



# The CRO's Annual Report

## 2019

### Introduction:

Since it was established in 2014 the Circassian Repatriation Organization (CRO) is moving forward with its goals. Some of the major achievements of the CRO are listed below:

- Supported 28 small projects through its “Small Business Support Program” (SBSP), where almost USD 70,000 was used to support these projects.
- Contacted several governmental bodies regarding the fate of Circassians in Syria, including the President of the Russian Federation.
- Financially supported Circassian families in Syria.
- Financially supported families in need to cover their travel expenses to the homeland.
- Financially supported several orphans living in Turkey after escaping the war zone in Syria.
- In 2017, the CRO became a partner of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).
- In 2017, the CRO was registered as one of the NGO–UN Organizations.
- In 2018, The CRO partnered with the Circassian Nurnberg Association to organize the First International Circassian Conference in in Nuremberg, Germany.
- In 2018, the CRO established the CRO's Awareness Program and the CRO's Awards Program
- Established a branch of the CRO in the USA (registered as Non-Profit Organization in NJ)
- In 2019, established the CRO's Relief Program and the CRO's Education Program.
- Actively working on establishing a branch of the CRO in Germany.

During 2019 the CRO continued to work on some of the programs that were introduced in previous years and worked on introducing new initiatives. The CRO worked actively on increasing the number of members by raising awareness about the role of the CRO in highlighting and addressing various critical Circassian issues.

## **Highlight of the CRO's 2019 Work Plan:**

1. Co-organizing the Second International Circassian Conference in Nuremberg, Germany with the Nuremberg Circassian Culture Association in joint venture.
2. Continue to offer the SBSP.
3. Establish “The Circassian Library” project. This project is one of the main recommendations of the First International Circassian Conference. A team of volunteers are working on this important and essential project and it will be open to public in the mid of 2019.
4. Initiate the new pilot program “The CRO Backpack Drive”, with the aim of making this program as one of the permanent programs that the CRO offers every year.
5. Introduce “The CRO Awards”. The CRO Awards Program is intended to honour Circassian individuals or groups who made significant contributions.
6. Running a “Membership Drive” to increase the number of members.
7. Participate in the Annual Adiga Day in New Jersey, USA.
8. Pursue the CRO's application at the United Nations to bump up the listing of the CRO to be recognized as an NGO by the United Nations.
9. Participate in the opening ceremony of the Circassian Culture House in Samsun Turkey and utilize this meeting to further introduce the CRO to Circassians in Turkey and build bridges and collaboration efforts with the Circassians Associations in Turkey as well as increasing the number of CRO members in Turkey.
10. Identify financial resources that can provide the CRO with self-sustaining funding to support the Organization and improve its performance.
11. Communicate with international and civil organizations to build new bridges and establish partnerships and collaboration efforts with them.
12. Work on opening the branches in Germany and Jordan and exploring the possibility of establishing a branch in Turkey.
13. Focus on the marketing and media strategies of the CRO and appoint a team specialized in media affairs.
14. Improve the website of the CRO.

## Activities and Achievements:

### *The CRO Awareness Program*

- For the second year in a row a joint venture between the CRO and the Circassian Culture Association in Nuremberg resulted in organizing “The Second International Circassian Conference” and it was held at the Karl-Bröger-Zentrum in Nuremberg, Germany between October 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of 2019. The Conference consisted of seven sessions and covered the following topic:
  - Survival of the Circassian Language
  - Circassian Culture and Tradition During the Time of Globalization
  - Circassian Mobilization
  - Circassians Challenges in the Diaspora
  - Circassians Heritage
  - Projects and Activities of Circassian Associations in Support of New Refugees from Syria

The conference was attended by approximately two hundred participants from 14 countries. The program of the conference consisted of almost 60 contributions as well as entertainment programs. One of the main objectives of this conference was to bring together Circassian experts and activists from the homeland and other countries to get to know each other, exchange ideas and practice their *common* role in serving the Circassian cause away from any political and ideological differences. More information can be found in the attached concluding remarks of the conference.

A Circassian Art Exhibition was organized during “The Second International Circassian Conference”. A great number of Circassian Artists from different countries participated in the event. The Art Exhibition was mainly organized by the dedicated efforts of Mrs. Tina Abzakh, Sweden and Mrs. Safa Moki, Germany.

The CRO Awards were presented to several Circassian Activists during the conference.

