

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING
MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING**

**Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and
Other Forms of Intolerance**

**The Problems of Ethnic Survival
of National Minorities in Azerbaijan**

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The Republic of Azerbaijan signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM) of the Council of Europe, and is obliged to submit periodical reports on the process of implementation of that Convention. In 2002 Azerbaijan submitted its first report; however, the analysis of that document reveals some contradictions, in particular:

- almost a third of the Report refers to the tasks, not set up by the Convention, but rather presents Azerbaijan's claims to Armenia and Armenians, which goes far beyond the frameworks of Azerbaijan's obligations and more resembles an "indictment" against Armenia and Armenians. It is a bypass of the tasks, proposed by the Convention, and a text, completely contradicting such tasks;

- many national minorities, living on the territory of Azerbaijan and descending from the peoples of the historical Caucasian Albania, or, in other words, the indigenous ethnic entities, populating this territory, have not been "included" into the list of national minorities subject to protection, and the analysis of the policy, addressed to them, shows that their ethnic existence, or at least, a part of them, will be under pressure;

- the Report is based on the principle of negation of long-established scientific truths.

Let us consider these conclusions by some excerpts from this document, containing a considerable political and historical excursus, having nothing to do with science and not required by the Convention. The reports literally says the following: "The most ancient Azerbaijani State ... was a part of the overall region of the Mesopotamian civilization and ruled by the dynasties of Turkic origin," "in the 2nd century B.C. the overwhelming majority of the population of the Caucasian Albania spoke Turkic languages ...," "Armenians came to the South Caucasus only in 1828-1830: 40 thousands from Iran, 84 thousands from Turkey ... and started settling down in the Yelizavetpol and Erivan Provinces, on the lands, populated by Muslims," "whom Armenians not only expelled from the land, but also killed nearly 2 millions ...,"¹ and so on, and so on.

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¹ Report submitted by Azerbaijan pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Received on 4 June 2002)

The whole “Introduction” of the Report on Implementation of the Framework Convention is actually a political statement concerning the historical rights of the “Turkic speaking Azerbaijan” to the territories of the neighboring countries, confirmation of the enmity and hatred toward the very existence of Armenians on these territories.

Otherwise it is impossible to understand which connection the issue of population of “Erivan Gubernia” (Province) has with the process of implementation of the FCPNM, why the Report touches upon the problems of identity of the population, living on that territory in the 1st millennium B.C., and especially on the basis of the statements, unknown to science at all. It is senseless to continue; it is necessary here to point out that the Report of the Azerbaijani Government to the Council of Europe does not correspond to its goal, i.e. showing the process of implementation of the Convention. Even more, it is a document full of lies and falsifications, submitted to an important political structure – the Council of Europe, and the latter does accept it.

The goal of that “historical essay” is dual – first, to convince Europeans that the Turkic community had existed on the territory of the contemporary Azerbaijan and adjacent territories since the most ancient times, which, apparently, has to become a basis for substantiation of its historical rights; and second, to prove that Armenians are newcomers, that they appeared here “only yesterday,” i.e. just in the 19th century. It is absolutely obvious that Azerbaijan uses that document, trying to “substantiate” the historical rights of Turkic-speaking ethnic groups on that territory, putting aside the very fact of existence of the South Caucasian indigenous peoples, in particular, those of the Caucasian Albania, a part of whom have miraculously survived as ethnic minority. Meanwhile the very ethnic existence of them in contemporary Azerbaijan is endangered as such.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities refers to the rights of citizens of non-Azerbaijani origin, living at present on the territory of Azerbaijan, and a report on its implementation should refer to protection of just that category of citizens. However, that official document goes beyond the geographical borders of Azerbaijan, actually “ratifying” its historical claims. It is necessary to note that the allegation that “Armenians appeared in the South Caucasus only in 1828-1830” has become more and more widespread in the recent years in Azerbaijan. That country not only goes beyond the provisions of the Convention, but also officially challenges the historical right of Armenians on the statehood on the territory of the Eastern Armenia.

Here comes the following question: why does the Council of Europe accept such a politicized report, having nothing to do with reality?

