

Occasional Papers No. 19

UTRIKESPOLITISKA INSTITUTET



Minorities in Turkey

Nigar Karimova and Edward Deverell

Published by
Utrikespolitiska institutet
*The Swedish Institute
of International Affairs*
Box 1253, 118 82 Stockholm
ISBN 91-7183-943-7
Stockholm 2001

© The Swedish Institute of International Affairs

Contents

PREFACE	4
1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1. HUMAN RIGHTS AND MINORITY RIGHTS	5
2. MINORITY RIGHTS IN TURKEY	6
2.1. TURKISH GOVERNMENT POLICY	6
3. MINORITIES AND IDENTITIES IN TURKEY	8
3.1. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES	8
3.1.1. <i>Alevis</i>	8
3.1.2. <i>Armenians</i>	9
3.1.3. <i>Jews</i>	10
3.1.4. <i>Greeks</i>	11
3.1.5. <i>Assyrians</i>	12
3.2. PREDOMINATELY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES	13
3.2.1. <i>Kurds</i>	13
3.2.2. <i>Romas</i>	14
3.2.3. <i>Dönme</i>	14
3.2.4. <i>Caucasians Groups</i>	14
3.2.5. <i>Arabs</i>	15
3.2.6. <i>Balkan Immigrants</i>	15
3.3. LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES	15
3.3.1. <i>Zaza</i>	15
3.3.2. <i>Laz</i>	16
4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	16
5. POLICY ALTERNATIVES	17
5.1. WHAT WOULD MAXIMUM CHANGES MEAN?	17
5.2. WHAT WOULD MINIMUM CHANGES MEAN?	19
APPENDIX. TABLE ON MINORITIES IN TURKEY	

Preface

This study is carried out within the Swedish Institute of International Affairs' Human Rights Program. It is a pre-study and a part of the program's larger aim to initiate a major project on minority rights in Turkey.

Nigar Karimova and Edward Deverell

February 2001

1. Introduction

The international community may be well informed about the Kurdish issue, including the Kurds' striving to achieve minority status thus far not granted by the Turkish government. But as this paper will make clear there are other minorities in Turkey that are not as well studied.

The study poses two research questions, viz.: What are the minority problems in Turkey, generally speaking? What are the difficulties of getting rid of them? It begins, however, with a general description of minority rights within the international human rights regime and continues by defining the concept *minority*. The following section then identifies Turkey's minorities by looking at criteria such as size, living conditions, location and predicaments. The concluding part of the study suggests some policy alternatives based on the above mentioned questions. Here the research questions are put to the test by analyzing what *minimum* changes would mean for Turkey and what *maximum* changes would mean.

1.1. Human Rights and Minority Rights

Initially the human rights regime concerned itself mainly with a gamut of the most fundamental rights and freedoms, stressing the values and principles of human rights to everyone without discrimination. Consequently, minority rights were for a long time considered peripheral for human rights work. But minority affairs were also sidelined because of the order of the day, namely emphasizing the perceived need of the nation state to stress national unity and combat separatism. Minority rights were believed to lead to demands for self-determination, which most commonly is understood as a process leading to independence.¹

Thus minority rights per se were not granted pride of place within the Council of Europe (COE), the European Convention of Human Rights of 1950 or the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights. It is only during the late 1980s and early 1990s that the question of minority rights has truly become an important issue for the human rights regime. Although implementation and protection of fundamental rights are still a priority, there has emerged a tendency to promote 'new' human rights. Rights that often relate to either specific human values (e.g. privacy or new technology threats to free expression) or to neglected vulnerable groups such as national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In terms of the latter, it is far from justified to call all of these proposals 'new' as most of them derive from a claim of lack of protection under existing general instruments.²

Even if minority affairs have never seized to be an issue of controversy, it has become more of a priority in later years. The traditional opposing arguments remain, and, hardly surprising, the more deviation between the nation and state the firmer state opposition against promoting minority rights. In the 1990s, nonetheless, a number of international minority rights instruments were set up³ including the COE's Framework Convention for the Protection of

¹ Allan Rosas, 'The Protection of Minorities in Europe: A General Overview', pp. 9-13 in John Packer and Kristian Myntti, eds., *The Protection of Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities in Europe* (Åbo: Institute for Human Rights Åbo Akademi University, 1993) pp. 9-10.

² Krzysztof Drzewicki, 'Internationalization of Human Rights and their Juridization', pp. 25-47 in Raija Hanski and Markku Suksi, *An Introduction to the International Protection of Human Rights* (Åbo: Institute for Human Rights Åbo Akademi University 1998) p. 44.

³ E.g. the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (adopted by the ILO in 1989), the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (proclaimed by the UN in 1992), the Helsinki Decision on OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (1992) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (adopted by the COE in 1995).

National Minorities which is the first ever legally binding multilateral instrument for the protection of national minorities.⁴

Who are then the people protected by these measures? There is no consensus on the definition of what a minority is. However, the proposal for an additional protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning persons belonging to national minorities defines a 'national minority' as "a group of persons in a state who:

- ? reside on the territory of that state and are citizens thereof;
- ? maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that state;
- ? display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics;
- ? are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state;
- ? are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language".⁵

2. Minority Rights in Turkey

Even though Turkey has yet to sign the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,⁶ it has undertaken several legal obligations and political commitments to respect and protect minority rights. Turkey is a state party to the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, the 1948 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and, moreover, a participating state in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). It should also be noted that in August 2000 Turkey signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁷

2.1. Turkish Government Policy

Despite Turkey's obligations to the international human rights regime; discrimination on ethnic, religious and linguistic grounds still exists, although conditions have improved since the low point of October 1983. At the time, a month before elections and the transition to civil rule, the Law Concerning Publications and Broadcasts in Languages Other Than Turkish (Law No. 2932) was passed. It declared that the mother tongue of all Turkish citizens was Turkish and prohibited the use of any language but Turkish as a mother tongue. It also prohibited all publishing in Kurdish. Today legal obstacles to publishing in Kurdish and other languages than Turkish are removed.⁸ Nonetheless, there are still laws that forbid or restrict the use of certain languages such as the Supreme Board of Radio and Television Law.⁹

⁴ The Framework Convention was opened for signature in February 1995 and entered into force three years later.

⁵ 'The proposal for an additional protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, concerning persons belonging to national minorities, *Recommendation 1201 (1993)* on an additional protocol on the rights of national minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights', *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly*, Section 1 Article 1.

⁶ '2000 Regular report from the commission on Turkey's progress towards accession', 8 November 2000, p. 14.

