

**UDC 32 (327)**

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## **ARMENIAN COMMUNITY IN KRASNODAR KRAI**

### **Summary**

*The article examines the formation of the Armenian community in the Krasnodar region, the migration and settlement of Armenians in the region, the Armenian community, and its support activities for Armenia. Today, the dynamics of migration processes in Krasnodar Krai, a federal entity within the North Caucasus economic region, one of the 12 economic regions of the Russian Federation, is high. International migration is dominated by migrants from Ukraine and Armenia. The reason for the influx of Armenians to these regions is the stable social and political situation, developed agro-industrial and resort complex, favorable climatic conditions, and developed transport infrastructure. Armenians not only from Armenia but also from different parts of the world have established their communities in Krasnodar Krai. Currently, the Armenian community is in second place in Krasnodar Krai. Thus, during public opinion polls on the situation of migrants, Kubans are confident that the vast majority of migrants coming to the region for permanent residence are Armenians. The Armenian community in Krasnodar Krai is developing rapidly. The Armenian community in the Kuban is so large that several hundred Armenian villages and about twenty Armenian churches have already been built here. Armenians have become the second-largest community in Krasnodar Krai after the Russians. They control the most successful business structures in Kuban cities.*

**Keywords:** *Russian Federation, Krasnodar, Armenian community, migration, church*

### **Introduction**

The landscape and climatic diversity of Krasnodar region, one of the agro-industrial giants and tourist centers of the Russian Federation, as well as the abundance of natural resources create conditions for future economic and social development of the region. This region is the Russian equivalent of the Marmara region of Turkey, which is developed in terms of agriculture, industry and trade. Krasnodar region, with its temperate climate and fertile lands, is one of the most attractive regions for migrants in Russia. This region is home to various ethnic communities. One of them is the Armenian community. The history of the settlement of Armenians in these regions of the south of Russia consists of numerous stages of resettling and migration. From this point of view, the formation of the Armenian community in the Krasnodar Krai, the migration of Armenians to these regions, their settlement, the study of the Armenian communities and their support activities for Armenia are relevant.

Various methods were used in the study of the topic, including historical, comparative, situation analysis and systematic approach. First, the research literature was researched and collected, then the sources were reviewed and systematized. Generalized scientific results have been obtained on the subject.

### ***The ethnic composition of the Krasnodar Krai***

Krasnodar Krai is one of the most densely populated regions of the country. The population is 5,683,947,000. It is the third most populous region in the Russian Federation, accounting for 3.4 percent of the total population. [1]

Kuban is a multi-ethnic region with more than a hundred nationalities. The region is characterized by dense population of ethnic groups. The modern ethnic composition of the region's population began to take shape in the early 18th and 19th centuries, but the process of changing the ethnic map continues today.

### ***Ethnic composition of Krasnodar Krai according to the 2002 and 2010 censuses [2]:***

<b>Peoples</b>	<b>2002 (thousand people)</b>	<b>2010 (thousand people)</b>
Russians	4436,3	4522,9 (88,3%)
Including Cossacks	17,5	5,3 (0,1%)
Azerbaijanis	11,9	10,2 (0,2%)
Armenians	274,6	281,7 (5,5%)
Ukrainians	131,8	83,7 (1,6%)
Greeks	26,5	22,6 (0,4%)
Tatars	25,6	24,8 (0,5%)
Georgians	20,5	17,8 (0,3%)
Germans	18,5	12,2 (0,2%)
Adygeys	15,8	13,8 (0,3%)
Turks	13,5	8,5 (0,2%)
Gypsies	10,9	12,9 (0,3%)

The population of Krasnodar Krai has grown significantly during the post-Soviet period. The reason for this increase is the influx of economic migrants from all southern regions of Russia, as well as from Ukraine and the South Caucasus. In January-June 2021, interregional migration increased by 40.1 percent or 6778 people compared to January-June 2020. In January-June 2021, a positive migration balance was observed with all CIS countries. Kazakhstan accounts for 25.4% of migration flows from the CIS, Ukraine 23.3%, Armenia 13.4% and Tajikistan 11.0%. [3]

In 2020, the number of Azerbaijanis migrating to Krasnodar Krai was 634 people.

