



Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

- Caucasian Concerns -

History, Political Background and Self-Determination Issues
in the Trans-Caucasian Region



Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

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August 2008

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I. Introduction

In a world increasingly characterized by interdependence and the growing influence of non-state actors, we are consistently challenged to adjust and adapt to an ever-changing world system. Traditionally narrow interpretations of self-determination have continuously drawn into conflict with other principles of international importance. For many actors these interpretations have proven to be, in fact, counter-productive. The array of solutions to this problem is however far richer than it once was. A full range of democratic distributions of power are available for implementation and further maturity.

The Trans-Caucasus region lining the Black Sea is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse regions on earth. It has experienced unprecedented political transitions in the last two centuries, with the past eighteen years having been a particularly tumultuous time. Today it remains unquestionably complex and delicate. As many actors in the region have experienced, self-determination can be a thorny issue with often undesirable realities.

This report **Caucasian Concerns - History, Political Background and Self-Determination Issues in the Trans-Caucasian Region** aims to inform readers on the historical development and current realities of several of the diverse populations scattered throughout the region. Their concerns and requests regarding self-determination are equally diverse, spanning across addressing religious, linguistic, cultural and political preservation.

Emboldened with this information, the international community is challenged to develop their engagement with these populations. It is challenged to realize a modern system which goes beyond Westphalian sovereignty to include all actors, both state and non-state, in fair democratic engagement. The future of the Trans-Caucasus region and its diverse people will greatly depend on the evolution of this new thinking and new world order.



II. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

The **Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)** is an international, nonviolent, and democratic membership organization. Its members are indigenous peoples, minorities, and unrecognized or occupied territories who have joined together to protect and promote their human and cultural rights, to preserve their environments, and to find nonviolent solutions to conflicts which affect them.

Although the aspirations of UNPO Members differ greatly, they are all united by one shared condition – they are not adequately represented at major international fora, such as the United Nations. As a consequence, their opportunity to participate on the international stage is significantly limited, as is their ability to access and draw upon the support of the global bodies mandated to defend their rights, protect their environments, and mitigate the effects of conflict.

In today's world where over 90 percent of conflicts are intra-state, UNPO has been established to fill this gap, providing an international forum through which its Members can become effective participants and contributors to the international community. In an increasingly interdependent world it is ever more important that those who continue to be denied their rights or remain excluded be given an opportunity to present their case. UNPO works therefore to address the consequences of marginalization, working with its Members to promote their democratic causes, to provide information, and to articulate creative and nonviolent strategies for progress, above all however, UNPO works to ensure their voices are heard.

Founded in 1991 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, UNPO is unique as an international organization in that it is built entirely by its Members. Through this strong connection to those suffering the consequences of the exclusion the organization seeks to address, UNPO has since grown into a prominent and respected international forum.

UNPO's membership has also grown steadily from its original fifteen founders, representing now almost 70 Members worldwide. Although the work of UNPO adapts continually to meet the challenges of its Members and the nature of the international political climate, each Member remains committed to respecting the five principles enshrined in the UNPO Covenant: nonviolence, human rights, democracy and self-determination, environmental protection, and tolerance.

UNPO remains committed to offering an increasing number of nations and peoples an entry point into the international community, enabling its Members also to learn from one another; lending their support where there are setbacks and sharing their experiences in success.

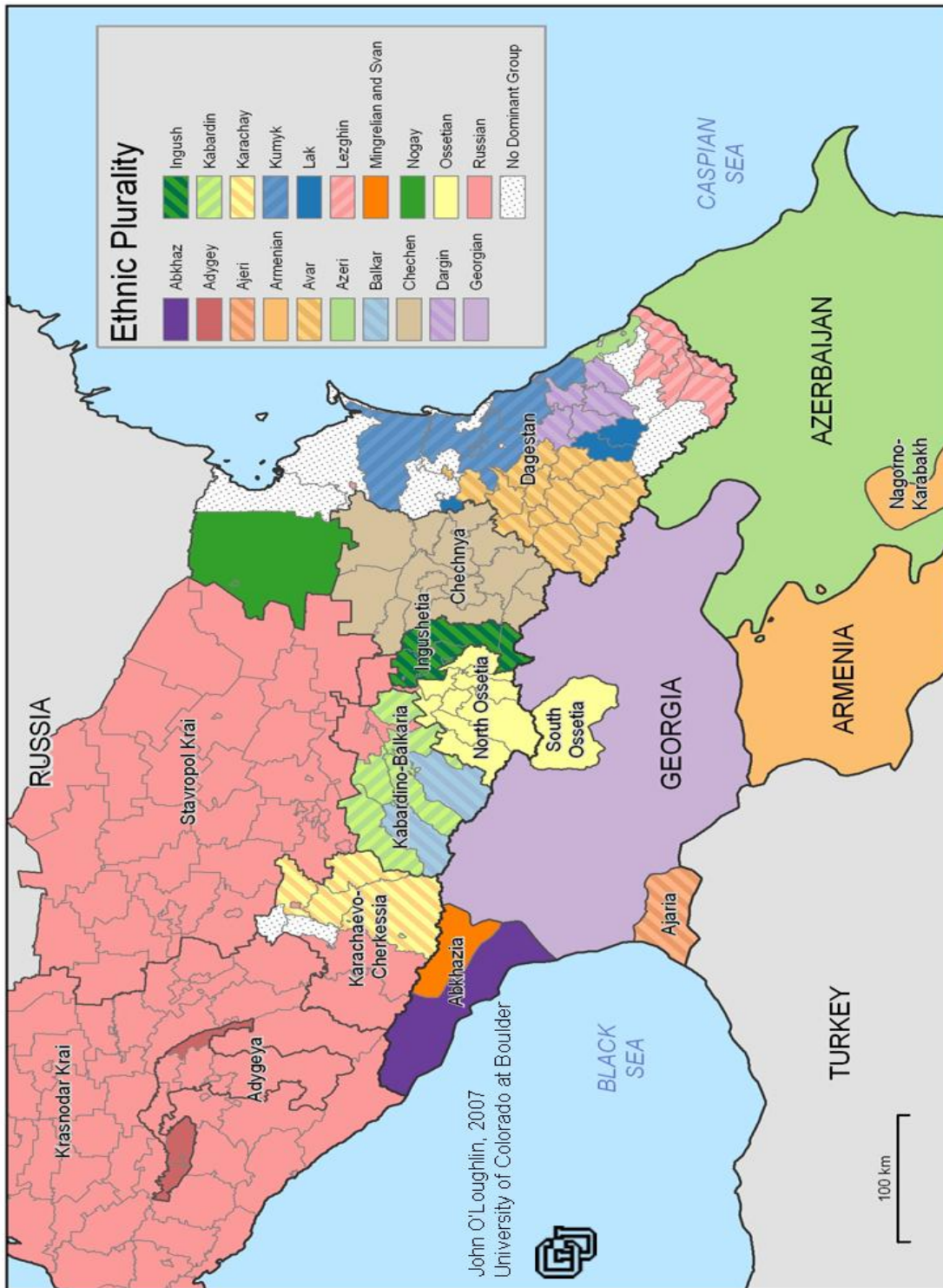
Acknowledgements

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II. Maps of Black Sea Region

