

CURRENT ISSUES OF THE TURKISH MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE (GREECE)

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ABTTF



Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)



ABTTF
Wemerstr. 2
58454 Witten
Germany



Tel.: +49 2302 91 3291
Fax: +49 2302 91 3293
E-Mail: info@abttf.org
Web.: www.abttf.org

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Introduction

The Western Thrace is the name of the region stretching out from the Turkish border in North-eastern Greece till the Karasu River, and our minority has been living in the region with its rights recognized by the Lausanne Treaty signed in 1923. From this date onwards, many people of our minority had to leave their birthplaces due to the repressions on our minority the Greek nationalism has declared as “scapegoat”. Therefore, the population of our minority today is still about 150 thousand, which counted 129 thousand in the year 1923. You can read the related repressions in the reports of various international human rights organizations. To state some examples here: our minority members cannot get a simple permission to repair their house roofs; they have been forced to live in the forbidden regions, to which the entrance is only possible with passes; because they are from an other ethnic group, they have been permanently facing the threat of losing their citizenship through an administrative decision; or till a few years ago, they were compelled to read books for their education, which were containing statements such as “The human being will step on the moon one day.” When we consider all of these and also that our minority, whose ethnic identity is rejected, lives from the agriculture and parallel to that, has a high rate of population increase, the importance and the difficulty of the migration out of the region can be guessed easily.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), which was founded in 1988 by 25 thousand Western Thrace Turks organized under 28 foundations in the Western Europe, where this migration has been experienced, has been struggling since then to introduce and be voice of our minority in Europe and in the world.

As the outcomes of our activities, our country Greece has given some of our citizenship rights back in the last years due to the pressures coming from the European Union, and we are coming out slowly from the second-class citizenship. However, any step could not be taken regarding our minority rights, which is the first condition to continue our existence. In this respect, we would like to mention you some infringements going on.

1. Non-Recognition of the Turkish Identity and Obstruction of the Freedom to Organization

Council of Europe - Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocol No. 11, Rome, 4.XI.1950

Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association

1 Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

2 No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.

Council of Europe -Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Strasbourg, 1.II.1995

The member States of the Council of Europe and the other States, signatories to the present framework Convention,

Considering that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity;

Article 5

1 The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

Charter of Paris for a New Europe

Determined to foster the rich contribution of national minorities to the life of our societies, we undertake further to improve their situation. We reaffirm our deep conviction that friendly relations among our peoples, as well as peace, justice, stability and democracy, require that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities be protected and conditions for the promotion of that identity be created. We declare that questions related to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework. We further acknowledge that the rights of persons belonging to national minorities must be fully respected as part of universal human rights

Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Article 11

- 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.*
- 2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.*

The signboard of our outstanding foundation, the Turkish Union of Xanthi, which was founded in 1927 and has become one of the culture carriers of our minority through its cultural and sporty activities, was got down through the governorship decision, and subsequently, it was decided officially to ban the foundation due to the word “Turkish” in its name. At the end of the legal process, which has continued till today, the Supreme Court of Greece came to the final conclusion, and the Turkish Union of Xanthi was banned by a final decision taken two months ago through using up the last national law means. As you would appreciate, the ban of a foundation demonstrating completely peaceful activities due to its name is not only a negative attitude against this establishment, but also against our whole minority, and our ethnic identity is being rejected collectively through an ostensible legal decision. The second case I would like to mention is in the same context, namely, the official activity permission to the Cultural Association of Turkish Women in Rhodope, which wants to act in Komoditini, is not being granted. Like in the case of the Turkish Union of Xanthi, it is a clear attack to the right to the freedom of peaceful association and our ethnic identity, since the concerning foundation could not get the permission to establishment due to its name. The “Agreement on the Protection of Minorities”, although Greece signed it years ago, but has not passed yet to the national assembly for ratification, gives to the minorities the rights to determine and protect their own identities, and further brings obligations to the states to protect and develop these identities. Unfortunately, I cannot find a good will in the not-ratification of these international treaties by my country, Greece, although she is a party to them. To say, many behaviours of our country, Greece, being member to the European Union, are not honest. Greece has to still go a long way in front of her in this subject matter, and we are looking for your help to overcome the difficulties we confront on this path.

2. Article 19

Council of Europe - European Convention on Nationality, Strasbourg, 6.XI.1997

Chapter II – General Principles Relating to Nationality

Article 4 – Principles

The rules on nationality of each State Party shall be based on the following principles:

A everyone has the right to a nationality;

B statelessness shall be avoided;

C no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his or her nationality;

D neither marriage nor the dissolution of a marriage between a national of a State Party and an alien, nor the change of nationality by one of the spouses during marriage, shall automatically affect the nationality of the other spouse.