In 2020, the ethnic composition of the population of Krasnodar changed slightly compared to 2010: Russians made up 89% of the total population, Cossacks 0.1%,

Armenians 5.5%, Ukrainians 1.6%, Greeks accounted for 0.4% and Belarusians for 0.3%. [4]

In the XVII-XVIII centuries, during the reign of Peter I, the Caucasus region began to gain great importance in Russia's foreign policy. Armenians have become a tool in Russia's Caucasus policy. Armenians, dreaming of establishing an independent Armenian state, began to take advantage of this situation. Armenian communities in Russia have been granted not only economic but also legal privileges by the country's authorities.

The process of establishing Armenian communities continued in the 19th century. As a result of the influx of Armenians, especially to the southern regions of Russia, the old Armenian communities were united and new ones were formed, and the number of Armenian communities increased sharply. After the collapse of the USSR, changes took place in the social and cultural life of the Armenian communities in Russia. In those years, there was an unprecedented influx of Armenians to Russia. As a result of the 1988 Spitak earthquake and economic blockade, most Armenians moved to Russia, especially to Krasnodar and Stavropol. Here they began to engage in agriculture and construction. [5] Thus, the Armenians became the second largest ethnic group in Krasnodar after the Russians.

Considering the Kuban region "historical Armenian lands" and fully organized within this region, Armenians began to search for political and cultural autonomy in Krasnodar after 1995. For this purpose, the Armenians, who make up the majority of the population in the region from the south of Sochi to the northern city of Gagra in Abkhazia, demanded autonomy in Adler, on Russia's Black Sea coast. To achieve this legally, in the summer of 2000, they tried to hold a referendum in Adler to create an "Armenian National Region". Along with Armenians in Krasnodar in the 1990s [6, p. 123], Kurds living in the former Soviet republics also moved to Krasnodar and began to demand autonomy. The Armenian diaspora has always tried to cooperate with the Kurds living in Russia. One of the most important reasons for this is to get support for their anti-Turkish propaganda or to use it as a tool for this purpose. The Armenian diaspora has been a supporter of the so-called genocide propaganda and Kurdish activities against Turkey.

### ***Armenian community in Krasnodar region***

The Armenian community is in second place in Krasnodar Krai. Thus, during public opinion polls on the situation of migrants, Kubans are confident that the vast majority of migrants coming to the region for permanent residence are Armenians. Indeed, during the wars and economic devastation in the South Caucasus in the 1990s, most Armenians settled in Kuban. If in 1989 there were about 174,000 Armenians in the Krasnodar Krai, in 2002 their number increased even more. In 1989, Ukrainians were second only to Russians, but according to the 2002 census, Armenians were the second largest ethnic group in Krasnodar Krai.

On March 10, 1925, the Armenian National Region was established in the Krasnodar Krai, mainly in the area inhabited by Armenians. Yelizavetpolskoye village has been designated as the district center. Initially, the Armenian National Region was part of the Maykop district. In 1930, the division of the region was abolished, the use of the term “national region” was stopped, and the region was simply called “Armenian”. In 1943-1946, the center of the region was the village of Chernigovskoe. In 1953, the national region was abolished and its territory was divided among neighboring districts. [7]

At present, Armenians make up 5.5 percent of the country’s population, or 281,680 people. [8] For comparison, the number of Azerbaijanis is 10,165, or 0.19 percent of the total population. Armenians live mainly in the south of Krasnodar Krai, especially in the cities of Sochi, Armavir, Novorossiysk, Anapa, Tuapse and Krasnodar.

During the Soviet era, Kuban Armenians did not have socio-cultural organizations. However, after the 1990s, Kuban Armenians began lobbying, setting up diaspora organizations, as elsewhere in Russia. The Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenian volunteer associations played a major role in the formation of the Armenian diaspora community in Krasnodar Krai. Because when religious feelings come to the fore, it is easier to bring people together.

Armenian volunteer associations were first established in the south of Russia in the late 19th century. In 1889, a branch of the Armenian Charity Society in the Caucasus, first established in Tbilisi (Georgia) in 1881, was opened in Krasnodar Krai. [9] Until 1882, members of the Armenian Charity Society in Tbilisi made short trips to Armavir and Yekaterinodar (now Krasnodar city) to raise funds and establish contacts with Armenians in the Krasnodar Krai. In the early days of the Armenians’ migration to the Kuban region, the Russian government passed laws to stimulate Armenian diaspora activities and the migration process, and IDPs were given many privileges, such as the right to establish a system of self-government within their territory. However, as the number of Armenian migrants continued to grow outside the control of the Russian government and as Armenian national parties gained more political influence, the Russian government began to restrict previous privileges granted to Armenian migrants. As a result, Armenian schools in the Caucasus were closed in 1896, and Armenian volunteer associations in 1898. However, starting from 1907, various Armenian volunteer associations were opened in Krasnodar Krai, including the Armenian Charitable Society for Women in Maykop and the Armenian Women’s Charitable Society in Yekaterinodar. [10]

