

Commemoration and Memorialization of Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks in Türkiye Foreign Ministry's Commemoration Statements-(2015-2021)

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring press release regarding Anniversaries of the Deportation of Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks from their homeland commemoration statement by Ministry of Turkey Foreign Affairs. Therefore, this article is based on the single official documents as a primary resource. Only one primary source is used to gather empirical data which extracted from Turkish Foreign Ministry official website. Turkey has been celebrating the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks Commemoration Anniversary between 2015 and 2021 with a gap in 2016 in which it was not released for the unknown reason. The span time for this research has chosen according to the available official press release and official letter by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The text content analysis is applied to commemoration statements to find the nature of the language used in the letters to define and underline Turkey approach to the community using the commemorative language. It concluded to verify the correlations between transnationalism, commemoration and diasporization process with analysis content of the commemoration letters.

Keywords

Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, Diaspora, Turkey, Transnationalism, Commemoration, Memorialization

1. Introduction

Every year on November 14th, since 2015 Turkey Foreign Ministry of Turkey commemorates Ahiska (Meskhetian) tragedy dates back to 1944. The commemoration

moration letter was published under press and statements of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey under the title *Press Release Regarding Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from Their Homeland*. The commemoration is one of the official declarations by Foreign Ministry that express Turkey perspective and intention for its kindred community. For the last two decades Turkey initiated to deal with Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turksglobal cause with support, outreach and connection with Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks communities in many countries they settled now. The commemoration letters¹ produced to mobilize the official state discourse to demonstrate that Turkey has not forgotten but remember Ahiska (Meskhetian Turks). Turkey is the sole supporter as a state, and there this article claims that Ahiska Meskhetian Turks is a kindred diasporic community of Turkey to transform through diasporic activities and commemoration is part of this policy. Ahiskan Meskhetian Turks' as the term will be used as it is referred by *Aydingün, A. (2002)*².

Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks are a religiously Sunni Muslim, ethnically Turkish-speaking community, resided in Akhaltsikhe (known as Samtskhe-Javakheti) in southern Georgia, as regarded homeland by Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. They are one of the communities that was subjected to the oppression, forced immigration and exclusion during the Soviet Union. Stalin in 1944 decided to exile several ethnic groups in central Asia and Caucasus, such as Inguish, Chechen, Volga German, Balkarians, Karacian, kamlıks, Crimean Tatar and Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, however, in 1956, Soviet Union decided to send back all ethnic groups to their homeland but Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks were single out from such policy. Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks is the only ethnic group who has not been granted repatriation since then they aspire to return to their homeland. Turkey vowed to support and assist Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks for their aspiration returning to their homeland. In 1999, when Georgia became a conditional member of the Council of Europe, the organizing of the repatriation of Ahiska Turks was required as a provision. Although Georgia passed legislation in 2007 regarding the repatriation of Ahiska Turks, few steps have been taken since then (*Keskin, 2019*).

As recorded in Encyclopedia of Islam under Diyanet Akhaltsikhe during the 3rd Caliphate Osman which marked the first Islamic conquests in the region, Akhaltsikhewas conquered by Habib bin Meslama in 642. In 1068 was taken by Alparslan under the Seljuk, fell to the Mongols in 1267-1268. Akhaltsikhe was ruled by local administration called Atabegs, head of the local ruler. Akhaltsikhe Atabegs who assisted Yavuz Sultan Selim's Caldiran campaign, joined Ottoman

¹Turkey Foreign Ministry. Press Releases and Statements.

<https://www.mfa.gov.tr/sub.en.mfa?248a41bb-6744-4d91-91f7-500bd7a2cac1>

²Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks or Meskhetian Turks are two overlapping and interchangeable term to define. Ahiska Turks is mainly used by Turkish academia to refer people from the region and underlines the Turkic character. Meskhetian term mainly is used by regional, international and Georgian scholars. In order to avoid confusion, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks is used together, as is used in following study by *Aydingün, A. (2002)*. Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks: Source of Conflict in the Caucasus? *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 6, 49-64.

administration after Lala Mustafa Pasha's Cildir Battle (between Ottoman and Safavid) in 1578. The latest Atabeg of Akhaltsikhe converted to Islam and adopted Mustafa Pasha name in this period, Akhaltsikhe became the center of newly established Cildir state. Due to the wars that ruined the Cildir, Ahiska transferred to and Administrative state. In short of time, it fell under Savafid, retaken in 1635. During the war between Ottoman and Russia in 1828-1829 concluded Adrianople Treaty that favored Russia to gain territories around the Black Sea and Akhaltsikhe later led the first Akhaltsikhe migration to Turkey.

Turkish population in Akhaltsikhe couldn't accept the patronage of Russia. Ahiskan who assisted the Ottomans during the 1853-1856 war with Russia fled in large numbers to Erzurum due to Russia's oppressive treatment. By signing the Armistice of Mudros in 1918 Akhaltsikhe as Sancak (Administrative unit during Ottoman) joined to temporary governate centered in Kars. Georgian National Government left Akhaltsikhe to Turkey in June 1918 as part of Treaty of Trabzon. However, on April 13, 1919, after the British occupation of Kars and the dissolution of the National Council (Milli Sura Teskilati) Akhaltsikhe was occupied by Georgia and with the Moscow Treaty of March 16, 1921 was connected Tbilisi of Georgia Soviet Socialist Republic (Bostan, 1998). An official letter (Special settlement Regime) signed by Stalin in 30 July 1944 ordered to expel ethnic communities to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Krygistan. Chief of Soviet Security, Georgian Lavrentiy Beria³ (Mustafa Uren, 2016) and Polian (2003) accepted the order to purge and exile several ethnic groups to central Asia and Caucasus, these ethnic minorities group were Inguish, Checen, Volga German, Balkarians, Karacian, Kamliks, Crimean Tatar and Ahiskan Turks, however, in 1956, Soviet Union decided to send back all ethnic groups to their homeland but Ahiskan Turks were excluded from such policy. Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks are the only ethnic groups have not been granted reparation. According to the World Ahsika Turks Association, in 1944 Joseph Stalin ordered the expulsion around 92,307 Ahiska Turks from the Meskheti⁴ area of Georgia. Around 13,000 Ahska Turks died during the almost 40-days of deportation period from their home country Georgia to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, mostly died as a result of starvation, cold weather, and illnesses.