Article 13 – Fees

1 Each State Party shall ensure that the fees for the acquisition, retention, loss, recovery or certification of its nationality be reasonable.

2 Each State Party shall ensure that the fees for an administrative or judicial review be not an obstacle for applicants.

United Nations - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 13

2 Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 15

1 Everyone has the right to a nationality.

2 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Concerning the Turkish Minority, we have suffered due to the exclusive policy through the Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (No: 3370 of 1955), which stated that "A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek citizenship. This also applies to a person of non-Greek ethnic origin born and domiciled abroad. "The Ministry of Interior Affairs made public that in the period from 1955 to 1998 about 46.638 Turks were deprived of Greek nationality and no steps has been taken to reinstate these people, yet. (Appendix 1)

The ones, who belong to our minority and have lost their citizenships, live mostly in Turkey, than in Europe and even in Greece. These individuals served their state many years, the men from these performed their military service, worked, gave their tax properly and lived as a faithful Greek citizen,

which should be like. Nevertheless, since they have lost their citizenship, they cannot visit their birth-places, see their relatives, benefit from those citizenship rights such as pension, health insurance or suffrage at present. They live under very hard conditions, where they are at present. The problems of these individuals should be solved at once.

In Germany, where we have our federation, there are many hundreds of members of the Western Thrace Turkish minority like these individuals. We would like to present Erdogan Cambaz, one of these individuals, as an example to your attention. The situation, in which Mr. Erdogan Cambaz now finds himself, influences his work and private life. Mr. Cambaz has got into a psychological depression due to his problems and cannot work anymore. He has health report from the German Work Agency (Arbeitsamt), which is documenting his health condition.

According to the information we have got, these individuals should have first gone through all the domestic law in Greece, and could not reach any result. However, many of these individuals cannot enter Greece. Or the lawyers do not except the claims of these people, who want to take such initiatives, or they leave the claim in negligence. As it is seen in the case of Mr. Erdogan Cambaz, although lawyers were charged two times, they did not do their jobs by taking the advantage of the situation that Mr. Cambaz lives in Germany, and attempted nothing related to the claim.

In addition to the other costs, a price value in amount of 1500 € is demanded from those, who submit an application for a citizenship to get their citizenships back. This price is not taken from those ones, who have migrated from ex-Soviet Unions and applied for a citizenship, since they are “of the same ethnic group”. However, this price value is being taken from the members of Western Thrace Turks and other minority members, although they have been Greek citizens for years.

Among ten thousands of members Turkish minority and families, who have been deprived from their social, cultural, political and human rights due to the racist and discriminative Art. 19 of the Citizenship Law of Greece, and have been forced to live away from their homelands, we would like to present Erdogan Cambaz and his family as an example to your attention. Many thousands of members of Western Thrace Turkish minority live also under the same hard conditions, and share the same destiny. (see also Appendix 1, Appendix 2)

3. The Attitude of the Majority toward the Minorities

Council of Europe - Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities# Strasbourg, 1.II.1995

The member States of the Council of Europe and the other States, signatories to the present framework Convention,

Considering that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity;

Article 6

1 The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.

2 The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.

Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Article 14

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status

The government policy is reflected at large in Greek society which generally holds a similar negative attitude. When last year in September the so-called 'youth parliament' – initiated by the Greek writer Antonis Samarakis and bringing together the country's best schoolchildren – congregated, the socio-political proposals made by these 16- to 18-year-olds were highly (problematic/) deeply troubling: in one of their declarations, the 350 children asked for a cutting of the number of foreigners to 300.000 and, furthermore, tied immigration issues to a catalogue of criteria hard to fulfill. Moreover, these 'young intellectuals' encouraged the state to adopt a tougher policy towards Western Thrace. Needless to say, these tendencies are deeply troubling, especially when they can be found in the young enlightened Greeks potentially leading the country in the future. (see also Appendix 3, Appendix 4)

4. Education

Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923

Section III

Protection of Minorities

Article 40

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Article 45

The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory.

Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Article 2

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions

As of September 2003 the number of minority schools in Western Thrace lowered to 226 (Actually there are 230 schools, but 4 or 5 of them no longer have students).

Minority education has been the target of constant interference by the Government. Consequently, the autonomous nature of the education underwent radical changes in spite of the Article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne, which guarantees the right to establish and manage minority schools. As a result, the quality of education substantially eroded.

The minority is not allowed to establish and direct schools with its own financial possibilities, which are intended to be established in order to provide education before school for the minority children, and where the education is supposed to be in the Turkish language. The minority is put under pressure that these schools are established under the direct control of the Greek Educational Ministry.