After the 1917 Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union in December 1922, the Armenian Church and Armenian political parties were banned. Until the 1980s, there was no Armenian church in Krasnodar Krai. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the post-Soviet period, a large number of Armenian volunteer unions began to be reorganized.

In Krasnodar operate the regional branch of the Union of Armenians in Russia “All-Russian public organization” (UAR), the Krasnodar city organization of the UAR, the Pashkovskaya Armenian community organization represented by the St. Sahak-Mesrop Church, the Pashkovsky Armenian Cultural Center public organization, the Kuban Armenian diaspora Krasnodar regional public organization, public organization “Regional Armenian national-cultural autonomy of the Krasnodar Krai”, Krasnodar City Armenian National-Cultural Autonomy Public Organization, Autonomous non-profit organization of supplementary education Armenian Cultural and Educational Centre named after Hovhannes Tumanyan, Krasnodar Regional Public Organization for Social Support of Citizens “Armenian Charitable Society”. Krasnodar is also the center of the Russian southern diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church. For comparison, there is only one Azerbaijani community in Krasnodar. “AZERI” Azerbaijan Cultural Society Krasnodar regional public organization has been operating since January 28, 2010. [11] The Chairman of the Board is Vladimir Gurbanov.

One of the first Armenian institutions established in Krasnodar is the Amshen Science and Culture Center. The center was founded by Armenians living in the Tuapse and Absheron districts of Krasnodar. This center was established to inform the Armenians about the activities of the Armenian structures of Armenia, Karabakh and the Armenian diaspora, as well as to inform the Russians, Armenians and the Armenian diaspora about the Armenians.

Tensions between Armenian and Cossack youth have been rising since 1996, with occasional skirmishes. In June 2000, Deputy Governor of Krasnodar Nikolai Kharchenko, at a meeting on “International Relations of the Krasnodar Krai and the Conditions of Admission as an Immigrant”, focused on the Armenians of Krasnodar: “Armenians see Kuban as their historical homeland, so Armenian migration to this land is systematic. Armenians, who make up 38 percent of Krasnodar’s population, have become the second largest ethnic group. The Armenian population in Sochi, on the Black Sea coast, where the ethnic and demographic structure has changed rapidly in favor of Armenians, has doubled in recent years, and some leaders of Armenian non-governmental organizations in Sochi have ties to Armenian terrorist organizations. The goals of these non-governmental organizations are to create an “Armenian National Zone” in Adler, which has led to the “Armenian problem” in Sochi”. [12]

Armenian terrorist organization ASALA has started threatening Russia. These threats are also carried out through the Yerkramas newspaper of Russian Armenians. The terrorist organization ASALA has decided to reactivate its activities after the historic defeat of the Armenians in the Second Karabakh War. Russian historian, Caucasus scholar Oleg Kuznetsov said that these are a new generation of young people from the Armenian diaspora who have decided to follow in the footsteps of their terrorist ancestors. [13]

The Armenian Church plays an important role in the activities of Armenians in Russia. The first diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Russia was established in Astrakhan in the early 18th century (1717) and was called the Astrakhan diocese. This diocese included all the Armenian churches in the territory of the Russian Empire. As a result of the administrative changes that took place after the October Revolution, the borders of the Astrakhan diocese were narrowed to the North Caucasus and the Volga region, and the North Caucasus and the Astrakhan diocese were divided into two parts. Armavir became the center of the new diocese. In 1966, as a result of the merger of the dioceses with the Moscow pastorship, Moscow became the center of the new diocese. [14]

In 2007, there were at least 15 Armenian churches in Krasnodar Krai. At present, about 30 Armenian church communities are registered in different cities of Krasnodar region. The Temple and Cultural Center of the Armenian Apostolic Church has been built and operates in Krasnodar. There are several youth groups in the Church and the Center. There is a media platform called Hayk-Media and an Armenian film studio of the same name with experience in filmmaking.