- The Third International Circassian Conference will be held in Istanbul, Turkey between October 9<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup> of 2020.
- The 2020 Circassian Film Festival for short films was announced during the conference and it will take place in Turkey during the “Third International Circassian Conference”.
- The 2020 Circassian Art Exhibition will be also held during the “Third International Circassian Conference”.
- The Chairman of the CRO visited Turkey to promote for the conference and coordinate with Circassian Federations and Associations as well activists to co-organize the “Third International Circassian Conference” together as a collective effort. Prof. Günsel (Şurdum)

Avci accepted to be the “Chair of the Local Committee”, who will be the key person in organizing the event in Turkey.

- The CRO participated in the Annual Adiga Day in New Jersey.
- The CRO-US organized an Adiga Night in NJ. The event included the following programs:
  - Highlights of the CRO and its Programs
  - Award Ceremony
  - Several Circassian Entertainment Shows

The CRO-US Team listed below worked hard to make this event a success:

- Mrs. Nada Abeda
- Mr. Safwan Helmi Soukar
- Mr. Nasouh Apesh
- Mrs. Sahab Dabet
- Mrs. Sue Napso
- Mr. Zaver Barsbai
- Mr. Yanal Ali
- Mr. Badreddin Youssef

The CRO appreciates the following in Making this event a success:

- The Circassian Benevolent Association in NJ and Mr. Qasbeck Kaghado
- Mr. Amer Bazouqa
- Mr. Aslan Tlebzu
- Mrs. Sima Kuysokova
- Mrs. Loussana Tok
- The Nart Dance Ensemble and Mr. Askerbi Batsev
- Ms. Dana Wojokh
- Mrs. Huda Daghouz
- Mr. Sean Marshan
- Mr. Tamer Mamkeg
- Ms. Sania Jatker
- Mr. Yamiz Bashkhaz

### ***The CRO Small Business Support Program (SBSP)***

The CRO continued to offer the SBSP in 2019 and under this program, the CRO managed to support 7 more projects in the Caucasus with a total cost of USD17,500.00. Mr. Deeb Katt and Mr. Ossama Libzo are the CRO Representatives in Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea, respectively. Mr. Deeb Katt has been the key person in operating most of the CRO’s activities in the motherland since the establishment of the CRO.

- Two different Taxi Projects

- Two Small Grocery Stores
- Carpenter Shop (Kitchen and Furniture)
- Raising Cows Project
- Fast Food Restaurant

### *The CRO Education Program*

The CRO is a big advocate of the importance of education and hence it has started “*The CRO Education Program*” with two initiatives under this program:

- The Backpack Support Program: This program is aimed to provide supplies for students from pre-school to high school.
  - The Higher Education Scholarship Program: this program is aimed to help University Students with their tuition expenses. (*This initiative was postponed until 2020 due to limitation of available funds*)
- In 2019, The CRO launched the Backpack Support Program as a Pilot Project to test the usefulness of the program. The Program was tested in the Republic of Adygea and the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. The goal of this program is to help families cope with the costs associated with the beginning of the school year, which can be extremely high, especially for families with several kids. Under this program the CRO has helped 178 students (104 from Kabardino-Balkaria and 74 from Adygea (34 Maykop + 40 Panakhas)).
  - The working group responsible for this project collaborated with several activists in the Caucasus to collect information and create a data base of school supply costs as well as assembling a list of students.
  - Mrs. Tina Abzakh Served as the General Manager of the project and collaborated with several teams from different countries on this campaign. Representatives were free to choose the appropriate activity to raise funds for the program. Activities included art activity, Facebook campaigns, and door-to-door fund raising campaigns.
  - The team from Turkey was highly creative and produced a video for the campaign and they managed to raise TRY 4500 and USD 600.
  - Prof. Günsel (Şurdum) Avcı, helped the campaign by producing a short video inviting people to donate for the campaign in both the Circassian and Turkish languages.
  - Mr. Tambi Cimuk helped the campaign by making a promotional video.
  - The USA team (Mr. Nassouh Apesh, Mr. Badr Aldeen Yousef, and Mrs. Nada Abeda) through an exceedingly dedicated campaign raised USD 12,105.
  - The team in Sweden raised Kr 2600.

- An agreement was signed a Memorandum of Understanding with “The Kabardino-Balkarian Regional Public Organization for Assisting the Return of Compatriots” (PERYT) to work together on this Program. The PERYT was responsible for distributing the funds to the student.
- The following people were responsible for the successful distribution of funds to students in the Caucasus:
  - Mr. Deeb Katt
  - Mrs. Samara Varouqa
  - Mr. Ossama Libzo
  - Mr. Ratmir Khazritovich Karov
  - Mr. Ghazi Balkar
- The CRO determined this initiative to become a permanent program and it will continue in 2020.