2.1 Map 1



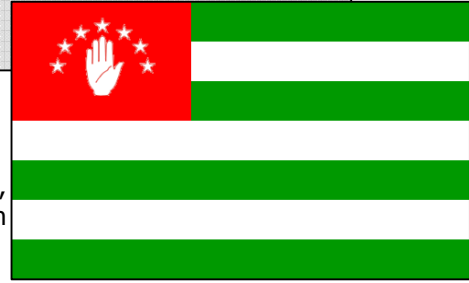
2.2 Map 2

Ethnolinguistic Groups in the Caucasus Region



III. Caucasian Concerns

Abkhazia



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Located on the Eastern Bank of the Black Sea, bordering Russia on the west and Georgia on the east.
 - Capital: Sukhum. Total population: 250.000
 - 7 administrative districts: Gagra, Gal, Gudauta, Gulripsh, Ochamchira, Sukhumi and Tquarchal.
- History
 - The Abkhaz Kingdom existed from the 8th to the 11th century, after which fragmentation eventually led to the existence of two separate entities in the 19th century: Abkhazia and Georgia.
 - In 1810 Abkhazia voluntarily became a protectorate of the Russian Empire, however following the Russia-Circassian War in the mid-19th century, hundreds of thousands of Abkhazians were deported to Turkey and other nations.
 - After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Georgia occupied and annexed Abkhazia, which led to liberation struggles from 1918 to 1921. In 1921 Stalin imposed a Treaty Union with Georgia, under which military, political and economic relations between Georgia and Abkhazia were demanded and later led to Abkhazian participation in the creation of the USSR.
 - In 1931 Abkhazia's status was changed to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Georgia. Subsequent Georgian policy this included the deportation of Meskhetian Turks, Greeks, Kurds, Khemshins, Laz and others, forced assimilation and mass settlement of Georgian nationals in Abkhazia.
 - Up until the 1990s severe language restrictions against the Abkhaz native language were in place, as Abkhaz schools and institutions were closed. Abkhazians were given Georgian passports and following further deportation and immigration from Georgia, became the minority population in the territory where they were previously the majority.
 - Relations broke down between Georgia and Abkhazia in the 1990s and in 1992 Abkhazia declares its sovereignty of its own territory. At the same time negotiations began with Georgia to establish equal relations, however armed aggression ensued until 1993.
 - In November 1994 Abkhazia adopts a new constitution, thereby officially declaring its national sovereignty and marking the start of its function as a *de facto* independent state in the world system. The political status of Abkhazia remains one of the most contentious issues in the Caucasus.
 - In 1996 economic sanctions were issued against Abkhazia by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), severely hindering the Abkhazian economy.
 - In 2004 Sergey Bagapsh is elected President.

II. Recent Events

- Armed conflict between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia results in Russian troops carrying out military operations against Georgia on Abkhazian territory. The result is increased tensions in Abkhazia and a full military mobilization (August 2008).
- Since June 2008 Abkhazia has been engaged in German-mediated negotiations with Georgia in Berlin. The talks, backed by the EU and the UN Secretary-General's so-called Group of Friends of Georgia (including Britain, France, Russia, and the US), produced a

nonviolence agreement (yet to be adopted) and included discussion on the legal status of Abkhazia as well as the repatriation of Abkhaz refugees in Georgia (June 2008).

- Russia announced its withdrawal from the 1996 CIS treaty on the imposition of economic sanctions against Abkhazia (March 2008). Economic growth has risen considerably since.
- Russia's Duma, lower house of Parliament, voted in favour of the Kremlin recognizing Abkhazia (December 2007). The Duma's vote is not legally binding.
- Parliamentary elections were held on 4 March 2007. Proceedings were deemed peaceful and democratic by international observers present, with approximately 48% of the 130.000 eligible voters coming to the poles. Elections were not recognized by the US, EU and NATO (March 2007).
- The UN hosts Georgian-Abkhazian dialog in Geneva (February 2007).

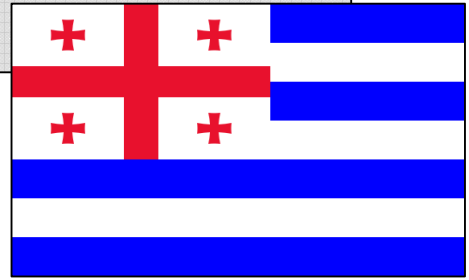
III. Requests

- Seeks international recognition of its independence and hopes to join the international organizations that currently do not recognize the state.
- Calls for the return of refugees to Abkhazia, particularly to the Gali region.
- Seeks reparations from Georgia for destruction during the 1992-93 war, as well as the economic damage suffered due to the sanctions placed against Abkhazia by CIS states.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia
 - President (Sergei Bagapsh), Prime Minister (Alexander Ankvab)
 - People's Assembly of Abkhazia (Speaker of Parliament: Nugzar Ashuba)
 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Foreign Minister: Sergey Shamba; Deputy Foreign Minister: Maxim Gunjia)

Adjara



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Adjara is an autonomous Republic within Georgia that borders the Black Sea in the west and Turkey in the south. Its area is approximately 2900 km².
 - The population of Adjara consists of Adjara Georgians who speak a dialect of the Georgian language. The population of the autonomous Republic is approximately 375.000.
 - Unlike most of Georgia, the dominant religion of Adjara was/is Islam.
- History
 - In 1920 Adjara became part of the Republic of Georgia and in 1921 the Adjar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established as part of the Soviet Union.
 - After the dissolution of the Soviet Union it became part of independent Georgia, but established a large amount of independence from the main government. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the nationalist Gamsakhurdia regime in Tbilisi made a concerted effort to stamp out ethnic differences and create a "Georgia for Georgians." In Adjara this took the form of a campaign to replace Islam with an "atheist upbringing" throughout the region. This religious discrimination created a great deal of tension and calls from Adjar nationalists to break apart from Georgia.
 - Until 2004, Adjara enjoyed what was in effect *de facto* independence from Georgia and, therefore, no political or economic discrimination was recorded. However, the strategy they used to achieve that independence was quite different from the other autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where rebellions broke out. By contrast, despite the extreme turbulence of post-Soviet Georgian politics, the main leader of Adjara, Abashidze, maintained Adzharia as an island of stability. Since becoming leader of Adjara in 1991 within a local political structure that remained Soviet and Communist, Abashidze demonstrated virtuoso political leadership. Unlike Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Abashidze was careful not to challenge, even rhetorically, the territorial integrity of the Georgian state; furthermore, the autonomy he did demand for Adjara was not based on self-determination. However, Adjara was *de facto* independent from Tbilisi until 2004.
 - In May 2004, Abashidze was forced into exile and Georgia regained control over the region. Adjara retained its formal autonomous status, but all major positions were taken over by persons loyal to the Georgian president.
 - Since the Georgian take-over in 2004, Adjara has been the scene of a Christianization that has resulted in a sharp decline in the number of Islamic followers.

