



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

Newsletter

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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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Election System in Greece Prevents Turkish Candidates

Election System in Greece is specially designed to prevent Turkish candidates to win a chair in the Parliament. Election results prove that intention clear enough.

► Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF), evaluated the local election results that took place in Greece on 15 October, Sunday and he made a press release.

In his press release, he underlined that only in areas where Greece could not interfere, Turkish Minority candidates were successful. He criticized Greek election system and congratulated the Turkish Minority members for their conscious voting and their success in spite of such an unfair election system.

Movement in Xanthi To Be Followed

Halit Habipoğlu qualified the movement in Xanthi as a great success while two independent Turkish candidates were elected for the Xanthi City Council for the first time. He congratulated Turkish Minority members for their conscious voting and emphasized that that political solidarity movement in Xanthi should be an example and followed.

City Councils of Xanthi Mustafçova and Gökçeler; Komotini Sirkeli, Susurköy and Kozlukibir could not be separated more by the Greek authorities and they were left to Turkish minority and that was the underlying reason for such a success while Greek



authorities could not interfere. Habipoğlu continued "Greek authorities aim to prevent Turkish minority members to elect their own governors in regions where they are densely populated. That policy is named "Plan of Kapodistrias". In the framework of that plan, election areas are redefined by Greek authorities and regions where Turkish minority members are densely populated are divided into smaller election regions where Turkish minority lose their population power."

Eleven Turkish Candidates are in Rodop Province Council and four Turkish candidates from PASOK got the highest level of votes after the elected Governor of Rodop

"Eleven Turkish candidates (nine from PASOK; 2 from YDP) were elected for the Rodop Province Council and four Turkish candidates from PASOK got the highest level of votes after the elected Governor of Rodop" said Halit

Habipoğlu and he underlined "With the latest regulations, Greek authorities eliminated the election possibility of Turkish candidates. Best proof for that can be summarized as; four candidates who got the highest level of votes after the elected Greek Governor of Rodop are the Turkish candidates. When we consider the population ratio of Turkish Minority in Rodop, it would be quite easy to elect a Turkish Governor. But with the "extended governorship" regulation, Komotini, Dedeagaç, Xanthi, Drama and Kavala were united and became one election area. With that regulation specially designed against Turkish candidates, Turkish voters lost their population power and remained as minority without any right to elect their own governor."

Halit Habipoğlu wanted to remind the political unrest in Greek politics due to the ethnic identity of Gülbeyaz Karahasan when she was nominated as candidate from PASOK for the "Extended Governorship of Xanthi, Kavala, Drama". In addition to election barriers of mayors and governors, there is the 3% election barrage that is applied to independent candidates, are all specially designed not to give chance to the Turkish minority to exercise their political rights and exclude them from administrative jobs, underlined Halit Habipoğlu.

Meanwhile, Halit Habipoğlu pointed out the necessity to change that unfair election system in the framework of democracy and permit the Turkish minority to elect their own representatives.

General Assembly Discussed The Turkish Minority

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), participated 5th International General Assembly of Western Thrace Turks with a delegation of 19 people, members of Executive Committee and ABTTF experts, between 15-17 September 2006 in Istanbul.



5. Uluslararası Batı Trakya Türkleri Kurultayı
5th International Assembly of Western Thrace Turks
15-17 Eylül / September 2006, İstanbul

► Interest in the Assembly organized by Istanbul Western Thrace Solidarity Association was worth mentioning. Prime Minister of Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a speech as well.

Western Thrace Turkish Minority members from Greece, Germany, USA and Australia expressed unfair implementations of Greek authorities and told their up to date situation. After analyzing the current situation, new solution oriented policies were determined by the participants.

Erol Kaşifoğlu, chairman of Istanbul Western Thrace Solidarity Association and Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of ABTTF, made the opening speech. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of Turkish Republic, said that

Government of Turkish Republic took diplomatic initiatives many times to solve the problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority with the Greek Government but Greek authorities did not give positive response to those diplomatic initiatives. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan underlined that Turkish Republic always backed Turkish Minority in Greece and he added that the treaties related with the minorities in both countries could be reviewed in case of the continuity of the problems in Greece.

Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of ABTTF, emphasized in his speech that Western Thrace Turkish Minority members are still subject to

economical, political and social discrimination as well as xenophobia and continued "The legal status of Istanbul Greeks were determined by Treaty of Lausanne as of Western Thrace Turkish Minority. When there is a problem related with Istanbul Greeks, that problem is conveyed to world public with great support of Greece. But Western Thrace Turkish Minority, whose population number is more than Istanbul Greeks, can not even use the their basic rights guaranteed by Treaty of Lausanne, to say nothing of new rights other than the existing ones."

