

English translation:

In this matter, umm... it was the case that we migrated to Russia. Of course, this was not voluntarily; it was mandatory. This, umm... was the second exile for this nation after Georgia. And it was a hurtful exile. Umm They went to Russia. In Russia they settled in different places. This nation has settled wherever they could find opportunities: in the Rostov province, in the Krasnodar region, umm... what else, umm... in the Stavropol region. In many, many different places; wherever there was an estate on sale, they bought properties in those regions in exchange for the cheap houses they sold. People have settled there. After they were settled ... umm... in Russia, we were living in the Krasnodar region -- this was where we settled. Then the Crimean Tatars were allowed to go to their homeland. I mean, there was a mass estate on sale. These people went and bought houses there. We settled all together. And then umm... that community, the Krasnodar community, did not like the Abkhaz Turks, would not like them, I mean they would not accept them as a part of them. Why? First of all this nation [our people] is Muslim; this nation is Turkish. Umm ... I mean, there were times when Turkey dominated the Krasnodar province, the Krasnodar region. And then umm... after the Abkhaz Turks settled there, the indigenous people heard a rumor that, when the Ottoman Empire left this region they said they were going to come to get it back. You see, they thought, "here the Turks are back again; they came back to take their land." I don't know exactly whether it was because of this fear, or [if] it was, sort of, the government's politics that this nation was not welcomed since they were Muslim and Turk.

With all kinds of persecution throughout the seventeen years they lived there, with no privileges provided to this nation during this seventeen-year period, *no propiska*¹ was provided This nation was exposed to every kind of persecution; they have been through a lot. There... umm... we were Muslims, *Alhamdulillah*²; in Islam we do daily prayers five times, umm... we have Friday rituals once a week, umm... twice a year we have the Ramadan feast and Sacrifice feast rituals. These feasts, the greatest of all feasts, the Sacrifice and Ramadan feasts, were not allowed; umm... we were not allowed to have a meeting room or a hall where we can get together and pray in winter, in the cold and rain. These kinds of privileges were never provided. Even when we received permission a month or two months in advance, even that required an intense back and forth process of documentation. We were afraid of the Kazakhs and they were having the Kazakhs do [inflict] all the persecution on us. Therefore, even when, against all odds, we received the permission to do these feasts, they were only providing us a place in the middle of nowhere, umm... a place where no one would go ... umm ... I mean away from the city. They were letting us pray in such places, but even then, at those places, the police were coming and checking to see what we were up to, to see if we were doing or saying anything against them. We were doing our feast rituals in these tough conditions. For

¹ *Propiska* is a state registration within a certain area, in some cases limiting one's ability to commute and apply for job.

² *Alhamdulillah* is an Arabic phrase meaning "praise to God."

seventeen years we faced this persecution. This was real. I mean, umm... They were saying that they are Christians and we are Muslims and that our, umm... characters were not in line and that we should accept their rituals and go to churches. Only then could we have a place there. If not, they were telling us to go to Turkey, since we were Turkic, and that our cultures were not aligned with theirs. They were saying, “go to your Turkey anytime and live there.” However, our nation, [our people] umm... the Abkhaz Turks, I mean ... for a long while... umm... I mean we were not born in Turkey, we did not come to this world from there, we did not know anything about Turkish culture, umm... we were not familiar with Turkish traditions. We had been under the laws of Russia; we were obeying these rules for years. We lived through that, and continued to live our lives based on that, until we came to America. Our nation is always, umm... I mean our nation [our people] always obeys the laws and regulations of the country in which they are living. We have never been a society that rebels against the government.

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