



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement on Georgia

The European Union is worried about reports that on 3 January 2017, the remains of a church and a cemetery in the village of Tsebelda, located in the Gulripshi district of the Georgian region of Abkhazia, were destroyed as a result of Russian military personnel undertaking ground levelling work in the area. This work was reportedly aimed at expanding a training ground for Russian troops.

We call once again for the obstacles to monitoring activities of the EUMM to be lifted, so that the facts of these events can be established and assessed with the involvement of all concerned.

We also call for joint measures aimed at the registration, protection and preservation of cultural heritage sites. Similar steps should also be undertaken to protect the property of displaced people. The European Union stands ready to provide assistance for implementing such measures.

The announced imminent closure of two crossing points along the Administrative Boundary Line of Georgia's breakaway region of Abkhazia - Nabakevi-Khurcha and Meore Otobaia-Orsantia - which are used daily by hundreds of commuters - will severely restrict the freedom of movement of the population, including school children, on both sides of the Administrative Boundary Line.

This announcement contravenes existing commitments to work towards enhanced security and improved living conditions for the conflict-affected population. Furthermore, it is contrary to efforts to normalize the situation and creates an atmosphere not conducive to longer-term conflict resolution and improving overall stability in the region.

The European Union, therefore, calls for corrective measures to ensure the freedom of movement, including humanitarian crossings.

The European Union reiterates its firm position that the continuing Russian military and security related presence and infrastructure reinforcements in the Georgian breakaway regions are in violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.