



INTERNATIONAL LEGAL GUARANTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES AND PROBLEMS IN THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON MINORITY EDUCATION

Intervention on the theme ‘Forms of support for National minorities’

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Unofficial translation

In addressing this problem we believe that it is important to understand national minorities not as a demographic group but rather as a group that sees itself or is perceived by society as a discriminated one in a certain form.

This approach makes it obvious that providing support to national minorities one should also keep in mind the diversity of national minorities themselves (with or without a form of self-determination like autonomy, long-time residents, indigenous groups, migrants etc) as well as the huge diversity inside national minorities (for instance, in Moscow there are a lot of intellectuals among Armenians but there are also middle-class Armenians among the long-time residents as well as low-status Armenians among refugees and forced migrants).

For a sociologist, it is always important to take into account the status of an ethnic group, or, in this case, of a national minority. The status of a group is determined by its social resource, i.e. education, professional qualification and subjective factors like prestige in the society (for example, Armenians and Georgians in Russia were perceived as high-status groups until the new influx of migrants).

What kind of support may be useful for Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Ossetians, Buryats, Yakuts with a higher percentage of educated people among them than among the majority that they live in?

The following form of support is needed for all ethnic groups. An important step was made in 2001 when the Federal Program “Forming consciousness of tolerance and prevention of extremism in the Russian society”. The program was specified in by-laws adopted in the Russian regions. For example, in Moscow there is a program for 2005-2007 entitled “Multinational Moscow: forming civil solidarity, culture of peace and concord”. We attach great importance to the addresses by the leaders of our country and its regions, which help establish a psychological climate of “acceptance” and “inclusion” around various groups of national minorities with a special focus on groups with a negative image.

Ensuring recognition and self-expression is an important form of support for all ethnic groups. This support is provided through the Laws on National and Cultural Autonomies (1996), Concept of the State National Policy and is manifested in establishing national and cultural autonomy as a public institution, supporting publications in ethnic languages and ethnic celebrations.

Another form of support that I would like to mention is the problem of inclusion, i.e. ensuring participation of minorities in the decision-making on the issues of importance for them. On the whole in Russia we do not implement the concept of multi-component society (in terms of Arend Lijphart) but we do use some elements of this model in complex situations fraught with conflicts (in Dagestan government posts are distributed between ethnic groups).

Holding parliamentary hearings on specific issues, for example, hearings on repressed peoples, also contribute to inclusion. Another form is consideration of problems faced by ethnic minorities in some republics (Tatars in Bashkortostan) on the basis of the principle that “no group may have the exclusive right to control a territory, political institutions and resources”.

One of the forms of support for national minorities in Russia is implementation of the Law on Making Amendments and Additions to the Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples. The following resolutions were also adopted: “On social and economic support for the Balkar people” (1993), “On rehabilitation of Russia’s Finns” (1993), “On measures of rehabilitation of the Karachay people and social and economic support for the Karachay-Cherkess Republic” (1993). In the same spirit, the Law on the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repressions was adopted (for instance, Finns who lived in Germany were put into the category of victims of political repressions and all compensation norms were applied to them).

My colleagues will speak of support to national minorities through governmental organizations – a State Duma Committee, a Department in the Ministry for Regional Development, committees in local authorities – and implementation of the Law about Indigenous Small Peoples.

I would also like to mention the role of regional authorities in post-conflict situations. It relates, for instance, to the return of the Ingushes to North Ossetia and refugees from Chechnya to the Chechen Republic, i.e. to the areas of their permanent residence.

Finally, there is a special form characteristic of globalization – protection of migrants from among ethnic minorities. In 1990s Russia became the third migrants-receiving country in the world. It turned out to be a big problem. New migrants altered the social composition of ethnic minorities and diversified ethnic groups. For example, a half of the new migrants from Georgia, like their compatriots with a long history of residence in Russia, were educated professionals with high expectations. Not all of them though were able to find suitable jobs in the new environment. They had to take jobs in the growing sector of services. Similar was the destiny of many Armenians. Some of them joined high-status groups that compete with the groups of the majority, others occupied available niches in construction, transport and services sector. This second Armenian group in many ways resembles migrants from Azerbaijan, who also have a similar but more numerous group, and migrants from Central Asia. Most of them were people with a low qualification. That was the segment of ethnic migrants that needed protection most. Therefore, the resolutions adopted by the Government concerning regulation of migration, responsibility of employers for registration of employees and providing them with dignified living conditions, were very timely.

This area needs regulation because of other acute problems like corruption and non-payment of taxes. When these social problems are found in the ethnic environment alien to the majority groups, they intertwine with ethnic problems. A committed crime must not remain unpunished but in a multicultural environment, it is of special importance that justice and equality are ensured as well. This is responsibility of both governmental institutions and every citizen. The duty of an academic is to make clarifying statements for the media, to spread the knowledge in educational system and to work on expert level with governmental authorities.