

# Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa Newsletter

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
Member of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  
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## ABTTT paid a study visit to Brussels



ABTTT President Halit Habip Oğlu discussed the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace with MEPs Pál Csáky, Nedzhmi Ali and Ilhan Kyuchuk

The President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTT) Halit Habip Oğlu paid on November 13, 2014 a one-day study visit to Brussels to hold a series of talks. Accompanied by the officer at ABTTT Brussels Office, ABTTT President discussed during his visit the basic and current issues of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace with the members of European Parliament (EP) Pál Csáky (Slovakia/EPP-Christian Democrats), Nedzhmi Ali (Bulgaria/ALDE-Liberal Democrats) and Ilhan Kyuchuk (Bulgaria/ALDE-Liberal Democrats) and diplomat Dr. Krisztián Manzinger who is in

charge of minority issues at the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the European Union (EU).

It was asked from MEPs their supports to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the EP

During the study visit, firstly it was met with MEP Pál Csáky (EPP-Christian Democrats) who belongs to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia in his office in the EP. ABTTT President Habip Oğlu informed Csáky, who was elected to EP from the Hungarian minority party in Slovakia, about the Turkish minority's fundamental problems and recent developments in the region and exchanged views on joint efforts can be made for the Turkish minority within the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National

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Communities and Languages that is expected to be established during the new period under the umbrella of the EP as it was done in the past.

Then, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu met separately in their offices with the MEPs Nedzhmi Ali (ALDE-Liberal Democrats) and Ilhan Kyuchuk (ALDE-Liberal Democrats) who both belong to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Habip Oğlu firstly congratulated them on having been elected to the EP in 2014 and then he informed them about the basic and current problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and asked for MEPs' support for the joint activities in the EP and the minorities intergroup. Also, Habip Oğlu congratulated the two MEPs on the Rights and Freedoms Movement's accomplishment in the last national elections in Bulgaria and gave



them Turkish coffee from Western Thrace as a gift.

After completing talks with the MEPs, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu met with

the diplomat Dr. Krisztián Manzinger who is responsible for minority issues at the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the EU. During the meeting, Manzinger having as a task area minority groups in Europe stated his wish to cooperate with ABTTF in order to learn more about the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and see the whole picture. Moreover, ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu informed Manzinger by emphasizing the autonomous structure of the Turkish Minority Western Thrace in the fields of education and religion according to the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty but this autonomous structure has been damaged on purpose at different times by the Greek State due to various practices and today it doesn't function in practice anymore and mufti and foundations problems are very good examples for this situation.

## ABTTF met with HRWF Int'l and ENAR in Brussels

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habip Oğlu and ABTTF Executive Board member Sami Yusuf paid a one-day working visit to Brussels on 10 December 2014. Accompanied by the ABTTF Brussels Office, Habip Oğlu and Yusuf met with Willy Fautre, Director of the Human Rights Without Frontiers International (HRWF Int'l) and Michael Privot, Director of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) during the working visit.

### Current problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and cooperation issues discussed

Firstly, the ABTTF delegation met with Willy Fautre at HRWF Int'l's head office. Particularly, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu conveyed the current problems of the Turkish Minority Western Thrace in the fields of religion and education. He said despite the opposition of the Minority, the draft bill which includes amendments in minority education and



is a new blow to the Minority's educational autonomy was accepted in the Greek Parliament on 27 November 2014. Habip Oğlu added their wish as ABTTF to move forward the current collaboration with HRWF Int'l in the coming period regarding human and minority rights issues and make joint efforts on problems related to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace as they did in the past.

The second meeting during the working visit was held at ABTTF Brussels Office with Michael Privot, Director of ENAR which is one of the leading NGOs in the field of combating racism and discrimination in Europe. After informing ABTTF delegation about ENAR's basic working areas, Privot talked about these working areas as collecting data on the equality field, not letting minorities and immigrants face discrimination in employment and economy and ensure equal opportunities, developing specific strategies for minorities, supporting of civil society organizations to join their forces in human rights and fundamental rights and through this way strengthening their voice and the fight against racism and hate-motivated crimes. Finally, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu expressed the desire to engage in collaborative work together and to develop cooperation with ENAR within the scope of the fight against discrimination and racism towards the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece.