⁷ Cf. Bertil Dunér and Edward Devereil, *Too Bumpy a Road? Turkey, the European Union and Human Rights* (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs 2000) p. 12.

⁸ Law No. 2932 was lifted in 1991.

⁹ The Constitution, the Political Parties Law, the Law Concerning the Founding and Broadcasts of Television and Radio, the Foreign Language Education and Teaching Law, and the Law Concerning Fundamental Provisions on

According to the decree law, radio and television broadcasts must be in Turkish or certain languages that contribute to the development of universal culture and science. In the field of education no language other than Turkish is allowed for teaching purposes, except where explicitly authorized by the ministry of national education.¹⁰

Basically, Turkey's policy on minority rights is outlined in the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923. Turkey argues that national minorities are those that are recognized by international treaties. Under the frames of the Lausanne Treaty the definition of minorities was made as 'non-Moslems' and their rights were granted as follows: "The freedoms of living, religious beliefs and migration, The rights of legal and political equality, Using the mother tongue in the courts, opening their own schools or similar institutions, The holding of religious ceremonies". It refused any distinct status for non-Turkish Moslems. Only Greeks, Armenian Christians and Jews were formally acknowledged as minorities.¹¹

The Government's policy and the mostly amicable relationship among religions in the society contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, extremist groups or individuals target minority communities from time to time. While non-Moslem minorities recognized by the Turkish Government enjoy autonomous legal status in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty, the state is directly responsible for administering Moslem religious affairs, through the Department of Religious Affairs.¹² According to Article 136 of the 1982 Constitution, the Department "shall exercise its duties prescribed in its particular law, in accordance with the principles of secularism, removed from all political views and ideas and aiming at national solidarity and integrity". This state involvement in Moslem religious affairs poses a further problem in that it seems to promote a single conception of Islam, the Hanafi, and this could be seen as a taking position in favor of Hanafism.¹³

Article 42 is another area of concern; "training and education shall be conducted under the supervision and control of the State, pursuant to the principles and reforms of Atatürk, and in accordance with contemporary standards of science and education". Moslem religious teaching is thus essentially in the hands of the state, and this could pose a problem if such teaching were monolithic in the sense of promoting a Hanafi conception of Islam.

It is stated in the Constitution that Turkey is a secular state, which according to the preamble signifies that "... there shall be no interference whatsoever of the sacred religious feelings in State affairs and politics".¹⁴ The difficulties surrounding the notion of secularism are reflected in the issue of wearing the so-called Islamic veil in public institutions and the attitude of the authorities in this respect. The Constitutional Court has decided that wearing of any form of dress considered or perceived as religious is incompatible with secularism.¹⁵

Although religious affiliation is listed in national identity cards, there is no official discrimination. There were no reports of persons who were detained or imprisoned solely for their religious beliefs. Jews and most Christian freely practice their religions and report little discrimination in daily life. However, some Turks who have converted to Christianity

Elections and Voter Registries Provincial Administration Law are such laws (*Violations of Free Expression in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch 1999) Chapter IX).

¹⁰ '2000 Regular report from the Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession', 8 November 2000, p. 18.

¹¹ *World Directory of Minorities* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 1997) p. 379.

¹² 'Interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief', *A/55/280/Add.1*, 11 August 2000.

¹³ Hanafism is a Sunni school of thought that follows the Koran and the Sunna but also admits the use of customary law.

¹⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Turkey.

¹⁵ 'Interim report', op. cit.

experience harassment from family and neighbors.¹⁶ Keeping in mind the Lausanne Treaty and the lion's share of the Constitution¹⁷ nonetheless, Turkey has a comprehensive minority rights instrument, at least on paper. Thus it might seem the discussion on minority rights in Turkey is redundant. Needless to say this is not the case. In terms of interpretation and protection of minority rights there are a plethora of problems that should be solved.

3. Minorities and Identities in Turkey

Turkey is a mosaic of different identities including religious, ethnic and linguistic. Below those of most importance will be presented.

3.1. Religious Communities

Like language, religion, including religious education, is a key area in the education of persons belonging to minority groups. Since education is provided by the state, it belongs to the public domain, while religion in a secular state belongs to the private domain. But for many minorities, if their religion remains in the private domain it may become invisible and low status – both in educational terms and to society at large. Another difficulty is that secular values may not satisfy the religious desires and needs of minorities, who may then argue for separate schools. If religious minorities establish their own religious schools through disenchantment with state schooling, then mutual understanding between minority and majority is more difficult to achieve. The rise of fundamentalism in secular states may be a reflection of how those states have failed to provide a safe and secure framework for different religious minorities.¹⁸

3.1.1. Alevis

'Alevi' is a blanket term for a large number of different Shia communities, whose actual beliefs and ritual practices differ. The Arabic speaking Alevi communities of southern Turkey (especially Hatay and Adana) are the extension of Syria's Alawi (Nusayri) community and have no historical ties with the other Alevi groups,¹⁹ their numbers are small and their role in Turkey has been negligible. The important Alevi groups are the Turkish and Kurdish speakers (the latter still to be divided into speakers of Kurdish proper and of related Zaza); both appear to be the descendants of rebellious tribal groups that were religiously affiliated.²⁰ The term Alevi encompass several disparate groups, e.g., *Turkomans*, *Yoruk* and *Tahtaci*. Turkomans are Turkic tribal peoples by now highly assimilated (if Alevi Turks originate from Turkomans or not is still a disputed issue). Yoruk, is a Turkoman group of about 70,000 of which some are Alevi. Economic antagonism with the neighboring settled population is a factor in their distinct identity. The Tahtaci are Alevi and consider themselves Turkomans. They are stigmatized more than other Alevis.

¹⁶ *2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Turkey* (Washington: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor U.S. Department of State, 2000).

¹⁷ Articles 24, 25 and 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey regard the right to freedom of religion, thought, opinion, speech and expression.

¹⁸ *World Directory of Minorities*, op. cit., p. 380.

¹⁹ The Arabic-speaking groups with beliefs and practices resembling those of Turkish-speaking Alevis are known as Nusayri, Alawite, or Alawi (John Shindeldecker, 'Turkish Alevis Today' at <http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis1.htm>).

²⁰ Martin van Bruinessen, 'Kurds, Turks and the Alevi revival in Turkey' at <http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/alevivanb.html>.

Alevi constitute one of four Shia sects in Turkey. They are by far the largest Shia sect in the country, accounting for at least 70 percent of the country's Shia. Over the past two decades tensions between Sunni rightists and Alevi leftists have grown. Alevi harassed by Sunnis seldom seek redress either from the police or from the judicial system since they believe the latter to be deeply prejudiced against them. Most Alevi are ethnically and linguistically Turkish. They descend from and inhabit mainly Central and Eastern Anatolia and use Turkish rather than Arabic for their religious ceremonies and literature.

