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Forced Migration
in the Northern Caucasus:
Involving Local Stakeholders in the
Process of Returning Ingush IDPs

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Introduction

The present paper is a policy research of the consequences of Ingush-Osetian armed conflict in Prigorodny District (*Prigorodny Rayon*) of North Osetian Republic in November, 1992. The main focus of the study is the return of Ingush forced migrants, who fled the war zone in 1992 to the place of their permanent residence in Prigorodny district. The project aims to develop a policy proposal addressing the problems related to the return of Ingush IDPs and efficient reduction of other damaging socio-political consequences of the Ingush-Osetian armed conflict.

A workable policy strategy for conflict resolution in Prigorodny area has to be based on a thorough analysis of the situation, incorporation of local peacemaking intelligence and instructive experience from other cases, where similar deep-cutting cleavages have been reduced or overcome. The paper will thus have three main plots: disentangling the past, scrutinizing the present, and proposing the future scenarios and recommendations for successful Ingush return and ethnically healthy Prigorodny Rayon.

Among the major obstacles to alleviation of the ethnic tension between Osetians and Ingushis today is the preoccupation of both parties to conflict with disputing their ethnocentric versions of the past, sorting out who was the first to settle on the disputed lands, who behaved worse in the conflict, and who is to be blamed for the bloodshed. This preoccupation prevents meaningful communication between the parties, who instead of deciding how to peacefully co-exist in the future, after twelve years still try to enforce on the antagonist their initial standpoint on the events of and proceeding November 1992.

My position in this paper is in that negotiating the past is a futile endeavor, and is helpful in resolving the current issues of returning social peace and IDPs to *Prigorodny Rayon*. Nonetheless, in the first section of this policy paper I will deal with the roots of the Ingush-Osetian conflict. This is done not to sort out who was wrong or right, but to find out how the ailment had come about. A careful scrutiny of the roots and a valid diagnosis are necessary if effective remedies are to be found.

I. Ingush-Osetian Armed Conflict of 1992: Roots, Preconditions and Circumstances

1. “Reliable” and “Unreliable” Peoples: Ethnic Tensions as a Result of Non-Neutral Nationality Policy of the State

In his article on Ingush-Osetian conflict, Valerij Tishkov, a renowned Russian ethnologist, who briefly functioned as a minister for nationalities of the Russian Federation in 1992, classifies the Ingush-Osetian conflict as deeply rooted and large scale. In his view, this conflict involves “such deep feelings, values, and needs, and the alienation is so strong that the usual ways and methods can hardly result in resolution” (Tishkov: 1997: 354). A researcher Chervonnaja, traces the roots of the conflict to 1770s-1780s, the period of Russian colonization of the Caucasus, when the Muslim peoples (including Ingushis) were treated with disproportional brutality, especially compared to their Christian neighbors (including Osetians). This, in her view, created deep ethnic divisions between indigenous peoples, and echoed hundreds years later in 1992 (Chervonnaja: 1995). Both respected authors, in my understanding, wrongly emphasize the alleged innate hatreds of the Osetians and Ingushis. Although colonization did fragment peoples, in my view, the contemporary ethnic tension between Ingushis and Osetians is a matter of several decades.

The Osetians were annexed to the Russian Empire in 1776, the Ingushis in 1810. Indeed, the colonial wars against the Caucasian Muslims were protracted and very violent. The Northern Caucasus has always been a very densely populated area, scarce lands and strong militant traditions made Caucasian Muslims fight severely against Russian advancement to their territory. The resistance of half - pagan, half-Christian Osetians, was weaker, thus the process of subjugation much softer. The Osetian historian Arthur Tsutsiev quite convincingly explains weak Osetian resistance by the fact, that when the Russian colonization was launched, the Ingushis had already descended from mountains and were settled on plain, while the Osetians were still mostly mountainous people. The Osetians started inhabiting the plain simultaneously with the Russians; therefore, for them the advancement of Russians and Cossacks was not perceived as aggression, as it was by the Ingushis. For them the Russians were rivals, while for the Ingushis they were the invaders of their territory.

Regardless of the mentioned above differences in two people’s perceptions and experiences of the colonial wars, one can hardly argue that colonialism created the Ingush-Osetian cleavage, which detonated many years later in 1992. First, in the 17-1800s the Osetian and Ingush peoples were non-existent as such. Instead were the so-called “societies” or tribes, such as *ironsty*, *kudartsy*, *digortsy* (which subsequently formed the Osetian nation) and *ghalghajtsy*, *dzejrahktsy*, *kistintsy*, *metskhaltsy*, *tsorintsy* (which were later merged into the Ingush nation). In the time described those tribes had blurred identities and probably lacked ethnocentrism, in its modern political sense.

Second, the state penetration into the social life of North Caucasian peoples in the Imperial Russia was low, the degree of autonomy high, which made the subjugated peoples quite independent from each other and the metropolis in their every day social-economic affairs. Since both the dependency and the integration were low, the differential treatment of “the societies” by the metropolis was not yet a conspicuous factor in the relations between them. Rivalry did emerge at a later stage, when the two peoples were integrated in a much tighter Soviet socio-political and economic space.

