



**Approaches to minorities in  
conscription systems in Eastern  
Europe, the South Caucasus,  
and Central Asia**

## About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

---

## About this study

This study is part of DCAF's broader engagement in the area of human rights in the Armed Forces. DCAF advises governments and civil society organizations, provides assessments and trainings, creates knowledge products and conducts various projects addressing the rights of conscripts in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The research constitutes a series of knowledge products exploring the legal framework to which conscripts, as citizens in uniform, are subject to and offers recommendations and practical tools protecting human rights in national emergencies, in line with international best practice. Other resources developed by DCAF on this topic include:

- Elizaveta Chymkh, Dr. Grazvydas Jasutis, Rebecca Mikova and Richard Steyne, *Legal Handbook on the Rights of Conscripts* (Geneva: DCAF, 2020). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/legal-handbook-rights-conscripts>
- Dr. Grazvydas Jasutis (ed), *Rights of Conscripts in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and South Caucasus: A Review of Legislation and Practice* (Geneva: DCAF, 2021). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/rights-conscripts-eastern-europe-central-asia-and-south-caucasus-review-legislation-and-practice>
- E-learning course: *Introduction to the Rights of Conscripts* (in English and Russian). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/introduction-rights-conscripts>
- Dr. Grazvydas Jasutis, Rebecca Mikova and Richard Steyne, *The Rights of Conscripts During National Emergencies in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia: A Case Study of Covid-19* (Geneva: DCAF, 2022). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/rights-conscripts-during-national-emergencies-eastern-europe-south-caucasus-and-central-asia-case>

## Publisher

DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector  
Governance

Maison de la Paix, Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E  
CH-1202, Geneva, Switzerland

---

 +41 22 730 94 00

 info@dcaf.ch

 www.dcaf.ch

 @DCAF\_Geneva

---

## Authors

Grazvydas Jasutis, Rebecca Mikova and  
Reetta Toivanen

---

## Copy-editor

Aravis Global Advisors

---

## Design & layout

Ziad Rizkallah

---

## ISBN

978-92-9222-698-5

---

## Acknowledgements

DCAF would like to thank the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) of the Swiss Confederation for its generous support in making this publication possible.

The authors of this study would also like to express their gratitude to the those who provided valuable contributions on minorities in national conscription systems. These include Aida Alymbaeva (International University of Central Asia, Lecturer), Office of Civil Freedoms, Edgar Khachatryan (Peace Dialogue NGO), Elkhan Mehdiyev (Peace and Conflict Resolution Center, Director), Vadim Enicov, and Shorena Lortkipanidze (Civil Council on Defense and Security, Chairperson).

---

## Notes

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not reflect the opinions or views of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS) of the Swiss Confederation.

The URLs cited in this document were valid at the time of publication. Neither DCAF nor the authors take responsibility for subsequent changes to any URLs cited in this publication.

---

DCAF 2023.



*Diversity is one of the truest reflections of our nation's ideals, and part of the fabric of our military. It is crucial, not because it is in vogue, but because it makes us better, stronger and more effective as a fighting force.*

**Jay Silveria**

Superintendent of the US Air Force  
Academy in Colorado Springs,  
Colorado

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Preface.....6**
- Introduction.....7**
- 1. International human rights commitments..... 11**
  - 1.1 Approaches to inclusion of minorities ..... 14
  - 1.2 Challenges to protecting minority rights ..... 16
  - 1.3 Minorities and fragile areas .....20
- 2. Minorities in eastern europe,  
the south caucasus and central asia..... 23**
- 3. Good practice in promoting diversity and the inclusion  
of minorities in conscription systems ..... 30**
  - 3.1 Overcoming inequality, discrimination, and harassment ..... 30
  - 3.1.2 Dealing with complaints of discrimination or harassment..... 32
  - 3.3 Approaches to linguistic minorities ..... 36
  - 3.4 Approaches to religious minorities..... 40
  - 3.5 Food and dietary requirements..... 43
- Recommendations ..... 45**
- Annex 1: international instruments for the protection  
of the rights of minorities ..... 46**

# PREFACE

I am delighted to introduce this special publication, which focuses on the minorities who are subject to military conscription in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Conscription systems across these regions vary widely, but all share a common element in that they are used to bolster defence capabilities. Conscription is a vital part of the military defence strategy and has played an important role in maintaining stability and security in the region. However, the conscription system also, as indicated by our authors, poses numerous challenges.

Minorities, particularly those living in remote areas, often face difficulty in accessing resources and support to fulfill their obligation to serve in the military. There are concerns around the lack of adequate preparation or resources to ensure that conscripts are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to serve effectively. Minorities require, as a result, appropriate support and access to resources to fulfill their military service obligations.

Understanding and addressing the specific needs of minority groups will help ensure that their service is meaningful and beneficial to them and to their countries. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the unique challenges that minorities face in this system and to ensure that their rights and needs are respected and met.

I am deeply grateful for the assistance of our partners from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, who have been with us every step of the way for this research project. I am certain that this publication will educate the public, guide policymakers and militaries, and, eventually, result in more inclusive armed forces, where minority rights are upheld.

**Darko Stančić**

Head of Europe and Central Asia Division

Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

# INTRODUCTION

Managing ethnic, religious, linguistic and other types of diversity in states' military structures poses a major challenge. The composition of a nation's armed forces should reflect the society that they serve, and ensuring adequate representation of minorities is fundamental in that respect. At the same time, armed forces need to have a common vision that transcends the different identities of its members in order for them to perform cohesively and effectively in the field.<sup>1</sup> National conscription systems reflect a state's need to impose a duty on its citizens to contribute to the state's capacity to defend itself and preserve peace and security. Conscription is often, also, credited with developing civic education, fostering cohesion across different socio-economic groups and building national identity.<sup>2</sup>

This is only possible if military structures create a conducive environment for the inclusion of minorities. But it also means that policies that accommodate minorities may be undesirable due to the need for differential treatment. The central questions to managing diversity in national conscription systems are the following:

- ❖ How can authorities ensure the adequate and appropriate participation of minorities in mandatory military service?
- ❖ What policies can authorities adopt in protecting the rights of minorities?
- ❖ How can authorities balance policies accommodating minorities while ensuring combat capabilities?

There is no universally agreed definition of “minority” under international law. According to the 1992 United Nations Minorities Declaration, minorities are based on national, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity. The existence of a minority is a question of fact, and any definition must include both objective factors – such as the existence of a shared ethnicity, language, or religion, and subjective factors, above all the fact that individuals identify themselves as members of a

---

1 'Multiethnic Armed Forces' *DCAF Backgrounder* (Nov 2005). Available at: [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15007/backgrounder\\_05\\_multi-ethnic-forces.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15007/backgrounder_05_multi-ethnic-forces.pdf)

2 See, for example, J. Kosonen, and J. Mälkki, 'The Finnish Model of Conscription: A Successful Policy to Organize National Defence', *Successful Public Policy in Nordic Countries: Cases, Lessons, Challenges*, ed. Caroline de la Porte et al., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 456-472.

minority.<sup>3</sup> Sexual and gender minorities may also be considered in this category even though this study will not address them.<sup>4</sup>

Minority rights are at the core of universal human rights. Human rights, including minority rights, are not just ideals and utopias. Rather they have been coded and ratified by those states that are members of such organisations as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. “Ratification” means that a treaty has become binding upon the state and the issue is no more an internal matter of state, but that it will be monitored by international human rights bodies.<sup>5</sup> Protecting and enhancing minorities’ right to their cultures, religions and languages is a way of protecting their human rights. For example, one leading international lawyer, Professor Asbjørn Eide, argues that there are three basic values and aims that have guided minority protection in international law.<sup>6</sup> First, everyone should be able to enjoy all their human rights fully, regardless of ethnic, cultural or religious belonging. This means positive and targeted measures to be included in the human rights framework, and this is why contemporary minority categories ensure that special differentiated rights have emerged. The second aim is to protect and facilitate cultural diversity and pluralism. According to Eide the combination of these two has meant the need to ensure everyone’s right to express and live out their culture and identity without the fear of discrimination. The third aim is to ensure peace and security for all members of society from both a regional and a national perspective.<sup>7</sup>

---

3 *Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation*, (OHCHR: Special Publications, 2010), HR/PUB/10/3.

4 In a series of cases, the Court held that any ban on the employment of homosexuals in the military constituted a breach of the right to respect for private life as protected by Article 8 (Lustig-Prean and Beckett v. the United Kingdom; Smith and Grady v. the United Kingdom; Perkins and R. v. the United Kingdom)

5 A. Comstock, *Committed to Rights: UN Human Rights Treaties and Legal Paths for Commitment and Compliance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), doi:10.1017/9781108908979

6 A. Eide, ‘The Rights of ‘Old’ versus ‘New’ Minorities’ *Minority Governance in and Beyond Europe: Celebrating 10 Years of the European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, (ed.) T. H. Malloy & J. Marko, (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2014), 23-38.

7 Ibid.



## International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing the adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or of individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups and individuals enjoy equal human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved. United Nations General Assembly Resolution (1965) 2106 (XX),. Art. 1(4)

This third aim of ensuring peace and security is at the core of why protecting and promoting diversity in the armed forces is essential. Where a state's army represents all sections of society, including ethnic and other minorities, the army can also become a source of national unity and cohesion. It follows that unnecessary barriers to the recruitment of conscripts and the participation of ethnic minority groups within the armed forces should, as far as possible, be removed. This is a question of added protection for those in non-dominant positions in their countries – and it is also a human rights issue.<sup>8</sup> It is a question of effectiveness as well – the armed forces will operate more effectively in the national interest if they are broadly representative and not dominated by ethnic elites.<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the over-representation of minorities in conscription can also prove a concern. For example, under Russia's mobilization in 2022 members of Buryat, Tatar and Tuvan minorities were disproportionately recruited to fight in the war in Ukraine, something which led to severe criticisms.<sup>10</sup>

Although any individual can make valuable contributions to the military, there are also some disadvantages to having minority members in the armed forces. They may face language barriers when serving in the military. Those who are not fluent in the official language can find it difficult to understand orders and instructions. This can lead to misunderstandings, to miscommunication, and even potentially to dangerous situations. Also, this can result in unfair treatment, unequal opportunities, and sometimes hostility. Another disadvantage of having minorities in the military is that they may lack the same level of training and experience as dominant groups. This fact

- 
- 8 *R. Toivanen, 'Beyond legal categories of indigeneity and minority-ness: The case of Roma and falling in-between', Extending the Protection to Migrant Populations in Europe: Old and New Minorities, (ed.) R. Medda-Windischer, C. Boulter, & T. H. Malloy (London: Routledge 2019), 65-88, doi. 10.4324/9780429490866*
- 9 *L. Slapakova, B. Caves, M.N. Posard, J. Muravska, D. Dascalu, D.Y. Myers, R. Kuo, & K. Thue Leveraging diversity for military effectiveness: Diversity, inclusion and belonging in the UK and US Armed Forces. (RAND Corporation: 2022), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1026-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1026-1.html)*
- 10 *J. G. Cuesta, and M. R. Sahuquillo, 'Putin's conscription targets Russia's ethnic minorities', El Pais [English edition] (7 Oct 2022). Available at: <https://english.elpais.com/international/2022-10-07/putins-conscription-drive-targets-russias-ethnic-minorities.html>*

may lead to problems with coordination and morale, as well as to a lack of respect for minority members. There may be, consequently, an increased risk of injury in combat, as well as a greater likelihood of failure on important missions if minority members fail to understand commands. Some studies have shown that minorities are more likely to experience PTSD symptoms, such as anxiety, and depression. This may lead to a greater risk of developing mental health issues and can also interfere with conscripts' ability to perform their duties in the military. A new US study examined mental health disparities within the ranks and has found that Black, Hispanic and Asian troops report "significantly higher" rates of suicide attempts than their white counterparts<sup>11</sup>. Overall, while having minorities in the armed forces can be beneficial in many ways, there are also the disadvantages mentioned above. It is important to be aware of these issues and to take steps to ensure that all members of the military are treated fairly and given the same opportunities regardless of their background.