3 million of the Alevi are also Kurdish. Politically they face a dilemma. Should their primary loyalty be to their ethnic or religious community? Some care more about religious solidarity with Turkish Alevi than ethnic solidarity with Kurds particularly since many Sunni Kurds deplore them. Some fear such tension may lead to new ethno-religious conflict.²¹

The Alevi are a minority among fellow Moslems but are of majority Turkish origin. They experience both prejudice and discrimination and feel that they cannot manifest their belief openly in the Sunni-dominated society. They also consider their belief to be misrepresented and misunderstood. It may still not be accepted and Alevi are constrained to practice their belief by violating the law. For instance, the Welfare Party mayor of Istanbul reportedly has tried to close the houses of worship which the Alevi use for prayer.²² Moreover, in contrast to Sunni religious leaders, there are no government-salaried Alevi religious leaders.²³ State intrusion into Moslem affairs leaves no room for specific Alevi needs, particularly in terms of places of worship and religious education. Policies of 'Turkization' reinforce the discriminatory treatment of Alevi within Turkish society and even within the state. For example, they have no representation in the Department of Religious Affairs,²⁴ they are under-represented in the political sphere and they suffer discrimination in the labor market.

In general Moslem religious minorities, such as the Alevi, seem to have less legal protection of their rights than non-Moslem groups. A major concern is the lack of will or ability on the part of the Turkish authorities to protect Alevi from harassment and other forms of abuse by Sunni extremists.²⁵

3.1.2. Armenians

Armenians are about 50,000-60,000 and primarily live in Istanbul. Apart from a minority who are Catholic or Protestant, most of them belong to the Armenian Apostolic Church.²⁶

Many Armenians are bankers and merchants often with extensive international contacts. They are intensely attached to their Christian faith and their identity as Armenians rather than Turks and support their own newspapers, old people's homes and schools. Although the state respects their minority status, most Turks regard Armenians as foreigners. In addition, they still find it difficult to register their children as Armenians.²⁷

²¹ U.S. Department of State Turkey Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998 (the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 1998).

²² Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen, eds., *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A world report* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) p. 391.

²³ U.S. Department of State Turkey Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998, op. cit.

²⁴ 'Interim report', op. cit.

²⁵ Gunnar M. Karlsen, ed., *Freedom of religion in Turkey: The secular state model, the closing down of the Welfare Party, and the situation of Christian groups* (The Norwegian Helsinki Committee 1998).

²⁶ 'Interim report', op. cit.

²⁷ *World Directory of Minorities*, op. cit.

The Armenian Orthodox community ranks as the second largest Christian denomination in Turkey. In addition 7,000 other Armenians belong to an Armenian Catholic Church in Union with Rome, or to various Protestant denominations.

According to the Armenian Patriarch there are many difficulties facing his Patriarchate and his community. The Armenian Patriarchate has no legal status as an institution and does no longer have a seminary for training clergy. The attitude of the courts and of the General Director of Foundations and the confiscation of community properties causes big problems to the Patriarchate. Furthermore, the Church had no concordat with the State and successive governments since the establishment of the Turkish Republic had intervened in the appointment and election of the Armenian religious leader. And although representatives of the Armenian Protestant Church have declared that they face no obstacles to their freedom of religion and worship, they refer to the same difficulties as those cited by the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch concerning the lack of legal status, religious training institutions, and obstacles and attacks affecting their property and educational establishments. Similar information was given by the Armenian Catholic Church.²⁸

A fundamental issue concerning improved Armenian and ethnic Turk cohabitation is to break the spiral of historic hatred. Relations between the groups have been embittered throughout history, especially since World War I when Armenians living on Ottoman soil fought alongside the Russians against the Empire. In 1915, the Ottoman authorities responded by implementing relocation programs after which Armenians died en masse. In the fall of 2000 the Armenian minority in Turkey was placed in the limelight as politicians in the US, France and Italy brought the events of 1915 to their respective agenda. Contrary to the views of foreign parliamentarians, the campaign for acknowledging the tragedy as genocide does not seem to contribute to increased understanding between the two states or enhance the situation of Armenian Turks.

3.1.3 Jews

Unlike the Armenians and the Greeks, the Jewish minority is neither ethnically nor linguistically homogeneous. Most of its members are *Sephardic* Jews whose ancestors were expelled from Spain by the Roman Catholic Inquisition in 1492. They speak *Ladino*, a variant of 15th century Spanish with borrowings from several other languages. The *Ashkenazic* minority, Jews from central and northern Europe, speak Yiddish, a language derived from German. Both languages are written in the Hebrew script. Most Jews also speak Turkish. The *Karaites*, viewed by most other Jews as heretics, speak Greek as their native language. In general, the different Jewish communities have tended not to intermarry and thus have retained their identities.²⁹

Representatives of the Jewish community declare that they enjoy full freedom of religion and worship. They confirm that the Rabbinate has no legal status, but the government recognizes it de facto. It has also been noted that the Jewish community encounters no anti-Semitism either from the state or from society, except for a few right-wing newspapers. Moreover, attacks on their places of worship have been very rare and, when committed it was the act of foreign elements.³⁰

The Jewish community's satisfactory situation is explained by the UN's Special Rapporteur by two factors, namely, the close relations between Turkey and Israel and the fact

²⁸ 'Interim report', op. cit.

²⁹ Helen Chapin Metz, ed. *Turkey: a country study* (Washington: Federal Research Division Library of Congress 1995).

³⁰ 'Interim report', op. cit.

that the Jews, in contrast to the Armenians and the Greeks, have made no claim to lands within Turkey's borders.

3.1.4. Greeks

Since 1924 the status of the Greek minority in Turkey has been ambiguous. Most Turks do not accept the country's Greek citizens as their equals. Beginning in the 1930s, the government encouraged the Greeks to emigrate, and thousands, in particular the educated youth, did so, reducing the Greek population to about 48,000 by 1965. Although the size of the Greek minority has continued to decline, Turkish Greeks generally constitute one of the country's wealthiest communities.³¹

The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest Christian church in Turkey. The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is the central church authority for Greek Orthodox Christians in most of Europe and beyond. But the diminution of the community has weakened the Patriarchate and undermined its status in its dealings with the Turkish government. Nevertheless, the Patriarchate's importance has remained considerable because of its ecumenical and international connections.