II. Recent Events

- Georgian labour party announces its plan to boycotts election of the Adjara Supreme Council set to take place October 2008 (August 2008).
- Foreign investment in Adjara increases significantly in the textile, construction, tourism and agriculture industries, with Turkey acting as a main investor (April 2008).

III. Requests

- Respect for the distinct identity of the Adjara population and their religion.
- Creation of a genuine autonomy status for Adjara within Georgia.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Government of the Ajarian Autonomous Republic
 - Defined by Georgia's law on Ajaria and the region's new constitution, adopted following the ousting of Aslan Abashidze. The local legislative body, Supreme Council (parliament) of Adjara consists of 18 members and is elected for four years. The head of the region's government – the Council of Ministers of Adjara – is nominated by the President of Georgia who also has powers to dissolve the assembly and government and to overrule local authorities on issues where the constitution of Georgia is contravened.
 - Levan Varshalomidze is the current head of the Adjaran government.

Chechen Republic of Ichkeria



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - In the west it borders North Ossetia and Ingushetia, to the east Dagestan, and to the south Georgia.
 - Capital: Grozny. Population approximately 1.5 million, including Russians, Kumyks, Ingush and others nationalities.
 - Religion is Islam.
 - Economy severely hindered by civil conflict. Chief exports are oil and grain.
- History
 - Chechnya was incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1859. Following the October Revolution in 1922, Chechnya became an autonomous district in the Russian Federation.
 - In 1936 Chechnya and Ingushetia were combined to form the Autonomous Republic of Chechen-Ingushetia.
 - Mass deportation of Chechens to Soviet Central Asia occurred in the 1940s. Chechen-Ingushetia was later abolished, and the Chechens were allowed to return to their homeland after 1956 during Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin's actions.
 - With the collapse of the Soviet Union, an independence movement emerged, led by the Chechen National Congress, but was opposed by Boris Yeltsin's government. Reasons for opposition included the claim that Chechnya was not an independent entity within the Soviet Union, that Chechnya's secession would create a precedent for other minority groups within the Russian Federation, and that Chechnya's abundant supply of oil was critical to Russia's economic prosperity.
 - Chechnya declared independence following a referendum in 1991 and appointed Dzhokhar Dudaev President.
 - The First Chechen War occurred from 1994 until 1996, in which Russian forces attempted to thwart Chechen secession. A peace agreement was signed in 1996 which gave Chechnya substantial autonomy, with full status settlement planned by December 2001.
 - Chechnya experienced brief self-rule until Russian initiated a military campaign to regain control of Chechnya in 1999, known as the Second Chechen War.
 - Since then, Russian authorities have established a pro-Russian Chechen regime (Chechnya). A regional constitution entered into effect in 2003 establishing Chechnya as an autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation.
 - The separatist movement (Chechen Republic of Ichkeria) in Chechnya continued following the Second Chechen War, with Aslan Maskhadov remaining President after having been elected in 1997 in an internationally monitored election. Chechen Foreign Affairs Minister, Ilvas Akhmadov, launched a peace plan, which aimed to transform Chechnya into a democratic and peaceful state over a transitional period of several years.
 - Democratically elected President Aslan Maskhadov was assassinated in 2005 and the effectiveness of the separatist movement disintegrated.
 - In March 2007 Ramzan Kadyrov, son of Chechnya's first pro-Moscow president, Akhmad Kadyrov, confirmed as appointed President of Chechnya by Russian President Vladimir Putin
 - Human rights groups allege that security forces under Kadyrov's control abduct and torture civilians suspected of ties to Chechnya's pro-Ichkeria groups, while forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions have been noted to be commonplace.

II. Recent Events

- European Court of Human Rights rules Russia is liable for the killing of over 50 Chechen civilians in 2000 (July 2007) as well for the disappearance of dozens of Chechens in 2002 and 2003 raids (June 2008).

- Council of Europe's human rights chief Thomas Hammarberg reported massive human rights abuses, including systematic torture (March 2007).
- Human rights groups boycotted Moscow-sponsored rights conference in Chechnya, calling it an attempt by the Kremlin to legitimize the egregious human rights record of Ramzan Kadyrov (March 2007).
- UN Committee against Torture reported illegal detention, unofficial detention centers, torture and inhuman treatment of prisoners, abductions and disappearances (November 2006).

III. Requests

- Removal of Russian-backed regime, including President Kadyrov, and empowerment of Ichkerian representatives as the legitimate government of the Chechen people.
- Broader economic and cultural autonomy.
- Elementary and secondary education in Chechen.
- Halt of human rights abuses and harassment by the Kadyrov government against Ichkerian political dissidents.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Unrecognized secessionist government of Chechnya
 - Prime Minister: Akhmed Khalidovich Zakayev (currently in exile in UK)
 - Former President: Doku Khamatovich Umarov (in office June 2006 – October 2007)

Circassia



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Population occupies the northwestern area of the Caucasus, mainly living in three small autonomous Republics of the Russian Federation: Adygeya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. In the former two Republics they form a minority, while in Kabardino-Balkaria they comprise a majority (55% of population).
 - Those Circassians living in Adygeya, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria typically refer to themselves Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabardins respectively.
 - The vast majority of Circassians, numbering in several million, live outside of the Russian Federation, mainly in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Israel, Europe and the United States.
 - Religion is divided between Muslim and Orthodox Christian.
- History
 - Prior to Russian conquest in 1864, Western Circassians lived in tribal societies and Eastern Circassians lived in highly stratified aristocratic societies. Following Russian seizure of power, the overwhelming majority of Circassians fled the Caucasus to Ottoman lands.
 - The Circassians who had remained in the North Caucasus participated, with the other North Caucasian peoples, in the short-lived independent state of Mountaineers Republic of the North Caucasus formed in 1918. The Republic became part of the new Soviet Union and was renamed the Soviet Mountain Republic in 1921.
 - Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Mountain Republic disintegrated. Throughout Soviet rule, Circassians inhabited lands in the following administrative units: Adygeya Autonomous Oblast, Cherkess Autonomous Oblast within Stavropol Krai, Kabardin Soviet Socialist Autonomous Republic, and Shapsough National Ogrug.
 - Following the Second World War, masses of Circassians were deported to Soviet Central Asia. They were allowed to return to the Caucasus in the late 1950s, during Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin's actions.
 - The Republics Adygeya and Kabardino-Balkaria have passed legislation giving Circassians constitutional rights to resettle in these Republics. 21 May has been designated in both Republics as an official mourning day for those Circassians who were forced to flee their homeland in the last century.

