



Circassian Repatriation Organization

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The CRO's Annual Report 2021

The executive board has been working on the plan drawn up since taking office for the electoral cycle for the years 2019-2023.

The approved annual plan consists of the following points:

1. The 3rd International Circassian conference to be held in Istanbul in collaboration with the Nuremberg Association for Circassian Culture and many Circassian federations and associations in Turkey.
2. The continuation of funding for small businesses for repatriated Circassians.
3. The investment of more time and effort into the protection of Circassian literature and culture, and especially the Circassian Library project.
4. The promotion of the organization's educational programs through the CRO Backpack Drive and scholarship program.
5. The promotion of the CRO Awards Program, which aims to honor Circassian individuals or groups that have made significant contributions by investing their energy and resources, inspiring others, and their dedication to support the Circassian community or the Circassian culture and language.
6. The launch of a campaign to increase the number of members.
7. The participation in National Adiga Day held by the Circassian Benevolent Association in New Jersey, USA.
8. Following up on the organization's registration request with the United Nations and its recognition as a non-governmental organization by the United Nations.
9. Trying to find financial resources that can provide the organization with self-financing to support the organization and improve its performance.
10. Continue communication with international and civil organizations to build new bridges and establish partnerships and cooperation with them.
11. Work on opening a branch of the organization in Germany.
12. Studying the possibility of establishing a branch of the organization in Turkey.
13. Focusing on the marketing and media strategies of the organization and appointing a team specialized in media affairs.
14. Developing the organization's website.

Accomplishments and activities during 2021

The Executive Board of Directors has accomplished the following points included in its plan for the year 2021

1. Student Initiative:

Due to the economic conditions, the worsening levels of poverty and unemployment, the worsening health situation due to the Corona virus pandemic, and due to the many appeals from Circassian families seeking help in finding sustainable solutions for Circassians residing in Syria, the Executive Council called for a virtual meeting via the Internet for representatives of Circassian associations in the diaspora. The goal of the meeting was to discuss the situation of Circassians in Syria and searching for opportunities and capabilities to help them get out of the suffocating crisis in which they live. The invitation was answered by each of the following associations:

- Circassian Community in Bursa, Turkey
- Krasnodar Xasa, Russia
- PERIT Xasa, Nalchik, Russia
- Circassian Xasa in Nürnberg, Germany
- KAFED, Turkey
- Cherkes Fed, Turkey
- UKD, Turkey
- Circassian Community in Kfar Kama
- Women Xasa, Istanbul, Turkey
- ÇDP, Istanbul, Turkey
- Circassian Benevolent Association, NJ, USA

The International Circassian Association, the Federation of Circassian Associations in Germany and the Circassian Association in Jordan were also invited, in addition to legal personalities from various countries of the diaspora. The heads of the International Circassian Association, the Federation of Circassian Associations in Germany and the Circassian Association in Jordan did not participate in the initiative.

The meeting discussed the situation and the existing possibilities and suggested correspondence with the supreme leadership in the Russian Federation to resettle the Circassians in the Circassian republics or provide in-kind assistance to the needy. The representative of the Krasnodar Association, Mr. Askar Sukht, commented that to address the official authorities in Russia we need an authorization from the people and a list of names of those wishing to return.

Askar Sukht, the head of the Circassian Association in Krasnodar, suggested the possibility of enrolling students in universities for a period of one year, for which they could obtain a student visa. Then upon their arrival they would be able to apply for residence according to the quota system allocated to Circassians in the diaspora seeking repatriation. Once they obtain residence, the applicants would then stay and seek citizenship by applying to the voluntary return program in the future. The meeting discussed this proposal and the possibility of achieving it.

The meeting adopted the previous proposal as a pilot project for the year 2021, as the organizers pledged to provide scholarships to a number of students who wish to study in one of the universities and institutes located in each of the republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Adyghe in addition to the Krasnodar region.