There are barely 3,000 aging Greek Christians left in Turkey, mainly in Istanbul. There are two small communities on the islands of Gokceada (1,000 people) and Bozcaada (less than 100) in the Aegean. These three communities speak distinct dialects. Besides the mainstream Orthodox Christian Greeks, there are other Greek speakers in Turkey, although they do probably not share the same ethnic consciousness. These are the Moslem Greeks of Turkey whose integration among mainstream Turkish culture seems certain, given the anti-Greek sentiments running high in Turkey. The Moslem Greeks of Turkey are divided in two groups, viz., the Moslem Greek refugees coming from Crete called Cretans, and the Pontis Moslem Greeks of the Black Sea. Pontis Moslem Greeks call themselves 'Turkos' and their language 'Romaika'. They consider the real Greeks as a separate race and call them 'Oromeos'. Their population is estimated between 200,000-300,000.³²

When a Helsinki Watch mission visited Turkey in October 1991 it found that the government violated the rights of the Greek minority, e.g., by police harassment, restrictions on free expression, discrimination in education involving teachers, books and curriculum; restrictions on religious freedom, limitations on the right to control charitable institutions, and the denial of ethnic identity.³³ Ethnic Greeks in Turkey have also witnessed their religious dignitaries and sites being targets of acts of violence, including desecration, assassination and bomb attacks (particularly against the Patriarchate's headquarters).³⁴

Nonetheless, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Bartolomeos I, recently declared that the Greek Orthodox community enjoys full freedom of religion and worship. But he stated that his community faces the following problems in the area of religion: The Turkish authorities do not accept either the term Ecumenical or the reference to Constantinople, which was renamed Istanbul in 1930. Regarding the Patriarchate, it does not have the status of a legal entity. With the closure by the authorities of private religious training institutions in 1971 it lost the use of its seminary on the Island of Halki. The Patriarchate is compelled to train its religious personnel abroad and is facing difficulties in administering its schools and enrolling students. Books in Greek are limited since the Greek Patriarchate still has no right to publish. This creates further obstacles for teaching, worship and information.

³¹ Helen Chapin Metz, *op. cit.*

³² Bilgin Esme and Aggeliki Ralli, 'Greek Speaking Muslims', at http://www.tufts.edu/org/hellenic/m-asia/muslim_greeks.html.

³³ 'Denying Human Rights and Ethnic Identity' (Human Rights Watch, 1992).

³⁴ 'Interim report', *op. cit.*

Aggravated by hostility and suspicion, approximately 30 Greek Orthodox families leave Turkey each year, which makes it uncertain whether there will even be a Greek community in Turkey in the future.³⁵

3.1.5. Assyrians

Although Assyrians are Christian, they cannot benefit from the rights laid out in the Lausanne Treaty as can the Armenians and the Greeks.³⁶ 45,000 Assyrians have migrated from Turkey, many to Germany or Sweden and at present there may only be up to 4,000 Assyrians left in Turkey. Always denied any form of recognition by the republic, it is a community in steep decline and one that is rapidly losing its viability. It is under pressure of Islamic revivalists, Sunni Kurdish landlords who seek to acquire their lands and local security forces which turn a blind eye to local harassment.³⁷

In the words of the UN Special Rapporteur: “The Assyro-Chaldean Minority is suffering serious violations, in particular in the area of religious tolerance. They have no schools, even at primary level, or social institutions; they are forbidden to open their own establishments. They are also banned from public service”.³⁸

The Syrian Orthodox community, which numbered 50,000 in 1995, ranks as the largest Christian denomination in Turkey. Historically, they have lived in southeastern Turkey, although, an estimated 2,000 Syrian Catholics are scattered in small communities in the Southeast. They retain the distinct Syrian Orthodox rite but recognize the spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Pope.

The information gathered by the Special Rapporteur of Syriac representatives reflects the situation of the rest of the Assyrian community, Catholic and Protestant alike. They enjoy none of the rights of a religious minority, although they should, in principle, be covered by the constitutional guarantees relating to freedom of religion and worship. They pointed to the lack of any legal status for the Assyrian community, which has no religious training seminar. The community faces the confiscation of places of worship declared ‘unused’ by the General Director of Foundations, which sometimes will convert them into mosques. They are prohibited from opening their own establishments. When it comes to the situation of the Assyrian community in Istanbul, it was found that some Assyrians have adopted a low profile, seeking to protect themselves through a degree of anonymity. Others, apparently the majority, are hoping to leave Turkey, because of the rise of Islamism and the obstacles that the authorities are placing in the way of the communities attempts to maintain its religious and cultural identity.³⁹

Because the Assyrian community lacks official religious minority status it does not have as strong legal protection of their rights as do the Jewish, Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities, albeit the Turkish authorities maintain that there is no legal discrimination between different non-Moslem groups. Nevertheless, the fact that the Syrian community has not received permission from the Turkish authorities to run their own schools must be taken a

³⁵ Gunnar M. Karlsen, op. cit.

³⁶ *Turkish Daily News*, 29 August 1996.

³⁷ *World Directory of Minorities*, op. cit., p. 381.

³⁸ ‘Special Rapporteur Report on Religious Intolerance, Mr. Abelfattah Amor, in accordance with the Commission on Human Rights resolution 1994/18’ (E/CN.4/1995/91). Assyrians are sometimes referred to as *Assyro-Chaldean*. The Chaldean title appeared around 16th century when the Vatican tried to distinguish between the Orthodox Assyrians of Iraq, known as Nestorians, and those who united with Rome and became Catholics, so the Pope called them Chaldeans.

³⁹ ‘Interim report’, op. cit.

sign of discrimination. In addition no Syriac books, apart from Bibles, are published in Turkey.

On the whole minorities and especially non-Moslem religious groups suffer from harassment at the hands of violent (Islamic fundamentalist) groups. And harassment is neither prioritized by authorities nor by the police. This, in turn, creates an insecure environment for members of such minority groups.⁴⁰

3.2. Predominately Ethnic Communities

Most nations are ethnically heterogeneous. In other words no single group is completely dominant. An ethnic community is often defined as a group of people united by inherited culture, racial features, religion, or national sentiments.⁴¹ Membership in an ethnic community is normally an ascriptive phenomenon, a relationship into which the individual is born. It is essential how state authorities respond to the challenges launched by mobilized ethnic groups. It is a risky venture for state authorities to pursue the policy of assimilating ethnic minority groups into the majority by coercive measures, such as banning minority languages or by positive incentives that encourage and reward members of ethnic minorities to leave their native community and join the national mainstream. Such policies tend to be met by violent conflict and once that is achieved harmony and stability is hard to reinstate. Instead governments should foster moderation and accommodative behavior among ethnic communities and seek solutions based upon compromise and reconciliation.

