



World Directory of Minorities

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Turks

Profile

According to the 2002 census, there were 77,959 Turks in Macedonia. They speak Turkish and most are Muslim. They are dispersed and many live in villages.

Historical context

During the Ottoman period, a large body of Turkish administrators and indentured rural labourers settled in Macedonia. Their numbers were augmented by Turkish-speaking Muslims who fled from the Caucasus region in the nineteenth century. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the number of Turks in the Republic of Macedonia fell substantially because of emigration to Turkey and, possibly also, of assimilation into the Albanian community. Turks were recognized in the former Yugoslavia as a nationality and were allowed educational and cultural rights. The post-1991 transition to a market economy had a big impact on the Turkish community and resulted in increased levels of poverty and high unemployment. As with other smaller minorities in Macedonia, Turks cannot participate effectively in public life, which is dominated by ethnic Macedonian-Albanian relations.

Current issues

The Turkish minority continues to chafe at limited educational opportunities in the Turkish language; after fourth grade, instruction in Turkish is available only in very few schools throughout the country. Many children do not continue their education after the fourth grade, as they cannot afford to travel the great distances, nor purchase the schoolbooks and materials required to continue their education. Turks do not participate effectively in public life, and have only two representatives in the national parliament. Following redistricting in 2004, there are no majority-Turkish municipalities. Turks remain under-represented in public-sector employment, and complain of a dearth of Turkish-language media.

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