II. Recent Events

- Aslancheryy Tkhakushinov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's endorsed candidate, was inaugurated as President of the Adygeya Republic on 13 January 2007. Tkhakushinov supports Putin's position that Adygeya should not be subsumed by the surrounding Krasnodar Krai (January 2007).
- Twenty Circassian organizations signed a letter to the President of the European Parliament (EP), asking for recognition of mass persecution against the Circassian population during the Russian-Caucasian conflicts in the 18th and 19th centuries (October 2006). To date the EP has not adopted such a resolution.
- Circassians in Adygeya ask Russia's State Duma for recognition of mass persecution against the Circassian population during the Russian-Caucasian conflicts in the 18th and 19th centuries. Duma has thus far denied such recognition (January 2006).

III. Requests

- Preservation of ethnic and cultural identity.

- Increased spiritual, ethnic and political unity among Circassian communities and Diaspora in efforts to address the large distribution of Circassians and the resulting demographic disadvantage.
- Larger autonomy in regions where they live.
- International recognition of Russian persecution of the Circassian population in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- Calls for the recognition of the status of exiled Circassians and efforts to let them return to their homeland while maintaining dual citizenship (in their present country of residence and in Russia).

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- International Circassian Association
 - President – Mr. Boris Akbashev
- Cultural Foundation Caucasus



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - The Crimea Peninsula is situated in the Black Sea in the South of the Ukraine. It is comprised of approximately 29,600 km² and is connected with the mainland by an isthmus of 8 km. The capital is Simferopol.
 - The total population of Crimea is approximately 2,5 million of which 12% are Crimean Tatars (275.000), 68% are Russian, 23% Ukraine and 3% Belorussian, Armenian, Greek, German and Karaim. 90% of this population settled in Crimea after the entire Crimean Tatar population had been deported by Stalin in 1944.
 - The Crimean Tatar Diaspora is currently living in Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan and the United States. Smaller communities can be found in Finland, Lithuania, Russia, Belarus and Poland.
 - There are three state languages - Russian, Ukrainian and Tatar (which belongs to the Turkish group of languages). Russian is the official language used by the Government.
- History
 - In the 9th - 13th centuries Turkic tribes and Mongol Tatars entered the region.
 - In the 14th - 17th centuries the Crimean formed its own Khanate as a part of the Ottoman Empire.
 - In 1783 Russian Cossacks occupied the Crimea.
 - In 1917 - 1918 Crimea briefly declared its independence. In the years that followed approximately 1.25 million people fled to Turkey, Romania and Caucasus.
 - The Crimea received the status of Autonomous Soviet Republic in 1928.
 - In 1941 German troops invaded the Crimea.
 - Soviet troops conquered the peninsula over the Germans in 1944 and deported the entire Crimean Tatars population, mostly to present-day Uzbekistan. This deportation of the entire peoples and resulting deaths has been termed a 'genocide' by some. Estimates have indicated that approximately half of the deported Crimean Tatars did not survive the initial deportation or died within few months after arrival.
 - In 1967 the Parliament of the Soviet Union officially recognized the injustice of the deportation of the Crimean Tatars ordered by Stalin, but still forbade Crimean Tatars to return to their homeland.
 - Crimean Tatars were officially allowed to return to their homeland in 1988.
 - In 1991 the Crimean Tatars Parliament, Milli Mejlis, was founded and national sovereignty declared.
 - A new Constitution of the Ukraine was adapted in 1996 containing all the safeguards for a democratic, non-ethnic state and granting everyone the right to have a free choice to residence.
 - Crimean Tatars made progress in the struggle for recognition of their rights and for resettlement of repatriated Tatars. Tensions with the Russian-dominated government of the Crimea continue. A project sponsored by United Nations Development Program, is providing assistance in the area of housing and other facilities.
 - In 1998 Jemilev, Chairman of the Milli Mejlis, was awarded the Nansen Medal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his efforts for and commitment to the return of the Crimean Tatars to their homeland.
 - Though the Milli Mejlis and the Qurultay are independent national institutions, enjoying major support from the Crimean Tatar population, they have not been officially recognized by the Ukrainian state and thus lack any sort of legal basis. Over the last decade, however, the Ukrainian authorities have seemed to *de facto* recognize the Milli Mejlis. In 1999 a small step was put forward towards legalization of the Milli Mejlis when an Advisory Council to the President of Ukraine on Crimean

Tatar Matters was formed. At the same time, Advisory Councils for Regional Representatives were created in all regions of Crimea.

II. Recent Events

- Ukraine, whose human rights record has recently been investigated in June 2008 through the UN Human Rights Council's initiated Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has indicated that resettlement of previously deported peoples, amongst which are the Crimean Tatars, has been one of its priorities since 1991. However, preservation of the Crimean culture is still an area of concern for Tatars. As of June 2008 only 15 schools in Crimea teach Crimean Tatar language for example (June 2008).
- Crimean Tatars suffer, like many national minorities, from discrimination within the Ukraine. Some 200 Crimean Tatar grave stones were vandalized in February 2008, in what seems to have been an ethnically motivated act of racism. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has also expressed its concern over this issue in one of its reports concerning the situation in the Ukraine, issued in early 2008 (February 2008).

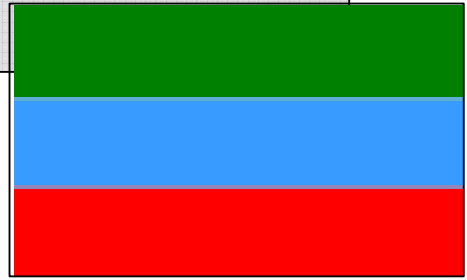
III. Requests

- One of the main goals remains the preservation of national interests, including enhancement of the reestablishment of political, socio-economic, cultural, linguistic and religious rights of the Crimean Tatar peoples.
- In order to have the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Crimean Tatars acknowledged and respected, the Crimean Tatars pursue the:
 - enhancement of the recovery of national and religious identity of the Crimean Tatar people;
 - enhancement of the use of the Crimean language, culture and customs;
 - increased efforts for the creation of programs which will engage Crimean Tatar youth in gaining experience in common international, political, business and humanitarian activities; and
 - enhancement of the participation of Crimean Tatars in the political process of the Autonomous Region of Crimea and the Ukraine.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- The Crimean Tatars are represented by the Crimean Tatars Parliament, the Qurultay (Kurultai), of which the Milli Mejlis is the executive body.
- Since the 1990's, former Soviet dissident Mustafa Abdülcemil Qırımöđlu, better known as Mustafa Jemilev (Cemilev/Dzhemilev/Jemilev) is the political leader of the Crimean Tatars and the chairman of the Milli Mejlis.
- The governmental structure of the Crimean Tatars works on three different administrative levels:
 - The Milli Mejlis, elected by the Qurultay;
 - The regional Mejlises, which represents territories similar to provinces;
 - The network of the Mejlises representing towns and villages.The latter two levels are elected by all Crimean Tatars.