During the civil war, which followed the Russian Revolution of 1917, *Bolsheviks*, who looked for support of the Imperial outcasts- Caucasian Muslims - in their struggle against the

Empire, made very attractive offers of cultural and religious autonomy to them in exchange for joining the Soviet Union. The first decade of Soviet regime was very progressive for the Muslim peoples, especially the Ingushis. In 1921 the first Ingush administrative unit was founded – Ingush Autonomous Oblast', as part of the Mountainous Soviet Republic. This Oblast' included the current territories of the Ingush Republic and the adjacent area of Ingush settlement – *Prigorodny Rayon*. The Ingush only urban center - the city of Vladikavkaz, which Ingushis historically shared with the Osetians (Osetians inhabited the left bank and Ingushis the right bank of the Terek river) was made the capital of Mountainous Soviet Republic. Since then the Ingushis have considered these lands (present day Ingushetia, Prigorodny District, Right Bank of Vladikavkaz) as their national territory.

After Lenin's death, the nationality policy of the USSR changed. Stalin curbed Muslim autonomy, closed national schools, forbid Arabic as public language, "advised" local alphabets based on Latin script being changed to Cyrillic. Collectivization and secularization were particularly mass scale campaigns in the Muslim regions. Both instigated fierce resistance on behalf of Ingushis, this in its turn resulted in a wave of repressions against them, including military suppression by the regular army, and the elimination of the best part of the Muslim religious elite, which at the time constituted the main intellectual capital of the Ingushis.

In 1934 Ingush Autonomous Oblast' was merged with Chechen Autonomous Oblast' into Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Oblast' (region), while Vladikavkaz was transferred under the jurisdiction of North Osetia. Prigorodny district became part of Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Oblast', which was soon upgraded to Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Republic. Ingushis suffered the loss of Vladikavkaz, at the time their main economic and cultural center.

On February 23 1944, 85, 000 Ingushis, down to one person, were put on unheated cattle trains and deported to Central Asia on the accusation of "cooperation with Nazis". Over 40, 000 perished on the way or died subsequently in the inhuman conditions of the Stalinist exile. Prigorodny district was transferred under the jurisdiction of North Osetia. The Osetians were resettled there.

The resettlement of 25-30,000 Osetians from North Osetia and Georgia to Prigorodny district was "voluntary - enforced": each Osetian district and *kolkhoz* was allocated a certain number of "volunteers", who had to be resettled to the "new districts". Refusal to go could entail administrative repressions, agreement entitled the settler to benefits: after 5 years of work on the Ingush farms, the Osetian settler became the owner of the house and cattle, which remained from the Ingushis.

In 1957 when the repressed peoples were allowed to return from exile, Chechen-Ingush Republic was restored, however, Prigorodny district remained part of North Osetia. Upon return the Ingushis found their houses occupied, their cemeteries destroyed, new people working on their fields. "The destruction of cemeteries was a widespread practice... may be simply because *churty* /Ingush gravestones – E.S./ are "very good as construction blocks", but most likely because...these were the symbols of FOREVER gone epoch and their destruction was only symbolization, psychologically necessary confirmation of victory, forever won over this past", argues the author of the most convincing book on Ingush-Osetian conflict A. Zdravomyslov (Zdravomyslov: 1998: 40).

After the deportation the return of Ingushis to Prigorodny area was discouraged: Moscow treated repressed peoples with suspicion, while North Osetian authorities, anxious on

territorial claims, created difficulties with employment and domicile registration. In 1982 the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued an edict (№ 183) «On limitations of registration of citizens in Prigorodny district of North Osetian ASSR», which denied registration to certain categories of citizens in the area. This edict was de facto enforced only in respect of the Ingushis.

Nonetheless, the Ingushis, whose tradition treats the land of the forefathers as sacred, returned to their villages anyway, bought the houses, which belonged to their families before deportation back from the Osetians; lived illegally (without registration) or bribed officials into registering them. Many studied and worked in Vladikavkaz, were treated in the republican hospitals; and in spite of relatively high tensions with the Osetians, the percent of mixed marriages was rather high.

Until late 1980 the Ingushis remained on the black list. “The mark of citizens unreliable to the state was fully preserved in respect of Ingushis after 1956 – due to the activities of the ideological machine and the factual daily stereotypes”, states Author Tsutsiev. A representative of Ingush nationality had problems entering higher educational establishment, encountered obstacles, when making career in the army or in the civil service. Especially in North Osetia she was a second-rate citizen. This way the Soviet regime drew an almost official line between the “reliable” and “unreliable” peoples.

After the deportation the Ingushis retained the alternative social structure and a spirit of opposition to the regime. In the conditions of authoritarian politics this alternative spirit found expression in maintenance of ethnic traditional lifestyle.¹³ years of deportation strengthened the traditional family structure, informal social institutions, solidarity, customary law; these institutions formed a political structure parallel to the official. Authoritarianism, which aims to control the social life of its subjects, was strongly suspicious of such a social make-up.

The Osetians, on the contrary were among the most Sovietized republics: “The ideology of state Socialism fully ruled the spiritual life of the Osetians as a society”, noted Zdravomyslov (Zdravomyslov: 1998: 38). An average Osetian accepted the official anti-Ingush doctrine of the state. Many until now believe that Stalinist deportation was a justified measure against the collaborators with Nazis. The alternative lifestyle of the Ingushis was another proof of their unreliability. Unlike Ingushis, for whom the state has been mostly repressive, for the Osetians the state has been mostly supportive, and perceived legitimate.

