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HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY AND  
DISPLACEMENT IN GEORGIA

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. FERRIS: Good morning, everyone. My name is Beth Ferris. I'm a senior fellow at Brookings and co-director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, and we're delighted to welcome you to this session on Human Rights, Democracy, and Displacement in Georgia.

You know, since our little project began in 1994, we've had a particular interest in Georgia, in terms of the longstanding displacement situation of many people from several different kinds of conflict. And we'll be hearing more about that this morning.

But we've put together a panel today to look at various aspects of current developments in Georgia -- Georgia, of course, a very important strategic ally of the United States, one with its constitutional process underway. And we'll hear more about the status of democracy and some of the issues around that this morning.

We have a panel of four people. We'll begin by hearing from colleagues from Georgia, with Tinatin Khidasheli, who is a co-author of this report that I hope you all received this morning, and is a member of the Tbilisi City Council and of the Republican Party; formerly with the Young Lawyers' Association of Georgia.

We'll then hear from Giorgi Chkheidze -- is that right? Chkheidze? Well, that was close enough, I think -- who is a former chair

of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and a human rights lawyer. And he'll be speaking about human rights, particularly in the last couple of years in Georgia after the war with Russia.

We'll then turn to Sam Patten, who is the senior program manager for Eurasia and who has worked a lot on Georgia as you've seen from his bio -- and just back from Georgia actually -- and will talk about some of his developments.

And then we'll hear from Nadine Walicki, who is from the Norwegian Refugee Council based in Geneva -- actually Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, where she has been following issues around Georgia and displacement for at least the last four years.

So it looks like a good panel, and we'll begin over here and then have some comments and then open it up for discussion. So, Tinatin.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much first of all for being here and being interested in Georgian affairs.

I am Tinatin Khidasheli, as it was said here. I represent the Republican Party today, but I used to work for human rights in jails for 15 years. I am one of the founders of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, and the former chairman, as well as Giorgi was.

We have put together this report already starting from 15th

of August 2008. As soon as war was over, there were groups of human rights organizations in Georgia who went to the field, meeting with the IDPs in camps collecting information, because there was an understanding that there was still lots of evidence available, and we needed to be quick to have all the evidence collected as much as possible to prove later on whatever violations that evidence would lead us to.

And all this work was possible due to generous support from the Open Society Georgia Foundation, which was there ready for all the groups interested in dealing with the IDP situation at that time and consequences of the August War.

We have managed to collect around 2,000 interviews and around 6,000 different kinds of evidence -- being photos, videos -- taken by and brought from their villages by the Georgian IDPs proving the interference by the Russian troops, proving the ethnic cleansing -- lots of human rights violations in the conflict area.

And the conclusion of the report was -- we've collected all those documents and interviews -- was that, and this is what we are trying to prove here in this paper, is that there was an ethnic cleansing conducted in Georgia -- were massive, well-planned, organized ethnic cleansing -- where the people were forced out of the region due to their nationality, with the idea that they will never go back.

We have collected lots of interviews from those days by both

Russian and South Ossetian authorities, where they very clearly say what their intentions are. They are even proud of saying what their intentions are, that they will not allow any Georgians to go back.

We've collected interviews from the elderly who've stayed in the villages to the very last moment, when it was still possible, who've been told that they should leave, not because they constitute any threats to the independent state of South Ossetia, but because if they are there it means that the youngsters will come back to look after their grandparents. So that was the reason why those people are also forced to leave those places.

We strongly believe that regardless of the size of the nation, regardless of the importance of the nation, if there is an international crime committed, people should be held accountable, again, not depending on how important is this power or how strong is this power.

We've presented reports last year to the ICC, Giorgi and myself. We were in The Hague meeting with the prosecutor, talking for two and a half hours, trying to convince him to start the case on the August War. There were a couple of visits from ICC to Tbilisi and Moscow, and we are still waiting for their final decision, and we are very optimistic and hopeful that there will be a case, actually, on the ethnic cleansing on the territory of Georgia.

We feel it's very important to bring the justice to this region,

not only because of the August War, but because of everything that happened for the last 20 years in the region in the South Caucasus. If the people are not held accountable at one point, it's like a vicious cycle, and it's never going to end. There will always be a war. There will always be hostility. There will be something similar to the August War happening all the time. We were witnessing it over and over again for these last 20 years, and I'm absolutely confident that it's going to happen again, whether in Georgia or Azerbaijan or Armenia, Chechnya. It's going to happen as long as people feel they are not accountable, no one is going to be punished, and it goes simply because there are some superpowers involved who can not be brought to justice.

This is not to say that it's only one side to be held accountable, obviously. And our report clearly shows -- although it's kind of one-sided because we were not allowed in South Ossetia and we were not allowed to do our research in the villages that are not under Georgian control, but we had strong assistance and support from some Russian human rights groups who've been providing us with the information from the other side. And whatever we've managed to collect, we've put it in the report and we've tried to be as objective as possible to bring a clearer picture of the entire development during those five days, as you say, but three days in reality, that the war was going on in South Ossetia.

There are a number of international crimes one can think of

and talk about and investigate, but again we are waiting for a response from the ICC and if they will be interested. I'm pretty sure that they will be some justice brought to the region, not only for the August War, but for the all the wars that happened in Georgia for all those years.

We are today, after two years from the August War -- I think that it was used as a nice excuse by everybody, including my own government -- August War was seen as an opportunity for the politicians to use the consequences of it in their own interests. And after the August War, we've got the whole campaign of blaming of Russian spies and searching for the agents, KGB agents, everywhere, and again seeing it as an opportunity for the oppression of the political opposition and for starting various campaigns against the people who dare to raise their voice.

There was one case I will tell you, to have an idea of how it was used by the government. The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association has brought around -- how many cases, Giorgi? -- around 150 cases to the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights. And 149 of them were against Russia and only 1 case was against Georgia. It's a case of disappearance of some Ossetian nationals after the war. And actually there was a response from the Georgia Ministry of Justice, which is the prosecutor's office at the same time, that they were not arrested, but they were held in a private apartment for security reasons, although no one has seen them before that.

And that was a case to Strasbourg. There was an interim decision, and then these people were released and sent back to South Ossetia after the decision from the Strasbourg court. But why am I saying this story? Because it's that there was a whole campaign against the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association because of that case. All national media, for three days, were doing nothing but saying how this organization serves Russian interests, and how then if they are -- when the human rights are more important to them than the national interests, and how much they don't understand what the Russian media or Russian authorities will get out of this case.

This is the kind of atmosphere we are in. If anyone dares to raise a question, to raise a doubt about the Georgian part in the August Conflict, then immediately there is a Gasprom label for you any time, any moment, and the national Georgian state-controlled national media would be happy to broadcast and talk about it for days.

But obviously, it does not prevent anyone from having their independent opinions and talking about the realities of the war and after-war situation. Me personally, and the Republican Party, we had a press conference on 8th of August, different from every single other opposition party in Georgia who have announced kind of a moratorium on when the war started. They've said it's no time for criticizing the government. For the opposition now, we shall all stand united and fight against Russia.



