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Global Overview 2014: people internally displaced by conflict and violence - Russian Federation

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Number of IDPs	At least 34,900
Percentage of total population	At least 0.1%
Start of displacement situation	1992
Peak number of IDPs (year)	500,000 (1996)
New displacement in 2013	No information available
Causes of displacement	✓ Armed conflict ✓ Generalised violence ✓ Human rights violations
Human development index	55

At least 34,900 people were still displaced in Russia as of the end of 2013, as a result of armed conflict, human rights violations and generalised violence in North Caucasus. The 1994 and 1999

wars in Chechnya forced more than 800,000 people to flee their homes, and as many as 64,000 people fled ethnic conflict over Prigorodny district in North Ossetia in 1992. The conflicts have not been resolved, contrary to claims from the Russian government. More than 100 civilians were killed in 2013 in ongoing fighting between government forces and non-state armed groups that aim to establish an Islamic caliphate.

The figure of 35,000 combines an 2011 NGO estimate of 25,000 IDPs in Chechnya and Ingushetia with government statistics from 2013 that show around 9,900 people registered as "forced migrants". Government figures only include people displaced from Chechnya and North Ossetia who hold forced migrant status and live outside their republics of origin. Registration is valid for five years, after which IDPs can apply for an extension. The authorities, however, have rejected most such applications. The true number of IDPs in Russia is likely to be significantly higher.

The government's 2013 statistics showed around 7,300 people from Chechnya and North Ossetia living in Ingushetia, around 700 in Stavropol and 200 in Dagestan. The remainder were living in other western parts of the country such as Krasnodar and Saratov. In 2011, NGOs counted around 20,000 IDPs in Chechnya and Ingushetia living in private accommodation and 5,000 in collective centres. No information was available on the situation of IDPs living outside North Caucasus.

Unregistered IDPs are deprived of entitlements such as housing assistance, which are linked to forced migrant status. Some also continue to have problems registering their residence, which is normally required for all Russian citizens to access public services and jobs.

Around 160 IDPs were evicted from three collective centres in Ingushetia in 2013, a move that was justified by a new state programme to provide 2,000 families with improved housing. The closure of the centres is welcome, but some IDPs ended up in a worse situation as a result. More than 80 Chechens were evicted from the Promzhilbaza centre with nowhere to go before winter. They were told either to find rented accommodation with a government subsidy of around \$150, or to live with family members. Those without relatives nearby were left homeless, as the money provided was insufficient and in some cases was reportedly not paid as promised. IDPs organised hunger strikes to publicise the evictions, but to no avail. In some cases, the authorities shut off utilities and used other tactics to pressure IDPs to leave.

There have been few returns in recent years. More than 300,000 IDPs previously returned to Chechnya after the second large-scale armed conflict in 1999, according to government reports. Most set their sights on the capital Grozny because of its better infrastructure and employment opportunities. Housing assistance, however, was linked to IDPs' return to their places of origin. More than 25,000 IDPs have returned to North Ossetia since 1992, but local authorities prevented some from doing so for fear of sparking renewed ethnic conflict. Others were unable to return because ethnic Ossetian refugees from Georgia had occupied their property. There has been no monitoring of returns either in Chechnya or in North Ossetia, and as a result there is no information on progress towards durable solutions for returned IDPs.

The Russian government has attempted to portray the conflict in North Caucasus and the internal displacement it caused as resolved, and as a result international assistance has decreased dramatically in recent years. UN agencies left the region in 2011 and only a few international humanitarian organisations remain. The government helped some IDPs to access improved housing in 2013, but more needs to be done to fully address their needs.

Together with international organisations, the Russian authorities should conduct an assessment of progress towards durable solutions for IDPs who have returned and those who have settled elsewhere in the country. Collecting accurate data and information on IDPs' socio-economic situation according to international standards would allow the government to uphold IDPs' rights and address their specific needs. Russia has a real chance to resolve displacement given its relative wealth.