Currently minority schools are governed by a series of complex restrictive laws. In its present form, the Turkish minority's education system can not possibly serve fundamental educational needs. Nor can it help build mutual respect and confidence between the citizen and the State.

Towards the end of 2003 two decrees have been passed by the parliament to provide government funds to minority schools. Regional authorities also started distributing computers and other educational equipment to minority schools.

Although such improvements would normally receive positive reactions, in an atmosphere lacking transparency and dialogue, the government's surprising willingness to co-operate is skeptically observed by the minority. The reasons for such a skepticism should be clear: it is triggered off by the fear that the schools could lose their autonomy in educational matters - particularly at a time when the government refuses to return the administration of the charitable foundations to the people.

5. The Problem of the Post of *Mufti* (the Highest Religious Authority of a Province/ District) and the Foundations

Treaty of Athens, 1913

Article 11

The life and properties, and the honor, religion, sect and customs of the folks from the places left to Greece, and who will remain under the administration of Greece, will be fully cared and respected, and these folks will possess all kind of civil and political rights like the Greek citizens of Greek origin do.

The already founded autonomous establishments of the Muslim community, or the ones which will be founded in the future, and the sub-establishments of these, and the management of their money and properties will diminished by no means, and the relationships of the religious leaders of the Muslim community of the society with the exalted post (Seybulislamlık - the highest religious post in the Ottoman Empire) having the seat in the capital city Istanbul will be also diminished by no means, and the appointment of the chief Mufti (the highest religious authority of a province/ district) will be made by Seybulislam.

Each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti.

The Chief Mufti will be elected by an election council composed of all Muftis in Greece, and will be appointed among three candidates determined by the King of Greece.

The Greek Government will inform through the Greek Embassy in Istanbul the post of Seybulislam about the election of the Chief Mufti, and the Chief Mufti elected by the Seybulislam will have the hegemony right and the fatwa power over the other Muftis in order to practice his civil-service duty.

The Muftis will have apart from their authorization over the religious matters and the administration and control of the properties of the foundations, the authorization to decide about the conflicts among the Muslims in the subject matters of marriage, divorce, alimony, guardianship, maturity, testament issues, patrimony etc. of the Muslims.

The Protocol Number 3

7. The Chief Mufti and Muftis, and the civil servants and servants in their offices will be provided with the same rights and obligations like the Greek civil servants do.

8. The Chief Mufti investigates, if the elected Muftis carry all the necessary qualifications determined according to the religious rules.

9. The Muftis can only be removed from their posts according to the provisions provided by the Art. 88 of the Constitution of the Greek Kingdom.

10. The Chief Mufti, who is obliged to look after the Muslim community and administer the foundations, has also the chief duty to make them to prepare the accounting records through asking them for the financial records.

Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923

Section III

Protection of Minorities

Article 40

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Article 41

As regards public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision will not prevent the Turkish Government from making the teaching of the Turkish language obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budgets for educational, religious, or charitable purposes.

The sums in question shall be paid to the qualified representatives of the establishments and institutions concerned.

Article 42

The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Moslem minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities.

These measures will be elaborated by special Commissions composed of representatives of the Turkish Government and of representatives of each of the minorities concerned in equal number. In case of divergence, the Turkish Government and the Council of the League of Nations will appoint in agreement an umpire chosen from amongst European lawyers.

The Turkish Government undertakes to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments of the above-mentioned minorities. All facilities and authorisation will be granted to the pious foundations, and to the religious and charitable institutions of the said minorities at present existing in Turkey, and the Turkish Government will not refuse, for the formation of new religious and charitable institutions, any of the necessary facilities which are guaranteed to other private institutions of that nature.

Article 45

The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory.

Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Article 9

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.*
2. *Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

At the borders to Greece there live about 150 thousands of Muslim Turks, the majority of them live in Western Thrace. Until today their status is controlled by the criteria of the peace agreement of Lausanne from 1923. The agreement of Lausanne set international standards for the freedom of religion and worship, the permissiveness, the legal equal treatment with Greek citizens, the use of the mother tongue and classes in their native language, the building, maintenance and protection of social and religious institutions, as well as especially the direction of these institutions by elected representatives of the Muslim Turkish minority. These standards are valid until today.

The meaning of the foundations from the point of view of Western Thrace was stressed in 1920 in the Greek agreement of Sèvres and in the agreement of Lausanne. According to the articles 40-42 of the agreement of Lausanne “the minority is allowed to found, chair and control any kind of charity organisation, religious or social association and receive allocations of funds from the authorities on condition that the expenses will be borne on their own. The government guarantees any kind of help and support to these foundations and charity organisations.”