Turkey closely works with Ahiskan Turks in the United States, most of them applied to green cards in 2005 and accepted to United States and they are now citizens of United States working in different sectors are considered Ameri-

³In many Turkish and Ahiskan Scholars, Georgian Beria, Chief of Security of the Soviet himself ordered and personally participated the deportation of Ahiskan, Hemshin (Muslim Armenian), and Kurdish population to Central Asia. Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks hold him as the main responsible for the (special settlement policy). See Polian Pavel, *against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migration in the USSR*, 2004, p: 123-164 cited in Symposium. International Symposium on Legal and Social Problems of Ahiskan Turks. University of Giresun and Mustafa Uren (2016). *Cikar ve Guc Dengesi Kiskacindaki Ahiska Türkleri Sorunu*.

⁴The region name "Meskhetia" officially used by Georgians is the historical name of the region which is situated in the today's southern Georgia bordering Turkey. Today, it is in the area of Samtskhe-Javakheti Regional Administration, which is one of the twelve regional administrations of Georgia.

can-Ahiskan Turks as hyphenated. After 2006 onward Turkey financially culturally, religiously supported them to institutionalized in order to preserve their identity.

The main purpose of this article examines the language and tone of the statements by Turkish Foreign Ministry to find the connection between commemoration and diasporization analyzing the Turkey's commemoration of Meskhetian deportation from Ahiska Region of the Georgia. Turkey traditionally has been commemorating Meskhetian deportation from Samtskhe-Javakheti region to other regions of the Soviet Union that resulted in mass death called as genocide by global Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks and Turkey. In recent years, Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks commemoration has been emerged as one of the commemoration policies of Turkey, commemoration is politically and religiously instrumentalized (Hammond, 2020)⁵.

Thus, the commemoration texts are carefully studied to find the correlations between Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks tragedy, their desire to return to their homeland and how their identity is shaped by Turkey. Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks in Turkey foreign policy, further, it looks into such questions, how do Turkey describe Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks in the content of the commemoration text? What does Turkey do to outreach Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks with new identity? Do Turkey diasporize Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks? For such questions, the transnationalism and diaspora as conceptual framework are utilized as an explanatory power along with the commemoration statements by Turkey Foreign Ministry. Transnationalism for Turkey is underlined to reconnect with ethnic, kin, and religious communities that Turkey sees them historical, cultural and religious affinities. Especially, the ethnic minorities who were scattered in the regions during Soviet Union, such as Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. Turkey organizes a series of events on 14 November 1944 to revitalize the scars of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks tragedy or efforts to bring Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks's historical memory back. It can be called that Turkey's effort is to make the Ahiska (Meskhetian) memory as "International memorial" or "Ahiskan (Meskhetian) Tragedy day". The memorial or memory construction discussed by Timmur Hammond that how Turkey constructed memorial politics of July 15 coup attempt as one of the rare studies.

To reconnect them via remembering them and shaping their lost identity has been one of the core policies of the diaspora of Turkey. According to Schwartz (1982) "Relocation of the past is an active, productive process, not a simple matter of recovering facts. To remember is to put a fragment of the past at the service of conceptions and needs of the present". Collective memory has been utilized powerfully in foreign policy to commemorate with events such as movies, cultural events and identity-based programs.

Turkey foreign policy attentively and closely works with Ahiska (Meskhetian)

⁵Political Commemoration is very popular in Turkish Culture. Religious commemoration has increased during Justice and Development Party (JDP). How Turkey constructed Public Memorial after July 2016 see article by Timur Hammond (2020): Making Memorial Publics: Media, Monuments, and The Politics of Commemoration Following Turkey's July 2016 Coup Attempt, Geographical Review.

Turks, brings their problem to the global attention and help them to establish institutions (Yeşiltaş & Balci, 2013). Turkey main objective is ascertaining that Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks to return to their homeland which is in Georgia. As mentioned before Ahiska means *Vatan* that referred to homeland in Turkish doesn't mean a geographical location rather a home that attached to Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks identity. Sahin (2014) underlines the strategical importance of Ahiska in Turkish foreign policy in term of geological, geo-economics and geo-cultural. Ahiska region constitute a bridge between Turkey and Caucasus to reach out to the Turkish speaking world, another important aspect of the region between two Muslim populated regions in Georgia Borchali and Adjara that has potential to connect and unified Islamic world, Ahiska is on the route of energy and transit pipelines. It is having land connection to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, with these all imperative geo-strategical explanation of Ahiska holds a special location in Turkish foreign policy to protect Turkey interests in the region Besides that, there are 25,000 Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks live in Turkey form a political organization to push Turkey deal with their repatriation and returning back to Meskhetian, in Akhaliskhie⁶ located in northeastern Turkey, on the border with the province of Ardahan and inside the territory of Georgia, the city of Ahiska serves as the cultural and religious heart of a very ancient Turkic homeland. It is home to cities such as Abastuban, Adigon, Aspinza, Ahlkelek, Azgur, and Hirtiz, as well as around 200 villages that are linked to these urban areas. As a natural extension of Anatolia and Georgia today within the borders of the region Meskhetian, that is a settlement in the northeast of Ardahan.

2. Literature Review

Literature of Ahiska Meskhetian Turks is mainly focus on the Ahiskan history, ethnic origin, repatriation to homeland. Literature on ethnic origin are not included as it creates confusion for example Kobaidze and Beridze (2010) believe that Ahiskan Turks were Georgian but are Muslimized Meskhetian during Ottoman Empire. As this literature is eclectic consists of Transnationalism, diaspora and religious in foreign policy. However, Turkey's "commemoration" literature is understudy. Commemoration and diaspora and transnationalism which are interchangeable used with "identity and culture" as studied by Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso, (2004). It also can be new concepts to define Turkey commemoration politics, or identity constructions-based commemoration as we observe with Ahiska Meskhatian Turks in Foreign Ministry of Turkey.