### *The CRO Award Program*

The CRO initiated the following four Awards:

**The CRO Lifetime Achievement Award:** Recognizes dedicated individuals who made exceptional contributions to the Circassian public affairs, language or culture for at least 25 years.

**The Circassian Person of The Year Award:** Recognizes distinguished individuals or groups, aged 18 or above, who made exceptional contributions to the Circassian community, language or culture in the previous calendar year.

**The Satanay Award:** Recognizes distinguished female individuals or groups, aged 18 or above, who made exceptional contributions to the Circassian community in the previous calendar year.

**The Project of The Year Award:** Recognizes outstanding ideas or projects, executed in the previous two calendar years, to preserve the Circassian language or culture.

The recipients of the 2019 CRO Lifetime Achievement Award are:

- The Late Mr. Qoueçoua Nalbi (Къуекъо Налбый), a poet and a writer, was born in 1938 in the Republic of Adygea.
- Mr. Kadir I. Natho (Къадир Натхо) was born in 1927 in Hatramtook, Anapa region, North Caucasus.

The recipient of the 2019 CRO Circassian Pearson of the Year Award is:

- Prof. Günsel (Şurdum) AVCI (гунсэл (шурдым) Авджы) was born in 1947 to the Shurdym family.

The Recipient of the 2019 Satanay Award is:

- Mrs. Raya Hatzeka (ХьэцЫкIу Рае) was born in 1959, in the village of Baksan district of the CBD.

**The CRO Award Committee consisted of the following members:**

- Mr. Mohammad Hamzouq, Chair
- Mrs. Zarena Qanouqa
- Mr. Nouraldeen Barsbay
- Mr. Bassam Haj-Hassan Lapsarouqa
- Mr. Memduh Ceylan
  - and Dr. Orfan Shouakar-Stash served as a “Coordinator”

**Designer:**

- Ms. Zhanna Shogenova, Designer

**The Jeweler, Craftsman and Artist:**

- Mr. Zalim Tuzemovich Tumov, jeweler, member of Artists Union of Russian Federation and International Association of Fine Arts AIAP UNESCO

**Logo Designer:**

- Mr. Khaled Chuck

***The CRO Charity and Relief Program***

The CRO Charity and Relief Program is another prominent program that started as early as 2015. Under this program the CRO supported Circassian families in Syria, supported families in need to cover their travel expenses to the homeland, provided funds to help Circassians who are in desperate need, and have been supporting a number of orphans living in Turkey after escaping the war zone in Syria.

- In 2019, The CRO launched a campaign after the terrorist attack in New Zealand to help the Circassian families cope with their tragedy.
- Within the framework of helping Circassians in Syria, The CRO collected Zakat Alfeter and passed the collected money to Circassian families in different localities in Syria.

The CRO Charity and Relief Program Committee consists of the following:

- Mrs. Sue Napso / USA

- Mrs. Nada Abeda / USA
- and Mr. Sibay Taloustan / Germany

### *The CRO Outreach Program*

The CRO continues to contact various Circassian Associations and Circassian activists in order to join efforts and collaborate on various important issues by initiating new programs.

- The collaboration with Circassian Association in Nuremberg to organize the International Circassian Conference.
- Talks with several federations and Associations in Turkey for collaboration,
- The Collaboration and partnership with the PYRET.
- Talks of Collaboration with the Bza Xasa in Natick.

### *The CRO Literature and Culture Preservation Program*

Under this program, the CRO established “The Circassian Library” project. This project is one of the main recommendations of the First International Circassian Conference. A team of volunteers are working on this important and essential project. Unfortunately, the website design team went through some technical difficulties and lost valuable manpower time and effort and set the program several months back.

Circassian Experts and activists who are working or agreed to work on this project are listed below:

- Mr. Amjad Yahia
- Mr. Saad Yanem
- Mr. Yahia Touk
- Mrs. Tina Abzakh
- Mr. Bassam Labsarouqa
- Mr. Marwan Chattaw
- Mr. Maher Ghojel
- Mr. Anas Ghonjouqa
- Dr. Adel Abdulsalam
- Dr. Ehsan Saleh

### *Other CRO Activities*

- The CRO sent an Open Letter to the President of the ICA (Mr. Khauti Sokhrokov) Congratulating him on his appointment to the working group who will be reviewing and



recommending the amendments of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The CRO perceived this appointment in his legal capacity as the president of the International Circassian Association (ICA), and as the representative of Circassians in diaspora, as an important and positive step in the right direction. The letter stressed the importance of achieving the *right of return* to all Circassians who live abroad and reminded Mr. Sokhrokov of his role and responsibility as the president of the ICA.