On 8th of August, the Republican Party was the only political group which made a statement, and we've said that happened which should not have happened. And we've addressed to the international community to stop Georgian government and to do everything possible for having this war as short, as painless as possible and the less damage and the less human lives taken due to the war. And then our assessment was, and still is, that it was a trap, but it was a trap that Misha Saakashvili walked in voluntarily, and which he has used for his very personal power -- keeping-in-power reasons.

Just a short reminder where we were in August 2008, politically speaking and as a state. We had two elections, which we strongly believe were falsified. I don't think anybody doubts anymore the falsification of the presidential elections on 5th of January 2008. There was a very strong report by the OSCE about the parliamentary elections as well, issued after the war, unfortunately -- end of August -- but still it is there and it speaks about every single problem that country faced.

Saakashvili was not a hero, national hero, anymore -- not this great guy whom people prayed for -- and he needed something that would have led the confidence to him and that would have unified the nation around him. And this is when the August War happened. And this is when he felt that there was an opportunity for him. And I'm -- and it actually kept him in power. It actually helped to have the nation unified. It

helped to have him back to the streets on 12th of August demonstrating and celebrating -- I don't know what. And the Georgian national media was broadcasting the results of the war, as if we won the war.

There was a not-very-nice joke after the war and after what Georgian media was broadcasting, said that if Hitler had (inaudible) 2, which is one of our private channels, German people would have still believed that they won the Second World War. That was kind of the situation we were in, in August, September, October of 2008. If you were living somewhere in a remote Georgian village where you have only two national TV channels and nothing more, then you would have easily believed that Georgia actually won the war against 80,000 soldiers who came to Georgia and some 1,500 planes that flew the Georgian territories, which were the figures given by our President, and 800 tanks that entered the Georgian territory. It was like the entire Russian army was in Georgia, according to the speeches we were hearing every day.

And on the 12th of August, there was a huge celebration in Georgia, celebrating the -- again, I don't know what -- and this is the moment when Georgian hostages were still in Tskhinvali. And in the reports we have a couple of interviews where they say that they were tortured, and the TV was on and the perpetrators were telling them that, look, your country does not care about you. They are singing, dancing on the streets while we are torturing here, and why don't you just change

sides and agree to getting Russian passports and giving the whatever-evidence -- statements they were requiring them to give.

And after that lots of people were still killed while being hostages, and all those horrible things were still happening. But the show was on and he was the hero and that was the whole idea.

So today Georgia faces lots of different challenges in security terms, democracy-wise, constitutional reform, which was just mentioned. Lots of doubt, lots of questions -- what are real plans? 2013 is going to come, which is the year of the presidential elections. Regardless of developments in the country, the calendar is not going to stop. And obviously, it's a huge pressure over Saakashvili, and I'm absolutely sure that he has no final decision yet what he's going to do. So constitutionally, he prepared grounds, but I'm again almost sure that there is no final decision yet. Neither who is going to be the next leader of the current ruling party, nor what Saakashvili's going to do in three years' time.

And anything might happen. We can talk from very dramatic developments, which might be starting another war and also state of emergency and keeping him in power forever, which is not going to happen. But like the extreme -- most extreme -- possibility of finishing with a peaceful transfer of power and other political forces coming to power, which again is not going to happen. But there are a lot of different variations in between the two. And anything is possible.

It depends a lot on the position of the international community, how much responsibility our partners and friends in the West will take about Georgia, about the assistance they've delivered to Georgia, about all the support for all these 20 years, how much they value the support that they deliver to Georgia for these 20 years, how much they care about their democracy state-building in the country. And of course, a lot depends on the Georgian people, as well, who are the ones who should take the final decision at the end of the day.

But again, having the 2008 general elections experience, unfortunately, we say that the decision of the Georgian people sometimes is not enough. There are some others who might think that they are the ones in charge, and they can take decisions. This is what happened on the 5th of January, with the statement we had in the morning by the U.S. Congressman, Mr. Hastings, who has declared that the 5th of January elections were terrific steps to democracy. And that was it. End of the story. No counting, no results where there, but he still declared it. And we've got Misha as the President. No second round, no development.

I need to finish here because other people need to speak. I'll be happy to answer any questions, whether it's about the war or state of democracy or constitutional reform in Georgia. Thank you very much, again, for being here.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Tinatin.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Certainly. (Applause)

MS. FERRIS: Giorgi.

MR. CHKHEIDZE: Thank you. Thank you very much to The Brookings Institution for organizing this event. Thank you for coming.

I, myself, will be short and actually provide the perspective from the NGO-human rights approach, which was an issue while I was the chairman of the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association during the August War and afterwards. Tinatin provided you specific goals as well as process how this report was created. Let me add specific principles to which, around which, a number of nongovernmental organizations assembled, because beyond the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, four more -- at least at the national level as well as local level -- nongovernmental watchdog organizations have been working to collection all this information -- to visit victims, witnesses all around the country at displacement camps, so-called "buffer zones," villages, et cetera.

There were a number of principles. First of all, our work was guided by the principle of the human rights approach. We had approached to collect information and analyze information from the human rights perspective, less from the academic perspective, and of course less from the party-political perspective. Our objective was to have information collected and preserved for the future mechanics -- whether it's the

International Criminal Court or national investigation -- to follow up on that and to investigate and punish perpetrators. But not punishment for the sake of punishment, but for the sake of the remedy to the victims, and for the sake of the justice delivered as a result of the human rights violations.

So beyond the human rights approach, we had an individual approach. Although the report is based on a number of public documents, reports, analysis, maps, assessments, et cetera, which are available on the Internet or publicly, we wanted to have personal stories here. We wanted to follow personal stories of the families, victims, hostages, civilian hostages, or military hostages, and to have these stories and specific information provided by the individuals checked and analyzed based on the public documents and public information to detect, more or less, the reliable information and present to you for further consideration.

We had, as Tinatin mentioned, a non-discriminative approach. So for us it was important to see any violation of human rights - - basic principles of international humanitarian law -- happened as a result, during, or after the war, whether it was happening towards the ethnic Georgians or against other ethnicities. And an objective obstacle which is still around for the Georgian NGOs to travel in occupied territories is something which we could not work on, of course, although we cooperated with the Russian human rights watchdog, like Memorial and others, to provide information. But its different possibility, of course,

cannot ensure full access to information.

For us it was important to have an objective to provide this information to government, because we believed and still believe that it's a primary responsibility of the Georgian Government to investigate all human rights violations that happened during the war or afterwards. Investigations have been launched, and we hope that it will reach positive results for the victims, because the one question which was asked to us from the prosecutor of the ICC: What is the expectation of the people who gave us information? And I can say from our experience that we continue to provide some services -- Young Lawyers' Association is continuing to provide services to the victims of the war. And that we are always and still are asking whether there might be a possibility for international investigation, or any kind of investigation, to provide the remedy, which is definitely the remedy for seeing someone held responsible for the actions, as well as for the damages caused by the material -- or other damages caused as a result of this action.

