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THE HISTORY OF THE PERSONS DEPORTED FROM MESKHETI IN 1944

The question of the population deported from Meskheta remains one of the least-studied in Georgian historiography. The question of deportation was tabooed from the very beginning. Southern Georgia was within the Ottoman Empire almost three hundred years, which led to the changes in the spiritual make-up and life of its population.

On November 15, 1944 the Soviet Empire at night carried out a top-secret special operation in five districts of southern Georgia - 220 villages of Meskheta were depopulated. Thousands of people perished during an almost one-month journey from cold, famine, stuffiness and insanitariness. The Meskhs were settled in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan with no right to return. 92% of the deported persons were Georgians.

On October 31, 1956 the strict order was cancelled, but the deportees were not permitted to return home. Repatriation began only in the 1980s. By 2000 the number of the repatriate Meskhs in Georgia was 643 - 184 families.

Muslim Meskhs arrived for the first time in the village of Tianeti, Samtredia district in 1983. They, along with the local population, also live in the villages Nasakirali and Neruja (Ozurgeti district), where the degree of integration is higher than in Tianeti.