International.” June 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/0581/2019/en/
[32] “Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia. | UNHCR US.” *Unhcr US*, 2026, https://www.unhcr.org/us/media/status-internally-displaced-persons-and-refugees-abkhazia-georgia-and-tskhinvali-region-south.

Georgian territory. What this entails is that no internationally recognized border was crossed, hence they are internally displaced by definition instead of refugees. [UNHCR]

This displacement is still a pressing issue as a significant humanitarian challenge to this day. The United Nations Secretary-General reported that as of January 2025, Georgia has 299,172 officially registered internally displaced persons, which approximates to 8% of the country's total population. Many of the aforementioned IDPs have remained displaced for over three decades, presenting this issue as one of the world's longest standing dilemmas of protracted displacement. [UNGA][33]

Living Conditions

Despite attempts from the Georgian government to provide assistance through resettlement programmes and social support, most IDPs live in sub-par conditions, especially housing, having to live in collective centers that are inadequate living conditions. One of the largest borders IDPs cross is achieving long-term self-sufficiency. There are limited employment opportunities, lacking in access to financial resources as opposed to regular citizens, such as credit, and a heavy reliance on state assistance.

Sufficient healthcare is available to the IDPs formally, yet financial hindrances, inadequate living conditions, and lack of access to essential medicines continue to hinder physical and mental health, due to the price and scarceness of the medicines

But their issues stem not only from physical hindrances, but also social scrutiny. IDPs face discrimination and ostracization from host communities due to not truly belonging to that village/region, eliciting feelings of alienation amongst the IDPs. [Amnesty][34]

Legal Protection Challenges

Legal protection is far more than simply recognising the rights of IDPs, it requires that these rights can effectively be exercised in practice, not just on paper. Georgia has adopted an extensive domestic legislation protecting IDPs, and pre-existing international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement establish a clear standard for their protection, countless displaced persons continue to face significant legal barriers in exercising these rights. Consequently, one of the primary challenges for solving this issue is not per se the creation of new legal rights, rather identifying practical mechanisms to ensure the implementation of existing frameworks. [UN Geneva][35]

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[33] "Document Viewer." *Un.Org*, 2026, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/892 Accessed 29 June 2026.
[34] Amnesty International. *In the Waiting ROOM Internally Displaced People in Georgia*. Aug. 2010. https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/eur560032010en.pdf
[35] "Twenty-Five Years of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement | the United Nations Office at Geneva." *The United Nations Office at Geneva*, 25 Apr. 2023, https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/press-release/2023/04/twenty-five-years-guiding-principles-internal-displacement Accessed 26 Aug. 2026.

One of the most prominent current legal challenges are the borderized administrative border lines, with crossing points being heavily patrolled and monitored by de facto authorities, and with unauthorized crossing leading to detention. From the timespan of 2011-2018, a staggering 2706 IDPs were detained or abducted along the ABL, a blatant violation of Humanitarian rights. This 'illegal' splitting of the regions from Georgia proper through the borderization has led to the severing of communities, separation of families, and denied humanitarian organizations consistent access to affected populations for remedial purposes [Amnesty International][36].

Another fundamental failure in the protection of IDPs is the lack of sufficient pathways to obtain replacement documentation, as Georgia's domestic IDP legislation does not fully meet international standards. Obtaining documentation requires high fees, and oftentimes requires returning to areas of origin that are unsafe or unreachable due to the borderization. Thus this creates a vicious cycle, because without proper documentation, the IDPs can't access public services, cannot find employment, and don't have insurance or social protection, but the reason they cannot obtain proper documentation is because they cannot return to their place of origin. [UNHCR][37]

Beyond acting as just physical boundaries, borderization is also preventing IDPs access to the very institutions established to protect their rights. Georgian courts, legal aid centers, and notaries are all concentrated in government-controlled territory, thus leaving families who are still living within or near Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region unable to access these facilities, leaving them unable to register births, marriages, deaths, or inheritance claims. These civil acts can instead be registered with De Facto authorities, yet this comes with a caveat, that being that they are not recognised under Georgian law, leaving IDPs and their relatives in a legal grey zone regarding their own family status. This further compounds the broader documentation crisis described above, and transforms what is supposed to be a basic bureaucratic formality into a fundamental barrier to exercising basic legal personhood; this problem is especially prevalent considering the growing number of IDP children born decades after the original displacement. [Amnesty International][38]

Housing and Property Rights

Under Georgian law, the IDPs have a legal right to property restitution, along with the right to return, as established by Georgia's 2006 Law on Property Restitution and a 2003

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[36] "Georgia/Russia: Post-Conflict Boundary Splits Communities, Leaving Thousands in Limbo." *Amnesty International*, 3 July 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2019/07/georgiarussia-post-conflict-boundary-splits-communities-leaving-thousands-in-limbo/.

