



საქართველოს საგარეო საკმეთა სამინისტრო  
Ministry Of Foreign Affairs Of Georgia

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA MIKHEIL  
SAAKASHVILI**

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**August 26, 2008**

The Russian Federation's actions are an attempt to militarily annex a sovereign nation—the nation of Georgia. This is in direct violation of international law and imperils the international security framework that has ensured peace, stability, and order for the past 60 years.

Russia's decision today confirms that its invasion of Georgia was part of a broader, premeditated plan to redraw the map of Europe. Russia today has violated all treaties and agreements that it has previously signed.

Russia's actions have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by the entire international community, which has reaffirmed its support for Georgia's territorial integrity. The Government of Georgia is grateful for the world's support.

The regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are recognized by international law as being within the borders of Georgia.

Today, by its actions, the Russian Federation is seeking to validate the use of violence, direct military aggression, and ethnic cleansing to forcibly change the borders of a neighboring state.

Russia's refusal to withdraw its military forces from Georgia—and its attempt to annex two regions of Georgia—is in direct violation of the EU-brokered cease fire to end Russia's invasion and occupation of Georgia.

The two regions in question have been de-populated by conflict and continue to be subject to widespread ethnic cleansing by Russia and its proxies—as confirmed by the United Nations and other international bodies.

These are areas where the local populations— simply because of their nationality - have been chased out, with the direct intervention of the Russian Federation.

The few civilians who remain in these regions have been given Russian passports en masse, in violation of international law and norms, making a

mockery of the principle of "right to protect".

One such expulsion took place in 1993 in Abkhazia. Others took place last week in South Ossetia and in Upper Abkhazia/the Kodori Gorge.

I remind you that before the first conflict, more than 525,000 people lived in Abkhazia. Today less than 150,000 do.

I remind you that ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia have been systematically forced to flee that territory due to Russia's invasion. The attacks on ethnic Georgians, both inside and outside the conflict zones, are continuing.

The ethnic cleansing is something that the local rebel separatists are proud to announce—and which Russia, through its actions, is attempting to legalize.

Is it legal to remove ethnic groups from their homes using violence and terror?

Is it moral or legal for an ethnically cleansed area to be rewarded with independence by a neighbor?

If intervention in Kosovo was about stopping ethnic cleansing, today's decision by the Russian Federation is about rewarding and legalizing ethnic cleansing.

Russia has turned logic and morality on its head.

Russia's decision is therefore a direct and grave challenge to the international order. This a challenge for the entire world. Not just Georgia.

It means that today, annexation and ethnic cleansing have once again become tools of international relations.

If accepted by the international community, it means that foreign-sponsored groups around the world can use violence and ethnic cleansing to achieve their ends.

It means that third parties can arm, sustain and direct those groups in order to change the borders on the world's map.

Today, it is clear around the world that Russia is acting as an aggressor state.

My appeal to the free world is to condemn and reject Russia's dangerous and irrational decision – NOT only for Georgia's sake – but for the sake of preserving the fundamental basis of international law and order.

On behalf of my Government and people, I condemn this reckless act and want to state clearly that the Russian action does not hold any legal value.

As before – and according to international law, Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty is inviolable.

Russia's aims, method and goals are now clear.

The Russian Federation has used military force to try to dismember my country.

In the days and weeks ahead we will work with the international community to prevent this decision from having any effect on the sovereignty of my country and from further undermining the international order.

Together we must stand united against this aggression and call on you for your assistance and immediate reaction.

This is a test for the entire world and a test for our collective solidarity.

This is the test that we—all free people—must not fail.

My friends, we are all concerned today. And today Georgia counts on your support.

Today a challenge has been posed to all of us.

Today the fate of Europe and the free world is unfortunately being played out in my small country.

But together, we can and we must unite to meet this challenge.