The aim of this study is to explore the role, inclusion, and protection of rights of minorities in conscription systems, with a special focus on Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia retained conscription systems. This decision was largely driven by a desire to maintain strong national defence forces during a period of political and economic instability, when there was also an inability to generate professional forces to fill up the security vacuum. Conscription systems in the region vary from country to country, but typically involve a period of service ranging from 12 to 24 months. All men are required to register for conscription and can be called up at any age between 18 and 26 years old. Upon registration, applicants are usually required to undergo an assessment to determine their physical and mental readiness for military service. Conscription systems remain in place in many countries in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, especially in light of the on-going war between Russia and Ukraine. While there are discussions on the importance of conscripted personnel for countries' defence strategies, conscription does provide an opportunity for young people to gain valuable work experience, as well as a chance to learn about military discipline and to develop teamwork skills. It also helps to promote patriotism, national pride and a sense of unity among the people of a country regardless of their ethnicity or social status.<sup>12</sup>

This publication has four parts. The first examines international human rights commitments related to minorities and their protection. The second concentrates on minorities in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. It then focuses on good practices: the struggle to overcome inequality, discrimination, and harassment; inclusion strategies and training measures; dealing with complaints of discrimination or harassment; special personnel policies; implementation of equal opportunity in the armed forces; approaches to linguistic minorities; approaches to religious minorities; and special food and dietary requirements. We finish with recommendations based on good practice.

---

11 John Vandiver, 'Service members in several minority groups more likely to attempt suicide, report finds', Stars and Stripes, (9 Feb 2021). Available at : <https://www.stripes.com/theaters/us/service-members-in-several-minority-groups-more-likely-to-attempt-suicide-report-finds-1.661563>

12 V. Bove, R. Di Leo, R. and M. Giani 'Conscription's comeback: The old everlasting appeal of an age-old policy', (Centre for Economic Policy Research 2023). Available at: <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/conscriptions-comeback-everlasting-appeal-age-old-policy>

# 1. INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS

The right to equality is well established in international human rights law: it is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), although there are some significant differences between said texts. These instruments ban discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, national origin, and religion. Article 27 of the ICCPR specifically extends protection to include discrimination against ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities.

According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, a body consisting of independent experts at the Council of Europe, discrimination means any differential treatment with no objective or reasonable justification, based on grounds such as “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status.<sup>13</sup>

There are, however, several difficulties in treating these provisions as an outright prohibition on any of these forms of discrimination in the armed forces. First, there is no right to become a conscript or a member of the armed forces, as such. In the cases of discriminatory provisions contained in legislation, this presents no obstacle, at least so far as the ICCPR is concerned. The position under Art. 14 ECHR is more problematic and is discussed below. Second, it is not clear that these treaty obligations, by themselves, require states to take active measures in eliminating discrimination, such as enacting anti-discrimination laws or preventing acts of racism or racial or ethnic harassment by others (for example, by fellow service personnel).

A more specific International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which requires such steps, is relevant. The Convention applies to “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life” (Art. 1.1).

---

13 7 of explanatory memorandum to ECRI General policy recommendation 15.

## Equality and Non-discrimination Provisions in Selected Human Rights Treaties

**Art. 2 UDHR:** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

**Art. 26 ICCPR:** All persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

**Art. 27 ICCPR:** In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

**Art. 14 ECHR:** The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

**Art. 1 of Protocol 12 to the ECHR:** 1. The enjoyment of any right set forth by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. 2. No one shall be discriminated against by any public authority on any ground such as those mentioned in paragraph 1.

Art. 14 of the ECHR does not establish a free-standing right not to be discriminated against. It only applies to the enjoyment of another Convention right or “within the ambit” of a Convention right. In other terms there is no need to demonstrate a breach. A practical link will suffice. There is, however, no Convention right to employment or to taking part in public service as such. Even where such a link or breach can be established, and Article 14 is engaged, it is possible to justify differential treatment. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has stated, for example, that “a difference of treatment is discriminatory if it ‘has no objective and reasonable justification’, that is, if it does not pursue a ‘legitimate aim’ or if there is not a ‘reasonable relationship of

proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised”<sup>14</sup>. It follows that there is justification under Article 14 if these conditions are satisfied. However, race and nationality discrimination are two categories that the European Court of Human Rights has said require “very weighty reasons” or “particularly serious reasons”.<sup>15</sup>

Due to the difficulties in establishing racial motivation in cases of discrimination, the ECtHR has found that a failure by a state to investigate obvious lines of inquiry in investigations into violence by state agents or the disregard of apparent evidence of discrimination by the authorities, may lead to negative inferences. Consequently, the burden of proof will shift to the state to show that discrimination has not taken place.<sup>16</sup> This is of relevance, for example, if bullying in the armed forces is arguably racially motivated.

Unlike Article 14, Protocol 12 to the ECHR is a free-standing provision to protect individuals from discrimination:

- ❖ In enjoying any right within national law;
- ❖ By public authorities carrying out their legal obligations, including when using discretionary powers such as grant-making;
- ❖ Any other act, or failure to act, by a public authority.

Since the armed forces are certainly public authorities, Protocol 12 can be used to prevent discrimination by them on prohibited grounds in the countries where it applies. Protocol 12 has been signed by 38 states, and it entered into force — for the 20 that have ratified it<sup>17</sup>— on 25 June 2018.

Another notable instrument for the protection of the rights of minorities is the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which is the first legally binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of minorities worldwide and is currently in force in 39 states.<sup>18</sup> The Convention sets out rights enjoyed by individuals belonging to minorities and complementary obligations to be respected by states. These include the rights to freely express ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities; not being discriminated against; enjoying freedom of assembly,

---

14 ‘Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali v. the United Kingdom, ECHR’, 28 May 1985, *European Human Rights Reports* 7 (1985), 741, para. 72. See also ‘The Case Relating to Certain Aspects of the Laws on the Use of Languages in Education in Belgium (Belgian Linguistics Case), ECHR’ (23 Jul 1968), *European Human Rights Reports* 1 (1979-1980), 241.

15 ‘Tekeli v. Turkey, ECHR’, 16 Nov 2004, *European Human Rights Reports* 42 (2006), 53, referring to “compelling reasons”. It was only in 2007 that the ECHR explicitly included the notion of indirect (race) discrimination under Article 14 in *DH and Others v the Czech Republic*, its famous judgment on Roma education segregation.

16 ‘Nachova v. Bulgaria, ECHR’, 26 Feb 2004, *European Human Rights Reports* 39, (2004), 793, para. 169.

17 For example, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance tries on its country visits to help governments to remove the obstacles to ratifying Protocol no. 12.

18 ‘[Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#)’ (ETS 157) (entered into force 1 Feb 1998).

association, expression, thought, conscience and religion; using minority languages in contact with the authorities in areas inhabited traditionally or in substantial numbers by national minorities; and being able to influence public decision-making for issues affecting persons belonging to national minorities.<sup>19</sup> Complementary obligations to be respected by the states include: promoting effective equality, preserving and developing minority cultures, religions and languages; promoting intercultural dialogue and protecting persons belonging to minorities from hostility and violence; making education accessible to all; and fostering intercultural knowledge and promoting minority rights through bilateral, multilateral and cross-border cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

The OSCE has developed broad commitments in discrimination against ethnic minorities. As early as the 1975 Helsinki Conference, the OSCE stated that participating States should recognize the contribution that national minorities and regional cultures could play in those states.<sup>21</sup> Later, at the Vienna Conference of 1989, participating States agreed to “protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory”.<sup>22</sup> The 1990 Copenhagen Conference added the right of those belonging to such a minority or culture to use their own language and to establish their own educational, cultural, and religious institutions.<sup>23</sup> Subsequent conferences have re-affirmed these principles relating to cultural identity. The OSCE has also turned its attention in numerous resolutions to the issue of migrant workers.<sup>24</sup>

---

19 'About the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities', Council of Europe (nd). Available at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/at-a-glance#{%2279030665%22:\[3\]}](https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/at-a-glance#{%2279030665%22:[3]})

20 Ibid.

21 Helsinki 1975 (Co-operation in Humanitarian and Other Fields).

22 Vienna 1989, para. 19.

23 Copenhagen 1990, paras. 32-34.

24 Specifically, at the Vienna Conference of 1989, the OSCE invited “host countries and countries of origin to make efforts to improve further the economic, social, cultural and other conditions of life for migrant workers and their families legally residing in the host countries”, such as education and training. Of particular interest here, the OSCE stated that the “participating States recognize that issues of migrant workers have their human dimension”.

## 1.1 Approaches to inclusion of minorities

---

Until the 1970s, there was a theory that states would choose between assimilationist or multiculturalist treatment of their minorities. Theories of recognition have replaced these ideas.<sup>25</sup> The recognition policy puts human dignity and the equality of all people first and foremost.<sup>26</sup> This approach seeks to accommodate the needs and wishes of people who are in non-dominant position in their societies. The measures that follow acknowledge ethnic and linguistic differences without trying to downplay or celebrate these.<sup>27</sup>

“As the Armed Forces adapt to an evolving strategic environment, there is however a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the full spectrum of advantages that can be gained by employing a diverse workforce, particularly in relation to key strategic priorities identified by the UK and US Armed Forces. This understanding should also build on the increase in representation of different personnel characteristics, attributes and demographics to help strengthen inclusion and belonging among the UK and US Armed Forces.”

L- Slapakova, B. Caves, M.N. Posard, J. Muravska, D. Dascalu, D.Y. Myers, R. Kuo, & K. Thue, *Leveraging diversity for military effectiveness: Diversity, inclusion and belonging in the UK and US Armed Forces*. (RAND Corporation, 2022). Available at: [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1026-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1026-1.html)

Armed forces do not exist outside the state’s normal social environment and conscripts represent the average individuals<sup>28</sup> from a given society. As such, conscription can be seen as a micro-model of a society since it brings different people into the same place with the task of defending a state. Recognition, inclusion and dialogue policies are central in creating an effective working environment for conscripts and other recruits. Some armed forces have had successful experiences in terms of integration. In others, a multicultural approach has led to armed forces with units drawn almost exclusively from ethnic sub-groups. Different challenges in preventing discrimination and enhancing equality arise in each case.

---

25 I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1990); W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory for Minority Rights*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); S. Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Citizens and Residents*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004).

26 J. Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

27 R. Toivanen, ‘Anthropology and the Paradox of rights in a Multicultural Context’ *New Challenges for the Welfare Society*, (ed) V. Puuronen, A. Häkkinen, A. Pylkkänen, T. Sandlund, & R. Toivanen (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Karelian Institute, 2004), 107-123 at 107–8.

