

Claims that Neighboring Countries Want to Divide Ukraine Are to Justify Minorities Persecution

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Maxim Buzhansky, a Member of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament), said that several European countries have territorial claims against Ukraine. In his opinion, revanchist sentiments come from Poland, Romania and Hungary. Buzhansky emphasized that Kiev’s weakness plays into the other three countries hands and provides an opportunity to revise the history of the region.

“These attempts [...] call into question the legality of Transcarpathia, Bukovina and Western Ukraine as being part of Ukraine,” Buzhansky said December 23.

The parliamentarian clarified that Warsaw, Budapest and Bucharest are handing out passports to ethnic Poles, Romanians and Hungarians in Ukraine, thus creating a potentially explosive situation. According to Buzhansky, Hungary is openly pursuing a policy of tearing away several regions and at some point, may send troops to “protect the Hungarian population.”

When discussing Poles during a meeting of the parliamentary commission for relations with Poles abroad, he said:

“It would not be an exaggeration to say that Poles in Ukraine are discriminated against regarding freedom of religion, access to education in their native language and freedom of speech.”

It is reminded that in 2017, a law on education was adopted and forced schools to use the Ukrainian language. Currently, about 400,000 schoolchildren in Ukraine receive education in their non-Ukrainian native language. About 16,000 children were studying in 75 Romanian schools by the time the new law was adopted. In addition, there are 71 Hungarian schools; about 3,000 Moldovan children studying in three schools in their native language; and, about 2,000 Polish children study in five schools.

The foreign ministers of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece immediately signed a letter addressed to Ukrainian authorities, in which they called for restrictions on education in native languages to be scrapped. Hungary and Romania initiated the issue in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Although Kiev enacted this racist law in the hope of forcing the Ukrainization of Russian-speaking populations, it has invertedly affected all ethnic minorities in the country. For this reason, Kiev's relations with neighboring states have been souring. It is for this reason that since 2017, Budapest has exercised the right of veto in relation to some Ukraine-NATO initiatives. In addition, Hungarian authorities called for the denunciation of the Agreement on Associate Membership signed between the EU and Ukraine.

Ukrainian nationalists are constantly exaggerating the hypothetical claims Hungary has on Transcarpathia, where the Hungarian national minority live. They also claim that Romania is preparing to annex the Chernivtsi and part of the Odessa regions. Since January 1, 2022, Ukrainian nationalist militant units, armed with armored vehicles, have been created in every region of Ukraine, including where minorities live.

It is also worth noting that Budapest issues citizenship on the principle of "blood" (people with Hungarian roots), but Bucharest on the principle of "land" (any descendant of a subject of the Kingdom of Romania, regardless of ethnicity, can apply for a Romanian passport today). Therefore, according to various estimates, up to 200,000 to 300,000 Romanian citizens live in the Odessa and Chernivtsi regions.

Due to fears of having vibrant minority communities, Kiev explained their plans of forced Ukrainization by the fact that graduates of national schools often do not speak Ukrainian at a level that allows them to successfully pass the mandatory exam, without which it is impossible to enter Ukrainian universities.

However, the truth is that Ukraine today is modeled on ultra-nationalism that has no tolerance for minority identity or anything not aligned with their chauvinistic and racist ideology.

For this reason, Hungarian authorities called for the denunciation of the Association Agreement signed between the EU and Ukraine. It is noteworthy that the Polish Foreign Ministry issued a statement which did not support Hungary's initiative: "Poland does not see the possibility of revising the Association Agreement or the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with Ukraine."

Last summer, Zelensky said that his country is developing a bill on national communities, and not on national minorities. Although the bill has been talked about since the presidency of Petro Poroshenko, it has not yet been made public.

Ukraine beyond reasonable doubt violates the EU's Treaty of Lisbon and other initiatives that protect minorities. Yet, even with the Polish minority suffering in Ukraine, Warsaw is unwilling to challenge Ukraine in a serious way as it does not want to weaken the country since it resolutely continues to challenge and provoke Russia. For this reason, Buzhansky's fears that Poland, Hungary and Romania are seeking to territorially expand at the expense of Ukraine may sound unfounded but definitely serves as an excuse to escalate persecution against minorities.

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