For us it was really important to provide this information to you in a clear way. So the work which was done by Tinatin as well as by international experts in international criminal law, it was quite challenging to collect all this information and to make it as user-friendly as possible. But we believe that we achieved something, and together with this paper copy -- some of you had the possibility to collect CDs where you can find,

in addition to the report, video, audio, and other materials. Photos, of course. And it was a huge challenge, of course, to collect all this material and to check their source of information as well as to provide the specific linkage to the report.

What is happening afterwards, when it comes to the victims? When it comes to the internal displacement citizens that might be more appropriate for my side to follow up on this. Of course, we have a set of issues related to IDPs, and my colleagues, I believe, will address this. But let me say the following, there've been a number of cases sent to the European Court of Human Rights, not only by Georgian organizations, but also by other organizations. And we hope the European Court of Human Rights, which is really important for the Georgian legal system, will provide effective follow-up on these cases.

It is really important to say that the NGO community who have been -- and all the activists of Kyla and other organizations who have been working on this report continue to work jointly, and created the Georgian Coalition for the International Criminal Court. And this coalition cooperates with the international coalition, and the objective of NGOs right now is to follow up on this report and to ensure if there were additional violations, unfortunately after August events related to the war. To detect that, to follow up on that, as well as to see and seek effective follow up on the side of the ICC, calling for the investigation as well for this oversight of



the national government.

In addition to the activities when it comes to International Criminal Court, Georgian nongovernmental organizations right now work in the area of providing legal assistance to IDPs, other important assistance for the social protection for pushing more participatory democracy -- for IDPs to be able to participate in the decision-making process, as well as the Georgian NGO community assembled together with the support from the Open Society Georgia Foundation by creating mechanisms, coalitions for the monitoring of the international aid coming to Georgia after war. We put some brochures about this coalition, but we will provide you some additional information if you interested in it.

The coalition works in the area of anti-corruption monitoring, transparency, as well as accountability to ensure that it is aid which has been and still is coming to Georgia, to be effectively spent and for the Georgian public especially to know the results of this support.

And finally, I would like to mention that it is really important for justice, for Georgian democracy, for the well being of the state, your support, your advice, as well as your involvement. But it's really more important for local citizens and victims of this war to feel that they are not forgotten. And we are trying our best -- Georgian lawyers, nongovernmental organizations, and some other institutions.

However, this is an area which is not isolated within Georgia.

This is an area where there should be close country-cooperation and an international approach. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Giorgi. (Applause)

We'll turn now to Sam Patten from Freedom House.

MR. PATTEN: Thanks, Beth. It's a pleasure to be here today on behalf of Freedom House. I think Nadine will take a little bit about the IDP situation. I like to address the report itself and why documents like this are very important in terms of adjudicating the aftermath of an event like the Georgian War. And also just some general observations on the political situation in Georgia, as I've seen it in the last couple of years.

I'd like to commend the authors of this report, Agila and the other authors. It's a compelling read and it really does provide as close as one can get to a clear-eye perspective on what is a very polarized and very painful situation in the aftermath of the Georgian War.

Just to look at it in a little bit of context. I've been spending some time recently in Kyrgyzstan, where there has also been ethnic cleansing. And the difficulty of getting the society to speak honestly of such issues is a huge challenge and critical to restorative justice and the hopes for finding some resolution, and this report is just very, very important in terms of putting facts on the table that can be discussed and, as we've heard today, can be brought before courts, I think -- their actions

before the ICC and also the European Court of Human Rights. And it will be important as these legal processes go forward to see how the report and its finding can help people better understand how to prevent this kind of naked aggression in the future.

The role of the youth in documenting human rights abuses is, I think, very important and obviously played a big role in this report. There were hundreds if not thousands of volunteers who were brought together to quickly assess information in Gori, in Shida Kartli, and throughout the area that they were able to access.

It's important, I think, to look at the disproportionality of such a well-documented report as this, and the lack of documentation we see on the other side. Thanks to Human Rights Watch and some brave work by Tatiana Lokshina and others, we are able to look at the Russian Government's claims about its intentions and its action during the war and in the aftermath of the war and get some sense of perspective. However, we don't see this type of detailed reporting on the Russian side, and it would be very helpful if one were able to -- if the international community could get that kind of fact collection from both sides.

Another thing that's interesting about this report in terms of human rights documentation is the use of satellite imagery, which I think was really advanced during the 2008 war, beyond what had been used before in terms of publicly available UniSat satellite imagery, so that the

ethnic cleansing that occurred could clearly be seen. Destroyed villages, destroyed houses could be seen by satellite imagery.

During that time I was working in the State Department and close monitoring was happening via satellite. One felt sort of helpless to see a friend of the United States like Georgia suffer from the Russian aggression that was happening at that time. However, one was able to get a clearer picture of what was going on, thanks to the kind of documentation that technology affords, so this report is a good showcase of that.

It also talks a little bit about the difference between the physical and the moral damage that Georgia suffered during the war. And I've had the ability to travel to Georgia a couple of times since the war. Once in early 2009, once in early 2010, and again just last week. And I was pleased, just anecdotally, to be able to see a change in the national spirit. Clearly the country was demoralized in the aftermath of the war. It was certainly not a victory for Georgia; it was a defeat. And it was a time of great national suffering and shame. To be invaded by another country is never a pleasant thing.

The impression that I got in my most recent visit is that the Georgian national spirit is more revived now that it was two years ago certainly. That as a result of having been able to have a dialogue about what happened during the war -- arguably, as Tina mentioned, there is a

polarization in the Georgia media. So one can question the degree to which that is a fully objective dialogue. However, it is a dialogue, and it's not the same dialogue that I've seen in Kyrgyzstan, where it is considered unpatriotic entirely to talk about ethnic cleansing that happened in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June of this year. So there is a qualitative difference there, in terms of just the ability to discuss things. However, clearly there can be more advances made in media freedom in Georgia.

There is sort of a difference between the legal cases and sort of the court of international public opinion, in terms of how this war has been viewed. Georgia seems to me to be unique, in that it's one of the few countries -- we've just come out of an election in the United States in which foreign policy was not an issue. It was a very distant concern in most American polls. It was a fifth-, sixth-, seventh-ranked concern. It was rarely brought up on the stump. In Georgia, foreign policy is always a primary concern -- a first or second concern -- because the hope for reintegration with South Ossetia and Abkhazia is a central hope to the Georgian people and their aspirations.

And the role of foreign policy is critical in that respect. The Georgians want to know more about where Caucasus policy falls in U.S. foreign policy. They watch the actions of large countries like the United States and Russia with existential concern, and I think that's an important thing to remember when looking at Georgia.

I had a chance to meet a Russian in Tbilisi last week who moved to Georgia before the war. He was a human right defender and a media freedom advocate, and he chose to move to Georgia before the war, and indicated that the war showed for him more than anything else the clear difference between Russia and Georgia, in that -- he said: My country does not understand freedom. And as a result of the war and having lived through this war, I can see more clearly now than I have before that there is a very clear line in terms of respect for freedom. And it was an attempt to destroy Georgia's freedom, essentially as it led to the war among many other circumstances.

