

# Circassian Genocide

Historical Records & Archives



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Dear Humanity,

We, the Circassians, as one of the unique colors of the human family, are an ancient nation that has lived in our historical homeland, Circassia, for thousands of years. Our homeland, Circassia, has been subjected to numerous invasions throughout history; however, we have resolutely resisted and managed to protect our land and people for centuries. From the late 18th century onwards, we defended our homeland against the Russians, who sought to seize Circassia and the entire North Caucasus, with the same determination for over a hundred years. Nevertheless, it was impossible for us to withstand the inhumane and brutal methods of the Russian Empire.

Throughout the war, which lasted until 1864, the Russian army systematically and deliberately massacred civilians, raped women, enslaved people, burned villages and living spaces to the ground, and destroyed crops to eliminate any chance of survival for our people. During the war and the subsequent great exile, historians estimate that we lost nearly 1.5 million of our people. Approximately 90% of the surviving population was forced to leave their homeland under extremely harsh conditions and was sent into exile. As Circassians who have suffered genocide and exile, we continue to live in various countries around the world with longing for our homeland.

The atrocities and genocide committed against the Circassian nation by the Russian Empire have been extensively documented in various written sources, including reports from Russian military officials and the works of contemporary historians. The Circassian Genocide, which historians and researchers have described as "one of the most well-documented genocides of modern times," has still not led to the establishment of justice for the Circassian nation, despite its extensive recognition.

Today, the Russian Federation refuses to acknowledge the genocide committed by its predecessor, the Russian Empire. Moreover, it does not permit Circassians affected by wars, earthquakes, and other humanitarian crises in different parts of the world to return to their historical homeland, Circassia. Under Putin's regime, Circassians living in their homeland face increasing restrictions on their most fundamental democratic rights, such as receiving education in their native language, preserving their culture, and participating in politics. Various legal regulations and pretexts are continuously being introduced to further these restrictions, while a systematic Russification policy is being carried out. Furthermore, under Putin's rule, numerous young Circassians and activists have been assassinated in planned, unsolved murders.

In addition, the vast natural and economic resources of Circassia are being exploited by Moscow, leaving the local population in systemic poverty. Circassians, who are suppressed by murder, oppression, and economic hardships, are unable to demand their rights or protest against injustices.

The Russian Federation today acts with an approach far removed from modern humanitarian values, implementing a harsh Russification policy against ethnic minorities within its borders while pursuing an imperialist expansionist policy beyond them. This situation poses a clear threat to world peace and all of humanity. The fact that the Circassian nation, its identity, culture, and language are on the brink of extinction today makes the Russian Federation just as responsible and guilty as the Russian Empire.

As Circassians living in the diaspora with a longing for our homeland, we want to share this truth with the world and seek support in our pursuit of justice. So far, the parliaments of Georgia and Ukraine have officially recognized the Circassian Genocide, demonstrating their strong solidarity with the Circassian nation.

As the Council of United Circassia, we continue our initiatives with parliaments and governments to seek justice for the Circassian nation and to stand against Russian imperialism, which poses a clear threat to all of humanity. The work in your hands contains undeniable evidence of the Circassian Genocide. It has been compiled using quotations and source information derived from Russian military reports, the observations of contemporary Russian historians and travelers, evaluations by foreign military officials, and scientific studies by modern researchers.

This work was prepared to provide basic information to those who do not know Circassians and the Circassian Genocide. It illustrates the genocidal actions committed during the Russo-Circassian Wars (1763-1864) and the scale of the tragedy experienced by the Circassians. As can be seen in this work, historians and researchers living in different countries at different times confirm the genocide that the Circassian nation experienced.

161 years ago, the Circassian nation was deprived of its right to live, and all its resources were plundered. Today, Circassians strive to maintain their existence in various countries around the world while seeking ways to return to their homeland. Circassians continue to organize and engage in political struggles with the dream of living freely and humanely in their historical homeland, as a democratic country that respects human rights, universal values, and the rule of law. This struggle is not only for the interests of the Circassian nation but also for the common interests of all humanity and must be supported by all relevant parties.

We call on you to learn about the Circassian Genocide, one of the shameful pages of human history, and to support us in our pursuit of justice.

Meretyko Kenan Kaplan  
Chairperson of the Council of United Circassia



## 1. WHO ARE THE CIRCASSIANS?



The Circassians are an indigenous people of the North Caucasus, with a history dating back thousands of years. Known for their warrior culture, democratic traditions, and unique language, they resisted numerous invasions, including those of the Mongols and the Ottoman Empire. However, their most significant struggle was against the Russian Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, as Russia sought to expand its control over the Caucasus region.