[37] "Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia - a Gap Analysis July 2009 | UNHCR." *Unhcr*, 2025, https://www.unhcr.org/media/protection-internally-displaced-persons-georgia-gap-analysis-july-2009.

[38] Amnesty International. "Georgia: Behind Barbed Wire: Human Rights Toll of 'Borderization' in Georgia - Amnesty International." June 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur56/0581/2019/en/

Constitutional Court Ruling, thus a legal foundation has been established on paper. However, there is a difference between on paper and in reality, because in practice, these rights are practically unenforceable due to the fact that the authorities enforced by the De Facto governments block any return, along with the Borderization of the ABL, making it practically impossible for these IDPs to fulfill their legally acknowledged rights. [Brookings][39]

This lack of legal restitution has been internationally recognized as well, with the European Court of Human Rights stating that there is an abundant violation of the right to freedom of movement through Russia's and the de facto authorities' prevention of return. This persistent gap between de justo and *de facto* that has appeared in every aspect of the IDPs lives is the most fundamental greyzone that the committee must address throughout the conference. [Brookings][35]

Even where restitution is legally guaranteed, many abandoned Georgian properties in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region have since been informally been occupied, reallocated, or issued to new residents by the de facto authorities, often without any registry recognised outside the region. Even where Georgian law entitles the original owner to restitution, oftentimes there is no property left to reclaim, or there is a whole new occupant who now considers it their home after decades of settlement. This brings a whole new challenge to light, transforming restitution from purely a legal question into one of practical impossibility, with Georgian courts having no jurisdiction to enforce rulings within the de facto territories, and even if they did, these properties have suffered severe alterations or cease to exist as a whole, leaving IDPs ownership rights symbolic rather than genuinely exercisable. [UNHCR][40]

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Georgia

Georgia is the state that is most directly affected by this issue at hand, seeing as Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region are *de justo* part of Georgia, along with the majority of the UN countries recognizing the regions as Georgian. The issue within Georgia is of course the IDPs, having a total of 299,172 displaced peoples after a series of conflicts [UNGA][41]. Even though the Georgian government continues to make attempts at providing aid to the IDPs such as adopting domestic legislations including providing housing, social assistance and property restitution. However, this aid only goes so far for the IDPs, as oftentimes they

[39] Kälin, Walter. "Legal Aspects of Return of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees to Abkhazia, Georgia." *Brookings*, 29 Nov. 2007, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/legal-aspects-of-return-of-internally-displaced-persons-and-refugees-to-abkhazia-georgia/

[40] "Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia - a Gap Analysis July 2009 | UNHCR." *Unhcr*, 2025, https://www.unhcr.org/media/protection-internally-displaced-persons-georgia-gap-analyis-july-2009.

[41] "Document Viewer." *Un.Org*, 2026, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/892 Accessed 29 June 2026.

cannot obtain replacement documentation because the lack of proper channels due to the ABL preventing them from returning to their areas of origin to obtain the proper documents.

Moldova

Moldova consistently supports Georgia's sovereignty within its borders, and has expressed their support countless times in international summits and assemblies. They strongly condemn the continued illegal presence of Russian military forces, and political influence over the 2 regions, and not only in Georgian territory but also Moldovan. The reason why Moldova strongly advocates for territorial integrity, is due to facing a similar issue, with the unresolved conflict in Transnistria. Moldova cooperates closely and continuously with Ukraine and Georgia on regional security issues. Lastly, Moldova stands for peaceful resolution of conflicts through diplomatic channels and under the pretext of international law. [MFA][42]

Russia

Russia has been a prominent actor throughout the history of this issue, having provided military, political, and economic support to both South Ossetia and Abkhasia over the course of the 1990s, and continues to do so to this day after the 2008 Russo Georgian War. Russia is one of the few countries to formally recognize the 2 regions in August 2008 as independent states, playing a key role in supporting the *de facto* governments. To this day, Russia continues to maintain military, financial, and political ties to the aforementioned regions, and plays a major role in the dividing of the regions from Georgia proper through the borderization of the ABL.

