

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
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)



No. 34 | August 2016 | Year 12

Turkish Minority of Western Thrace took part in 2016 FUEN Congress



ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu was re-elected as FUEN Vice-president at the congress where Turkish minority was represented by ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party who are the full members of FUEN.

Turkish Minority of Western Thrace took part in the 61. Congress of FUEN that took place in Wroclaw/Breslau, Poland during 18-22 May 2016. Turkish minority was represented by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party at the congress hosted by the the Association of the German Socio-Cultural Organisations in Poland (VdG). ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, Vice-presidents Mehmet Hüseyin and Mustafa Kasap, K. Engin

Soyyılmaz from ABTTF Head Office, Onur Mustafa Ahmet from WTMUGA and Attorney Sinan Kavaz from FEP Party attended the congress which hosted 150 representatives from 54 organisations in 27 European countries. The president of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (full member of FUEN) Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kaymakçı was also present at the congress. A new president was elected at the congress and ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu was re-elected as FUEN Vice-president.

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu was re-elected as FUEN Vice-president at FUEN Board of Delegates

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ABTTF News

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu was re-elected as FUEN Vice-president for a 3-year term at FUEN Board of Delegates after the elections held for FUEN Presidency Council composed of 7 members. Being a member of Hungarian minority in Romania, Loránt Vincze who is the vice-president of FUEN was elected as new President of FUEN and succeeded Hans Heinrich Hansen who has occupied this position for the last 9 years.



The draft resolution presented by the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace delegation composed of ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party on the systematic violations by Greece of the educational and religious autonomy guaranteed by international treaties as well as the draft resolution on the problems of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks on education in mother tongue, religion, foundations and cultural properties were approved by the delegates votes.



Total number of FUEN members rises to 94

The association of the Cham minority in Albania and the one of Hungarian minority in Slovenia were approved as full members of FUEN while the statutes of International Society of Meskhetian Turks "Vatan" and Association of Meskhetian Turks in Azerbaijan "Vatan" were both upheld to full membership by the unanimity of FUEN Board of Delegates. The FUEN Congress in 2017 will be held in Cluj with the hosting of Hungarian minority in Romania.



As ABTTF board of directors, we sincerely congratulate ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu for being re-elected as FUEN Vice-president restoring confidence.



Delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace visited South Tyrol

The delegation conducted several meetings and visits on tourism, rural development and agriculture for the economic development of Western Thrace region in Greece.

A delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which was composed of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) as the initiator, mayors belonging to the minority and officials of the Agriculture-Livestock Research Institute (ALRI), visited from 26 to 29 May 2016 South Tyrol, an autonomous province in northern Italy where the German and Ladin minorities live. The delegation was led by Halit Habip Ođlu, ABTTF President and Vice-President of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and comprised ABTTF Vice-President Mesut Küçük Hasan, the Mayor of Yassıköy (Iasmos) İsmet Kadı, the Mayor of Myki Cemil Kabza, the City Councillor of Yassıköy (Arriana) Rıdvan Hacı Mehmet, ALRI Executive Board Member Hüseyin Sadık, ALRI Business Advisor Onur Mustafa Ahmet and Yakup Uzun from ABTTF Brussels Office.

The delegation met with the high-level officials of the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol and paid attention to the experiences of the German and Ladin minorities by visiting the places where they live

On 26 May 2016, Arnold Schuler, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry in the Provincial Government of South Tyrol hosted in honour of the delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace a dinner attended also by the MEP Herbert Dorfmann who belongs to



the German minority. The delegation attended on Friday, 27 May, a guided tour through the farmer's market in the city of Sterzing and was provided by the Chairman of the Sterzing Farmer's Market Bernhard Auckenthaler with detailed information on the farmer's market (Bauernmarkt) concept from agriculture as well as tourism perspectives. Afterwards, the delegation visited the Tourism Association of Sterzing, where it was introduced by the association's director Josef Turin on the tourism model of South Tyrol. On the same day, the delegation was received separately by Arno Kompatscher, Governor of the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol and Martha Stocker, Minister for Health, Sport, Social Affairs and Labour in the Provincial Government of South Tyrol and former Vice-President of FUEN.