On October 16, 2021, the opening ceremony of the Temple of Surp Grigor Lusavorich of the Russian southern diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church was held in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Krai. Construction of the church began in 2001.

The purpose of the Armenian communities existing and operating in the Krasnodar Territory, including churches, is to establish an Armenian republic here. In general, uncertainty and a tendency to separatism are characteristic of Armenians. Armenians continue to make false claims by misinterpreting the history of the lands they want. Representatives of the so-called Western Armenia are actively promoting the establishment of separate Armenian republics in the North Caucasus and around the world. Armenian separatism has become more active in the North Caucasus. Recently, such activities have increased significantly in Krasnodar Krai. Armenian radicals talking about the establishment of the “Krasnodar Republic of Armenia” in the North Caucasus have become more active. Krasnodar Armenians are literally attacking the local population with their nationalist initiatives. Thus, the Union of Armenians of Russia appealed to the Department of Education and Science of the the Krasnodar Krai to include Armenians in the list of local residents in the subject of “Kuban Studies” in schools, which caused dissatisfaction among local residents. Against this background, the Armenians of Stavropol and Krasnodar constantly refer to the speeches of the Catholicos of All Armenians Vazgen I, who called the Armenians “a time of a crusade against the Russians”. Armenian nationalist Igor Muradyan appeals to Armenians in Krasnodar and Stavropol to take up arms and prepare for “self-defense”. Armenian radicals, who claim that discrimination against the Armenian population in Krasnodar Krai is part of the Russian Federation’s state policy, say that if Armenians in Russia want to continue living in the country, they must take up arms and prevent attempts to commit crimes against them. [15]

Thus, Karabakh is not the only region where Armenian separatism has emerged. Armenians have repeatedly demonstrated separatist tendencies in the North Caucasus. For example, in the Myasnikovsky district of Rostov region, Armenians make up more than half of the population. According to the 2010 census, ethnic Armenians make up 56.1 percent of the region's population. Here Armenians live compactly in Chaltir, Crimea, Bolshiye Sali, Sultan-Sali, Nesvetay and other villages. At the entrance to the district there is a sign in two languages – Russian and Armenian: “Welcome to Myasnikovsky district”. [16] A similar situation will soon be seen in all the southern cities of Russia, including Anapa, Sochi and others.

### ***Conclusion***

As a result of inter-ethnic wars in the former Soviet Union in the 1980s and 1990s, many refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants fleeing these conflicts settled in Krasnodar Krai. This area was more favorable in terms of climate and agricultural than other regions of the former Soviet Union. In addition, Krasnodar became a second home for some ethnic communities, such as the Armenians. At the time, the Krasnodar government was concerned that emerging migration trends threatened interethnic harmony. Some Armenians fleeing Baku chose to go to Moscow, Krasnodar or Stavropol, not Armenia. Until 1991, the flow of migrants was almost unregulated by the central authorities, and the regions received virtually no assistance to reduce the additional burden on local social services. There is no accurate information on the total number of refugees, IDPs and other migrants since 1988. According to the passport service of the Krasnodar Department of Internal Affairs as of October 1, 1994, there were 184,125 people in Krasnodar from “conflict zones” and “riot zones”. Most of them, ie 60.6 percent, were Russian-speaking and 24.7 percent were Armenians. [17, p. 28] By January 1996, that number had risen to 223,000. In 1993, representatives of the Krasnodar Krai Office claimed that the total number of both legal and illegal migrants was close to 675,000. They made up about 13 percent of the total population, but that figure sparked many protests. One of the Armenians who immigrated to Krasnodar Krai told Human Rights Watch in 1996 that about 390,000 Armenian refugees live in the region without registration. [18] The growth of the Armenian community worried the government of Krasnodar Krai. The 1996 regional migration program, which sets out the main objectives of local migration policy, states that, given the stable death rate of the Slavic population and the growth of the Armenian population as a result of migration flows and natural growth, there are changes in the historically established balance in the number of major national population groups in the region. [19] The document warned that the growing number of refugees and IDPs would continue to lead to interethnic conflict.

