



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa Newsletter

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Western Thrace Turks attended the 10th Annual Meeting of FUEN TAG



The Western Thrace Turkish delegation consisting of ABTTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party and their representatives conveyed the current developments related to the Turkish community in Western Thrace during the meeting.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the 10th Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) held in Ankara, the capital of motherland Türkiye on 30 October-1 November 2024.

ABTTTF President and FUEN TAG Spokesperson Halit Habip Oğlu, ABTTTF Vice-President and FUEN Vice-President Nabi Ibrahimcik, ABTTTF Vice-President Sebahattin Mümin and ABTTTF

TF Head Office Manager K. Engin Soyylmaz attended the meeting as FUEN TAG Secretariat officer.

Representatives of Turkic minorities and communities living in a wide geography from the Balkans to the Caucasus met in Ankara

ABTTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party representing Western Thrace Turks; Rhodes, Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER) representing Rhodes and Kos Turks; Public Organisation of Meskhetian Turks "VATAN" representing Meskhetian Turks; the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (QTMM) representing the Crimean Tatars; the Kosovo Youth Union Association (KGBD)

CONTENTS

Western Thrace Turks attended the 10th Annual Meeting of FUEN TAG

pages 1-2



We won't be duped!

page 3



ABTTTF attended the 68th FUEN Congress in Germany

pages 4-5



ABTTTF President paid a working visit to the PACE Autumn Session

page 6



FUEN organised a conference on the Women of Minorities in Athens

pages 6-7



ABTTTF participated in the consideration of Greece of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

pages 8-9



ABTTTF participated in an event on teaching regional and minority languages in pre-school age

page 9



Representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the OSCE Human Dimension Conference

page 10



ABTTTF submitted two written statements to the 57th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

page 11



Provocation from appointed mufti regents in Western Thrace!

page 12



representing the Turks in Kosovo; the Ukrainian Gagauz Union representing the Ukrainian Gagauz people; Turkish Democratic Party (TDP) representing the North Macedonian Turks; "Meras" Association, which protects and develops the Gagauz Language and Culture, representing the Gagauz people in Moldova and Bulgarian Turks were represented by the Recep K p c  Turkish Cultural Centre, Mevlana Folk Culture House and Youth and Innovative Development Association.

The FUEN TAG delegation was hosted by the Vice-President of the Republic of T rkiye and officials responsible for the Turkic linguistic and cultural world.

Within the framework of the programme, the delegation headed by FUEN TAG Spokesperson Halit Habip Ođlu visited the official authorities of the Republic of T rkiye on 31 October.

The FUEN TAG delegation first visited the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and was received by YTB Vice-President Abdulhadi Turus. Later, the FUEN TAG delegation visited the International Organization of Turkic Culture (T RKSOY) and was hosted by T RKSOY Secretary-General Sultan Raev and Deputy Secretary-General Sayit Yusuf. The FUEN TAG delegation visited Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) and was received by YEE Vice-President Assoc. Prof. Dr. Cahid Őenel and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) and was hosted by TIKA President



Serkan Kayalar.

During the visits where the FUEN TAG delegation was informed about the activities, studies and programmes of YTB, T RKSOY, YEE and TIKA, FUEN TAG Spokesperson Habip Ođlu revealed information about FUEN and TAG, and ideas were exchanged on the activities that can be carried out as stakeholders.

FUEN TAG's activities and road map for 2025 were determined

On 1 November, the FUEN TAG round table meeting began with the opening and welcoming speeches of FUEN TAG Spokesperson Halit Habip Ođlu and FUEN Vice President Nabi Ibrahimcik. Habip Ođlu delivered information about the activities of TAG and Ibrahimcik about the activities of FUEN in the last year.

Afterwards, representatives of Western Thracian Turks, Rhodes and Kosovo Turks, Meskhetian Turks, Crimean Tatars, Kosovo Turks, Ukrainian Gagauzians, North Macedonian Turks, Moldovan Gagauzians and Bulgarian Turks presented the important developments in the Turkic minorities and communities they belong to, their current problems and the activities of the organisations they represent.

The meeting, where the activities of FUEN TAG for 2025 were discussed, ended with the determination of a common roadmap for 2025 with the contributions of the participating organisations.