28 Whereas military service is obligatory for men in many countries, it is obligatory for women (or even accessible to women) only in a very few countries.

### Roma minorities as conscripts

“[A]s a result of their turbulent history and constant uprooting the Roma have become a specific type of disadvantaged and vulnerable minority... As the [European] Court [of Human Rights] has noted in previous cases, they therefore require special protection ...” (*D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, application n° 57325/00, Grand Chamber judgment of 13 November 2007, 182).

Armed forces can serve as an example of how to integrate Roma minorities into the society by acknowledging difference in culture and language but emphasising joint mission in the national defence.

In multi-ethnic states, which today means nearly all states, the armed forces should adequately reflect the composition of a given society, while having a vision that transcends the different identities of its members for them to perform cohesively and effectively in the field. Armed forces can act as a positive force for integration. Indeed, because of the armed forces' importance as a visible symbol of national unity, successful integration models can have a broader impact within society at large and in facilitating the acceptance of difference in terms of linguistic, cultural and ethnic difference. The country's armed forces can contribute to the emergence of a common spirit.

## 1.2 Challenges to protecting minority rights

There are many challenges to the effective protection of minority rights in conscription and in the armed forces in general. The following list outlines the key challenges to the protection of minority rights in conscription:

- ❖ **Balancing equality, diversity and military discipline:** Conscription presents a major challenge to the effective protection of the rights of conscripts from minority groups. This depends on the tension between military discipline, the objective of treating all recruits equally and the reality that minorities are distinct and may have different dietary, linguistic, and cultural needs. All conscripts, regardless of their ethnicity or individual needs, must adhere to military orders and regulations as set out by their superiors. Respect for the chain of command and proper adherence to military discipline must be maintained at all times. This is to ensure the safe and effective functioning of the military unit. At the heart of the challenge lies the principle of equality, which requires that all conscripts be treated similarly, irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, or culture. This principle is essential to ensuring that all recruits have the same opportunity to serve their country and that they benefit from the experience. However, the reality of minority groups makes it difficult to achieve this objective. Minority groups may have different dietary requirements, such as halal or kosher food. They may require different language support or time off for religious holidays. Failing to accommodate these needs can



result in feelings of exclusion and discrimination, lower morale, and higher attrition rates, all undermining the effectiveness of the military. This can prove especially problematic in situations where the conscripts are engaged in complex operations that require a high degree of trust and cohesion.

- ❖ **Underrepresentation of minorities in armed forces:** Minority groups often lack sufficient representation in the armed forces of a given country which can limit their ability to be heard and have their concerns addressed. This lack of representation can also make it difficult for these groups to access resources and opportunities that are available to other members of the military. Moreover, when minority groups are not adequately represented in leadership positions, it can limit their ability to influence decision-making processes and policies that affect their lives and communities. This can result in policies and practices that do not adequately reflect the needs and experiences of these groups, potentially leading to disparities in access to resources, services, and benefits.
- ❖ **Prejudice and discrimination:** Prejudice and discrimination are still quite common in the armed forces, which can make it difficult for minority groups to be accepted and respected. Biases against minorities can hamper their ability to report cases of mistreatment, discrimination and harassment through complaint mechanisms and their complaints, when addressed, are not impartially assessed. Minority conscripts may face limited recruitment opportunities due to biases and stereotypes, which can further limit their representation in the armed forces.
- ❖ **Language barriers:** The ability of armed forces minority members to benefit from complaint mechanisms can be hampered by language skills. Minority members may not have access to the same support programs as their non-minority counterparts due to language barriers. This makes it difficult to address their needs and concerns. For example, a mental health support program designed to support service members with mental health issues may not be available in the language spoken by a minority member. Alternatively, the program may not take into account cultural differences that can affect how mental health is perceived and addressed within that community. A minority serviceman or woman may also struggle to understand rights and to effectively report incidents of discrimination or harassment if they have limited proficiency in the language used in official communications.
- ❖ **Lack of data collection:** In the countries of interest, there has been little research conducted on the rights of minorities in the armed forces, and only limited monitoring of these rights has taken place. For example, in Moldova there are no state institutions specialized in monitoring minority rights. Several institutions monitor human rights in general along with some aspects

of minority rights.<sup>29</sup> However, the Ministry of Defense<sup>30</sup> does not prepare specialized reports on the respect of human rights or on the respect of the rights of minorities in conscription. Some aspects of human rights and minority rights are offered in periodic reports but without essential data<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, data on the conscription of minorities are not collected in Armenia, Azerbaijan or Georgia. In Kyrgyzstan there are statistics on ethnic and linguistic but not for religious minorities. This means that minorities' fates in militaries are often unknown. In order to ensure the equitable treatment of all personnel in the armed forces, it is important to implement measures to monitor and protect the rights of minorities. This could include the establishment of independent review boards, training and awareness-raising initiatives, and the introduction of equal opportunities policies.

❖ **Inability of civil society to monitor human rights of conscripts:** In the countries of interest civil society is generally unable to access military units and cannot, therefore, conduct any independent monitoring of conscripts and their human rights. This inability poses a significant challenge to protecting the rights of minority conscripts, particularly those belonging to marginalized communities as without access to military units and data, civil society organizations cannot fully get a sense of the situation and conditions of minority conscripts. This makes it difficult to address any potential human rights violations. The lack of access and transparency can also create an environment of impunity, in which violations can occur without consequences. Therefore, ensuring access to military units and related data is essential to protecting the rights of minority conscripts and to promoting accountability within the military system.

Some of these challenges can be addressed through targeted policies which, for example, aim to increase the participation of minorities in the armed forces and to create opportunities for their career advancement to leadership positions. Language barriers can be, to some extent, overcome by ensuring that units responsible for assessing complaints and other services include minority-language speakers. Overcoming prejudice and bias can require a series of substantial measures (and not only in the Armed Forces) which aim to enhance mutual understanding, dialogues and confidence among armed forces members from both dominant groups and minorities. These can include interactive workshops, cultural competency training, implicit bias training, diversity panels or inclusive language training. Sensitization measures of this kind serve not only to protect the rights

---

29 Among public Moldovan authorities, the following can be named: Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Interethnic relations, <https://www.parlament.md/StructuraParlamentului/SecretariateleComisiilorpermanente/tabid/84/CommissionId/42/language/en-US/Default.aspx>; Hearings on Human Rights (11 May 2022), <https://www.parlament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jj716awe7%2fU%3d&tabid=263&language=ro-RO>; Ombudsman Office, <http://ombudsman.md/en/>; Study on perception of human rights in Moldova, (2021), <http://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Studiu-PERCEPTII-DO-2021.pdf>; National Council on Human Rights, <https://www.parlament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jj716awe7%2fU%3d&tabid=263&language=ro-RO>; Report on implementation of National Plan in the domain of Human rights (2022), [https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport\\_pnado\\_pentru\\_anul\\_2021.pdf](https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_pnado_pentru_anul_2021.pdf); Aspects of minorities rights were developed in the Fifth State Report submitted to the Council of Europe: 'Fifth Report submitted by the Republic of Moldova', COE (2019), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/republic-of-moldova>

30 See further <https://www.army.md>

31 'Ministry of Defense periodic report', (2020, 2021), <https://www.army.md/?lng=2&action=show&cat=172>

of minorities during conscription. They may also enhance the effectiveness of armed forces during subsequent operations.

Some of the other challenges are more difficult to overcome in practice. Conscription by its nature requires uniform treatment and as a result a high degree of assimilation of minorities during their period of service is likely to be required. The limited space in which authorities can accommodate the needs and preferences of minorities will be addressed in the subsequent sections. In many instances, the absence of data collection on minority groups is intentional and can be attributed to a range of factors, from a lack of state resources to entrenched perceptions towards ethnic minorities by local communities and governmental agencies. The consequences of conflicts, social stigmas and other sensitive issues can further limit the ability to accurately document and collect statistical data on ethnic minorities. Consequently, a lack of quantitative data is likely to be expected for the future and it will be necessary to seek out other ways of assessing the respect of minority rights. Potential methods for developing a better understanding of minority conscripts include qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and case studies. The role of civil society in this regard is paramount as civil society organizations have the resources and expertise to conduct such assessments and their findings can be used by authorities to re-assess their approaches and policies.

The activities of a Georgian non-governmental organization the Civil Council on Defense and Security (CCDS)<sup>32</sup> can be used to illustrate good practice in this area. CCDS has been exploring diversity and inclusion in Georgian defense and security institutions since 2019. CCDS developed the special web platform [www.diversity.civilcouncil.org](http://www.diversity.civilcouncil.org) to address diversity and inclusion related knowledge and information gaps and also to highlight diversity- and inclusion-based challenges for Georgia's defense forces and for security sector institutions. CCDS's efforts to promote knowledge of these issues in defense and security institutions has been expanded to the development of diversity and inclusion course for the Defense Institution Building School at the Ministry of Defence of Georgia. Furthermore, CCDS regularly organizes consultations with national stakeholders: these include the Ministry of Defence and the Public defender's office, both key actors for conscript rights. Consultations with the Ministry of Defence are crucial to working out a common understanding of problems relating to conscript rights in Georgia: both issues of perception and issues in practice. CCDS hosted several roundtables in 2022 with the participation of the Ministry of Defence civilian and military leadership. The results of the study on conscript rights were discussed and key areas where additional analysis is needed were identified.

---

32 <https://civilcouncil.org/>

## 1.3 Minorities and Fragile areas

---

Conflicts in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia have been exacerbated by unresolved border disputes, the spread of radical ideologies, the creation of *de facto* states, and external actors' plays for power in the area. In Eastern Europe, tensions have been most acute in Ukraine and Moldova. Russian military aggression has caused ongoing conflict in Ukraine and instability in Moldova. In the South Caucasus, the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan is the most significant source of tension. The ongoing territorial dispute between Georgia and Russia, which included two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has been a source of instability for the entire region for over a decade. The Central Asian republics have all faced various levels of political unrest and violence. In particular, the civil war in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1997 was the most destructive conflict in the region. Islamic extremism has become a growing concern, particularly in relation to Afghanistan, where the Taliban controls much of the country. The conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic groups in Osh was another violent confrontation, which left hundreds dead, thousands displaced, and that caused widespread destruction. Recent clashes along the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are a reminder that many issues remain unresolved.<sup>33</sup> All these tensions make it difficult to create multi-ethnic armed forces and to integrate minorities into the security sector.

The re-establishment of ethnic co-operation within unified armed forces is of special significance in countries that have endured ethnic conflict. In these countries, armed forces have historically been divided along ethnic lines, with each group maintaining its own military units. This division often leads to a perpetuation of the conflict as it reinforces ethnic divisions and creates further mistrust and tension between groups. The re-establishment of ethnic cooperation within the armed forces can help to overcome these divisions and build trust between groups. This can be achieved by creating a unified chain of command that is representative of all ethnic groups, providing equal opportunities for advancement and training for soldiers of all ethnicities, and fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding. A unified military also acts as a symbol of national unity, demonstrating to the public and to the international community that the country is committed to overcoming its ethnic divisions and working towards a peaceful future.

