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MILS NEWS Skopje December 26, 2005

GORANS ASK FOR CULTURAL AUTONOMY IN KOSOVO

The Macedonians living in Kosovo, known as Gorans (Gorani), are to forward a demand for cultural autonomy in Kosovo as part of the solution for the future status of Kosovo, regardless whether Kosovo would remain under Serbia's control, or become independent. "Dnevnik" says this would be the main demand that the Gorans are planning to put forward during the Conference of Gorans, scheduled for 14th January in Skopje. "We are planning to table a proposal for language autonomy and education in our mother tongue i.e. declaration of Gorans in Kosovo for a euro-region", Ismail Bojda, President of the Association of Macedonians of Islamic Religion, said. He added that the scheduled conference in Skopje would include debates on the measures that the Gorans are expected to undertake during the census in Kosovo, as well as talks on the political and religious oppression over the Gorans in Kosovo. "Dnevnik" says that representatives of the Macedonians in Kosovo, especially the locals from the village of Dragas, claimed to have been exposed to strong pressure exerted by the Bosnians, Serbs and Albanians from Kosovo, forcing them to join their ethnic community.

"Dnevnik" says some 200 Gorans have already applied for Bulgarian citizenship, which would enable them free access to the countries from Western Europe. The newspaper adds that a Bulgarian National Association, registered by UNMIK, has

already been established in the region of Gora and Sredacka Zupa in Kosovo.