

Islam and Tolerance

in Wider Europe



Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe

Edited by Pamela Kilpadi

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p a r t t w o

Ethnic Relations in the Caucasus

'Reliable' and 'Unreliable' Peoples

The Ingush-Ossetian Conflict and
Prospects for Post-Beslan Reconciliation

Ekaterina Sokirianskaia

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'Reliable' and 'Unreliable' Peoples: The Ingush–Ossetian Conflict and Prospects for Post-Beslan Reconciliation

Ekaterina Sokirianskaia

The only armed ethnic conflict in post-communist Russia, the Ingush–Ossetian conflict over the status of Prigorodny District of North Ossetia was a small-scale regional war that lasted for seven days from October 31 through November 6, 1992, and caused the dislocation of some 30–60,000 people. The conflict received virtually no coverage in the media in 1992 and was quickly forgotten. For the past 14 years, tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from North Ossetia struggling for their survival in substandard conditions in Ingushetia, with no aid from the Russian state, have gone virtually unnoticed by the international humanitarian and development organizations that arrived in the region two years later to assist IDPs from Chechnya.

My policy research project as an International Policy Fellow was designed as an 'early warning report' about the dangerous consequences of protracted displacement caused by conflict. Before I had the chance to publicize my 'warning,' the tragic hostage-taking in the North Ossetian town of Beslan suddenly woke the entire world to the realities of the Ingush–Ossetian conflict. Answers to many of the questions addressed by this policy study are central to a deeper understanding not only of the Ingush–Ossetian conflict, but also a more nuanced policy perspective vis-à-vis Muslim–Christian relations in Russia and interethnic tolerance in the era of the 'war on terror.'

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September 1, 2004, Beslan

On the morning of September 1, 2004 at School No.1 in the town of Beslan in the Russian republic of North Ossetia, the parade to celebrate Learning Day was due to take place at 10 a.m. Students and their families gathered in the yard to await the start of the ceremony. The children had come to school in their ceremonial uniform, with flowers and balloons, everyone was in a festive mood, so when armed masked men burst into the schoolyard many at first thought that it was a prize draw, and assumed the shooting was the sound of bursting balloons. When it became clear within a few minutes that this was no joke, the parents and children attempted to flee. Some managed to escape, but the majority were herded into the school.

The terrorists spread the hostages throughout the school building. The bulk of the children and their parents were in the gym. So many people were herded inside that everyone had to sit on the wooden floor with their legs drawn in. It was not possible to lie down or move around the hall.

During the first 24 hours the hostages were allowed to drink. Household buckets for washing the floor were filled with water from the tap and enamel mugs were used to allow the children to drink. Visits to the toilet were made in groups of several people. On the second and third days, water was not allowed. According to several of those I questioned, some children urinated on their clothes and suck the urine. One of the hostages related that he ate the leaves of a houseplant which happened to be nearby.

Meanwhile the relatives of the hostages gathered in groups of up to about 15 people on the square by the town's Palace of Culture, approximately 300 meters from School No.1. It was here that the television cameras had been set up to broadcast reports on the developing situation to Russian and foreign television channels. Many relatives made the journey from distant villages to lend support. When I arrived a few hours after the hostage-taking, I heard the crowd discussing information in the media—that the terrorists who captured the school were from 'the Ingush Dzamaat'. How it was possible to know at that point that the hostage-takers were from an ethnic Ingush group remains

unclear. And while the media claimed that the terrorists had expressed no demands, many in the crowd outside the school assumed that the demands concerned the release of Ingush prisoners held in the town of Vladikavkaz.

On September 2, former President of Ingushetia Ruslan Aushev arrived at the school. From among the three presidents invited by the terrorists into the school for negotiations, Aushev was the only one who dared to enter. The incumbent presidents of Ingushetia and North Ossetia—Murat Zyazikov and Alexander Dzasokhov—abstained from visiting the school, as did Doctor Roshal, who cared for hostages during the Moscow Theater Terror in 2002.

Aushev quickly crossed the gym and entered the negotiation room. He said briefly to the hostages, “Don’t worry, we’ll soon get you all out.” The terrorists had gathered women with children of breast-feeding age into a separate room before Aushev’s visit, and he was allowed to escort them out. After Aushev left the school, lists with the names of the 26 released hostages were read out. Relatives whose small children were not on the list burst into tears, and some women became hysterical. Soon the crowd began discussing why Aushev was not killed by the terrorists—a fact that, in the opinion of some, confirmed their guess that he was somehow linked to the hostage-takers and that the school had been seized by the Ingush.

According to the hostages who escaped, the gym was mined around its entire edge. Explosive devices were attached to wires slung across the entire length of the hall from one basketball hoop to the other. On September 3 some of these devices exploded at the very beginning of the violent and chaotic events that led to the deaths of over 330 people, 170 of them—children. What caused this, and whether the devices actually exploded before or after the start of the storming of the school, remains unclear.

Several days after the tragic events, Ruslan Aushev explained to journalists that the terrorists had asked him to deliver their demands to the President of Russia. They were written on a piece of paper torn out from a school notebook.

Across the folded note was written: “To His Excellency President Putin, from Shamil Basayev, Slave of Allah.” The demands were to 1) withdraw troops from Chechnya, with the Chechen Republic remaining part of the Commonwealth of Independent States and within the ruble zone, and 2) ensure that peacemaking troops from the international community are brought into Chechnya. The hostages were to be released after Putin’s decree satisfying these demands was announced by federal television channels. Aushev said that he passed the note over to the head of the North Ossetian security services. He was sure that the demands “reached the federal center.”