That being said, the creation of a multi-ethnic (multi-religious or multilingual) defence force is particularly challenging in this context. It requires the (re)integration of former enemies who may have deep-seated mistrust and animosity towards one another. Integrating minorities from conflict-affected populations into the armed forces is difficult. There are often mental health issues, including PTSD, depression, anxiety. War crimes and links to fighters also result. Issues of this kind can make it difficult for these individuals to trust the military or their peers, or even, indeed, to perform basic tasks. Furthermore, cultural and religious differences can be a source of tension

---

33 See further Grazvydas Jasutis, Rebecca Mikova, Richard Steyne, *Ceasefires and Peace Agreements in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia: Assessing the Inclusion of Security-Sector Reform Provisions* (Geneva: DCAF, 2022). Available at: [https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Study\\_Ceasefires\\_PeaceAgreements\\_ECA\\_EN.pdf](https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Study_Ceasefires_PeaceAgreements_ECA_EN.pdf) and *Grazvydas Jasutis (ed), Mapping Fragile Areas: Case Studies from Central Asia* (Geneva: DCAF, ND). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/MappingFragileAreasCaseStudies.pdf>

and mistrust, making it difficult for these individuals to integrate into the military. Even where it is necessary to maintain separate structures, measures need to be taken to ensure timely dialogue among the military leaders of different communities and the rapid re-establishment of a national command structure.

### **Formation of unified national armed forces following Tajik Civil War**

*The Joint Statement by the delegation of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the delegation of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) on the outcome of the round of the inter-Tajik talks held in Moscow from 26 February to 8 March 1997 and the Protocol on Military Issues addressed the re-integration of UTO fighters into national armed forces.*

The reintegration, disarmament and disbandment of the armed units of UTO was agreed to be carried out by the President of Tajikistan and the Commission on National Reconciliation – which was comprised of equal numbers of government and UTO representatives, and in close cooperation with the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan. The reintegration of UTO units was carried out in four stages. In the fourth stage, the former UTO units were completely merged with the government structures. The conditions of the agreement also included the possibility for persons who were members of the armed units of UTO and expressed the wish to receive military training to be afforded equally with other nationals of Tajikistan the possibility of attending the relevant training institutions.<sup>34</sup>

The military can face a number of special tasks in the post-conflict phase. These are designed to support or even launch reconciliation processes. There can also be the implementation of special programmes to encourage the recruitment of conscripts from various ethnic groups that are under-represented in the armed forces. There are also choices to be made about downsizing, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration, giving prominence to a multi-ethnic dimension. The temporary presence of an international peacekeeping force can be a further opportunity to point the way to co-operation among different groups.

---

34 Joint statement by the delegation of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the delegation of the United Tajik Opposition on the outcome of the round of the inter-Tajik talks held in Moscow from 26 February to 8 March 1997 and the Protocol on Military Issues; see also Jasutis, Mikova and Steyne, Ceasefires. Available at: [https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Study\\_Ceasefires\\_PeaceAgreements\\_ECA\\_EN.pdf](https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Study_Ceasefires_PeaceAgreements_ECA_EN.pdf) Annex 11

## Recruiting Conscripts Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina represent an example of how one country's defence structures are coping with the legacy of a tragic conflict. The active phase of conflict ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, but it was only in 2006 that Bosnia and Herzegovina was able to establish a state-level defence institution to replace the sub-state (entity) defence structures that had remained essentially untouched since the end of the conflict. This included the creation of a NATO-compatible single military force (the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina) to replace the three predominantly mono-ethnic brigades. The political and legislative solutions for this reform were put together with significant assistance from the multinational NATO headquarters.

The new defence legislation (principally the Law on Defence and the Law on Service in the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina) strikes a balance between protecting the group rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina's three ethnic groups (and others not belonging to those groups) and promoting the individual human rights of military personnel. For example, the legislation ensures that the senior positions in both the Armed Forces and the Defence Ministry are divided fairly between ethnic groups (or constituent peoples, namely Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and others), additionally serving as a useful confidence-building mechanism. The legislation also provides the country's presidency with the power to determine the appropriate ethnic representation in the Armed Forces.

One notable feature of the system is the creation of three infantry regiments, each responsible for maintaining the military legacy and identity of the former units/armies from which they are descended: the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (predominantly Bosnian), the Croatian Defence Council (predominantly Croat), and the Army of the Republika Srpska (predominantly Serb).

## 2. MINORITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE, THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia constitutes a very diverse region in terms of population, with many ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. The table below outlines the various minority groups present in this region.

Country	Ethnic minorities	Linguistic minorities	Religious minorities
Armenia <sup>35</sup>	Yezidis: 35,308 (1.2%) Russian: 11,911 (0.4%) Assyrian: 2,769 (0.1%) Kurd: 2,162 (0.1%) Ukrainian: 1,176 (0.09%) Greeks: 900 (0.08%)	Kurmanji: 260,780 (5.8%) Russian: 15,130 (0.3%) Assyrian-Neo-Aramaic: 3,060(0.1%)	Armenian Apostolic: 2,668,000 (92%) Roman Catholic, Armenian Uniate (Mekhitarist) Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Evangelical Christians, Armenian Evangelical Church, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Charismatic Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, followers of the Church of Jesus Christ, Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, Molokan Christians, Yezidis, Jews, Baha'is, Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Pagans: 232,000 (8%) <sup>36</sup>

35 Minority rights group site, Armenia page (nd), <https://minorityrights.org/country/Armenia/>

36 'Report on International Religious Freedom: Armenia', (Office of International Religious Freedom, 2021). Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-report-on-international-religious-freedom/armenia/>

Country	Ethnic minorities	Linguistic minorities	Religious minorities
Azerbaijan	Lezgin: 180,312 (2.0%) Armenian: 120,000 (1.3%) Russian: 120,000 (1.3%) Talysh people: 112,000 (1.3%) Avar: 50,000 (0.56%) Turks-Meskhethians 38,000 (0.42) Tatars: 29,000 (0.29%) Tats: 25,000 (0.28%) Ukrainians: 22,000 (0.14) Tsakhurs: 12,000 (0.14%) Georgians: 10,000 (0.11%) Jews: 9,000 (0.1%) Kurds: 6,000 (0.07%) Krizs: 4,4000 (0.04%) Udis: 4,000 (0.04%) Khynalygs: 2,200 (0.02%) <sup>37</sup>	Lezgi language: 162,461 (1.8%) Armenian: 120,149 (1.3%) Russian: 117,995 (1.3%) Talysh language: 47,147 (0.53%) Avaric: 46,472 (0.52%)	Muslim: 8,806,000 (96%) Russian Orthodox, Georgian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Seventh-Day Adventists, Molokan Church, Roman Catholic, other Christians, including evangelical churches, Baptists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews and Baha'is: 367,000 (4%) <sup>38</sup>
Georgia <sup>39</sup>	Azerbaijanis: 233,000 (6.3%) Armenians: 168,100 (4.5%) Russians: 26,500 (0.7%) Ossetians: 14,400 (0.4%) Yezidis: 12,200 (0.3%) Ukrainians: 6,000 (0.2%) Kists: 5,700 (0.2%) Greeks: 5,500 (0.1%) Assyrians: 2,400 (0.1%)	Azerbaijanian: 231,436 (6.2%) Armenian: 144,812 (3.9%) Russian: 45,920 (1.2%) Others: 30,742 (0.8%) Ossetian: 5,698 (0.2%)	Georgian Orthodox Christians: 3,102,000 (83.4%) Muslim: 398,000 (10.7%) Armenian Apostolic: 109,000 (2.9%) Roman Catholic: 19,200 (0.5%) Jehovah's Witnesses: 12,400(0.3%) Not specified: 34,300 (0.9%)

37 Based on 2009 Census data

38 'Azerbaijan 2021 International Religious Freedom Report' (Washington: Office of International Religious Freedom [State Department], 2021). Available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/AZERBAIJAN-2021-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf>

39 Minority rights group site, Georgia page (nd) <https://minorityrights.org/country/georgia/>; the census data, note, does not include the territories of Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) occupied by Russia. Abkzians were not included in the 2014 census.



Country	Ethnic minorities	Linguistic minorities	Religious minorities
Kazakhstan	Russians: 3,793,764 (23.7%) Uzbeks: 456,997 (2.9%) Ukrainians: 333,031 (2.1%) Uyghurs: 224,713 (1.4%) Tatars: 204,229 (1.3%) Germans: 178,409 (1.1%) Koreans: 100,385 (0.6%) Belarusians: 66,476 (0.4%) <sup>40</sup>		Muslim: 11,295,000 (70.2%) Orthodox Christians: 4,215,000 (26.2%) Atheist: 450,000 (2.8%) Unspecified: 80,000 (0.5%) Other: 32,000 (0.2%) <sup>41</sup>
Kyrgyzstan	Uzbek: 985,358 (14.8%) Russian: 341,351 (5.1%) Dungan: 75,437 (1.1%) Uyghur: 60,210 (0.9%) Tajik: 58,913 (0.9%)	Uzbek: 757,700 (14.1%) Russian: 419,000 (7.8%) Dungan: 56,300 (1.0%) Tajik: 42,300 (0.79%) Uygur: 37,300 (0.70%)	Muslim: 5,310,000 (90%) Orthodox Christian: 413,000 (7%) Jews, Buddhists, Baha'is, unaffiliated groups: 177,000 (3%) <sup>42</sup>
Moldova <sup>43</sup>	Ukrainian: 181,035 (6.5%) Gagauz: 126,010 (4.5%) Russian: 111,726 (4.0%) Bulgarian: 51,867 (1.8%)	Russian: 263,523 (9.4%) Gagauzian: 114,532 (4.1%) Ukrainian: 107,252 (3.8%) Bulgarian: 41,756 (1.5%)	Orthodox Christian: 2,770,000 (97%) Christian Evangelic Baptist: 25,380 (0.9%) Jehovah's Witnesses: 17,341 (0.6%) Pentacostal: 10,049 (0.3%) Seventh-Day Adventists: 9,063 (0.3%) Evangelic Christian: 4,812 (0.01%)

40 Minority rights group site, Kazakhstan page (nd). Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/country/kazakhstan/>; there is no reliable source for linguistic minorities in Kazakhstan.