During the Assebly, ABTTF newspapers published in 4 different languages; scientific works, press watch reports were on public parade and got serious attention from the participants

Meanwhile, members of ABTTF Executive Committee and experts made presentations on six different subjects; Local Governments, Political Participation, Law and Human Rights, Education and Culture, Religion and Foundations, International Relations Press and Information and Economics.



Western Thracians Have Excitement For Taking Action

Opening Speech of Halit Habipoğlu, the President of ABTTF at General Assembly

► Dear Mr. Prime Minister,
Dear Mr. President,
Dear Members of Administrative Board,
Dear Western Thracians,
Dear Guests,

You are welcome to the "5th International Western Thrace Turks Congress" which is organized by the Head Office of the Cooperation Association of Western Thrace Turks. I talk to you on behalf of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe which is the representative of Western Thrace Turkish Society in Europe. Before starting my speech, I want to convey lovely regards of all members of Western Thrace Turkish Society of Europe who can not attend to the congress.

Dear guests,

ABTTF, whom I am the president of, was established in 1988 to notice the voice of our minority to international institutions and West European countries. ABTTF, as the volunteer envoy of our minority in Europe, do many lobby works for solution of our problems, from this time. ABTTF, which breaks through important successes from its establishment, had the most important result of its works by membership of the UN ECOSOC, in July of this year, 2006.

Dear guests,

Western Thrace Turks live as minority in Greece for 80 years. Despite all injustices that she faced with, our minority has always been pacifist and protected her respectful attitude to the laws. In 1923, some rights in the fields of education, religion, property and citizenship were recognized with international agreements for us, as minority. But unfortunately, we could not use these rights and we, as minority, had great problems.



The important one of these is prohibition of our Turkish identity in the public sphere.

The oldest institutions of our minority were closed by Greek official authorities because of having the term of "Turk" in their names.

The Muftis who were selected by our minority have not been recognized for years and the persons who are not approved by our minority have been appointed to this place instead of them.

Thousands of our people were deprived of their Greek citizenships just because of their "Turkish" identity and their Greek citizenships have not been repatriated yet.

The quality of "education in own language", which is the natural right of Western Thrace Turks, have been decreased by the laws made in last 40 years.

Greece still attempts to eliminate "Turkish education" in the future. The situation of waqfs which could not select their own administrators for 40 years, is lamentable.

In addition to these, the minority faces with discrimination in the public sphere. Even in the areas whose Turkish population is more than half of the whole population, there are only a few members of the minority working

in the public sector. Shortly, our minority still faces with discrimination and xenophobia in economic, political and social spheres, in Greece, a European Union member country.

Status of Greeks in İstanbul is determined by the Treaty of Lausanne just as Western Thrace Turks. But, when there is any problem about Greeks in İstanbul, this problem is strongly narrated to the world public with support of Greece. For example, the cases of İstanbul Fener Greek Patriarchate and Theological School of Heybeliada are used as trump in the scope of "minority rights in Turkey", in Turkey's process of European Union membership, by Greece.

When it is examined by the minority in Greece being the member of European Union: Western Thrace Turks, who have much more population than Greeks in İstanbul, apart from demanding their existing rights, even can not use the basic rights given by national and international texts. Minorities are richnesses of a country in which they live with their different language, religion and culture. Because of this reason, there are important agreements about democracy and minority rights in the European Law. Besides, every state gives special rights to her own minorities. This situation is the same, even in Poland, in Czech Republic, in Slovakia and in Hungary which has become European Union members newly. Not only our minority, but also other minorities are under pressure in Greece. Not only, we say that, but also, this is written on the reports of objective human rights organizations. We have to claim our rights. The facilities that are provided to us by the European Union will be the source for solution of our problems. We should not be afraid of demanding our rights. The right is not given, it is taken.

For this reason my dear quarrel friends,
Dear Western Thracians,

We should turn to Europe and we should continue to our right claim contestation in Europe. We should bring out existing

democracy and human rights violations in Greece, European Union member country. We, as ABTTF, are ready to do our duty. We are in conscious and in faith of the response that we have. Unity, cooperation and brotherhood atmosphere, existing here today, shows that Western Thracians have enough excitement for this struggle that will be had. Furthermore, there is no doubt that our mother country Turkey which is guarantor state, claims us adequately.

Dear Western Thracians,

I want to mention the coming elections. As you all know, local elections will be held in October, in Greece. Unfortunately, the candidates who are not belong to minority had taken the majority of the minority's votes. Elections have a great importance for representation of our minority in the administration. We can show our strength only if we are in administration. The number of votes that will be given to Turkish candidates is important to show our strength and unity. Because of this reason, I want all Western Thracians to vote only to Turkish candidates,

to whichever political party they are belong to.