United States of America (USA)

The United States has repeatedly shown that they stand with Georgia, and support their sovereignty and territorial integrity. Along with showing support for Georgia, they have also condemned Russia for their continued military presence and borderization on multiple occasions. The US preaches for a peaceful diplomatic solution through the Geneva International Discussions mechanism for addressing the conflict, and advocates for the safe voluntary return of the IDPs. [U.S Embassy in Georgia] [43]

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC has direct influence on the well being of the IDPs, through providing humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by the conflict. They provide a direct channel to

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[42] "| Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova." *Mfa.Gov.Md*, 2021, https://mfa.gov.md/en/node/2318.

[43] U.S. Embassy Tbilisi. "U.S. Participation in the 59Th Round of Geneva International Discussions on the Conflict in Georgia, December 5-6, 2023." *U.S. Embassy in Georgia*, 6 Dec. 2023, https://ge.usembassy.gov/u-s-participation-in-the-59th-round-of-geneva-international-discussions-on-the-conflict-in-georgia-december-5-6-2023

essential services, and facilitate family tracing along with protecting civilians under IHL. Similar to aforementioned organizations and countries, they advocate for peaceful dialogue between parties on humanitarian concerns through its neutral and independent mandate to ensure neutrality and transparency [ICRC][31].

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR continuously monitors the pressing humanitarian situation of IDPs in Georgia, and recognizes its importance. It regularly works together with the Georgian government in order to improve the living conditions of displaced populations, and regularly conducts assessments of displacement trends, and identifies protection gaps. They provide technical assistance on IDP protection, supporting the development and practical implementation of domestic legislation, advising governments on policies to comply with international standards and IHL, and strengthening national systems for protecting internally displaced persons and urge for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. They publish annual reports on the status and the living conditions the IDPs face, highlighting the pressing issues previously mentioned in the guide, such as inadequate housing, limited employment opportunities, documentation barriers, and the restricted freedom of movement caused by the ABLs. Lastly, they advocate for long-term solutions, such as voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement. Beyond practical humanitarian assistance, the UNHCR often works closely with other UN agencies, NGOs, and governments to ensure effective humanitarian responses, and properly legislate these activities.[UNHCR][23]

BLOCS EXPECTED

Bloc A

This bloc should consist of member states that clearly recognise Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region as internationally recognised parts of Georgia. The states that will be a part of this bloc will also generally advocate for stronger humanitarian assistance, greater involvement of international organisations in protecting IDPs and ensuring complaints with IHL and IHRL, and expanded international monitoring mechanisms. Overall, they generally advocate for a larger role for the UN, UNHCR, OSCE, and the IRC in protecting these IDPs. Examples of countries in this bloc include: Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, United States, France, Germany, Canada and majority of the EU.

Bloc B

The countries that will make up this bloc, will consist of Member States that align more closely with Russia, support, or are sympathetic to Russia's position regarding the two regions. These states will generally advocate for the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference, and are more cautious about expanding international monitoring systems,

wanting far less invasive policies. Moreover, they support the principle of self-determination, and are generally less likely to describe the regions as occupied territories. These states will still be in support of humanitarian assistance for IDPs, but advocate for more limited international intervention and less far-reaching policy measures. Keep in mind that these countries don't have to recognize the two regions to be in this bloc. Some examples of countries in this bloc would be Russia, Belarus, China, Iran, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
25th February, 1921	**1921 USSR Annexation of Georgia** The USSR annexed Georgia in 1921, leading to the creation of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, and creating the foundation for the future autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia [Georgian SSR][44]
December 1990	**Abolition of South Ossetia's Autonomy** Georgia officially abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia, leading to significant escalations in tensions between the two parties [Princeton][45]
1991-1992	**South Ossetian Conflict** The tensions between Georgia proper and South Ossetia overflowed, leading to armed conflict amongst the 2 sides, causing approximately 1,000 deaths, and the beginning of waves of mass displacement. [Samut et Cvetkovski][46]
14th August, 1992	**War in Abkhazia begins**

[44] EBSCO. "Constitution of the Georgian SSR (1978)" *EBSCO,* https://rrc.ge/law/Gkon_1978_04_15_e.htm

[45] Wolff, Stefan. "Georgia: Abkhazia and South Ossetia." *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination*, 2008, https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/706.