Thus, with limited literature on Commemoration, research will contribute to commemoration identity and politics regarding to the Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks or other minorities or Turkish expat or diplomats that Turkey uphold as kindred or Turks abroad which underwent social and political tragedies, attack or assassinations. Most of the commemoration that Turkey official organize to remember has connections with foreign state or groups. For example, Turkey

⁶In Georgian Language Akhaliskhie means "new castle", Akhal means new, tsikhe means castle.

begun commemorates 29. May, 1993 arson that five Turkish-German were burnt to die by neo-Nazi group. It is called Solingen arson attack. The burnt down house of the family is regarded a memorial house today. Both Turkey and German officials commemorate. In 2018, German Chancellor Angelina Merkel, and Foreign Ministry of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu attended the memorial event (TRT World, 2018). The Solingen attack has been one of the political memorial events commemorated by officials in Turkey attended by public. To bring attention to the fact that the Turkish diaspora is a frequent target of neo-Nazi violence in Germany, the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) built a miniature⁷ version of the home in the capital city's Ulus Square (Daily Sabah, 2021). Turkey also commemorate to honor the lives of the Turkish diplomats, officials, and public workers who were killed by terrorist organizations while representing Turkey overseas, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey hosts a ceremonial Memorial Day at the Martyrs' Cemetery on the occasion of the Martyrs' Day. During the 1970s and 1980s, 40 Turkish ambassadors lost their lives due to terrorist assaults and it is reported that Turkey has 58 martyrs' cemetery in 26 countries, each year Turkey commemorate and during the visits to these country officially hold the commemoration ceremony (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018)⁸. The political commemorative memorial consists of visible landmarks and image for example. The assassinated diplomats with their family members profile is framed at every Turkish consulate in foreign countries. Similarly, July 2016 coup attempt is commemorated with landscapes such as "July 15 Martyrs Avenue" (Hammond, 2020).

Most of the commemoration scholars underline the "memory politics" and identity. Gillis (1994) discuss that identity politics and commemoration are historical. *In introduction of commemoration: The politics of National Identity*. This collection explores the historical significance of the many ways in which people have chosen to honor the past. Because it requires the coordination of individual and communal memories, commemorative action is inherently social and political, despite the fact that its outcomes may look consensual while being the product of tremendous dispute, struggle, and, in some cases, destruction (Gillis, 1994).

Another concept for this study is transnationalism which is in foreign policy analysis was first conceptualized in 1970 by the scholars of international relations denoting its importance of global interactions and impacts on interstate politics (Vertovec, 2009). This was the first approach to the issue from more statist and top-down perspectives, "transnational" as an unclear concept along with international and multinational understanding that has been used for the home country activities beyond its border. As these terms were more appropriately defined, the top-down ideas of the "transnational" was single out. This

⁷Presidency of Turks Abroad and Related Communities (2021). Replica House in Ankara Reminds Horrors of German Neo-Nazi Violence.

<https://www.ytb.gov.tr/en/news/replica-house-in-ankara-reminds-horrors-of-german-neo-nazi-violence>.

⁸Turkey Foreign Ministry (2018). Martyrs of the Foreign Ministry are Commemorated.

<https://www.mfa.gov.tr/martyrs-of-the-foreign-ministry-are-commemorated.en.mfa>.

signified when the disciplines of anthropology and migration studies selected the term “transnational” and made “transnationalism” a new scientific idea. At the time, the term emerged with the enduring relationships and repeated movements across borders, in which the agents were not states or nations, but individual actors or organizations focus (Kokot et al., 2004). Sheffer (2006) focus on the “Muslim transnational network” that has connection with their homeland political culture. Migrants’ political transnational pursuits include electoral participation, membership in third political parties and NGOs or campaigns in two different countries, lobbying, the authorities of one country to impact its policies toward another, and nation-building itself (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) asserts that such activities were well defined and extension of Turkey’s government transnationalistic practice in Europe, especially in Germany. Transnationalism and diaspora have not studied before regarding the Turkey’s foreign policy to particular Ahiskan Meskhetian Turks, due to the fact that, they are not outsiders, in recent years, Turkey relationship with Ahiskan Meskhetian Turks population in the United States conducted through integration to Turkish Foreign policy.

The focus of this research emphasizes theoretical values that attribute broad definitions to Turkish foreign policies structures toward ethnic minorities, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks and “Religious discourses” “historical connection” and “returning to homeland” “Transnational commemoration” as “mnemonic role (Meyers et al., 2009) are highlighted the mechanistic dynamism of Turkey’s conceptual shift toward ethnic minorities; such Turks outside of Turkey turned to Diaspora. Taking into consideration the specifically geo-political and geo-strategic values of South Caucasus, the term, “religious identity” describes the hemispheric interests of Turkey distributed on behalf of Turkic nations who were under Ottoman empires. Turkey under JDP considers itself the “defender” of the kin and ethnic people, and reconnecting is a historical responsibility. First of all, for the region the diaspora term is limited to apply, however, as it is a new concept can be studied for the, Ahiskan Meskhetin Turks. Concept of diaspora overlaps as Turkey is not a “sending states” to the South Caucasus, historically Turkey was a receiving country as “host country” for immigrants from origin Caucasus (Putkaradze, 1998)⁹. As the diaspora and kin community are used in “with dense and continuous linkages across borders” (Faist, 2010) rather than linking within the imagery of origin and destination, the new suggestions included countries of onward migration and the multiplicity of spaces.