Dear Western Thracians,

Dear guests,

When I finish my speech, I greet all of you with my best regards, and, I hope 5th International Western Thrace Turks Congress to afford best developments for our minority. Besides, I thank to dear our prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan once again, who honours us with his attendance in such an important day for us.

Cases of Elected Muftis at Europe Economics Forum



ABTTF as being the unique Non-Governmental Organization that was invited to 7th Annual North-South Europe Economics Forum, conveyed the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members problems to 150 delegates of 38 countries.

► 7th Annual North-South Europe Economics Forum, which was organized by Institute for European Affairs and Norwegian Foreign Relations Ministry, was held between 28-29 September in Oslo, the capital city of Norway.

Due to the recent events, the theme on the agenda was "Coexistence of Religions-Values and Tolerance" ABTTF was invited to the Forum because of the cases of elected Muftis of Komotini and Xanthi, Ibrahim Şerif, Mehmet Emin Ağa respectively at European Court of Human Rights.



Jonas Gahr Støre, minister of Norwegian Foreign Affairs, Dr. Şarık Tara, honorary member of Council of Foreign Economics Relation and founder of North-South Europe Economics Forum, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Gramke, former Germany Prime Minister and chairman of INEA, Jan Figel, European Union Commissioner of Education and Culture, Mesut Yılmaz, former Prime Minister of Turkish Republic. In addition, Ministers, former ministers, representatives of various institutions, experts and media members participated the Forum whose patron was Norwegian Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg. The top themes to be discussed during the Forum were cooperation between South and North Europe, strategic cooperation for a better integration in Europe and the communication with non-EU countries. Due to the dramatic events experienced recently in Europe, the first day of the organization was devoted to "Tolerance between religions".



Prof. Dr. Jürgen Gramke, former Germany Prime Minister and chairman of INEA, made the opening speech of the 7th Annual South North European Forum and criticised West European countries as they did not spend the necessary money for tolerance between the religions while they spent great amount of sources for fighting against terrorism.

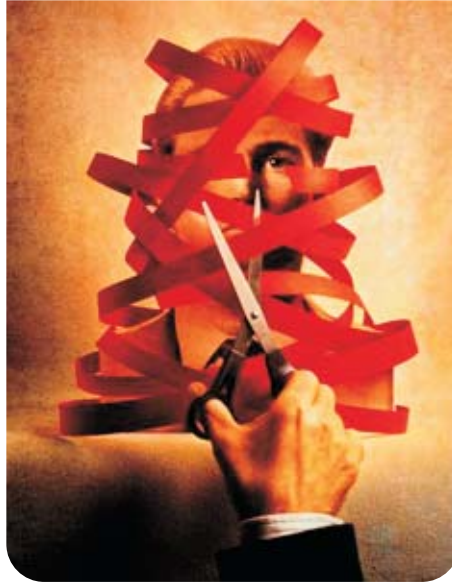
Dr. Şarık Tara, honorary member of Council of Foreign Economics Relation and founder of North-South Europe Economics Forum, emphasized that in history more than enough wars were experienced because of religion. He continued as "During the post war era of rising nationalism and the cold war period, European countries sought scape goat that was responsible for all worrisome happenings and Islam was selected as the scape goat.

Jonas Gahr Støre, minister of Norwegian Foreign Affairs, explained that in Norway, there

were no problems related with neither Islam fobia nor racism. He emphasized that he evaluated "Islamic Terror" so wrong and in his opinion, Islam was being abused by different groups. He continued as "For peace and solidarity, dialog between religions is urgent and dialog establishes bridges between different communities."

Tolerance between religions and economic problems of European Union were the top themes of the Forum during two days. Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe and Nesrin Hatzimehmet, translator, conveyed the problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members to the 150 delegates of 38 countries.

The status of the elected Muftis has not been officially recognized yet as conveyed by Halit Habipoğlu. In addition, the cases of İbrahim Şerif and Mehmet Emin Aga, the elected muftis of Komotini and Xanthi respectively were also



explained. As mentioned before, cases of the Muftis at European Court of Human Rights were succesfully won. Those cases, that were won, show that European Court of Human Rights approve the human rights violations

committed by Greece in Western Thrace aganist Turkish Minority members.

Public record of the cases of İbrahim Şerif and Mehmet Emin Aga, the elected muftis of Komotini and Xanthi respectively were distributed to the delegates by Halit habipoğlu and they attracted serious attention from the delegates. Also monthly newsletters of ABTTF published in Greek, Turkish, English and Turkish were given consideration.