A team of the regional television channel Rai Südtirol accompanied the delegation during its visit in the city of Sterzing and made an interview both with ABTTF President and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Ođlu and the Mayor of Mustafçova (Myki) Cemil Kabza.

On Saturday, 28 May, the delegation made a tour through that part of South Tyrol where the Ladin minority lives, visited the Ladin Museum and was informed by the representatives of the Ladin minority on the relationship between and coexistence of mountain farming and mountain tourism. Subsequently, the member of the Italian Parliament and FUEN Vice-President Daniel Alfreider, who belongs to the Ladin minority, hosted in honour of the delegation a lunch in the mountainous area.

ABTTF on a working visit in Brussels

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid on 15 June 2016 a working visit to the European Union (EU) capital Brussels. Accompanied by the ABTTF Brussels Office, ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu met with the Director of the European Free Alliance (EFA) Günther Dauwen and members of the European Parliament (MEPs) József Nagy (Slovakia/EPP), Herbert Dorfmann (Italy/EPP), Iuliu Winkler (Romania/EPP) and Tatjana Zdanoka (Latvia/The Greens/EFA).



Problems of and recent developments of concern to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece highlighted

The ABTTF delegation first met with the Director of EFA Günther Dauwen at the ABTTF Brussels Office. During the meeting which was also attended by Eva Petkovic from the Centre Maurits Coppieters (CMC) affiliated with EFA, cooperation opportunities and common working topics between ABTTF, EFA and CMC were discussed.



During the first-ever meeting with the MEP József Nagy at the EP, who belongs to the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and is a member of the EP Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu presented him the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, its problems and activities of ABTTF at international platforms to aid in obtaining solutions for its problems. During the meeting with the MEP Herbert Dorfmann who belongs to the German minority in Italy in his office, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu provided him with information on the latest developments with regard to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.



During the meeting with the MEP Iuliu Winkler who belongs to the Hungarian minority in Romania, ABTTF President

Habip Oğlu addressed to the provocative actions of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party in the Turkish minority villages in Western Thrace, which purposed to frighten and intimidate the Turkish minority. Habip Oğlu stated the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been facing serious problems in education, adding the Greek authorities reject the request of the Turkish minority for opening bilingual kindergartens where the instruction will be both in Turkish and Greek languages. Habip Oğlu also added the three branch offices of the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) were closed down by the decision of the Mayor of Komotini on the grounds that they were operating “unauthorized nurseries”, and for this reason, a criminal

proceeding was opened against the members of the WTMUGA Executive Board.

Lastly, the ABTTF delegation met with the MEP Tatjana Zdanoka who belongs to the Russian community in Latvia. During the meeting, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu thanked her for submitting with her two other colleagues a written question entitled “Non-execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights by Greece” to the European Commission and thus for her support for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. In reply to Habip Oğlu, Zdanoka noted within the European Union (EU), Greece and France are the two Member States with the worst records with regard to the minority rights.

The European Parliament's President Schulz responds to ABTTF

The European Parliament's President Martin Schulz responded to the letter sent by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) with regard to the closure of two branch offices of the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) in Komotini by the Greek authorities. In his response, Mr Schulz firstly expressed his gratitude to receive the letter dated 3 June 2016 concerning the situation of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and the recent events in Komotini. He further stated that he had submitted the letter to Mr József Nagy who is the Member of the European Parliament and Rapporteur for the



situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2015 in the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) for information and any follow-up that may be deemed appropriate.

