

Nogai

Profile

According to the 2002 national census, there are 90,666 Nogai in the Russian Federation. The majority of Nogai live in the Nogai steppe of northern Dagestan and in the Chechen, Ingush, and Karachay-Cherkess Republics and in Stavropol Krai. This geographical dispersal has weakened the promotion of Nogai ethnic claims.

Historical context

The Nogai are thought to be descended from a 13th century fusion of the Turkic Qipchaks and their Mongol conquerors. Converted to Sunni Islam in the 14th century, the Nogai came under Russian influence in the 18th century.

In the early 1990s the Nogai nationalist movement Birlik ('Unity'), based in Dagestan, called for the creation of a Nogai state separate from Dagestan but still within the RF. The lack of compact settlement among Nogai, however, weakened their case. The Nogai were subsequently reported as being one of the first North Caucasian nationalities not related to the Chechens or Ingush to join the Chechen resistance against Moscow. Reports suggested that a so-called 'Nogai battalion' participated in the 1999 incursion by the Chechen resistance into Dagestan. However, representatives of Nogai communities elsewhere in the Russian Federation have denied the existence of any such battalion and decried the association of the Nogai ethnic group with the Chechen resistance and 'terrorism'.

Current issues

In July 2005 the parliament of the Karachaevo-Cherkessia Republic (KChR) passed a resolution creating national districts for the Nogai community in the republic, where Nogais account for 3.4 per cent of the total population. Little progress appeared to have been achieved in this regard over the following months as in March 2006 the KChR Nogai community again issued calls for the creation of a Nogai autonomous district to counter unemployment and depopulation among the Nogai community.

In December 2005 high-ranking Russian Federal Security Service personnel in Stavropol krai claimed that the leader of an alleged Nogai underground group had been killed in August of that year while resisting arrest. In February 2006 Russian police in Stavropol krai claimed that eight to 12 militants killed during a shootout in the village of Neftekum were ethnically Nogai. They further alleged the continued existence of a Nogai militant group or *djamaat* in the region.

In July 2006 Nogai community leaders joined a North Caucasian appeal to the Georgian leadership not to undertake new hostilities against South Ossetia, following a period of heightened tension between Georgia and South Ossetia.