In article 14 of the Greek treaty of Sèvres this matter was defined more detailed: It got straight, that the existing Muslim foundations were recognized, that they would be guaranteed any help and these helps would not affect the building of new foundations. On the other hand the regulations stated in the treaty of Athens from 1913 were changed by law nr. 2345/1920 into domestic matters.

The Greek government has always tried to restrict the activities and the influence of the foundations. The military junta gained the power by staging a coup in 1967 and removed the elected managing committees and appointed their own persons in the foundations, as they did with any other institutions. However, law nr. 1091/1980 exceeded everything what has been passed or planned before. This law created possibilities of interfering on all levels: In view of filling the members of the managing committees of the foundations due to a new definition of the purpose of the foundations or due to absolute control about the direction and the budget of the foundations.

Just article 20 of the law would be sufficient to put an end to the foundations. Although it is generally known, that the deeds of foundation of a majority of the foundations have been lost because of wars, which predominated in this region for more than hundred years. This article decrees, that the foundations have to hand over to the appropriate inland revenue office not only the entry of the real estate register, but moreover detailed explanation about the respective kind, purpose and the founder of the foundations. And it is determined to deprive them of the foundation character if these explanations will not be presented.

Furthermore in 1991 law nr. 2345/1920 was repealed. It contained, that the muftis should be elected by members of the minority and that they hold the right to control the foundations. The right to a say of the minority in matters of education and religion was abolished.

From all this it is obvious that the real intention of the government is to prevent the minority from using educational and religious matters for their own aims. So taxes were imposed on the earnings of the foundations since 1973. If they were not paid the property of the foundation was mortgaged, possessions of the foundations were confiscated over and over again, mosques and tekkes were destroyed and not rebuilt.

In contrast to the behaviour of Greece regarding the foundations of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, Turkey has permitted to hold elections for the new cast of the managing committee of the 61 foundations of the Greek minority in Istanbul in 1991. Moreover in 1998 there were hold new elections of the managing committee in five Greek foundations, in which the number of members of the committee was reduced to three or even less.

According to law nr. 1091 on the foundations, which was passed in 1980 on the resolution of the state president, the managing committees of the foundations of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace will be appointed on the suggestion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Administration as well as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

According to the same law the members of the local council are also appointed for two years, instead of being elected directly by the members of the Turkish minority. This happens by means of “muf-tis,” who are appointed by the Greek state in order to represent its own interests

According to this regulation the term of office for the representatives, who were appointed for 2 years in the local foundations, was expired this year on October 16th. However, the Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis had announced before the Greek parliamentary elections that from now on the legal rules could be made that in future the managing committees of the foundations of the Turkish minority could be determined by elections, instead of being appointed. Karamanlis meanwhile tends to not to fulfil this election pledge, after he has published the decree on the “announcement of the election principles and the electoral procedure for the elections of the managing committees of the local foundations” on September 16th in 2004, which was unilateral and without regarding the principle of reciprocity as agreed with Turkey.

The Turkish minority of Western Thrace has waited until now for the day, on which the legal status will be given to their foundations, to which they are entitled to according to international agreements. And that they are allowed to elect the members of the managing committee of their foundations independently and in a legal guaranteed way.

6. The Election Hurdle of 3%

Council of Europe - Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Strasbourg, 1.II.1995

Section II

Article 4

2 *The Parties undertake to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities.*

The Election Code, which came in force in 1922, lays the 3% country hurdle down as a condition at the general elections for a political party in order to enter the Parliament. This 3% condition applies also, apart from the political parties, to the independent deputy candidates. However, it has been ever since enough for an independent candidate to acquire the “election measure (number of votes / number of chairs)” in his/her constituency in order to be elected as a deputy. Since the number of chairs in the Greek Parliament count to 300, the election measure in the country along is equivalent to 1/300. Through the new code, this rate has been raised to 3/300. This measure has made the election of a person as a deputy independent from the political parties impossible. For instance, an independent candidate, although she/he gets 100% of the votes in a constituency/province, where the number of chairs counts to 8, she/he cannot be elected as deputy.

As it is admitted clearly, this undemocratic and unjust measure concerning the independent deputy candidates has been taken to block the election of independent deputies from the minority in the provinces of the Thrace.

7. Economic Underdevelopment and the Lost Lands

Council of Europe - Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as amended by Protocol No. 11, Rome, 4.XI.1950

Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Article 1

Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law.

The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a State to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties.

