

Kaffed

Thank you, Madame Chair.

I am representing the Federation of Caucasian Associations in Türkiye and the member of Circassians community. Circassians face legal discrimination and inequalities in Türkiye and also in the Russian Federation where Circassians are a minoritized in their homeland. As the result of the Russo-Caucasian war between 1763 – 1864 Circassians were exiled to the Ottoman Empire. Their population in Türkiye is now larger than in their homeland which is today within the borders of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation has not recognized the right of Circassians to reside in their homeland where they continue to face discrimination in their exercise of fundamental rights. A recent example was the partial mobilization in 2022 when non-Russians were targeted for military draft and sent to the front. Circassian culture has mostly been assimilated into the dominant cultures both in Türkiye and the Russian Federation and their language is under threat. Türkiye doesn't legally recognize communities not identified by the Treaty of Lausanne as minorities. Yet, the state's commitment under article 39 of the Treaty of Lausanne is to allow non-Turkish speaking citizens to use their own language in all areas of life. The only positive step taken legally towards realizing this right was introduction of elective courses in Circassian and Abkhazian languages in secondary schools. However, practices such as not printing textbooks, obstacles imposed on parents by officials, and not assigning teaching staff to these courses, have undermined this progress, are not sufficient to address the threat to the languages.

My key recommendations are for the Russian Federation to recognize the unconditional right to reside of Circassians; for Türkiye to enforce legislation to ensure the protection of identity, culture, mother tongue for all minorities, and in accordance of the core treaties and sustainable development goals no. 10 and 16 of UN.

Thank you.