

## Adygey

### Profile

According to the 2002 national census, there are 128,528 Adygey in the Russian Federation. The majority of Adygey live in the Adygey Republic, formerly the Adygey AO in Krasnodar Krai, (estimated population 446,000: Adygey 22 per cent, Russian 68 per cent, others 10 per cent) and in Krasnodar Krai. There is also a large diaspora Adygey community in Turkey, although retention of the Adygey language is reportedly very low among this community.

### Historical context

Adygey were part of the Circassian people until the 1920s, when they were divided from Cherkess and Kabards. Adygey areas became an AO in July 1922. Leading members of the Adygey resented the fact that they were not given republican status. In 1991 Adygeya was given the status of an autonomous republic, albeit one entirely enclosed within the Krasnodar region.

Of all of the territories of the North Caucasus, the Adygey region historically has had the highest concentration of Russians. In August 1991 Adygey created a special commission to oversee the return of expatriates, primarily the large communities in Turkey. The first All-Adygey Congress was held on 28 March 1992. Large numbers of Russians in the Adygey regions have identified themselves as Kuban Cossacks. They have demanded their own Cossack region in Krasnodar Krai but have also supported the Adygey. Some Adygey have participated in the movement to unite Circassian peoples.

### Current issues

Inter-ethnic relations in Adygeya have been complicated by two major factors. The first is the trend towards the amalgamation of national territories designated for specific ethnic groups to larger neighbouring districts. Since 2004 some Russian officials, including figures within the Krasnodar regional administration, have proposed such a merger for the Adygey Republic and Krasnodar region. Supporting arguments for such a merger include the fact that Adygeya is already an enclave entirely surrounded by Krasnodar, Adygeya's dependence on subsidies from Moscow and the economic benefits to Adygeya arising from Krasnodar's relatively prosperous economy rooted in tourism. Slavs in Adygeya support the merger, claiming that they suffer ethnic discrimination at the hands of the Adygey minority. They claim that their status as a majority should ensure proportionate representation in republican structures regardless of the fact that they live in the designated national homeland of another group. Adygey leaders are opposed to the merger, which would leave them a tiny minority within a much larger Russian-dominated region. In April 2005 a mass rally protesting the proposed merger took place in Maikop, while in February 2006 the lower chamber of the Adygey parliament rejected a draft law on referenda, which would have provided a legal basis for a republican referendum on the merger.

Adygeya has also seen knock-on effects from the conflict in Chechnya and elsewhere in the North

Caucasus. In July 2005 a small group of Muslims protested against the construction of a Russian Orthodox religious monument to St Nicholas the Wonderworker, while in October of the same year armed police officers allegedly assaulted a group of Muslims leaving Maikop mosque, including the mosque's imam.

Also in July 2005 Adyghey and Cherkess organizations in Adygheya sent a written appeal to the Russian State Duma to issue a formal condemnation of tsarist policies towards Circassian groups as 'genocide'; the appeal was rejected.