After more than a century of resistance, the Circassians were ultimately defeated in 1864. This led to one of the darkest chapters in their history—the Circassian Genocide. Hundreds of thousands were killed, and nearly 90% of the population was forcibly exiled, primarily to the Ottoman Empire. Many perished during the brutal deportations due to starvation, disease, and mass drownings in the Black Sea. Today, the Circassian diaspora is spread across the world, while the memory of their tragic past remains a central part of their identity.

Despite the hardships they faced, the Circassians have worked tirelessly to preserve their language, culture, and identity. In diaspora communities across Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and other countries, they have established cultural associations, foundations, and events to keep their traditions alive. In recent years, there has been a growing movement for the recognition of the Circassian Genocide and efforts to reconnect with their ancestral homeland in the Caucasus. However, challenges such as assimilation and political restrictions continue to threaten their cultural survival, making their struggle for historical justice and identity preservation an ongoing battle.

## 2. DEFINITION OF GENOCIDE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

Genocide was first recognised as a crime under international law in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/96-I). It was codified as an independent crime in the 1948 **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** (the Genocide Convention). The Convention has been ratified by 153 States (as of April 2022).

The first three articles of the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide** clearly set out the definition and framework of the crime of genocide.

### *“Article I*

*The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.*

### *Article II*

*In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:*

- (a) Killing members of the group;*
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

### *Article III*

*The following acts shall be punishable:*

- (a) Genocide;*
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;*
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;*
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;*
- (e) Complicity in genocide.”*



### 3. QUOTATIONS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

“They (England & France) are fully aware that Russia has not the shadow of a right to the sovereignty of the Caucasus, yet they hesitate to perform an act of justice; but now that she has thrown at their feet the gauntlet of defiance, the honour of their respective countries calls for a vigorous and decisive course of action; and their first movement ought to be to declare Circassia and the whole Caucasian isthmus independent-a tardy act of justice, but perfectly consonant with international law” (Spencer, 1855, p. 229).

**“Men and women were slaughtered mercilessly and blood flowed in rivers, so that it was said that the ‘bodies of the dead swam in a sea of blood’.** Nevertheless, the Russians were not content with what they had done but sought to satisfy their instincts by making children targets for their cannon shells” (Levene, 2005, p. 300).

“The reports of British diplomats during this period strongly indicate Russian vindictiveness and even atrocities. A few examples:

*-The Russians in order to compel the natives of Netauchee (Circassian tribe) and Shapsik (Circassian tribe) to abandon the country and emigrate to Turkey have lately destroyed the whole of that part of Circassia, burning down the houses and crops of the people and thus obliging them to fly.*

*-A Russian detachment having captured the village of Toobah on the Soobashi river inhabited by about a hundred Abadzekh (Circassian tribe) . . . After they had surrendered . . . they were all massacred by the Russian troops” (Henze, 2007, p. 32).*





“(From the Caucasus.) According to the A. A. reports, the **Russians were engaged last autumn primarily in the destruction of auls, houses, and cultivated fields. The war is said to have been conducted much more cruelly and inhumanely in recent times than before.** After the landing of the Anglo-Polish expedition, the self-confidence of the mountain peoples was somewhat strengthened; within a week, 30,000 men were at the disposition of the English. The Circassians have, since that time, been under the command of European officers, engaging in battles with the Russians almost daily until the snow fell in the high mountains. However, the situation of the Circassians remains desperate. **The English officers report that famine among the Abzakh tribe has reached great proportions,** and there is also a severe shortage of weapons and ammunition. As a result of these dire conditions, the emigration of the Abzakhs has once again increased significantly in recent times.” (Fränkischer Kurier, 1863)

“**In order to hide the terrible crime - the physical extermination of an entire people - the tsarist executioners invented all sorts of legends about the predatory tendencies of the Circassians.** However, those who carried out the aggressive policy of tsarism could not hide the fact, and often themselves claimed the opposite: the Circassians tried to maintain peaceful relations with the Russians and provided all kinds of assistance to the Russian settlers, who were their first neighbors. ” (Pobedonostsev, 1940, pp. 30-31).

“The **cleansing** of the latter canyons of natives required a large number of soldiers... Through all these actions of the Dakhovsky Detachment, **the entire mountainous and inaccessible areas between the sources of the Belaya and Pshekha rivers were cleansed of natives.**” (Evdokimov, 1863).



“Were Ermolov’s (Aleksey Petrovich Ermolov, Russian general, 1777-1861) actions and orders genocidal? Using definition of genocide in the UN Convention on Genocide, a very strong case against him can be made:

*Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:*

- (a) Killing members of the group;*
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

**Ermolov and his men violated all five of these categories on several occasions.** There can be no argument that he killed innocent Kabardians (eastern Circassians); even Tsarist historian Vasily Potto admits as much. As for points (b) and (c), the wholesale destruction of auls (Circassian settlement) and the vast scale of theft of cattle and other goods necessary for the Kabardians’ survival was, in Ermolov’s own words, intended to terrorize them. As an experienced officer in the Caucasus, he knew that forcing people into the elements in winter was a death sentence, one more painful than if he had simply massacred them. By destroying entire communities, he disrupted the Kabardians’ social system, forcing them to flee and exist in such conditions that raising families was impossible. Finally, when the aristocrats who refused to submit fled to western Circassia, Ermolov sent their children, who had been taken as hostages in 1814, to orphanages or to the army. Because of his actions as well as those of his predecessors, the population of Kabardia was reduced from three hundred thousand in 1790 to only thirty thousand by the 1820s. All of the survivors were in Greater Kabardia, since the entire population of Lesser Kabardia had either died or fled to western Circassia.” (Richmond, 2013, pp. 28-29).



