Crisis in Georgia: recommendations and principles

Conciliation Resources calls for a full and fair investigation of the human rights violations committed by both sides. We also urge the international community to heed the voices of civil society and to involve all communities concerned in both current and future peace negotiations. Our recommendations are:

1. **Give more prominence to international humanitarian norms and standards and human rights law.** Territorial integrity is not the only international law that has been violated in the past week. In their public statements and approach, governments and international organizations should give much greater attention to affirming international humanitarian and human rights law and humanitarian protection. They should publicly acknowledge what appears to be the disproportionate use of force by both Russia and Georgia in the pursuit of their objectives, with civilian non-combatants paying the price. Greater acknowledgement of these violations could also assist public diplomacy efforts in generating greater confidence in the even-handedness of European governments and institutions.

2. **Investigate civilian deaths and casualties to promote accountability and long-term reconciliation.** The international community should support a high-level independent investigation into the allegations of indiscriminate and targeted killings and human rights violations. They should work to incorporate such a mission into the terms of a ceasefire or enable it through another mechanism, such as UN Special Rapporteurs. A timely investigation is needed if those responsible for violations are to be held to account in the future. Furthermore, in a region where accusations of adversary’s atrocities have long been used to stoke animosity and justify one’s own bellicose actions, it will be crucial to have an accurate and credible account of civilian deaths to underpin any future political and social reconciliation.

3. **Cessation of hostilities agreement and preventing deployment of irregular forces.** CR supports European efforts to mediate a ceasefire agreement between the parties. An agreement should include measures to prevent the mobilization and operations of all irregular forces so as to avoid the potential for proxy wars between the parties. It should also include robust monitoring and dispute resolution mechanisms.

4. **Include representatives of the unrecognized entities in processes to agree peacekeeping arrangements and lay the foundations for future conflict resolution.** This is not only a conflict between the governments of Georgia and Russia or a struggle for geopolitical influence. The international community has long recognized the need to engage with representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and it should build on this principle in current and future negotiations. The terms of any durable peace, including the format for peacekeeping, will need to be broadly agreed by all the parties and negotiations should be constructed to involve them all. The current crisis has demonstrated there can be no military solution to Georgia’s complex and longstanding ethnic and territorial disputes. We remain committed to working with partners in the Caucasus and beyond to try to achieve reconciliation and a just and lasting peace.

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