3.2.1. Kurds

The Kurdish community numbers about 13 million or over 20 percent of Turkey's population. Most Kurds in Turkey speak *Kirmanji*, but many Alevi Kurds and some Sunni Kurds living north and northwest of Diyarbakir speak *Zaza*. In 1984 Kurdish nationalism found violent expression in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK), which embarked on a guerrilla war against the state. By now this conflict has accounted for about 30,000 casualties. Turkey's Kurds are concentrated in 11 provinces of the southeast. They are technically allowed to publish in Kurdish, but face police harassment if they do so, however moderate these may be politically. In addition, Kurdish remains banned in education.

Although the Kurds comprise a distinct ethnic group, class, as well as regional and sectarian differences divide them. Religious divisions have often been source of conflict among the Kurds. Scholars estimate that at least two-thirds of the Kurds in Turkey are Sunni Moslems, and that one-third are Shia Moslems of the Alevi sect. Unlike the Sunni Turks, who follow the Hanafi School of Islamic law, the Sunni Kurds follow the Shafii School. A small but unknown number of Kurds also adhere to secretive *Yazidi* sect, which historically has been persecuted by both Sunni and Shia Moslems. The Yazidi believe that the government does not protect them from religious persecution. Consequently, as many as 50 percent of the Yazidi have migrated to Germany.⁴²

The Kurdish issue is of course the chief minority problem in Turkey. The Turkish Constitution does not recognize the Kurdish community as a national, ethnic or linguistic minority since it is not acknowledged in the Lausanne Treaty. Consequently, the Kurdish language is allowed only in non-political communication whilst political debates must be held in Turkish.⁴³ Whereas there are no legal impediments to Kurds' participation in political and

⁴⁰ Gunnar M. Karlsen, op. cit.

⁴¹ Cf. Milton J. Esman, ed., *Ethnic Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994) p. 26.

⁴² Helen Chapin Metz, op. cit.

⁴³ 'UNHCR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers' (Geneva: UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research, 1997).

economic affairs, those who publicly affirm their ethnic identity risk harassment or prosecution. Conditions in the predominately Kurdish southeast and especially relations between state authorities and Kurds got even worse once the PKK took to arms in an effort to achieve autonomy. Lately however PKK activity has been reduced considerably and suddenly a settlement of the issue, including compromises from both camps, seems to be more than a distant possibility.

3.2.2. Romas

There are probably 50,000 mainly Roma speaking Romas in Turkey. The majority are Moslem although a few are Christian. Members of the Roma community are widely stigmatized and excluded from mainstream Turkish society. However, there are few records of reported incidents of public or government harassment directed against them.⁴⁴

The Human Rights Association in Istanbul estimates the number of Romas in Turkey to be between three and three and a half million. This is six or seven times higher than the figures most commonly quoted to date. Many of the Roma in Turkey live in the Thrace region which is the European part of Turkey, but in fact Roma can be found all over Turkey. There is a vivid prejudice in Turkey against the Roma and it is not combated appropriately, to some extent because the Roma are not nationally organized to defend their rights. According to a 1997 report by the European Roma Rights Center, “[t]he social stance between Roma and other Turks is also evident from the fact that many Turks told us not to go into Roma neighborhoods, since they were supposed to be very dangerous places”.⁴⁵

3.2.3. Dönme

The Dönme are descendants of the Jewish followers of a self-proclaimed messiah, Sabbatai Sebi, who was forced by the sultan to convert to Islam in 1666. Their doctrine includes Jewish and Islamic elements. They consider themselves Moslem and are officially recognized as such. Their name is the Turkish word for ‘convert’, but it carries overtones of ‘turncoat’ as well.

The Dönme, who numbered about 15,000 in the late 20th century, are found primarily in Istanbul, Edirne, and Izmir. They have been successful in business and in the professions, but historically they have not been part of the social elite because neither Jews nor Moslems fully accept them. Experience with prejudice inclines some Dönme to hide their identity to avoid discrimination. Since the early 1980s, however, overt discrimination has lessened, and intermarriage between Dönme and other Moslems has grown common.⁴⁶

3.2.4 Caucasians Groups

Circassians are one out of three small but distinct ethnic groups which have their origins in the Caucasus Mountains. The other two are the *Georgians* (including the Abkhaz), and the *Laz*.⁴⁷ Approximately 70,000 Circassian Moslem immigrants, most of them originally from Russia, settled in the late 18th century in the Adana region where they and their descendants continue to live as farmers and farm laborers. They now number 1 million and are increasingly integrating into Turkish society. As Hanafi Moslems they share the same religious identity as indigenous Turks.

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State Turkey Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998 (Washington: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 1998).

⁴⁵ ‘Roma Rights field report Spring 1997’ (Budapest: European Roma Rights Center, 1997) at http://errc.org/rr_spr1997/field.shtml.

⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica online at <http://www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/9/0,5716,31439+1,00.html>.

⁴⁷ The Laz are discussed in paragraph 3.3.2.

There are roughly 80,000 *Georgians* in Turkey. Sunni Georgians like Sunni Turks are generally bilingual and intermarry with Turks. Another 10,000 or so are Orthodox Christians.

Finally, in terms of Caucasian groups, Turkey is home to some 75,000 *Azeri Turks*. They are predominately Shia and live in tension with neighboring Sunni Kurds.

3.2.5. Arabs

The Arabs are heavily concentrated along the Syrian border. Almost all of the Arabs in Turkey are *Alevi Moslems*,⁴⁸ and most have family ties with the Alevis living in Syria. They are a distinct religious community from the Turkish Alevis but have in common reverence for Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. The Arabs of Turkey believe they are subjected to state-condoned discrimination. Fear of persecution actually prompted several thousand Arab Alevis to seek refuge in Syria following the incorporation of the Hatay province into Turkey in 1939. Since the mid-1960s, the Syrian government has tended to encourage educated Alevi to resettle in Syria, especially if they seem likely to join the ruling Baath Party. Alevi Arabs have uneasy relationships with Sunnis and are more comfortable with Christians.

There is also a community of *Sunni Arabs* living in Turkey. Unlike the Turkish Sunni majority its members belong to the Shaji'i tradition (which they share in common with most Sunni Kurds). They are denied the opportunity to use their language Arabic officially, e.g., in education and broadcasting.

Finally the *Christian Arabs* are about 10,000. They call themselves *Nasrani* and like other Turkish Arabs, they feel under pressure, to 'Turkicize'.

3.2.6. Balkan Immigrants

An estimated 750,000 Balkan Moslems sought refuge in Turkey in the period 1876-96. They are mainly Sunni or Alevis. More recent arrivals have still not fully integrated.