“If, on the other hand, his name and fame (Aleksey Petrovich Ermolov, Russian general, 1777-1861) still linger in the memory of the mountaineers of Dagestan and Tchetchnia when those of most of his contemporaries and successors have already been forgotten, it must be admitted that this survival is due not merely to his commanding personality or actual accomplishment, but in part, at least, to the calculated cruelty of his methods—methods, unhappily, too generally characteristic of Russian warfare, morally indefensible, but possessed of undoubted advantages in dealing with Oriental peoples. It will always be argued, more or less plausibly, that the tribes of the Caucasus would have mistaken clemency for weakness, whereas campaigns conducted on the good old plan with fire and sword—the **devastation of crops, the sacking of villages, the massacre of men and the ravaging of women**—gave a lesson they thoroughly understood and fully appreciated.” (Baddeley, 1908, pp. 96-97).



Aleksey Yermolov (1777-1861)



Dmitrii Miliutin (1816-1912)

“In a policy memorandum of 1857 Dmitrii Miliutin, chief of staff to Bariatinskii, summarized the new thinking on dealing with the northwestern highlanders. The idea, Miliutin claimed, was not to clear the highlands and coastal areas of Circassians so that these regions could be settled by productive farmers, as had happened in other parts of the empire’s periphery. **Rather, eliminating the Circassians was to be an end in itself—to cleanse the land of hostile elements.**” (King, 2008, p. 94).



“After the defeat of Shamil, the only peoples in the Caucasus who had not been subdued were the Circassians (Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabardians), the Abazins and the Ubykhs. In the following years Russia carried out an operation of demographic warfare which **in contemporary international law would be considered as genocide or ethnic cleansing**. By conquering villages, killing or expelling its inhabitants (including forced migration to the Ottoman Empire) and giving the lands to Russian and Cossack settlers, the tsarist regime aimed to end the war and consolidate their hard-won territories, **a policy already decided upon in 1808.**” (Coene, 2010, p. 127).



Award medal “For the Conquest of the Western Caucasus. 1859-1864.”

“**The last phase of the Caucasian war can only be described as genocide.** Under the new commander, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, Russian troops systematically combed the mountains, valleys, and forests of Circassia, flushing out Cherkess tribesmen, driving them into the plains and to the seashore, or killing masses of them. Death, emigration to Turkey, or settlement in the plains under the guns of Russian forts in a ring of Cossack villages was the fate of the Mountaineers... In 1864 Circassia almost ceased to exist. Many Cherkess tribes (the Shapsug, the Natukhai, the Ubykh) had been **either exterminated or uprooted**. Others were **overwhelmed by Russian settlers.**” (Kazemzadeh, 1974, pp. 261-262).



“In order to further squeeze this population and cleanse the land of the natives as much as possible... On the fifteenth of November three columns advanced to the mouth of the Defan... On the first, second, third and fourth of December several columns went from the source of the Defan along the upper and middle reaches of the rivers **annihilating the population**, after which, having ascended along the Shapsugo and crossed over into Psekups Basin, **they cleansed the left bank of this river of natives.**” (Kumykov, 1994, p. 62).

“Russian sources from the time gave a number of 400-500,000 Circassian emigrants, whereas Turkish sources give 595,000 as an estimate. And that was only Circassians. In the re-organization of the provinces, 22,000 Chechens and 3,000 Kabardians and Ossetians were expelled to Turkey. Ingush and Karabulaks also left. Others in these parts considered troublemakers were executed or sent to penal settlements. The overall numbers are still being debated today. Owen (2007) cites other scholarly sources: 600,000 (McCarthy), up to a million (Henze) Circassians, with a total of two million Caucasians (Karpas), with only 1.5 million reaching their destination. **Nobody disputes that this was ethnic cleansing and genocide**” (Teissier, 2024, p. 61).

“The ferocity of Russian reprisals against the "predatory" tribesmen only increased the latter's determination to resist. **Massacres of the local population and large-scale destruction of crops became the usual means of dealing with rebellious natives.** "Such actions of the representatives of the tsarist command," writes a Soviet historian, "served only to set the Mountaineers against Russia and interfered with the liquidation of the uprising." (Kazemzadeh, 1974, p. 247).