The head of the Krasnodar Krai Department issued a decree on the facts of violation of the registration procedure in the resort city of Sochi. The decree criticized regional registries for violating local registration and federal law and allowing a sharp increase in the number of Armenian migrants in Sochi. [20] It is not surprising that

the Armenian diaspora in Russia is the most active and numerous in the Krasnodar Krai. Armenians feel like masters here. Attempts by local authorities to restore order in the field of migration and to combat illegal migration are always met with fierce, deliberate and insidious resistance from the Armenian community. In fact, Armenians are the largest ethnic group hostile to Russian statehood while living in Russia today. It should be noted that Armenians are the largest national minority in regions of strategic importance to Russia, especially in Krasnodar Krai. For this reason, the activities of the Armenian diaspora against Russia, supported from abroad, are a serious threat.

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## **KRASNODAR DİYARINDA ERMƏNİ İCMASI**

### *Xülasə*

*Məqalədə Krasnodar diyarındakı erməni icmasının formalaşması, ermənilərin bu bölgəyə köçləri, yerləşmələri, erməni icması və onun Ermənistana dəstək fəaliyyətləri tədqiq edilmişdir. Rusiya Federasiyasının 12 iqtisadi bölgəsindən biri olan Şimali Qafqaz iqtisadi dairəsinin tərkibində federal subyekt olan Krasnodar diyarında bu gün miqrasiya proseslərinin dinamikası yüksək göstəricilər nümayiş etdirir. Beynəlxalq miqrasiyada Ukrayna və Ermənistandan gələn miqrantlar üstünlük təşkil edir. Ermənilərin bu bölgələrə axınının səbəbi sabit sosial və siyasi vəziyyət, inkişaf etmiş aqrar-sənaye və kurort-istirahət kompleksi, əlverişli iqlim şəraiti və inkişaf etmiş nəqliyyat infrastrukturunun olmasıdır. Təkcə Ermənistandan deyil, dünyanın müxtəlif bölgələrindən gələn ermənilər Krasnodar diyarında öz*

*icmalarını qurmuşlar. Hazırda Krasnodar diyarında erməni icması ikinci sıradadır. Belə ki, miqrant vəziyyətinin öyrənilməsinə həsr olunmuş kütləvi sorğular zamanı Kuban sakinləri əminliklə bildirirlər ki, bölgəyə daimi yaşamaq üçün gələn miqrantlar arasında böyük əksəriyyəti ermənilər təşkil edirlər. Krasnodar diyarındakı erməni icması sürətlə böyüyür. Kubanda erməni icması o qədər əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə böyükdür ki, artıq burada bir neçə yüz erməni kəndi salınıb, eyni zamanda iyirmiyə yaxın erməni kilsəsi tikilmişdir. Ermənilər Krasnodar diyarında rusalardan sonra ikinci ən böyük icmaya çevrilmişdir. Ermənilər Kuban şəhərlərində ən uğurlu biznes strukturlarına nəzarət edirlər.*

**Açar sözlər:** Rusiya Federasiyası, Krasnodar, erməni icması, miqrasiya, kilsə

**Гюнай Фейзијева**

## **АРМЯНСКАЯ ОБЩИНА КРАСНОДАРСКОГО КРАЯ**

### **Резюме**

*В статье рассматривается формирование армянской общины в Краснодарском крае, миграция и расселение армян в крае, армянская община и ее деятельность по поддержке Армении. Сегодня высокая динамика миграционных процессов в Краснодарском крае, субъекте федерации в составе Северо-Кавказского экономического района, одного из 12 экономических районов Российской Федерации. В международной миграции преобладают мигранты из Украины и Армении. Причиной притока армян в эти регионы является стабильная общественно-политическая обстановка, развитый агропромышленный и курортный комплекс, благоприятные климатические условия, развитая транспортная инфраструктура. Армяне не только из Армении, но и из разных уголков мира создали свои общины в Краснодарском крае. В настоящее время армянская община находится на втором месте в Краснодарском крае. Так, в ходе опросов общественного мнения о положении мигрантов кубанцы уверены, что подавляющее большинство мигрантов, прибывающих в край на постоянное место жительства, составляют армяне. Армянская община Краснодарского края стремительно развивается. Армянская община Кубани настолько велика, что здесь уже построено несколько сотен армянских сел и около двадцати армянских церквей. Армяне стали второй по численности общиной в Краснодарском крае после русских. Они контролируют самые успешные бизнес-структуры кубанских городов.*

**Ключевые слова:** Российская Федерация, Краснодар, армянская община, миграция, церковь.

Daхilolma tarixi: 12.10.2021

Çара qəbul edilmişdir: 10.12.2021