In its letter addressed to the EP President Martin Schulz on 3 June 2016, ABTTF had emphasized that the two branch offices of WTMUGA were closed down by the decision of the Mayor of Komotini for their activities for the minority children on the ground that the branch offices were unlicensed nurseries. ABTTF underlined that the decision was a part of a strategy of deterrence and fear by Greek authorities against the minority NGO of WTMUGA and a clear restriction to the use of the mother tongue by minority children through social and cultural activities.

Question for written answer on the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to the European Commission

The MEPs, who tabled the written question, underlines Greece persistently refuses to implement the ECtHR judgments.



The members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Tatjana Ždanoka (Latvia, the Greens/EFA), Judith Sargentini (Netherlands, the Greens/EFA) and Jordi Sebastià (Spain, the Greens/EFA) tabled a question for written answer entitled "Non-execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights by Greece" to the European Commission.

MEPs state in cases such as Sidiropoulos and Others v. Greece (26695/95), Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others v. Greece (no. 26698/05), Emin and Others v. Greece (no.34144/05), Bekir-Ousta and Others v. Greece (no. 35151/05) and Macedonian House of Civilization v. Greece (no. 1295/10), the Court found that Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights had been breached, adding this notwithstanding, the Greek authorities have refused to execute the Court's rulings in such cases, and to register the minority associations concerned, in some instances for more than twenty years and only after the breach had been noted a second time. The MEPs

Ždanoka, Sargentini and Sebastià ask the Commission whether it is aware of the regarding situation, the failure to execute the rulings of the ECtHR does indicate a systemic threat to the rule of law in Greece and it is going to activate the rule of law framework in the case of Greece.

In their joint question, the MEPs the Federation of Western Turks in Europa (ABTTF) had already met within the framework of its lobbying activities as an NGO at the EP, note the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has delivered several rulings concerning the freedom of association in cases concerning minority NGOs in Greece. The three

As is known, the ECtHR held unanimously in 2007 and 2008 through its three judgments with regard to the cases of the Turkish Union of Xanthi, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association which had been either dissolved or not registered by the Greek courts on the grounds that their names included the words "Turkish" or "minority" that Greece had violated the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to freedom of association. However, Greece persistently refuses to implement the regarding judgments of the ECtHR.

Second review of Greece's human rights records at the United Nations

ABTTF attended the second review of Greece within the framework of the UN UPR mechanism.

During the 25th Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Nations to be held from 2 to 13 May 2016 in Geneva, the second review of the human rights records of Greece took place on Tuesday, 3 May. Greece's first review within the framework of the UPR mechanism had taken place in 2011. Melek Kırmacı Arık, Director of International Affairs of the Federation of Western Thrace (ABTTF), participated in the said session that can be attended and observed only by those NGOs in general or special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).



Greece: Policy frameworks aiming at responding to the economic crisis have adverse impact on the enjoyment of human rights

The Greece national report was presented by the President of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) Kostis Papaioannou. During the second review, Greece stated first there has been a severe economic crisis for the last year six years in the country, adding the adoption of austerity measures affected negatively the enjoyment of human rights and democratic institutions. Greece mentioned in details the experiences with regard to the migration/refugee crisis and noted alone in 2015, more than 1 million refugees and unregistered migrants arrived the country.

Problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace also came onto the agenda

During Greece's second review, representatives of 92 UN Member States took the floor. As to one of the main issues of grave concern to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, namely right to freedom association, Greece stated in its reply to the question by Mexico in advance to the session what the mechanisms are to ensure

prompt attention for the registration of associations to ensure that minorities enjoy their freedom of association and expression, the freedom of association and expression is protected without any discrimination, adding everyone living in the country is free to declare his/her origin, speak his/her language, exercise his/her religion and observe his/her particular customs and traditions. Greece argued further "in Thrace where the Muslim minority lives", there are Muslim minority associations and NGOs that have been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded, and since 2008, tens of minority associations have been registered, adding the Greek Government is considering ways and means of executing those three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) finding a violation of the right to freedom of association.

