

September 22, 2009



**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT EDUARD KOKOITY
IN RESPONSE TO HAVEL OPEN LETTER**

“Vaclav Havel and the co-signers of today’s open letter to Europe are turning history on its head by ignoring the genuine democratic aspirations of the people of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and, instead, siding with a reckless Georgian president who launched a five-day war in August 2008 that killed hundreds and left thousands homeless.

Their abuse of history confirms only their intellectual bankruptcy. If they genuinely want to support peace in the Caucasus, they would use their moral influence to persuade Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to sign a pledge of non-violence against his neighbors.

In light of their appalling misunderstanding of our region, I remind Havel and others of an important historical fact: The border they are attempting to resurrect around Georgia was drawn not by Georgia’s democracy champions but by Josef Stalin, who forced South Ossetia and Abkhazia into what was then the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. After decades of violence inflicted by nationalist Georgian leaders, the people of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are dismantling a wall of oppression and fear and building a future as free and independent nations.

The right of self determination is a foundation of democracy. Mr. Havel, of all people, knows that and his country has prospered because of it. Why would South Ossetians and Abkhazians deserve anything less?”

--Eduard Kokoity, President, Republic of South Ossetia

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