The very spirit of the document on the implementation of the FCPNM is an apparent evidence that many national communities are not protected, and which is worse, they are deliberately persecuted in Azerbaijan. Let us consider it on concrete examples. Absolute false is the statement that “...overwhelming majority of the population of the Caucasian Albania spoke Turkic languages in the 2nd century B.C.,” it is simply killing for the indigenous peoples, speaking Caucasian languages, as well as Farsi. Some of them still remain in Azerbaijan as small ethnic groups. The Report that has a big historical survey, says nothing about the political, social, cultural mission of these peoples, even in the historical past. Even more, some peoples, having an extremely hard historical past and miraculously survived, are not mentioned at all in that document, submitted to the Council of Europe. In general the qualitative and ethnographic data on the mentioned peoples may be presented in the following table:²

	<i>nationality</i>	<i>population</i>	<i>percentage</i>
1	Azerbaijanis	7,205,500	(90.6%)
2	Lezgins. Compactly reside in the northern regions of Azerbaijan (Khachmasi and Gusari). Language –	178,000,	(2.2%)

² Azerbaijan’s ethnic composition is given by the results of the 2001 census; the other data are given according to the Report

	Lezginian, belongs to the Caucasian group of European languages. They also speak Azerbaijani and Russian.		
3	Russians. Compactly reside in the industrial towns (Baku, Sumgayit), and in many villages (the Ismayil and Gedabek districts). Language: Russian and Eastern-Slavic.	141,700	(1.8%)
4	Armenians. Compactly reside predominantly in the Nagorno-Karabakh Oblast of Azerbaijan. Despite the armed conflict with Armenia and the occupation by the latter of a part of Azerbaijani territory, there is information that some 30.000-50.000 Armenians live in other territories of Azerbaijan, including Baku, except Nagorny Karabakh. Language: Armenian, the Indo-European group.	120,700	(1.5%)
5	Talishes. Compactly reside in the south of Azerbaijan (Lenkoran, Astara, Massaly, Lerik). Language: Talish, the Iranian group of the Indo-European family; they also speak Azerbaijani.	76,800	(1.0%)
6	Avars. Compactly reside in Zakataly and Balakan districts. Language: Avarian, the Avaro-Andocesian group of European languages. They also speak Azerbaijani.	50,900	(0.6%)
7	Meskhetian Turks. Compactly reside in the northern and the valley part of the country. Speaking language is Azerbaijani.	43,400	(0.5%)
8	Tatars. Compactly reside in Azerbaijani towns. Language: Tatar, the Turkic family. They also speak Russian.	30,000	(0.4%)
9	Ukrainians. Mostly reside in Baku. Language: Ukrainian, the East-Slavic family. They also speak Russian.	29,000	(0.4%)
10	Tsakhurs. Compactly reside in Zakataly district. Language – Tsakhurian; the Dagestani group of the European family. Also speak Azerbaijani.	15,900	(0.2%)
11	Kurds. Before the armed conflict with Armenia compactly resided in the districts of Lachin, Kelbajar, Kubatlu, Zangelan. During the hostilities they had to leave the places of their permanent residence. They also speak Azerbaijani.	13,100	(0.2%)
12	Georgians. Compactly reside in the region of Kakhi. Language: Georgian, the Kartvelian group of European languages.	13,100	(0.2%)
13	Tats. Compactly reside in the regions of Khachmaz and Davachi. Language: Tat, the Iranian group. They also know Azerbaijani.	10,900	(0.13%)
14	Jews. They are divided into three groups: European Jews (Ashkenazi); Mountainous (Highland) and	8,900	(0.13%)

	Georgian Jews. Language – Jewish, one of the Kham (Ham) languages of the Semite group. They also speak Russian; Georgian Jews also speak Georgian.		
15	Udi. Compactly reside in the Gabala and Oguz districts. Language: Udi, the Dagestani group of Caucasian languages. They also speak Azerbaijani.	4,200	(0.05%)
16	Others	9,500	(0.12%)