Halit Habaipoğlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, evaluated their actions during two days Forum as "ABTTF was the unique NGO invited to the 7th Annual North South European Forum and we found the opportunity to convey the problems of out minority to the international public attention. We also met scholars who desire to make cooperation with our Federation on future projects. Our international actions carry great importance for our minority's future".

Akılhoğlu: ABTTF Has Caught a Great Opportunity

Letter from Prof. Dr. Tekin Akılhoğlu

► Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) is admitted as Non-Governmental Organization in Special Consultative Status with United Nations Economic and Social Council as of July 2006.

Personally, I evaluate this news as a great achievement. The number of NGOs listed with ECOSOC is about three thousand but number of Turkish NGOs can not exceed ten in total. The success of ABTTF can be explained through its regular works and publications. They cry the problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority over the international organizations and they have the ability to express those problems in written forms as well. Their simple and clear language used in



press releases and booklets proves the seriousness of ABTTF.

Absolutely, United Nations is the most important international organization. It is very important to be admitted as NGO with this organization. ABTTF will have the opportunity to be a NGO with Council of Europe and European Union after being accredited by ECOSOC. Becoming an international NGO gives

two functions to ABTTF. First of those two is that Greek authorities will listen to the words of ABTTF more carefully from now on because of its special consultative status with ECOSOC and the second to mention is that European Union as well as Council of Europe will consider the works of ABTTF more carefully. ABTTF has the potential to become very effective in the minority problems and local government issues by European Union.

European Commission aganist Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Commission of Local and Regional Administrations, European Social Charter will take the information, statements and complaints conveyed by ABTTF into consideration more carefully from now on.

Briefly, ABTTF has caught a great opportunity and has opened a way. There is a long way further and I congratulate Halit Habipoğlu and his colleagues...

ABTTF Conveyed The Problems of Turkish Minority in OSCE Meetings



ABTTF uttered the "Citizenship and Political Participation" problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority on the first day of OSCE Warsaw Meetings, 2-3 October and on the second day problems related with "Freedom of Association and Human Rights" were discussed.

► Özkan Reşit and Association of University Graduates represented ABTTF, Western Thrace Turkish Minority respectively at the meetings. Mr. Reşit said that Greek authorities have been very reluctant towards the problems of Turkish and Macedonian Minorities for years and responsible authorities have been keeping the problems unsolved. There has been no improvement aiming a clear cut solution.

Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of ABTTF, made a statement on topic and said "Greece always considers his minority as a danger and due to this point of view, Greek authorities never accept their mistake and do not take initiative to form a clear, peace oriented minority policy. We should not forget the fact that minorities always enrich countries, where they live, in every means."

No Administrative Duties for Turks

Reşit emphasized that Turkish minority had serious problems related with political participation and they were not represented fairly at the parliament. He continued "Election barrier of 3% in accordance with political

stability and equality in political representation that is implemented to all political parties is acceptable but the same election barrier is being implemented on personal base and that is not only undemocratic but also unacceptable. After the success of Western Thrace Turkish minority independent candidates during 1990's elections, Greek authorities decided to implement election barrier to independent candidates as to restrict political rights of the minority. We reiterate our demand of election barrier of 3% to be implemented only to political parties. Kapodistrias' Plan anticipates the union the election areas and that aims to prevent the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members to elect their own governor of province in their election areas.

Gülbeyaz Karahasan was nominated as the candidate for governor of İskeçe-Kavala-Drama province. Conservatives as well as other parties in the community overreacted to the candidacy of Gülbeyaz Karahasan and demanded her to announce the public that "she is a Greek woman". The interesting point here is that the center point of all discussions on the theme is the "Turkish identity" of the candidate

No Improvement

Mr. Özkan emphasized the citizenship rights violations of Greece and made the following statement "19th Article of the Greek Citizenship Law, that was issued in 1955 and implemented between 1955-1988, caused directly or

indirectly 46.638 Western Thrace Turks to lose their citizenship by a very simple administrative decision due to their ethnic origin as we discussed in the former meetings. The article was abolished in 1988 as a result of international pressures but it was not implemented retrospectively and due to this, the victims of the mentioned law still have serious problems and are aggrieved by that unfair implementation. We repeat our call to our country, Greece to give Western Thrace Turkish minority their basic rights back. We believe strongly, Europe that is established on the principles of peace, welfare and freedom will not accept such an unfair implementation. Greek's problem concentrating on our "Turkish identity" has been known for years. Our organizations were formally closed due to their names containing "Turk" and the last of the cases lasting since 80's at European Human Rights Court will be adjudicated as we hope.