Thus, until late 1980s the Osetians and Ingushis had different perceptions, relations and experiences with the Russian/ Soviet State. While all peoples suffered from colonization, collectivization, Stalinist repressions, the Ingushis seemed to suffer particularly. The state treated them with suspicion or anger; they paid back with the same coin. The Osetians had initially more fortunate relations with the Russians, which they managed to maintain throughout history. Stalin’s policy of arbitrary redrawn borders, resettlements and preferential treatment created the situation, when the Osetians and the Ingushis had to directly confront each other in combat for jobs and scarce (and in the Ingush case sacred) land. By late 1980 the tensions between the Ingushis and the Osetians were conspicuous.

2. From Tension to Conflict: Political Factors and Social Preconditions for Intensification

The main political factors, which influenced the intensification of Ingush-Osetian tension into an armed conflict were: *"the nationalization" of politics, play of nationality card in the power struggle* between the leadership of the USSR (President Gorbachev) and the leadership of the Russian Federation (President Yeltsin), *the Georgian-Osetian conflict and the inflow of refugees* from South Osetia to Prigorodny Rayon. Among the social preconditions were *the emergence of free market of arms* in the region, and the *"privatization" of law enforcement function* in the national Republics of the Northern Caucasus.

"Nationalization" of politics

The “national revival” gained unprecedented strength in the late 1980s, when the communist ideology *de facto* lost its legitimacy with the majority of the population. Nationalism and ethnocentrism were quick to fill the emerging vacuum, and the centrifugal forces were gaining dramatic speed throughout the country. The example set by Lithuania, which declared its independence on May 18 1989, was followed by Latvia (04.05.1990), the Russian Federation (12.06.90), Uzbekistan (20.06.90), Moldova (23.06.90), Armenia (9.08.90), Turkmenistan (22.08.90), Tajikistan (24.08.90), Kazakhstan (10.90), and Kyrgistan (15.12.90) etc. The same snowballing dynamics was repeated at the level of Autonomous Units within the Soviet Republics. In 1990 independence was declared by most politicized Autonomous republics: Abkhazia (Georgia 25.08), Tatarstan (Russia 30.08), Transdnistria (Moldova 2.09.), Sakha/Yakutia/ (Russia 27.09) etc.

In 1989 the ethnocentric discourse became dominant in the political space of then Chechen – Ingush Autonomous Republic. The issues most frequently addressed in the public debates were related to national political history. The Republican Communist Party, which tried to stay in the avant-garde of reform, raised the sensitive issue of deportation. Throughout 1989-1990 the central daily of republic’s Communist Party «Groznskii Rabochii» dedicated one full page in almost every issue to publishing lists of repressed /deported and subsequently rehabilitated (often posthumously) citizens of Chechen – Ingushetia (Groznskii Rabochii: 1989-1990). This steadily increased the awareness of the past grievances suffered as an ethnic collective and intensified anger and demand for redress with the Ingush population.

Since 1989 ecological movements in Chechen-Ingush Republic quickly turned into political movements. The opposition consolidated against the local historian Vinogradov, the author of a famous work on how Ingushis and Chechens voluntarily joined the Russian State. His work, almost entirely a fabrication, incited heated debates, which led to the emergence of national movements and fronts, first as *Vainakh* (Chechen- Ingush) organizations; gradually Chechen and Ingush elites separated and launched their individual national projects. When Chechnya declared independence and a radical nationalist regime was established in Grozny, many capital-based Ingush intellectuals left Grozny and settled in Nazran’, the Ingush largest village/small town. Now the Ingush elite, which returned to its ethnic motherland, dominated the local political space, molding and shaping a new modern Ingush sense of ethnic belonging. The ideas of “return of the lands” and “restoring historical justice” were popular among Ingushis ever since deportation. In early 1990s it became possible to discuss the problem widely and openly. The new Ingush intellectuals envisaged the future of their people in their own republic, which would include Prigorodny Rayon.

Play of nationality card in the power struggle between the leadership of the USSR & RSFSR

The above mentioned events coincided with the period of intense power struggle between the leadership of the USSR and the RF. Although the struggle was very personalized (the conflict between Gorbachev and Yeltsin was of several years standing) and the two presidents proved more adversarial to each other than their policies, ideological differences existed: while Gorbachev embodied the reformed, but still old regime, Yeltsin was the symbol of new, revolutionary democratic ideology. Being its President, in nationality issues Gorbi was on the side of preserving the USSR, while Yeltsin was rather indifferent to its future.

At the time when the centrifugal tendencies in the country gained enormous force, one of the easiest cards for new opposition to play against the old federal center was the nationality issue. Indeed, USSR which committed grave crimes against its peoples, lost legitimacy and remained the symbol of imperial thinking for many of them. In the conditions when ethnic minorities of the Gorbachev's state wanted separation, Yeltsin's aim was to garner as much support from the Russian minorities as he could.

Among the most obvious minorities try to win support from were the outcasts of the Soviet state - the repressed and deported peoples, especially North Caucasian Muslims, who had had long histories of grievances. As I mentioned earlier, in the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the years following it, Bolsheviks likewise looked to the Caucasus for support in their power struggle with the old regime. However, soon after getting established in Kremlin, they gave up on their promises to the Caucasians. A similar pattern could be traced in early 1990s. In the months of the most intense struggle with Gorbachev, Russian Federal leadership supported the repressed minorities in their national strive, emphasized understanding of the injustices committed against them, and showed readiness to remedy evils.

