



DÜNYA AHISKA TÜRKLERİ BİRLİĞİ
THE WORLD UNION of AHISKA TURKS

DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

A total of 92,307 Turks consisting of 45,985 children, 18,923 elderly and 27,399 women living in and around Samtshe-Cavaheti region were deported from their homeland (Georgian SSR). They were citizens by the decision of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) administration on November 14th-15th in 1944. During the exile, about 17 thousand innocent people lost their lives due to hunger, colds and disease. The Ahıska Turks whose ancestral properties have been confiscated and all human rights have been violated, were subjected to unfair, injustice and inhuman practices that trampled on human rights and dignity.

In the decrees published by the USSR in 1956 and 1968, statements such as “the rights of Ahıskans were returned” were used but were not implemented. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, in its resolution on November 14, 1989, condemned the 1944 deportation as a grave crime committed against international law, human nature and social order. No steps were taken to return the Ahıska Turks to their homeland. The injustice experienced has continued to this day. When the USSR collapsed, the Ahıska Turks faced new problems in the countries they lived in. Today, Ahıska Turks live dispersed in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey and the USA. They cannot return to their ancestral homeland and their return was prevented by illegal practices.

The government of the Republic of Georgia made a treaty with the Council of Europe in 1999 and the Law No. 5261-PC adopted in 2007 as a condition for admission to the Council. (Opinion 209, 1999) The treaty recognized the rights of Ahıska Turks to return to Georgia, recognizing it as a unilateral international legal process and making a unilateral promise. However, the necessary conditions for the “realization of historical justice” and the “honorable and voluntary” return specified in the relevant law and have not been met. The Ahıska Turks have not been able to return to their homeland. Despite the abundance of documents required for return, the complexity of the return procedure, and the arbitrariness and openness to abuse in the evaluation of applications, between 2008 and 2009, more than 20 thousand people applied to the Georgian authorities to return to their homeland, but only 8900 of them were accepted. As of 2017, only 1998 people were granted repatriant status, and only 494 of them were granted conditional citizenship. We would like to point out that the family integrity of the 494 people who were granted conditional citizenship was not protected, some members of the families who consciously applied were not granted citizenship, and for this reason, those who wanted to return could not benefit from this right.

The World Union of Ahıska Turks on behalf of all Ahıska Turks have been exiled and were victims of crimes against humanity for 81 years. There were demands that relevant countries and organizations fulfill their responsibilities and eliminate the human rights violations suffered by Ahıska Turks as follows:

1. **The government of the Republic of Georgia**, as it accepted, should remedy the unfair treatment of the Ahıska Turks in a fair way and implement the law No. 5261-PC in a healthy and lawful manner. It is the greatest desire of the Ahıska Turks that Georgia makes the necessary legal arrangements to ensure that the Ahıska Turks enjoy all the rights granted to Georgian citizens, including the right to citizenship and property, in accordance with human rights and dignity.

2. As the legal heir of the USSR, the **Russian Federation** should recognize that what is being done to the Ahıska Turks is an injustice, condemning the deportation, contributing to covering the material and moral losses of the exiled people. Providing material, legal and political support for the repatriation of the Ahıska to their homeland.

3. **The Council of Europe** should closely monitor the issue, which was registered in 1999 and given all kinds of support for a solution. The Council of Europe should contribute to the issues that reflect the Council of Georgia's reports. (e.g. Doc. 12554, March 28, 2011) An example is: "the rejection of the application only on technical grounds", "the lack of flexibility regarding the documents" and "the fact that the Ahıska Turks who want to immigrate to Georgia by their own means face more obstacles than other foreigners who want to settle in the country." We need to activate the necessary mechanisms to ensure the repatriation should be a follower and apart of the solution.

4. Within the framework of international agreements and the friendly, good-neighbourly relations with Georgia, it is the greatest aspiration of all Ahıska Turks that the Republic of Türkiye - which is closely concerned with resolving this issue - will continue its support by taking an active role in addressing the rights violations suffered by the Ahıska Turks, particularly in the process of their return.

Human Rights Day which should be celebrated as a holiday for humanity is a painful and sad day for the Ahıska Turks. They have been deprived of their rights to property, to travel, the right to citizenship and the right to equality specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the discrimination they have been subjected to. A democratic, free, just and civilized world cannot be built on the political, ethnic, religious, cultural and economic discrimination that the Ahıska Turks have been experiencing for 81 years.

ZİYATDIN KASSANOV
PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD UNION OF
AHİSKA TURKS
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