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Caferis

According to Caferis themselves, the Caferi presence in Turkey is a result of the fact that their historical homeland in the province of Igadir was transferred from Russia to Turkey when the borders of the latter were drawn. Most Caferis are ethnically Azerbaijani Turks. However, they define themselves primarily as a religious group belonging to Shi'a Islam. According to the information provided by a former Minister of Culture in Turkey, the number of Caferis is around 3 million. Caferider, the national organization of Caferis, endorses this figure. As a result of economic immigration since the 1980s, the highest number of Caferis – around 500,000 – live in Istanbul. The lack of a vibrant economy and the resulting hardships in Igadir has also led to waves of international migration to Europe.

As with Alevis and other non Sunni Muslims in Turkey, Caferis are subject to the restrictions of the Treaty of Lausanne. This ignores different denominations of Islam and amounts to lack of formal recognition of the Caferi's (and other minorities') distinct religious identity. While the state allocates substantial funds to provide religious services for Sunni Muslims: to pay the salaries of imams, construct mosques and oversee pilgrimage, it does not provide any funding to non-Sunni Muslims. Furthermore, the religious affairs of all Muslims are subjugated to state control through the Diyanet (see above Alevi section). Alevis and Caferis are not permitted to have representation in this institution.

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