[46] Sammut, Dennis, and Nikola Cvetkovski. *CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MATTERS The Georgia-South Ossetia Conflict*. 1996.

	Georgian forces entered Abkhazia, triggering full scale warfare with Abkhaz forces, backed by Russia. [Cogent][47]
27th September, 1993	**Fall of Sukhumi** The fall of Sukhumi marked the end of the gruesome conflict, and led to the second wave of mass displacement of around 250,000 ethnic Georgians. [Cogent][47]
1998	**Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement Established**
2006	**Passportisation** Russian passportisation campaign grants Russian passports to 90% of Abkhaz and South Ossetian people.
7th-12th August, 2008	**Russo Georgian War** The Russo-Georgia War was short yet impactful, lasting 5 days, yet led to the displacement of approximately 138,000 people, a majority of which however were able to return. At the end of the war Russia recognised the 2 regions [CRS][48]
2025	**299,172 officially registered IDPs in Georgia** [UNGA][49]

RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

Conventions

Fourth Geneva Convention

The Fourth Geneva Convention, signed in 1949, establishes legal protection during times of need such as armed conflict and occupation for innocent civilians. Even though there is no explicit mention to internally displaced persons, a plethora of its provisions regarding the protection of the civilian population, humanitarian assistance, and occupied

[47] Shalva Kikalishvili. "Russian Intervention in the Georgian-Abkhazian Conflict: A History of Tensions and Turmoil." *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 17 June 2023, 10.1080/23311983.2023.2220216.
[48] ''Russia-Georgia Conflict in August 2008: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests." *Www.Everycrsreport.Com*, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL34618.html.
[49] "Document Viewer." *Un.Org*, 2026, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/892 Accessed 29 June 2026.

territories are undoubtedly applicable to the frozen conflict in the Abkhaz and Tskhinvali Regions. The Convention bars the forced displacement of civilians, with the sole exception being where absolutely necessary for their security, making it especially relevant to this case as they have not met the criteria. It further obligates both parties to facilitate humanitarian assistance and protect civilians, granting a legal basis for the work of organizations such as the ICRC in supporting IDPs. Nevertheless, the Fourth Geneva Convention is not solely targeted to ensure the safety of IDPs, and its effectiveness lies solely on the willingness of parties in the conflict to comply with its obligations. [ICRC][50]

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998)

The UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement was established in 1998 constituting the primary international framework, drafting the rights of internally displaced persons, creating guidelines protecting IDPs before, during and after displacement. Whilst they are not legally binding, they still serve a purpose, acting as a foundation for domestic IDP legislations, as seen with Georgia's domestic legislation, and also for international humanitarian responses. But of course, the guidelines have a prominent issue, that being the lack of legal ground, leaving their implementation to the political will and domestic legislation of states.[UNHCR][51]

Resolutions

A/RES/63/307

As a result of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the United Nations General Assembly adopted this resolution in 2009 with regards to the internally displaced persons.

This resolution reaffirms the rights of the internally displaced persons hailing from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region to safely and voluntarily return to their homes. Furthermore, it emphasized the right of Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Since its adoption, it has now become an annually adopted resolution of the General Assembly, even though it offers little to no practical aid to the IDPs; this is due to the fact that as a General Assembly resolution, it is non-binding, lacking enforcement mechanisms, all of which limit its practical impact on conditions faced by IDPs. [UNGA][52]

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Georgia’s Law on Internally Displaced Persons

[50] International Committee of the Red Cross. “Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949..”, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949
[51] UNCHR. “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.” *Unhcr*, https://www.unhcr.org/media/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.
[52] United Nations General Assembly. Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Resolution 63/307, 30 Sept. 2009, United Nations Digital Library, https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/63/307