The United States of America (USA) mentioned the hate-motivated attacks against the Minority and recommended Greece should condemn hate speech against religious and ethnic minorities in the country. Peru recommended Greece should continue to implement policies guaranteeing the religious freedom of the Minority. Slovakia urged Greece to implement all the policy commitments on educational and religious freedom included in the National Action Plan on Human Rights. Hungary recommended Greece to sign the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority

Languages. Macedonia FYR brought the case of the "Home of Macedonian Culture" onto the agenda and recommended discrimination against the children belonging to the different ethnic groups in Greece should be eliminated.

Recommendations by Turkey to Greece with regard to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

Turkey invited Greece to take result-orientated measures for eliminating discrimination and hate speech against migrants, Muslims and the members of the Turkish Muslim minority. Furthermore, Turkey recommended Greece to fulfil its long-standing pledge for constructing a mosque in Athens, and open one of the historical mosques in Thessaloniki to worship as well as allocating a cemetery for Muslims in both cities, to take necessary steps for recognizing the Muftis elected by the Turkish Muslim minority, to amend the relevant articles of the Law on Foundations (Waqfs) and allow the Turkish Muslim Minority to have full power over the control and supervision of its Waqfs, to execute the three judgments of the ECtHR regarding the associations of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, to initiate procedures for the opening of Turkish-Greek bilingual kindergartens as well as new bilingual minority schools and to reinstate the citizenship of about 60 thousand Greek nationals under the repealed Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code.

ABTTF delivered a presentation at UPR Info pre-session for Greece

ABTTF presented the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and put forward its recommendations ahead of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session in May 2016.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) attended the Greece pre-session organised by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Info on 31 March 2016. ABTTF Vice-President Mesut Küçükhasan and ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kirmacı Arık participated to the pre-session, which brought together state representatives and NGOs ahead of the Greece session during the UN UPR 25. Session at UN Geneva House on 2-13 May 2016. Kirmacı delivered a presentation on the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the pre-session that took place at International Conference Centre of Geneva.

3 NGOs gave presentations at the meeting where Surinam and Greece were discussed. The session began with the speeches of Ilia Maria Siatitsa from Greek National Human Rights Council and George Nikolaidis from LUMOS, which is an NGO active on the rights of children. Siatitsa explained that human rights had been negatively affected in Greece especially thanks to the huge flow of refugees and immigrants in the last years. She insisted that all national action plans had to be effectively implemented with regard to the protection of human rights of the refugees and immigrants. LUMOS on the other hand focused on the issue of unaccompanied children and stated that there was no child protection system in Greece. Consequently, around 300 thousand children are in need of institutional care, she concluded.



ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kirmacı Arık highlighted the issues that Greece had approved during the first cycle in 2011 in her presentation. These issues included the women rights, implementation of sharia law in Greece, developments on the freedom of association, 2014-2016 Human Rights National Action Plan and the other problems of the minority in education. Following the explanations of the

developments on the mufti problem and the “240 Imams Law” in the framework of the sharia law, Kirmacı further talked about the current situation concerning 3 ECtHR ruling against Greece on the freedom of association. Kirmacı stated that Greek authorities should respect the minority's right to elect its religious leaders and officers and demanded that Greece should implement the ECtHR rulings as soon as possible.