Obviously, the horrendous crime in Beslan was linked with the decade-long atrocious war in Chechnya and had nothing to do with the Ingush–Ossetian territorial dispute over the status of Prigorodny District.

Answers to many of these questions are central to a deeper understanding of Muslim-Christian relations in Russia, and more generally interethnic tolerance in the era of the ‘war on terror.’



After the tragedy in the Northern Ossetian town of Beslan, the local authorities and media deliberately attempted to divert the anger and grief of the people away from the state's failed policies and toward 'unreliable' ethnic groups ■ Ekaterina Sokirianskaia

Post-Beslan anti-Ingush harassment and violence

Despite the fact that the demands of the terrorists had nothing to do with Ingush territorial claims in the area and, moreover, the group of hostage-takers were not Ingush, but consisted of Chechens, Ingush, Ossetians, and 'individuals of Slavic nationality,' the Beslan events sparked an unprecedented rise in ethnic tensions in the Prigorodny District of North Ossetia. The leading federal and republican printed press, including *Izvestiya*, *North Ossetia*, *Socialist Ossetia*, and *Expert*, published interviews with political scientists and other specialists who implicitly or explicitly linked Beslan with the October–November 1992 Ingush–Ossetian conflict in the district. The authorities did not try to disqualify these myths but instead, during the days immediately following the tragedy, supported groundless links between Beslan and the Ingush–Ossetian conflict of 12 years earlier.

Such speculations had deep resonance in the region, bringing Ingush–Ossetian relations to their lowest point in a decade. The grief and anger of the Ossetian population was successfully re-directed from the federal center and its failed policy in Chechnya towards the neighboring ethnic group. To make matters worse, some well-intentioned Russian non-governmental leaders tried to act as mediators and contacted Ingush public figures and officials urging them to go to Ossetia and apologize for Beslan. Now Ossetians want apologies from the Ingush. On September 4 and 5 all Ingush and Chechen students were asked to withdraw from their programs in North Ossetia and were transferred to other regional universities. Ingush patients were moved from local hospitals. Even women and sick children seeking urgent hospital treatment were harassed by anti-Ingush groups of citizens. In the months between summer 2005 April 2006, nine cases of enforced disappearances of Ingush civilians took place in Prigorodny District. One of the disappeared has been found dead with marks of severe beatings and torture. None of the crimes has been investigated and no one has been arrested or charged with crimes against representatives of the Ingush minority in North Ossetia.

At the same time, the Ingush reaction to the Beslan tragedy received no coverage in the press. The fact that the Ingush government had promptly expressed condolences to the Ossetian people and planned to attend the burial ceremonies (to which they were denied access), that Ingush children had collected money (two million rubles) and toys for the children of Beslan (the convoy with humanitarian aid was stopped at the administrative border and returned back to Ingushetia), the employees of ministries of education and culture allocated their daily salaries to the victims of Beslan, and the elite troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Ingushetia had offered their assistance to Ossetian law

enforcement during the hostage-taking crisis remains unknown to the Ossetian public. I was in Ingushetia on the evening of the September 3 and I know that the reaction of the Ingush was identical to that of people everywhere in the world—shock, anger and grief.

‘Unreliable peoples’ of the Empire

The Beslan tragedy and its aftermath vividly illustrates how easy it is to manipulate the popular notion of collective guilt in the North Caucasus, which in its turn can fuel hatred, violence, and even ethnic cleansing. Combined with the notion of family responsibility and the strictly regulated institution of blood feud still practiced in Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Chechnya—whereby the relatives of a murder victim are allowed to kill the murderer or, if the murderer is dead, a member of his nuclear family—the manipulation of collective guilt can be especially deadly.

Why did Ossetians so easily ascribe collective guilt for Beslan to the Ingush?

While conceding modernist scholarly views tracing the roots of Ingush–Ossetian tensions to the post-Second World War period and namely Stalin’s deportation of the Ingush to Central Asia in 1944¹ and annexation of the disputed Prigorodny region to North Ossetia, pre-Stalinist experiences within the context of Russian colonization created stable patterns of relations between Orthodox Christian Ossetians and Muslim Ingush in the Imperial and later Soviet states. Although 18–19th century colonialism did not spur modern Ingush–Ossetian conflict, it did sow the seeds of future animosities by encouraging new patterns of interaction, and promoting the dichotomy of ‘reliable’ vs. ‘unreliable’ peoples, which seem to continue playing a prominent role in relations between Russia’s federal center and its national peripheries today.

Non-neutral policies of the Empire toward Orthodox versus other peoples during colonial state-building and various mechanisms utilized by communities and ‘societies’² in response to their integration into the Imperial state profoundly impacted their mutual relations. Colonial perceptions within the context of Russian state-building have been a significant factor in the self-identification and historical construction of the modern Ingush–Ossetian conflict.