- The CRO sent an Open Letter to the President of the Russian Federation. The CRO expressed their appreciation for appointing Mr. Khauti Sokhrokov (Presidential Decree, Dated Jan. 15, 2020), in his legal capacity as the president of the International Circassian Association (ICA) and as the representative of Circassians in diaspora, as a member of the working group that will be addressing the amendments of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as an important and positive step in the right direction. The CRO stated that the appointment of Mr. Sokhrokov is intended to officially initiate the recognition of the right of return to all Circassians who live abroad. The CRO encouraged the President to direct Mr. Sokhrokov and other committee members of the constitution amendment work group to fulfill their honorable duty and address the *Right of Return* issue.
- The CRO issued a Press Release condemning the comments made by the Russian Ambassador in Turkey, Mr. Alexei Yerkhov on Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> of 2020. The top Russian Federation diplomat made some false comments about the Russian-Circassian war during the eighteenth and nineteenth century during an interview regarding the Moscow-backed military campaign in Syria and the Russian-Turkish relations. The Comments made by Mr. Yerkhov are disgraceful, false and misleading. We sincerely believe that such irresponsible, incorrect and outrageous statements might jeopardize the Russian-Circassian relations.
- The CRO issued a Press Release expressing their deep concern about the newly proposed amendment of the Constitution of the Russian Federation by President Vladimir Putin.
- The CRO issued a Press Release strongly protesting against the actions of Mr. Khauti Sokhrokov, the President of the ICA. Unfortunately, Mr. Sokhrokov betrayed Circassians and ignored the objectives and responsibilities of the ICA. Mr. Sokhrokov did not put any efforts in achieving the rights of Circassians or securing any constructive results for preserving the Circassian existence.
- Aside from the CRO SBSP, the CRO dedicated funds for emergency and short-term loans. In 2019, around 30 loans were given to various people to help them with their needs.

► **The CRO initiated the CRO Board of Executives' Service Award:** This Award recognizes individuals with outstanding services by one of the CRO members. Someone who helped and assisted in the success of one or more of the CRO programs. This Award is presented to individuals who served the CRO for over five years and their service greatly exceeded the normal expectations of voluntary service. Nominations for recipients of the CRO Board of Executives' Service Award may be made by any member of the CRO or by the Board of Executives. The 2019 Service Award was granted to Mr. Zaver Barsbai and Mr. Yahia Touk for their outstanding service over the years.

► **The US-CRO Recognition Awards:** recognizes individuals with outstanding service who contributed in the advancement of the Circassian Community in the USA.

The 2019 US-CRO Recognition Awards were rewarded to:

- The late Aubeed Mula Musa (Hubert)
- Mr. Talaet Taher (Wojoukh)

► **The CRO Certificate of Appreciation:** The CRO Certificate of Appreciation recognizes individuals (CRO members or non-members) who contributed in advancing the CRO's Programs with their financial support or volunteer work. The success of the CRO and its Programs is a direct result of all contributions and all collaboration efforts. Nominations for recipients of the CRO Certificate of Appreciation may be made by any member of the CRO or by the Board of Executives.

Recipients of the 2019 CRO Certificate of Appreciation:

- Mr. Fathi Rajab
- Dr. Riad Ismail
- Mrs. Lina Bast
- Mr. Bassam Haj-Hassan Lapsarouqa
- Mr. Marwan Chattaw
- Mr. Nasouh and Mrs. Latifeh Appesh
- Dr. Sameer Stas and Mrs. Lama Appesh
- Dr. Muhammad Abey and Mrs. Serin Appesh
- Mr. Badreddin Wojokh and Mrs. Nefen Stas
- Mrs. Jina Haboukh
- Mr. Teejan Wojokh
- Dr. Yaldar Taher
- Mrs. Nada Abeda
- Mr. Safwan Helmi Soukar
- Mr. Yanal Ali