41 'Kazakhstan Religions', Index Mundi, 18 Sep 2021. Available at: <https://www.indexmundi.com/kazakhstan/religions.html>

42 'Report on International Religious Freedom: Kyrgyz Republic' (Washington: Office of International Religious Freedom [State Department], 2019). Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kyrgyzstan/#:~:text=Both%20ethnic%20Kyrgyz%20and%20ethnic,live%20mainly%20in%20major%20cities>

43 The census was conducted in 2014

Country	Ethnic minorities	Linguistic minorities	Religious minorities
Tajikistan	Uzbek: 1,093,203 (11%) Kyrgyz: 55,915 (0.5%) Turkmen: 15,171 (0.2%) Russian: 11,318 (0.2%) Tammari people: 6,495 (0.09%) Tatars 5,415 people (0.08%)	Uzbek: 903,211 (12%) Kyrgyz: 59,437 (0.79%) Russian: 32,747 (0.43%) Turkmen language: 13,653 (0.18%) Tammari language: 3,996 (0.05%)	Sunni Muslim: 7,740,000 (90%) Other: 516,000 (6%) Ismaili Shia Muslim: 344,000 (4%) <sup>44</sup>
Ukraine <sup>45</sup>	Russian: 8,334,100 (17.3%) Belarusian: 275,800 (0.6%) Moldovan: 258,600 (0.5%) Crimean Tatar: 248,200 (0.5%) Bulgarian: 204,600 (0.4%) Hungarians: 156,600 (0.3%) Romanians: 151,000 (0.3%) Poles: 144,100 (0.3%) Jews: 103,600 (0.2%)	Russian: 11,101,000 (24%) Romanian, Polish, Hungarian: 4,163,000 (9%) <sup>46</sup>	Orthodox: 18,500 (74%) Unaffiliated Christians: 2250 (9%) Greco-Roman Catholic: 2000 (8%) Unaffiliated groups: 1500 (6%) Roman Catholic and Protestant: 250 (1%) <sup>47</sup>

44 'Report on International Religious Freedom: Tajikistan' (Washington: Office of International Religious Freedom [State Department], 2018). Available at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/tajikistan/>

45 Based on 2001 census form data.

46 'Ukraine Language Stats', Nation Master (nd). Available at: <https://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Ukraine/Language>

47 [https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/religioznye\\_predpochteniya\\_naseleniya\\_ukrainy.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/religioznye_predpochteniya_naseleniya_ukrainy.html) (The survey was conducted in 2015 and 25,000 respondents were interviewed)

Country	Ethnic minorities	Linguistic minorities	Religious minorities
Uzbekistan	Tajik: 1,544,700 (4.8%) Kazakhs: 803,400 (2.5%) Russians: 750,000 (2.3%) Karakalpak: 708,800 (2.2%) Kyrgyz: 274,400 (0.9%) Tatar: 195,000 (0.6%) Turkmen: 192,000 (0.6%) Korean: 176,900 (0.6%) Ukrainian: 70,700 (0.2%) <sup>48</sup>	Russian: 4,860,000 (14.2%) Other: 2,430,000 (7.1%) <sup>49</sup> Tajik: 1,506,000 (4.4%)	Sunni Muslim: 32,862,000 (96%) Russian-Orthodox: 753,000 (2.2%) Catholics, Ethnic Korean Christians, Baptists, Lutherans, Seventh-day Adventists, Evangelical Christians, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, Baha'is, members of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness, and atheists: 616,000 (1.8%) Shia of the Jaafari school: 342,000 (1%) <sup>50</sup>

The situation of minorities as well as the collection of data about them and their representation in the military varies country-by-country.

**Armenia** is one of the most mono-ethnic countries in the world: non-Armenians make up only 1.8% of the country's population. There are very few reports on minority rights published by Armenian governmental institutions. The most recent one was published in 2020. This is the fifth report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In response to an official inquiry to the Ministry of Defence sent by Peace Dialogue NGO on 11 August 2022 the Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence stated that no special accounting was implemented during the conscription of Armenian citizens from ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Moreover, no specific study or research is being

48 Minority rights group site, Uzbekistan page (nd), <https://minorityrights.org/country/uzbekistan/>

49 'Uzbekistan Language Stats', Nation Master (nd), <https://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Uzbekistan/Language>

50 'Report on International Religious Freedom: Uzbekistan' (Washington: Office of International Religious Freedom [State Department], 2020), <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/uzbekistan/>

conducted either by the Ministry of Defence or by the General Command Staff. Military service in Armenia is arranged in accordance with the demands of the “On approving the internal service code of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia” law. The military service of the national, religious and linguistic minorities is organized considering their cultural specifics to ensure that their military service works efficiently. The above-mentioned specific aspects were not addressed in the Ministry’s response letter.

**Azerbaijan** is a multicultural and multi-ethnic country with dozens of ethnic minorities. Sometimes one village has just one ethnic group like Khynalygs in the Quba region. The percentage of ethnic groups depends largely on whether ethnic origins are indicated as Azerbaijani or Talysh or Lezgin on citizens’ IDs. These two groups are the largest ethnic groups in Azerbaijan. But there are many mixed families and more and more multicultural marriages. Movement to urban areas also changes ethnic calculations. In many cases citizens are becoming automatically “Azerbaijani” by not insisting on their own ethnicity. In the armed forces: there is no distinction made on the basis of ethnic origin. Numerous interviews and conversations with officers, experts and former soldiers have indicated that Azerbaijani armed forces are not mapped by ethnic groups. Rather they are organised on the basis of citizenship and everyone in the army irrespective of their language, religion and ethnic origin have the same rights and are treated in the same way. All conscripts go by their surname and they all speak Azeri. Only ethnic Russians stand out as their surname is different, but they are highly respected due to their service. All minorities serve in the armed forces of Azerbaijan except Armenians. There is no monitoring focused on the rights of specific minorities or minority conscripts in the armed forces.

**Georgia** does not publish data regarding the ethnic, religious or linguistic composition of conscripts. There is no line on nationality in Georgia’s ID documents, though, note, the Ministry of Defence keeps this information. With respect to state policies on the protection of minority rights, Georgia has adopted a State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021-2030 action plan. Georgia has an Interagency Human Rights Council, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. Parliamentary committees – the Committee on Human rights; the Committee on Defence and Security; the Legal issues Committee – are directly responsible for the protection of human rights and for preventing discrimination and mistreatment. At the Public Defender’s Office there are two councils: the Council on Ethnic Minorities and the Council on the Religious Minorities Council.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, citizens are not registered by language, but by ethnicity. Ethnic and linguistic identity is viewed as the same and therefore, the Ministry of Defence has not distinguished between ethnic and linguistic minorities. It only offers data on ethnic minorities. According to a response the Ministry of Defence of Kyrgyzstan sent on 15 September 2022 ethnic/linguistic minorities constitute 3% of the armed forces with the main minority group being Uzbeks (1.7%) and with others including Russians, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Turks, Tatars, Dungans, Ukrainians and Germans. There is no open data on the number/percentage of religious minorities serving in the armed forces and among conscripts. The Ministry of Defence has officially confirmed that it does not keep records of the religious affiliation of conscripts. Moreover, there is no national census information on the religious affiliation of the local population. Thus, it is difficult to identify the percentage of religious minorities. Based on ethnicity perhaps around 90% is Sunni Muslim (this includes Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Dungans, Tatars and Turks). Using the same criteria Orthodox Christians (Russians and Ukrainians) would constitute approximately 5% of the population. Shia Muslims represented

by Tajiks would account for 0.88% of the total population. An alternative service to conscription is offered for young males aged from 18 to 25. This includes minorities, who are reluctant to serve or who cannot be conscripted. Most ethnic and religious minorities do, in fact, opt for an alternative conscription service.

In **Tajikistan** statistics on the demography of the conscripts are compiled by the General Staff of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan. These are not publicly available. In 2022 the Law against all forms of discrimination was adopted. The law protects the rights and interests of all vulnerable groups, regardless of their status. If the rights and interests of recruits/soldiers have been restricted or violated in accordance with Article 19 of the Law “On the Status of soldiers”, the recruit in question has the right to appeal against actions or inactions.

# 3. GOOD PRACTICE IN PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND THE INCLUSION OF MINORITIES IN CONSCRIPTION SYSTEMS

This study has: outlined the obligations national authorities have as regards the protection of minority rights in conscription systems; likely challenges; and included information on minorities in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The following section will build on this by showcasing good practices in promoting diversity and the inclusion of minorities within conscription systems. Through case studies and management initiatives, it will examine how various states and their armed forces have addressed ethnic, national, religious, and other forms of discrimination. The focus will be on identifying effective measures to address complaints of discriminatory behaviour, as well as policies and training programs that promote diversity and combat discrimination within the armed forces. It will also discuss the importance of multilingualism and the approaches taken by different countries to deal with the use of minority languages in the military. Finally, it will explore the accommodation of soldiers' dietary requirements based on their culture or religion, in order to respect their beliefs and customs in light of the realities of the military.

## 3.1 Overcoming inequality, discrimination, and harassment

---

Biases, prejudice, and stereotypes of “the other” lay the grounds for unequal, treatment, discrimination, harassment, and bullying. Discrimination here refers to the unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on certain characteristics or attributes, such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, and other protected characteristics. Harassment similarly consists of conduct related to one of the enumerated grounds. This has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating and offensive environment.<sup>51</sup> Discrimination and harassment of conscripts is extremely undesirable. It leads to illegal actions on the part of military units, and physical and mental health damage to mistreated soldiers. Fragging, decreased performance of armed forces personnel and armed forces in general, negative perceptions of the military as well as impaired

---

51 *ECRI §35 of the General policy recommendation No. 7.*

trust, morale and cohesion among armed forces personnel all become more common.<sup>52</sup>

Whether mistreatment, bullying and harassment come from fellow servicemen or commanding officers, it is important to develop adequate and sufficient safeguards for their prevention, investigation, and remedy.

### 3.1.1 Inclusion Strategies and Training measures

A key preventative approach for fostering diversity and inclusion in the armed forces is for national authorities to develop a strategy or action plan to this end and to designate an entity responsible for its implementation. Many countries have designated bodies whose purpose is to provide advice and to develop strategies and policies for overcoming negative behaviour towards minorities. For example, in the United States it is the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of the Department of Defence, the Defence Equal Opportunity Management Institute and the Defence Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services. The Finnish Defence Command developed, in 2007, an equality and gender equality plan. In 2016, the Finnish Defence Forces published a study about diversity in the armed forces. It showed that the diverse backgrounds of the conscripts was mainly seen as an asset and that diversity was seen as a resource. The German Federal Ministry of Defence expressed its political will to foster diversity and inclusion in the armed forces by signing the Diversity Charter in 2012. This bound the Bundeswehr to develop measures for ensuring that all employees receive the same support regardless of their nationality, ethnic origin, gender, religion, disability, age, and sexual orientation or identity.<sup>53</sup>

Policies of this kind may include special training courses to raise awareness of ethnicity issues. For example, in the mid-1990s, the members of the newly formed South African National Defence Force, which had to incorporate seven different armed forces from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, went through several training programmes designed to nurture greater tolerance and respect for diversity. The United Kingdom has developed a 2018-2030 Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.<sup>54</sup> As part of their activities in this area, every unit in the British Army has a trained diversity and inclusion advisor who ensures that their unit has an inclusive culture and assists the commanding officer in supporting those who are treated in an unacceptable fashion. They lead on informal resolutions and signpost the organizations that are there to support soldiers.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore,

---

52 Dr George R. Lucas et al. *Conceptualizing the Relationship of Good Security Sector Governance to the State Security System* (Geneva: DCAF, 2022). Available at: [https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/RelationshipGoodSecuritySectorGovernanceStateSecuritySystem\\_EN.pdf](https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/RelationshipGoodSecuritySectorGovernanceStateSecuritySystem_EN.pdf)

53 'Diversity in the Bundeswehr', Bundeswehr.de (2023). Available at: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/identity-of-the-bundeswehr/equal-opportunities/diversity-bundeswehr>

54 *A Force for Inclusion Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2030* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2018). Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/907901/20180806-MOD\\_DI\\_Plan\\_A4\\_v14\\_Final-U.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907901/20180806-MOD_DI_Plan_A4_v14_Final-U.pdf)

55 'People: Diversity and Inclusion', Army.mod.uk (nd). Available at: <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/work-well/diversity-and-inclusion/>

the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Defence Leadership Centre carries out regular courses on Diversity and Inclusion for MoD military and civilian personnel.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in the United States service members and leaders also receive training on recognizing and understanding the impact of their own biases and prejudices.<sup>57</sup> Commanders are additionally provided training on guiding discussions on discrimination, prejudice and bias. In the Dutch armed forces, the concepts and values of diversity and inclusivity were also embedded in their training courses.<sup>58</sup> The inclusion of such courses in the training curriculum of servicemen can be an effective way to gradually change the organizational culture into a more inclusive one. To go further, completion of equal-opportunities training may be a pre-condition for promotion; conversely, evidence of non-compliance with these policies may be treated as a bar to career advancement.