It should be noted, however, that at this point the threat of separatism in the Northern Caucasus was authentic. Quite serious attempts at consolidation of the Caucasian peoples first as such and then in opposition to the Soviet Union / Russia were undertaken. Already on August 26, 1989 the so-called Assembly of Mountainous Peoples of Caucasus was created. In the words of one of its founding fathers, this was a political movement aimed at "resurrection of unified Caucasian thinking, consciousness, prevention of conflicts between the peoples, self-help in preserving Caucasian cultures" (Shanibov Musa: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: 2.09.92). Gradually the Assembly became increasingly adversarial towards the Russian Federal Center. There were plans to restructure the Assembly into the United Nations of Caucasus, eventually on the basis of the Assembly was created the Confederation of Mountainous Peoples of the Caucasus (CMPC).

CMPC set independent state-building as its long term goal. "... We have to follow in the footsteps of our forefathers, restore the Mountainous Republic and launch a unified state-building. Our forefathers were tightly knit, but the empire tore us apart" (Shanibov: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: 2.09.92). By 1992, 16 peoples joined the CMPC, the consociational institutional framework was created, with 16 vice-presidents chairing the organization; branch ministries were founded and military units were created in conjunction with the Confederation. The goals set for these military formations were clearly stated: "We have to resist the powerful military formations of the Imperial dictatorship." (Shanibov Musa: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: 2.09.92). Yeltsin was right; a remedy had to be found.

The way out proposed by the government of the RSFSR was the law “On rehabilitation of the repressed peoples” adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the RF on April 26, 1991. Articles 3 and 6 of the law stipulated “territorial rehabilitation”, i.e. those peoples, whose lands were illegally annexed from them, had the right to claim them back.

The law was adopted very hastily, as A. Zdravomyslov claims, under serious pressure of lobbies. Two days before adopting this crucially important piece of legislation in its second and final reading, Boris Yeltsin received a group of 35 representatives of the repressed peoples of the Northern Caucasus, who explained to him that the legislation had to be adopted immediately, since their co-ethnics could not wait even another week (Zdravomyslov: 1998: 50). Many Russian democrats also supported the idea: at the time being pro- Rehabilitation Law was a sign of being pro- justice and anti-Imperialist. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia sent an appeal to the Supreme Soviet asking to adopt the law immediately, so did some famous religious leaders and intellectuals. Interestingly, by then armed clashes between the Ingushis and the Osetians had already been in place, exactly over the issue of property and land illegally expropriated from the Ingushis in 1944.

“Undoubtedly, one of the main motifs for deliberating on and adopting this Law was the intention of the Supreme Soviet of RF to declare some kind of act, which with clearly demonstrative purpose would go further than the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of USSR of November 14, 1989 “On declaring the illegality and criminal nature of the repressive acts against the peoples, who were subjected to forced resettlement, and on guaranteeing their rights” (Zdravomyslov: 1998:51) The Russian law "On repressed peoples", inspired by the ambition by all means to be “more democratic” than its Soviet counterpart and by the romantic aspiration to redress long-term evil by one decree, legitimized the Ingush demands to Prigorodny Rayon, drastically increased the feelings of insecurity with the Osetians and catalyzed the breakout of conflict between them.

The Georgian-Osetian Conflict and the Inflow of Refugees from South Osetia to Prigorodny Rayon

When the USSR was created, the Osetian people were divided between two Soviet Republics: South of Osetia became part of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, while North Osetia was part of the Russian SSR. This way the Bolshevik government achieved two goals at a time: satisfied Georgian claim on these territories and had a population group in Georgia, which was dependent and loyal to Moscow¹.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Osetians found themselves in two independent states. In 1989 the first armed clashes happened between South Osetians and Georgians, which by 1990 spilt into a full-blown ethnic war. Irredism and armed conflict with Georgians created a feeling of insecurity among the Osetians, who felt vulnerable in the surrounding of the increasingly hostile peoples. The usual support of the Kremlin was weakened. "The fact that the Russian troops had withdrawn from the /South Osetian – E.S. / region was regarded by the Osetians as a betrayal" (Nezavisimaya Gazeta: 29.04.92: page 3).

A huge inflow of refugees (according to different estimates, 80-100,000 people) from South Osetia and inner regions of Georgia intensified demographic tensions in the conditions of densely populated Prigorodny Rayon. Prigorodny district became a buffer for streams of refugees from Georgia: tens of thousands settled in the *Rayon*. The refugees were not only an

economic and social burden, but had a potential for conflict behavior: the humiliation and trauma of war with the Georgians, unemployment and uncertainty of refugee existence made some South Osetian men easy victims of conflict entrepreneurs. "Over 80, 000 of refugees fled to North Osetia from Georgia. This is a dangerously flammable force, which can be used by the opponents of peaceful settlement of the conflict", wrote *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in April 1992 (*Nazavisimaya Gazeta*: 3.04. 1992). South Osetian fighters will play a prominent role in the war with Ingushis.

Privatization of Law Enforcement Function & Emergence of Free Market of Arms

"It is necessary to reduce the arrogance of the local leaders, who feel capable to resolve any problem, supported by weapons of their *spetsnaz*", - warned Valeriy Tishkov, the chairman of State Nationality Committee, before his voluntarily resignation in the summer of 1992. According to the eye-witnesses of the conflict, whom I interviewed for the purposes of this study, by late 1992 the general situation of lawlessness reached the point when the effectiveness of state militia and other law enforcement agencies became almost nil. Militia was unable to prevent or investigate cases of crossfire, abduction of vehicles and arms.