The most important characteristic noticeable of the Turkish quarters in Xhanti and Komotini, which are the main Turkish settlement regions in the Western Thrace that these quarters have been left underdeveloped. Since the permission to buy new property, to new buildings and to repairs has not been given to the Turks for years, the Turkish quarters look like out of time. The city infrastructure of the region, which has found itself within the borders of the European Union for almost a quarter of a century presents such a bad condition which cannot be encountered in any of the old members of the European Union. The same situation is much more valid for the villages of these big two cities. Especially in the northern part of the region, due to the restricted area which existed until the mid 1990s (supposedly to hinder the infiltrations of the communists) and the entrance to was possible only with special permission documents, the people living there has been isolated, and the region has underdeveloped regarding economy and infrastructure.

Beside all of these, as at the time when the Lausanne Treaty was signed in 1923, our minority possessed 84% of the lands in the region, the land proportion it possesses today decreased to 30%. While it was not permitted throughout the years that the minority buys new properties, the majority was encouraged through giving them credits with low interest rates that they buy the minority properties. Through the unjust nationalizations having been applied for years, the productive lands and the pastures of the minority were taken away from them, and they have been given narrow and unproductive lands. The lands having belonged to the minority have passed to the possession of the majority again through the unjust applications of so-called “land consolidations (anadasmos)”. Unfortunately, we witness that the lands taken away from the minority through the nationalization have not been used at all for years, or a smaller part of them has been used, which is actually smaller than of that aimed through the nationalization. Moreover, such a way has been chosen that through hiring these nationalized lands to the farmers from minority members, they have been used.

The tobacco production, which has been the most important livelihood of the region for centuries, has become unsustainable due to the lack of land and minimum price set on purpose very low by the state. Our minority, which has not been given driving license for tractor and could not benefit from the support funds equally with the majority members for years, they have been kept away from the modern agricultural techniques, and especially in the narrow lands in the mountainous region, they have been forced to do agriculture and stock raising activities through the oldest production techniques.

Our minority, which has been forced to live under these hard conditions, has faced the dilemma to immigrate, or to be doomed to poverty.

8. Conclusion

The Muslim Turkish minority whose rights have been recognized by the Lausanne Treaty signed on 24 July 1923, and which has been left to Greece, has been confronting many minority rights violations for years. As the basic origin of our problems depends on the fact that the form of building of Greek nationalism depends on the creation of an enemy over the image of “Turkish Muslim”, it is striking that the period, in which we struggle against the most serious problems, is the tension phases of the Turkish-Greek relationships. While our rights are being violated, it bothers us a lot when all these practices are justified on the ground of the principle of reciprocity with Turkey. The attitude that a state acts unjustly toward its own citizens because of the reason that another state acts the same way toward its own citizens cannot be accepted by any logic and international relations approach. Therefore, we believe that like any single Western Thrace Turk, and associations and foundations belonging to the Western Thrace Turks, everybody who is aware of the human and minority rights should do the maximum in order to cause Greece, member of the European Union, to give up her wrong action.

We ask for especially the help of the members of the Council of Europe. This kind of sustenance of the condition of the Western Thrace Turks which belongs to the European family gives the way to harm the founding principles of Europe which were declared in the Epilogue Document of Vienna in 1989 and Paris Charter in 1990. The continuation of such clear rights violations in one of the old members of the European Union, the dynamic motor of new constructed Europe, constitutes not really a good example for the European Union candidate countries.

Recommendations:

- We ask for the recognition of the determination of the self-identity for all of the minorities, the Western Thrace Turkish minority inclusive, living in Greece, which is the natural right of every human being.

Therefore, we ask for that the foundations banned due to the reason that they used the word “Turkish” in their names, begin to operate again, and the permission to foundation is given to those which were not permitted to be founded due to the same reason.

- We want that the violations against our property rights, one of the basic human rights, are stopped completely, and the region is brought to the minimum life conditions.
- We ask for that the necessary judicial and administrative arrangements are made in order that those who lost their Greek citizenships due to the Art. 19 acquire their Greek citizenships back without any application required.
- We ask for the abolishment of the election hurdle of 3%, which hinders the minorities living in Greece to send their own independent deputies to the Parliament. Instead of this, like in Poland and Hungary, the new members of the European Union, the deputies representing the minority members could become member of the Parliament directly.
- We ask for that the rights of electing freely its own *mufitis* and the executive boards of its own foundations and schools are given to our minority back, which have been recognized by the treaties.
- We ask for facilitating the conditions to open and manage nursery schools by the minority members in the cities and villages, where Turkish is taught.
- We kindly ask our Government to make further steps to improve the conditions of the elected school boards.
- We like to ask of the Greek government a more responsible approach to the co-existence of the Greek majority with its minorities, of its indigenous people with the immigrants, as well as to civil rights issues connected to these relations.