Dagestan



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Dagestan is the largest Republic in the northern Caucasus and is part of the Russian Federation. It has a population of around 2.5 million people and a surface area of 50.300 km².
 - Dagestan has a diverse and multi-ethnic population consisting of more than two dozen distinct (language) groups, whereby 75% are of Northeastern Caucasian origin, 20% speak Turkic languages and the remaining are formed by Russians and other groups. The Avars, Dargins, Lezgins and Kumyk are the most numerous groups in Dagestan.
 - The dominant religion is Islam.
- History
 - The area of Dagestan has seen many rulers, including Arabs, Persians and Mongols, and finally Russia which became the dominant force in the early 19th century.
 - From 1918 to 1921, Dagestan, together with the other North-Caucasian peoples, formed the independent Republic of the Mountaineers of the North Caucasus.
 - The Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established on 20 January 1921 as part of the Soviet Union.
 - After World War II several peoples in Dagestan, most notably the Kumyk, were transported to Central Asia by Stalin, and eventually allowed to return in the late 1950's.
 - Since 1999 there has been frequent low level violent conflict as a result of a spillover from the Chechen war although there is no drive for independence of Dagestan.
 - High unemployment, corruption and Islamic ties with Chechnya have caused a significant number of youths to turn to violence and to the Islamic group called Shariat Jamaat that wants to establish a North Caucasian Emirate.
 - Conflicts between the government of Chechnya and Dagestan have led to violent skirmishes with the government of Dagestan claiming that Chechnya wants to increase its area at the expense of the Republic of Dagestan.

II. Recent Events

- Until 2006 the Republic was governed through a large number of ethnic districts. In autumn 2006, a voting list that removed ethnic districts and aimed to "de-ethnicise" politics replaced the old system. The March 2007 parliamentary elections were the first to be held under the new law. Under the 2006 electoral code, control of political parties took on new importance. The new law created significant obstacles to the participation for smaller parties. To be on the ballot a party needed to have at least one candidate in each of the Republic's 53 districts. The United Russia party took almost two-thirds of the vote (March 2008).
- Russia has increased its police forces in Dagestan and has also created new legislation to govern Dagestan (and all other regions of Russia) more directly from Moscow. In 2000, seven super districts were created which are overseen by plenipotentiary representatives. Dagestan is part of the South Russian super district. The duty of the representative was to make sure that local constitutions conform to the federal constitution and to implement all federal policies in Dagestan. Moscow also created another law, which gives the Russian president the authority to discharge the executive head of Dagestan and to ask the federal Duma to dissolve the legislative body. Following these actions, Dagestani autonomy has been limited and under strict control of Moscow (2000).

III. Requests

- Return of local self-government within Dagestan by reinstating the ethnic districts as they existed until 2006.
- Return of the autonomy status for Dagestan as it existed before the then Russian President Putin created new legislation that curbed the political power of Dagestan and placed it under direct control of Moscow.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Government of Republic of Dagestan
 - The Republic of Dagestan is a federal subject of Russia, located in the North Caucasus region with its capital at Makhachkala. These federal subjects are of equal federal rights in the sense that they have equal representation—two delegates each—in the Federation Council (upper house of the Russian parliament).
 - A federal subject is nominally autonomous, each has its own Constitution, President and Parliament; it is represented by the federal government in international affairs.
 - President: Mukhu Aliyev; 121 Member Parliament known as the People's Assembly; Prime Minister (Chairman of the Government): Shamil Zaynalov.

Gagauzia



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Gagauzia is an Autonomous Territorial Unit in Moldova, with its own elected parliament. It borders the Republic of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, with an approximate territory comprised of 1800 km². The capital is Comrat (32.000 inhabitants).
 - The population of Gagauzia is approximately 170.000. The Gagauz make up 82% of the population (137.500 people). The remaining inhabitants are Moldovans, Russians, Bulgarians and Ukrainians.
 - The Gagauz are a Turkic-language people. There are three official languages in the Gagauz Region: Gagauz, Moldovan and Russian.
 - The predominant religion in Gagauzia is Orthodox Christianity.
- History
 - The Gagauz are a people of Turkic decent whose ethno-genesis lies with the Oguz, Petchenegs and Cuman tribes that inhabited the plains of Central Asia, north of the Caspian and Aral Sea between 500 BC and 900 AD. In the 10th and 11th century these tribes migrated south and west. The tribes who moved west settled in the Balkans (Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania) where they adopted a sedentary lifestyle as well as Orthodox Christianity.
 - The first Gagauz state was established in the thirteenth century along the Black Sea coast in North East Bulgaria in Dobrogea. This state was dissolved in 1417 when it became part of the Ottoman Empire. The population remained in the territory and continued to speak the Gagauz language and practice the Orthodox Christian religion. Due to the shared ethnic relationship with the Turks, the Gagauz enjoyed a special autonomy within the Ottoman Empire.
 - From 1770 to 1812 the Gagauz migrated to Southern Bessarabia, where they settled and lived under Russian rule until the border changes of 1856, when the territory became part of Romania.
 - During World War II the Gagauz suffered greatly with much loss of life through German occupation, Stalin's work camps and the great famine of 1946/47.
 - In 1988 the movement known as the "Gagauz People" was created, which held its Assembly the following year. At this Assembly, a resolution was adopted to create an autonomous territory in southern Moldova with Comrat as its capital. After the independence of Moldova, the Gagauz authorities declared Gagauzia an autonomous Republic on 19 August 1990. Moldova deemed this act unconstitutional and thus did not recognize this independence. With help of Russian forces, the Gagauz authorities established firm control over their territory.
 - In 1991 a political party called Gagauz Halky (Gagauz nation) was established, which advocated autonomy for Gagauzia. Eventually, the moderate Gagauzian political views to accept autonomy within the state of Moldova came to predominate. Following negotiations with the Moldovan parliament an autonomous Republic of Gagauz-yeri was declared in December 1994.
 - In March 1995 a referendum was held to determine whether the population wanted to be part of the Autonomous Republic of Gagauz-yeri. After the elections of 1995, the Gagauz autonomous Republic focused on the revival of Gagauz Turkish culture and established ties with Turkey.

II. Recent Events

- Presently the National Assembly of the Region of Gagauzia rules the autonomous region of Gagauz-yeri, whereby Moldova control's the external relations and defence. The leader (Bashkan) of Gagauzia also holds the position of vice-prime-minister of the Republic of Moldova (2008).

