

THE STABLE ETHNOCRACY OF LATVIA

At the first glance, Latvia is a democratic country, the member of NATO, European Union and OSCE. Yet, it's inevitable to admit under the "wing" of these respected organizations there has formed really ethnocratic state, where the Latvian majority (60 % of the population) successfully discriminates and suppresses 40 % of the population that consists of ethno linguistic minorities, among whom 37 % are native Russian speakers, and 3 % - are the natives of other languages.

Using their privilege in numbers, the Latvian ethnocracists strengthened their advantage already in 1991. By the means of democratic vote they adopted "The Law on Nationality", depriving citizenship to a half of ethnolinguistic minorities. And with the adoption of "The Law on Language" Latvian was announced the only state one. Russian received the status of foreign – on an equal basis with, for example, Chinese or Swahili.

This year the parliament of Latvia has adopted amendments to these laws which sharply reduce an opportunity to get an education in Russian. Secondary education in Russian has been destroyed completely, while primary and main-course education in Russian - have been reduced more than twice. These amendments concern all schools, including private. The higher education in Russian has also been liquidated, including private. It is ironic that this year we're celebrating the 230 years since the foundation of the first the Russian school in Latvia, whereas the independence of Latvia is only 100 years old.

All these circumstances have been noticed by the UN committee on elimination of racial discrimination. In the conclusion of the meeting of August 30 the Committee, in particular, has issued the following [recommendations](#):

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17. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to ensure that its language policy and laws do not create direct or indirect discrimination or restrict the rights of ethnic minorities to access education, employment, and basic services, and:

(a) Ensure that there are no undue restrictions on access to education in minority languages.

Reconsider the necessity of amendments to the Law on Education which create further restrictions on the number of lessons minority language in public and private schools;

(b) Reiterates its previous recommendation that the State party ensure that the Law on State Language does not result in unnecessary restrictions that may have the effect of creating or perpetuating ethnic discrimination and ensure that language policies do not impede in the ability of ethnic minorities to employment in the public and private sector;

(c) Take concrete measures to ensure that persons belonging to ethnic groups are represented in public and political life, at all levels, and are not excluded on the basis of language. Ensure access to services of ethnic minorities.

As for the "non-citizens" the UN Committee is concerned regarding their numbers, the lack of the right to vote, with the discrimination on the public services access, slow naturalization and the lack of the automatic granting of the citizenship to the newborns.

The recommendations of the Committee towards the non-citizens are the following (chapter 21):

Taking into account its general recommendation No. 30 (2004) on discrimination against non-citizens, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Step up measures to decrease the number of persons without nationality by continuing to facilitate access to naturalization;
- (b) Should find ways and means to phase out the separate legal category of “non-citizens”;
- (c) Reiterates its previous recommendation (CERD A/54/18 (1999), para. 448) to recommend that the State party consider allowing non-citizens who are long-time permanent residents to participate in local elections;
- (d) Prevent discrimination of these individuals in access to public services;
- (e) Continue to remove any remaining barriers to naturalization and facilitate naturalization for individuals wishing to partake in it;
- (f) Intensify efforts to ensure that all children have access to a nationality at birth, including by successfully amending the Citizenship Law to automatically grant citizenship to children born in Latvia who would otherwise be without nationality. Consider ratifying the 1997 European Convention on Nationality (2001) and the Council of Europe Convention on the avoidance of statelessness in relation to State succession (2009).

Unfortunately, these are the recommendations only. Practice shows that Latvia willingly ignores any decisions which prevent existence of the ethnocratic regime. For example, in Court of Justice the Law under which the non Latvian surnames were distorted according to rules of Latvian has been successfully protested. This decision hasn't executed the ethnocratic government of Latvia, the non Latvian names and surnames in Latvia are continued to be distorted. For example - my surname is.

Therefore I suggest OSCE to join efforts of UN committee on elimination of racial discrimination and to support them with their authority. I ask the High Commissioner of OSCE to pay special attention to the processes with ethnic minorities in Latvia, and also to visit Latvia to find out what the situation is, and to make additional recommendations.

The report is made with the assistance of the Master of Legal Linguistics Alexander Kuzmin (MFPCh the Latvian Human Rights Committee) by F.I.D.H. Latvian Human Rights Committee.