The Ingush and Ossetian peoples enjoyed equal footing within the Empire in the early years of colonialism. Many North Caucasian lowland and mountainous societies sought political alliances and protectionism from Russia, especially against the powerful *kabardines*, who at the time controlled most of the fertile lands on the plain (Gakaev: 1999:10; Kodzoev: 2002:153; Tsutsiev: 1998: 20–22). Some societies concluded agreements with Moscow, whereby they offered political and military support to the Russian Empire and its allies, while Russia ensured political endorsement and guaranteed no damage or interference from its side. But by the end of 19th century, after the half-century-long Caucasian War and a major ‘pacification’ campaign organized by the colonial administrations following the war, the Ingush had been convincingly branded as ‘unreliable’ people, while the Ossetians were considered to be ‘Russia’s allies in the Caucasus.’ The tempests and turbulence of the Great Empire were mirrored in the relations of Ingush and Ossetian societies, with the modern Ingush–Ossetian conflict the culmination of inconsistent, non-neutral state policy that tended to treat Muslim

peoples (including the Ingush) unequally when compared to their Christian neighbors (including Ossetians).

The geopolitical role of religion within the context of Imperial state-building was very conspicuous. Russian state-building was closely linked to Orthodoxy, according to Ossetian ethnographer Tsutsiev, “Orthodoxy in the processes of Russian colonization of the Caucasus was virtually equal to Russian citizenship, becoming a citizen was equal to conversion to Orthodoxy. The confessional identification of non-Russian peoples was a clear criteria of their inter-Imperial stratification. Christian peoples were more reliable... and received status benefits.” The Russian state was opposed to the spread of Islam, and some agreements openly stated that ‘the allied societies’ were obliged to adopt Orthodoxy and resist the spread of the Muslim religion.³

During the Caucasian War from 1817 to 1864, Ingush societies did not join the Chechens and Avars in the anti-colonial struggle led by the legendary Imam Shamil and preferred to maintain relations with the colonial administration. Shamil unsuccessfully attempted to convert the Ingush to Islam, as Ingush oral history recounts, “with his sword.” As the war persisted, however, Ingush societies became more supportive of the resistance and during the Nazran uprising of 1858,⁴ which involved the most bloodshed ever seen in Ingush anti-colonial history, the Ingush called on Shamil’s army for help. The Caucasian war resulted in the spread of Sufi Islam to Ingushetia and by 1850 most Ingush societies were Muslim. The famous Chechen prophet-philosopher Khunta Khadzi, who preached peace between peoples and argued against going to war with stronger enemies, was extremely influential among Ingush societies. Khunta Khadzi provided Ingush Muslims with a program of moral behavior under humiliating conditions of colonial subjugation:

“If they tell you to go to the church, do so: churches are only buildings and in our souls we are Muslims.

If they make you wear crosses, wear them, as they are only pieces of iron, and in your soul you remain Muslim.

But! If your women are used or abused, if you are forced to forget your language, culture and custom, rise and fight to death, till the last man!”

(in Kodzoev: 2002: 167)

Thus, the Islamization of the Ingush was an immediate reaction to colonial expansion and protracted war. Many Ingush like to emphasize that Imam Shamil was unable to convert them to Islam with his sword, while preacher Khunta Khadzi was successful with his word. This historical fact is central to Ingush self-identification as a peaceful people, who suffered unfair repressions from the state. The values preached by Khunta Khadzi strongly shaped the further development of the Ingush nation. As the war continued, however, many Ingush joined anti-colonial troops. Since then there would always be a more radical fringe of Ingush society who would support Chechens and other Caucasians in their guerilla wars against the Russian State.

Serious Ingush–Ossetian differences crystallized after the defeat of Shamil in the Caucasian War. In the late 1840s–1860s, the policy of ‘pacification’ implemented in the North Caucasus implied the creation of Cossack settlements inside and around indigenous settlements in strategically important areas, including the resettlement of entire communities (*stanitsy*) of Cossacks from other areas of Russia. Cossack interference into the life of the local community was uneven for ‘peaceful’ Ossetians and ‘unreliable’ Ingush. Four Cossack settlements⁵ emerged on the territory of the Ossetian societies, while Ossetian villages previously located on the sites of Cossack settlements were moved to the South and North of the Cossack line, to the fertile lowland. Thirteen Cossack settlements⁶ were built on the sites of Ingush villages, which encircled Ingushetia and blocked the main thoroughfares connecting the Ingush mountains with the plains. Ingush societies were squeezed out of their most fertile land, locked between the mountains and the Cossacks, and moved as far away as possible from the Military–Georgian Road. The entire central region of Ingushetia was forcefully resettled in 1859–1861 and replaced with Cossack settlements of 200 families each, occupying most of the best fertile land.

Although tensions between Muslim Ingush and Orthodox Christian Ossetians are rooted in Stalin’s repressions, pre-Stalinist experiences in the context of Russian colonization created stable patterns of relations.

Non-compliance in the integration process among Ingush was frequent, including military resistance to the regime. The most widespread forms of protest against colonial administration and the deprivation of land were the kinds of abductions and raids that were not uncommon in Caucasian economic practice of the time. Raids and abductions for ransom targeted the representatives of the invading ‘out-group’—primarily Russians and Cossacks but increasingly Ossetians, perceived as their allies—and were not considered to be a crime by the ‘in-group.’ Moreover, such activities were often the only way to get married or earn bread for the family among unemployed, landless young men. Within the framework of the colonial state, this traditional pattern of interaction between mountainous peoples acquired new meaning and resulted in an intense mutual negative stereotyping of the Ingush as ‘bandits’ and ‘hostile tribes’ and of the Ossetians to be ‘cowards’ and ‘servants of Russia.’ Clearly, the Ossetians saw only one side of the story—the abductions—without seeing the repressive policy of the state and economic deprivation of the Ingush. Meanwhile the Ingush, oblivious of the benefits that colonial state-building had brought to Ossetian societies, considered their behavior undignified for Caucasian men.