That includes the improvement of the curricula with regard to the instruction of democratic and anti-racist values in accordance to a state under the rule of law. Only then can those hostile tendencies be avoided that have been at the center of our report. Such an attempt would also have to include the ban on hate speech and xenophobia in Greek mass media.

- Design more exchange programs or cultural events in cooperation with Turkey to reverse the strident nationalist rhetoric that has dominated relations for so long.

Appendix 1

Greece had annulled the citizenships of 46638 persons!

The state made public for the first time through official numbers: The citizenship of 46638 persons had been annulled!

The member of Parliament, Ilhan Ahmet, had asked in his question motion he had submitted to the Parliament on the 20. April in 2005 (10097/ 20-4-2005) how many persons had lost their citizenship, and what kind of initiatives had been undertaken in these subject matters. The question had been addressed to the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs answered Mr. Ilhan Ahmet through its writing dated 78400/8334 as follows:

1. 46638 Muslims from the Western Thrace and 12 Islands lost their citizenships till the year 1998, till the Citizenship Law numbered 19. N. 3370/55 was applied and abolished.
2. From these persons, who obtained the Turkish citizenship, and live in Greece, can have the “Stateless (Heimatlos)” identity card.
3. The persons, who find themselves in this condition, can ask for their citizenships through applying to the Ministry of Interior Affairs with the necessary legal documents. The applications are going to be evaluated according to the any case by the Citizenship Committee; the wrong actions of the administration are going to be investigated, and it is going to be decided by the Vice Minister of Interior Affairs at the end.
4. The ones whose requests to obtain the Greek citizenships are not accepted, can apply for the method of the “Politography of obtaining the Citizenship” upon the Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the New Citizenship Law dated N. 3284/2004. This law was passed in the Parliament recently, and the redraft of the law is out of question.

Appendix 2

Erntouvan Tzambas (Erdoğan Cambaz)

Date of Birth : 04.10.1965

Place of Birth : Pelekiti, Rodopi

Father's Name : Feim Tzambas

Mother's Name : Nachie Tzambas (Ramadan)

His Family:

In 1981, his sister Havva Tzambaz settles down in Bursa. In the same year, she marries Saban Mandaraci. Afterwards, she submits her passport to the Greek Consulate in Istanbul, and quits her Greek nationality of her own free will. In 1982, she obtains the Turkish nationality.

His parents settle down in 1983 in Bursa in Turkey. Afterwards, through their nephew Tzelal Tzambas, they also submit their passports and identity cards to the Greek Consulate in Istanbul, and quit their Greek nationalities of their own free will.

His brother Celalettin Tzambas, who was born in 1967, goes to Turkey in 1987. He passes his identity card to the taxi driver, who drives him to Turkey. And the taxi driver delivers his identity card to the Municipality of Amaxades (Arabaciköy), and quits his Greek nationality of his own free will. Afterwards, in 2001, he obtains the Turkish nationality.

His Curriculum Vitae:

1980 onwards, he works 11 years on board. He only gives a short break between the years 1984-85 to perform his military service.

Erdoğan Cambaz goes to the Amaxades Municipality in 1991 to get a document for the health insurance. There, he looks at the family registry himself, too. He finds out that the Greek nationality of his parents, sister and brother has been revoked. Since he is still a Greek national, they give him the document he asks for.

He applies for a "ballot paper" in order to be able to vote in the elections, which will be held in 1991. He submits a petition to the Amaxades Municipality that the necessary procedures are taken for a "ballot paper". But the same civil servant tells him it is not possible to carry out the necessary procedures, since his Greek nationality has been revoked. Then she/he asks Mr. Cambaz to return his passport and identity card he possesses. But, Mr. Cambaz does not deliver his passport and identity card.

Erdoğan Cambaz visits the Gümülcine (Komoditini) previous independent member of Parliament (MoP), Dr. Sadik Ahmet in those days, and tells him the situation. Dr. Sadik Ahmet applies to a couple of official posts, but these applications remain unsuccessful.

Since he has a 5-year valid passport in those days, he visits her parents living in Bursa first. After a few days, in August in 1991, he goes to Homburg in Germany, and settles down there. He begins to work there in a steel and concrete factory.

20 January 1992 onwards, he settles down in Munich, and starts to work in the company "Pegafon" in Neustadt.

In March in 1994, he marries the Greek citizen Münevver Turgutoglu in Turkey (for the document, please see the enclosure). He has two sons from this marriage. He registers his sons to the Greek nationality through the Greek Consulate in Munich.

