

Laz Tribal Nation ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations

WHEREAS we, the representatives of the Laz tribes of Turkey, declare:

- A. The Lazuri-speaking ancestors of the modern Laz originally hailed from the northeast, from the southern part of Abkhazia, and settled in the present homeland of the Laz in antiquity. Most Laz people today live in Turkey, where the Laz minority group has no official status. Their number today is estimated at 1,000,000.
- B. The Laz language (*Lazuri nena*) is spoken along the Black Sea coast from the Chorokh River (Georgia) to south of Pazar (Atina) in Turkish territory. The language is unwritten, Georgian being used as the literary language in Georgia and Turkish in Turkey. In view of the structural closeness, Mingrelian and Laz are sometimes considered to be dialects of a single language.
- C. The Laz nation and its tribes were an independent sovereign nation long before the creation of the Turkish state. The Laz were never dominated by the Byzantines; nor did the Ottoman Empire succeed in subjugating them fully. When the Laz felt their partial autonomy threatened in the early 19th century, they took up arms under Memiş Tuzcuoğlu and fought against the troops of the governor of Trabzon for more than two decades.
- D. The Laz nation and tribes have their own unique histories, customs, traditions, and relationships with Turkey. Laz autonomy is therefore deeply embedded in Laz thought and history.
- E. The current Laz leadership has entered into agreements between all three Laz tribes; through ratifying the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations, the Laz tribal confederation seeks recognition as a sovereign nation.
- F. The Laz nation affirms that it is sovereign citing the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations and international law as well as Laz customary tribal laws.
- G. The International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations affirms that Laz “participation in cultural or ceremonial activities for the transmission of tribal culture shall be protected.”
- H. Ratification of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations is essential for Laz civic leaders to execute their responsibilities to promote the general welfare of the Laz, given their unique structures and communities.
- I. It is customary and traditional for Laz governments to provide honoraria to citizens who engage in civic participation opportunities related to the governmental general welfare operations that are essential for ensuring the transmission and protection of Laz culture, history and the long-term viability and health of its citizenry and overall community.
- J. The International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations affirms that, “Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,” and further recognizes that, “Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.”

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- K. In accordance with the principles enshrined in the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations, the Laz tribes defer in how they choose to define their own customs, traditions, and ceremonial practices.
- L. Since current state laws do not protect or maintain Laz tribal culture and tradition, these issues should be addressed by Laz customary laws with the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations as basis for legal codes to address these concerns and work with Laz tribes on a government-to-government basis.
- M. The Laz leadership has consulted with all three Laz tribes regarding the implementation of the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations and have sought to interpret the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations in terms of Laz customary law before establishing legal codes.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that:

- 1. The Laz tribal confederation hereby formally ratifies the International Covenant on the Rights of Indigenous Nations; and
- 2. This resolution shall be the policy of the Laz tribal confederation until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Laz tribal confederation on March 31st 2022.

Title.
Laz Lazi

Name
Hikmet Eilas