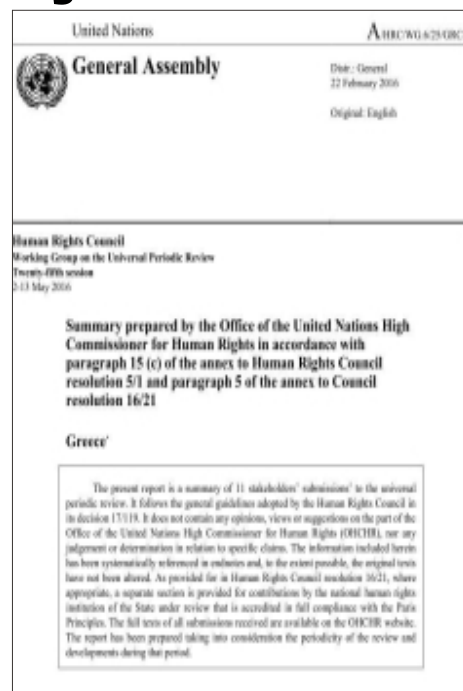
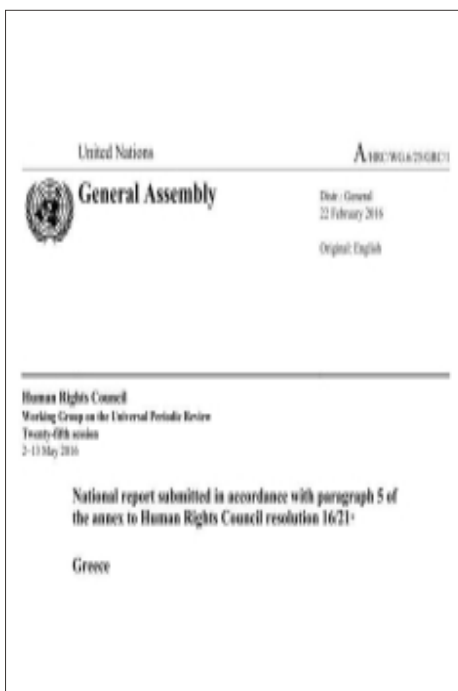
On the issues that are not included in the first cycle but are of huge importance, Kirmacı drew attention to the increasing state control over all aspects of education and declared that this was incompatible with the educational autonomy. While mentioning the current problems such as bilingual minority kindergardens, insufficient number of primary schools where the quality of education is fairly poor, insufficient number of secondary schools, Kirmacı also emphasised, as a new development, the problems of the law numbered 4310/2014 adopted in 2014. In her closing remarks, Kirmacı recounted that some of the problems of the Turkish minority could not have been mentioned because many recommendations articulated during the first cycle had not been approved by Greece. Kirmacı insisted that Greece didn't recognise Turkish Minority of Western Thrace as ethnically Turkish and closed all possible communication methods. Kirmacı also talked about the conference organised by ABTTF on 2 March 2016 at the European Parliament in Brussels where 2 Golden Dawn members of the Parliament interrupted the event and that the other mainstream parties had sent a letter of protest to the EP President Martin Schulz. Kirmacı equally criticised the lack of any dialog mechanism between the governmental authorities and the minority.

National report of Greece and summary of stakeholders' information within the framework of the UPR 2nd cycle released

The report containing the summary of information by NHRIs, NGOs and IOs on human records of Greece refers also to the submission by ABTTF.

The Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which is a unique process involving a review of the human rights records of all Member States of the United Nations (UN), released the national report of Greece and summary of the stakeholders' submissions to the UPR. During the UPR Working Group's 25th session from 2 to 13 May 2016 in Geneva/Switzerland, Greece will also be reviewed within the framework of the UPR 2nd cycle (2012 to 2016).

The national report of Greece presents the developments with regard to the protection and promotion of human rights in the country since 2011, the year of Greece's first review. It is stated in the report that the first National Action Plan on Human Rights, covering the period 2014-2016, has been prepared, under the coordination of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Right, and a National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child is being elaborated. The report mentions the achievements, challenges and constraints as regards of the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Greece at the end of the first cycle of the UPR, and also the national priorities, initiatives and commitments Greece has undertaken and intends to undertake to improve human rights situation on the ground. Under the title "Rights of persons belonging to minorities", the Turkish minority of Western Thrace is referred as the "Muslim minority in Thrace", and it is claimed that during the



reporting period, Greece has continued to implement measures to protect and promote the rights of the minority.

