



## **APPEAL**

### **BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH OSSETIA TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS**

#### **On the occasion of the centenary of the Ossetian genocide**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia appeals to foreign governments to take into consideration the tragic date for the Ossetian nation – the centenary of the Ossetian genocide, committed by the Georgian government in 1918-1920. On June 20, 2020, each Ossetian family will commemorate the civilian population of South Ossetia, their loved ones, killed by the Georgian raiders.

Many years have passed since then, but the pain of the sufferings is not subsiding. The bloody crimes committed in 1920 have no statutory limitations and cannot be forgiven or forgotten.

From ancient times the Ossetian state – the medieval Alania was a single ethno-territorial entity, united by common language, religion, culture and territory of settlement on both sides of the Greater Caucasus range.

Throughout its centuries-old history Ossetia-Alania has been independent of external domination, in contrast to neighboring Georgia, which during three centuries of the Middle Ages had been a province of the Persian state and the Ottoman Empire, until the Russian troops liberated the Georgians from occupation and saved them from physical extermination in late XVIII – early XIX century.

At that time permanent opposition of Ossetia to external threats was an everyday occurrence in the life of all Ossetian societies in the north and south of the Central Caucasus. But from the middle XVIII century, with the enlargement of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus, the Ossetians saw a reliable ally in it and began turning to Russia with a request to take them under its protection.

For this purpose the Ossetian embassy, representing all Ossetian societies in the south and north of Ossetia, was in St. Petersburg in 1749-1752. The embassy received at the highest level as well as the high-level Russian-Ossetian negotiations became authoritative testimonies to the fact that Ossetia was considered both in the Caucasus and in St. Petersburg as a single and influential ethno-national community with a specific geopolitical status.

The negotiations resulted in a close political Ossetian-Russian alliance. Ossetia became part of the Russian Empire in 1774, after the conclusion of the Kuchuk-Kainardzhi Peace Treaty between Russia and Turkey, which lifted the obstacles to formalization of affiliation of Ossetia within the Russian Empire on voluntary basis.

It should be marked that following the appeal by Georgian rulers of that period, the Georgian lands neighboring to South Ossetia also became part of the Russian Empire, but only in 1801, in accordance with Emperor Paul's I Manifest to Georgia. Primarily eastern and later western lands made up the Tiflis and the Kutaisi provinces in the late Russian Empire.

However, after the entry of Georgian lands into the Russian Empire the Ossetians continued to experience even greater pressure not only from the Georgian feudal lords, but also from their new patrons – the tsarist administration.

Claims of the Georgians on the Ossetian territories as their “own possessions” became the traditional political course of the new Georgian feudal lords. The resistance of the free Ossetian nation to the aggressive expansion of the Georgian nobility always had a national liberation character.

It's known that dramatic socio-political changes took place in Russia in 1917. The Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia dated November 15, 1917, which gave the right to self-determination to all the peoples of the former Russian Empire, became the first constitutional act of the Soviet regime.

The revolutionary events in Russia resulted in the dissolution of the Empire and the beginning of nation-state building process in the Caucasus. Experiencing pressure

from the German occupation authorities, the Georgian National Council announced the creation of the Georgian state. On May 26, 1918 the Constituent Assembly of Georgia adopted the Act of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

By that time the legitimately elected Ossetian National Council had already been functioning in Ossetia. Considering the national interests of Ossetia, it fulfilled a number of important tasks of national importance. On May 28, 1918 the Third Congress of the Ossetian Delegates rejected the proposal of the Georgian newly formed structure to recognize its authority, and in accordance with the granted right to self-determination, the Ossetians did not participate in the elections to the Georgian Parliament.

The new Georgian government unilaterally defined the border with Russia as the watershed of the Greater Caucasus range. Georgia was supposed to get natural protection; while the southern part of Ossetia was supposed to be included in the Georgian newly formed structure without prior arrangements. The only obstacle to this plan were the Ossetians themselves, who lived on the southern side of the range and who had already declared themselves as a part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

The new Georgian government decided to solve the territorial issue by depopulating the southern part of Ossetia and clearing the territories bordering with Russia.

Thus, yet in 1918 preparations to a punitive expedition against the people of South Ossetia, involving armed forces of the new “democratic” government began in Georgia. The Nazi rhetoric of the new Georgian authorities is well reflected in the periodical press of that period.

