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**For immediate release**

### **Yezidis launch European Court case claiming ethnic discrimination by Russia**

Two persons of Yezidi origin have lodged a case with the European Court of Human Rights complaining that Russia has unlawfully refused to issue them with Russian passports and has subjected them to widespread discriminatory treatment because of their ethnicity. The applicants are represented by lawyers at the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), based at London Metropolitan University and the Russian NGO, Memorial.

Kyalash Safaryan, Tina Nadoyan and their families were living in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1988. Their houses were completely destroyed by an earthquake and in 1989 they moved to Krasnodar Krai (in Russia).

According to a 1991 law On Citizenship of the Russian Federation, Safaryan and Nadoyan are entitled to Russian citizenship as they were living in Russian territory on 6 February 1992, when the law came into force, and did not declare that they did not wish to become Russian citizens. For nearly 19 years they have made repeated requests to the authorities to be issued with Russian passports, all of which have been refused without reason.

The applicants argue that their inability to obtain Russian citizenship has had a significant negative impact on their private and family lives in violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. They are unable, for example, to legally find employment, receive medical care or marry. Their freedom of movement within and outside Russia is impaired or prevented (Article 2 of Protocol 4) they cannot vote in parliamentary elections (Article 3 of Protocol 1) or sell their private property (Article 1 of Protocol 1).

In addition they submit that the local authorities in Krasnodar Krai have waged a campaign of discrimination against the Yezidi community in violation of Article 14 and that the severity of this discrimination amounts to degrading treatment in breach of Article 3. They have also been unable to obtain a fair hearing of their case within Russia (Article 6) or an effective remedy (Article 13).

*NOTE: The Yezidi are followers of a Middle Eastern religion with ancient origins. The largest Yezidi community was, until 1988, living in Soviet Armenia. The 1988 earthquake caused almost all the community to flee to the Krasnodar region of Soviet Russia. Since relocating to Russia, the community has experienced discrimination from the Russian authorities in the region. For more information about the situation of the Yezidi living in Krasnodar, please see: <http://www.memo.ru/hr/discrim/ver1/Report-ICERD-eng-site.html> (paras 131-139).*

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