So, I'd be happy to talk about Freedom House methodology in our reports in the question and answer period. But with that, I think I'll -- Nadine?

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Sam. And now we'll hear from about internal displacement from Nadine.

MS. WALICKI: Thanks for organizing this event and inviting me here. My focus will be on internal displacement as a result of the 2008 conflict. I'd also like to commend the authors of the report. It does provide a wealth of information on the human rights violations caused by the conflict, and that happened during and even after the conflict.

I wanted to highlight just a few human rights issues that seem to be a bit background or secondary in the report, and then go on to

talk about some of the other issues still facing IDPs displaced in 2008 -- today.

The report very clearly talks about violations of the right to life and the right to liberty and security of the person, examples such as deprivation of life, arbitrary arrest, detention, and so on. Most interviews, as mentioned, are with IDPs, and one kind of underlying theme is that the violations that were happening actually led to forced displacement of these people.

And there are two issues here that I wanted to highlight. The first is loss of property, possessions, housing, land. In the report, there's a lot of information about deliberate acts of destruction, burning, pillage; and other reports document these instances as well. In addition, bombing and shelling of populated areas cause people to lose property, including livestock, access to land, and so on. Many of these people who suffered this destruction were displaced, have lost their livestock, vehicles, property, and so on. And there's little immediate prospect of returning what they have lost. So the right to protection against arbitrary deprivation of their property is definitely an issue that led to their displacement.

The second issue that led to their displacement was, as mentioned earlier, the ethnic cleansing of ethnic Georgians. And this was also concluded by the international fact-finding mission that ethnic cleansing was practiced against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia, both

during and after the conflict. Ethnic Georgian homes were systematically looted and torched, and I was surprised by the one percentage in the report that 74 percent of respondents had their homes destroyed or burned. This ethnic cleansing led to their forced displacement, and forced displacement for the purpose of ethnic cleansing is arbitrary. And as a result, the protection against arbitrary displacement wasn't there.

So these two issues -- loss of property and ethnic cleansing -  
- led to the forced displacement of people.

How are these people living now? People that have been internally displaced as a result of the conflict? Those living on the territory of Georgia proper, under the effective control of the Georgian government, we wanted to highlight four issues that they face today. These aren't the only issues, but these are considered some of the more pressing ones.

The first being freedom of movement. Return as of yet is not possible. The South Ossetian authorities are not -- largely not -- allowing return. Others who were displaced within Georgia proper had been pressured to return, and most have. But this return we're seeing is unsustainable, at least for the time being as a result of continued insecurity and loss of access to land and livelihoods.

Another issue related to freedom of movement is crossing the so-called administrative boundary line. It's reportedly difficult to cross both ways, from Shida Kartli and back. However, some people still



manager to cross, either unintentionally or to visit to relatives, graveyards, markets, and so on. However, the result has been the division of families and communities, and again a disruption of livelihoods.

A second issue, which has already been mentioned as well, is access of IDPs to justice and reparations for the violations they've suffered. Thus far, there's been a lack of effective judicial recourse, and it seems international aspects of the conflict and the fact of physical division of the areas have complicated the problem of access to justice for these people. And of course, as Tinatin said, there's a need to bring the perpetrators to account on all sides.

Third issue still facing IDPs today is access to livelihoods. As I've mentioned, access to land is difficult or impossible, and livelihoods were very much agriculturally based, so as a result people have been cut off from their access to their livelihoods. But also livestock was looted, and other assets for livelihoods as well, and this affects the long-term ability of people to support themselves and gain an adequate standard of living again. IDPs have been given land on the territory of Georgia proper. However, this land has not always been in sufficient quantity or quality, and has not allowed all of these IDPs to secure food for their family.

The fourth issue, and not necessarily the last, is adequate housing. IDPs were housed in newly-built cottages. Others chose to receive compensation instead. However, those who opted for

compensation, two years later, many are still waiting to receive this money and live in dire conditions. The public defender's report that was presented this week explains more about this.

Those who chose to settle in new cottages, these cottages were built very quickly, but the quality often suffered and some construction flaws are being addressed, but largely there's still several issues with this housing, including mold, leaking roofs, warped floorboards, vermin, and so on.

Finally, I'd just like to mention that in addition to IDPs displaced in 2008, there were also people displaced in the 1990s from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the territory of Georgia proper. They still also face these issues, some 20 years later. So it would be important to not again revisit these issues as a result of unfinished business now. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you very much, Nadine. (Applause)  
Thanks to all of our panelists. We have time now for questions, if you could identify yourself -- and there should be a microphone coming. This is the first time at a Brookings event that I haven't seen a lot of hands go up. Yes, please.

MS. JEFFERS: Hi. Christina Jeffers with the National Democratic Institute. I was wondering if I could direct a direct a questions to Ms. Khidasheli about the electoral code working group.

You spoke about the 2008 elections and disappointment with the process and the conduct. Your party is participating in the inter-party working group on reform of the electoral code for the upcoming 2012 parliamentary elections. I was wondering if you could tell us where that process stands, and what your party's expectation is for consensus on improvements to the electoral code, or changes to the electoral code?

MS. KHIDASHELI: Thank you very much. Yes, the Republican Party is the party which advocates for the elections of every type. So we have participated in every election in Georgia since the independence, and we are not planning to boycott any in the future.

There was an eight-party working group set up after -- or right during the local elections in April 2010, and the idea was to try to draft the legislation to address the main concerns from the last three elections. The group has prepared quite a substantial document. It covers all the areas, starting from the electoral code going through independent media, or giving independence to media, and police -- noninterference from the police in the electoral processes, which are three main problems which Georgia faces right now in terms of the elections. And it was presented through the ruling party in September.

We've been waiting for their response for a long time. As far as I know, last week -- I'm out of Georgia for three weeks now -- but what I was told last week, there was a first meeting of the ruling party and those

eight parties.

And in terms of the progress and my expectations? Well, it's very difficult to say, and it will be a speculation what I say now, but coming from the previous experience we have had with the ruling party -- within Movement -- of NDI, for example, when the local elections -- before the local elections there was a working group. We had a full cooperation from the National Movement till the very last moment. Full cooperation in terms of the legislation, in terms of the steps to be taken, setting up and inter-agency working group, which was a means to monitor the police activities during the electoral process, which was meant to monitor the media balance for the elections. But at the very last moment, before the draft law was sent to the Parliament, we've got the change in the conditions of the consensus.

So, the whole idea in Georgia today -- and it's very easy to understand -- is that National Movement holds the constitutional majority in parliament. They don't need involvement of any political party to pass the laws to bring any changes to the legislation, including the changes to the constitution. The whole idea of those working groups is that, although again technically and legally speaking National Movement does not need anybody's votes for having this or that election passed, the idea was that we reach a consensus and then the National Movement obliged itself to work for the laws that will be accepted in this multi-party process -- during

this multi-party process.