Written contribution by ABTTF on Greece in the summary report of UPR

The written contribution on the rights and problems of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted on 21 September 2015 within the framework of the second cycle of the UPR (2012 to 2016) has been included in the summary of stakeholders' information. In its contribution, ABTTF had reflected the state of implementation of the recommendations with regard to the Turkish minority that Greece had accepted at the end of first review. ABTTF had mentioned the problem concerning the minority Muftis, non-recognition by Greece of the minority's ethnic Turkish identity and violation of its right to freedom of association, and

referred also to the problems in the field of minority education. ABTTF had called on Greece to respect its obligations arising from the Peace Treaty of Lausanne and to take immediate measures to restore the autonomous structure of the Turkish minority in the fields of education and religion, and urged it to establish a mechanism for dialogue between the governmental authorities and the Turkish minority in the form of advisory or consultative bodies to be the channel for the minority to raise its own voice.

The full text versions of the national report of Greece and summary of stakeholders' information within the framework of the second cycle of the UPR are available at:

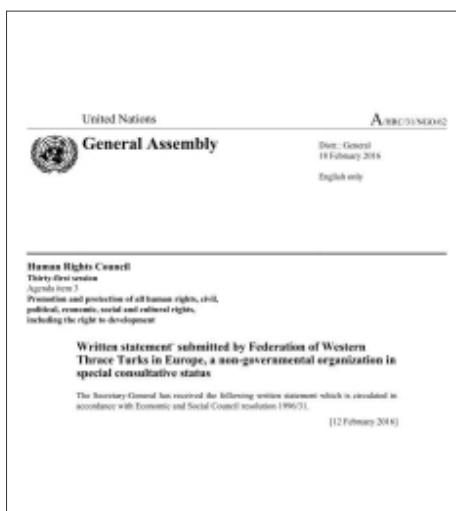
<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/032/55/PDF/G1603255.pdf?OpenElement>
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ABTTF submitted a written statement to the UN Human Rights Council

ABTTF raises in its written statement the problems having been faced by the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in Greece with regard to the ethnic recognition and freedom of association.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted a written statement entitled “The Non-Recognition of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece and Limitations on the Right to Association of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece” to the 31st regular session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (UN) to be held from 29 February to 24 March 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland. ABTTF refers in its written statement to the fact that Greece does not recognize the Turkish minority of Western Thrace as the “Muslim minority in Thrace” and deny its ethnic Turkish identity and the minority associations carrying the word “Turkish” in their titles were either banned or the applications of the new ones for registration were refused by the Greek authorities. ABTTF notes the Greek government declared in 1983 there are no Turks in Greece and on the grounds of this justification, the Greek courts ordered in 1986 the dissolution of the Turkish Union of Xanthi, the Turkish Youth Union of Komotini and the Turkish Teachers' Union of Western Thrace.

ABTTF states the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) held unanimously in 2007 and 2008 through its three judgments with regard to the cases of the Turkish Union of Xanthi, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association which were either dissolved or not registered by the Greek courts on



the grounds that their names included the words “Turkish” or “minority” that Greece had violated the freedom of association of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace, Greece has not implemented yet these judgments.

ABTTF expresses the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has been closely following since 2008 the developments concerning the implementation of the Court judgments under the name of “Bekir Ousta group” of cases against Greece, adding the Committee of Ministers adopted on 5 June 2014 an interim resolution and called on the Greek authorities to take all necessary measures for the implementation of these. ABTTF further

refers to the report written by the parliamentarian Klaas de Vries and adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) during its Autumn Session 2015, in which it is mentioned Greece is one of the nine member states with the highest number of unenforced Court judgments with 558 cases which were not implemented by Greece by the end of 2014.

