

## **Caucasus: Sep '08**

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Azeri and Armenian journalists join Georgian colleagues on trip to improve their understanding of the Ossetian conflict.

IWPR journalists from several countries in the region visited the war-ravaged Georgian town of Gori to assess conditions for refugees and prospects for a resolution of the conflict with Russia.

The mission, September 29-30, was part of the Bridging Bridges/Building Capacity project aimed at supporting media and promoting dialogue between conflict parties in the Caucasus.

Eight journalists from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan met refugees, local officials, politicians and experts in Gori

The participants said they were moved by their visit to a tented encampment which is home to over two thousand refugees.

“What I saw in the Gori tent town was terrible,” said Mikhail Arutiunian, a journalist with the Armenian Yerkir Media TV.

“There can’t be victors in a war. People should not be allowed to live like that or to fall victim to politicians’ ambitions.”

Azeri journalist Maharam Zeinalov said seeing the aftermath of the conflict first-hand gave him a better understanding of the conflict. “We learnt about developments in the media, but seeing it all with your own eyes gives you a far more complete picture,” he said.

Vagan Ishkhakanian, of [Armenianow.com](#), said while the restoration of many of the damaged buildings is almost complete, the fact that so many refugees remain in Gori suggests that the conflict is not at an end.

The journalists subsequently met representatives of the government and the opposition, who disagreed with each other about how the conflict broke out and the current situation in Georgia.

The mission was reported on by the Georgian media, including the state broadcaster.

After meeting the mission participants, local journalist Giorgi Aptsiauri, who works for Radio Freedom, said the involvement in the mission of Armenian and Azerbaijani journalists was a good example of how journalists can cooperate with each other even when their respective countries are in conflict.

“I wish we had similar projects that would involve Georgian and Abkhaz, or Georgian and Ossetian journalists,” he said.

**Location:** [Caucasus](#)  
[Stavropol](#)  
[South Ossetia](#)

Russia

**Topic:** Project Highlight

**Focus:** Caucasus

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