Before the invasion to Ossetia the “democratic” government of Georgia issued an appeal “to the Georgian soldiers – defenders of native land” stating “**...do not spare traitors, adults with their young vipers that must be destroyed. The prosperity of the Georgian nation requires that!**”

Newspapers of that time wrote about the strong will “**of the whole Georgian nation and the rigid determination of its government to clear and sweep out with an iron broom the nests of treason and to remove with hot iron the abscesses from our national body!**” (Ertoba Newspaper, June 20, 1920).

The general offensive of the Georgian raiders on Ossetia began on June 12, 1920. By June 20 the Ossetian political leadership was eliminated. Early in the morning

of the same day Georgian raiders shot the 13 communards - ordinary residents of Tskhinval, who were guilty only of being Ossetians. When Tskhinval, the capital of South Ossetia, was taken over, the total extermination on the peaceful Ossetian population began.

The bloody punitive expedition of the Georgian regular army resulted in deaths of thousands of civilians, who were killed by Georgian militaries and by hunger, cold and diseases when crossing the passes of the Greater Caucasus to North Ossetia. About 50.000 people lost their homes and property and were forced to leave South Ossetia for their lives.

Hundreds of villages were burned to the ground and over 5.000 people were killed. Georgian military burned almost all Ossetian villages from Tskhinval to the northern village of Ruk, butchered the population, sparing neither children, women, nor the elderly.

The Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia of that time Ramishvili arrived in South Ossetia and addressed the Ossetians with a call to return to peaceful work and rehabilitate their homes. This did not give serious result, as the first groups who had fallen for the Georgian Minister were shot by death squads or forcibly deported.

In the interview with the newspaper "Slovo", given after his returning to Tiflis, the Minister joyfully informed (August 3, 1920): **"The rebels of the Dzhava gorge left Georgia and moved to North Ossetia. The rest of them are flying in a hurry. Georgian settlers from Racha, Dusheti and even Ozurgeti districts (of Georgia) are settling in the cleared locations"**.

Even the Bolsheviks were surprised at the vandalism and the bloodiness of the Georgians raiders. Thus, the Georgian Bolshevik Philip Maharadze wrote: **"The savage guardsmen under the directives of the government of Zhordania and Ramishvili committed such terrible things as history knows very little about. People were shot indiscriminately, property was robbed, some could escape from these horrors and those who couldn't were decided to be evicted from South Ossetia.**

**Every Ossetian is announced out of law. They are recognized as enemies of the Georgian people, and they are subjected to all kinds of violence, beatings, insults, up to forcible eviction from their homes. The struggle against the Ossetian people is one of the most shameful pages in the history of the Georgian government"**.

For a number of reasons it has proved difficult to create an accurate list of the victims of the 1920 genocide. The scales of the genocide are evidenced by the documentary materials of the special Commission, which worked with the participation of Georgian representatives among others. In total, 5.279 people were killed by the Georgian punitive troops, including 1.375 women and 1.844 children. This means that every third killed person was a child! In total 20% of the Ossetian population of South Ossetia was exterminated.

1.588 residential and 2.639 household buildings were burned; 23.600 hectares of crops were destroyed. Georgian occupation authorities stole 32.460 herds and 78.485 small cattle. The Georgians from neighboring Georgian districts were moving to the places of former settlement of the Ossetians. According to approximate calculations the loss amounted to 3.317.000 gold rubles. Many localities have never been rebuilt because their entire population was completely destroyed and there was nobody left to return to the ashes of their burned homes.

In 1920 the newspaper “Sovetskiy Kavkaz” published new data on the number of refugees from South Ossetia: **“... 50.000 people who found shelter in North Ossetia and some in Kabarda. The newspapers wrote that these people, who fled from the enemy “on mountain paths from hunger and lack of shelter, to this hour are dying out in masses”. There were cases when a woman at sight of her child starving from hunger, threw him into the abyss, into the river and then rushed herself after him. There was no end to the suffering of the people, and there is still no end to it”.**

Despite the revolutionary changes that took place in 1921 with the establishment of the Bolsheviks government, the Georgian community cruelly continued to defend their habitual socio-political policy. With the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia, the Ossetian genocide not only wasn't condemned, but during the entire time of its existence was never recognized by the new Georgian communist government.