- Parliamentary elections held in November-December 2003 for the National Assembly, were won by the block of the former communists and the independent "For Flourishing Gagauzia in the Composition of the Renewed Moldova". 23 out of 33 members of the National Assembly are Communists (December 2003).
- Economic progress has been high on the agenda, especially because Gagauz-yeri has been an impoverished region. In 2001 a Gagauz-Romanian-Russian dictionary was published through the "Cainac" Fund for the Support and Development of the Gagauzian Science and Culture, attached to the Moldovan Academy of Sciences (2001).

III. Requests

- The Autonomous Republic of Gagauz-Yeri does not hold any influence over allocation of budget with regards to promotion of culture, in particular that of the Gagauz language. Resources and teaching materials are in dire need in order to preserve the Gagauz language and through it, its culture.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- The Autonomous Republic of Gagauz-Yeri is represented by its legally elected representative body - the Peoples Assembly of Gagauzia. The elected leader of the Gagauz-Yeri parliament is called Bashkan (governor) and is elected for a four-year term. Mihail Formuzal was elected in December 2006 as Bashkan of Gagauzia. The Bashkan of Gagauzia is a member of the government of the Republic of Moldova issued by decree from the president of the Republic of Moldova.
- The Executive Committee is the permanent executive body of Gagauzia. The Executive Committee members are appointed by the Parliament for a four-year term as proposed by the Governor of Gagauzia. The Executive Committee has the right to initiate proposed legislation to the Parliament.
- The leaders of each Gagauzian sectoral administration are members of their corresponding Board of Ministers in the government of Moldova.
- Gagauzia is governed in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, the "Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia", Republican and local laws, as well as other normative acts issued by the Gagauzian Parliament. The Moldovan Parliament accepted the law "On the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia", giving Gagauzia the right to independently determine issues relating to its political, economic and cultural development. In light of this, Gagauzia has its own police force. In the event that the Republic of Moldova's status as an independent country changes, the people of Gagauzia have the right to self-determination.
- Gagauzia has adopted its own symbols that include a coat of arms, flag and hymn, which are used along with the national symbols of the Republic of Moldova.

Ingushetia



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Located between Chechnya to the east and North Ossetia to the west and borders Georgia in the south. Capital: Magas. Area: 4.000 km². Population: estimated 400.000.
 - Religion is predominantly Islam.
 - Designated a free economic zone. Mineral resources investigated to date consist of high-quality oil (probable reserves of more than 60 million tons), gas fields and mineral deposits.
 - The main crops grown in Ingushetia are corn, wheat, oats, barley, sugar beets, sunflowers, and potatoes. Cattle, sheep (primarily fine-fleeced breeds), and pig farming are also well developed.
- History
 - Ingushetia became part of the Russian Empire in 1810, after which many Ingush were forced to emigrate, mostly to Ottoman lands.
 - Between 1921 and 1924 Ingushetia was part of the Autonomous Soviet Mountain Republic, which was composed of Kabardians, Chechens, Circassians, Ingush, Ossetians, Balkars and the Karachai.
 - In 1924, following the disintegration of the Soviet Mountain Republic, Ingushetia became an autonomous district of the Russian Federation, however political and intellectual leadership of Ingushetia was deported.
 - In 1936 Chechnya and Ingushetia were combined to form the Autonomous Republic of Chechen-Ingushetia.
 - Like their fellow populations in the Caucasus, the Ingush were deported to Soviet Central Asia in the 1940s, and their territory was dissolved, with portions (Prigorodni District) transferred to adjacent North Ossetia. The Ingush were allowed to return to Caucasus after 1956, during Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin's actions.
 - The Republic of Ingushetia formally became a Republic within the Russian Federation in 1991.
 - An agreement, signed in 1995 between Ingushetia and North Ossetia, addressed the issue of displaced Ingush living in North Ossetia, which caused violence to erupt in 1992 in Prigorodni District.
 - In 1995, with the outbreak of the first Russo-Chechen war, the number of refugees in Ingushetia from both conflicts doubled. According to the UN, per every citizen of Ingushetia there was one refugee from Ossetia and Chechnya.
 - The second Russo-Chechen war, which started in 1999, brought more refugees: 240.000 from Chechnya plus 60.000 from North Ossetia.

II. Recent Events

- According to the Committee to Protect Journalists Zurab Tsechoyev, the editor of the Ingush-based human rights website Mashr (www.mashr.org), was abducted in by some 50 masked gunmen and interrogated for five hours about publications on the website concerning a list of members of the Federal Security Service (FSB) who had allegedly participated in the kidnapping and killing of Ingush civilians (July 2008).
- On March 12, 2008 Ingush President Zyazikov dissolved the regional government. He did not offer a specific reason for his decision to dissolve government, but called for further social and economic reforms. It is believed Ingushetia had been plagued by guerrilla raids on federal forces and local authorities in recent months. Government critics attribute the growing violence to anger fueled by alleged abductions, beatings, unlawful arrests and killings of suspects by government forces and local allied paramilitaries (March 2008).

- Ingush rejected Russia's proposed settlement plan to house displaced persons, calling the proposed site a "reservation" and demanding the return of their ancestral land (March 2006).
- Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour visits Ingushetia, during which the Parliament of Ingushetia called for diplomatic assistance to overcome the consequences of the conflict that erupted in 1992 with North Ossetia (February 2006).
- Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women of the UN Human Rights Commission, Dr. Yakin Erturk, visited the Caucasus, where she noted disparaging socio-economic conditions in Ingushetia and increasing human rights abuses (December 2004).

III. Requests

- Urgent need for vigorous monitoring in Ingushetia due to the ongoing human rights violations by security forces.
- Urge Russia to bring to justice those individual that have committed serious human rights abuses.
- Urge Russia to release detained human rights activists and independent journalists, such as Zurab Tsechoyev.

IV. Organization/ Spokesperson

- Government of Republic of Ingushetia
 - President: Murat Zyazikov; 34 Member Parliament known as the People's Assembly, Prime Ministers (Chairmen of the government) Kharum Dzeytov.
 - In the 1980s, Zyazikov was a member of the KGB and later the FSB. On May 23, 2002 he was elected president of the Republic in controversial circumstances. Zyazikov is considered a close ally with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, especially because of his province's proximity to Chechnya.
 - The Republic of Ingushetia is a federal subject of Russia, thereby granted it two delegates in the Federation Council (upper house of the Russian parliament).
 - A federal subject is nominally autonomous, each has its own constitution, president and parliament; is represented by the federal government in international affairs; and is meant to be home to a specific ethnic minority; in this case the Ingush.