Joseph Nye 30 years ago, only its relevancy with religious transnationalism in this section will be explored, by this way the religion as a soft power utilized in the

⁹Mohajir or Abkhazian along with immigration from the North Caucasus immigrate to Turkey after 1918 USSR politics on the region. After 2008 Georgian and Abkhazian war, the Abkhaz communities turned into an unofficial political diaspora institution in Turkey. Muhajiring as a specific form of displacement of population (Muhajir in Arabian means an emigrant, who has left the homeland) was used in historiography as a term of resettlement from the Caucasus to Turkey in various periods of the 19th century. The Georgian muhajir call themselves as “chvенеburebi”, i.e. “one of us”, “relatives” (Putkaradze, 1998).

foreign policy of JDP dealing with kin, ethnic, religious and diaspora groups in Georgia is limited. Turkey has begun to use leverage in Georgia with the goal of expanding its religious, ideological, and cultural influence in Georgia by enforcing the institutions such TIKA, Diyanet, Yunus Emre (Ter-Matevosyan, 2014).

In order to find the connection between religious transnationalism in International relations which has introduced to the field lately, there are several main scholarships worth to underline. First, in 1986 an edited book by Adeed Davisha, *Islam in Foreign Policy* that study the role of Islam as main motivator that prioritized in the foreign policy of the countries; however, Turkey was excluded due to its secular identity. Kubálková, V. (2000) called such dynamic as International Political Theology (IPT). Kubalkova studied religion in constructivism that is included in subtopic of religion and Constructivism. Haynes (2014) book *An Introduction to Internaitonal Relations and Religion* and Haynes (2008) *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power* book explore religion in International Politics. Haynes (2014) claims that religion came to internaitonal relations very late and the study limited to political security and economy. This statment is well relevant to the main objective of the disseration that look concepts in foreign policy beyond the security and economy. However one of the weak points of the Hayness is that he limites his exploration about Turkey only in relation with European perception towards to Turkey as a Muslim country. Similiar to Dawisha (1986) to exlude Turkey as and Islamist states, Hayness only examines Turkey's bid for European application in Chapter (9) in *Introduction to Religionand International Relations*. He draws conclusion that opposition in EU are skeptical about Turkey's entrance to the union due to its largest Muslim population and Islamic identity as the main hindrance. On the contrary, Hayness utilizes Saudi Arabia and Iran, two countries as cases to highlight how they bring the religion in their transnationalistic and soft power oriented foreign policy conduct towards neihbouring countries. These two countries have incorprated Islam, different interpretation of Islam in to their foreign policy and create "geopolitics of the religious soft power" which is defined by Mandeville, P. and Hamid, S. (2018). As Turkey involved as the third party to use Islam as a statecraft. The report underlines how the religious is used as an instrumental in foreign policy and in the commemoration letters by Turkey foreign Ministry on Ahiska (Meskhetian Turks).

Revisiting to Turkey's Diaspora and Kin-State Politics

In this section the research aims at arguing the Diaspora studies including Turkey diaspora making over kindred, relative and religious communities is a wide choice of Turkey's new diaspora policy during JDP available in the literature. Turkey's new diaspora policy, outreach and reconnection policy have been covered in many academic works during JDP¹⁰. However, most of the studies encapsulated Turkey's engagement with Turks abroad and dispersal population's

¹⁰JDP was founded in 2002 as considered with Islamic rooted party that shaped the identity of the kindred communities in Balkan, Caucasus, and Middle East.

problem. Diaspora with its contested concept gained popularity after Turkey founded institutions Turkey founded YTB, Yunus Emre, Maarif Schools, Turkey Alumni, Turkiye Scholarship to outreach to kin, relative and religious groups. Specifically deals with Diaspora, since then Turkey not only engage with Diaspora with state personnel and machinery but it strived to transfer the meaning of the concept into identity-based character. Turkey's Diaspora identity, the way Turkey considers Diaspora is to shape toward its ideological token and to integrate diasporic communities in wider Turkey's geopolitical imperatives has been subject matter in many researches. In this regard, relevant literature has been questioning relationship between Diaspora groups and Turkey during JDP or the homeland/kin-state and the diaspora/kin-communities or Turkey's recent relationship with diaspora communities. Since the 1990s, the word "diaspora" which refers to the narratives of certain groups, has gained a lot of academic interest. Unlike the popular parlance that define Turkish diaspora in Europe and Balkan states. Diaspora was used "to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland" (Faist, 2010) categorizes these groups, can be as well applied to Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks community. These categorize are 1) Nation-states continue to shape trans migrants' actions and identities, 2) the nature, pattern, intensity and types of transnational connections of migrants vary with class, gender and generation, 3) states often try to encompass and redirect the transnational activities of migrants, and 4) continuities as well as differences, exist between contemporary and past patterns of transnational migration as defined 15 Transnational migration is then defined as "a process of movement and settlement across international borders in which individuals maintain or build multiple networks of connection to their country of origin while at the same time settling in a new country" (Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001). Analyzing the literature on the transnational and diaspora activities, two main approaches in case of Turkey under JDP where: 1) the political and territorial legacy of the Ottoman Empire persists, in this case, Turkey is a sending state and home for various ethnic groups around the world; 2) JDP gradually shapes the migration policies toward co-ethnic minorities in many regions based on its political ideologies; 3) to better serve the communities, Turkey institutionalized her diaspora and transnational activities by founding the Presidency of Turks Abroad and Kin Communities (YTB) as in role of diaspora ministry, but it is officially under the ministry of Tourism and Culture. Abdullah Eren (2020) president of the YTB defines Turkish diaspora in following words "We have 6 million Turks in Europe and elsewhere, we institutionally aim to connect to them to solve their bureaucratic problems they face in dual citizenship, military service enlistment, and education".

William Safran definition and typology of the diaspora is widely quoted, the main description of the diaspora paradigm that depicts the diaspora groups are: Safran categoration of Diaspora is also applicable to Ahiska Meskhetian Turks with following definitions.