“Usually captives of all sexes and ages were sold into slavery, but on some occasions the captured men were pressed into military service inside Russia and the women distributed among the Russian officers, so that in winter quarters ‘for the officers, at least, the Commander-in-Chief setting the example, the time passed pleasantly enough in the company of native wives” (Gammer, 2003, p. 186).

“There are horrific reports written by Russians about the conditions under which the communities that decided to migrate attempted to make the sea journey. Russian officer Ivan Drozdov, for example, describes the devastating march of a group of Circassians trying to reach Sochi: "A group of Circassians, men, women, children, old people, were walking like corpses, exhausted from hunger and disease, and were attacked by dogs and eaten alive." (Grassi, 2018, p. 73).

"Tsarist Russia was a prison of nations. Numerous non-Russian nationalities of Tsarist Russia were completely disenfranchised, constantly subjected to all sorts of humiliations and insults. The Tsarist government taught the Russian population to look at the indigenous peoples of the national regions as an inferior race, officially called them "aliens", and cultivated contempt and hatred for them." Speaking about the situation of non-Great Russian peoples before the revolution, mentioning the Circassians, Comrade Stalin points out "The policy of tsarism, the policy of the landowners and the bourgeoisie in relation to these peoples consisted in killing the beginnings of any statehood among them, crippling their culture, restricting their language, keeping them in ignorance and, finally, Russifying them as much as possible. The results of such a policy are the underdevelopment and political backwardness of these peoples." All this is fully confirmed by the life that the Circassian people were forced to lead before the revolution. (Pobedonostsev, 1940, p. 35)



“Evdokimov's (Nikolai Ivanovich Evdokimov, Russian General, 1804-1873) plan was quite different. It was impossible to get along with the Circassians, it was impossible to tie them to oneself in any way, it was also impossible to leave them alone, because this threatened the security of Russia, of course, not because of the trifling rapacity of the Abreks, but because the Western powers and Turkey could find powerful support in the mountain population in the event of war. From this followed **the conclusion that the Circassians, for the good of Russia, must be completely destroyed.** How to accomplish this destruction? The most practical way was by expelling them to Turkey and occupying their lands with the Russian population. **This plan, similar to the murder of one people by another, represented something majestic in its cruelty and contempt for human rights.** ... Having a huge practical mind, indestructible energy, free from any sensitivity, completely uneducated, only literate, he calmly weighed the relations of the Russians and the Circassians **and made his decision in terms of "pacification" through "extermination"** (Tikhomirov, 2000, pp. 129-130).



Award ribbons of the Russian Imperial Army "For Distinction in the Conquest of the Western Caucasus"

“Midway along the tectonic plate, the ongoing struggle by Romanov Russia to wrest control of the northwest Caucasus, itself a critical flank to its consolidation of the Black Sea, notably ratcheted up in the early 1860s with a full-scale assault on its—again—Muslim Circassian tribes. The specific aim as it crystallized in 1864 seems to have been one of total **“ethnic cleansing.”** In practice, this process was carried through by **systematic massacre** followed by the **literal disgorgement of survivors in unseaworthy, disease-ridden vessels** across the Black Sea to the Ottoman Empire” (Levene, 2010, p. 196).



“As I mentioned, the Circassians first defended themselves, formed alliances, and fought to the death. But, of course, they were beaten everywhere, and little by little the highlanders lost heart, even stopped defending themselves... Small detachments were sent to all areas, which were divided into small teams at the scene of action, and these in turn were divided into groups of several people. These groups were dispersing all over the area, looking for villages, or at least individual villages, or at least simple huts in which dispersed Circassians were hiding. **All these villages, villages, huts were burned to the ground, property was destroyed or looted, cattle were seized, residents dispersed - men, women, children — wherever they looked.** They fled in terror, hid in the forests, and took refuge in villages that had not yet been looted. But the extermination storm was coming on and further, it overtook them in new shelters. The destitute crowds, growing in number, fled further and further west, and the inexorable broom swept them further and further, finally threw them over the Caucasian Ridge and swept them into huge piles on the shores of the Black Sea. From here, the survivors were loaded onto steamships and simple kocherms and thrown into Turkey. ... **There were over half a million people who moved across the sea.** It is not easy to find transportation facilities for such a mass of people, and the ill-fated exiles waited for months on the shore for their turn. ... **They died there like flies — from typhus and other diseases. All this wild bullying - I can't find another word -dragged on about four years, reaching its peak in 1863.**” (Tikhomirov, 2000, p. 135).





