

# Turkmenistan

## *Ethnicity in Turkmenistan*

### *Group selection*

We identify the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Turkmen, Kazakhs, Russians, and Uzbeks.**

### *Power relations*

#### *1991-2017*

Turkmenistan is an authoritarian state, dominated by the president (ethnic Turkmen) who controls all branches (<sup>4589</sup>). The majority of Turkmenistan's citizens are ethnic Turkmen. All other ethnic groups are 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 on power, 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.

<sup>4589</sup> [US Department of State, 2009]

The Minority Rights Group International (<sup>4590</sup>) 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. For the Russian minority, the dual-citizenship conflict continues to be unresolved. Peimani (<sup>4591</sup>) reports that the treatment of the Uzbek minority mainly influences the relationship between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Although it is open to all citizens to register as an NGO, out of all the minority groups that had tried to do so in 2016, no group was successful in doing so (<sup>4592</sup>). Bohr (<sup>4593</sup>) writes that the Uzbek minority still continues to be affected by the nationalization attempts today, and coupled with the foreign relation conflicts between the two countries, thus is politically relevant. The same can be said for the smaller Kazakh minority, but to a lesser degree, as the two countries have more relaxed foreign relations.

<sup>4590</sup> [Minority Rights Group International, 2008]

<sup>4591</sup> [Peimani, 2003]

<sup>4592</sup> [U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2016]

<sup>4593</sup> [Chatham House, 2016]

Ethnic minorities experience societal and educational discrimina-

tion (<sup>4594</sup>, <sup>4595</sup>) but no political discrimination as few ethnic minority members occupy government positions (<sup>4596</sup>) even if preference is given to Turkmen politicians (<sup>4597</sup>). 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.

<sup>4594</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2013]

<sup>4595</sup> [U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2012]

<sup>4596</sup> [US Department of State, 2010]

<sup>4597</sup> [U.S. State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2012]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan*

*From 1991 until 2017*

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



Figure 941: Political status of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2017.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan*

*From 1991 until 2017*



Figure 942: Map of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2017.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■ Turkmen	463942	Regional & urban
■ Uzbeks		Dispersed
■ Russians		Urban
■ Kazakhs		Dispersed

Table 314: List of ethnic groups in Turkmenistan during 1991-2017.