

Macedonians

Profile

The Albanian government recognizes as Macedonian only the minority living in the Prespa area and excludes Macedonians living in other areas, especially those in Golo Brdo who are mainly Muslim. Elementary schooling in Macedonian is provided. A radio and TV programme in Macedonian was broadcast by the Korca state radio and TV station. The areas where Macedonians live are extremely poor and many survive as day labourers in the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians in the Prespa region are Eastern Orthodox Christian and those in Golo Brdo are predominantly Muslim.

Historical context

The part of Macedonia known as Mala Prespa was given to Albania by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Albania is the only neighbouring country which recognizes the status of the Macedonian ethnic minority, but restricts it to the region of Mala Prespa. There has been instruction in Macedonian in this region since 1945 in elementary education up to the fifth form, for which textbooks have been issued by the state. It is expected that the right to instruction in their mother tongue, according to international standards, will also be extended to pupils of Macedonian ethnic affiliation in the other parts of Albania. The introduction of instruction in Macedonian in secondary education is also expected. Albania must respect the cooperation agreements in the field of education signed four years ago.

There are several organized and active associations of Macedonians in Albania, but the opportunities for political activity are small because the state does not financially support their organization. It was as late as 1993 that the first periodical in Macedonian, the journal *Mir* (Peace), appeared.

Current issues

The four Macedonian organizations in Albania, *Mir* (Peace), Gora, MED (Macedonian Aegean Society) and Prespa, boycotted the 2001 census in Albania because there was no option for Macedonian in the census list. In 2003, the Association of Macedonians in Albania (consisting of the four organizations) conducted their own census of the number of Macedonians in Albania. It estimated a population of between 120,000 and 350,000, while the Albanian state only officially recognizes 5,000.

In its 2005 report the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recorded complaints by ethnic Macedonians that not all sections of their community had access to mother tongue education. This was due to the fact that they live outside of areas previously categorized as 'minority zones' during the communist era. ECRI notes that, under Albanian law, minority-language schools are only established if a sufficient number of parents must request such a school and they must be recognized as belonging to that ethnicity. The Albanian authorities indicated to ECRI that they check the civil registry in order to determine ethnicity. However, members of minority groups living outside of areas previously categorized as 'minority zones' have difficulties registering their ethnic belonging in the civil registry.

ECRI furthermore recommends that the Albanian authorities ensure that people are not denied the possibility of having their ethnic identity officially recognized simply due to their geographic location in the country outside of areas previously categorized as minority zones.

In 2005 most of the Macedonian organizations united into the political party Macedonian Alliance for European Prosperity, which participated in the 2007 elections.

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