1) dispersal from a homeland; 2) collective memory of the homeland; 3) lack of integration in the host country; 4) a “myth” of return and a persistent link with the homeland. Safran (1991) and Robin Cohen (1997) supplemented this list of key diaspora features as follows. 1) dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions or expansion from a homeland in search of work/for trade/colonial ambitions; 2) a collective memory and an idealization of the homeland and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation; 3) the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation; 4) a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate; 5) a troubled relationship with host societies; 6) a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; Scholars agreed that Diaspora defines an “imagined group of people living outside of their origin country” (Knott, 2010; Vertovec, 2009). In more broad sense, Diaspora is described by Shain and Barth (2003) as “a people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the borders of their ethnic or religious homeland—whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control.” Diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others—inside and outside their homeland—as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs. For Cohen (2008) diaspora communities can “exist in cyberspace, in a physical location” or as Benedict Anderson (2006) argue that, “through a shared imagination”. In Global Diasporas, Cohen (1997) offers nine common elements that contemporary diaspora communities embody. Robin Cohen (1997) thus identifies five different types of diasporas: victim diasporas (e.g., populations forced into exile such as the Jewish, African, Armenian diasporas); labour diasporas (e.g., mass migration in search of work and economic opportunities such as the Indian and Turkish diasporas); trade diasporas (e.g., migrations seeking to open trade routes and links such as the Chinese and Lebanese diasporas); imperial diasporas (e.g., migration among those keen to serve and maintain empires such as the British and French diasporas); cultural diaspora (e.g., those who move through a process of chain migration such as the Caribbean diaspora).

Oktem (2014), Mencutek & Baser (2017) and Aksel (2014) are valuable sources that discuss the *raison d’être* drive behind the new policy formation of Turkey’s diaspora policies. However, their studies apply the cases in the Europe, such as Turks or Kurdish labors, and communities in Germany and other EU countries. Aksel (2014) is one of the few scholars working on Turkish diaspora in Europe. Her oft-quoted article titled “*Kins, Distant Workers, Diasporas: Constructing Turkey’s Transnational Members Abroad*” analysis the new Turkish state policies and reflects on immigrants and co-ethnics abroad in recent years and lays foundation of the diaspora studies from Turkey’s perspective. Turkey

demonstrated institutionally interest in the diaspora or kin communities abroad relatively during the previous government. It is an effective factor in Turkey's relations and for the geopolitical openings. A comprehensive edited book by [Hatay & Tziarras \(2019\)](#) covers Turkey's kin and diaspora policy with examples on Europe, the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. Georgia has Office of the State Minister for Diaspora Issues (Diaspora Office) founded in 2008. Georgia held a diaspora day forum with diaspora representatives in 2022 with many diasporic activities¹¹, Armenia has Ministry of Diaspora founded 2008¹². After the office, Georgian news agency began using the diaspora term quite often to define the ethnic Georgian origin in Turkey and Europe. In November 2016, the Office was closed and merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ([Agenda.ge, 2015](#)). Azerbaijan has the [State Committee on Work with Diaspora of the Republic of Azerbaijan](#) founded in 2008¹³.

Diaspora must be discussed within the structure in "Diaspora and Nationalism", however, nationalism in Turkish foreign policy is not in this study, as Islamism or neo-ottomanism are more relevant. The studies Nadja C. Johnson, "Global Journeys: From Trans-nationalism to Diaspora", 'diaspora' and 'trans-nationalism' may seem a futile exercise ([Johnson, 2012](#)). However, Turkey instrumentalize nationalism or transnationalism to reconnect Ahiskan (Meskhatian) Turks underlining their common language, religious and relative politics. [Aksel \(2014\)](#) conceptualizes the operational channel used by Turkey in order to reach the diaspora and kin communities by monitoring, controlling, coordinating and investing. Again, her study is confined communities in Europe. [Uzer \(2010\)](#) explains the Turkish foreign policy in two parameters in his book of *Identity and Turkish foreign policy: The Kemalist Influence in Cyprus and the Caucasus*. He underlined that Turkey's foreign policy analysis sets on rational and strategical understanding, and the other is identity-based analysis. Along with nationalistic driven foreign policy on diaspora, it is significant to explore religion (Islam) as an instrument or a statecraft that discussed in the study of ([Mandaville & Hamid, 2018](#)) religion as a statecraft in the foreign affairs means how the government manage and conduct the religious discourse in the foreign policy making. Nationalism and religions have been used in major studies underlying such connections.

The requirement of the *raison d'état* that the decision-makers are prudent to maximizes the state power in volatile and complex International order. However, in the second understanding of Foreign policy analysis culture and identity are primacy, emotional in this analysis, decision-makers shape the foreign policy towards ethnic minorities living abroad. Uzer defined Turkey foreign policy analysis as a combination of both, neither irredentist a sort of transnationality or

¹¹Prime Minister of Georgia (2022). Diaspora Day Forum: Georgian Diaspora for Georgia's European Future.

https://garibashvili.ge/en/n/all/diasporis_dghisadmi_midzghvnili_forumi_kartuli_diaspora_sakartvelos_evropuli_momavlisatvis.

¹²Armenian Diaspora official website <http://diaspora.gov.am/en>.

¹³Azerbaijan Diaspora official website <http://diaspor.gov.az/en/>.

pragmatic (Uzer, 2010). Uzer carefully frames his assumptions on the three cases; Hatay, Cyprus and Nagorno Karabakh. He presents his variables around these cases to explore if Turkey's foreign policy is constructed what he considers is a nationalistic approach. However, in his case of Karabakh, Uzer hypothesized that Turkish foreign policy is not identity interested but Turkey's involvement in Cyprus is military oriented. Interestingly, Uzer, highlights the ladder of involvement in the affairs of the Turks living abroad as one of the ladders he puts forwards. The second level of ladder of engagement is financial supports through NGOs or lobbying on behalf of groups. Special and statutory funds are allocated to ethnic minorities on the name of the Prime Ministers.

