

Working Session 14

“Veresk” Charity Foundation for Disabled and Amputees, Abkhazia

Violations and Discrimination Against the Citizens of Abkhazia

We do appreciate that today we have an opportunity to tell the Participating States' representatives about discrimination against the citizens of Abkhazia. Because of the shortage of time it is not that easy to express many things but I would like to bring to your attention the Georgian so – called “Law on occupied territories” adopted by the Georgian parliament in October 2008 as a true example of discrimination against the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and those who would like to visit our countries too.

The law regulates and restricts contacts between the outside community and Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Foreigners are allowed to enter our states only from the Georgian side and are liable to criminal punishment for violations. Such a discriminatory law isolates the people of Abkhazia from the whole world and violates the right to a dignified life and development. The Law contradicts the Georgian international engagements, and deteriorates humanitarian situation and causes unnecessary hardship as it was mentioned in the ‘Opinion on the Law on Occupied Territories of Georgia of the Venice Commission’ adopted in Strasbourg, 2009. But yet no one in Georgia pays special attention to the respective Opinion of the Venice Commission. I can't help emphasizing that the impertinent expression “occupied territories”. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not occupied by the Russian Federation. Russian military bases have been located in the borders between Abkhazia and Georgia as well as South Ossetia and Georgia, according to the agreements signed between the countries. Calling “occupied territories”, Georgian officials never mention that Abkhazia and South Ossetia were gifted to the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic by the USSR's Communist leader Josef Stalin, Georgian national by his origin.

Tbilisi opposes the resumption of the work of the Sukhum airport. The railway functions only within Abkhazia's borders or only to Russia. The seaports are closed for passenger boats, and Abkhaz boats could not leave the port to bring goods from Turkey.

Obtaining of visas for the citizens of Abkhazia is complicated and mostly impossible. For example visas have been denied even when people apply on medical grounds, which seem utterly unjust and unheard of in our time. And this we face at the time when freer movement is considered crucial for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Abkhaz students are denied the possibility to get education in Europe or the USA. It is also impossible for them as for the scholars to participate in the conferences and international forums in which they could get a chance to tell the international community about their views and opinions on a wide range of issues that maybe interesting for others. Then I would like to ask you about what kind of pluralism we are speaking here then, if such thing happens and as I see not just in regard of the citizens of Abkhazia

Finally I would like to add also that depriving and/or violating the rights of the people(s) of Abkhazia is absolutely incomprehensible and entirely discriminative in the light of the

principles declared in the international law.

Human rights are not the exclusive protect of larger nations - they are equal for all, as has been stated in all international covenants, declarations, protocols and resolutions, etc.; every human being has the right to enjoy them, but it seems that nowadays there exists an almost unheard of division whereby some peoples, due to political processes, are exalt highly respected, whereas the others are deemed to be worthy only of blame, accusations and discrimination. Let us recall that Abkhazia suffered a bloody war in 1992-93 and that it was instigated by Georgia; afterward the country has suffered years of blockade imposed on its peoples by the international community; furthermore, even today, after Abkhazia's recognition by Russia and some other countries, we are continually warned that our republic will be never recognized by other countries, which nevertheless lay upon our country (insultingly styled a "territory") the obligation to build a highly developed state with truly democratic society - no easy task, even when no war or economic blockade has been imposed on an emergent state.

Just a pair of days ago, regretfully, PACE roughly recommended Russia to reverse the decision of recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.