As it turned out later, the Soviet Georgia was a worthy successor to the medieval feudal ideology and the nascent national socialist “democracy”.

After the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia, all the communist leaders of Georgia without exception continued to pursue the hostile policy against the Ossetians of the former government of 1918-1921. This continued until the collapse of the USSR, was followed by the post-communist regimes of Georgia, and still today we see this ideology.

As already noted, the revolutionary cataclysms of the beginning of the XX century, having destroyed the Russian Empire, contributed to socio-political changes that ostensibly paved the way for nation building of the peoples of Russia.

But with the advent of the Soviet regime Ossetia was divided into two parts – the northern part fell under the jurisdiction of the Russian SFSR, and the southern, against the will of the Ossetians, was by a voluntarist decision incorporated into the Georgian Soviet Republic in the form of an autonomous region. This fact allowed the Georgian rulers to continue the policy of genocide against the Ossetian people, which later was called “quiet” or “cultural”.

In 1944, the Georgians obtained a new possibility of seizure of the Ossetian lands. The Georgian Bolsheviks, lobbied by influential group in the Kremlin, expanded the border of the Georgian Republic to the approaches to Vladikavkaz – the capital of North Ossetia. In accordance with the Bolsheviks’ voluntarist decision, the north slope of the Daryal pass with all Ossetian territories was included in the Soviet Georgia and so far is occupied.

Thus, a large part of the ancestral Ossetian lands in the Central Caucasus became part of the Georgian SSR. The seizure of the territory was accompanied with cultural expansion, which was followed by assimilation of native Ossetian population. As a result of this policy today we have desolated territories cleared of the Ossetian element, so that the loss of the historical part of Alania is evident.

The notorious events of 1937-1938 did not pass without a trace for South Ossetia. As a result of the bloody “planned” repressions of the late 30s, the best representatives of the Ossetian people were wiped out. Under the guise of fighting the enemies of the Soviet regime, all Ossetian intellectuals were slaughtered; those who resisted the Georgian raiders and led the rebels were shot or exiled to camps.

In 1938, South Ossetia was dictated the writing based on Georgian writings, the one different from that in North Ossetia. In 1944, Ossetian schools were closed in South Ossetia, and in 1951, records management was translated into Georgian. Thus, for the first time the Georgian authorities managed to divide one nation on educational and cultural grounds. This policy continued until 1990 – when South Ossetia seceded from Georgia and became an independent state.

In the late 80s, on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the spirit of the fascism was reawakened in the Georgian SSR, and ultra-radical policies promoting the uniqueness and “God-chosen” origin of the Georgian people began to gain popularity in Georgian society. Accordingly, the slogan “Georgia for the

Georgians!” became the main expression of the old national idea of the Georgian neo-Nazis and their governments in the late XX – early XXI century. All foreigners were declared guests on the Georgian land, and the most fascist characters were calling for forcibly restricting the birth rate in non-Georgian families.

Seventy years after the 1920 genocide, the history repeated itself. After the collapse of the USSR, the people of South Ossetia did not want to live in the same state with their yesterday’s executioners and determined their future in unity with Russia, together with their brothers in North Ossetia.

In 1989, Georgian neo-Nazis, like their forefathers in 1920, demanded of the Ossetians to submit to their will, otherwise they promised to “sweep the Ossetians as garbage” from the Georgian land. As it turned out later, those plans were not only for the Ossetians, but also for Russians, Abkhazians, Armenians, Greeks, Azeris, Meskhetian Turks and all other representatives of national minorities living in Georgia at that time.

November 23, 1989 is a special date in the modern history of South Ossetia. On that day, Tbilisi, represented by the leaders of the Georgian nationalist movement, organized a many thousand “march of intimidation” to Tskhinval.

In 1989-1992, Georgia carried out the first since 1920 armed aggression against South Ossetia and tried to conquer it by military force. The total number of victims amounted to more than 2.000 people killed, more than 3.500 people injured, and more than 120 people missing.

The number of villages burned amounted to 117. The property loss was more than 516 billion rubles or about 17 billion USD in 2005 prices. More than 20.000 refugees from South Ossetia and more than 100.000 Ossetian refugees from internal territories of Georgia, where mass ethnic cleansing and massacres of Ossetians were also carried out, have been registered in North Ossetia and the Russian Federation.