# ABTTF attended the 7th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues

ABTTF and BTAYTD voiced hate speech and hate crimes targeting against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the session

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated in the 7th session of the Forum on Minority Issues of the United Nations (UN) that was held from 25 to 26 November 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was represented by the ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group members Özkan Reşit ve Funda Reşit and Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) members Pervin Hayrullah and Aysel Homko at the session entitled “Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities” and voiced the hate speech and hate crimes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is exposed to.

## The perception of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece as “other” must end

Speaking in the first day of the session under the third agenda item “Understanding the root causes of violence and atrocity crimes”, WTMUGA member Aysel Homko said hate crimes are motivated ones because of having crime perpetrators of the victims different backgrounds and characteristics, and in many cases the perpetrators are affected throughout history by mold after learning them in a systematic way but also the perception of “other” plays an important role. She also said in Greece, the country's repressive and discriminatory policies of assimilation rely on the provocative nature of majority press and this causes to be victim of these policies the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, immigrants and others for being different from the



Greek Orthodox majority. Moreover, Greece does not take any measures related to the elimination of the Turkish minority grievances which exposes hate speech or crimes, and the reason behind these crimes and motives relies on not only the historical prejudice of offenders but also law-makers, government officials and media entrepreneurs according to Homko. In Western Thrace, hate motivated crimes and hate speech includes examples such as harm, draw provocative slogans

on walls, tombs and the Turkish minority associations walls and recently pork cut in front of the worship belongings.

Hate motivated attacks targeting against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace showed a significant increase in the recent years

Speaking under the fourth agenda item “Improving prevention of violence and atrocity crimes”, member of the ABTTF International Affairs and Lobbying Group member Funda Reşit talked about the rapid rise of far-right extremism and aggressive nationalism in Europe recently which has led to violence and hate crimes against minorities. The extreme rightist groups in Greece have also targeted against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace of which status and rights have been established by the Lausanne Peace Treaty in 1923 and violence and hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority have increased rapidly, which have created an environment of fear and anxiety among the persons belonging to the Minority. Besides, the persistent hate speech in the mainstream media with an explicit manifestation of hatred against Turkey makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which members are all Greek citizens, a vulnerable target for extreme rightist groups and a striking example of this according to Reşit was the attack of the supporters of the extreme right Golden Dawn Party on 29 March 2013 to Cüneyt Serdar belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at Xanthi city centre. Reşit completed her speech making recommendations to Greece, which aim to prevent the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace from hate motivated crimes.

## ABTTF participated in the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Board Director of Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (C.E.F.O.M.) Pervin Hayrullah at this meeting, highlighted the rights of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace and the exposed xenophobia and intolerance were laid on the table.

ABTTF participated in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting held between 29-30 September 2014 by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The programme that was organised at the capital of Poland in Warsaw, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace Turks were represented by ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group members Bülent Aptouraim, Funda Reşit and (C.E.F.O.M.) Board Director Pervin Hayrullah.

### Importance of education and active participation in society

OSCE Minorities High Commissioner Astrid Thors made an opening speech at the meeting's 'minority members rights' part and stated that social solidarity and cohesion could take place only if the education and active participation works together and the abuse of training can be used for national interests. High commissioner, recommended the opening of minority schools after underlining the contribution of ethnic communities at the determination of teaching materials. In addition, he expressed the need of kindergarten aged children's to receive education in their mother tongue before learning the country's official language.