Integration into the Russian society was problematic for the Ingush, not only because they had rejected Orthodoxy and converted to Islam, but also because they chose to retain their traditional societies, termed ‘free societies’ by Russian historians. Free societies expelled feudal lords and retained decentralized egalitarian structures rooted in gerontocracy. Each community was governed by a Council of Elders which consisted of the heads of all families on the basis of customary law—*adat* and *sharia*. It was not possible to strike deals with the elites without the consent of the community elders. Ingush intellectuals were usually religious authorities, educated abroad and critical of the regime. No formal educational system existed in Ingushetia.

By contrast, the adoption of Orthodoxy in Ossetia paved the way for the system of Orthodox schooling, which significantly raised the level of literacy among Ossetians. Educational opportunities resulted in the emergence of strong pro-Russian national elite, opportunities for upward mobility in the army created a new stratum of Ossetian officers loyal to empire. Thus, the Ossetians were inclined to perceive themselves as the winners of colonial state-building, while the Ingush were the losers. The division between ‘reliable’ and ‘unreliable’ peoples was internalized by the respective communities—the Ossetians felt included into Imperial state- and identity-building as beneficiaries of the empire, while the Ingush experienced systemic exclusion. The perception of Ossetians as a ‘reliable people’ was based on two major factors: their relative compliance with the state, and their conversion to Orthodoxy. The perception of Ingush as ‘unreliable’ was likewise based on two factors: their kin relations to the Chechens (Imperial outcasts) and their adoption of Islam.

Not surprisingly, during the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Ingush and Ossetians took different sides. While Ossetians remained loyal to *the ancien regime*, especially among the military elite, the Ingush largely opposed the regime. Ossetian–Ingush relations had acquired a new dimension: ‘pro’ versus ‘contra’ ideology toward the incumbent regime ever since.

On February 23, 1944, all 85,000 Ingush were forced onto unheated cattle trains and deported to Central Asia due to their alleged “cooperation with the Nazis.” Over one-fourth perished on the way or subsequently died due to the inhuman conditions of Stalinist exile. The Prigorodny District, overwhelmingly inhabited by ethnic Ingush,

was transferred to North Ossetia, and some 25–35,000 Ossetians from North Ossetia and Georgia were resettled there on a ‘voluntary/enforced’ basis. This meant that each Ossetian district and collective farm (*kolkhoz*) was allocated a certain number of ‘volunteers’ resettled to the ‘new districts.’ Refusal to go could entail administrative repression, while settlers were entitled to certain benefits including ownership of the house and cattle herd after five years of work on the Ingush farms. This transfer of ownership resulted in the modern territorial dispute and, as a direct consequence, the Ingush–Ossetian conflict of 1992.



From tension to armed conflict

In 1957 when the ‘repressed peoples’ were allowed to return from exile and the Chechen–Ingush Republic was restored, the

Many of the 40–60,000 Ingush forced migrants who fled the 1992 armed conflict in the Prigorodny District still live in inhuman conditions. The roots of the armed conflict lie in the unresolved ownership disputes precipitated by the Stalinist deportation of the Ingush in 1944. Theories about Ingush involvement in the Beslan tragedy have never been officially dismissed by Russian authorities ■ Ekaterina Sokirianskaia

Prigorodny District nevertheless remained part of North Ossetia. Upon return, the Ingush found their houses occupied, their cemeteries destroyed, and new people working on their fields. Although the return of the Ingush to the area was actively discouraged by both Moscow and North Ossetian authorities, who created obstacles to Ingush local registration and employment, the Ingush were determined to return to what they considered to be the sacred land of their forefathers. When they returned to their villages they bought the houses that belonged to their families before deportation, and lived illegally (without registration) or bribed officials into registering them. Many integrated well, studied and worked in Vladikavkaz, and despite the tense relationship with Ossetians, the percentage of mixed marriages was rather high.

Nevertheless the “mark of citizens unreliable to the state was fully preserved with respect to the Ingush after [the return from exile] due to the ideological machine that produced daily stereotypes,” Tsutsiev states. A representative of Ingush nationality had problems entering higher educational establishments, the army, or civil service and encountered numerous other obstacles. The Ingush, particularly in North Ossetia, remained second-class citizens.

Importantly, following the deportation the authoritarian state prohibited open deliberation or research on issues of deportation, thereby preventing the rehabilitation of social trauma. In fact, the attitude toward the repressed peoples was one of ‘pardoned but not forgiven.’ A lack of public discussion resulted in the absence of self-reflection on behalf of Ossetian society about their role in the aftermath of deportation in light of the fact that the majority of representatives of other ethnic groups resettled in the houses of the repressed, including Dagestanis and Russians, decided to leave these houses or inexpensively sold them to their original owners. The majority of Ossetians did not return property expropriated from the Ingush. The official Ossetian history includes no mention of the Ingush deportation from the Prigorodny District and the resettlement of the Ossetians to this area in 1944. A newly published volume on the 20th century history of North Ossetia edited by the republic’s ex-president Alexander Dzasokhov simply skips this part of Ossetian history (Dzasokhov: 2003). A 2005 calendar published by the North Ossetian Ministry for Nationalities entitled “In Ossetia, as a Unified Family” mentions dozens of nationalities, including 610 Avars, 232 Poles, and 114 Turkmen while completely ignoring the second largest nationality—the 21,000 Ingush.