It used to be a kin-state concerned with populating its territory and homogenizing its incipient nation with the "right kind of people" before 1945. The definition of the "right kind of people" or "loyalists" was not always decidedly ethnic; uncertain combinations between religion and former membership to the Ottoman Muslim (*Millet*) system always acted as an intervening variable in defining belonging (Kirişci, 2007), and therefore challenging traditional understandings of merely ethno-nationally defined trans-border kin. One may then suggest that the processes through which Turkey has become a "hybrid origin-reference state" endow opportunities to examine changes not only at the level of state interests and deliberate policies accordingly shaped policies on somewhat predetermined kin communities, but also in the constitutive identification, definition, delineation, and (sub)classification practices such as "politics of identification" (Brubaker & Kim, 2011). Under this light, Turkey as a kin state has "historical responsibility" to intervene in matters of ethnically, culturally and religiously affinity with groups.

William Safran, in his study, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homelands and Return" (1991), draws up a general framework of an ideal type of diaspora. He defines diaspora as "expatriate minority communities" that are: 1) dispersed from an original centre to at least two peripheral places; 2) maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland; 3) believe they are not fully accepted by their host country; 4) see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; 5) are committed to the maintenance and restoration of this homeland; and 6) of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland (Safran, 1991). Safran's ideal type of 'centred' diaspora, oriented by continuous cultural connections to a source and by a teleology of 'return', is very applicable to the Meskhatian. Hatay and Tziarras (2019) states that when JDP came to office in 2002, subsequently refashioned its foreign policy directions as multivectoral to assert more ideological ambition in its neighborhood. To capitalize this ambition, Turkey exerted soft power mechanism, partly voiced in Davutoglu foreign policy regional vision to connect Turkey's historical and cultural bonds to minorities the Europe, Central Asia, The Caucasus and the Middle East. Onward of the 2010, Turkey continued to influence abroad in which

Akraba Topluluklari exists by instrumentalizing ideological parameters as driven force of Soft power.

It is significant to explore religion (Islam) as an instrument or a statecraft Religion as a statecraft in the foreign affairs means how the government manage and conduct the religious discourse in the foreign policy making (Haynes, 2008; Haynes, 2014). Religion as an instrument or as a statecraft is used interchangeably. Islamic and soft power foreign policy in South Caucasus and specifically Georgia, then to look into sources which are limited on Islam as a transnational soft power on ethnic, kin, religious and diaspora communities in Georgia under JDP. It is possible to offer a conceptualization of the term of Islamic foreign policy on kindred communities such as Ahiska (Meskhetian). The commemoration in Turkish political history is religious oriented which will be elaborated in discussion section.

Turkey approach to the Ahiska Meskhatian Turks Diasporization Process

For a long time, Turkey strives to integrate Ahiskan Meskhetian Turks into its global diaspora objective during JDP. For such effort, Turkey first established sponsored organization to deal with the issues of the Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks. Datub was founded in 2010 with the signature of prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President, Abdullah Gul and alongside with 20 ministries signatures. The content of the document is as follows.

In accordance with Article 1 of Law No. 3335 on the establishment of international organizations, the Council of Ministers on May 24, 2010 approved the establishment of the World Union of Ahiskan Turks in Istanbul based on the advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in response to a letter from the Ministry of Internal Affairs dated May 12, 2010. For this reason, Datup is established on. Our mission is to unite Meskhetian Turks and the NGOs founded by Meskhetian Turks across the globe and provide them a unified voice and platform from which to advocate for their cause (World Union of Ahiska Turks).

Turkey financially sponsored them to established cultural centers in the United States. For example, Ahiska Turkish American Cultural Center in Dayton, Ohio, United States was sponsored with special budget. Turkey considers the cultural centers as mosques in the United States are named Ahiskan Mosques of the city name, as listed on the website of the Diyanet of America (Diyanet Center of America) with Ahiskan mosques in different cities in United states intended to shape the memory, identity and society of the Ahiskan community in the United States.

Turkey gives double citizenship to Ahiskan in United States and by this time, Turkey has granted 40,000 citizenship to Ahiskan. During the DATUB meeting, foreign minister of Turkey Çavuşoğlu said “Turkey will offer double-citizenship to the Ahiska Turks who are already U.S. citizens and living in the U.S.” (Daily Sabah, 2021). For lobbying and strong voice to united around the main idea of the force the Georgian authority to accept Ahiskan as citizen of Georgia, returning their land and property, Ahiskan found many foundations by the help of

Turkey since in 1956 (Polat, 2012) mainly in the United States, Kazakhstan, and Turkey.

As mentioned before Ahiska means Vatan that referred to homeland in Turkish it doesn't mean a geographical location rather a home that attached to Ahiskan identity. One of the recent activities by Turkey was to bring Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks from during the war in Ukraine to Turkey. Around 1131 Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks were transferred from Ukraine to Turkey, Elazig (Ozturk, 2022). Sahin (2014) underlines the strategic importance of Ahiska in Turkish foreign policy in term of geological, geo-economics and geo-cultural. Ahiska region constitute a bridge between Turkey and Caucasus to reach out to the Turkish speaking world, another important aspect of the region between two Muslim populated regions in Georgia Borchali and Adjara that has potential to connect and unified Islamic world, Ahiska is on the route of energy and transit pipelines. It is having land connection to Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, with these all imperative geo-strategical explanation of Ahiska holds a special location in Turkish foreign policy to protect Turkey interests in the region (Sahin, 2014). Besides that, there are 25,000 Ahiskan live in Turkey form a political organization to push Turkey deal with their repatriation and returning back Akhaliskhie in the Samtskha Javahati region. Turkey has series of the activities in on Ahiska with its organization and institutions. TIKA is one of the organizations to support with diverse projects such as agricultural, cultural, education and economic projects. The following table shows the TIKA projects between 2006 and 2019 in the area in which Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks live.