So the rule set by NDI, with the support of NDI or with the facilitation of NDI, before the local elections was the consensus-minus-one kind of rule. So if everybody agrees and there is one party which is against, it's considered done and passed. Unfortunately, it did not work like that. And unfortunately, at the last moment National Movement requested a vote, and obviously they were in the majority and they've got the votes and then they passed the legislation as they decided to do.

So what will happen this time? Difficult to say. We have this experience, but we also have, I believe and what I see now in Georgia, more involvement for the international community than it was before the local elections. There is more hope that the international community will be tougher with the government, with the ruling party, than it was before the local elections. I have a feeling that they care more how the national legislation for the elections will be for the 2012 elections. What will be the state of media independence? What will be the police involvement than it was before?

At least I'm trying to be optimistic if it is the case, and if the international community will be clear enough in its messages and its attitude, then they don't have a choice, and obviously they will go for lots of positive developments.

If they will see that it's just a matter of game and no one

really cares, then we will have a majority vote again, and they always have a majority and they will pass whatever laws they decide to pass.

But again, it's very important to understand that it's not only about the electoral law itself. What will be the Georgia electoral code? Georgia electoral code is more or less okay, even now. It's about the environment, electoral environment, which is in a country. It's about no single national state media being independent. It's about no single national state media -- we know who owns, we know who is behind, who is controlling. It's all monopolized by the government. It's all run actually by the government, and all the small TV stations like one in Batumi; for those of you who know Georgia more or less, it's Channel 25. And two small stations in Tbilisi, and one in Gori, Trialeti TV. They are constantly under pressure; they are constantly under threat. Just last month Trialeti, the Gori-based independent TV, channel's premises were invaded again and their founder was arrested and beaten up by the police severely, and there were lots of reports by the human rights groups about the physical damage he came back from the police station with. So if it won't change, then whatever we write in our electoral code does not really matter that much.

Two, if the local activists are going to be under threat all the time by the police, if the police involvement -- will be actually the ones holding, dealing, conducting elections in regions of Georgia. Again it does

not really matter what is written in the code. I always say, when someone asks me how the local elections went in May, I always say that it was the Soviet Union. It was a Soviet Union because, yes, people did vote for the National Movement, but there was no free vote, as well as in the Soviet Union. People were going an voting for the Communist Party, regardless of the fact they wanted to vote or not. It was exactly the same situation. We had groups of people standing outside the polling stations monitoring everybody. Who was going in? Who was going out? There were people who were told very clearly, directly, that they don't show up at the polling stations because they knew that these were opposition voters, or they will have problems.

So every time those voters were coming to the polling stations, there were like ten ladies standing outside the station telling them: Oh, by the way, we made a mark that you came and we of course know that you are going to vote for the opposition. Do you remember your son who is using drugs? Or do you remember your uncle who is working for this hospital or your whomever working for the government? And so on and so forth.

So if this continues, and if it stays like that, and if the people will say that, okay, there are people outside the polling stations but we did not see the violation. Well, fine, then it's going to be the Soviet Union again in 2012 and all the time.

But if there will be more attention to the general conditions, general electoral environment in a country, plus necessary changes to the electoral code, a little bit independence of the judiciary, then we might get something that is close to the elections. Today, we do elections, but this is more like we did in the Soviet Union rather than in young democracies.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. I wonder, Sam, if you'd like to comment on the elections and the parallels with the Soviet Union?

MR. PATTEN: Well, sure. Just quickly on the election code, a point that my friend and predecessor Jeff Goldstein recently made, is that the main thing is that the code is issued and agreed to and clear well in advance of the elections. And that was a problem in the preceding elections, is that the election code, which I think Tina agrees is largely fair, it was just unclear and not promulgated in enough time for all the parties to properly understand and use it.

So, I think in terms of the working group that you're taking part in now, hopefully there will be a conclusion well in advance of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

MS. KHIDASHELI: This is of two years ago, also?

MR. PATTEN: Yes. So there's time for that. In terms of -- I think comparisons to the Soviet Union are a little bit extreme. I mean, in the Soviet times there was no alternative, whereas you are an alternative and there are other alternatives, and some of those alternatives are sitting



in Parliament, some of them are in City Hall, so I think that comparing recent elections to the Soviet times is a little bit of hyperbole.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Yes, but in terms of the mood, in terms of the attitude from the people's side -- the side of those people who would never vote for the National Movement but were forced to vote for the national movement -- that was exactly the feeling you were getting that, okay, that's how we voted 30 years ago, 40 years ago. We would go there, just because we were afraid that relatives would be kicked out from the Communist Party, depriving all the future possibilities in life, and that's what we did now again. Yes, there is an alternative, but it really doesn't matter if you don't call out the word, if there is no free will to --

MR. PATTEN: What matters, as a Georgian said, is not what the votes are, but who counts the votes.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Right. Stalin said it, actually.

MS. FERRIS: Other questions? Yes please, in the back, and then here. If you could stand up, I think it might help to hear you a little better.

SPEAKER: My name is Elise. I am a graduate student at Catholic University. I was wondering how the psychosocial needs are being assessed and addressed of the IDPs and how community building is happening within the IDP camps?

MR. CHKHEIDZE: Well, I can actually try to start

contributing in that regard, because non-state actors are trying, as I mentioned, to provide not only typical legal assistance, for example, but also some psychosocial assistance because of a number of reasons. Because of the war hostilities, violence, as well as because of the social problems which the displaced community faced. The problem when it comes to their needs in this area is quite high, especially settlements provided to IDPs are, if we compare to the, say, so-called first degree of IDPs, IDPs displaced from the conflict zones beginning of 1990s, and IDPs displaced just two years ago, of course comparison is -- difference is huge when it comes to their access to housing.

However, still now they've started to have more access to other facilities, like school, hospital, et cetera. But from the beginning it was just houses in more or less remote areas. So it made some level of need in this direction quite high. And hopefully there were and there are still non-state international as well as local nongovernmental organizations providing such assistance.

Well, one example can be given when it comes to domestic violence, for example. Unfortunately, the problem of domestic violence is a problem in Georgia, and unfortunately after war, various researchers detected the high level of cases of domestic violence among IDP community, in Gori or Shida Kartli. So this is also an area where there is assistance and advice as well as some administration activities should be

carried out for the participation of local community in decision-making processes. It's again primarily non-state actor driven, primarily driven by the international actors, international organizations. Again, Open Society Georgia Foundation has been providing assistance to non-state actors to support IDPs being involved in the process of deciding assistance delivered to them, issues related to the governance of the government-in-exile, for example, for Abkhazia, et cetera.

But still, more should be done at the local government level when it comes to the participation in the decision-making process. We have local elections. We have new local self-governing bodies, especially for the regions where IDPs are currently residing. However, still the level of participation of citizens in local self-governance is quite low, so it's a cross-sectoral problem. It's a problem which is faced by IDP as well as by non-IDP citizens of Georgia.

MS. FERRIS: Nadine, did you want to add?

MS. WALICKI: Sure. Maybe just to add in one more example from our work in Georgia.