His passport expires in the years 1995-96. He extends his passport at the Greek Consulate in Munich. Since it is only a extension, and he does not have to get a new passport, there exists no problem. After he has moved to Hagen in 1999, he applies to the Greek Consulate in Dusseldorf in 2001 to extend his expired passport, but they ask him there for a document (“pistopitiko”), which should state that he is a Greek citizen. He asks the municipality for this document, where he is registered. But his passport is not extended, since it is stated in the document arrived that he has been thrown out from the Greek nationality. He informs the Foreigner’s Department of Hagen about the situation, and gets a passport for stateless people (see the enclosure).

Due to the psychological depressions and crisis he has got into, which have been caused by the thoughts that he cannot extend his passport anymore, since his Greek nationality has been revoked, he gets into a condition in 1997 that he cannot work anymore. He gets a health report from the doctor. He lives until 1998 through the financial assistance, which is offered by the insurance company AOK he belongs to.

However, since he is not in the condition to work due to his psychological problems, he is removed by his company. He applies to the Work Agency (Arbeitsamt), and starts to get unemployment money. In 1999, he moves to Hagen from Mainburg, und registers to the work agency there.

In 2000, he gets a health-check-up again due to the request of the work agency, and his psychological condition is examined. It is found out that his health problems continue, and he finds himself in a condition that he cannot work. Because of all of these, he retires earlier. So, Erntouvan Tzambas has early retired since 2000. The check-ups regarding his health problems will continue in small intervals till he is 65. When he is 65, he will get his normal retirement.

In order to get his nationality back, he gives his power of attorney to a lawyer (who is now the actual governor of Xanthi, Pavlidis) in Xanthi in the years 1996-97. He pays him 3000 German Mark. However, the lawyer does nothing, and no result can be acquired.

In the same way, he applies to the lawyer Yorgos Petapolis in Komotini in 2001, pays him 1000 German Mark. The lawyer tells him he has searched every possibility and they could not do anything more. He should better try to be a German citizen. Afterwards, since he is in Germany, he tries to reach the lawyer per phone. But he fails. The lawyer does not answer the phone.

Although his Greek nationality has been revoked, he visits Greece two times in 2002 and 2003 through his stateless passport for stateless people, which he has got from Germany.

In march 2004, he applies for a German passport.

Appendix 3

Greek flag is a hot potato

In yet another incident of the sort, pupils at a Thessaloniki high school refused to attend lessons yesterday as a protest against an Albanian classmate carrying the Greek flag on behalf of the school in the October 28 parade.

Students at the school, in the Harilaou suburb of Thessaloniki, said they would not take part in celebrations unless the proposed flag carrier, an unnamed 15-year-old Albanian girl, was replaced by a Greek. They did not indicate how long they would boycott their lessons.

The schoolgirl achieved top marks in her class and won the right to carry the flag. She has refused to step down and the next two students in line say they will not replace her so as not to give the impression they stirred up the matter.

This is the latest in a spate of similar incidents that seem to be snowballing, with the parade — marking the anniversary of Greece's entry into World War II — still over a week away. On Monday, an Albanian schoolgirl in a Peloponnesian village put an end to the sit-in protest by her classmates when she decided not to carry the Greek flag.

Kathimerini - http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_politics_100016_20/10/2004_48585

Appendix 4

Hide that minaret, Greeks say

Plans to build an Islamic center in Athens stalled by opposition from Church and residents

AP

Still a dream. A view of the largest mosque complex in Western Europe, at Morden in London. Plans to build an Islamic center in Athens have been stymied in the face of opposition by locals and the Greek Church.

By Harry van Versendaal - Kathimerini English Edition

Moavia Ahmed, a journalist from Sudan, has lived in Athens for more than 25 years. He is one of the capital's some 100,000 Muslims who, for the lack of a proper mosque, worship in tiny prayer rooms — often in basements or warehouses.

“Tens of thousands of people have to pray in inappropriate spaces and they have no place to commemorate their dead,” he said, expressing his hope that an Islamic center will eventually be built here as well.

However, Ahmed's modest wish sounds too radical an aspiration in a country where Christianity is widely seen as sine qua non of national identity and where 98 percent of the population are Orthodox Christians.

Worse, objections to the mosque reflect fear, or even resentment, at the swelling population of Muslims in the country. Like elsewhere in Europe, the growing presence of immigrants is challenging traditional notions of national self-understanding and raising fears of a fundamentalist backlash — to a large extent because scaremongering by Orthodox nationalists plays skillfully upon public insecurities in the post-September 11 world.