3. Methodology

The research is qualitative method which based on document analysis. In fact, qualitative content analysis, a type of content analysis, would be defined as a data gathering technique designed for the "subjective interpretation" of the content of corpus through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying concepts, themes or patterns. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond simply counting words or analyzing "objective" content and meaning conveyors from texts to study meanings, themes and patterns that may be latent, implied or buried in a particular text or format (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It enables researchers to realize social reality in a subjective but scholarly fashion. The examination of the content of communication is referred to as content analysis, and it is a research approach. For this reason, content analysis may be used to almost any text or media that has a message to impart. Articles, websites, journals, lectures, letters, interviews, pictures, videos and other categories (Pashakhanlou, 2017). To conduct a content analysis on a text, the text should first be coded or broken down into suitable categories on a variety of levels like word, phrase, sentence, paragraph or thematically classified, and then scrutinized using conceptual, relational and thematic analysis (Stemler, 2000).

Each year, in November of 14 Turkey Foreign Ministry marks the date to

Table 1. TIKA projects on Ahiska Meskhatian Turks.

YEAR	PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT	TARGET ETHNIC	CITY
2006	Cultural	Supporting Ahiskan Cultural Foundation in United States.	Ahiskan	United States
2006	Conference	Sponsored two academics to contribute Ahiskan reparation to Georgia.	Ahiskan	Tbilisi
2008	Education	Field visit to Ahiskan for the pilot Agricultural training.	Ahiskan	Akhalsikhe
2014	Travel	Trip to Meskhetia with 35 Ahiskan.	Ahiskan	Akhalsikhe
2017	Agriculture	Agricultural Development Project for Meskhetian Turks.	Ahiskan	Akhalsikhe
2019	Agriculture	Construction of Greenhouse for Ahiska Families Living in Ahiska and Gori Regions.	Ahiskan	Gori
2019	Construction	Renovation the houses of 45 families in the cities of Akhalsikhe.	Ahiskan	Akhalsikhe

commemorate the anniversary of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks deportation from the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks region to nine countries. Commemorations are released on website of Ministry of Foreign affairs of Turkey in both Turkish and English. The commemorative language in the letters has been selected to scrutinized to apply content analysis of religious identity, ethnic identity and diasporization process. Statements in commemoration letters are taken as direct quotation. Since the 73rd, 74th commemoration statements content is similar; thus, quotations were excluded but interpreted as content analysis in discussion section. 72th commemoration in 2016 has not been published due to unknown reasons. The commemoration statements for each year except 2016 listed at the end of the research in order.

Commemoration and Memorialization of Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks by Turkey

The research question about which ethnic group or communities from Georgia that Turkey pursues to transfer to diaspora is undoubtedly are Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks Analyzing the Turkey's commemoration of Meskhetian deportation from Ahiska Region of the Georgia. Turkey traditionally has been commemorating Meskhetian deportation from Samtskhe-Javakheti region into other regions under the Soviet Union that resulted in mass death called as genocide by global Meskhetians. Turkey pays special attention on this day and organizes a series of events on 14 November 1944 to revitalize, remember and shapes the scars of the tragedy. In order to understand the identity and political landscape transformation in Turkey, it is important to mention the identity is centered on Islamist-Nationalist Politics. Along with other terms and discourses, the Millet (National) and Vatan (homeland) are two main discourses have re-indoctrinated and re-islamized as political parlance during JDP as further integrate into Pan Turkic ideas after JDP.

Unlike other former government diaspora policies, JDP's policy can be described as peaceful and a bridge between host and homeland countries. The JDP government applied the ethnic minorities, kin community and diasporas politi-

zation process, from a bridge essence, to an ideological thrust, blending them into the party ideology. Further, to detach diaspora from the host country by using foreign policy factors or to determine if Turkey uses diaspora as constituencies, in order to consolidate and galvanize the diasporic communities. Analyzing the language of the commemoration there is a consistence in the language with perspective added to the letter according to the activities that Turkey organized for or with Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. The results find out that the repetition plays a dominant highlighting unwavering support for the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks.

In 72th, 73rd, 74th the language, word selection, emotion and who are they, population and where they live, discourses are all same including that Turkey feels sorry for the deportation that took place in 1994. The Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks population is half million and scattered to around 9 countries. They are brothers and sisters of Turkey. They imagine to return to Ahiska which is in Georgia in 75th, 76th, 77th, the language is same with some alteration and additional information. Unlike other commemoration, TFA firstly used “preserve identity”. That is to say, Turkey has been assisting Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks community to preserve their identity through lobbying and transnational activities such as building mosques, giving scholarship, opening cultural centers, help to migrate from the conflict areas, such as Ukraine and central Asia to Turkey

In 75th commemoration Turkey use “homeland”, “turn” and “deportation”. Turkey uses repatriation as a legality of the return. As expected, that Turkey under JDP instrumentalized kin and ethnic communities in its foreign policy. Turkey don't see Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks community as “other” however, as it is demonstrated in the commemoration letters that Turkey see them as “brothers and sisters”. In 71st anniversary commemoration statements in 2015 Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks is defined as “kin community” unlike past year commemoration content, the word of Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks was more common. This demonstrates that the different perspective of the Foreign Ministry came into existence, and Turkey began a staunch supporter of the global Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. In the statement, Turkey claims that “the repatriation process is slow but Turkey does its utmost effort to make their cause global”. In 71st commemoration Turkey vowed to continue to work support the repatriation and organizes activities toward that cause. After the first commemoration, the word of “support” for the cause of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks has been uttered. In 71st the first commemoration TFA mentions that Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks must return to the Georgia to live with Georgian in harmony.

In 73th commemoration statement, the language of the press release remained same with repetition that underlines Turkey supports for their repatriation where ever they are. The religious tone is also changed in the commemoration letters, starting 2017 until 2021-year *Allah* (Arabic) more religiously is used instead of *Tanri* (God) more secularly in English. That indicates that after 2017, religious tone in foreign ministry became common in the official statement that

can be understood that Turkey started using Islam in the foreign policy as an instrument or secularist foreign ministry institutions adapted the language of JDP party, or leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan who hails from Islamic rooted background. In the 74th anniversary, Turkey pledges to support the cause of the Ahiska Turks, closely follow the repatriation process of them to their homeland. In 77 the anniversary of the deportation and commemoration, Turkey's Foreign Ministry released a letter that one sentence reads as "As before, we will continue to follow closely the return of Ahiska Turks to their motherland and to give necessary support to our kinsmen".