The outbreak of armed conflict in 1992 was brought on by a number of specific social and political conditions: 1) a weak state and systemic crisis of state governance, 2) a power struggle between the leadership of the former Soviet Union and the leadership of the Russian Federation, 3) the ‘nationalization’ of politics in the region, 4) the emergence of a free market for arms, and 5) the ‘privatization’ of law enforcement. Finally, lack of political will and weakness among forces that could counteract the worsening confrontation paved the way to large-scale violence.



Evidently, conflict ensued after a number of private territorial disputes escalated into a series of battles, and the Ossetian interior and Russian federal troops responded by crushing the ‘rebel’ forces. Russia’s Security Council, quoting a group assigned to investigate the events, estimates that 583 people were killed (including 407 Ingush, 105 Ossetians and 17 federal servicemen, with the remainder impossible to identify), over 650 injured (including 168 Ingush and 418 Ossetians), over 3,000 houses damaged, and some 8,000 people immediately affected by the violence. An estimated 30–60,000 people fled the conflict.

Not only did the Ossetian and Ingush press present the events very differently, but also independent reporters working in the area during the war. Over the last 14 years, deeply internalized myths about the conflict that spanned five days in October and November 1992 have snowballed. Truth committees have not been established.

The Russian state was opposed to the spread of Islam. Some agreements openly stated that the ‘allied societies’ were obliged to adopt Orthodoxy, which was virtually equal to citizenship in the process of Russian colonization in the Caucasus.

The Ossetian myth of Ingush collective guilt for ‘planned action,’ premeditated violence and ‘treacherous behavior’ has become a part of Ossetian popular consciousness and a strong argument against Ingush return. For example, a school principal I interviewed at one of the mixed education schools for Ingush and Ossetian children) in the Prigorodny District said: “Every morning after the first class I check the lists of children who are missing from school. If there are

no Ingush names on the list, we can relax and work in peace. But if Ingush children are missing we have to cancel classes and close the school, as this means something terrible will happen.” A school teacher from the village of Tarskoe said in an interview: “I went to school with the Ingush, I had many friends among them, and none of them warned me of what was going to happen! How can I live with them after that?!”

Interestingly, similar myths of collective guilt for ethnically charged violence and terrorist attacks have been repeatedly reproduced by both Ossetians and Russians (not to mention other majority populations around the world affected by violence perpetrated by ‘outsiders’). For example, the myth actively circulated in Russia that Moscow diaspora Chechens ‘knew’ about the Nord Ost Theater terror attack in Moscow in 2002 and stopped sending their children to school several days in advance. The popular myth that Ingush and Chechen students in Vladikavkaz did not show up for classes three days before the hostage-taking in Beslan also persists despite the fact that the academic year in Russia starts on September 1, the day the hostage-taking took place.

The social costs of protracted internal displacement

Most of the 30–60,000 forced migrants who fled North Ossetia in 1992 found refuge in the neighboring republics of Ingushetia and Chechnya. In Ingushetia spontaneous residence centers emerged accommodating IDPs from the Prigorodny District, while in Grozny—already home to many Ingush deportees unable to return to Prigorodny—

relatives hosted many Ingush forced migrants. Significant discrepancies in official numbers of Ingush IDPs—the Migration Service of Ingushetia counts 61,000, the Russian Federal Migration Service registered 49,048, and the Chair of the North Ossetian Supreme Soviet puts the figure at 32,782. Such discrepancies are explained by Ingush difficulties in registering their residence in North Ossetia (neither the new houses built or bought by Ingush, nor the families who lived in them, were included in the official register).

Concerned non-state actors and governments provide IDPs around the world with the food, water, and medical care necessary for their survival. In the early 1990s the United Nation's Administrative Coordination Committee developed a conceptual framework aimed to provide for the basic needs of IDPs while at the same time preventing dependency and a loss of working skills by the aid recipient population. Programs integrating relief aid with development, ensuring that IDPs are active participants rather than passive recipients have been widely implemented by international organizations including UNHCR, UNDP, ICRC, WHO, WFP, etc.

For a variety of reasons including the unwillingness of many governments to interfere in Russia's 'internal affairs,' in practice IDPs have spent 14 years in Ingushetia live in inhumane conditions and receive no international support and virtually no humanitarian or medical aid from the Russian state organizations. Although the IDPs reside on Russian territory, federal authorities have not assumed responsibility for those in Ingushetia, resigning them to frustrating years of substandard living conditions and immense poverty.

At the same time, quite impressive progress has been made in respect of return. Thousands of Ingush IDPs have returned to 13 villages of the Republic of North-Ossetia–Alania, which as of the 2002 census was home to 21,442 Ingush. Although the state strategy of reintegrating former combatants into law enforcement agencies is questionable at best, their putting under control has been successful and the physical security of Ingush in North Ossetia has significantly improving in the recent years, with a dramatic reduction in the number of hate crimes (68 in 1999, 19 in 2000, 19 in 2001, 9 in 2002, and 0 in 2003). Although a significant amount of IDP property is still illegally occupied, the Ossetian judiciary has played a major role in the restitution of property and has a record of passing ethnically neutral decisions in favor of IDPs. Basic infrastructure and medical and educational facilities have been restored and in some villages Ingush and Ossetian neighbors visit each other for funerals and weddings, just as they did 13 years ago.