We noticed that there is a need for psychosocial support, both with IDPs displaced in the 1990s and in 2008, but their needs are very different. For those displaced in 2008, we focused mainly on children with after-school programs, and children who first came having nightmares, and so on, as a result of their experiences during the conflict,

have slowly become normal children. Of course, the process isn't finished, but this is just one activity that we're doing, as just one NGO, in addition to others that are working on psychosocial assistance.

In terms of community mobilization, this is something else that we're doing as well surrounding housing, mostly having to deal with the privatization of collective centers that is ongoing. But what we're finding is that there's a lot of lack of information, or the information flows aren't flowing adequately to IDPs, so they have a lack of information, which inhibits their participation. So that's one thing that we're trying to address as well.

MS. FERRIS: Okay, briefly, and then we've got someone.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Just about the social assistance. One of the important issues here is, one thing is IDPs who are displaced, but the other is the people who -- they are IDPs, but got back to the buffer zone villages. And this is the group of the people who are kind of, well, I wouldn't say completely forgotten, but somehow get less attention or sometimes no attention, because it is considered they are back to their villages and they can survive.

But in reality what we've heard here is exactly the problem for them as well, because most of those villages have lost their land, although they still have their gardens and the places where they had houses, which are burnt in most of the cases now. But they don't have

land any more. Most of the land and the forest, which is also very important state on the other side of the administrative border -- so-called administrative border. So now, these are the people who need most of the attention, because there's no food, there is no wood for winter not to freeze in their houses, and they seriously have huge problems. The same is, for example, the water supply. The dam is on the other side of the administrative boarder, which is closed for them and for the entire summer they had no drop of water there.

So we have several problems of this kind. It's not just the IDPs who are living in Tbilisi or other cities, but the even bigger problem is for those living in buffer zones.

I can't miss this opportunity to thank you NRC, Danish Refugee Council as well, and all the refugee organizations who are actually doing a great job, because everywhere you travel, you see them. It's like you cannot miss them. They are everywhere. If there is any social assistance provided, it's by either the Norwegian Refugee Council or Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR, or other groups working on IDP center refugees. And they've really been doing a great job.

MS. FERRIS: Is it okay with the panelists if we take three or four questions and then give you a chance? Did you have your hand up?

MS. NIELSEN: My name is Anne Charlotte Nielsen. I am writing a book about children in conflicts, so you kind of answered my

questions, but I'm going to ask you more specific questions afterwards, because I'm interested in like the access to education, and other issues.

MS. FERRIS: Okay. Next question right here.

SPEAKER: (inaudible), Georgetown University. Lately we've been seeing protests in the capital of Georgia, mainly by IDPs protesting the decision of the Georgian Government to send them to different cities or villages outside of the capital. I'm wondering what's your take on that? Is it too early to do this? I'm specifically interested in the take of the Republican Party. Thanks.

MS. FERRIS: Thank you. And there's one in the back here.

MR. DE WAAL: Hello. I'm Tom de Waal here at Carnegie, and I apologize I arrived a bit late for the meeting. I was just in Georgia last week and I was struck by how Abkhazia and South Ossetia seem to have receded from the political discussion. All the talk was about the economy and jobs, in particular high unemployment.

And of course, so I was interested in your perception about whether the government was doing anything in providing jobs and employment for IDPs, given that there's also a sort of political temptation as kind of suffering people in camps without integrating them into the economy. Where there any employment programs for them?

And also, if you wouldn't mind, a brief comment on the situation in Akhalgori. I gathered from the conversations in Tbilisi -- I didn't

actually go up there -- that the people there are finding it different to get access from either side, both deeper into South Ossetia and into Georgia proper. Thank you.

MS. FERRIS: Why don't take one more here, and then we'll give our panel a chance to respond?

MR. HETFIELD: Mark Hetfield from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. While a lot of you have talked about the importance of foreign affairs in Georgia and of the international community, there's only been one mention I believe -- Tina's mention of the UNHCR -- of the U.N. in general or of any U.N. organizations.

So I was wondering what role has the U.N. been playing in Georgia in terms of finding a solution to the conflict? What roles should they be playing? And how is the U.N. perceived in Georgia?

MS. FERRIS: Okay. A variety of questions there. Who'd like to jump in?

MR. CHKHEIDZE: Well, let me respond to some of the questions, not all of them, of course.

First of all, education is really important. I wanted to follow on that. Access to education for youth, not only secondary education, but also higher education. It is not only an issue of distance; it is also an issue of possibility, access to tools, various tools like textbooks. Possibility for funding within the country or outside the country for

continuous education. And unfortunately, although foreign aid coming to Georgia was -- and I am speaking about that based on the experience of the NGO monitoring of the foreign aid to Georgia -- although this aid was directly related, targeted towards IDPs, I can't recall a huge portfolio devoted towards education or some more or less sustainable activities to support IDP communities. Well, some might argue whether there was a possibility of such, to build good houses, provide some immediate social assistance, even some food. And at the same time provide long-term perspectives for the education.

But I believe they should be a priority. We believe that it should be a priority. A priority which should be somehow championed by the government, because nowadays -- I would not repeat the names of these organizations, I fully support what Tinatin mentioned -- nowadays all these services, the possibilities provided by non-state actors, especially by the international organizations.

Issues related to the U.N. I would like to mention first of all the role of the U.N. Secretary General, especially the representative on internal displacement, Dr. Walter Kälin's involvement in Georgia. His involvement is -- the involvement of his party is really important, because the mechanical -- he personally travelled to Georgia after the war a number of times. Because of pushing policy discussion, legislative changes, as well as practical changes for the sake of the IDPs. So I can



answer from this perspective of the IDPs, their rights, and their possibilities.

I guess for Akhalgori I would like to mention that unfortunately when there are still cases of continuous human rights violations on which some non-state actors are trying to respond from a human rights perspective, providing legal aid to citizens, unfortunately, there are some issues related to the access to Akhalgori, and here I believe Tinatin knows better than I this reality and can continue from this point on.

MS. KHIDASHELI: Okay. In Akhalgori we can speak about different problems there. Access. I would not say it's a primary concern, because if your ID is issued in Akhalgori, then it's not a big deal. Yes, you need to go through the checkpoints or the security, but I think it's normal when you are in a nearly war situation.

Access is not such a big problem. It is a problem for us, for example, if Giorgi and myself have decided to travel to Akhalgori, we will have limited possibility for that, and we would need all kinds of permissions from all sides. But as for the people who are from Akhalgori, I don't see it as a major problem. And I know many people, as Giorgi mentioned. I work with the people from Akhalgori a lot. I have, as a lawyer, I have this post kept all the time, a politician and a lawyer for my human rights work, from which people know me mostly. I have around

1,500 inhabitants of Akhagori whom I'm representing right now in courts on different proceedings, because they are the ones who suffered the most in terms of housing, compensation, and getting various social packages available for IDPs. And that's the real problem everyone sees.

People from Akhagori are told a number of things by the government. One, that their houses have not been burned -- they are still there, they can go back and live in their houses. Two, that because they travel back and forth, government tells them, well, you can still grow your crops, and then just bring them to Georgia, sell them, so you are not really the one in most need as, let's say, people from Tamarasheni or Achabeti or other villages where the houses were entirely burned.