Almost in all commemoration statements Turkey pledges to support Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks community for their repatriation to return to their homeland which is Georgia. The commemoration for the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks tragedy has been used as a political tool to further to attempt to diasporize. For lobbying and strong voice to united around the main idea to force the Georgian authority to accept Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks as citizen of Georgia, returning their land and property, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks found many foundations by the help of Turkey since in 1956 (Polat, 2012).

In 2019 that which marked 75th anniversary Turkey organized an event in Georgia attended by deputy foreign affairs Selim Kiran with Turkey-Georgia Parliamentary Friendship Group, the group also visited the region of deportation and home of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. It further mentioned that Turkey support Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks ethnic identity so they can handle down to the next generation. This objective is very consistent with research question that Turkey seeks to solidify the links between ethnic minorities' and to shape their lost identities. Turkey first time commemorated Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks deportation and tragedy officially in Georgia with delegation from Ministry of foreign Affairs from Turkey. In 75th anniversary Turkey organized an event in Georgia attended by deputy foreign affairs Selim Kiran with Turkey-Georgia Parliamentary Friendship Group, the group also visited the region of deportation and home of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. It further mentioned that Turkey support Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks ethnic identity so they can pass down to the next generation. This objective is very consistent with research question that Turkey seeks to solidify the links between ethnic minorities' identities, diaspora and transnational activities.

In 77th anniversary of the deportation and commemoration letter, "As before, we will continue to follow closely the return of Ahiska Turks to their motherland and to give necessary support to our kinsmen". It is seen that Turkey shapes the creation of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks diaspora or diasporization of the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks communities gradually by integration, lobbying and involvement. According to Mevlüt Cavuşolu's statement at the conference organized by World Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks Association the difficulties Meskhetian Turks faced is an issue needs to be resolved both in bilateral relations and on international forums". To our knowledge, it is the only Georgian neighbor

with whom we have not had any difficulties. Turkey is continuing to collaborate with both Russia and Georgia in order to find a solution to the crisis in the region. Finally, commemoration letters prove that Turkey memorialize and commemorate Ahiskan Meskhatian historical suffering to shape their identity, make a tradition and diasporize the community.

4. Conclusion

Study concludes that comparing and contrasting Safran and Robin paradigm of the diaspora revealed main points assessing that Turkey justifies Meskhetian Turks aspiration to return. Especially, Robin's 4.5.6. article can be applied to the Meskhetian Turks. Meskhetian Turks developed the sense of "belonging" and "returning" to their homeland which they have imagined for. Our study provides that Turkey's transnational and diaspora process has been confirmed on Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks community. However, the diaspora process is externally transforming, due to the less Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks population in Georgia.

As expected, the language of the letters confirmed that Turkey instrumentalize the community in its foreign policy. Turkey commemorative statements and textual context demonstrate that Turkey utilizes many diasporic and transnational elements to outreach to the communities. Also, demonstrated that Turkey politically memorialized Ahiskan Meskhatian Turks by a series of memorial and ceremonial events with religious, political, historical and cultural elements. The Turkish government changed the essence meaning of diaspora structurally, and further institutionalized the diaspora under party agenda. Turkey relationship with kin, relative or religious groups in around the world doesn't fall under the diaspora category however as Turkey doesn't define them as diaspora yet, Turkey defines them "member of imagined homeland" brothers, relative, kin and fellow Muslim, thus it is found out that there is correlation between Turkey's new foreign policy mechanism, institutions and ideas rebranded as seen in literature to reach out not only diasporic groups but "all sort of social formation who is transnationally active" (Faist, 2010). Commemoration culture of Turkey is confirmed that Turkey officially initiates ceremonial events to shape the public memory regarding the historical narrative. Turkey's relationship with kindred communities the South Caucasus is mapping the conceptional and ideological token of JDP. It mainly gained popularity after JDP openly revealed its identity and discourses that underpinning Islam in party activities and speeches of officials regarding kindred communities and AhiskanMeskhatian Turks are one of the communities that Turkey instrumentalized religious, nationalistic and political discourse to shape the community's identity.

Commemoration Statements by Turkey Foreign Ministry, 2015-2021

1) No: 288, 15 November 2015, Press Release Regarding the 71st Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from Their Homeland.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-288_-15-november-2015_-press-release-regarding-the-71st-anniversary-of-the-deportation-of-ah%C4%B1ska-turks-from-their-homeland.en.mfa Accessed 5.25.22.

2) No: 347, 14 November 2017, Press Release Regarding the 73rd Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from Their Homeland.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-347_-ahiska-turklerinin-anavatanlari-ahiskadan-surgune-gonderilmelerinin-73-yildonumu-hk_en.en.mfa Accessed 5.25.22.

3) No: 308, 14 November 2018, Press Release Regarding the 74th Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from Their Homeland.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-308_-ahiska-turkleri-nin-surgune-gonderilmelerini-yetmisdorduncu-yildonumu-hk_en.en.mfa Accessed 5.25.22.

4) No: 331, 14 November 2019, Press Release Regarding the 75th Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from Their Homeland.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_331_-ahiska-turklerinin-surgunu-hk.en.mfa Accessed 5.25.22.

5) No: 292, 14 October 2020, Press Release Regarding the 76th Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from their Homeland in Ahiska.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-292_-ahiska-turklerinin-anavatanlari-ahiska-dan-surgune-gonderilmelerinin-76-yildonumu-hk.en.mfa accessed. 5.25.2022 Accessed 5.25.22.

6) No: 375, 14 November 2021, Press Release Regarding the 77th Anniversary of the Deportation of Ahiska Turks from their Homeland in Ahiska.

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-375_-ahiska-turklerinin-anavatanlari-ahiska-dan-surgune-gonderilmelerinin-77-yildonumu-hk.en.mfa Accessed 5.25.22.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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