In August 2004, under the leadership of the new Fuhrer Saakashvili, Georgia unleashed a new war, throwing regular units with heavy equipment and artillery at South Ossetia. The enemy did not pass, but with the help of the Western partners and with participation of NATO countries, Saakashvili began to prepare for revenge.

The attack of the Georgian army on South Ossetia in August 2008 became the culmination of the aggressive Georgian neo-fascist activity. A full-scale punitive operation named “Clear field” was launched with only one aim of completely destroying the Ossetian population, clearing South Ossetia from the Ossetian element, and reaching the strategically important tunnel connecting North and South Ossetia. The result is well known.

We would like to emphasize that since 1918 to the present, no Georgian government has recognized the responsibility for the crimes committed against the Ossetian people in 1920, 1989-1992 and 2008. Neither those governments have recognized the right of the South Ossetians to national and state self-determination in their ancestral territories.

On the contrary, over the past 100 years, each successive Georgian government has regularly taken measures aimed at creating conditions for continuation of the policy of genocide.

We consider it necessary to state that over the past 100 years the Georgian leadership and successive governments not only did not stop the policy of “cultural genocide” against South Ossetia and the Ossetians living in Georgia, but used military force three times to achieve their goals. Impunity always breeds new crimes!

Those acts fully comply with the articles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, adopted on 26 November 1968.

The Ossetian genocide committed a hundred years ago and its subsequent relapses can be qualified as crimes against humanity. The UN General Assembly Resolution 96 (I) of December 11, 1946 states that genocide is a crime that violates international law and is contrary to the spirit and purposes of the United Nations, an act that is condemned by the entire civilized world.

Article III of the UN Convention of December 9, 1948 on Prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide defined the following acts as punishable: genocide; conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; attempt to commit genocide; complicity in genocide.

The Convention also states that persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.



Being guided by these and other provisions of international law, as early as September 20, 1990, the legitimate agency of South Ossetia – the Soviet of People's Deputies of South Ossetia characterized the events of 1920 as genocide of the Ossetian people and accepted a special resolution stating:

- 1. Recognize the events of 1918-1920 as the national liberation struggle of the people of South Ossetia.**
- 2. Recognize the actions of the leadership of “democratic” Georgia against the Ossetian people in 1920 as genocide.**

Considering the crucial importance for the historical memory of the Ossetian people to commemorate the victims of the genocide of 1920, the President of the Republic of South Ossetia Anatolii Bibilov has signed the Decree on the establishment of the Memorial Day of the victims of the Ossetian genocide. It will be held annually on June 20. On this day, commemorative events dedicated to the Memorial Day of the victims of the Ossetian genocide will be held throughout the country, as well as in Embassies and Representation Offices of South Ossetia abroad.

The Georgian neo-Nazism has not passed even today! In 2008, it was shattered by the iron will and the unity of the people of South Ossetia, the undying desire to be masters in their land, of their future. Ossetia withstood and won honor passing through incredible trials and at the cost of great self-sacrifice proved to the whole world its inalienable right to freedom and decent future.

The recognition of the independence of the Republic of South Ossetia by the Russian Federation in August 2008 prevented the annexationist ambitions and the aggressive relapse by Georgia, has restored the historical justice, which allowed recreating the state of the Alans in the Caucasus, and made irreversible the state-building processes.

**On behalf of the people and the Government of the state, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia is authorized to address to:**

- the United Nations,**
- the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,**
- the Council of Europe,**
- the European Parliament,**
- the Parliaments and Governments of the world,**
- the international community,**

with an appeal to

1. **Condemn and bring it to international justice the current Georgian government as the successor to the government of Georgia of 1918-1920, which committed the genocide of the peaceful Ossetian population in South Ossetia.**
2. **Condemn and bring it to international justice the current Georgian government as the successor of the Bolshevist Georgia and the accomplice of the crimes committed against the civilian population of South Ossetia in the post-communist period of 1989-2008.**

**No one is forgotten. Nothing is forgotten.**

**There are no statutory limitations for crimes against humanity!**

The Republic of South Ossetia

Tskhinval, June 20, 2020