Nagorno-Karabakh



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - The *de facto* Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh is located in the Southern Caucasus region, approximately 270 kilometers west of Baku, capital of Azerbaijan and quite close to the Armenian border.
 - Nagorno-Karabakh is an enclave of approximately 4400 km² and is surrounded entirely by Azerbaijan. Its nearest point to Armenia is across the Lachin corridor, which is approximately 4 km across and is in effect the only route to Armenia. The capital is Stepanakert.
 - Recent data on the make up of the population are not available, but are estimated at a total of 192.000, of which 76% is Armenian, 23% is Azerbaijani and the remaining made up of Russian and Kurdish minorities.
 - The main language spoken is Armenian – due to the make up of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh – but the specific dialect of Armenian spoken in Nagorno-Karabakh has very distinct influences of Russian, Turkish and Persian.
 - Most of the Armenian population is Christian, belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. Other forms of Christianity and Judaism form minority religions.
- History
 - The Nagorno-Karabakh region has been disputed since both Armenia and Azerbaijan gained independence from the Russian Empire in 1918.
 - When the Soviet Union established control over the area, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was created in 1923/24 within Azerbaijan, as its population at the time consisted for over 94% of Armenians. As the Azerbaijani population expanded, discrimination against the Armenians thrived and hostilities between the two groups sparked by the 1960s.
 - As the Soviet Union started to fall apart, the fight over the disputed territory flared up, resulting in full fledged war between 1988 and 1994, witnessing the heaviest years of the war in 1992/93.
 - On 10 December 1991 a referendum was held within Nagorno-Karabakh, which approved the creation of an independent stated from Azerbaijan and established the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. No international organization or country – including Armenia – recognized the Republic.
 - Since a ceasefire was signed in 1994, Nagorno-Karabakh and several Azerbaijani regions around it remain under the joint control of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh military. Ever since the ceasefire, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been brokering peace talks which have been mediated by the so-called Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

II. Recent Events

- The 17 July 2007 presidential elections were won by Bako Sahakyan. These elections were deemed to have been organized in a free and fair manner by the international election observers (July 2007).
- On 10 December 2006 a referendum was held amongst the citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh, which resulted in a vote in favour of a new constitution. The European Union, the OSCE and the GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) have rejected the outcome of the referendum, as the newly adopted constitution describes the territory as a 'sovereign, democratic legal and social state' (December 2006).
- 19 June 2005 saw parliamentary elections in Nagorno-Karabakh, which were also deemed free and transparent by international observers to the elections (June 2005).

III. Requests

- The government of Nagorno-Karabakh in essence still wants the independence they have declared recognized, in light of their right to self-determination. However, what has been negotiated so far and whether there are any other options open to the government of Nagorno-Karabakh, such as an autonomous region within Azerbaijan, remains unclear, as most of the negotiations with the Minks Group of the OSCE remain confidential.

IV. Organiztion/ Spokesperson

- Nagorno-Karabakh is a democracy, headed by a President, who also has the main executive powers. The President is chosen directly for a period of five years, with a maximum of two periods. The current president is Bako Sahakyan.
- The Prime Minister, currently Arayik Harutyunyan, is appointed (and dismissed) by the President. The Prime Minister is the chairman of the government, which exists of the Prime Minister, the Vice-Prime Minister and 11 Ministers. In addition the Commissioners of the national security, the police force and the tax and customs administration are part of the government.
- The legislative tasks belong to the directly elected parliament which consists of 33 seats. The members of the parliament are elected for five years.

Pridnestrovia (Transnistria)



I. Background

- Geography/ Statistics
 - Located within the internationally recognized borders of Moldavia, with the official status of an autonomous territory. Although not recognized, it is *de facto* independent. Capital: Triaspol. Area: 4.163 km². Population: estimated 547.000
 - Religion is predominantly Christian.
 - The economy is based on a mix of heavy industry (steel production), electricity production and manufacturing (textile production), which together accounts about 80% of the total industrial output.
- History
 - On 2 September 1990 the Republic of Transnistria was unilaterally proclaimed by the Soviet Republic, as separate from Moldova. However this decision was later annulled and reintegrated Transnistria in Moldavia.
 - On 25 August 1991, the Republic of Transnistria declared its independence.
 - On 27 August 1991, the Republic of Moldavia declared its independence, whose territory included Transnistria.
 - After Moldova became a member of the United Nations on 2 March 1992 it authorized concerted military action against Transnistria, which had been attacking police outposts loyal to the Moldovan government.
 - The Transnistrian forces were aided by forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Russian Federation, who in turn stationed in Transnistria. This eventually led to a cease-fire agreement was signed on 21 July 1992 and the current status quo.

II. Current Events

- In 2007 the registration of the Social Democratic Party was allowed. This party is allegedly in favor of a union with Moldova. In the latest presidential election (December 2006) the registration of opposition candidate Andrey Safonov was delayed until a few days before the vote, so that he had little time to conduct an election campaign (2006 – 07).
- According to the 2006 Transnistrian referendum carried out by the Transnistrian government the population voted overwhelmingly in favour of "independence from Moldova and free association with Russia" (2006).
- In November 2003, Dmitry Kozak, a counselor of the former Russian President Vladimir Putin, proposed a memorandum on the creation of an asymmetric federal Moldovan state, with Moldova holding a majority and Transnistria being a minority part of the federation. Known as "the Kozak memorandum", it did not coincide with the Transnistrian position, which sought equal status between Transnistria and Moldova, but was giving Transnistria veto powers, which hence agreed to sign it. Vladimir Voronin was initially supportive of the plan, but refused to sign it after internal opposition and international pressure from the OSCE and US, and after Russia had endorsed the Transnistrian demand to maintain a Russian military presence for the next 20 years as a guarantee for the intended federation. The refusal by the Moldovan side resulted in the sudden and long-term cooling of relations between Moldova and Russia, and halted further progress in the settlement negotiations (2003).

III. Requests

- The two main political parties in Transnistria, the Republican Party (*Respublikanskaya Partiya Pridnestroviya*) and Renewal (*Obnovleniye*) oppose any transfer of sovereignty to Moldova. The Social Democratic Party headed by former local MP Alexander Radchenko is the only functioning party in the region to favor reintegration. However, negotiations

under OSCE auspices have been ongoing since 1997 based on the premise that better relations are desirable, and that the restrictions on communications, movement of people, and trade flows must be removed.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Government of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic
 - President: Igor Smirnov, he has held the position since 1991; 43 Members of Parliament.

South Ossetia



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - South Ossetia is a *de facto* independent Republic of about 3900 km² and with a population of 70.000.
 - The population of South Ossetia consists of Ossetians who speak Ossetic, which is a Persian language that is also spoken in Northern Ossetia (a Republic within Russia). The total population of Ossetians is about 700.000 of which 70.000 live in South Ossetia.
 - Most Ossetians are Christian.
- History
 - After the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801, part of Ossetia formed the Ossetian 'okrug' within the Tiflis governorate from 1846 to 1859 and in 1922 received autonomy within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic as South Ossetia.
 - In 1991 war broke out between the Georgian government and Ossetian forces. In light of a military coup against President Gamsakhurdia and the threat of Georgia disintegrating, Georgia agreed to negotiations to avoid confrontation with Russia. In June 1992, the Head of the State Council of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian President Boris Yeltsin met to discuss the question of South Ossetia. A ceasefire was agreed upon and on 14 July 1992, a peacekeeping operation began that left the territory of South Ossetia under the control of the Ossetians.
 - In 1992 the South Ossetians held a referendum for independence that was not internationally recognized, but resulted in a large turnout and support for independence.