Following the meeting, FUEN TAG delegation was received by the Vice-President of the Republic of T rkiye Cevdet Yılmaz at the Presidential Complex. FUEN TAG Spokesperson Habip Ođlu explained that they held their tenth annual meeting in Ankara after their first annual meeting in 2014 and briefed about FUEN and TAG and their activities. During the meeting, the members of the delegation had the opportunity to convey the activities of the organisations they represent.



We won't be duped!

Dear readers,

For some reason, the moderate and calm atmosphere due to the positive relations between our country Greece and our motherland Türkiye disturbs some circles in our region.

On 11 October, let us remember what happened during the Friday prayers at the Aşağımahalle Çınar Mosque in Xanthi.

Our congregation, who went to the mosque that Friday as they do every Friday to fulfil their religious duties, suddenly saw the appointed mufti regents entering the mosque in robes and turbans, which caused a strong reaction upon our congregation.

Indeed, this is an outright provocation!

And it has already turned out to be so.

Following the provocation in the mosque, New Democracy MP from the Prefecture of Rodopi Evripidis Stylianidis wrote an article titled "Who will put an end to the terrifying Turkish nationalism in Thrace?" in the newspaper Foni Tis Rodopis; he called on the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding what happened in the Çınar Mosque and criticised the policy of cooperation between our country and our motherland.

Secretary General for Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Education Giorgos Kalantzis also intervened in the issue, visited the appointed Mufti Regent of Komotini at the end of October and condemned the reaction of the community, describing it as an attack.

Kalantzis thus deepened the provocation in the region.

This provocation was also brought to the Parliament with a question.

NIKI Party MP Nikos Papadopoulos asked the question to the Ministry of Citizen Protection.

Deputy Minister of Citizen Protection And-

reas Nikolakopoulos responded to the question.

Nikolakopoulos indicated that the Xanthi Police initiated an ex officio investigation into the incident at the Çınar Mosque in Xanthi and that all information has been submitted to the prosecutor's office.

It seems that someone wrote a scenario to create a provocation at the Çınar Mosque in our region, then this scenario was realised and now we are watching it.

Let's not forget this and remind everyone!

In our country, the leaders of all recognised religions are determined by their own communities.

In other words, in our country, Armenians, Jews, Catholic Christians, Orthodox Christians elect their own leaders in accordance with the rules of their own communities, and the state recognises these elections and recognises the elected leaders.

But when it comes to us, things are different!

While the state does not intervene in the Greek Orthodox Church or the Greek Jewish Community, only our community is under state control and intervention.

Although the Turkish community in Western Thrace is autonomous by international treaties, the state has usurped this right and has appointed our muftis!

In our country only we are being interfered with, our mufti offices are being transformed into ordinary state offices, and the mufti regents appointed by the state are considered civil servants at the level of general manager!

We all know that the mufti regents, who are ignored by our congregation, cannot enter any mosque in our region with their official title, except for a few mosques, because our congregation does not perceive, recog-



nise or accept them as religious leaders.

Knowing this, the appointed mufti who came to Çınar Mosque wearing a robe and turban is therefore a provocation!

Otherwise, as we all know, our mosques, which are the houses of Allah, are open to everyone!

But again, as we all know, the purpose here was different!

Knowing this, our congregation did not take part in the provocation.

Now some circles are trying to make it look different and are deliberately fuelling this incident in a different way!

Now who is trying to manipulate the public opinion and how, what is the real purpose here?

Our eyes are open, we see what is happening.

We will be duped!

Let no one be tempted!

Greetings and yours sincerely,

Halit Habip Oğlu
ABTTF President

ABTTF attended the 68th FUEN Congress in Germany



At the FUEN Assembly of Delegates, the resolution on the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace was adopted.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, attended the 68th annual congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) held in Husum/Hüsem, Germany on 19-22 September 2024.

ABTTF President and Spokesperson of the Working Group on Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) at FUEN Halit Habip Ođlu, ABTTF Vice-President and FUEN Vice-President Nabi Ibrahimcik and ABTTF Head Office Manager K. Engin Soyyılmaz attended the Congress which was hosted by the North Frisian minority in Germany and celebrated the 75th anniversary of FUEN. Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER) President Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kaymakçı and Board Member Rařit Tavřancı also attended the Congress.



In the panel sessions of the Congress attended by 180 people from 30 European countries, the situation of the North Frisian minority was discussed with cultural performances, the future of minority rights in the European Union (EU) and FUEN's vision for 2099 in this framework were discussed with the participation of MEPs, national politicians and experts.