A free market of arms emerged in the Caucasus, and most interviewees said they could buy almost every kind of weapon or ammunition in the markets of Grozny and Nazran: "Those days every *vainakh* had a gun in his backyard", admitted some of them.

"These are no problems with guns here", said the president of Confederation of Mountainous Peoples of Caucasus, when he described the situation in the Caucasus in September 1992: "In Osetia was created a national guard, Ingushetia is fully armed...If someone wants to impose a big battle on us, they should tremble" (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: 2. 09.92). "...In Osetia were created legal security structures, such as national civil defense forces and national guard, which were involved in among other activities, purchase of weapons in Russia and in other places where they could be acquired from". The paralyzed state of law enforcement agencies and general anti-statist mood of the time, made the idea of self-defense popular, "especially since this was in line with the revival of the ancient Caucasian traditions...in the framework of which carrying guns and being able to use them was considered a norm of everyday life." (*Zdravomyslov*: 1998: 59)

The combination of the above analyzed factors intensified Ingush-Osetian tension to conflict.

3. From Conflict to War. Moscow Sides with the Osetians

The break-up of large-scale violence was preceded by several armed clashes.

- In April 1991 in the village Kurtat, Ingush citizen *Kotikov* quarreled with the Osetian *Dzotov*. The house, where Dzotov lived before 1944 had belonged to Kotikov family. The quarrel provoked a large scale armed clash. The Supreme Soviet of North Osetia introduced the state of emergency. Both sides reinforced their demands, the civilian guards were formed spontaneously in Osetian and Ingush villages, APC were being purchased through agricultural firms and documented as agricultural vehicles.

- October 20, 1992 an Ingush school girl, *Madina Gadaborsheva*, was smashed dead by Osetian APC in the village of Oktyabr'skoje.
- October 22, 1992 Osetian traffic policemen shot dead two Ingushis in the village of Yuzhny, near Vladikavkaz.
- October 24, a mourning protest demonstration of the Ingush residents of Prigorodny District declared the sovereignty of Prigorodny Rayon and its unification with the Republic Ingushetia. In Nazran, a united session of representatives of Ingush regions was called, which adopted a confrontational statement, condemning the "crimes committed by North Osetia against the Ingush people", called on Moscow "to bring to justice the leadership of North Osetia, who carry out genocide of the Ingush people, to stop the slander on the Ingush people in the Russian media" (in *Zdravomyslov*: 1998: 61). Security groups were established to protect the Ingush population in Prigorodny rayon.

The full-scale armed conflict broke out at night of October 31.

At night of *October 30/31* - irregular shooting started in the areas of villages *Oktyabrskoje* and *Kambileevskoje*. One Osetian militiaman was killed, in response another Osetian militiaman subjected to fire a civilian car passing by, as a result one Ingush militiaman was killed, and another was wounded. The news circulated fast and in a few hours hundreds of Ingush men headed to Prigorodny District to help defend their co-ethnics.

At 6: 30 a.m. the so-called Chermensky checkpoint at "the border" of Ingushetia and Osetia was captured by the Ingushis. 4 militiamen and 11 military servicemen became the first hostages. Several APCs were disarmed by Ingush fighters under the threat of killing the hostages. According to some sources, over a hundred hostage military servicemen were delivered to the local culture club in Nazran. In the morning Ingush fighters started to take hostage the Osetian civilians.

At 9:30 the Ingush fighters successfully stormed the militia station in Chermen. The head of local militia was killed and his body was subjected to torts and abuse. Ingushis moved further in the direction of Vladikavkaz. However, they were stopped at the outskirts of Chermen by the Osetian fighters. According to the official sources (a report by nationality minister Sergey Shakhraj), the same night there were fights in the villages *Dachnoje, Kurtat, Kambileevskoje, Dongaron, Komgaron, Chernorechenskoje, Terk, Redant, Yuzhnoje*. Both sides used machine guns, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft guns, sniper's rifles. Ingushis used specially equipped Kamaz lorry trucks.

(I am currently carrying out a village-to village check-up of the data provided in this official report. It seems that the scale of the actual fighting was slightly exaggerated. Thus, both Osetian and Ingush residents of villages Dongaron and Kurtat asserted that there were no fights in their settlements, since their elders managed to prevent violence).

In the morning on the 31st the Osetian population of Prigorodny district gathered in front of the administrative buildings and demanded weapons for self-defense. Weapons were captured and distributed; groups of armed men were sent to all villages of mixed settlement for protection of the Osetian population. Allegedly, federal forces distributed arms to Ingushis in Nazran. At the same time Ingush residents of Vladikavkaz were taken hostages by the Osetians.

In the afternoon the governmental delegation arrived from Moscow, represented by deputy prime-minister G.Khizha, chair of State Emergency Committee Shojgu and his deputy, and the commander of ministry of interior troops general-colonel Savvin.