3.3. Linguistic Communities

One of the critical ways in which minorities define themselves is through language. Language is an essential part of an individual's identity, and for minority groups it is a significant part of the group identity. The minority language transmits cultural norms and values. In most states, however, minority language does not have equal status with a majority language. From the position of the state, language is one of the bonds that hold the state together. It can be argued that the cultural identity and political and social unity of a state will be promoted if everyone is educated in the same national language. But there are also strong arguments for teaching minority languages. Minority language teaching is necessary for the development of a positive self-image and for children to know about their history and culture. It prevents language loss and helps prevent forced linguistic and cultural assimilation. Linguistic and cultural pluralism can thus be seen as enriching society as a whole.⁴⁹

3.3.1. Zaza

Zaza is a linguistic group that possibly numbers 3 million. Most Zaza speakers are Alevi but a minority are Sunni. Zaza's closest linguistic relative is *Gurani* spoken by Kurds. Some Zaza speakers aspire to forming a solidarity group and describe their linguistic region as 'Zazastan'.

⁴⁸ They are also known as Nusayri, Alawi or Alawite.

⁴⁹ *World Directory of Minorities*, op. cit.

3.3.2. Laz

Laz is a South Caucasian language related to Georgian. There are 150,000 Laz speakers in Turkey, all Hanafi Sunnis. Some Laz are bilingual but the Laz language does not have a written form and it is in decline. The Laz live in the eastern parts of ancient Pontis in an area from approximately Trabzon by the Black Sea to Batumi past the Georgian border.

The term 'Lazistan' is also used for the region of the Laz in Turkey, but the region does not cover all the Laz territory. In addition Lazistan is a virtually a forbidden term in Turkey.⁵⁰

Other groups whose populations in Turkey are thousands or tens of thousands are Abkhasians, Chechens, Gagauz, Ingush, Nogay, Ossets and Yezides. All of these peoples are Moslems. In addition to these groups there are small numbers of Pomaks (Bulgarians who converted to Islam during the era of Ottoman rule) and Albanians.

4. Recommendations of International Organizations

The commonly held view is that a minority is a self-identifying group with a national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity. The Turkish Foreign Ministry summarizes its official interpretation as follows: "The status of minorities in Turkey has been internationally certified by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, according to which there are only non-muslim minorities in Turkey".⁵¹ However, international organizations frequently contend that the EU's Copenhagen criterion of 'respect for and protection of minorities' should be applied not only to the Jews, Greeks and Armenians covered by the Treaty of Lausanne, but also to the Assyrians, Kurds, Laz, Romas and many other Turkish minorities.⁵²

According to the EU accession partnership recommendation, the Turkish government should abolish the language restrictions on television and radio broadcasting contained in the Supreme Board of Radio and Television Law. As a minimum gesture toward the respect and protection of its language minorities, the government should lift all obstacles to the foundation of private language courses in minority languages. Such measures should include repeal of Article 42.9 of the Constitution, which states that "[n]o language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education".⁵³

The UN's Special Rapporteur recommends that precise legal terminology be devised and that legislation, including constitutional provisions, be interpreted in a manner consistent with international standards of human rights and with jurisprudence and general comments of

⁵⁰ Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law (Law No. 3713 amended by Law No. 4126) reads, "No one may engage in written and oral propaganda aimed at disrupting the indivisible integrity of the State of the Turkish Republic, country, and nation. [...] Those who engage in such deeds will be sentenced to from one to three years in prison and given a heavy fine...". This article means that those who orally or in print make use of words such as Lazistan or Kurdistan risk prosecution. In March 1991, for instance, the National Security Court sentenced author Günay Arslan to six years and three months' imprisonment and ordered the confiscation of his book, "Yas Tutan Tarih, 33 Kursun" (History in Mourning, 33 bullets) (See 'Case of Arslan v. Turkey', *Application no. 23462/94*, Strasbourg 8 July 1999 at http://www.echr.coe.int/Eng/press/1999/Jul_Aug/13%20Turkish%20cases%20epresse.htm) for inter alia writing the following reflection, "... if one were to say that Kurdistan belongs to the Kurds, Armenia to the Armenians, 'Lazistan' to the 'Laz' and the territory of Rum to the 'Rumis', what would be left for the Turks?". In late October 2000, the Kurdish mayor Gihan Sincar of the city of Kiziltepe was tried but subsequently acquitted by the State Security Court in Diyarbakir. Among other things she was accused of having used the word "Kurdistan" in an interview with a Swedish daily newspaper.

⁵¹ Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupa/ac/acl/faq.htm#bml>.

⁵² See e.g. www.hrw.org/reports/2000/turkey2/Turk009-04.htm and '2000 Regular report', op. cit., pp. 10, 18 and 21.

⁵³ '2000 Regular report', op. cit.

UN Commission on Human Rights. He also offers the following general recommendations, applicable to all religious communities in Turkey:

1. The Government should ensure that Islam does not become a political tool, a situation that could escalate in ways that would promote religious extremism.
2. The Government should ensure both more legal protection against discrimination based on religion or belief, and the implementation and respect of these legal safeguards.
3. Minority religious communities should be protected from any political manipulation in the context of Turkey's foreign affairs.
4. The Government should undertake a true dialogue with minority religious communities so as better to understand their needs and to promote a climate of respect and trust.
5. Turkey should take advantage of technical cooperation services of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the area of freedom of religion and belief, with particular attention to minorities.⁵⁴

5. Policy Alternatives

In dealing with minority issues there is always an abundance of impediments to overcome. Too often outside observers demand extensive changes and recommend sweeping reforms. The concluding section of this study will scrutinize suggestions of maximum and minimum reform and possible outcomes of such policies.

5.1. What Would Maximum Changes Mean?

Solving Turkey's Kurd problem is a crucial demand for EU accession but also for lasting peace in the country. The Kurds' chief demand is that they are granted minority status. But currently there is not even a domestic debate on giving the Kurds special status as a minority since recognizing Kurds as a national minority would mean changing the Turkish definition of the state.⁵⁵ The same goes for acknowledging other neglected groups such as the Assyrians or the Alevites.

Due to the size of its populace and the strong support it enjoys abroad, the Kurdish community is able to place more weight behind its demands than are other Turkish minorities. Taken into account the number of minority groups in Turkey, however, it cannot be justified that one group is given distinctive advantages while others are not. Apart from the fairness argument such proceedings are contrary to fruitful ways of practicing national unity. Granting minority status to a specific group is likely to lead to neglected groups' disappointment over finding themselves not incorporated in reform packages. Because if one preferred group is provided special status it may well include exceeded freedom and lack of restrictions and this might at the end of the day lead to social disorder among the neglected groups.