According to the monitoring I regularly carried out in the villages of the Prigorodny District in 2003–2006, the most favorable psychological climate is in villages where Ingush have returned and the settlements are not fragmented into ethnic enclaves, but where Ingush and Ossetian families live on the same street.

Toward lasting peace and sustainable return: Evaluating the options

A number of obstacles continue to prevent a lasting resolution to the Ingush–Ossetian conflict. Throughout the 14 years since the events of October–November 1992, Russian federal authorities have not attempted to propose a *political solution* addressing the

underlying cause of the conflict—the territorial dispute. Instead, Russia’s policy for resolving the conflict has been to ‘liquidate the consequences,’ i.e. restore housing and infrastructure and allow IDPs to return while maintaining the political status quo in favor of the Ossetian side. The fact that this status quo was achieved with the assistance of the federal army makes the situation appear even more unfair in the eyes of the Ingush community.

Interestingly the Kremlin, so conscious of subordination, centralization, and state integrity (especially under President Putin), continues to treat the Ossetians and Ingush as two independent nations—one friendly to Russia and the other unfriendly. The division between ‘reliable’ and ‘unreliable’ people persists, and nationality policy within the state resembles international relations between allies and antagonists rather than relations between a federal center and its regions.

Moreover, Russian federal policy has failed to promote *good governance and interethnic policymaking* with Ingush political representation. The fact that Ingush returnees have no representation in state institutions has proven to be a serious obstacle to their reintegration. Their exclusion from policymaking has also undermined efforts to *combat discrimination* against returnees in North Ossetia at a time when the territory is overwhelmed with refugees and returnees from two conflicts (South Ossetian refugees from Georgia also remain poorly integrated) and has not seen any *economic solutions* for development and economic revival. Development projects aimed at reducing unemployment and creating conditions for mixed ethnicity work forces would provide strong incentives for reconciliation.

Last but not least, the official policy of media censorship as a way of banning nationalists from the public space has proven unsuccessful. Although it did exclude some hate speech from the mainstream press, hostile messages still made their way to the public. Most importantly, *control of the media* was left to nationalistic elites who failed to promote balanced analyses refuting stereotypes and myths.

The story of IDP return to Prigorodny has its successes and failures. Villages of mixed settlements, where Ingush have returned and live dispersed next to Ossetian neighbors have proven fine examples of post-conflict confidence building. Although some hostility and distrust do remain, relations are on the right track and moving toward sustainable reconciliation.

Dongaron: A Success Story

The village of Dongaron is a striking example of successful transformation from ethnic conflict to peaceful reconciliation. The process of Ingush return to Dongaron was completed in 2004.

**According to the monitoring
I regularly carried out, the best
success stories are in villages
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enclaves but where Ingush
and Ossetian families live on
the same street**

All 77 applications submitted for return or resettlement were accepted by the local administration, and 33 houses have been rebuilt. Plots of land are being allocated to Ingush returnees who require additional land. There are now 147 families in Dongaron in total, including North Ossetian, Russian, South Ossetian, and 33 Ingush. Refugees from South Ossetia and the inner regions of Georgia are accommodated in 34 flats converted from a former prison. The village has a school educating children from a mixture of ethnic backgrounds, a medical station, and a village club with new library.

Although complete reconciliation requires time, the ‘moral-psychological climate’ seems healthy. “We do not have any problems with our Ossetian neighbors, we visit each other for tea, and of course weddings and funerals. In recent years there have been no clashes between the youth, they communicate well, although they do not yet party together. In the evenings the Ossetian youngsters get together in the club, and we keep our young people at home to avoid clashes,” said Ingush Elder Poshev. The school principal Elisbar Arutunov said: “We have a healthy environment, although some nervousness is created by additional security measures and press.” Ingush and the Ossetians line up together for meeting with the local administration, they laugh and crack jokes together, and greet each other in a friendly way. The head of the administration Sozyr Bagalov explained that the main problem is unemployment. “I will tell you something: if you want peace, give us jobs. We do not need to put people around a table in front of each other. We need to put them in an industrial factory, and if they sit at a table, let it be a kitchen table during lunch break,” he said. “When someone is unemployed, they have too much time to think about grievances and the status of the Prigorodny District. Let him occupy his time thinking about how to better sell the autumn crops at the market in Vladikavkaz.”

Observations and interviews conducted in the ethnically mixed settlement of Kurtat revealed a similarly promising situation.

Tarskoje: A conflict-prone solution

The village of Tarskoje is an example of an unsuccessful post-conflict settlement. A policy of restraint split the village into two ethnic enclaves, de facto creating two separate villages with Ingush living on the right side and Ossetians of the left. Ingush and Ossetian children attend separate schools and there is virtually no communication between the communities. Both sides try not to cross the dividing borderline unless absolutely necessary, and the village administration, library, and club are located on the Ossetian side, restricting Ingush access. In 2004 Ossetian teenagers came to play football on the Ingush side, but the adults forbid the boys from playing together after several weeks. “We decided not to experiment. It will certainly end up badly,” said one teacher from the Ossetian school in an interview.