After this talk, ABTTF representative



Funda Reşit gave a speech about the Western Thrace Turkish Minority kindergarten problem. Reşit reminded the Lausanne Treaty's 3rd section which determines the minority's rights "Minority has the right to establish, manage its own schools, other educational institutions, mosques, foundations and other social institutions and use their own language in these institutions and worship freely". However, it was stressed that in Greece, in 2006 according to the 3518 numbered law that was adopted preschool education became compulsory to all five years old children but it was not made any regulations for minority schools and this way the Minority's arising educational rights from Lausanne Treaty have been violated. Funda Reşit has outlined three proposals on this issue at the end of her speech. Firstly, she demanded the establishment of bilingual minority Kindergartens, secondly the state Kindergartens should provide bilingual education until the opening of the minority ones and finally it must be allowed the establishment of private

kindergartens in the region. Another participant of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace Turks (C.E.F.O.M.) Board Director Pervin Hayrullah mentioned about the 0.5% quota application that was launched in 1995, in Greece for university entrance but at the calculation of scores of Turkish minority high school students' school ratings are not taken into account and this is a great disadvantage for university entrance for Turkish minority high school students. Hayrullah also said that she will be very pleased to see a skilled person from the delegation of OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities to visit the European Union's most underdeveloped regions that is to say Western Thrace in order to experience the realities first-hand.

Then, the representative of Greece used his right to reply and said that the number of Muslim students attending college has increased in recent years. The representative continued saying that there are 57 kindergarten schools for minorities and the Greek government gave importance to receive minorities education in mother tongue and they were careful at languages and religions integration.

### Ensuring Representation Rights and Equal Opportunity



Speaking at the active participation of Minority in society and representation rights session, Minority Rights Group International General Manager Mark Lattimer stated the duty of state to take responsibility in order to have integrated the minorities to society and make efforts especially in the fields of education.

Speaking at the same session, ABTTF representative Funda Reşit, pointed

Western Thrace Turkish Minority's underrepresentativeness in decision-making processes in the national and regional levels. She also talked about the presence of an electoral system like "Reinforced proportionality" which causes Western Thrace Turkish Minority of members not be elected as an independent candidate to parliament. Lastly, she demanded from the Greek government the removal of 3% threshold

in national elections so this way it should be provided to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority active participation in politics at regional, local and national level and active role in the decision-making process.

After that, speaking at the same session (C.E.F.O.M.) Board Director Pervin Hayrullah emphasized the fact that although the Western Thrace Turkish Minority represents half of the population in the region, faces social discrimination like not receiving task in high positions in the military and there is not single Turkish policeman after stating the presentation importance of the equality of opportunity.

The Greek representative responded to this issue saying that in almost every parliamentary elections, Turks and Romanians enter parliament and currently there are three Turkish deputies. Furthermore, he indicated that 3% threshold is one of the lowest rates available in Europe, and 1,500 citizens from minority served in the various institutions of the state.

## Struggle against Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination

Speaking at the session of tolerance and combating discrimination, Prof. Talip Küçükcan stated that violence against Muslims increased with each passing day and the police had raided mosques in order to search for weapons under the moderation of "The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance" representative Michael Whine. Küçükcan also raised his concerns about rapidly spread of hate speech against Muslims through social media and stressed closely monitoring of this kind of activities. On the other hand, ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group member Funda Reşit added the need of banning the racist parties in the political sense and punishment of hateful rhetoric.

## ABTTF participated in the UN Human Rights Council's 27th Regular Session

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated on 23-24 September 2014 in the 27<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council. Funda Reşit and Fatih Hafız Mehmet, both members of the ABTTF International Affairs and Lobbying Group, represented the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the Session held in Geneva, Switzerland.



The discrimination experienced by the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the field of education and bilingual minority kindergartens problem was brought both orally and in writing on the agenda of the UN



ABTTF as an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC of the United Nations participated in the meeting addressed by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein and attended by hundred diplomats, civil society representatives, academics and experts. ABTTF International Affairs and Lobbying Group member Funda Reşit spoke about the discrimination the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece has been experiencing in the field of education and bilingual minority kindergartens issue under the agenda item 9 entitled "Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" during the general debate at the session.