II. Recent Events

- On 1 August 2008, Georgia invaded South Ossetia and started the latest Georgian-Ossetian war. On 8 August 2008, Russia sent troops across the Georgian border to South Ossetia to stop Georgia's massive offensive against its South Ossetia and forced Georgia to retreat its forces (August 2008).
- South Ossetians nearly unanimously approved a referendum on 12 November 2006 calling for independence from Georgia. The referendum was hugely popular, winning between 98 and 99% of the ballots (November 2006).

III. Requests

- Since South Ossetia first declared its independence from Georgia in 1992 it has actively pursued its full recognition by the international community.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- President: Eduard Kokoity, the fourth president to be elected since 1991. Not recognized by Georgia.
- Provisional Administration led by Dmitry Sanakoyev. Recognized by Georgia.

Southern Azerbaijan



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - Southern Azerbaijan is a region in north-western Iran, which lies south of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.
 - The region's most important cities and provinces include Ardabil, which is located in the north-east of Iran and has great geographical and environmental diversity.
 - Southern Azerbaijan is populated by Shi'a Muslim, Azerbaijani Turks. The total population that can claim to be of Azerbaijani descent in Iran is estimated at up to 30 million people.
 - There are large communities of Azerbaijani Turks living abroad, including in Azerbaijan, Turkey, Russia, Georgia, U.S.A, Kazakhstan, Germany, Ukraine and Canada.
 - The Azerbaijanis speak Azerbaijani, which is a Turkic language.
 - At present, nearly 8 million Southern Azerbaijanis live outside Southern Azerbaijan, where more than a million of them are political immigrants, living in Europe and America. A million of them live in southern Iran while up to several million live in the city of Teheran.
- History
 - Quarrels occurred between the State of Gajar and Tsarist Russia which lead to the collapse of the Gajar State and the division of Azerbaijan. Prior to the Russians arrival, the area of Azerbaijan was 410.000 km².
 - The Azerbaijani borders had stretched from Darband to the Province of Hamadan. The total area of Northern Azerbaijan, during Russian occupation, decreased to 130.000 km². As a result of the "territorial reforms" implemented by Russia, Northern Azerbaijan had been weakened and made smaller. In 1918 this downsized territory became the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan.
 - When the Gajar State collapsed in 1925, Southern Azerbaijan was annexed by Iran. After 1925 the Azerbaijani East was incorporated into West Azerbaijan which lead to a massive influx of non-Azerbaijanis to the predominantly Azerbaijani cities of Gazvin and Hamadan. After the Islamic Republic was founded, this policy had stopped; however, it continued again immediately after the Iran-Iraq War.
 - The Iranian regime currently in power is dismissive and oppressive of national minorities at large and the Southern Azerbaijanis are no exception to this, even though they can be considered to be one of the better integrated minorities within Iran.
 - The civil struggle for the restoration of the national rights of the Southern Azerbaijani Turks including the Tehran Turks is still continuing.

II. Recent Events

- Following peaceful demonstrations marking the International Mother Language Day during which activists called for education in Azerbaijani Turkic, over 100 Southern Azerbaijani people were arrested and detained in multiple cities across Iran. The incident was condemned by various human rights organizations, including Amnesty International (March 2007).
- Protests and riots erupted across Southern Azerbaijan in reaction to a newspaper cartoon depicting Azerbaijanis as cockroaches. Several hundred people were reported to have been detained or killed by Iranian security forces reacting to the protests (March 2006).

III. Requests

- Respect of cultural and linguistic rights.
- Pushes for creation of a unit of a con-federal, secular and democratic government in Iran, or in the alternative self-determination through independence of Southern Azerbaijan.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- SANAM (Southern Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement) was founded by Mahmoudali Chehraganli in 1995, who started the movement in order to strengthen the national consciousness of the Azerbaijani Turks and to pursue the struggle for Azerbaijani rights.
 - President of SANAM: Mahmoudali Chehraganli.

Talysh



I. Background

- Geography / Statistics
 - The Talysh live along the coast of the Caspian Sea in Azerbaijan and Iran, often referred to by the Talysh community as Talyshstan. The majority of the population lives near the Azerbaijani-Iranian border in and around Lenkoran, Astara and Lerik.
 - Population: +800.000. Language: Talysh.
 - Religion is predominantly Islam.
- History
 - In the 1828 peace treaty of Turkmenchajsky, the Talysh lands were divided between Russia and Iran.
 - The Talysh were incorporated into the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic in 1920, after which the Talysh culture experienced a revival, including Talysh language schools as well as books and media printed in Talysh.
 - Repression increased in the 1930s and 1940s, resulting in the closing of Talysh schools and the exile of one of the most important Talysh intellectuals of the time, Z. Akhmedzoda, to Siberia, where he died in 1942.
 - Talysh nationality was removed from official registers and replaced with Azerbaijani. Not until the 1989 population census in the USSR were citizens allowed to specify their nationality as Talysh.
 - In 1991 Azerbaijan seceded from the Soviet Union.
 - A Talysh political movement began in 1993, which resulted in the establishment of the Talysh National Movement.

II. Recent Events

- On 24 June 2008 at a closed trial Novruzali Mamedov, editor of the Talysh minority language newspaper and head of the Talysh Cultural Centre, was sentenced to ten years imprisonment on charges of treason (June 2008).
- The first issue of the independent Talysh newspaper "Shavnisht" meaning "Nightly Gathering", devoted to the history, culture, literature, folklore, traditions and life of the Talysh people, was released in April 2006, after which its journalists and editor-in-chief were reportedly harassed and intimidated by Azerbaijani authorities (April 2006).
- The NGO International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities (IFPRERLOM) submitted an appeal to the (then) UN Commission on Human Rights to call upon Azerbaijan to guarantee the preservation of the cultural, linguistic, religious and national identity of the Talysh people (March 2006).
- OSCE election observers reported that the November 2005 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were undermined by significant deficiencies in vote counting and therefore did not meet international election standards. Tens of thousands of opposition activists gathered in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, for several weeks to protest the election of President Ilham Aliyev (November 2005). Aliyev remains President of Azerbaijan to this day.

III. Requests

- Call for the recognition of the Talysh nation.

IV. Organization/Spokesperson

- Talysh National Movement
 - Leader: Alikram Hummatov (in exile in Europe).



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