I said a couple of times in several interviews that there is to me, what I observed today, attitude is similar to Gali -- Torbatso Akhagori. Government is trying to make Akhagori something like Gali. Gali, for those who do not know, is the southern part of Abkhazia, which is mainly populated by Georgians and is -- that's my understanding of Gali -- that is used and manipulated all the time by both sides. Georgian Government, Russian Government, Abkhaz as well, for planning whatever games they are planning exactly around Gali. It's something similar now happening with Akhagori.

So if there is a new provocation to happen from whatever side, Akhagori will be the perfect case for it, because Georgians still go

there back and forth and they can always manipulate it. The same goes for the Ossetians. Ossetians live there. They also go back and forth, so from the other side they can be manipulated. And what I see there, it's something really close to Gori.

The other problem people from Akhalgori have is that -- and it is actually true and it's very difficult to number and count and say exactly -- most of them own houses in Georgia proper. And it is obviously a problem, because -- and here I fully agree with the government -- that's when it comes to the limited resources, we need to help those who are most in need. Yes, I understand that those people lost their lands and lost their houses and although even if they travel in Akhalgori, it does not mean that tomorrow it will be the same and they can go and live there. But still if they own houses in Tbilisi or anywhere else in Georgia, I don't think that they should be given the first priority in terms of giving houses or giving the compensation. So the list should be starting from those on top who lost everything and really live on the street, and now they're in need of some roof on their top, other than those who have houses.

But they don't really understand it, and they say that it's been two years -- it's not like September 2008 -- but it's been two years and how come that our time never came? And there is some logic in it as well, but again, it's a big controversy there.

And lots of people had summer houses in Akhalgori, and the

villages that were close to now-Georgia-proper -- well, at that time Akhalgori was always under Georgian control and people would go back and forth there. And lots of people who were from this place, from after the first war in South Ossetia, actually bought houses in Akhalgori and they were based there.

So now they have a problem, because if they were registered as IDPs -- and this is another problem with IDPs in Georgia -- if they were registered as IDPs from the first war, although even if they've lost now their second residence, Georgian Government tries to manipulate them and say, Oh, you are the IDPs from the first war? Your program did not start yet. Come in 2011. And it a real problem, because many people who were displaced from Tskhinvali after the first war, they did not live in Tbilisi. They lived in villages that went under Georgian control. And of course they are on a secondary displacement right now. But they have a status from the first war. So because of that they are treated differently than first-time IDPs. And they are like a specific group.

As for the many -- short about the education, the only thing I can add to what Giorgi was saying was that we had an initiative in the Republican Party to have books for schools, secondary schools and primary schools, provided for free for IDP children who were in need of it, as well as for the children in formerly buffer zone villages. Unfortunately, this proposal was not accepted by the government, and I think that it is

very urgently needed and necessary because these people have problems with clothing, not to talk about the books, which is pretty expensive if you take it seriously and if you really want to have a normal education and have the books and everything.

As for --

MS. FERRIS: Questions about employment and protest, IDPs.

MS. KHIDASHELI: IDP protest. Yes. About the IDP protest, here we need to differentiate, because it's not the similar and same for everybody. We had IDPs who were, during the whole summer -- and again for those who do not know, IDPs were expelled from their temporary housing, some of them sent to the villages in Western Georgia close to Abkhazia, and some of them given the compensation.

And what was the understanding of the Republican Party? I was personally involved in this case, because we've got this expelling of the new IDPs as well. And I strongly believe that everywhere where new IDPs have been expelled and sent to the villages nearby Abkhazia doesn't make sense. Because this is not a natural environment for them. These are the people from South Ossetia, a totally different -- well, totally different would be too much, but kind of a different mentality, different attitudes, different language they speak, actually, because it's Samagello. Samagello, it's quite difficult for them to -- for people from Shida Kartli to --

yes, we joined their protest of this particular group. And we've said it's not fair, it's not right, and if there is any reason -- for privatization reasons or whatever reasons that is that this building needs to be emptied, they should be given another housing, either in Tbilisi or Gori or somewhere close to their natural environment, rather than sending them on the totally other side of the country.

Second group was IDPs from -- were in Abkhazia from the '90s. So, and here again we need to differentiate. I have right now a case in a court where I'm a lawyer of two groups, around 70 people, who moved to Tbilisi 17 years ago and lived in this very place for 17 years. There are children who were born in Tbilisi who have nothing to do with Abkhazia, other than their parents are telling them how nice beaches in Abkhazia and how much they want to go there. All their social environment is Tbilisi. They live in Tbilisi, they go to school, they went to school in Tbilisi -- friends, everybody they have in Tbilisi.

I strongly believe that sending them to the villages in Western Georgia is a forceful displacement by your own government. Because this displacement is not -- the moving of the people against their will is no different from what happened during the war. The only difference is that they are not shot. But other than that, it's against their will and it's against the social environment they've grown up and they are used to. And now they are told that you should start a totally new life.

But we have groups of the people who took an advantage -- to say very clearly -- after the August War, and after this hotels and kindergartens and different places that were emptied after the August War, return in October, November 2008. There were groups of people who took an advantage and occupied those buildings emptied by new IDPs. And these were mainly people who came in August 2008 to Tbilisi from the regions.

So when they were forced to leave -- when they were first asked and then forced to leave, well, I still have a problem with the force government took against them, like 2,000 policemen surrounding the building in the middle of the night, throwing out their belongings, putting them forcefully in cars and sending to the villages. Yes, I have a problem with that. But legally speaking, just in terms of the relocation, I think government was right. But again it was about the force that the government used against them.

So we basically talk about three different groups that were affected in summer 2010, and I would have problems with all of them, but in different way.

SPEAKER: U.N.?

MS. KHIDASHELI: U.N. Well, U.N. there is not much I can say about U.N. I say much more about the Council of Europe, European Union's involvement -- not that much about the U.N.

U.N. in Georgia was working more on development in a very traditional understanding of it, rather than IDPs or -- I don't know -- any particular group. They would finance lots of governmental programs oriented on development.

UNHCR was always very active. Giorgi and myself when we were with the Young Lawyers' Association we used to work in a very big project dealing with reconciliation in South Ossetia that time, in '96, '97, '98. We would travel to Tskhinvali very often, and that was all UNHCR-driven projects that we were providing roof supplies for the houses in Ossetian villages. And there was a very funny project for Georgians, but actually very useful -- livestock given, female livestock -- I don't know what's the English word for it -- but female livestock went to Georgian villages and male livestock to the Ossetian villages, so they would feel the need in cooperation. Lots of different things like that.

But it was all done by UNHCR, not by UNDP per se, but by the UNHCR office in Tbilisi. And they were always helpful. I don't really know about that much that they've done after the August War, because initiative was mainly taken by the Council of Europe and the organizations like DRC and NRC, they were much more active, maybe getting money from U.N. I don't know. But they were more active rather than UNHCR itself.