At the traditional "Minority Market" organised within the framework of the Congress, the culture and problems of Western Thrace Turks and Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks were presented.

The draft resolutions submitted by the Western Thrace Turks and the Turks of Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese were adopted

On Saturday, 21 September, the draft resolution submitted jointly by ABTTF, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party as the Western Thrace Turkish delegation to the FUEN Assembly of



Delegates was unanimously adopted.

In the resolution, it was noted that although the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association, a supporters' association founded by Western Thrace Turks, was officially registered by a court in October 2022, the Court of First Instance with a Single Judge of Rodopi ruled on 28 May 2024 to revoke the registration of the association with the claim that the phrase "Western Thrace" in its name is in contradiction to the laws and public order and poses a danger to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the country.

It was pointed out that Greece has persistently failed to execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for the past 16 years and has violated its obligations arising from the European Convention on Human Rights and called on Greece to recognise the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, to guarantee freedom of association and to revoke the court decision on the dissolution of the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association.

The draft resolution submitted by FUEN member ROISDER calling on Greece to stop the verbal attacks targeting ROISDER in the Greek National Assembly and to recognise

the Turkish presence in the Dodecanese Islands was also unanimously adopted. At the Assembly of Delegates, where the FUEN main resolution on the development of a European legal framework for the protection and promotion of minorities was unanimously adopted, amendments to four articles of the FUEN statutes were voted and adopted.

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Six new minority organisations join the FUEN family

At the FUEN Assembly of Delegates, the organisations of the Slovenian minority in Austria and the German minority in Lithuania became associate members of FUEN, while the organisations of the Roma minority in Austria, the Swedish minority in Finland and the Hungarian minority in Romania, as well as the organisation of the Bashkirs in Ukraine "Duslyk" were admitted as supporting members of FUEN.

FUEN 2025 Congress and EUROPEADA 2028 to be organised in Italy

The FUEN 2025 Congress will be hosted by the German and Ladin minorities and EUROPEADA 2028, the football championship of the national minorities in Europe, will be hosted by the Slovenian minority and the Friulians in Italy.



ABTTF President paid a working visit to the PACE Autumn Session

At the meetings during his working visit in Strasbourg, ABTTF President indicated that the execution of the ECtHR judgments regarding the Bekir-Ousta group of cases is a litmus test for our country where the rule of law is under threat.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habip Oğlu paid a working visit to Strasbourg on 3-4 October 2024 in parallel with the Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

During the working visit, during which ABTTF President was accompanied by ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı, Habip Oğlu expressed the current issues during his meetings with PACE members and Council of Europe bodies.

Within the framework of his contacts in Strasbourg, Habip Oğlu expressed that Greece persistently does not execute the ECtHR judgments on the Bekir-Ousta group of cases, which have been pending for 16 years regarding the violation of the freedom



of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Habip Oğlu noted that Greece is following a strategy to prolong the process in this group of cases, which the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe continues to examine and brought the demands to the agenda before the examination of the Committee of Ministers in December.

Habip Oğlu explained that the execution of the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta group of cases would serve as a litmus paper in the process of democratisation of Greece under the conditions that there are many international reports and European Parliament resolutions arguing that the rule of law is under threat in the country.

During the meetings, along with an allusion made to the non-execution of the ECtHR judgments with respect to the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases and following a court decision to dissolve the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association, he further expressed concerns regarding calls in the media and legal initiatives to dissolve the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party, which represents the political party of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the aftermath of its success in the European Parliament (EP) elections. Indeed, Habip Oğlu stated that the stigmatisation, targeting and hate speech against the representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace aims to create the perception of an “enemy within”.

FUEN organised a conference on the Women of Minorities in Athens

As an example of the state’s systematic discrimination against the Turkish community in Western Thrace, ABTTF indicated that the freedom of association of women’s associations was violated because of the word “Turkish” in their name and accounted the effects of the backwardness of Western Thrace on Turkish women in the region.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated in a Conference on Minority Women organised by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in Athens on 30 October-1 November 2024.

ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı attended the conference titled “Approaches to Addressing Intersectional

and Multiple Forms of Inequality” hosted by FUEN member Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans (Ec.Fe.Con) as a speaker.