A tense atmosphere pervades the village. Immediately after visitors appear on the Ingush side, militiamen seem to spring from the soil like mushrooms. Driving through the Ossetian side, an unknown car with Islamic prayer beads hanging in the front window is monitored closely by the suspicious looks of the villagers. While attempting to conduct interviews with school teachers in Taskoje together with a foreign journalist, I myself



Before the tragedy in Beslan human rights groups tried to build bridges between children from Ingush and Ossetian schools. The Human Rights Center Memorial carried out small reconciliation projects, which brought Ingush and Ossetian children together in one classroom. After Beslan these projects were suspended ■ Ekaterina Sokirianskaia

was arrested in Tarkoje and held for three hours in a militia station. The militiamen then summoned two hand-picked teachers to the station, allowed them to talk to us for ten minutes, and escorted us out of the Prigorodny District with two military jeeps in front and behind. The interviews turned out to be interesting nonetheless. A literature teacher from an Ossetian school began the interview cheerfully: “The Ingush are not bandits or terrorists. Terrorists have no nationality,” but ended on a much less pacifist note: “All of us have guns in the backyard. We will sell our last cow to buy guns—they will never take us by surprise again.” Notably, during the October–November 1992 conflict there was no fighting in Tarskoje, and every Ingush family had already left by the time the Russian and Ossetian troops arrived.

Obviously, there is no lasting peace in Tarskoje. The sustainability of the return is doubtful. This is the situation in the majority of the settlements where Ingush returnees and Ossetian communities form ethnic pockets, such as Chermen, Kartsa, and Kambileevka.

Policy options: Restrict return and create enclaves, or encourage return to places of origin?

The tragedy of Beslan was a severe test for Ossetian-Ingush conflict resolution and Ingush return. An unfortunate consequence of the tragedy has been the decision by Russian authorities to ‘temporarily solve’ problems of Ingush security by restricting return and dividing Ossetian and Ingush communities into ethnic enclaves. The strategy of enclaves institutionalizes ethnic cleavages, perpetuates the conflict, and increases frustration among the Ingush, who interpret this ‘solution’ as a defeat—not only does it mean that they lose the Prigorodny District to which they are entitled according to Russia’s ‘Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples,’ but it also means that the ethnic cleansing perpetrated against them in 1992 with the support of the federal army has permanent consequences, ‘cleansing’ them out of the area for good. This new grievance will be another blow to the legitimacy of the federal center in the eyes of the Ingush, confirming their suspicions that they are still being treated as ‘unreliable peoples.’ In the unstable conditions of the North Caucasus, such grievances can fuel propaganda promoting acts of violence and terrorism.

Peace plan and recommendations

My findings point to the following strategies for government, national and international decision-makers seeking a durable resolution to the Ingush–Ossetian conflict:

To all parties concerned:

- 1) Acknowledge the importance of resolving the Ingush–Ossetian conflict, which remains a serious destabilizing factor for the entire North Caucasus region, threatens further armed clashes, and creates conditions for the radicalization of youth.
- 2) Initiate programs aimed at securing a durable peace which include the sustainable return of Ingush IDPs to the Prigorodny District.

To Russian federal policymakers:

- 1) Seek political solutions to resolve the Ingush–Ossetian conflict. A possible solution to the territorial dispute may include the following elements:
 - The Prigorodny District remains part of North Ossetia. Ossetia recognizes the special status of the district as an area of ‘consociational’ rule.
 - All Ingush IDPs return to the places of their original residence. Those who do not wish to return are provided with full compensation for their lost housing and land.
 - The ‘Law on the Rehabilitation of the Repressed Peoples’ includes addendum that prescribes a mechanism for the return or compensation of property lost as a result of Stalinist deportation. All Ingush who had property in Prigorodny district before the deportation are assisted in reclaiming it and returning to their historical homeland if they wish.
 - The Prigorodny District Council unites deputies from Ingush and Ossetian communities who proportionally represent their populations. The Council is granted the autonomy, authority, and budget from local taxes sufficient for its needs and elects the head of the district administration on a rotating basis from both Ingush and Ossetian representatives. The villages of mixed settlement create village councils.
 - Ingush are provided due representation in North Ossetian state institutions, including government, parliament, ministries and law enforcement.
 - Former combatants are restricted from occupying leadership posts in the local government.
 - Educational programs in the Ossetian media focus on the crimes against humanity committed by Stalinism and Stalin’s statues and portraits are banned from public spaces.
 - A unified federal agency for the resolution of the Ingush–Ossetian conflict is re-established with responsibility for monitoring the return and observance of concluded agreements.

- 2) Allow for an honest investigation of the tragedy of Beslan and strictly punish in accordance with the law those responsible.
- 3) Define the borders of the “water protection zone” as soon as possible on the basis of an expert, politically neutral opinion and either begin the process of return to this area or develop a compensation scheme for those houses situated in the water protection zone.
- 4) Speed up the resolution of the property dispute concerning illegally captured flats in the towns of Vladikavkaz, Oktyabrskoye, Yuzhny, and Ir.
- 5) End the practice of ethnically segregated education in Prigorodny District schools.
- 6) Prosecute cases related to the illegal treatment of Ingush prisoners in preliminary detainment in North Ossetia and end the practice of charging Ingush men with ‘terrorism’ and holding them in Vladikavkaz without legal representation.
- 7) Transfer the tax inspection authority for the Prigorodny District from Beslan back to the Prigorodny administrative center of Oktyabrskoye.
- 8) Ban discriminatory practices in North Ossetian institutions including banks (eg. Western Union services), which have been known to engage in a kind of segregated banking whereby services available to Ossetians are restricted for Ingush residents.
- 9) Provide humanitarian assistance to Ingush IDPs remaining in temporary residence facilities in Ingushetia and grant these facilities official temporary residence center status, providing them with assistance according to the usual scheme practiced by the Russian Ministry of Emergency and migration services.
- 10) Launch income-generating programs that encourage both new and old enterprises to employ ethnically mixed personnel.
- 11) Develop programs aimed at youth vocational training and employment in Ingushetia and North Ossetia.
- 12) Establish recreation centers for youth including sport gyms in the Prigorodny District.
- 13) Support exchanges focusing on culture, sport, education, and economics between the two republics.