The other option would mean granting all minorities the same advantages but this alternative also involves elements of risk. One cannot rule out that approving several official minority categories could generate, and subsequently institutionalize, divisions within the Turkish society. Nationalism is firmly established as the driving and unifying force in Turkish

⁵⁴ 'Interim report', op. cit.

⁵⁵ Dogu Ergil, 'The Kurdish Question in Turkey', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 11, no. 3, July 2000, p. 130. See also Article 66 of the Constitution, which reads: "Everyone bound to the Turkish State through the bond of citizenship is a Turk".

politics which makes it plausible that institutionalized ethnic, linguistic or religious distinctions are prone to become political and societal fault lines. This, in turn, might lead to the fragmentation of the Turkish state.

There are further problematics involved in implementing extensive minority rights reform. These could be illustrated by a demand often brought up by foreign delegations, viz., that Turkey's 'language laws' must be revised. A maximum revision, however, would mean allowing Kurdish in political communication which would render the country bi-lingual. This would demand major economic investments for a country already under severe financial pressure. It is irrefutable that providing extensive countrywide bi-lingual services involves enormous administrative and financial expenses. Opting to allow several minority languages in political communication would obviously only increase the costs.

It seems important that Turkish remains Turkey's sole state language. Indeed it would be detrimental, not least for members of minority groups, if far-reaching changes on the issue were made. Keep in mind that certain minorities are already discriminated against, e.g., on the labor market, and establishing a new generation with lack of command of the state language, *de facto* if not *de jure*, will hardly assist them. Surely, those with knowledge of a minority language *only* would remain second class citizens and have very limited employment opportunities because of their lack of Turkish language skills. At least in areas where ethnic Turks are in majority. Under these circumstances, if language would profit the minorities little, the only reason to incur the administrative and financial costs to establish two or more languages in Turkey would be for the satisfaction of ethnic pride in areas where minority groups are the majority. Meanwhile, opportunities for economic advancement for minority groups as well as ethnic Turks in the rest of the country will possibly diminish.

Revising the ban on languages in education needs to be further problematized. True, facilitating conditions for all people to learn their mother tongue is a minority right of utmost importance but giving minorities a major influence over the school curricula would differentiate them even more from the prevailing form of education which might affect those children's integration into Turkish society. In the long run, such an outcome would probably hamper economic development.

The Kurds are the only minority strong enough to suggest regional autonomy. Evidently, granting the Kurds an independent state in the southeast would not only lead to Turkey's territorial breakup but also destabilize the entire region. Settling for less extensive autonomy such as regional home rule, instead of an independent state, would also involve complications. As the prominent scholar Ted Robert Gurr puts it: "The success of autonomy arrangements in ending or preempting civil wars lies in the details and implementation of the arrangements".⁵⁶ The crucial factor then is to balance the interests of communal groups and state elites.⁵⁷ Even if political reconstruction by home rule is achieved peacefully, it may well intensify communal conflicts. As is usually the case with ethno-national groups, and as has been made clear by this study, the Kurds are far from homogenous. The Kurdish community is divided along religious, linguistic and tribal lines. Therefore it is likely that Kurdish leaders of a potential new state or region managed by home rule would eventually face new communal dilemmas.⁵⁸ There is a lesson to be learned from the Iraqi Kurds' case. Attempts to set up an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq were almost immediately challenged by internal fighting among regional elites.

⁵⁶ Ted Robert Gurr, 'Communal Conflicts and Global Security', pp. 212-217 in *Current History*, Vol. 94, No. 592, May 1995, p. 215.

⁵⁷ Ted Robert Gurr, 'People Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System', pp. 347-377 in *International Studies Quarterly*, No. 38 (1994), p. 365.

⁵⁸ Ted Robert Gurr (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 217.

Despite the complexity of the issue, territorial autonomy is a recurring suggestion. But if home rule is realized, it may well leave non-Kurdish groups disgruntled, in particular those in the southeast who might feel like aliens in their native lands. Moreover, home rule will not benefit Kurds that have migrated from the southeast. Migration from rural to urban areas is common in Turkey and the years of PKK rebellion resulted in mass influx of Kurds to western Turkey, which in effect made Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara the largest Kurdish cities in the country.⁵⁹ Naturally an attempt to resolve the Kurdish problem without taking the views of these people into account have slim chances of reaching a durable solution.

Regarding the Armenian genocide issue, there is a solid unity in Turkey behind the government's policy. Politicians, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businessmen alike agree that recognizing the events of 1915 as genocide is out of the question. Even Mesrob II, the patriarch of Turkish Armenians, expressed skepticism over the matter. He implied that Armenians would suffer the damages of the measures taken by Turkey against the resolution:

The Armenians in Turkey do only want friendship between the two nations. That Turkish Armenians behaving and thinking in contrary to the Turkish Republic cannot be in question. [...] As the Patriarch of Turkish Armenians, the launching of a constructive dialogue between the two nations which is the desire of many authors and intellectuals, is also my wish.⁶⁰

If the Turkish government apologizes for the massacres on Armenians and other Christian groups in 1915 it may perhaps lead to court cases or even territorial claims. Ankara suspects that Yerevan has a hidden aim that entails making Turkey compensate descendants and hand over three provinces granted to Armenia after World War I which Turkey had recaptured when Armenia was incorporated into the Soviet Union.⁶¹ But there are even greater implications. Historical hatred between the nations is firmly established and with increased xenophobic propaganda and fear, it could spiral into violence. The Armenian Patriarch in Turkey suspected that the naming the events genocide would lead to worsening conditions for his people and he is likely to have a clear grasp of the situation.

5.2. What Would Minimum Changes Mean?

Progressive changes towards improving minority affairs in Turkey will not come easy especially given the state's limited resources. With an already restrained financial situation Turkey has to balance the implementation of reform without disturbing the existing resource allocation or worsening inter-communal relations. In order to manage minority rights reform and at the same time steering clear of awakening social unrest and public grievances it would be favorable if key actors (foreign governments, international governmental organizations and NGOs) would not push hard for increasing rights and improving the status of a specific group but instead work for a reform agenda that encompasses all citizens of Turkey. Undoubtedly Turkey is in need of such reform. Below follows some suggestions of reform that do not overlook the importance of national harmony and social stability. It should be noted, however, that more time should not go to waste. As the renowned academic Donald Horowitz puts it:

⁵⁹ Sarah Graham-Brown and Zina Sackur, 'The Middle East: The Kurds – A Regional Issue' (1995), at <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/country/writenet/wrikurd.htm>.