November 1

The official position of Moscow delegation was verbalized by General-Colonel Filatov on the Osetian TV:

"Today at 12: 45 arrived the first plane with airborne troops, equipment and ammunition, which will be located on the territory of Osetia. Russia has not forgotten its faithful sons, the Osetians, who served it with faith and honesty for many year. Already today... the airborne troops together with interior forces of RF and Interior forces of North Osetia will start military action against the aggressors...and every hour this resistance and pressure on the aggressors will grow...I want to warn all the rest, who find themselves in the zone of military action.. I think it will not take us long to cleanse here all those who wants or disrupts the peaceful labor of Osetia...I want to warn them that they should leave this territory and not disturb those peoples, who live here, on this territory, and who have lived here before in peace and agreement for long years..." (Quoted in Zdravomyslov: 1998: 65)

November 2

The state of Emergency was introduced in Prigorodny district. Several regiments of the Russian troops were brought to the region, with the mission to draw apart the warring parties.

November 3-6

The federal troops and the Osetian interior forces pushed the Ingush combatants from Prigorodny Rayon. Together with them 40-60, 000 Ingush civilians were forced to leave Prigorodny district of North Osetia and its capital Vladikavkaz.

The more detailed subsequence of the events will be resorted at a later point in the fellowship. However, now it should be stated that during the "peacemaking operation" over 3, 000 (mostly Ingush houses) had been destroyed. A new technique was invented: houses were filled with gas and shot at from machine guns. As a result, the house would be torn to pieces. Especially violent was a South Osetian military unit, headed by field-commander Teziev, which arrived from South Osetia. Lots of Ingush houses were destroyed by members of this armed formation, with furniture and all the valuables taken and driven away from the house before it was blown up.

Both sides took hostages, and committed atrocities during October 31-November 6. Both sides killed hostages and abused corpses. Ingush and Osetian interviewees had horror stories to tell from those days. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, 583 persons were killed in the conflict, 939 injured, 261 went missing, 1, 093 taken hostages. The casualties among military servicemen, involved in separation of the warring parties and ensuring security the following months amounted to 66 killed and 130 injured.

Interestingly, as has been noted by many observers, on November 2-6 the troops were not in a big hurry to fulfill their task, it took them several days to stop fighting in the small area of Prigorodny Rayon. «...probably, the thing was that the certain circles in the Russian army were waiting for Dudaev to stand by the Ingushis and thus be involved in the conflict. This would have been a great opportunity to move the military campaign in the direction of Chechnya and finish off the self-declared independence of Dudaev regime". Indeed, having sketched through the developments in Prigorodny District it remains unclear, why did the Russian Federal Army side with the Osetians, if just 7 months ago the Russian leadership passed legislation, supportive of the Ingush cause? Why were they unable to rise above the conflict and take a neutral position in the ethnic struggle?

In the period of April 1991 to November 1992 the political situation in the country changed. When the law on "Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples" was adopted, Boris Yeltsin was still in the middle of his confrontation with Gorbachev; his own presidency was under question. The major thing on his agenda at that time was to garner support for his presidential elections scheduled on June 12, 1991. And indeed, B. Yeltsin got the highest voters' support from the repressed peoples of the Northern Caucasus. In November 1992 he was already a confirmed head of the Russian Federation, Gorbachev's political positions were weakened, and the Russian leadership was confronted with the new tasks, such as *inter alia* to preserve state integrity. Yeltsin remembered the Russian's traditional allies in the turbulent Caucasian region.

However, most importantly, since the centrifugal tendencies of the USSR were repeated in Russia, the *de facto* independent separatist regime, which was established in Groznyy under General Dudaev, troubled the new Russian government. Many experts believe that being aware of the close ethnic ties between Ingushis and Chechens; the federal government expected that General Dudaev would come to help Ingushis, which would be a good pretext for Moscow to declare war on Chechnya. However, both Chechen and Ingush leadership realized the trap and agreed that Chechnya should abstain from interference. In November 1992 the federal regiments made maneuvers in the proximity of Chechen borders. General Dudaev reacted by announcing mass mobilization of all men. Only enormous efforts of human rights defenders and groups of dovish politicians prevented the war at that point.

II. Forced Migrants: The Return to North Osetia 1994-2004

1. Return of Ingush IDPs: Determining Factors

Returning IDPs is a difficult process, dependent on a whole series of complex factors. It has been likened to a game of chess in which many moves have to be planned in advance. One move is to decide how many Ingushis have the right to state assistance on their return. Ingush and Osetian sides still cannot reach consensus on this point. Second, before return can be effected, compensation for lost housing has to be paid. Third, there is still a high degree of hostility between the peoples, for whom the experience of ethnic war just over a decade ago is still fresh. On top of it as many as 26,000 South Osetian refugees (some estimates put this figure at 7,500) still remain in Prigorodny District where many of them are occupying houses and flats which were previously Ingushi-owned.

Disagreement over statistics

According to various estimates, 30 - 60,000 Ingushis were forced to leave their houses and look for refuge in Ingushetia as a result of armed conflict in Prigorodny District of North Osetia and in Vladikavkaz. In 1992-1993 Migration service of Ingushetia asserted that 61,000 Ingushis fled Republic North Osetia – Alania (RSO-A). On November 10, 1992 Galazov, the Chair of North Osetian Supreme Soviet, verbalized the figure of 32,782 IDPs.

The number of Ingushis forced out of their houses as a result of armed conflict in Prigorodny District (North Osetia) and in Vladikavkaz ranges from 30,000 to a figure twice that amount. The higher figures were supported by the Migration service of Ingushetia which asserted that 61,000 Ingushis had fled Republic North Osetia – Alania (RSO-A) in 1992-93, while on November 10 1992 Galazov, the Chair of the North Osetian Supreme Soviet, put the figure at 32,782.