### 3.1.2 Dealing with Complaints of Discrimination or Harassment

National authorities may take a variety of measures and steps to reduce prejudice and bias against minorities in the armed forces. But despite their best efforts it is reasonable to assume that instances of discrimination and harassment will still occur. It is, then, essential that effective means be provided for dealing with complaints of ethnic or racially motivated discrimination. Allegations of racial mistreatment focus on harassment or bullying conducted by other servicemen or women. It is important to understand that the armed forces are responsible for maintaining a non-discriminatory, tolerant, and safe working environment. Racial and ethnic harassment may be regarded as a form of discrimination for which the armed forces are by proxy responsible.

Remedies for discrimination may take several forms. One avenue is to allow for civil claims of discrimination to be brought before civilian employment tribunals: this is permissible in the UK after an internal consultation. Alternatively servicemen and women can be provided with direct access to human rights commissions: this is the case in Canada. In addition, institutions and offices that address complaints of unfair treatment and abuse (such as military ombudsmen or an inspector general) may have jurisdiction over issues related to discrimination and harassment on grounds of ethnicity. One noteworthy model is the German parliamentary commissioner for the armed forces. The commissioner can receive and investigate complaints concerning the actions of other soldiers. Dealing with racial discrimination is not simply a question of providing legal avenues for handling complaints. US and UK experiences stress the importance of policies and management initiatives.

Apart from anti-discrimination law, there may be measures of protection or signals of official disapproval under offences of military discipline. In the UK, for example, a military court or superior

---

56 Diversity and Inclusion (Practitioner), Da.mod.uk/ (nd). Available at: <https://www.da.mod.uk/courses/diversity-and-inclusion-practitioner>

57 'How the Military Supports Diversity and Inclusion', Militaryonesource (25 Jan 2021) Available at: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/relationships/support-community/military-diversity-and-inclusion/>

58 A Stronger Netherlands, A Safer Europe: Investing in a Robust NATO and EU (NP: Ministry of Defence, 2022). Available at: <https://english.defensie.nl/binaries/defence/documenten/publications/2022/07/19/defence-white-paper-2022/Defence+White+Paper+2022.pdf>



officer must treat racial or religious aggravation in a violation of military law as an aggravating factor. This will be reflected in potentially more serious punishments.<sup>59</sup>

## **CASE OF CHEMBER v. RUSSIA (European Court of Human Rights)<sup>60</sup>**

(Application no. 7188/03)

3. The applicant complained that he had been subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment during his military service.

9. The applicant was assigned to serve in military unit no. 5464 in Kislovodsk. In the unit he was allegedly harassed and ill-treated by senior conscripts and the unit sergeant on account of his Moldovan ethnic origin.

### **I. ALLEGED VIOLATION OF ARTICLE 3 OF THE CONVENTION**

38. The applicant complained that he had been subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment while in military service in breach of Article 3 of the Convention, which reads as follows:

“No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

**FOR THESE REASONS, THE COURT UNANIMOUSLY**

1. Declares the complaints concerning the ill-treatment in military unit no. 6794 (3025) in Astrakhan and the absence of a civil-law remedy admissible and the remainder of the application inadmissible;
2. Holds that there has been a violation of Article 3 of the Convention on account of the inhuman treatment of the applicant in military unit no. 6794 (3025) in Astrakhan;
3. Holds that there has been a violation of Article 3 of the Convention on account of an ineffective investigation into the ill-treatment to which the applicant was subjected;
4. Holds that there has been a violation of Article 13 of the Convention.

---

59 *Under Section 240 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.*

60 'Chember vs Russia, CoE', (3 Jul 2008), <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/docx/?library=ECHR&id=001-87354&filename=CASE%20OF%20CHEMBER%20v.%20RUSSIA.docx&logEvent=False>.

## 3.2 Special personnel policies and the implementation of equal opportunity in the armed forces

---

Ensuring equal opportunities and participation for minorities in the armed forces directly contributes to creating a more inclusive environment and the adoption and implementation of measures for the protection of the rights of minority conscripts. This covers both policies on recruitment and on equal opportunities in career advancement.

Recruiting minorities into the armed forces is an important step in creating a diverse and inclusive environment. There are a number of steps that can be taken to ensure that minorities are adequately represented in the military. The first step should be to actively recruit diverse candidates. Military recruitment teams ought to target minority communities and organizations to ensure that individuals from these backgrounds are fully aware of the opportunities available to them. This can include recruiting in colleges, schools, and universities. In the UK, concerns about the under-representation of ethnic-minority groups in the armed forces, racial discrimination and bullying, and low retention rates have led to the implementation of a series of proactive policies. A partnership agreement was concluded between the Ministry of Defence and the statutory anti-discrimination body, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), in 1998. This covers measures to achieve racial equality, including ethnic-minority recruitment targets, the removal of barriers to ethnic-minority recruitment and promotion, increased numbers of ethnic-minority officers at higher ranks, effective action to prevent racist abuse and making equal-opportunity performance part of annual appraisals. In 2001, the CRE reported to the Armed Forces Select Committee of the House of Commons that substantial progress had been made. In 2000, an official policy “for equal representation” was launched to correct the under-representation of national minorities in the armed forces.<sup>61</sup>

In Canada in the 1960s, one of the issues dividing the Anglophone majority and Francophone minority — respectively roughly three-quarters to one-quarter of the population— was the under-representation of Francophones in the armed forces and particularly in the officer corps. Affirmative-action quotas, special training programmes, and changes in language requirements for officers were introduced with the expectation that this would increase Francophone representation. It seems that the creation of French-speaking units in all three services and in every military discipline has had a notable impact on increasing the number of French-speaking officers.<sup>62</sup>

A further method, short of quotas, for facilitating the recruitment of under-represented groups is by easing the requirements for the acceptance of minorities into military schools: a policy of this kind was introduced in Bulgaria in 2003, with the help of the NATO Information Centre and with financing from the EU delegation in Bulgaria.

---

61 A Force for Inclusion. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/907901/20180806-MOD\\_DI\\_Plan\\_A4\\_v14\\_Final-U.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907901/20180806-MOD_DI_Plan_A4_v14_Final-U.pdf).

62 *'Multiethnic Armed Forces'*.

For such policies to succeed, it is also important to create an environment in which minorities feel welcome, valued and are provided with the same opportunities as everyone else. This includes setting policies that prevent discrimination and making sure that the military's code of conduct reflects the values of diversity and inclusion. Additionally, providing education and training opportunities to help minorities succeed in their roles is key. This can include language classes, cultural sensitivity training, and mentorship programs.

For example, in the US, Executive Order No. 9811 was introduced in 1948 to secure equality in the treatment of all persons in the military, regardless of race, colour, religion, or national origin. In 1971, the Defense Race Relations Institute, later renamed the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, was created to advise the government and to carry out training. From the US experience, if combating discrimination and minority representation in the armed forces is a sufficiently important goal of public policy, significant steps may be taken to prevent discrimination and harassment. The armed forces of the United States has rather detailed equal opportunity scheme to make sure that persons belonging to minorities have access to and equal treatment in the army.<sup>63</sup> Among other strategies they remove photographs and references to race, ethnicity and gender from personnel files in promotion and selection processes. This eliminates the risk of bias when considering a candidate for a promotion, assignment, training, education or command.<sup>64</sup>

However, a possible disadvantage to recruiting minorities should be mentioned as well. Some may not have the same level of experience or qualifications as other candidates. It requires additional resources and training to ensure that all soldiers are comfortable with each other, regardless of race, gender, or any other background. It can, in fact, be difficult to create an environment of trust when there are language and cultural barriers between soldiers. This may lead to difficulty in communication and may even lead to problems in completing missions. There are ways to mitigate such problems. Targeted training and mentorship help minorities gain the necessary skills and qualifications. By actively recruiting from minority communities, creating a welcoming environment, and providing targeted training and mentorship programs, the military can ensure that all candidates have an equal chance of succeeding. Affirmative-action policies are often controversial and may even be unconstitutional or unlawful. This is so especially if they involve reverse discrimination. They could also potentially breach the international agreements described above. Specific and time-limited derogations for redressing previous discrimination are an option. However, targets or quotas of under-represented groups to specify the desired levels of minority participation in certain army ranks and structures, and policies designed to meet those quotas, can be effective. Canada offers an example of this.

---

63 See more under <https://diversity.defense.gov/>.

64 ['How the Military'](#).

### 3.3 Approaches to linguistic minorities

---

Multilingualism is an invaluable asset for any military organization. It enables service personnel: to better understand the cultures and languages of other countries; increases operational effectiveness and communication; and fosters relationships with allies. One of the major advantages of having multilingual personnel in the military is the ability to understand the cultures of its own country as well. Being able to communicate in the language of the region can be a great asset during national emergency operations. It allows troops to better interact with the local population. For instance, the Republic of Georgia is home to a variety of ethnic minorities, these include Armenians, Azeris, Greeks, Abkhazians, and Ossetians amongst others. Armenians are the largest ethnic minority in Georgia, making up 7.5% of the population and they primarily reside in the capital city of Tbilisi and the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti. In a national emergency operation servicemen or women who speak the local language would naturally play an important role. This can also aid in intelligence gathering, as service personnel can gain a better understanding of the local situation and culture. In addition, multilingual personnel can help to increase operational effectiveness by improving communication between troops and allies. Having the ability to understand and speak the language of foreign allies would help troops to coordinate and work together, leading to more efficient and effective operations. Therefore, multilingualism in the armed forces is an invaluable asset, and should be encouraged and supported by military organizations.

However, soldiers' inability to speak in the official language of command can create problems. For linguistic minorities, there is the question of the use of their mother tongue within the armed forces: whether official communication takes place in the armed forces in all the official languages of the country or only the majority language, and whether they are allowed to communicate in their own language while on duty. Communication breakdowns can lead to confusion in the chain of command. If soldiers cannot understand each other, it is difficult for commanders to give clear, concise instructions or to receive feedback from their troops. This can cause operational delays and errors in judgement. Language barriers can impair the ability of soldiers to work together as a team. Without the ability to communicate, soldiers may not be able to coordinate or effectively cooperate with one another. This can lead to mistakes, missed opportunities, and other issues. Also, language barriers can create tension and distrust between soldiers. If soldiers cannot understand each other, they may become suspicious of each other's intentions and be unwilling to cooperate. This can lead to further breakdowns in communication and create a negative atmosphere in the unit. Complaint mechanisms can be impaired. The armed forces must take steps to address the problem of language barriers in order to ensure its successful operation. This can include providing language training for soldiers or deploying bilingual personnel. By doing so, the armed forces can make sure that soldiers can communicate effectively and work together as a team.