Some controversy in these data on various pages of the Report, is undoubtedly a product of work of its authors. For example, in the “Udi” section the Udi language is referred to the Dagestani group of Caucasian languages, meanwhile, speaking about the languages used by Lezghins, Avarians, Tsakhurs the same Dagestani group of languages is referred to as a family of European languages. However, the names of languages and their relation to any family/ group are defined quite arbitrarily: the Kartvelian group of languages is surprisingly attached to the European family, the language of Jews is named “Jewish”, etc. It is unclear why Azerbaijani is included into the languages, used by the Udi, meanwhile the Armenian and Russian languages are not. Up to the 1930s representatives of that people got education in Armenian, and after 1950s – in Russian; the elder generation of Udi knows Armenian better, the younger generation knows Russian better. According to poorly presented data about Armenians, who are referred to in the Report as a national minority (the Report speaks a lot about Armenians mainly in the context of enemies), it is possible to conclude that Armenians speak only Armenian also outside Nagorno Karabakh, and including those 30-50 thousand Armenians, allegedly living in Baku.... The other data, related to Armenians, have also been definitely falsified. As we know, Armenian women in Baku do not speak Armenian and try to lead as invisible way of living as possible. Had they such opportunity, they would have hidden their Armenian origin even from their neighbors. Even more, there were some cases, when their families wanted to change their flats to hide the ethnic origin of a mother or a wife in the new place of residence.

The problem of Armenians in Azerbaijan seems just a detail, but reality is different. Such attitude is more or less typical as regards to all indigenous nationalities, living on the territory of Azerbaijan. In other words, Azerbaijan’s official tolerance towards other nationalities refers only to those ethnic communities that began to settle down on the territory of the contemporary Azerbaijan only after the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups. The lack of any data on many indigenous peoples of the Caucasian Albania – Kreezes, Gaputlinians, Jeks, Gudughis, Rutuls is the evidence of the above-mentioned aspect; the only information about Khinaligs is that they have a culture study group and a manual for the 1st degree of the elementary school. According to the Report, mainly the Slavic, Jewish, Turkic ethnic communities have cultural organizations and societies.

	<i>Group/ Name</i>	<i>Community</i>
1	Cooperation	Slavic
2	Russian society	Russian
3	Center of Slavic culture	Slavic
4	Center of Azerbaijani-Slavic Culture	Slavic
5	Azerbaijan-Israel	Jewish
6	Society of Highland Jews	Jewish
7	Society of European Jews	Jewish
8	Society of Georgian Jews	Jewish
9	Jewish Women's Humanitarian Association	Jewish

10	Ukrainians	Ukrainian
11	Kurdish Cultural Center “Ronai”	Kurdish
12	Lezgins’ National Center “Samur”	Lezgin
13	Cultural Center of Tats	Tat
14	Azerbaijani-Tatar society	Tatar
15	Tatar Cultural Society “Tugan-Tel”	Tatar
16	Society of Crimean Tatars “Crimea”	Tatar
17	Tatarian Cultural Center “Yashlyg”	Tatar
18	Georgian Society	Georgian
19	Humanitarian Society of Georgians of Azerbaijan	Georgian
20	The Chechen Cultural Center	Chechen
21	Society of Meskhetian Turks “Vatan”	Meskhetian Turks
22	Women’s Society of Meskhetian Turks “Sona”	Meskhetian Turks
23	Talish Cultural Center	Talish
24	Polish Cultural Center “Polonia”	Polish
25	German Cultural Society “Karelhaus”	German
26	Society of Avars	Avar
27	Cultural Center of Udi	Udi
28	Cultural Society of Khinaligs	Khinalig

As it can be seen from the list, the Tatar community of Azerbaijan has 5 cultural organizations, the Jewish one – also five, but many indigenous peoples of the Caucasian Albania have none. Among those ethnic communities, having cultural and centers or organizations, the ethnic communities Kreez, Jek, Ghaputlin, Budugh, Tsakhur, Rutul are not mentioned, meanwhile their ancestors had created cultural monuments; built up relations and made history on the territory before Turks appeared there. Moreover, substantial part of the communities, having cultural centers and organizations in the contemporary Azerbaijan, also have many other opportunities for development of their culture outside Azerbaijan, unlike the above-mentioned groups, the whole past and present of which is connected with their homeland, where they are deprived of all rights, their population is insignificant and they need special protection. In the end, it is just for their protection the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities is aimed.