“The Circassian disaster defies description. Fleeing from persecution, they wandered without shelter and food, in winter — in twenty-degree frost. The winters, as luck would have it, were unusually cold. Devastating diseases, especially typhus, began to develop among the Circassians. Families separated, fathers and mothers lost their children. **They died in the open air and in burrows. They said that our people came across cases of poor people eating human meat. I speak of the horrors of the expulsion of the Highlanders as an eyewitness.** When the compulsion to evict them reached Novorossiysk, all the mountains surrounding the Tsemez valley and the bay were filled with columns of smoke from burned villages, and at night the illumination of fires shone everywhere. **We had no idea that our mountains were so densely populated.** The smoke rose and the fire sparkled in almost every gorge. This ominous picture stood before our eyes, perhaps, for a month. ... A year or two later, I had to see the remains of burned-out villages. One of them was located at the place where we founded our farm. **How many mountaineers died during this time from all kinds of hardships, hunger, cold and disease is known only to the Lord. There was no one to count the corpses in the forests and all sorts of slums, and it was impossible.** Even on the shore, where the highlanders were already under our supervision, the masses of the dying were buried hastily and without careful counting” (Tikhomirov, 2000, p. 136).

“The Circassians hate us. We have forced them out of their free and spacious pasturelands; **their auls (settlements) are in ruins, whole tribes have been annihilated**” (Pushkin, 1974, p. 23).



“When we viewed the desolation of whole districts the crops burned and the hamlets destroyed-and continually heard the account of families, once happy and prosperous, reduced to indigence and misery by the destruction of their young men and when we reflected that all this disturbance of the peace of a country every way fitted for the enjoyment of its inhabitants, was occasioned solely by the ambition and insatiable thirst for dominion of one individual, the Emperor of Russia, we could not restrain our indignation ; we therefore freely took part in the councils of the natives.” (Bell, 1840, p. viii).



Fyodor Bursak (1750-1827)

#### “Cossack Commander Bursak’s Campaigns

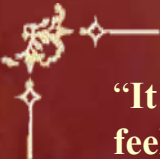
Since the beginning of the Cossack leaders’ first actions, Bursak hoped for a permission to send campaigns against the Circassians with disciplinary objectives, and when the forces were granted this right by the authorities, Bursak presided over a series of campaigns beyond the Kuban in the years: 1800, 1802, 1807, 1809, 1810, 1811 , and the Cossacks had presence at different times in the lands of Bjadogh, Natokhawaj, Shabsough and Abzakh under the leadership and supervision of Bursak personally. **Every time the mountaineers incurred loss and their neighborhoods were destroyed and burned including their Grain and fodder, and their livestock was looted as booty of war. Bursak had been promoted to the rank of major general in 1807 due to those actions”** (Shcherbina, 1913, p. 75).



"The war went on with relentless, merciless severity. We moved step by step, but irrevocably and clearing the highlanders, to the last man, of every land on which a soldier's foot once stood. Mountain villages were burned out by the hundreds, as soon as the snow came down, but before the trees were clothed with greenery (in February and March); crops were etched by horses or even trampled. The population of the villages, if it was possible to take them by surprise, was immediately taken away under military escort to the nearest villages and from there sent to the shores of the Black Sea and further to Turkey. How many times did we have to find warm porridge on the table with a spoon stuck in it, mended clothes with a needle not pulled out, some children's toys as they were laid out on the floor, near the child, in the huts that were empty at our approach. **Sometimes– to the credit, however, of our soldiers, very rarely – cruelties amounting to atrocities were committed...** These cruelties were all the more outrageous because they were completely out of the spirit of the valiant Russian soldiers – usually so good-natured.

Entire tribes, like the Besleneevites (Circassian tribe), were evicted within one or two days. Villages of barakaevtsev, abadzekhov (Circassian tribe) on Funf in the farce burned for three days, filling the air with burning for about thirty versts (approx. 32 km.), when, in February 1862, our movements began to expel these mountaineers. It is clear that the war, so waged, quickly led to decisive results." (Venyukov, 1878, pp. 249-250).


"After this order to chase after cattle, we reached the city of Anapa, then weakly fortified and having a small garrison, but, having done nothing near it, we set off on the return journey to the line, and about the end of November we reached our quarters, having suffered quite a lot of need for the entire army in this unsuccessful campaign. **The entire tactics of our generals consisted in to skillfully burn the Circassian shelters and destroy them completely, so that they would know that our generals knew nothing else.**" (Gordin, 2002, pp. 161-162).



“It would be too frivolous to hope to change in the given period the feelings of almost half a million barbarian people, independent from time immemorial, hostile from time immemorial, armed, protected by an impregnable terrain, given over to the constant influence of the whole sum of interests hostile to Russia. After England's denial of the very right of our dominion in the Caucasus, after the countless intrigues and attempts of Turkey, after the obvious partiality shown to the Circassians by the French embassy in Constantinople, we could not count on time. The subordination of the mountaineers to Russian power would not in the least free us from foreign intrigues in this region. We had no opportunity to look after every village, and even in peacetime the mountaineers would hardly be called Russian subjects. In the event of war, the Kuban region would become an open gate for the enemy to invade the heart of the Caucasus.