Registration for the initiative was announced on the website of the Circassian Repatriation Organization in May of 2021. 57 students applied for it, with only 46 students benefitting from the full scholarship. The rest of the students submitted their applications but withdrew for reasons beyond their control and their own circumstances (such as passport renewal, family status). The organization covered the expenses of submitting their papers, translations, and plane tickets. Unfortunately, they withdrew at the last moment.

The adopted pilot program for 2021 constituted the following:

- Covering the expenses during the school year, including travel, university fees, lodging, and living costs.
- Offering monetary and personal support to aid in the full integration of the students into their new environment and applying for residency.
- Allocating an approximate annual budget of 4,500 to 5,000 dollars for each student initially.
- Formation of a committee to follow up and coordinate the project and a committee to study the applications of those wishing to obtain the grant.
- Formation of an economic committee to study the economic potential and secure the grant funds, consisting of Orfan Soukar Stas and Yashar Naghoy.
- Assigning a committee to determine the criteria required to obtain the scholarship, and to select the students consisting of Tina Abzakh, Günzel Avagy, Nusret Bash and Sabah Tsey.
- Creation an electronic form (for scholarship application) that includes personal information, information about each of the student's educational attainment, desire to pursue university studies, preferred place of study (Kabardino-Balkaria, Adyghe, Krasnodar) as well as about the desire to stay and settle in one of the Circassian republics.
- Formation of a committee to communicate with universities consisting of three people, namely Askar Sukht, Atilla Gucer, Gazi Balkar, to communicate with the universities of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adyghe and Krasnodar.

In the first stage, the three universities expressed their desire to receive students, then Adyghe University rejected the students' applications under the pretext that the university city is undergoing repairs, which prevents the admission of foreign students, but the university did not send any written apology requests to the students. This forced the coordination committee to search for alternate solutions with other universities. Nalchik University was the practical alternative, which offered its willingness to accept all students who were rejected by the University of Maykop, so all the papers were sent to Nalchik again (which caused confusion for the students) and Nalchik University accepted all the names that were sent to it.

The economic committee was tasked with studying the costs involved in bringing students, and securing sums from associations and individuals that wish to contribute to the project. The initial estimates of the grant ranged from 4,500 to 5,000 dollars for each student. The total amount provided by associations,.
From the Circassian Associations in the diaspora: 95,363 US dollars.
From the Circassian Repatriation Organization: 52,745.00US dollars.

The initiative continued until the end of the school year, according to the order of the students' arrival at the end of the ninth month of 2022

For more details about the initiative, please see the initiative report

2. Backpack Drive

Proceeding from the organization's vision and belief in the importance of the role of education in achieving a better future for our children, the Circassian Repatriation Organization continued for the third year in a row to fund its "Backpack Drive" program, as it was announced on the fourth of June and was successfully completed in September 2021.

An amount of \$3,400 was collected for the aforementioned program, where an amount of 25,000 Syrian pounds was distributed to each student in each of the following areas: Bariqa, Bir Ajam, Qahtaniya, Al-Baath City, Eastern Kiswa, Western Kiswa, Marj Al-Sultan, Jdeidet Artouz, Jdeidet Al-Fadl and Al-Khashniyah. The total number of students benefiting from the school bag program for this year is 460 students.

The collection of names, distribution, documentation, and receipt of the amounts was achieved in cooperation with the Circassian Charity Association in Damascus.

3. Relief

Zakat al-Fitr was collected and distributed to 400 people in Syria, 100 food baskets were also collected in addition to collecting donations for medical aid and surgeries, and assistance was provided to build a roof for the family's house in Homs. In cooperation with Women Group in the United Arab Emirates.

US dollars The total amount disbursed as relief and medical aid for this year amounted to: 36,704.00

4. Joint symposium with the Circassian Women's Association in Turkey

The organization, in cooperation with the Circassian Women's Association in Turkey, held a symposium entitled "Circassians in Diaspora: Challenges and Solutions" on September 25-26, 2021 in Istanbul, Turkey.