Analysis of poor data on religious freedoms and religious situation also deserves a special attention. The Report says that there are nearly 400 registered religious organizations in Azerbaijan and that 1300 mosques have been built there in the recent ten years. The Report notes that Christianity is represented in the country by three traditional branches – Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism; synagogues function and there are followers of other religions, non-traditional for this part of the world – Krishnaites, Bahaites, etc. However, there is not even a word about the most traditional, historical religious direction on the territory of the contemporary Azerbaijan – the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Georgian Orthodoxy as well. Although Azerbaijani historians themselves wrote not so long ago that “since 8th to 12th century in the lack of Albanian statehood and any common power throughout the entire country the most part of the Albanian population was Islamized, lost their ethnic identity and used the Muslim law, Shariate. The remaining part of Albanians, the Christian population, living in the alien surrounding, survived only thanks to the Albanian Autocephalous Church, which played the role of a central all-ethnic organization.”³ The author meant the Armenian Apostolic Church with its

³ Farida Mamedova, The political history and historical geography of the Caucasian Albania. Baku, 1986, p.23. In Russian.

Catholicosates first in Chokh (Derbent), and then in Amaras and Gandzasar. That direction of Christianity, current existence of representatives of the traditional church in the Caucasian Albania are not mentioned in the Report despite the presence of remaining Udi-speaking followers of that direction of Christianity, and certainly, Armenians.

The Report certainly says nothing about churches, khachkars (stone-crosses), wiped out Armenian inscriptions etc, destroyed in the last 10-15 years.⁴ At the same time it is necessary to note that the Christian Udi, who preserved their adherence to the ancient Church of the Caucasian Albania, have not even a religious organization. It is absolutely obvious that on the territory of the contemporary Azerbaijan everything that has any relation to the Caucasian Albania and its culture, as well as all that one way or another has any relation to Armenians, is forbidden or being repressed.

Azerbaijan's policy against Armenians is well-known enough. Actually, ethnic cleansings and active or passive attempts of absorption were conducted by Caucasian Tatars/ Azerbaijanis not only against Armenians, but also the other ethnic minorities, although the most of burden fell upon those ethnic communities which have active links with Armenians and Armenian culture. Let us take only one example – the fate of the people of Udi, the national minority, a part of which had lived up to 1988-1990 in the regions of Vardashen and Kutkashen of the Soviet Azerbaijan (now – Oguzak and Gabala regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan).

Since the times of Caucasian Albania and up to the present, the people of Udi is one of at least ten preserved Albanian peoples, speaking Caucasian languages (Lezgins, Kreezes, Khinaligs Budughs, Jeks, Ghaputlins, Sakhurs, Aghuls, Udi), but among them the Udi are the only people, remaining within Christianity. Up to the beginning of the 20th century only several Udi settlements remained out of 43 ones, existed in the 18th-19th centuries (with population of more than 50.000), as a result of forcible Islamization and massacre.⁵ The ethnonym “Udi” was used only to define the Christian part of the Udi; all the Islamized Udi had lost their name “Udi” and joined the people of a community having the collective name of “Muslims,” by the terminology of that period. In general, all who had become Muslims in the Turkic-speaking environment in the South Caucasus, were not named any longer by their ethnic name; and the collective term “Muslims,” along with fixation of the religion, was also performed the function of forming up some ethnicity, allowing to “hide” a great number of people of not Turkic ethnic origin. For example, in the literature of the 19th- early 20th century very often it is possible to see the words “Armenians,” “Georgians” and “Caucasian Muslims” in one chain, which means some ambiguity in the ethno-confessional contents of the term “Caucasian Muslims” (Georgian Muslims have never been considered as “Caucasian Muslims”). Similarly the Caucasian peoples, which adopted Islam in the pre-Turkic period, usually preserved their ethnonyms – Lezgins, Avars, Laks, Darghins, Rutuls, etc, were distinguished just by the ethnic names. The people of Udi which became Turkic-speaking remaining Christian, was still named as “Udi.” As far as a part of the Christian Udi, professed Armenian Apostolic Church, and a smaller part professed Georgian Orthodoxy, they were respectively called “Armenian Udi” and “Georgian Udi.” Not touching upon the issue of Islamization of the Udi and their perception of their own ethnic identity, which is referred to in some studies,⁶ we would only note that Armenian became the language of education and cultural orientation of the “Armenian Udi;” in other words – the Udi, followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, which was just caused the tragedy of that small people. That people represents an exclusive interest for the Caucasian studies. The point is that meanwhile in Azerbaijan they simply “forget”