Georgia was one of the first nations to adopt national laws targeting specifically the protection of internally displaced persons, which was then later amended in order to better follow the principles of the UN Guiding Principles. The law protects the IDPs greatly, guaranteeing them rights relating to housing, documentation, and social services. This shows the great lengths Georgia has gone in order to protect the IDPs through the strengthening of legal protection and domestic legislation. Yet it comes with a large flaw, however strong this legal framework may be, many of these rights promised are hard to actually fulfil, namely the right of return and property restitution, due to the nature of the *de facto* control of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region, preventing Georgia from enforcing its legislation in said territories. [IHL][53]

Annual UN General Assembly Resolution on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees

The UN General Assembly has adopted resolutions reaffirming the right of return of IDPS in the 2 regions annually since 2008. These resolutions reiterate the importance of relocating the IDPs voluntarily and safely to their place of origin, and for the regions to stay in accordance with international law and IHRL. They aid this situation by bringing it back to international attention every year, and have demonstrated broad international support for the situation the IDPs face. Yet, once more, this "solution" faces the same issue as all the rest, it is non-binding; it lacks enforcement power and mechanisms, and they have provided no practical support or improvements for IDPs on the ground [UNHCR][54]

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Strengthening the International Framework for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons

This solution would most directly tackle the most persistent issue throughout this topic, it encourages states to strengthen the implementation of the existing International Principles for the protection of IDPs. What this international convention could be modeled after is the 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, using it as the blueprint for international cooperation and domestic implementation. As of now, the Principles stand as a well respected, yet ultimately voluntary framework; states. The Principles have served as a foundation for domestic legislation in the past, as seen with Georgia, but still their voluntary nature leads to significantly varying degrees of implementation between states, leaving many IDPs without proper protection. Thus, strengthening the international framework is a

[53] "Protecting Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: 2007–2011." *IHL in Action*, 2018, ihl-in-action.icrc.org/case-study/georgia-protection-internally-displaced-persons-past-conflicts.

[54] "Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia. | UNHCR US." *UNHCR US*, 2026, www.unhcr.org/us/media/status-internally-displaced-persons-and-refugees-abkhazia-georgia-and-tskhinvali-region-south.

necessity; this could be done by encouraging greater implementation of the Guiding Principles, expanding international cooperation and awareness, and promoting stronger domestic legislation ensuring the protection of the IDPs.

However, such a convention must cover more areas as opposed to simply replicating the existing Guiding Principles. Said convention should explicitly address vulnerable scenarios brought by frozen conflict, these scenarios ranging from but not limited to: the denial of the right of return, the obstruction of humanitarian access by de facto authorities, and documentation barriers that trap IDPs in a vicious cycle of vulnerability. Possible measures range from encouraging greater cooperation with UN agencies, improving domestic IDP legislation, and promoting regular reporting on the implementation of the Guiding Principles.

Strengthening Documentation Access and Humanitarian Corridors through Neutral International Bodies

The most pressing issue is how to immediately relieve some suffering from the IDPs by providing them with documentation. The safest, most neutral way to do so is to expand the operational capacity of international organizations, namely the ICRC, UNHCR, and the OSCE, along with Amnesty International, to act as documentation services and humanitarian assistance to IDPs, by delivering the required documents across the ABL. As stated prior multiple times throughout the study guide, one of the challenges that IDPs face is the lack of documentation, yet in order to replace or obtain identity documents, birth certificates, and civil registration records, more often than not they must cross the ABL, which they are unable to do.

Thus, this committee should consider a solution involving advocating for the establishment of mobile documentation units operating under international neutral organizations, whom are authorized to move across the ABL in order to retrieve the specified documents necessary for the IDP for them to get replacement documents and finally access government benefits, and be able to seek employment and proper housing.

Establishing a UN Special Rapporteur on Protracted Internal Displacement

Lastly, the appointment of a UN special Rapporteur dedicated to internally displaced people in frozen conflicts would be another viable solution. As opposed to direct peacekeeping operations, this falls well within the means of the GA4, as the primary purpose would be to report, monitor, and assess the situations at hand, recommending improvements regarding the protection of internally displaced persons as seen fit, instead of trying to resolve the dispute as a whole. The Special Rapporteur could submit regular reports to the General Assembly and the HRC, as seen fit, identify gaps in the implementation of existing international frameworks, and encourage greater cooperation between governments, humanitarian organizations, and UN agencies.

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