To humanitarian and development organizations:

- 1) Provide urgent medical and humanitarian assistance in the Prigorodny District to Ingush IDPs as well as refugees from other Caucasus regions.
- 2) Launch development and income-generating programs in the Prigorodny District targeting Ingush, Ossetian and North Ossetian communities. Specifically, programs should be encouraged that aim to create small collective enterprises involving Ingush and Ossetian employees (kibbutz-like small collective farming, fish farming, and bird factories).

- 3) Support Caucasus-wide higher education programs for students from conflict zones, including the creation of a western-type liberal university (possibly located in Georgia).
- 4) Establish programs that counter youth idleness in the Prigorodny District.
- 5) Continue providing medical and psychological assistance to victims of the Beslan tragedy.

To human rights and peacemaking organizations:

- 1) Monitor human rights and discrimination in Prigorodny District.
- 2) Assist the victims of rights abuses in securing redress through judicial institutions.
- 3) Launch programs aimed at conflict transformation and reconciliation, especially targeting youth. The methodology of peacemaking via positive activities will be most successful.
- 4) Establish human rights education programs promoting multiculturalism, tolerance and civic and democratic culture that target youth, media reporters, judges and law enforcement officers from the Prigorodny District, Ingushetia, and Ossetia.

Notes

- ¹ Alexander Dzadziev in an interview with the author in August 2005; Lejla Arapkhanova in an interview with the author in August 2005.
- ² Russian historiography uses the term ‘societies’ in reference to North Caucasian communities before and during the colonial wars. I will likewise use this term, since I find it more precise and free of ideological connotations (unlike for example ‘tribes’).
- ³ In 1770 when 24 representatives of Ingush societies signed an agreement with Russia at Barta-bos (the Hill of Agreement) they sent the following letter to the Russian military commandant Nejmich in Kyzlyar: “*Here came to our land the archimandrite Porfiry, in his presence we swore into loyalty and diligence to her imperial majesty. Along with this, according to the state interests this archimandrite took the effort to show us the road of truth according to Christian tradition. We, the kistine people (proto-Ingush societies), herewith undersigned*” Kodzoev: 152. In 1810 another agreement with Russia obliged the Ingush “not to accept the missions of efendies and mullahs or Muslim laws and not to build mosques.” (Tsutsiev: 1998:22).
- ⁴ The Nazran uprising broke out in response to the decision of the Russian army to create large settlements on the plains by eliminating small individual households of farmers, which were often located a significant distance from each other. Individual families had to be resettled into big villages (no less than 300 households) which were easier to control. This new setup ran counter to the traditional Ingush economy, lifestyle and rules of land ownership, and the societies sent a delegation to negotiate with the military authorities. The latter arrested four deputies, and in response 5,000 Ingush men attacked the Russian fortress in Nazran. The Ingush called Imam Shamil for military assistance, but Shamil failed to arrive on time and the uprising was suppressed and its organizers executed or sent to labor camps to Siberia (Kodzoev: 165).
- ⁵ Stanitsy Ardonskaja, Arkhonskaja, Nikolaevskaja, Zmejskaja (1838–1845).
- ⁶ Stanitsy Troitskaja (1845), Sunzenskaja (1845), Voznesenovskaja (1847), Tarskaja (1860), Nesterovskaja (1861), Karabulakovskaja (1859), Feldmarshal’skaja (1860), Assinovskaja (1861), Vorontsovo-Dashkovskaja (1861), Galashevskaja, Dattakhskaja, shutors Tarsky and Muzichi (1867).

Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe offers a refreshing new look at the complex interplay between religion, nationalism and expansionism in an increasingly globalized world, as revealed by a new generation of open society leaders working to build a more tolerant Europe. The authors are fellows and colleagues of the International Policy Fellowships program—an initiative of the Open Society Institute that has attempted to combat ‘brain drain’ while developing policy research capacities, initially in emerging democracies of the former Soviet sphere where concepts such as ‘policy’ and ‘fellowship’ were virtually untranslatable. Since its establishment in the late 1990s, some 250 of its fellows have grown into a network of open society leaders spanning more than 40 countries on nearly every continent.

Each chapter—focusing on Western Europe, the Caucasus, Russia, Turkey, Central Europe, and the Balkans—includes several essays by different authors, all of whom are actively involved in the dynamic policymaking processes transforming their respective countries. Their policy perspectives benefit from a uniquely ‘inside out’ rather than the usual ‘outside in’ orientation found in most English-language information about their communities. Taken as a whole, the compilation offers insightful insider stories and comparisons across countries and regions. The results are illuminating.