⁴ A latest example is a barbaric demolition of the ancient Armenian cemetery of XIV-XIX centuries in Republic of Nakhichevan by Azerbaijani army. Editor's note.

⁵ See: G.Hovsepian. Essays of the Udi and Muslim Armenians, Tiflis,1904; H..Kharatyan, The ethno-confessional processes in the area of Sheki-Kabala. “Scientific thought of Caucasus”, 2003, #3. In Russian.

⁶ H.Kharatyan. Some issues of ethno- and religious self-identification of the Udi. “Haykazian Armenological magazine,” Vol. XI, Beirut, 2000. In Armenian.

about the preserved peoples, speaking Caucasian languages, ignoring their existence, but very actively “remember” about their brothers – the Udi, who remained Christians, and, unfortunately, that remembrance is against that small people, quite numerous up to the last century. The fact that they were Turkic-speaking, both in the beginning and the end of the 20th century, did not save them from Tatar-Turkish repressions. The Christian Udi (who belonged to the Armenian branch of Christianity) also suffered from the massacre committed against Armenians in 1918-1920: the evidences can be found in many archive documents, in particular, the reports by Greenleaf.⁷ Some Udi, who had fled those years from their homeland, settled down in Georgia, founding a new village of Zinobiani in Octemberi district. Those Udi, who had remained in Azerbaijan, got together in the village of Nizh, or defended their right to existence in Azerbaijan only by passing to Turkish language (the villages of Djourolu, Mirzabeylu, Sultan Nuhi). But the Udi suffered a new ordeal in the end of the 20th century, in the period of the second independence of Azerbaijan. Apparently, for the Azerbaijani ethnic self-affirmation it is necessary to get rid of the peoples representing the pre-Turkic period of Azerbaijan.

The aggressive anti-Armenian policy of those years once again affected the Udi, forcing them with Armenians to leave the last corner of their homeland. An insignificant number of Udins, who stayed in their homeland, again became victims of Azerbaijani claims. Despite the Baku TV daily appeals – not to touch “the Udi, Albanian predecessors of Azerbaijanis,” the remnants of that people, both – Udi-speaking residents of Nizh and Vardashen villages, and quite long Turkic-speaking, but Christian Udi, residents of the villages of Djourolu, Mirzabeylu, Sultan Nukhi, who preserved their Udi self-identity, again suffered all horrors and persecutions, which that people had undergone in the beginning of the 20th century and the following several decades. As soon as there was the slightest opportunity to leave Azerbaijan, the prevailing majority of Udi used it. Most of them settled in the Krasnodar Krai (province) and Rostov Oblast (region) of Russia, a part came to Armenia then left it for abroad, including European countries. Azerbaijani scientific literature puts that process the following way: “The Udi had left the places of their residence in Azerbaijan because of various peaceful and not peaceful circumstances. It has been taking place during the current century (the 20th century – H.Kh.) and intensified with the beginning of Perestroika in the USSR, since Armenia launched the undeclared war against Azerbaijan in 1988”.⁸ Today because of various political and other repressions, the remaining Udi in Azerbaijan are trying to “improve” their historical past, now considered shameful, to wipe out the evidences one way or another associating them with Armenians and Armenian culture. Last 15 years Udi have changed their Armenian family names; in 2004 the Udi, residents of the village of Nizh carefully destroyed Armenian inscriptions on one of the churches in the village; write articles denying any historical links with Armenians.