Language may, then, form a barrier to full participation in armed forces for conscripts from some minority groups who speak a language other than the official language. Box 12.8 below shows different approaches to this issue taken in several participating OSCE States.

## Approaches to Minority Languages in Selected Countries<sup>65</sup>

**Austria:** Servicemen can freely communicate in their own language. With respect to the conscription procedure and testing for the ability to fulfil military service, linguistic minorities are allowed to use their own (recognized minority) language. All other communication within the armed forces has to be in the official language, which, according to Austrian constitutional law, is German.

**Canada:** Conversations with peers are in the language of choice. However, in military units designated as unilingual, mainly located in unilingual regions, as defined by the Treasury Board Secretariat (both French- and English-language units are earmarked within the Canadian Forces), the language of work is mandated. In units designated as bilingual (mainly in bilingual regions), either language can be used freely.

**Czech Republic:** The official language for dealing with administrative authorities in the Czech Republic, including superiors in the armed forces, is Czech; Slovak is not considered equivalent. It is not permissible to use other languages for communication in the armed forces.

**Finland:** Official duties are carried out with State languages. If someone has difficulties in understanding/ communicating in State languages, necessary support actions are taken to make sure that everyone has equal opportunities to carrying out military service. During free time the use of one's own languages is not restricted in any way.

**Latvia:** According to the Official Language Law, only the official language of Latvia, Latvian, shall be used within the units of the National Armed Forces. However, this restriction is applicable only during the performance of official duties.

**Lithuania:** The official language must be spoken during duty hours.

**Slovakia:** According to Art. 6, para. 1, of the Constitution, Slovak is the official language of Slovakia. According to Art. 3.2 of Act No. 270/1995 of the Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic, members of the Armed Forces must use the official language in official communication.

**Ukraine:** Only the state language may be used in official business.

Where there are numerically significant language differences within a state, the creation of distinct units recognizing minority differences can be an effective solution to the underrepresentation of minority language groups. For example, the armed forces in Switzerland have a multi-tier structure, with units organized along cantonal and linguistic lines as far as possible. Specialized troops, however, may form multilingual units. Multilingualism is compulsory for Ministry of Defence staff and the officer corps (see Box 12.9).

---

65 ODIHR-DCAF questionnaire, questions 78 and 79. See also Kim Piaget and Rina Turtio, *Mapping Study: Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces in the OSCE Region* (Geneva: DCAF, 2015). Available at: <https://www.dcaf.ch/mapping-study-ombuds-institutions-armed-forces-osce-region>.

Belgium and Canada have established a dual military structure in response to the Belgian Flemish and Canadian Francophone preferences for command in their own language. In Canada, the introduction of such units has had several effects:

- ❖ Francophone officers are advantaged in such units because of their better communication skills in their native language;
- ❖ Francophone officers in French-language units are more attuned to the cultural peculiarities of their Francophone soldiers and, therefore, are more successful leaders, and are promoted as rapidly as (if not more rapidly than) their Anglophone colleagues in English-speaking units;
- ❖ The creation of French-speaking units throughout the armed forces results in a requirement for colonels, generals, and staff officers to be bilingual, regardless of promotion quotas.<sup>66</sup>

## Multilingualism and the Swiss Armed Forces<sup>67</sup>

Switzerland is a state with four official languages: French, German, Italian, and Romansh. Although the Swiss Armed Forces have never officially formulated a policy of multilingualism, they have developed three policies for addressing the multi-language character of the Swiss state.

### The principle of language territoriality

The equitable representation of the linguistic groups in the Armed Forces is guaranteed by the territorial structure of the Armed Forces, which goes back to historical cantonal military organization. Given the fact that most units are recruited from citizens of the same canton, and since 22 out of 26 Swiss cantons are monolingual entities, most units of the Swiss Armed Forces use one language for internal communication purposes.

### The principle of proportionality

In addition to territoriality, the question of multilingualism is addressed by the proportional representation of the linguistic communities in the Swiss Armed Forces. The composition of Armed Forces personnel is supposed to reflect the actual proportion of the language communities in Switzerland. This policy of representation relies mostly on informal and customary rules, and legal prescriptions are rare.

### The language competences of the officer corps

Officers need to have excellent communication skills. In this respect, the Swiss Armed Forces take advantage of the relatively good language competence of its officers, which they acquired during pre-military and civil education. Only recently has language education been given more attention in officer training. Though, note, this is not in one of the four official languages, but in English.

---

66 "Multiethnic Armed Forces", op. cit., note 211.

67 B. Altermatt, *Der Umgang der Schweizer Armee mit der Mehrsprachigkeit: Proportionalität und Territorialität: Ein historischer Überblick mit Standortbestimmung*, (Bern: Federal Military Library, 2004), 71–73.

The integration of linguistic minorities into armed forces in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia is a crucial part of a nation's capability to protect itself from external and internal threats. By integrating various ethnicities, cultural differences and language barriers, the armed forces can draw on unique perspectives, knowledge, and experiences from a variety of backgrounds. This is especially important in Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where many countries have multiple languages and cultures. By integrating these minorities into the armed forces, each country can benefit from the different strengths and skills of each minority group. Additionally, the integration of ethnic minorities into the armed forces can help build bridges between communities and promote tolerance, understanding, and acceptance between different groups. This is especially important in those regions, where there is often a history of conflict and tension between different ethnic groups. By integrating ethnic minorities into the armed forces, countries can help to build a sense of unity and cohesion between groups, and ultimately, create a stronger and more unified nation.

DCAF sources in Azerbaijan claim that Azerbaijani citizens who have completed Azerbaijani and Russian schools and live in Azerbaijan do not generally face any language barriers when filing complaints or communicating with military commissions. Russian soldiers who do encounter language issues can count on the assistance of their commanders and fellow-servicemen. Azerbaijani is the official language, so no military orders are given in any minority languages. It is worth referring to the 2021 Publication of the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, titled "Demographic Indicators of Azerbaijan", which is based on the 2009 census relating to ethnic groups, language groups, and the composition of the Azerbaijani ethnic map. The same ethnic groups and national minorities indicated that they have their own languages, while the overwhelming majority of them are able to communicate in Azerbaijani, the official language of the country. Though there are some issues with Russian, Tatar, and Jewish groups, the majority of the younger members of these populations are able to communicate in Azerbaijani; this is not always the case with the older members of said minorities. Though there are no clear-cut statistics on Armenians in Azerbaijan, it is traditional for them to be able to speak Azerbaijani fluently.

The situation in Georgia is different. Non-Georgian conscripts occasionally face a challenge when it comes to having a working knowledge of Georgian. Communication issues can arise due to language barriers. But some units provide translators for Armenian and Azerbaijani, as well as for young people who can help others communicate. Conscripts who do not speak Georgian are offered a one-month language course during their initial basic combat training. In Kyrgyzstan, the official language (Kyrgyz) is used in the armed forces, and oaths are taken only in Kyrgyz. All correspondence in the armed forces is conducted in Kyrgyz, though complaints may exceptionally be submitted in Russian. Experts have noted that the armed forces were the first government structure to transition fully to using Kyrgyz.

In Moldova, the constitutional norm protects the right to preserve, develop and use minority languages, including Russian and other languages, in the recruitment system.<sup>68</sup> The regulation for

---

68 Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Nr.1/1994. Art.13. Available at: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=128016&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=128016&lang=ro)

performing military service in the armed forces states that citizens who do not speak Romanian cannot be recruited into military service by contract, thus restricting this norm to the military alone.<sup>69</sup> The situation is ambiguous in regard to the rights of military personnel and minority languages. On the one hand, there is no express right given to them in terms of the use of these languages. The constitutional norm may apply, but its implementation in the conscription system can be complicated. On the other hand, there may be restrictions placed on military personnel by contract.

Since 2009, the Republic of Tajikistan has been focusing on the popularization of Tajik language, making it the official language for document management. Though there are Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz schools where Tajik is taught twice a week, there are no definitive statistics on conscripts from linguistic minorities. In 2014, the Office of Civil Freedoms and the Commissioner on Human Rights monitored the military units of the Ministry of Defence, interviewing more than 400 soldiers, including Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. It was found that linguistic minorities often have difficulty understanding and speaking the official language, and during their first three months of military service they have to undergo intensive language training. This suggests that the rights and interests of linguistic minorities are not adequately provided for during or after the conscription process, as all classes, education and orders are conducted in Tajik.

### 3.4 Approaches to Religious Minorities

---

Religious minorities are an important part of many armed forces around the world, and it is important to ensure that they are respected and appreciated. Religious minorities often bring unique perspectives and skills to the armed forces, and their presence can help to create a more inclusive and diverse workforce. For example, many religious minorities have experience in areas such as diplomacy, inter-communal relations, and conflict resolution. This can be especially important when it comes to international conflicts, as understanding other cultures and perspectives can prove vital in creating solutions that work for all parties. For instance, NATO operation in Afghanistan significantly benefited from recruiting servicemen and -women from Muslim backgrounds. Furthermore, religious minorities can help to facilitate interfaith dialogue and understanding. This can be critical in helping to create a more peaceful and cooperative environment in the armed forces. It promotes diversity, equality, and respect within the military and ensures that the best recruits are attracted and retained. Also, treating religious minorities equally is a matter of basic human rights law, and can help to ensure that religious minorities are not subject to discrimination or mistreatment.

However, it is important to note that having religious minorities in armed forces can also create some issues. There is the potential for increased sectarian tensions, as members of different religions may clash over religious beliefs and practices. Discrimination against religious minorities, both from within the armed forces and from outside could lead to feelings of alienation and a lack

---

69 The Regulation on the manner of performing military service in the Armed Forces, approved by Government Decision No. HG941/2006. Available at: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=125338&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=125338&lang=ro)



of inclusion for members of religious minorities. Also, there is the potential for religious minorities to be targeted due to their beliefs, leading to a lack of safety and security. Hence, while religious minorities can bring a unique perspective and can be an asset to the armed forces, there are a number of potential problems that can arise due to their presence. It is essential for the armed forces to recognize these potential issues and take steps to address them. It is, it goes without saying, paramount to ensure that the armed forces are an inclusive and safe environment for all members.