In a visit to Saudi Arabia in 1979, the late Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis was the first to promise a mosque in Athens. Three years ago, the Socialist government reactivated long-shelved plans to construct a mosque in the capital. (Greece's only proper mosques are in Thrace, a northeastern region near the Bulgarian border that hosts the country's Muslim minority.) This was mainly a result of pressure on the government from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to cater for the religious needs of Muslim athletes and visitors expected to flock to Athens for the 2004 Olympics. The government promised that the mosque will be ready by August 13, the day of the opening ceremony.

A law passed in 2000 earmarked a 3.35-hectare stretch for the construction of an Islamic Cultural Center in Paeania, on the eastern outskirts of Athens and close to the capital's new airport. The center, which would also include and oversee the construction of a mosque, would be financed by the Saudi government. (Most European mosques have been built with funds from the wealthy oil states of the Gulf).

But plans have stalled in the face of opposition from the powerful Greek Church and the local community.

Misleading

While not in principle rejecting the idea of a mosque, the Church's governing body, the Holy Synod, said that a minaret on the skyline near Athens International Airport might mislead foreign visitors.

Churchmen said the mosque should be built in a more discreet location that would not “injure Greeks’ religious feelings.”

Archbishop Christodoulos has often clashed with the government in the past, most notably when the reformist wing of the Socialist party decided to remove the mention of religious affiliation from state identity cards. The head of the Church of Greece — a populist and opinionated figure — caused turmoil last week when he called neighboring Turks “barbarians” who had no place in a predominantly Christian European Union. Church lobbying for a reference to Europe’s Christian heritage in the EU’s nascent constitution also irked Muslims earlier this year.

The residents of Paeania have reacted vehemently, arguing that the spires of minarets would intrude on the skyline of the area and give Muslims undue prominence. Their opposition has been embodied in a big white cross erected above the proposed site, a Paeania slope overlooking the airport. The city’s conservative mayor insists the land is property of the municipality and that the State has no right to cede it.

The string of terrorist attacks, from New York and Washington to the recent bombing attacks in Istanbul, have given fodder to those who oppose the mosque, and plans appear to have been stymied further.

Many are concerned over what they see as a strengthening sense of Muslim identity on Greek territory and say it is sign of increasing fundamentalism.

Ahmed said that to presume that every devout Muslim is a potential extremist is unacceptable. Opponents of the mosque have used the attacks as a strong pretext to undermine the plan, he said, stressing that there is no connection between Islamic religion and terrorism.

“These attacks were clearly terrorist acts. Whether committed by Muslims or other religious groups, they were criminal acts and as such they are rejected by every society or religion,” he said.

“If there really were a connection (between Islam and terrorism), we would have to close down all mosques across the world,” he added.

Islamic extremism

Others insist that the connection is not that elusive. Opponents of the Saudi-financed center point to similar centers in other European nations that were used as recruitment or fund-raising bases for extremist groups.

Fifteen of the 19 suicide hijackers in the September 11 attacks turned out to be from Saudi Arabia. Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the attacks, was also born there. These are embarrassing facts for the Saudi government, whose involvement was bound to raise eyebrows in Greece.

To counter the risk of outside influence, the Greek government demanded that half of the center’s administration be made up of state officials. It also requested that the imam come from Egypt.

Backers of the mosque have often contested the government’s decision to allow Saudis to bankroll the project, saying that the construction of the mosque is an obligation of the Greek government that stems from international law and the Greek Constitution. Some of them see other reasons too.

Michalis Papayiannakis, a European MP of the Synaspismos Left Coalition party, and otherwise a fervent supporter of a mosque in Athens, said that the Saudi interference was provocative as Riyadh has traditionally snubbed the principle of reciprocity over religious institutions. “Saudi Arabia strictly forbids construction of temples or churches of other religions on its territory. (If you are Christian) you cannot even set foot in Mecca or Medina,” he said.

Papayiannakis, who wants the government to fund the project, criticized its foot-dragging which, he said, will most likely result in an embarrassing improvised solution like a religious site inside one of the venues or at the Olympic Village.

Officials at the Foreign Ministry, now in charge of the project, were unavailable for comment.

The controversy over the Athens mosque is emblematic of a tussle that goes on in various degrees and forms in other European nations over a public Islam. France and Germany have been embroiled in a controversy over the public display of Islamic symbols — most prominently, the right of girls and women to wear a scarf in schools — and over the establishment of religious sites. People tend to interpret both tendencies as a sign of reinforced Muslim identity within host countries.

Also in Greece — which sees its self-styled open-mindedness coming increasingly under question — opposition seems to be the reflex of a fearful nation that is unwilling to come to terms with a changing society. However, the growing demands of the burgeoning Muslim community for equal rights and institutions underscore that Islam has not merely arrived, but is here to stay.

“We don’t mind where or how soon the center will be built. What matters most is that it becomes reality,” Ahmed said.

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