Reşit reminded the Section 3 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923, which defines minority rights enshrined in the said Treaty. Under the Section 3, the



Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an "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". However, Reşit set forth, in accordance with Law 3518/2006, the pre-school education for all children at the age of 5 has been made compulsory in Greece, and since the regarding law does not bring any regulation concerning minority schools belonging to the Turkish Minority, it contradicts with the principle of Minority's educational autonomy enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty. Reşit concluded his speech by reminding Greece to fulfill promptly her obligations and commitments arising from the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty and relevant international human rights treaties to which she is a party, and said the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace urges the Greek Government to establish bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace in line with the minority schooling system, to give bilingual education in public kindergartens in the region until bilingual minority schools are established, and finally, to allow the Minority to establish private kindergartens where the instruction is both in Turkish and Greek languages.

ABTTF, in addition to its oral statement, submitted a written statement entitled "Discrimination in minority education: The problem of bilingual minority kindergartens in Greece" to the 27<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council. The full text of the said written statement can be accessed at: [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage\\_e.aspx?b=10&se=156&t=7](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?b=10&se=156&t=7).

# Problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace conveyed to the delegation from Finland

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a study visit to Thessaloniki on 14 October 2014. The delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace consisting of the ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, ABTTF Director K. Engin Soyylmaz, the Friendship, Equality Peace (FEP) Party President Mustafa Ali Çavuş and FEP Party Working Group of International Affairs member Ali Ali Remzioğlu met with representatives of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland who were paying a study visit to Greece regarding the minority issues.

Greece should put an end to “other” oriented policy over minority

During the meeting held with the Finnish delegation under the chairmanship of Johan Häggman who served until recently as information and communication officer and team coordinator for multilingualism events at the European Commission Directorate-General for Translation, which consisted of eight people in total that is to say, the representatives of the think tank “Magma” which is a think tank of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland and the Swedish Assembly of Finland “Folktinget” plus journalists from the Finnish state radio and television “YLE” and the Finnish news agency “FNB-SPT”, it was discussed in detail the fundamental and current problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in particular those related to the educational and religious autonomy of the Minority

At the meeting, it was expressed the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have been defined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty which was signed in 1923 between Greece and



Western Thrace, it was expressed a new law was adopted in 1990 in Greece and according to it, the application of 3% threshold not only for political parties but also for independent candidates across the country had started and due to the electoral threshold, the Minority, which reflects 1.5% of Greece's total population, it became impossible to choose independent MPs to Greek Parliament. It was also said that founded in 1991, the FEP Party experienced its first election excitement after participating for the first time in its history in European Parliament (EP) elections in Greece on 25 May 2014 but it could not send any deputies to the European Parliament although it ranked first party and received majority of votes in the provinces of Rodopi and Xanthi due to the 3% electoral threshold applied also to the EP elections.

During the meeting, it was also conveyed to the Finnish delegation, on the basis of the problems and discrimination suffered by the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lies the Greece's perception of minority as “other” and internal threat. Lastly, it was noted the need of Greece to take direct interlocutors and engage in constructive dialogue to make much easier to solve the problems of Minority based on good faith which whom the status and minority rights guaranteed by treaties.

Turkey and according to the Treaty, it is recognized an autonomous status to the Minority in the fields of religion and education, but today, it came to the point of disappearance of the structure actually due to the various laws and practices starting from 1967 in Greece, and one of the latest examples of this includes “240 Imams Law” which gives opportunity to the appointed religious officials to work at the mosques and in the public schools in Western Thrace.

With regard to the political representation of the Turkish Minority of

## ABTTF attends the first annual meeting of the FUEN Working Group of the Turkic Minorities

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated from 20 to 23 November 2014 in Ankara, Turkey in the first annual meeting of the Working Group of the Turkic Minorities having been established last year under the umbrella of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) of which ABTTF is a regular member. ABTTF was represented by the Executive Board member Sami Yusuf at the meeting attended also by FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Ođlu who initiated the meeting.