ABTTF concludes its written statement by calling on the Greek government to implement, without any further delay, the ECtHR judgments with regard to the cases of the Tourkiki Enosi Xanthi vs. Greece, Bekir-Ousta and others vs. Greece and Emin and others vs. Greece, to amend the national Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the Court judgments in matters related to freedom of association and to develop strategies that are inclusive of minorities which would be part of an overall governmental policy for the promotion and protection of minority rights in Greece

The full text version of the written statement submitted by ABTTF to the 31st regular session of the UN Human Rights Council is available at: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?b=10&se=171&t=7

ABTTF's parallel report to the USA 2015 Human Rights Country Report on Greece

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) prepared a parallel report to the USA 2015 Human Rights Country Report on Greece released by US Department of State. Having it submitted to the relevant US authorities, ABTTF provided detailed information on the matters that were either missing or inadequately explained in USA Report about Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Greece's unilateral renouncement of religious law implementation means the violation of Treaty of Athens

ABTTF reminded in its report that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was deprived of the right to elect its own religious leaders and the Greek state unilaterally decided to appoint the Mufti's on the argument that Mufti's had authorities on religious law. It is noted in US report that the National Council of Human Rights advised that Muftis' competences should have been limited solely to religious tasks. ABTTF however underlines that the Muftis' competences on religious law derive from the Treaty of Athens of 1913 and hence Greece's unilateral renouncement of religious law implementation would mean the violation of the Treaty of Athens.

Owner of KRAL FM was fined €15.000 and given 17-month imprisonment

In its parallel report, ABTTF stated that KRAL FM was declared as an illegal radio channel by ESR in 2015 on an argument that the channel had set up an intermediate transmitter in Stavroupoli in order to extend its broadcasting area to mountainous regions in Xanthi.



ABTTF also declared that the radio owner Hüseyin Karadayı had been detained twice and finally given 17-month imprisonment along with a fine of €15.000 in May 2016 based on the allegation that the radio illegally continued its broadcast.

Greece continues to ignore the ECtHR rulings on freedom of association

ABTTF underlined that Greece insistently denied implementing the ECtHR rulings with regard to the case of Bekir Ousta Group, which comprises 3 Turkish associations, namely Evros Minority Youth Association, Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture and Turkish Association of Xanthi. It was noted in the ABTTF report that ECtHR decided in January 2015 to rehear those 3 cases and then delivered its decision in December 2015 where it refused the applications of Turkish Association of Xanthi and Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture on procedural reasons. ABTTF noted that the decision concerning the registration of Evros

Minority Youth Association was still awaited.

ABTTF draws attention to the problems at different levels of education

As US report refers to the findings of European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)'s Greece report that there are only 2 bilingual secondary schools, ABTTF further explained the significant problems in education. Having put forward the changes brought by the law 4310/2014, which foresaw the establishment of Minority Program Teacher's Academy, ABTTF particularly criticised the fact that only those who graduated from pedagogical departments in Greece would be accepted to this Academy.

US Report does not encompass the hate based attacks towards Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

ABTTF criticised that US Report did not mention the hate based attacks towards Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Noting the attacks towards minority members in 2015 and in January-April 2016, ABTTF provided detailed information on two recent attacks, namely to the FEP Party Head-Quarter by a group called "Guardians of Thrace" and to an imam working in the office of elected Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete.

You can reach the USA 2015 Human Rights Country Report for Greece via the following link:

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>

Polis raid to two branches of Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: “The main reason of the raids conducted to WTMUGA is to hinder the minority children to learn our mother tongue Turkish.”



Two branches of Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), which is one of the most important associations of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece, in Komotini have been subjected to raids by police and prosecutor on 21 April 2016. WTMUGA explained in its written statement that the association's activities beginning from 1982 until now in service of its members as well as the minority in general have apparently disturbed some segments. It was also mentioned that these segments had been trying to impede the WTMUGA activities that serve not only to the minority but to the majority as well for almost 10 years. WTMUGA added that the last example was seen on 21 April 2016 when the Centre A and Centre B branches in Komotini were searched by the public prosecutor accompanied by police on the ground that the association was illegally operating a nursery. The first hearing of the case in the court would

be held on 13 May 2016. WTMUGA board of directors refused the accusations insisting that they had not done anything illegally up until now and that there were no nursery or kindergarten operated by WTMUGA. Board of directors stated that they would do everything judicially to protect the association's interest and that they were determined to continue their struggle against this kind of groundless allegations which include the criminal cases against the board and the members.