What the figures do not indicate is that before 1992 a high proportion of the Ingush population living on the territory of North Osetia did so without registration. Registration was limited and the republican authorities operated a policy of restraint. When households expanded, the new houses would not be added to the register. Many Ingush men in any case spent several months a year working in brigades in other parts of the Soviet Union (either central Russia or Central Asia), often in the construction industry. Up to 10,000 Ingushis could have been in this category of “unregistered” citizens. These people, when they fled their homes, were unable subsequently to prove their residence or ownership of property in the Republic of North Osetia-Alania (RNO-A).

As I was explained in the Office of the Special Representative, in 1993-1995 was carried out a campaign for collecting applications from Ingush families, who intended to return to RNO-A. The number of applicants amounted to 45,000 persons. After verification of signatures, elimination of repetitions and errors, 40,953 persons remained on the list. Further was done a thorough work of confirming the fact of residence for each family on the basis of address databases of Ministry of Internal Affairs, agencies of local self-government and republican executive authorities.

From above described check up the Office of the Special Representative derived the figure - 31.224 persons and 5.515 families. These citizens were acknowledged eligible for receiving state assistance in their return to RNO-A.

State Assistance to Forced Migrants

Forced migrants, who have been acknowledged eligible for state assistance in their return to Prigorodny District of RNO-A, are provided with the following assistance:

1. Transport for moving the property and family members from the place of temporary residence;
2. Temporary residence facilities (caravans, value 80,000 rubles)
3. Transport for bringing the evaluation commission to perform measurements and evaluation of the destroyed housing at the site;
4. Financial aid for construction, restoration or purchasing new housing;
5. Free legal counseling for IDPs; defending their interests in courts.

The size of financial assistance allocated by the state for construction, restoration and purchasing of housing, depends on the size and the value of lost property, market price per square meter of living space and of necessary construction materials, and the number of family members. The compensation is paid in three installments and is indexed in accordance with inflation indicators. Counter to the usually practiced in the Russian Federation allocation of fixed sums in compensation for lost property, the size of financial assistance to IDPs from the area of Ingush-Osetian conflict is theoretically unlimited. According the Office of the Special Representative, several of families the Office have opened bank accounts and will receive compensations, exceeding 1 million rubles each.

Unfortunately, such IDP friendly scheme of determining the size of compensation, contributes to the failure of factual implementation of the aid program. The Federal budget line for Prigorodny District is fixed and amounts to 200,000 rubles per year. Growing prices and large size of compensations result in the situation when annual budgetary allocations appear insufficient. According to the Office of Special Representative, in 2003 the indebtedness for already opened accounts exceeded 600,000 rubles. Delays in payment of compensations for lost property are the main hindrance for return of Ingush IDPs to the so-called “unproblematic” settlements.

“Moral-Psychological climate” and “Problematic” settlements

In spite of the general reduction of tensions in the area as a whole, there remain “problematic” settlements where Ingush forced migrants cannot return. According to the authorities of RNO-A, the “moral-psychological climate” for the return of Ingushis is not “ripe”. Problematic villages of Prigorodny district are: *Trek*, *Chernorechenskoje*, *Oktyabr’skoye*, *Ir*, (partly) *Yuzhny*, (partly) *Chermen* (the middle part of the village), (partly) *Tarskoje*, right side of the village, (partly) *Kambileevskaia*, (three streets).

Vladikavkaz remains a closed city; the return is very slow, although according to the Office of the Special Representative, by the end of 2003, 113 flats in Vladikavkaz were returned to their previous owners of Ingush nationality. Some families restored their right of property ownership in *Oktyabrskoje*, however, according to the information at my disposal, they do not reside in their apartments, but rent them out to tenants.

Problematic villages include the settlements of the so-called “*water-protection area*”. According to Statute №186 Government of RNC-A of July 25, 1996, 5 villages (*Terk*, *Chernorechenskoje*, *Yuzhny*, *Balta and Redant*) belong to the so called “zone of sanitary protection of sources of drinking water supply”. Households in this area are to be destroyed and their residents - resettled. 80% of the housing aimed for destruction belongs to Ingushis.

According to the State Committee for Refugees and Forced Migrants of Republic Ingushetia (further referred to as State Committee) before 1992 in the villages of the so-called water protection area resided:

Terk 1,582 persons
Chernorechenskoje 1,784 persons
Yuzhny 2,600 persons
Balta 702 persons

Redant (including Popov-khutor) 1,373 persons
Presently, all the residents of the above mentioned villages are IDPs.

2. Dynamic Of Return: 1992-2003

Officially the return of Ingushis to Republic North Osetia-A started in 1994. Presently, Ingush IDPs return to 13 out of 29 villages of their previous settlement in Prigorodny district. After the conflict Ingush families expressed an intention to come back only to 16 villages. IDPs are cautious to return to villages, where Ingush population is not numerous or dispersed.

According to the Office of Special Representative, as of January 1, 2004 state assistance in return was provided to 3942 families of Ingush IDP, amounting to 21,560 persons. These IDPs were considered returned to their places of permanent residence in RNO-A.