### FUEN member Turkic minority organizations comes together for the first time at a roundtable meeting

The event, which brought together presidents or other high-level representatives of the FUEN member organisations that represent the Turkic minorities in Europe, began with visits to historical and cultural places in Ankara such as Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey and the first historical building of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), and was followed by a visit to Ambassador Ali Naci Kuru, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. This first annual meeting is seen as a milestone for the Turkic minorities in Europe as they, for the first time, had the chance to come together and get aware of their problems/demands at the same platform.



The participating Turkic minority organisations were the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) from Germany; the Friendship, Equality and Peace Party (DEB) and the Western Thrace Minority University





Graduates Association (BTAYTD) from Greece; the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association from Turkey; the International Society of Meshketian Turks "VATAN" and the Social Organisation for Fostering and Development of the Karachay-Balkar Traditions "Bars EI" from Russia; the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People and the Association of Crimean Karaites from Ukraine and the Association of Meskhetian Turks "VATAN" from Azerbaijan.

The Working Group of the Turkic Minorities forms the third subgroup under the umbrella of FUEN after the Working Groups of the German and Slavic Minorities that were established much earlier already. The Working Group aims at representing the interests



and problems of the Turkic minorities at international platforms. The next annual



meeting of the Working Group will take place in 2015.

## Hate motivated attacks targeted against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace included in the OSCE-ODIHR's 2013 Hate Crime Reporting

The hate motivated attacks targeted against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece during 2013, which were reported to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) in April 2014, appeared in the OSCE-ODIHR's 2013 Hate Crime Reporting released in November 2014.

36 participating States and 109 civil society organizations from 45 countries submitted information to the OSCE-ODIHR's 2013 Hate Crime Reporting. By filling in the online questionnaire developed by the ODIHR for the participating States, Greece reported 109 total hate crimes recorded by police during 2013. According to the information presented by Greece, 9 hate crimes were prosecuted, but none of



them did not led to any criminal sentence.

[ABTTF reported to the OSCE the hate crimes which occurred in 2013 in Western Thrace](#)

ABTTF reported to the OSCE the hate motivated attacks targeted against the

persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and its establishments, the Muslim cemeteries and mosques in Western Thrace during 2013 and January-April 2014 period. The OSCE-ODIHR's Hate Crime Reporting included the hate motivated attack against Cüneyt Serdar belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the city centre of Xanthi on 29 March 2013, the attack against the Komotini Turkish Youth Union on 27 December 2013, the attack against the masjid in Alexandroupoli by leaving a pig's head cut into peaces on 13 April 2013 and the attack by tearing Quran and throwing neo-Nazi Golden Dawn Party leaflets at the local cemetery of Rhodes on 23 February 2013.

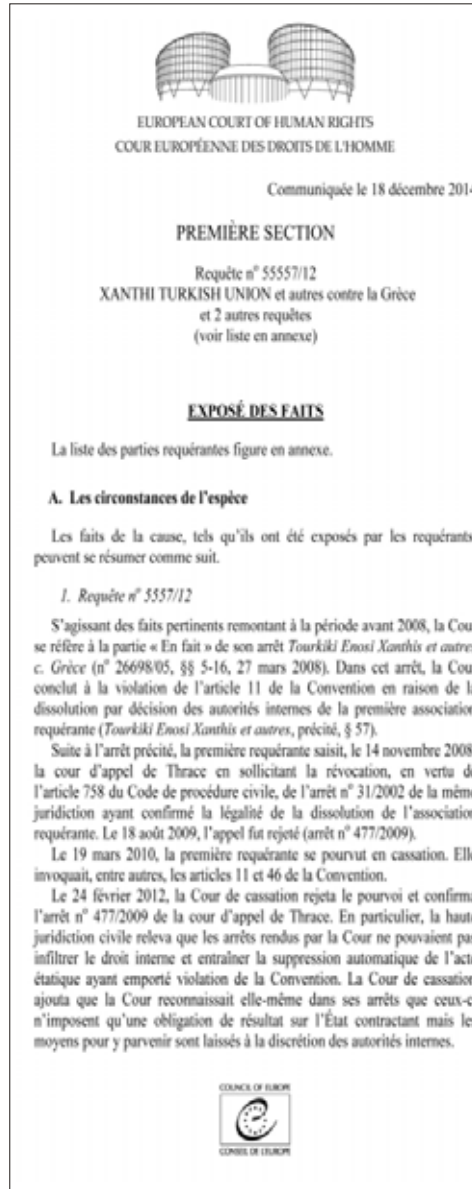
To the relevant section of the OSCE-ODIHR's Hate Crime Reporting regarding Greece can be accessed by clicking the link <http://hatecrime.osce.org/greece>.