Since 1988, the policy of oppressions and threats against the Udi has been aimed at the following one goal: in order to preserve their physical existence Udi have to “submit proves” that they constitute a part of the Azerbaijani ethnos, correcting their own historical and cultural past. Living in their historical homeland, the remnants of that small people, whose ethnic existence can be considered as a deed, should permanently “prove” the right to live on that territory. As a precondition, the Udi have to adjust their history in accordance with Azerbaijan’s official historiography. Some try to “help” them solving that task. In the book “The Udi: the historical-ethnographic study,”⁹ published in Baku in 1999, the authors “outline” acceptable limits of self-expression of Udi, distorting historical and cultural facts.

⁷ Chronicles of the history of the Armenian Church, Book I, The Artsakh Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church (1913-1933), Yerevan, 2001. In Armenian.

⁸ Ibid:

⁹ G. Djavadov, R.Gusseinov. “The Udi: a historical-ethnographic study, Baku, 1999, p. 211. In Azerbaijani.

In particular, the authors stressed many times in the book that Udi have allegedly always suffered from Armenians and survived only thanks to the Azerbaijani environment and culture.¹⁰

According to Azerbaijani sources, today there are about 10.000 of Udi in the world. The above-mentioned book puts the following figures of the population of Udi since the end of the 19th century: 1880 – 10.000, end of 1800s – 8.000, of which 5.000 in the village of Nizh, 3.000 in Vardashen, i.e. all Udi lived in Azerbaijan.¹¹

By 1910 there were 59.000 Udi. The Soviet census gave the following picture: 2.500 – in 1926, 3.700 in 1939, 8.000 in 1979, 4.000 in 1987. Giving these data, the authors of the book point out that in 1989 the number of Udi reached 8.652: 6.125 people lived in Azerbaijan, 1.102 – in Russia, 793 – in Georgia, 366 – in Kazakhstan, 109 – in Ukraine, 46 – in Uzbekistan, 32 – in Turkmenistan, 2 – in Kyrgyzstan.¹² It is necessary to note that about 100 Udi lived in Armenia (Yerevan, Edjmiadzin, Noyemberian), where they arrived in 1990s.

According to the authors of the book G. Djavadov and R.Gusseinov, in 1999 a relatively big number - 4.465 lived in Nizh and 100 people lived in Oguz (former Vardashen).

The Report on implementation of the FCPNM, submitted by Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe, said that the Udi population in Azerbaijan in 1999 reached 4.200.¹³ It is absolutely obvious that independence of Azerbaijan and its “democratization” has had tragic consequences for the indigenous peoples of that country, who are unable to hope for the possibility that Azerbaijan would pursue the policy of ethnic tolerance. Besides the experience of the historical past, it had been confirmed at least twice in the beginning and the end of the 20th century. However, after regaining independence, both Armenia and Azerbaijan engaged into the processes, outlining new ways in their domestic policy, and both states have got appropriate obligations. Both states got involved into these processes voluntarily, having signed some agreements, for which they are responsible.

Unfortunately, analysis of the process of the FCPNM implementation obviously shows that Azerbaijan not only ignores the obligations that it voluntarily took, but also consistently conducts the policy of elimination of the indigenous peoples, remained on its territory. Only that comes to evidence that preservation of Karabakh within the Republic of Azerbaijan is impossible.

¹⁰ Without any grounds marking the borders of the areas of the Udi settlement, including Karabakh within them, the authors mention that while the Udi succeeded in preserving their ethnic identity on the territory of Azerbaijan in the regions of Kutkashen-Vardashen despite the strong influence of Christianity, however, in Karabakh they completely lost their language and culture. But they don't answer the question why the Udi had left Azerbaijan 10 years before publication of that book, meanwhile by the logic of the authors, in the absence of Armenians, there would have been created favorable conditions for their development in Azerbaijan..

¹¹ As far as Azerbaijan did not exist that time, so all Udi lived in the Nukhi Gubernia (province).

¹² G.Djavadov, R. Gusseinov. Ibid., p. 212

¹³ Report submitted by Azerbaijan pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Received on 4 June 2002)