

Speech by Michael Chernov at the UNHRC Twelfth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues, **Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities**
panel: Human rights and minority language education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Michael Chernov, I am an expert with Historical Memory Foundation and also head of the Foundation for Support of Jewish Culture based in Moscow.

First of all I would like to thank the UNHRC and the Forum for the possibility to speak here on these very important issues for Jewish minority in Russia.

What is the basic thing, the core of the Jewish identity? It is the religion and the religious education. It doesn't matter if you are a believer or an atheist: the only thing which lets the communities to exist for centuries and not to disperse is Judaism. So strong and stable, prosperous community needs Jewish education including studying of Hebrew for the ability to read the Holy Scripture. That is our basic Human Right – to keep our identity and identity of our children.

And what is the situation in Russia with the Jewish minority and Jewish education to guarantee the community's existence and development? Formally, it's OK. Jews in Russia have freedom. You can teach and study whatever you need. But in reality we do not have a high level and officially recognized by Jewish bodies and by Government bodies both system of the Jewish education.

So what we really do need. We need help and support of the Russian Government and International Jewish bodies and educational institutions to establish Jewish higher education in Russia. We should jointly work out educational specialty standards of Theology, Pedagogy and Jewish Education, Work with National Communities etc. and then to establish a special faculty at one of the prominent universities thus taking the first step to the full scale independent Jewish educational system in Russia (including in Jewish languages). Let us to preserve and develop the unique Jewish community of Russia for the sake of humanity and tolerance.

Thank you for your attention!

Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages

Ladies and Gentlemen!

The importance of education in, and the teaching of, minority languages for preserving both ethnos and language itself is well known. Every nation and ethnic group faces absolute freedom in Russia concerning teaching and learning languages. Most of the problems minorities face due to natural process of emancipation in large and developed cultures.

If we talk about the Russian Jews – the Russian Jewry is a complex phenomenon itself. What is minority language for a Russian Ashkenazi Jew? Yiddish as a daily spoken language is dead. Hebrew is a national language but basically seen as a foreign one, not a mother-tongue for those living in Russia. For smaller sub-ethnic Jewish groups like Iranian speaking Mountain Jews or Bukharian Jews the problem is actual and they deal with it within their communities.

Thank you very much!