## European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) will rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta group

ABTTF President, Halit Habip Oğlu: As ABTTF, we will continue to closely monitor this process and put it on the table at international platforms we take part

According to the statement issued on 5 January 2015, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) will rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (35151/05), Emin and others (34144/05) and Turkish Association of Xanthi and others (26698/05). This statement means that Greece will be re-judged by the ECtHR on the basis of its non-compliance with 3 court rulings in 2007 and 2008 with regard to the cases of Turkish Association of Xanthi, which was closed down with the claim that its name contained the word 'Turkish', along with Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture, which was refused to be founded and Evros Minority Youth Association, which was not registered officially on the grounds that the word 'minority' has a vague meaning.

ECtHR presented a notification letter to the Greek authorities on 21 December 2014 demanding information in relation to the cases it inspects under the name of Bekir Ousta group. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe warned several times Greece for its non-compliance with the ECtHR rulings on the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (2007), Emin and others (2008) and Turkish Association of Xanthi and others (2008). The Committee of Ministers already noted down that the cases of Evros Minority Youth Association (Bekir Ousta and others), Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture (Emin and others) and Turkish Association of Xanthi (Turkish



Association of Xanthi and others), which was closed down, were not handled again. The Committee also declared that Greek authorities did provide neither any concrete information nor a calendar on what kind of solution mechanisms they are trying to find in order to implement the ECtHR decisions. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe sent a strong message to Greece on 5 June 2014 in the form of an 'interim resolution', which is different from 'decisions' being the only form of outcome in earlier meetings, and demanded that Greek

authorities should present a calendar regarding the implementation of ECtHR decisions.

With its statement on 5 January 2015, ECtHR asked the plaintiffs who re-applied to the national courts right after the judgments of the ECtHR whether the rulings of the national courts following the decision of the Supreme Court could be considered as creating "new problems". ECtHR also requested from the parties to take into consideration the interim resolution of the Committee of Ministers dated back to June 2014.

The President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Halit Habip Oğlu stated, "The ECtHR's decision to re-evaluate 3 cases that it investigates under the common name of Bekir Ousta group is an expected result for us. Greece is violating the right of our minority to found an association. Despite the ECtHR rulings, the decision to close down the Turkish Association of Xanthi has not yet been lifted and therefore the legal identity has by no means been given to our association. Additionally, Evros Minority Youth Association and Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture were not officially registered yet. Committee of Ministers who has closely been following the process from 2008 onwards strongly warned Greece against its insistent violation the ECtHR decisions. ECtHR will now re-evaluate these 3 cases. As ABTTF, we will continue to closely monitor this process and put it on the table at international platforms we take part."

You can reach the relevant court decision at the following link:

[http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/Page/s/search.aspx#{"fulltext":\["xanthi turkish union"\],"itemid":\["001-150344"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/Page/s/search.aspx#{)

## Armed attack to the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo



ABTTF President, Halit Habip Oğlu: “If this attack provokes similar aggressions in Islamophobic, racial and xenophobic forms, this will not only pave the way for more hate-motivated discourse but also have a spillover effect for hatred-based racial violence to find broader space in our communities.”