⁶⁰ *BBC Monitoring Service*, 6 October 2000.

⁶¹ *BBC Monitoring Service*, 24 September 2000.

“Timing is important. The earlier a country starts working on interethnic accommodation, the better.”⁶²

Basically, Turkey needs to provide cultural rights for all its minorities be they Moslem or non-Moslem, acknowledged by the Lausanne Treaty or not. Keep in mind, however, that there is a huge difference between allowing broadcasting and education in any language, including the ones appropriate in Turkey’s case, and granting some groups a specific minority status distinct from other citizens. As a natural result of the sheer size of the group, Kurds are the people that have pushed the most for minority status. Clearly there is room for engagement at present, as reconciliation between Turks and Kurds including granting the Kurds cultural rights is the primary EU accession demand on Turkey. Besides there is support from domestic high positioned politicians in favor of solving the Kurdish problem in a constructive way.⁶³ By stopping short of official minority status but allowing the Kurdish language in supplementary education and broadcasting Turkey might be able to overcome the risk of generating ethnic divisions within society.

In general, the legal protection and authorities’ respect for minority rights must increase. One way of achieving this could be by presenting an official strategy plan (including an ombudsman for discrimination, something that has been debated in Turkey) for ending discrimination on e.g., the labor market and in political life. In terms of increasing authorities’ respect for human rights, stepping up human rights education will surely benefit the process. Moderate human rights training for law enforcement is already put into practice and human rights education has been incorporated in police academy curricula since mid-1999.⁶⁴ Of course Turkey’s state and society are only rudimentarily developed in the area of human rights education structures and activities.⁶⁵ Bearing in mind the importance that human rights education can play to make human rights protection take root, such measures should be reinforced. Given appropriate instruction and training and time, police officers’, prosecutors’ and civil servants’ basic human rights knowledge (of international rules and procedures) and values could be strengthened, which possibly will increase their respect for protection of minority rights. Following such improvements prosecutors and police officers are likely to be more sympathetic towards publications in other languages than Turkish which, in turn, could work as a guarantee against confiscation of books ordered by the whim of local authorities.⁶⁶

Increasing human rights awareness among the police and civil servants is not enough, however. Awareness must rise among the general public and include all sectors of society. State authorities and the media could implement public campaigns stressing values of tolerance and mutual respect for minorities. Moreover, primary and secondary schools could include the teaching of minority history, culture and geography in the curricula. Increasing tolerance and respect among the public and especially among the younger generations is vital and does by no means threaten the state’s clout.

In terms of education policy, a review is required. The authorities should tone down Kemalistic attitudes and allow complementary and private education in any language. However, schools for specific minorities need to follow the official, if yet revised, Turkish curricula. With a reviewed curricula and softened authority attitude towards private language education, it should be possible for all citizens of Turkey to be educated in their mother tongue without endangering people’s knowledge of the Turkish language.

⁶² Donald L. Horowitz, ‘Ethnic Conflict Management for Policymakers’, pp. 115-130 in Joseph V. Montville, ed., *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990), p. 119.

⁶³ Cf. Dunér and Deverell, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶⁴ ‘2000 Regular report’, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶⁵ Cf. Dunér and Deverell, op. cit. especially pp. 31-32.

⁶⁶ *Violations of Free Expression in Turkey*, op. cit., Chapter IX.

x X x

In sum, suggesting minority rights reform in Turkey is a delicate matter which is complicated by the fact that there are many distinct minority groups residing in the country. Solving these problems, be it by implementing maximum or minimum reform, is a truly difficult task. To decide the magnitude of the demands a number of factors should be examined, in particular what the minorities' own demands are. In order to answer such questions further research is imperative.

Appendix Table on Minorities in Turkey⁶⁷

Ethnic group	Religion	Stream	Location	Problems	Size
Armenians	Christian	Mainly Orthodox, about 4,000 Catholics, 3,000-4,000 Protestants	Istanbul	1. Legal status of Patriarchate 2. Religious training institutions 3. Properties 4. Educational establishments 5. Election of the Patriarch	50,000-93,000
Greeks	Christians	Orthodox	Istanbul and the two islands of Imroz and Tenedos, off the western entrance to the Dardanelles	1. Legal status of Patriarchate 2. Religious training institutions 3. Properties 4. Educational establishments 5. Election of the Patriarch	3,500
Assyrians	Christians	Assyro-Chaldean	Istanbul, southeastern Turkey (vicinity of Mardin and Midyat)	1. Not recognized as minority under the Lausanne Treaty 2. Have no legal status as a community 3. Denied the right to their own social and charitable institutions	25,000
Balkan immigrants (Pomaks)	Moslem	Sunni/ Alevi (minority)	Western provinces and Edirne		750,000
Sunni Arabs	Moslem	Shaji'j tradition (close to sunni Kurds)	Provinces of Urfa, Mardin, Siirt, Hatay (Alexandretta)	To use Arabic outside of private sphere, e.g. in schools	
Alevi Arabs or Nusayri	Moslem	Alevi (Alawi or Alawite)	Hatay	Turkicization	200,000
Christian Arabs	Christians	Orthodox and Melkite	Hatay	Turkicization	10,000

⁶⁷ Figures on Armenians, Greeks, Jews and Assyrians are taken from the 'Interim report', op. cit. The remainder is taken from the *World Directory of Minorities 1997*, op. cit.

(Nasrani)					
Georgians	Christian	Orthodox	Artvin province (northeast)		10,000
Georgians	Moslem	Sunni	Artvin province (northeast)		80,000
Azeri Turks	Moslem	Ithna'ashria Shi'i	Northeast border area around Kars, Ardahan and Artvin		75,000

Ethnic group	Religion	Stream	Location	Problems	Size
Zaza	Moslem	Alevi and Sunni	Tunceli area and north of Diyarbakir		3,000,000
Laz, also known as Mingrelian	Moslem	Hanafi Sunni	Southeastern region of the Black sea	Need for religious broadcast in their language	150,000
Yoruk	Moslem	Alevi	Taurus mountain		70,000
Tahtaci	Moslem	Alevi	Forested part of the Taurus		
Roma	Majority Moslem a few Christian		Western Turkey and Thrace	Subjected to widespread prejudice and excluded from mainstream society	500,000 ⁶⁸
Dönme	Moslem				
Jews	Judaism	Sephardist	Istanbul, Izmir (2,000), Ankara and Adana		25,000-26,000
Kurds	Moslem	Mostly Sunni Moslem, 1/3 Shia Moslem (Alevi)	11 provinces of the southeast	Subjected to harassment and persecution	6,000,000-12,000,000

⁶⁸ European Roma Rights Center.