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu made the following statement on the issue: “Together with ABTTF, WTMUGA has been pursuing works on international platforms to contribute to the solution of minority's problems as well as activities aiming at meeting the social, economic and cultural needs of the minority thanks to the voluntary engagements of its members from different professions. Among

many others however, the activities of the association towards minority children disturb the Greek authorities and its branches are swooped by prosecutor accompanied by police forces. As you know the kindergarten education was made compulsory in Greece following the law that increased the compulsory education period from 9 to 10 years. We submitted applications to open bilingual kindergartens in Turkish and Greek in parallel to the fact that the minority has autonomy in education according to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. However there has been no answer to our demand so far. As a result, minority kids have to go to the state schools where the language of instruction is only in Greek. Our minority who is dreaming about having their own bilingual kindergartens have the opportunity to learn Turkish through activities of this association. With these latest raids on WTMUGA branches that have no legal basis, they would like to end these activities and prevent our children from learning their mother tongue Turkish.”

In order to read WTMUGA's written statement:

<http://www.btaytd.com/v2/view.php?lng=tr&id=158>

Meeting initiated by the Greek Foreign Minister

Kotzias on the economic development of Western Thrace

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: “Such one-sided meetings, to which the representatives of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace living in the region und knowing best the situation there are not invited to attend, can never help the economic development of Western Thrace.”



Protection and the Greek Deputy Minister of Rural Development. During the meeting, the Greek Foreign Minister Kotzias presented the participants his plan he has been working on about initiating measures for the economic development of Western Thrace in order to free the region from the influence of Turkey. Kotzias emphasized concerning the economic development of Western Thrace, the networks of energy, transport and education must be strengthened in order to reveal the geostrategic position of the region.

“As its examples were experienced many times in the past, the high-level politicians of

our country Greece discussed Western Thrace during a meeting which was attended only by themselves and in the absence of the representatives of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. It is no way understandable and acceptable that none of the representatives of our minority were invited to the said meeting although there are currently four deputies and three mayors belonging to our minority, who know best the situation and economic problems of Western Thrace and experience these on the ground. Besides, the Greek authorities refer at every opportunity to democracy and equality. Such one-sided meetings, which ignore the views and suggestions of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, can never help the economic development of the region” said Halit Habip Oğlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

*Image: www.birlikgazetesi.info



ABTTF reported on hate-motivated violence against the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to OSCE

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted data on hate crimes and violence against the Turkish minority of Western Thrace living in Greece to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

ABTTF mentions in its report the hate-motivated attacks against the persons, organizations and places of worship belonging to the Turkish minority of Western Thrace that took place in 2015 and in the first four months of 2016. Accordingly, ABTTF reports on the arson attack on the Mahmut Aga Mosque on 17 April 2015, the attack on the Alankuyu masjid (small mosque) on the same day as well as the attack on the New Mosque (Yeni Cami) on 10 October 2015, which are all situated in the city of Komotini. ABTTF also refers in its report to the attack on the new headquarters of the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party, the political party of the Turkish minority, on 8 December 2015 in Komotini and the attack by the masked members of the so-called "Guardians of Thrace" on the Imam Hüseyin Cihan



working at the Office of the Elected Mufti of Xanthi as he was visiting the Elected Mufti Ahmet Mete's house on 28 January 2016.

Within the framework of the 2015 Hate Crime Data, the ODIHR had invited the civil society groups to contribute to its reporting, too. The ODIHR presents in the hate crime data it prepares every year the data submitted by the governments, international organizations and civil society groups on hate crime and violence in the 57 OSCE participating States. The 2015 Hate Crime Data will be published on 16 November 2016, on the International Day of Tolerance.

ABTTF Newsletter

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

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