

PRESS STATEMENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGIA

**ICJ ACCEPTS GEORGIA'S CLAIM OVER ETHNIC CLEANSING 'DISPUTE' WITH  
RUSSIA**

**Negotiations must continue before Hague will consider full case against  
Russia**

The Hague, Friday, April 1, 2011

Embargo: For immediate release

The Government of Georgia today received the Judgment of the International Court of Justice in the ongoing legal proceedings of Georgia v. Russia, regarding the Russian Federation's responsibility for ethnic cleansing of Georgian civilians, in violation of the 1965 Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Government of Georgia expresses its confidence in the Court and its judges, and fully respects the Judgment. We have every confidence in the Court and that, in due course, justice will be done.

The court's ruling leaves open the possibility that once formal negotiations have been exhausted, it will have jurisdiction over the case.

Commenting on the court's decision, Tina Burjaliani, Deputy Minister of Justice, said:

"We welcome the Court's rejection of a core argument put forward by the Russian Federation that no dispute exists on the grounds of ethnic discrimination and ethnic cleansing. The court has simply ruled that – due to a procedural technicality whereby the court requires further negotiations to take place between the two sides - the proceedings will not immediately lead to further consideration of the merits of the case against Russia. However, the court has left open the possibility that the case can proceed once the formal conditions for the exercise of jurisdiction by the Court, as required by the 1965 Convention, have been met.

"For two decades Russia has pursued a policy of ethnic discrimination, which began in 1991. Since then, Georgians have been persecuted and a majority of them forcibly expelled from the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia and the forces under its control and authority has encouraged, contributed, and failed to prevent ethnic cleansing in these regions.

"In bringing this case to the ICJ, Georgia has no other purpose but to prevent discrimination and to allow the right of return.

“Russia has been seeking to block this important case on technical and jurisdictional grounds in order to avoid a full and proper assessment of its responsibility for ethnic cleansing.

“The Court – and public – has heard about these terrible crimes, and we have full confidence in this respected institution and that justice will be done.

“This case is *not* about the armed conflict in August 2008; it is about the responsibility of Russia for the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Georgians over the past two decades. The issue merely crystallized during 2008.

“It remains a fact that more than 500, 000 people have been displaced over nearly two decades. Responsibility for this lies squarely at the door of the Russian Federation.

The Court has not decided the case on the merits, and Georgia remains fully committed to pursuing justice, including ensuring the right of return under the 1965 Convention.”

ENDS