Table 1. Total number of Ingush IDPs, considered returned to RNO-A (breakdown for settlements)

Settlement	Number of Ingush IDPs considered returned to RNO-A since August 1994
Vladikavkaz	450
Kartsa	5,904
Chermen	5,334
Dachnoje	3,286
Kurtat	2,811
Dongaron	433
Kambileevskoje	263
Oktyabr'skoje	57*
Tarskoje	2,111
Balta	326
Redant	260
Chmi	76
Ezmi	27
Ir	10

* returned to Oktyabr'skoje, Mira *street*, which was later, transferred to the administrative and territorial jurisdiction of village Kartsa.

Thus according to the Office of the Special Representative, the state has already offered assistance to 80% of citizens whose registration or fact of residence in RNO-A before the conflict has been officially confirmed.

These data differs significantly from the data provided by of State Committee of Republic Ingushetia (hereinafter State Committee of RI). According to the figures made available by the State Committee of RI, as of January 1, 2003 in 11 988 persons returned to Prigorodny district of RSO-A.

This difference in figures is explained by the fact that the Office of Special Representative considers returned all IDPs, who have received state assistance for return, either via opening bank accounts and money transfers or by providing alternative temporary shelter. Their *de facto* return is not taken into consideration. The State Committee of RI considers returned only those citizens who *de facto* live on the territory of Prigorodny District. However, it is difficult to work out a reliable mechanism for registering civilians who actually reside in the area. Therefore, usually the figures provided by the Office of Special Representative are regarded official.

Table 2. Dynamic of Ingush IDPs return to RNO-A in 1994-2003. Source: Office of Special Representative of The President of RF on the issues of regulating Ingush-Osetian conflict.

Settlement	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Vladikavkaz	0	0	0	0	18	210	136	47	19	20
Kartsa	0	2,108	1,492	285	326	566	443	422	139	123
Chermen	549	3,450	440	27	231	231	290	38	50	28
Dachnoje	266	417	733	392	531	282	403	93	124	45
Kurtat	403	26	183	94	190	516	500	388	354	157
Dongaron	37	79	161	29	22	43	5	57	0	0
Kambileevskoj e	0	0	0	0	7	28	132	25	64	7
Oktyabr'skoje			52						5	
Tarskoje	0	0	438	30	47	178	348	679	376	15
Balta	0	0	0	0	102	138	29	29	28	0
Redant	0	0	0	0	28	170	0	17	42	3
Chmi	0	0	0	0	37	32	7	0	0	0
Ezmi	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	0	0	0
Ir	0	0	0	0						10

Table 3. Dynamic of return of Ingush IDPs to RNO-A for 2000-2003. Source: State Committee for Refugees and Forced Migrants of Republic Ingushetia

Settlement	2000	2001	2002	2003
Vladikavkaz	0	14	6	19
Kartsa	557	490	175	2,706
Chermen	259	259	180	4,442
Dachnoje	492	328	164	1,681
Kurtat	519	529	215	960
Dongaron	51	74	24	140
Kambileevskoj e	106	70	34	128
Oktyabrskoje	0	0	0	0
Tarskoje	664	321	41	386
Balta	45	24	8	159
Redant	7	16	3	16
Chmi	10	0	21	53
Ir	0	0	0	0
Yuzhny	0	0	0	0
Terk	0	0	0	0

From table 1 one can see that in the last years the dynamic of return to Prigorodny district has reduced compared to the previous years. A. Kulakovsky, the Special Representative of the President of RF for the issues of regulating Ingush-Osetian conflict claims that “this is explained by the fact that the base of IDPs returning to “unproblematic” settlements is almost exhausted, virtually everyone who wanted to return there have already returned.

A. Dzadziev, the leading expert of North Osetian Institute for Humanities and Social Research, Vladikavkaz Scientific Center of Russian Academy of Sciences, the reasons for this decreases in the fact that “there have not been created preconditions and possibilities for the return of Ingushis to a number of settlements with tense moral-psychological situation. In the consciousness of many Osetians, living in the zone of liquidating the consequences of Osetian-Ingush conflict, there continues to dominate the thesis of impossibility of mutual coexistence of Osetians and Ingushis, verbalized at some point (but later withdrawn) by the leadership of the Republic and the All-Osetian public-political movement “Alanty-Nykhas””

Forced Migrants from Prigorodny District in Republic Ingushetia and Republic North Osetia-Alania

According to different sources, as of the end of 2003 on the territory of Ingushetia and in other regions remain 14-20,000 Ingush IDPs from North Osetia. Mostly these are the residents of the so-called “problematic settlements”, falling into the water-protection zone or

from Vladikavkaz. IDPs reside in private sector and in barracks in RI or in the IDP town “Majskij”, located on the territory of RNO-A at the border with Ingushetia.

This category of citizens receive no assistance from the state or humanitarian organizations. The living conditions of IDPs in half-destroyed caravans (village Majskij) or barracks (Republic Ingushetia) do not meet the minimal standards of human shelter. In Majskij the emergency conditions of temporary shelter create a serious threat to the health of IDPs: in the winter frequent and prolonged electricity cut offs in unheated buildings lead to chronic illnesses; virtually 100% unemployment among IDPs coupled with lack of humanitarian aid lead to a growing number of emaciation among children. Many children do not attend schools because they have no warm cloths.

¹ The Osetians quickly accepted the Bolshevik ideology, the Georgians were more reluctant to accept Soviet power.