

CONSTITUENT DECLARATION OF THE COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE JAVAKHETI ARMENIANS

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Every day the Javakheti Armenians are suffering from political, linguistic, cultural, educational, religious and socio-economic discrimination.

In particular:

- The local self-government bodies of Armenian-populated Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Tsalka district of Kvemo-Kartli region are denied the right to exercise the powers provided for by law;
- The internal socio-political and administrative life of the Armenians, compactly inhabiting the Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Tsalka district of Kvemo-Kartli region, is supervised and directed by the Georgian police and security services ("KGB");
- The law requires mandatory use of the Georgian language in all spheres of public life (local governments, record keeping, administration, education, etc.) in Armenian-populated Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Tsalka district of Kvemo-Kartli region;
- The appointment to positions in the administrative, educational and other public entities in the Armenian-populated Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Tsalka district of Kvemo-Kartli region is linked to the knowledge of the Georgian language, which the vast majority of the Javakheti Armenians do not speak for objective reasons;
- The Armenian Apostolic Church still does not have a legal status in Georgia. The Armenian religious buildings, confiscated during the Soviet era, have not been returned to their legitimate owner up till now. As a result of the consistent policy, run by the Georgian authorities and aimed at delaying continuously the solution of this issue, the Armenian cultural-historical heritage in Georgia is gradually being destroyed;
- The Georgian authorities are consistently implementing the policy of renaming the Armenian settlements in the Georgian manner;
- The Georgian border guards create artificial obstacles to the transportation of the Armenian literature and periodicals at the crossing points of the Armenian-Georgian border;
- In 2007-09 several Javakheti-Armenian political activists have left their homeland as a result of direct and indirect pressure from the Georgian police and security structures. The trumped-up criminal cases were brought against many of Javakheti Armenian activists defending the rights of the Armenian population. The Javakheti political activist Vahagn Chakhalyan was arrested on July 21, 2008; on April 7, 2009 he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment based on trumped-up charges and as a result of the court proceedings accompanied by flagrant violations.
- Some politicians and public figures from Armenia, concerned with defending the rights of the Javakheti Armenians, have been banned entry to Georgia.

Most of the problems facing the Javakheti Armenians result from the discriminatory policy of the Georgian authorities against the Armenian minority of the country.

The requirement to address the problems of Javakheti Armenians comes directly from the international commitments undertaken by Georgia in the field of protection of human rights as well as the rights of ethnic minorities; on this basis, the various authoritative international and European structures, in their documents and recommendations urge the Georgian authorities take steps in this direction.

Consequently, it is necessary to undertake sustained and systematic efforts aimed at solution of the problems facing the Javakheti Armenians.

Based on the abovementioned, we- the Compatriotic-charitable non-governmental organization "Javakhk", Analytical Center "Mitq", the political party "Virk", the public movement "Javakhk" and the "Yerkir" Union of NGOs for Repatriation and Settlement, declare the establishment of the Coordinating Council for the Protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians.

The main objectives of the Coordinating Council are:

- To pursue successively the solution of the political, linguistic, religious, educational, cultural and socio-economic problems facing the Javakheti Armenians;
- To draw the attention of the international community to the issue of protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians in Georgia,
- To intensify the involvement of all Armenians in the efforts to protect the rights of the Armenian population in Javakheti.

The Coordinating Council for the Protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians encourages the Georgian authorities to find a solution in the atmosphere of dialogue and understanding to the problems of concern of the Javakheti Armenians, and in particular to:

- Cease the illegal practice of interfering with the policy of local self-government bodies in the regions densely populated by the Armenians; to provide the Javakheti Armenians a higher degree of self-government.
 - Stop the police repression and political persecutions against the Javakheti Armenian activists.
 - Close all illegal proceedings led against the Javakheti Armenian political activists.
 - Abolish the ban on the use of the Armenian language in public life in the regions compactly populated by the Armenians. To grant the Armenian language a status of regional language.
 - Allow and not prevent the establishment of the Armenian-Georgian University in Javakheti.
 - Give the appropriate legal status to the Armenian Apostolic Church in Georgia and to return to it all the Armenian temples, confiscated during the Soviet era.
- Stop all the actions aimed at changing artificially the demographic composition in the regions compactly populated by Armenians.

The Coordinating Council for the Protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians encourages the Armenian authorities to strengthen their policy of protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians.

The Coordinating Council for the Protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians will consistently struggle for the implementation of fair and legitimate rights of the Javakheti Armenians.

The Coordinating Council for the Protection of the rights of the Javakheti Armenians is open to all social, political organizations and individuals who are willing to participate in solving the above-mentioned problems.

THE COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE JAVAKHETI ARMENIANS

The Compatriotic-charitable non-governmental organization "Javakhk"

Analytical Center "Mitq"

The political party "Virk"

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