An armed attack to the headquarter of satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo took place yesterday in Paris. 12 people lost their lives as a result of the attack carried out by 3 armed men at around 11:30. The editor-in-chief of the magazine Stephane Charbonnier who has been receiving death threats for a long time also died together with his 2 police escorts. The armed attackers also targeted a police car and clashed with the police officers on their way out of the crime scene.

The publication of the cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammed in November 2011 had received strong reactions from Muslims all over the world. France had to temporarily close down around 20 governmental representations and other public institutions abroad as a result of these reactions. According to the statements of one of the surviving cartoonists, the attackers claimed to be belonging to Al-Qaeda. The police declared that the attackers were running away and shouting as, “We took revenge for the prophet.”

Huge demonstrations took place yesterday throughout Europe right after this violence that caused tremendous shock for European and French public. Today, a nationwide mourning was declared in France.

In his speech after this terrible attack, the president of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Halit Habip Oğlu stated, “We very strongly

condemn this inhuman aggression and declare that we stand always against any kind of terrorist activities. We would like to assert our greatest sympathy and solidarity with the French people in this significantly tragic day. We wish the greatest patience to those who lost their beloved ones and speedy recovery to the wounded. We also believe that no connection should be sought between this attack and the religion of Islam, therefore this violence should not provoke further aggressions in Islamophobic, racial and xenophobic forms. Otherwise, the basis of co-existence would be damaged and this will not only pave the way for more hate-motivated discourse but also have a spillover effect for hatred-based racial violence towards Muslims to find broader space in our communities. All of us should stress our belief in humanity once more in these days and behave more rational.”

\*Photo: [www.cnnturk.com](http://www.cnnturk.com)



## Turkish signs in a toy store in Western Thrace were asked to be removed

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: “The efforts to deny insistently the existence of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace by some groups in Greece will benefit nobody and also will damage the peace and security environment in the region as well”

With the statement issued by the movement called “Thrace Citizens Initiative”, it was asked to be removed immediately the Turkish signs in a toy store that serves during the summer months within the boundaries of Iasmos (Yassıköy) municipality in Western Thrace. According to the Gündem newspaper, local authorities and relevant ministries were invited to the task for the removal of Turkish signs in Greece’s largest toy store company “Jumbo”’s Iasmos (Yassıköy) store. The company is using Greek and Turkish signs as well in its summer opened store in Iasmos considering the population density of the Turkish Minority in the region of Western Thrace.

Related to the topic, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in



Europe (ABTTF), Halit Habip Oğlu, said: “The usage of both Turkish and Greek signs by toy store company “Jumbo” which has opened in Iasmos (Yassıköy) where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives, is a logical and appropriate action. I congratulate “Jumbo” company executives for this application. We live in a democratic country where free market economy is prevails. Greece is not a state that neither is a banana republic nor is ruled by dictatorships. Some groups behave as if they newly discovered the existence of the Turkish Minority Western Thrace. There are many bilingual

minority schools that teach both in Turkish and Greek and two bilingual junior high and high schools as well including Iasmos (Yassıköy) in Western Thrace. Like the efforts of denying the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, whom which the rights and status were guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty and is autonomous in the fields of education and religion, by some groups will not benefit anyone but rather will damage peace and tranquillity in the region. Both majority and Minority together should not let these efforts and approaches.”

### ABTTF Newsletter

The ABTTF Newsletter in four languages, namely in Turkish, English, Greek and German, is celebrating its ninth year.

The ABTTF Newsletter, in which the matters of grave concern to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, recent developments and current events in Western Thrace and Greece, in particular pertaining to the minority issues and policies, international activities and lobbying of ABTTF aimed at obtaining solutions for the for the problems of the Turkish minority through democracy and peace and information on the activities of the associations of the Turkish minority throughout Europe and the world are dealt with, is being followed with great interest not only by Western Thrace Turks, but also by large parts of the public.

To have more information on subscription to the ABTTF Newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### ABTTF

#### Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe  
Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa  
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