

IDPs from Chechnya in the Russian Federation



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Displaced people from Chechnya are still struggling to integrate outside the North Caucasus, despite being citizens of the Russian Federation.

Some 57,000 IDPs have returned to Chechnya despite the volatile security, while about 70,000 remain displaced in the North Caucasus. An unknown number of IDPs from Chechnya are living elsewhere in Russia.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) visited the Russian Federation in early 2008 and interviewed IDPs from Chechnya of various ethnic backgrounds in seven locations outside the North Caucasus. Regardless of their ethnic background, these IDPs are unwilling to return to Chechnya because they believe their physical security there would be at risk. Yet they struggle to settle outside the North Caucasus.

Difficulties securing documents

Many IDPs lack the documents necessary to lead a normal life. They struggle to extend or regain their status as forced migrants and acquire the residence registration, internal passports and documents needed to receive benefits they are entitled to. The main reasons for this are that their original documents were destroyed during the conflict and the criteria for extension of forced migrant status are interpreted too narrowly. Without these documents, IDPs are prevented from applying for jobs and accessing services and entitlements such as state-provided housing, free medical care and their full pension. The issuance of documents to IDPs should be facilitated without imposing unreasonable conditions that they cannot meet because they have been displaced. Procedures should also be in place to ensure officials issue documents to IDPs lawfully according to set criteria and without discrimination.

Lack of adequate housing

IDPs are still without durable housing solutions despite a government

property compensation and housing programme. IDPs who received this compensation lost their status as forced migrants and so have had to leave government housing. However, the property compensation has increasingly become insufficient for them to buy alternative housing. A new federal housing programme has proven unreliable in providing IDPs with permanent housing due to lack of funds and slow implementation. Additional funds should be allocated to the programme and IDPs still in need of adequate housing should be included regardless of whether they have forced migrant status or have received property compensation.

Discrimination

Ethnic Chechen IDPs are treated differently than others when applying to receive or renew documents and may face other particular difficulties on account of their ethnicity. They have been forced to move frequently by landlords unwilling to rent to them for extended periods or to register them as resident in the dwelling. Some claim they were denied employment because they were ethnic Chechen. The police frequently check the passports of ethnic Chechen men, who must often pay bribes since they do not have valid documents. This limits their ability to move freely in their area of residence and around the country.

Some non-ethnic Chechen IDPs also reported experiencing differential treatment in applying for jobs and renting apartments as a result of Chechnya being listed as their area of origin in their internal passport.

The federal and regional governments of Russia have made efforts to improve the lives of IDPs living in and beyond the North Caucasus. These include compensation for lost or destroyed property and the

rights and entitlements associated with forced migrant status. These efforts notwithstanding, IDPs from Chechnya living outside the North Caucasus are still struggling to settle in their current places of residence. A final, concerted effort is needed to solve the remaining problems facing these IDPs and continue the process through which they will be able to enjoy the same conditions as their fellow citizens.

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The Great Lakes Pact

On 21 June 2008, the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region entered into force, having been ratified by Burundi, CAR, Congo, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

IDMC and the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) have produced a guide for NGOs and civil society organisations to use the Pact to strengthen the rights of displaced people in the Great Lakes region. The Guide focuses on three of the Pact's Protocols that are of most relevance for refugees and IDPs.

The Guide is online, in English and French, at www.internal-displacement.org/greatlakes.