Article 8 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities provides that the “parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations.” Armenia implements this commitment through its Constitution which stipulates the right to replace military service with alternative service, as prescribed by law, if it contradicts religious faith or belief thereof, which is also equally applicable in the case of representatives of national minorities.<sup>70</sup> Armenian law prohibits employees of the National Security Service (NSS) from being members of a religious organization, but does not define “membership” in a religious organization. The law prohibits members of the police, military, and the NSS, as well as prosecutors, diplomats, and public servants, from using their official positions for the benefit of “religious associations” or from preaching in support of them. While the law defines a “religious organization” as an association of citizens established for professing a common faith, as well as for fulfilling other religious needs, it provides no definition for “religious associations.” A military service member may not establish a religious association. If a member of the military is a member of a religious association, the member does not have the right to preach to other service personnel during military service. A joint Ministry of Defense-AAC agreement allows only AAC clergy to serve as military chaplains and only AAC has free access and the right to station representatives in military units.<sup>71</sup> As of October 2021, in Armenia 124 Jehovah’s Witness conscientious objectors to military service were working in the alternative civilian labour service program, a number similar to previous years, and 302 had finished their service in the program.<sup>72</sup> The alternative service appointments included positions in hospitals, local utility companies, park maintenance services, boarding schools, eldercare facilities, and orphanages. According to government sources, Jehovah’s Witnesses were the only individuals participating in these civilian labour programs, and none chose to serve in alternative military service. On 19 May 2021, the government announced an amnesty for those who failed to undertake military or alternative service or for those who had not taken advantage of a government program allowing men who had not undertaken military service before 27 years of age to pay a fine to the Ministry of Defence to avoid criminal prosecution.<sup>73</sup>

---

70 Fifth Report submitted by Armenia pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities(15 Jun 2020) ACFC/SR/V(2020)002. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/5th-sr-armenia-en/16809eb7b3>

71 ‘Report on International Religious Freedom: Armenia’. Available at: <https://am.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/92/irfr2021.pdf>

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

The program allowed men who had fled the country to avoid military service to return. Jehovah's Witnesses, however, stated that there was no mechanism to pay the fine to another agency if a person had a religious objection to contributing funds to the Ministry of Defence. The amnesty allowed at least one Jehovah's Witness who had refused to pay the fine to the Ministry of Defence for reasons of faith to avoid criminal prosecution.<sup>74</sup>

In Austria, certain minorities are allowed to wear their religious clothes, e.g. turbans for Sikhs, bard for Muslims, kippa for Jewish servicemen under military headwear. In Azerbaijan there is no permission for any religious ritual and practice in the armed forces irrespective of whether they are Muslims or Christians. In Moldova, freedom of religion in conscription system is assured by a special norm. According to the Law regarding the status of the military,<sup>75</sup> article 11, "Military personnel have the right, outside the time of fulfilling their military service obligations, to practice a religious cult recognized by the state and to participate in religious rituals." This is a functional norm that allows the real protection of the right to freedom of religion. However, there is no information on how this norm is put into practice. In Georgia, studies conducted in 2021 and 2022 did not show any violations of religious freedom in conscription. Although, it should be noted, that chaplains are only representatives of Orthodox Patriarchy based on the agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the Orthodox Church. Those who have a need to see religious leaders from other religions can have these leaders be invited and they can meet with conscripts. Religious holidays are not celebrated, but some interviews indicated that Orthodox holidays are more likely to be given in the conscription system. There are rooms for prayers in the units and places of dislocation.

In Kyrgyzstan, according to national legislation, members of religious groups, who cannot serve in the army due to their religious beliefs (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) are allowed to choose an alternative conscription service. Consequently, the law intends to protect the rights of religious groups, including minorities. It is prohibited to have a mosque or church within a military unit, but there are still small prayer rooms for Muslims in some barracks. These prayer rooms are mainly to be found in the southern provinces of Kyrgyzstan (Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken). As legislation does not specify the procedures and requirements for praying, it is the commander of a military unit, who individually decides the time and regularity of praying for his conscripts. Conscripts do not observe religious holidays in the military, as it is not part of their required duties. Furthermore, all military personnel are required to wear military uniforms and are not allowed to display any religious symbols on their uniform.

According to the Constitution of Tajikistan, the country is a secular state. 96.8% of the population identified as Muslim, 1.7% as Christian, and 1.5% of the population belong to other religious denominations. The Republic of Tajikistan has recently adopted a new law "On military duty and military service" which does not provide for the option of an alternative non-military service. The lack of an alternative military service for conscripts due to religious beliefs needs to be addressed immediately. The government should ensure that all conscripts have the right to choose alternative

---

74 'Report on International Religious Freedom: Armenia'

75 Law on the status of the military: No. LP162/2005. Available at: [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=121250&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=121250&lang=ro)

military service without fear of condemnation. Furthermore, efforts should be made to provide a safe and supportive environment for those who choose to exercise this right. Daniil Islomov, aged 18, from Dushanbe, was enlisted into the army in April 2017, but expressed his religious beliefs by refusing to wear a military uniform and opting instead for alternative civilian service.<sup>76</sup> In 2021, the case of Rustamjon Norov provoked a public outcry after he was convicted of evading military service for refusing to take up arms due to his religious beliefs.<sup>77</sup> Tajikistan has reported to the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process three times and received recommendations in two cycles for the adoption of the Law "On Alternative Military Service". Soldiers serving in the military have a right to partake in religious acts and ceremonies as private individuals during their free time. The Minister of Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan (or heads of relevant departments) may permit religious cults, rituals, and ceremonies to be performed on the territory of a military unit at the request of soldiers. But it must be done at their own expense.

### 3.5 Food and dietary requirements

---

The food and dietary requirements of soldiers are of utmost importance. It is essential to ensure that soldiers are adequately nourished in order to maintain their physical and mental health. Proper nutrition is necessary for the proper functioning of the body and plays an important role in keeping energy levels high and performance at optimal levels. Poor nutrition can lead to a variety of health issues, such as fatigue, poor concentration, and weakened immunity. Soldiers from minorities may not be able to consume the same food as other soldiers due to their beliefs and customs. For example, some religious minorities adhere to a specific diet, such as veganism, which may be difficult to accommodate in a military setting. Providing soldiers of religious minorities with the food they need is a way to show respect. It is essential to create an inclusive environment for all soldiers, regardless of their religious beliefs. By paying attention to the food and dietary requirements of soldiers that belong to religious minorities, this environment can be cultivated. As mentioned in DCAF Legal Handbook on the Rights of Conscripts, the right to decent and sufficient nutrition is enshrined in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11 provides that all States Parties recognize rights to an adequate standard of living including adequate food, and commits states to taking appropriate steps to ensure that this right is respected. Access to sufficient nutrition is also relevant for the realization of Article 12, which provides for the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This right is similarly enshrined in Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With regard to this right, the Committee of Ministers recommended that military authorities take into account individual needs when providing meals to armed forces personnel, particularly

---

76 <https://tj.sputniknews.ru/20171020/posledovatel-svideteley-iegovy-osuzhden-tadzhikistan-otkaz-nosit-voennoyu-formu-1023667854.html>

77 'Рустамджон просил альтернативу военной службе, но ему в этом было отказано'. В Худжанде осужден свидетель Иеговы', Radio Free Europe (10 Jan 2021). Available at: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:npd1rUK78N8J:https://rus.ozodi.org/a/31040044.html&cd=3&hl=ru&ct=clnk&gl=ru>

as regards the dictates of different religions, health problems, pregnancy and personal ethics (e.g. vegetarianism).<sup>78</sup>

While field training and operations can be challenging with regards to meeting special dietary needs, it is essential to do so as much as possible. To ensure individuals' rights are respected, access to clean drinking water must be provided at all times. There are different models applied with regard to food and dietary requirements in the Armed Forces. For instance, dietary considerations are taken into consideration in Georgia for conscripts. This means that when deciding what to feed the conscripts in the military in Georgia, the individual dietary needs and preferences of the conscripts are taken into consideration. This might mean considering allergies, food intolerances, religious restrictions, and other dietary preferences. The goal is to provide nutritionally balanced meals that meet the needs of individual conscripts. This helps ensure that all conscripts are receiving the nutrition that they need to stay healthy and perform their duties. In Azerbaijan, individual dietary considerations are not taken into account for conscripts. Although conscripts may express dissatisfaction about the quality of the meals, personal dietary requests are not an option according to interviews with conscripts. In Kyrgyzstan, the medical check-up is conducted to ensure that all conscripts are healthy and fit for service. If any conscripts have allergies or dietary problems, they are exempt from conscription and are not subject to military service. Soldiers are allowed to fast, but due to the fixed meal times, it can be difficult to accommodate the fasting schedule. However, the meals prepared for conscripts in the military units do not take into consideration individual dietary habits, and all conscripts are served the same meals. In Finland, the organisation of the daily life of persons belonging to different religions was given special attention. For example, those who observe Ramadan are placed together in one barracks with food and a micro-wave-oven for them to make their own meals during the night. Minorities in Moldova do not have special rights as to their food regime. There are no laws or regulations that provide any special privileges or protection to minority groups regarding their dietary practices. All citizens must abide by the same food regulations and laws. This means that Moldovans, regardless of their ethnicity, must follow the same health and safety standards when it comes to food and drink.

---

78 'Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on human rights of members of the armed forces and explanatory memorandum', Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers (2010), 62.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Human rights education including training on the rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities, should form an essential part of training for military personnel and all conscripts, training courses should be continuous and could be arranged with international collaboration,

- ❖ Senior officers and NCOs have a special responsibility; therefore, detailed understanding of these issues should be a prerequisite for promotion. Equally, any finding of discrimination should be a bar to promotion and/or will lead to a reduction in rank;
- ❖ There should be efficient means for members of the armed forces to raise allegations of discrimination (including indirect discrimination and harassment on ethnic grounds) within the armed forces. Conscripts from linguistic minorities who do not have a fluent command of the official language should be able to raise complaints in their mother tongue.
- ❖ Conscripts should have access to civilian courts or tribunals to pursue allegations of ethnic or racial discrimination (including indirect discrimination and harassment on ethnic grounds). Where it is a precondition that they use internal means first, the civilian authority should be able to proceed notwithstanding undue delays or an inadequate internal investigation;
- ❖ All armed forces should have a transparent recruitment process that includes a hiring code based on principles that include the fair and equitable representation of all ethnic groups;
- ❖ Where an ethnic or linguistic minority is significantly under-represented in the armed forces in comparison with the population as a whole, active steps should be taken to encourage and facilitate applications from that group;
- ❖ Ministries of defence should co-operate with independent anti-discrimination bodies in monitoring and implementing these policies;
- ❖ Restrictions on ethnic minorities working within the armed forces should be reviewed to establish that they serve a necessary objective and are proportionate to said objective. Where members of ethnic minorities are permitted, any difference in treatment to the conditions of service of nationals should be similarly reviewed;
- ❖ In the case of significant linguistic minorities, consideration should be given to facilitating the minority language through specific arrangements, such as dual military structures;
- ❖ To foster an inclusive environment, it is important to pay attention to religious minorities' dietary requirements. Providing soldiers of these faiths with the food they need is a way to demonstrate respect and consideration. This will ensure that all soldiers are able to consume their preferred diets, regardless of their religious backgrounds.

## ANNEX 1:

# INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

### International Documents

- ❖ [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (adopted 10 December 1948)
- ❖ [Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities](#) (adopted 18 December 1992) General Assembly resolution 47/135

### International Treaties

- ❖ [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (adopted 7 March 1966, entered into force 4 January 1969)
- ❖ [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 23 March 1976)
- ❖ [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976)

### Regional Agreements

- ❖ [European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) (ETS No. 005) (entered into force 3 September 1953)
- ❖ [Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on the Prohibition of Discrimination](#) (ETS No. 177) (entered into force 1 April 2005)
- ❖ [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#) (ETS No. 157) (entered into force 1 February 1998)
- ❖ [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#) (ETS No. 148) (entered into force 1 March 1998)

- ❖ [Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin](#)

## Other documents

- ❖ OHCHR. [Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation](#). 2010. HR/PUB/10/3
- ❖ United Nations. [World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance – Declaration and Programme of Action](#). 2002. (Durban Declaration)

Maison de la Paix  
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E  
CH-1202 Geneva  
Switzerland

---



+41 22 730 94 00



[info@dcaf.ch](mailto:info@dcaf.ch)



[www.dcaf.ch](http://www.dcaf.ch)



[@DCAF\\_Geneva](https://twitter.com/DCAF_Geneva)