

Turkmenistan

Ethnicity in Turkmenistan

Power relations

Turkmenistan is an authoritarian state, dominated by the president (ethnic Turkmen) who controls all branches ⁽³⁵⁷²⁾. The majority of Turkmenistan's citizens are ethnic Turkmen. Other ethnic groups include Russian, Uzbek, and Kazakh, who are all powerless. Turkmen is the official language in Turkmenistan, though Russian is still widely spoken as a "language of inter-ethnic communication". Turkmen hold the monopoly, it is reported that non-Turkmen speakers complained that some avenues for promotion and job advancement were closed to them, and only a handful of non-Turkmen occupied high-level jobs in government ministries. The government required ministry employees to pass tests demonstrating knowledge of the Ruhnama, state symbols, and professional subjects in Turkmen; employees who failed the exam were dismissed. The Minority Rights Group International ⁽³⁵⁷³⁾ reports systematic cultural and economic discrimination against non-Turkmen ethnic minorities. Due to the authoritarian government, all potential opposition to the regime is not tolerated and it is, thus, difficult to politically organize. Russians for example unsuccessfully demanded the right to participate in the decision-making process, for equality in civil rights and status. Peimani ⁽³⁵⁷⁴⁾ reports that the treatment of the Uzbek minority mainly influences the relationship between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan leading to the conclusion that the Uzbeks are politically relevant. This applies to the Kazakh minority as well.

³⁵⁷² [US Department of State, 2009]

³⁵⁷³ [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

³⁵⁷⁴ [Peimani, 2003]

Update 2009-2013: No changes in the power states of the ethnic groups in Turkmenistan. The Turkmen remain the monopoly majority in the authoritarian ruled state. Ethnic minorities experience societal and educational discrimination ⁽³⁵⁷⁵⁾ but no political discrimination as few ethnic minority members occupy government positions ⁽³⁵⁷⁶⁾. The presidential elections of 2012 were accompanied by strong repression of all opposition, but the repression was targeted at political opponents in general and not ethnic identity groups.

³⁵⁷⁵ [Human Rights Watch, 2013]

³⁵⁷⁶ [US Department of State, 2010]

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Political status of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan

From 1991 until 2013

| Group name | Proportional size | Political status |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Turkmen | 0.85 | MONOPOLY |
| Uzbeks | 0.05 | POWERLESS |
| Russians | 0.03 | POWERLESS |
| Kazakhs | 0.02 | POWERLESS |



Figure 777: Political status of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2013.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan

From 1991 until 2013



Figure 778: Map of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2013.

| Group name | Area in km ² | Type |
|------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| ■ Turkmen | 463 994 | Regional & urban |
| Kazakhs | | Dispersed |
| Russians | | Urban |
| Uzbeks | | Dispersed |

Table 224: List of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2013.