MR. CHKHEIDZE: During August War, actually. During



August War, UNHCR played really important role, especially when it comes to Abkhazia, and Khodori, so forth. Abherakhazi, Khodori, Gorch, (inaudible) to new IDPs as well as afterwards assistance. So, UNHCR still continued to be active, to be honest, together with the non-state organizations.

MR. PATTEN: If I could just say two things quickly. In terms of the IDPs and their role in the political context. You know, the August War created 130,000 more IDPs, compounding the problem from the 1990s war. This is a significant constituency, and it's a constituency that needs to be spoken to about real issues. So jobs are such issues. Jobs, housing.

There's a need for an interim solution. The war put back the chances for reintegration, and so I think not only the government but opposition parties and society in general needs to be realistic in managing the expectations and looking at an interim solution in the hopes that there will be a more permanent solution later. And that should be part of the political dialogue.

And in terms of the question about the U.N., I think it's equally important to look at what the OSCE is doing -- and this year the Kazakh chairmanship. I think there have been a couple trips to Georgia. Whether or not there's a political declaration at the Astana Summit the week after next will be important. I think it will be important for the

Georgians. It will be important for the Russians. And I think that's something to look forward to.

MS. FERRIS: Why don't we take just two quick questions, if we can have quick questions? Anyone over here?

MS. KINODE: Jane Kinode from Carnegie Endowment. I guess I would like to direct this question particularly to Georgian participants. Clearly the war with Russia started a lot of anti-Russian sentiments, both in the popular level as well as when it comes to political rhetoric, when Russian is frequently described in black terms.

So, I was wondering whether you foresee some sort of renewal of dialogue, a *rapprochement* between Georgia and Russia, if not on a political level then on people-to-people, second-track level. And I'm asking this question particularly because I believe today there is a delegation of Georgian youth visiting Moscow. So I wonder if we can interpret it as a one-of-a-kind incident or something that would have a follow-up in the future?

MS. KHIDASHELI: Well, yes, there is lots of anti-Russian attitude, but I would not say it's really among the people. It's more politicized. It's on the surface. If you go talk to the average Georgian, there is no any anti attitude. Anti-Russian or anti-anyone. Anti-Ossetian. Anti-Abkhazian. You almost never find it. That's something we can really be proud of as Georgians.

But if you come to Georgia for a week, two days, three weeks, you watch TV, you meet with the politicians or NGOs or whatever socio-politico elite representatives, you will hear lots of anti-Russian, which is not, again, fortunately reflected that much in the majority of the people.

Actually, I can say even more. First time for these 20 years there was a pro-Russian vote in Georgia in May 2010. There was no single political party in Georgia for 20 years who would advocate anything pro-Russian. It was very unpopular. It was political suicide. And that's Misha's achievement, that we've got the pro-Russian political force in Georgia. It's one of the novelties Saakashvili brought to Georgia -- that it's okay to be pro-Russian now. And there was a quite significant support this group got, which was very unexpected for me personally. I was not expecting such a high support in Tbilisi, for example, for that.

People-to-people dialogue, I don't know. I'm a very strong believer, and I belong to a political party which is very strong believer of the dialogue on any level, because we believe that it's always better than taking guns and going into war. And we've been advocating for Georgian-Abkhaz, Georgian-Ossetian, Georgian-Russian dialogue all the time. But my fear is here that -- well, we didn't mention this state strategy about IDPs and conflict resolution, which was adopted a year ago, I guess, by the government. But there -- everything you have there, and the main

problem, which you have there, and we Georgian opposition have with this program and strategy, is that it's so much about Georgia-Russia, whether it's in terms of dialogue or whether it's in terms of confrontation, that the real issue, which is Georgian-Abkhaz, Georgian-Ossetian problem, is getting on the second -- behind the scenes. The Georgian-Russian conflict overshadowed the real problems.

And I am afraid that once again Georgian Government will make the same mistake that was happening there for the last 17 years. The wisdom is we have no problem with Abkhaz, we have no problem with Ossetians. We can perfectly live with them, and it's only Russia which is complicating the situation. Although I do agree, I have no problem saying, like some of the Georgian politicians, that there was an occupation, that the Russian army is illegally standing in Georgia. Yes, Russia interfered. Yes, there was an ethnic cleansing conducted by the Russians.

But still, there is a very difficult problem between Georgians and Abkhaz. Georgians and Ossetians. And as long as we ignore it, as long as we just talk about Georgian-Russian politics, Georgian-Russian confrontation, Georgian-Russian war, we are going to be going around the same circles we have been going for these 17 years.

Because what Georgia needs to address, what the primary concern of the Georgian Government should be, as I understand it, is addressing the security threats Abkhaz have, very legitimate ones.

Ossetians have very legitimate ones. We should be constantly thinking about them, about their problems, about the security issues that are there in Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, and trying to convince these people that there is no threat from Georgia. That it's about democratic, prosperous -- going to European Union. Georgia. Which is a so much better choice than Russia with Chechnya, and Russia in Beslan, and Russia in August 2008.

As long as we don't achieve this goal, I don't see any chance or potential for the integration as the Georgian Government says it, but I would rather say living in a common state. Because there are again very legitimate concern there in both capitals, Tskhinvali and Sukhumi, and we need to be constantly addressing them.

And the last point here is about the IDP conditions in Georgia, because the way we treat IDPs, the way the Georgian Government treats the IDPs, is the best example for Abkhaz and South Ossetian, whether they should trust the Georgian Government or not. When an average Abkhaz mother of my age, with two kids as I have, lives on the other side of the administrative border, looks in Zubdidi and sees how Georgians from Abkhazia are treated by its own government -- what kind of conditions they live in, what kind of threats go through, what kind of pressure they go through -- I don't think that they ever want to consider the unification or reintegration with Georgia. But as long as we are a real, true democracy, treating equally with respect our own citizens, then there are

more guarantees for minorities, for other nations, that they will be treated the same way.

But unfortunately, today's Georgia is not the one that will be your first choice if there is a choice given to you which way to go: Tbilisi or Moscow. I don't see it in Moscow either, but I think that with all the development for these last years, we just pushed Abkhaz closer to Moscow to Tbilisi. And it's our mistake, and we need to recognize those mistakes and work on them, rather than just saying that -- always pointing to Moscow and saying that, oh, yes, there is this bad guy over there and there is nothing I can do. There is a lot we can do, actually for solving these problems, if we want.

And just a small clarification about the numbers. You said 133,000. That's actually an initial number. Today we talk about 27,000 IDPs, new IDPs, because the rest was back in the buffer zone villages. So it's not as bad as it looks, and official data says that only 7,000 have been given full social protection, as it is prescribed by the Georgian law. Whether it's compensation or housing. Out of 27,000, it's only 7,000. I have an official communication from the Ministry where they say that, and they say that they don't have more money, which is not true. But that's another topic for another talk.

MS. FERRIS: I think there are a lot of topics for further talks, but we are going to have to close now. Thanks to all four of our panelists

and to all of you. (Applause)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

/s/Carleton J. Anderson, III

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

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