**We had to turn the eastern shore of the Black Sea into Russian land and, for that purpose, clear the entire coastline of mountaineers.** To carry out such a plan, it was necessary to break and move from their place other masses of the Trans-Kuban population, blocking access to the coastal mountaineers. Of course, a war waged with such a goal could cause desperate resistance and therefore required redoubled energy on our part - **it was necessary to exterminate a significant part of the Trans-Kuban population in order to force the other part to unconditionally lay down its arms** - but then victory would end everything at once.

Taking on the execution of this enormous undertaking, Count Evdokimov said: "the first philanthropy is for our own; I consider myself entitled to grant the mountaineers only what remains to their lot after satisfying the last of the Russian interests." **The expulsion of the mountaineers from their slums and the settlement of the Western Caucasus with Russians - such was the war plan for the last four years.**" (Fadeev, 2005, pp. 152-153).





Grigory Zass (1797–1883)



“In a conversation with Zass, I noted to him that I did not like his system of war, and he then answered me: "Russia wants to conquer the Caucasus at any cost. With the peoples, our enemies, how can we take them, if not by fear and thunder?. **Philanthropy is not suitable here, and A. P. Ermolov, hanging mercilessly, robbing and burning villages, was more successful than us in this alone.** To this day his name is pronounced with trepidation in the mountains, and they frighten little children with it".

**In support of the idea of fear preached by Zass, on a specially heaped mound at the Prochnoy Trench near Zass, Circassian heads were constantly stuck on pikes, and their beards fluttered in the wind.** It was sad to look at this disgusting sight. Once Zass invited Naryshkina to his place, and she agreed on the condition that the enemy heads would be removed. Zass fulfilled her wish, and we were all his guests. Once, going up to the general's office, I was struck by some unbearable disgusting smell, and Zass, laughing, disabused us, saying that his people probably put a box with heads under the bed, and, in fact, he pulled out a huge chest with several heads in front of us, which looked at us terribly with their glassy eyes. "Why do you have them here?" I objected. **"I boil them, clean them and send them to various anatomical offices and to my professor friends in Berlin"** (Lorer, 1984, pp. 258-259).



“Rostislav Fadeev, an officer-participant in the Western Caucasus campaign under Evdokimov, explained the methods of the campaign equally frankly in an 1865 article published in The Moscow Gazette. Fearing that the local population would side with Russia's foes in a future war, the state's goal had been to **"cleanse"** the region and turn it into Russian land. "Of course," Fadeev continues, "a war conducted to this end would cause desperate resistance, and thus demanded from our side redoubled energy; **it was necessary to exterminate a significant portion of the Trans-Kuban population (Circassians), in order to bring the other portion to lay down its arms unconditionally**" (Holquist, 2001, p. 118).

“Fearing to make another mistake, I stopped, still under cover of the skirmishers: I sent twenty Cossacks to search the aul (village), seize what I could and set fire to the saklya. When the fire was lit, cries were heard from inside the saklya, indicating the presence of women there. I ordered that help be brought to them. Thirty head of cattle, six horses, one hundred and fifty rams, much barley, **eight women, five infants, three large men (and among them the brother of the head of the aul) fell to us as trophies.** The riflemen and Cossacks divided the captured clothing and weapons among themselves; I took for my share the dagger found in the belt of the terrible mullah. **Having reduced the aul to ashes, I gathered up the spoils and set off on the return journey,** hastening to get out of the forest, where a small force could easily cut off our retreat.” (Gordin, 2002).



“In 1800 The campaign led by Major General Drashkevich

Major General Drashkevich, who was leading the entire mission, gave Bursak the news that on the 16th of May, he and his faction launched a campaign against the Circassians through the Temryuk lands and brought artillery across Tshorni(1). Bursak wrote to Drashkevich on May 28 that they had prepared 1500 Cossacks for the Zakuban campaign against the mountaineers, and on the second of July he crossed the Kuban River through Ikatirinowsk station accompanied by a faction of 2005 men and began chasing the mountaineers. The third faction consisted of two troops: the Cossacks troop and Likhner’s private cavalry troop which was led by the Black Sea troops Lieutenant Colonel Yermeyev. The military operations started, and on the fifth of June Bursak notified Drashkevich that in the early hours, the Cossacks ran into small groups of Circassians, two of whom were captured. But later on, the Cossacks had to engage more seriously in the battle, chasing the Circassians away from Aslan Jerry and Dawlat neighborhoods, by Oshid River. The Cossacks had their hands on thousands of heads of livestock. **The troop led by Yermeyev was able to plunder 2,542 different kinds of livestock. Our forces have also looted cattle from the Circassians in other areas. His Highness the Emperor Pavel declared graciously to the troops that the Cossacks and the regular soldiers who participated in the invasion and the defeat beyond the Kuban will have a share of the spoils.** The share of the Black Sea troops was 660 head of cows and 2684 head of goats” (Shcherbina, 1913, p. 156).

