
Georgia-Abkhazia tensions could boil over.

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TBILISI, Georgia, Jan. 18 (UPI) -- Hostilities could erupt again this year between Georgia and the breakaway entity of Abkhazia unless both sides resume

talks and cooperation, a new report says.

Georgia and Abkhazia should focus this year on confidence building and practical cooperation rather than seeking solutions to sticky political issues

which have little hope of success in the current political environment, according to an International Crisis Group report released Thursday.

Fourteen years of negotiation have done little to resolve the conflict, and the stalemate has solidified each side's distorted, negative view of the other, the report says.

"The eye-for-an-eye approach that both sides have followed has only perpetuated the stalemate," says Sabine Freizer, Crisis Group's Europe Program

director. "Unless they start treating each other as legitimate and equal partners

who both gain by working together, there's a real chance that the region could

backslide into hostilities."

Diplomacy has been stalled since mid-2006, when Georgia launched a military o

peration in the Kodori valley. ICG argues that neither side should take steps that could be interpreted by the other as provocative or undermine the little trust that exists in the present fragile climate.

Abkhazia insists on recognition of independence after working for years to build its own institutions, but the international community unanimously considers it part of Georgia, and Tbilisi sees secession as a threat to national

security and economic development.

More than 200,000 internally displaced persons live in Georgia under harsh conditions, according to the report, while the Abkhaz suffer from tough economic, trade and travel restrictions, which leave them dependent on Russia for

military and economic security.