Greek Delegation used their right to reply and they claimed that there was no Turkish minority but instead Muslim minority and Turkish minority members formed a part of Muslim minority.

Mr. Reşit commented that answer as "Greece still denies the national identity of the the minorities in the country. Such a denial is a human rights problem. National identity comes before religion while religion is an individualistic fact. Meanwhile, minorities in Greece can not exercise their right of religion."

Cooperation with Council of Europe in Progress



Michel Hunault, French Parliamentarian, who is in charge to prepare a report on the minorities in Turkey and Greece, accepted the cooperation offer of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

► Michel Hunault, French Parliamentarian of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was nominated to prepare a report on the minorities in Turkey and Greece, accepted to be in contact with Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe during the preparation phase of the report and he



expressed his willingness to meet with Halit Habipoğlu before he presents his report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

After the Turkish and Greece Delegations of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe gave a notice of question about the situation of Turkish and Greece minorities living in Turkey and Greece, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe nominated Michel Hunault, French Parliamentarian, to prepare a report on the Turkish and Greece



minorities. Federation of Western Thrace Turks, whose only aim is to bring the unfair implementations of Turkish Minority living in Western Thrace up on international platforms and help them to get their basic rights by the support of world public, has been voluntarily taking various actions for 18 years.

With this leading idea in mind, Federation of Western Thrace Turks wrote a letter to Mr. Hunault to celebrate his new duty as well as to offer cooperation during the preparation phase of the mentioned report.

Alivizatos: Muslim Turks Are Not Equal Citizens

► Government of Turkish Republic continuously bring up the problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Greece on international and national platforms. But this time, who brings up the "Turkish identity" and "deprivation of Greek citizenship" problems of Western Thrace Minority is not the Government of Turkish Republic but the most prestigious Professor of Law in University of Athens, Nikos Alivizatos. In his article in TA NEA, leading newspaper of Greece, he points out that Greece does not obey the minority rules specially considering Turkish minority, as an European Union member country. He emphasizes that Turkish minority members

are still not equal in front of the law, specially in means of individualistic, social and political rights in spite of some constitutional reforms.

Prof. Alivizatos article in TA NEA

Prof. Alivizatos points out that 1967-1974 Greek military junta implementations are still applied in spite of all the warnings from European Union. As an example of such implementations, Prof. said that Turkish minority members were deprived of their citizenship and have not got yet when they left the country only for 3 months although they paid their taxes to Greece during those

months. Prof. Alivizatos also utters that usage of "Turk" in the naming of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority associations was announced to be illegal by the Greek Supreme Court of Appeals and such an implementation is clearly contradictory to European Union principles.

He also underlines that objections against the governor candidacy of Gülbeyaz Karahasan, member of Western Thrace Turkish Minority, was completely against democracy. He also states that in Christian Greece families with 3 children get salary from Government of Greek while no salary is provided for Muslim Greek families with 3 children.

ABTTTF - UN ECOSOC Working Groups Will Be Established

► Halit Habipoğlu, the President of ABTTTF, expressed that ABTTTF would much more concentrate on international lobby activities and would give much more importance on studies in academic sphere after its acceptance to UN-ECOSOC membership, and, he said: "in addition to existing Political Activities and Lobby Group, we, as the Federation, decided to UN-ECOSOC establish a working group for our international activities and academic studies, we are open to everybody who wants to work with us".

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF), which has been accepted to UN-ECOSOC membership in the last July, has opportunity to work much more actively in

international arena, by the status of privileged non-governmental organization with support and help of the UN. In the scope of ECOSOC membership, the Federation will have activities about minority rights, migration, international law, religion, human rights, local administrations, education, culture, economy, development, family, women, children and youth, and the Federation calls everybody who are interested in these subjects to work together.

Habipoğlu emphasized that ABTTTF, which had made studies about violated rights of Turkish Minority living in Western Thrace by Greece since 1998, had broken through lots of important successes, and he said: "Minority

rights have been coming into value day by day in the European Union, in which human rights are thought as to be indispensable part of civilization. Not only within the scope of human rights, but also, because of their contribution to cultural mosaic to the countries they live in, minorities play important role in the countries where they live in. But, unfortunately, facts in Western Thrace show that Greece could not reach to this kind of consciousness yet. We want to realize projects primarily about minority rights, migration, international law, and other aspects. In the direction of topics mentioned above, we need young, dynamic and creative people who will work together with us".

Do you want to work with us?

If you want to work with ABTTTF,
you can send an application to the address

ABTTTF • Johannisstraße 50, 58452 Witten - Deutschland

In addition, you can contact with us and get information
at the web site www.abttf.org or
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