“So was it genocide? The deportation of the Circassians can certainly be regarded as an example of **‘ethnic cleansing’, in which massacres and the burning of villages** served to force the Circassians into emigration.” (Shenfield, 1999, p. 158).



Russian troops in Kbaada, Circassia, 1864

“Where Pushkin saw the mountains from a distance and gleaned what he could around the smoking hearths of Piatigorsk, Lermontov saw things in much grittier detail: gory battles; villages burned; women and children murdered or displaced; military units welcomed back to their forts in triumph, only to find, days later, highland warriors preparing to exact their revenge. “I love my native land but love it strangely,” Lermontov wrote, “**The glory bought by blood and treason**” (King, 2008, pp. 113-114).





“The brother crossed the Kuban in the dark night. After a five-hour march, he attacked the aul of Emir Akhmet, the main instigator of all attacks on the Cossacks' lands (Occupied territory of Circassia). **In one minute, the entire village became prey to flames; only the screams of the women being killed and the cries of children, frightened by the fire, responded to the loud "hurrah" of the Cossacks.**

**The brother, having made sure that there were no men in the aul, wanted to stop the killing of women, advising them to take as many captives as possible.** The Cossacks, drunk with blood, did not obey; he had to block their way with the help of more disciplined sapper soldiers.

....

**Finally, the brother managed to make them obey him; he gathered his detachment, counted the captives - forty women and children - and ordered a retreat, leaving sixty corpses in place. General Rondzevich's campaign was crowned with complete success: a large number of men, women, children, cattle and grain were captured.”** (Gordin, 2002, p. 346).

“It is worth reiterating that the Russian and Cossack forces did not invade and conquer the region quickly but rather carried out systematic plunder and destruction. The Russians used a system of aggression and oppression, which made it impossible for the Circassians to remain in their homeland. Villages were plundered and burned to the ground. Their cattle and everything else they needed for life were taken away from them. The method used by the Russians was the classic forced migration system, which would be used again and again in the Caucasus and the Balkans - burning and destroying their homes and fields, leaving them with no choice but to starve and flee.” (Grassi, 2018, p. 71).



“Before the Bolshevik Revolution these three ethnic groups (Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabards) were indeed regarded as one people, but in the 1920s they were defined in two groups: the Cherkess and the Kabards. In the 1930s they were further subdivided into Adyghe, Cherkess and Kabards. In order to separate one from another, administrative borders between them were created and the status of their lands changed frequently.” (Coene, 2010, p. 61).

“On the abandoned ashes of the condemned Circassian tribe arose the great Russian tribe; in one summer 12 villages grew up along the sea. And the main thing: the eastern coast with its magnificent beauty is now part of Russia. The charm has been removed from it. The coastline now awaits, like an undeveloped mine, only people who would take advantage of its natural wealth. There is no need to regret that it is empty until the weeds are pulled out and the wheat grows.” (Fadeev, 2005, p. 199).



#### 4. RECOGNITION STATUS OF THE CIRCASSIAN GENOCIDE

The Georgian Parliament became the first national parliament to officially recognize the Circassian Genocide on 20 May 2011 (No 3626).



##### Resolution of the Parliament of Georgia

##### On the Recognition of Genocide of Circassians by the Russian Empire

Recalling the colonial policy of the Russian Empire towards Circassians during the Russo-Caucasus war (1763-1864), when the Russian political and military leadership planned and executed ethnic cleansing of Circassian territories, subsequently settling the territories with other ethnic groups;

Recalling the fact that as a result of multiple punitive military expeditions, more than 90% of the Circassian population was annihilated;

Recalling numerous official documents of the Russian Empire confirming its aggressive actions, such as artificially engineered famines and epidemics amongst the civilian population, aimed at the physical annihilation of representatives of the Circassian people;

Recalling the 7 February 1992 Decree of the Supreme Council of Kabardino Balkaria Republic (№977–XII-B) on the Condemnation of the Act of Genocide of Adyge (Circassians) During the Russian-Caucasian War, and legally and politically assessing the results of the Russo-Caucasus War (1763-1864),

The Parliament of Georgia:

1. Recognizes the mass murder of Circassians (Adyge) during the Russo-Caucasus War and their forceful eviction from their homeland, as an act of genocide, in accordance with the IV Hague Convention on Laws and Customs of War on Land of October 18, 1907 and the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948;
2. Recognizes the Circassians, forcefully deported during and after the period of the Russo-Caucasus War, as refugees, in line with the Convention on the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 (Justice For North Caucasus Group, 2011).



The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Ukraine Parliament became the second national parliament to officially recognize the Circassian Genocide on 09 January 2025 (No 4206-IX).