The symposium received 20 abstracts, which were translated and published as e-books in three languages (Circassian, English and Turkish). The seminar consisted of six sessions, with the first and second sessions for speakers who gave ten-minute presentations. In their presentations, the speakers explained what they considered to be the most important challenges faced by the Circassians in the diaspora and gave some solutions and recommendations.

During the third session, the organizers summarized the challenges and solutions presented by all the speakers. The fourth and fifth sessions were devoted to discussing the identified difficulties and recommended solutions in depth. The sixth session was planned to form working groups to follow up on the recommendations proposed by the speakers.

Several challenges presented by the participants were discussed and the majority focused on the following points:

- Rapid fusion with the host communities
- Lack of cooperation
- Lack of education materials
- Lack of connection with the younger generation
- The challenges of language and culture and customs (Xabze)

The following solutions and recommendations were proposed:

- Encouraging cooperation between the Circassian associations and organizations around the world
- Forming an international organization or a coalition in the diaspora
- Implementing better measures to connect with the youth and include them
- Work on broadening the understanding of culture and customs to align with the requirements of living in modern society
- Building bridges with the mother land
- Repatriation and the right to repatriate
- Using media more effectively
- Focusing on Circassian language education and the maintenance of Circassian identity and culture
- Better census of Circassians in the diaspora

Two working groups were formed to follow up on the first and second recommendations, and the organizers of the symposium were tasked with forming other working groups.

5. CRO Awards program

Among the goals of the organization and its programs is to shed light on personalities and organizations that work with and care about the Circassian issue.

The organization awarded a lifetime achievement award to Mr. Yashar Naghoy and to the historical figure Ismail Barquq, and the project of the year award was awarded to the guest house program that was presented by Mr. Yilmaz Tse in the Circassian language. The program hosted active Circassian personalities and dealt with various issues of the Circassian community.

6. Activities in the US

An annual online conference was held from March 29 to April 10, 2021. A new board of directors has been elected as follows:

Mrs. Yasmine Bagh, Chairman, Ms. Sawsan Nabso Othman, Senior Vice President, Ms. Nada Abda, Second Vice President, Mr. Safwan Souqar, Treasurer, Public Relations and Secretarial Remaining vacant to be determined later.

The branch has put in its annual plan the following:

- Every member of the board was tasked with raising 5,000 dollars
- Work to increase membership by 100% through membership campaigns and events
- Increasing transparency and work on raising the level of awareness of the organization through social media
- Pausing fundraising for the next two years for our current programs: Microfinance Program, School Bag Campaign and Relief Program. Our focus for the next two years will be fundraising for humanitarian causes. Any donations received will be used for this purpose unless specified for use in another program.

Among the activities of the branch is the celebration of Stanay Day, which falls on the 21st of June of each year. This day was adopted by the Board of Directors of the organization to announce the Stanay Award presented by the organization to one of the active women to serve the Circassian community in the motherland and diaspora.

7. Other activities

Based on its role in supporting our youth and highlighting and encouraging their creative work, the Circassian Repatriation Organization launched a competition to design an annual calendar for the year 2022, and the proceeds of this competition were to be allocated to the charitable projects and activities of the organization. But the business was not at the required level, so the competition for this year was canceled.

8. Participation in the New Jersey Adiga Day

9. Donation Campaigns

Organizing donation campaigns for the relief and student programs of the organization carried out by the members of the organization individually. Also, members of the American branch have a great effort in setting up creative volunteer campaigns to collect aid to support the student program.

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Circassian Repatriation Organization is nonprofit organization registered under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* under registration number **878524-4**, Not-for-profit-humanitarian- charitable and peaceful, with no religious agenda or orientation aiming to To provide aid and support to all Circassians who wish to return to the historic homeland in the North Caucasus; and To relieve distress resulting from the dislocation of persons of Circassian heritage and provide support by establishing, operating and maintaining a center or centers to provide relief, and to provide assistance for relocation and repatriation to safe environments