- Mr. Hisham Kush
- Ms. Jan Salleh Kush
- The Kabardino-Balkarian Regional Public Organization for Assisting the Return of Compatriots (PERYT)
- Mr. Murat Tabish
- Mr. Ratmir Khazritovich Karov
- Mr. Ghazi Balkar
- The Late Mr. Helmi Hatoukh
- Mrs. Samara Varouqua
- Mr. Ossama Libzo
- Mr. Nalbi Shalakhoua
- Mr. Zalim Tuma
- Ms. Zhanna Shogen
- Mr. Sibay Taloustan
- Mr. Feras Stas
- Mr. Hani Soukar
- Mrs. Safa Moki
- Mrs. Yara Libzo
- The Adiga Wenna in Sweeden
- Mr. Mwafaq Katt
- Ms. Lina Zakaria Shagouj
- Mrs. Majd Qat Abaci
- Mr. Tambi Cimuk
- Mr. Guseruk Mahmut Kocer
- Mr. Motaz Batter
- Mr. Wesseem Katt
- Mr. Ammar Hamran
- Ms. Dana Hamran
- Mr. Yahya Adeeb
- Mr. Eyad Yanam
- Ms. Katia Daghstani
- Mr. Ayman Daghstani
- Mr. Ashraf Daghstani
- Mr. Omar Mazoukh

Previous Recipients of the CRO Certificate of Appreciation:

- Mr. Mozafer Dogoz 2015
- Dr. Akram Izzeddin Kamelmaz 2015
- Mr. Marwan Shalokh 2015

- Dr. Sameer Stas 2015
- Mr. Alaa Ihsan 2017
- Mr. Amjad Yahia 2017
- Mr. Ilker Sezen 2017
- Mr. Mohamed Ishaq 2017
- The Jordan Association of Caucasus Friends 2017
- Mr. Mazen Ghoukah 2017
- Mr. Nour Habbak 2017
- Mrs. Raja Mousa 2017
- Mr. Shan Hajo 2017
- Ms. Shirin Haj Mahmoud 2017
- Mr. Zaver Barsbay 2017

### **The CRO Board of Executives**

- Dr. Orfan Shouakar-Stash (Chairman) / Canada
- Mr. Sabah Tsey (Vice Chairman) / Holland
- Mrs. Tina Abzakh/ Sweden
- Mr. Yahia Touk / Germany
- Dr. Zaver Shawjan / Germany
- Mrs. Lina Bast / Canada
- Mrs. Sue Napso / USA
- Mr. Badreddin Youssef / USA
- *Mr. Tambi Shafaqouj / Jordan*
- Mr. Hamid Abzakh / Jordan

Mr. Tambi Shafaqouj resigned from his post as member of the board due to health and personal issues and Mr. Hamid Abzakh accepted to fill the position.

### **The CRO Board of Trustees**

- Dr. Ihsan Saleh / Germany
- Mr. Nour Barsby / USA
- Mr. Deeb Katt / Kabardino Balkaria
- Mr. Nasouh Appesh / USA
- Mr. Nusret Bash / Turkey
- Mr. Mohamed Hamzouq / Jordan

## Future Plans and Recommendations:

The CRO is planning on continuing and strengthening its programs. Some of the most important tasks are listed below:

1. The CRO will be organizing the Third International Circassian Conference in Istanbul, Turkey. The conference will be organized in a collaboration effort with the Nuremberg Circassian Culture Association and several Federations and Associations in Turkey. The conference will be held between October 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of 2020 and it will be held at “The Baglarbasi Congress and Culture Center”. The motto of the conference is *“Together for a Better Future”*. The conference will be focused on the following:
  - The Circassian - Circassian Relations: Overcoming Challenges and Initiating Collaborations.
  - The Circassian - Russian Relations: Addressing Critical issues including the Right of Return and Implementing Solutions.
2. Continue to offer the SBSP.
3. Invest more time and effort in the CRO Literature and Culture Preservation Program and especially the “The Circassian Library” project.
4. Promote the CRO Education Program with both initiatives: “The CRO Backpack Drive” and the “CRO Higher Education Scholarship”.
5. Promote “The CRO Awards”. The CRO Awards Program is intended to honour Circassian individuals or groups who made significant contributions investing their energy and resources, inspiring others, and going above and beyond to support the Circassian people, community, language, or culture.
6. The CRO will be running a “Membership Drive” to increase the number of members.
7. Participate in the Annual Adiga Day in New Jersey, USA.
8. Pursue the CRO’s application at the United Nation to bump up the listing of the CRO to be recognized as an NGO by the United Nation.
9. Identify financial resources that can provide the CRO with self-sustaining funding to support the Organization and improve its performance.
10. Continue to communicate with international and civil organizations to build new bridges and establish partnerships and collaboration efforts with them.
11. Finalizing the opening of the branches in Germany
12. Exploring the possibility of establishing a branch in Turkey.
13. Focus on the marketing and media strategies of the CRO and appoint a team specialized in media affairs.

14. Improve the website of the CRO.