## DECREE

Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

On the recognition of the genocide of the Circassian (Adyghe) people committed by the Russian Empire

Taking into account the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international treaties and international legal documents of the United Nations Organization on Human Rights;

emphasizing the international legal obligation of all states to cooperate and develop friendly relations between nations on the basis of compliance with the principle of equality provided for in Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, in order to stop violations of universally recognized principles and norms of international law, which include, in particular, the prohibition of genocide;

based on the principle of equality and self-determination of peoples as a mandatory norm of modern international law and considering that the Convention on the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide. and the punishment for it criminalizes actions committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group: killing members of a group, inflicting severe physical or mental injuries on members of a group, intentionally creating living conditions for such a group that lead to its complete or partial physical destruction, applying measures aimed at preventing births in such a group, forcibly transferring children of such a group to another group;

considering that the ethnic cleansing of Circassian territories during the Caucasian War of 1763-1864, as a result of which more than 90 percent of Circassians were physically destroyed or expelled from their historical homeland,



was a series of pre-planned brutal actions aimed at oppressing the Circassian (Adyghe) people, suppressing their identity, deliberately creating living conditions for this ethnic group that lead to its complete or partial physical destruction;

taking into account the historical evidence confirming the criminal actions of the Russian Empire during the Caucasian War of 1763-1864 to create artificial famine and epidemics among the civilian population in order to physically destroy the Circassians;

stating that the crimes of the Russian Empire against the Circassian (Adyghe) people and other peoples enslaved by it have not yet been given due legal and moral assessment;

emphasizing that the current Russian regime's justification of the crimes of the previous ruling regimes has led to the fact that today the Russian Federation pursues such a foreign and domestic policy, which has the consequence of the international recognition of its state as a sponsor of terrorism and a state that uses terrorist means to commit terrible crimes against the Ukrainian and other peoples;

drawing attention to the fact that the current Russian regime continues the policy of physical destruction of enslaved peoples;

condemning the criminal actions of the repressive regime of the Russian Empire, aimed at the subjugation of peoples and the implementation of a colonial policy towards them, the result of which was the destruction of millions of people, the destruction of the social foundations of peoples, their age-old traditions, spiritual culture and ethnic identity;

showing solidarity with all peoples enslaved by the Russian Empire, who, together with the Ukrainian people, suffered significant losses and suffering as a result of being in the common "prison of peoples";

Recognizing the need to restore historical justice to these peoples;

taking into account the resolution of the Parliament of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic of February 7, 1992 No. 977-XI-B on the condemnation of the Adyghe (Circassian) genocide during the Russo-Caucasian War;

taking into account the resolution of the Parliament of Georgia dated May 20, 2011 No. 4701-IS regarding the recognition of the genocide of the Circassians carried out by the Russian Empire;

confirming the Appeal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the international community on support of the right to self-determination of the peoples of the Russian Federation approved on October 6, 2022,



The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine decrees:

1. To recognize the mass destruction of the Circassian (Adyghe) people and their violent expulsion from their historical homeland, committed by the Russian Empire during the Caucasian War of 1763-1864, as genocide of the Circassian (Adyghe) people.
2. To express sincere condolences to the Circassian (Adyghe) people in connection with the genocide committed by the Russian Empire and to honor the memory of all the victims of this crime.
3. Resolutely condemn the crimes of genocide of the Russian Empire, which led to the death of hundreds of thousands of Circassians, caused significant damage to the social foundations of the Circassian (Adyghe) people and great losses to humanity.
4. To call on foreign states and international organizations that have not yet recognized the mass destruction of the Circassians as genocide, to recognize the mass destruction of the Circassians and their forcible deportation as the genocide of the Circassian (Adyghe) people.
5. To instruct the Government of Ukraine to appeal to the governments of foreign countries to help increase the level of awareness of this and other crimes committed by the Russian Empire by spreading knowledge about such crimes in educational and research programs.
6. Condemn attempts by the current Russian regime to deliberately distort historical facts to support the ideology of oppression and aggression.
7. To recognize the right of the exiled Circassian (Adyghe) people to repatriate to the historical lands of resettlement in the northwestern part of the Caucasus, with further realization of the right to national self-determination on their territory.
8. To instruct the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to ensure the urgent forwarding of this Resolution to the governments and parliaments of foreign countries, institutions of the European Union, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Permanent Forum of the United Nations on Indigenous Peoples, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.
9. This Resolution enters into force on the day of its adoption (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025).



The fifth General Assembly of UNPO, (the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization) (15–19 July 1997) issued a Resolution on the Situation of the Circassian Nation, in which it called upon the Russian Federation and the international community.



*“...to acknowledge the genocide of the Circassian nation that took place in the nineteenth century and to grant the Circassian people status of an exile nation; to grant the Circassian people dual citizenship, both that of Russia and of their respective countries; [and] to ensure the Circassian people of the possibility to return to their historical land” (Zhemukhov, 2012, p. 509).*



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