

**12 February 2009**  
**For immediate release**

### **Georgians complain to European Court of human rights violations during August 2008 Russia-Georgia armed conflict**

The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) working together with the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) at London Metropolitan University have jointly lodged 32 groups of cases with the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of 135 Georgian citizens who allege that Russia committed a number of serious violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) during the August 2008 armed conflict between Russia and Georgia.

The applications, which originate from Gori and the surrounding villages, including a number of villages within South Ossetia<sup>1</sup> and also Tskhinvali, primarily concern instances of shelling and air attacks on villages, allegedly by Russian armed forces, resulting in the destruction of property and the killing or injuring of civilians and the deliberate burning and looting of villagers' houses by Russian soldiers or Ossetian militia.

In one case, on behalf of eight villagers from Kekhvi, it is alleged that the village was shelled from the surrounding Ossetian villages on 6 and 7 August and attacked by air by Russian helicopters and planes on 8 and 9 August. The applicants state that Russian armed forces entered the village on 9 August. From 11 August a group of people wearing military uniforms looted and burned the villagers' houses, including those of the applicants. One applicant also alleges that her mother was killed by shrapnel during the shelling of the village.

In a number of cases the applicants complain about being illegally detained by Russian soldiers. One applicant states that on 13 August 2008 he was detained near his home village of Eredvi by three men in military uniforms who spoke Russian. He alleges that they took him to Tskhinvali in a small tank and detained him there for about 22 days in the basement of a building. He was not given food or water and was drugged and beaten daily.

A number of applicants also complain about not being able to go back to their homes, such that they are now internally-displaced persons (IDPs).

In their complaints the applicants rely on various provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights: Articles 2 (right to life), 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment), 5 (right to liberty and security of the person), 8 (right to respect for private and family life), 13 (effective remedy), 14 (prohibition of discrimination), Article 1 of Protocol 1 (right to peaceful enjoyment of property) and Article 2 of Protocol 4 (freedom of movement).

GYLA and EHRAC have been working in partnership since 2006 and the two organisations have lodged a series of cases against Georgia at the European Court of Human Rights. They have also brought cases against the Russian Federation on behalf of people who were deported from Russia to Georgia in October 2006.

[End]

<sup>1</sup> Achabeti, Argvitsi, Atriskhevi, Avlevi, Berula, Brotsleti, Dzartsemi, Dvani, Eredvi, Kekhvi, Kere, Kitsnisi, Ksuisi, Kurta, Satskheneti, Tkviavi, Vanati, Zardiaantkari and Zemo Kviti.