The event, which started with the opening speeches of FUEN Vice-President Olivia Schubert and President of Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans Nikolaos Uzunoglu, brought together approximately thirty people, mostly women, belonging to national minorities in Europe. Moderated by Dr FUEN Coordinator for the Minority Women Project Zora Popova, the participants spent two days discussing different forms of inequality faced by women, the role of the state and institutions in combating inequality, the challenges faced by women in leadership roles and best practices in Europe.

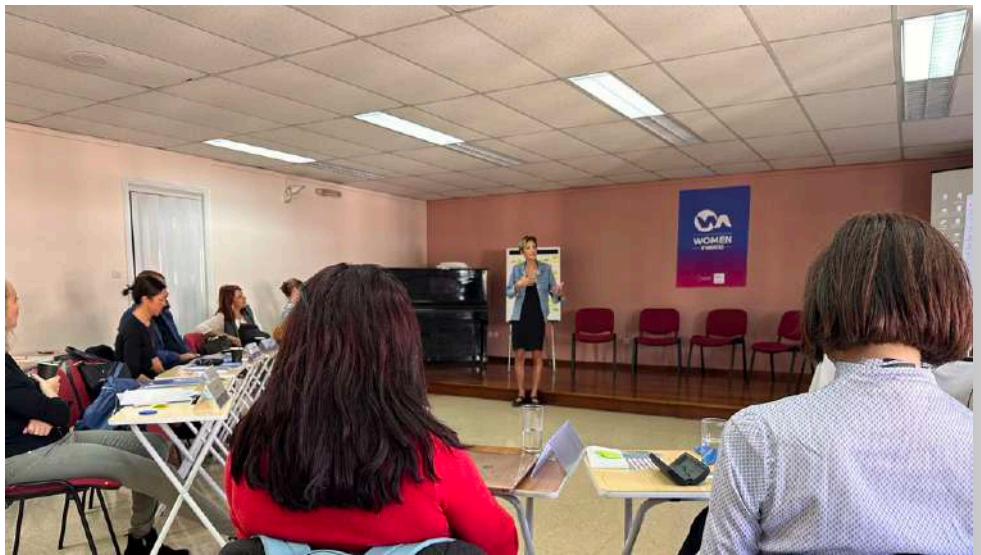
In the panel on the role of the state and institutions, ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı, Ec.Fe.Con. President Nikolaos Uzunoglu and Ec.Fe.Con. representatives Georgia Amilia Voulgari and İlay Örs discussed the role of the state in minority policy towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece and the Greek Orthodox community in Türkiye.

In her presentation in this session, Melek Kırmacı underlined the importance of civil society as a factor that has an important role in the social and cultural development of women belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace and noted that the freedom of association should be guaranteed within this framework. ABTTF explained that the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of



the Prefecture of Rodopi was established in 2001 and its application to the court was rejected due to the word “Turkish” in its name and reminded the process of its application to the ECtHR. ABTTF underlined that in the separate applications made to the ECtHR by the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi together with the Xanthi Turkish Union and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, the court ruled that Greece had violated the freedom of association and said that Greece had not executed the judgments for more than 16 years in the three cases known today as the Bekir-Ousta group of cases. ABTTF stated that similar issues will continue as long as the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta group of cases are not executed and that the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, which was established following the ECtHR judgments, was not registered due to the word “Turkish” in its name. It added that this situation is actually a result of the systematic discrimination of the state against the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Secondly, ABTTF indicated that as a result of the conscious policies of the state, Western Thrace is underdeveloped, unemployment rates are high in the region due to the limited employment opportunities, men belonging to the Turkish community in Wes-



tern Thrace migrate abroad for seasonal jobs and women experience second social issues related to the economy by increasing their burden on the family.

Thirdly, ABTTF added that hate speech against the Turkish community has become widespread due to labelling and targeting against the Turkish community in Western Thrace and that this situation has increased the isolation of Turkish women in the region. ABTTF explained that the prevention of freedom of association and the general prejudices and stereotypes against the Turkish community create barriers for the participation of Turkish women in social, economic, cultural and public life.

ABTTF participated in the consideration of Greece of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



ABTTF, which contributed to the review process, brought to the agenda the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the non-execution of ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta group of cases for the past 16 years.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), which has a special consultative status at the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council, participated in the consideration of Greece at the 142nd Session of the Human Rights Committee, which examines the compliance of countries party to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

During the session held in Geneva on 14 October-8 November 2024, ABTTF participated online in the consideration of Greece on 21-22 October 2024. ABTTF sent a detailed report to the Human Rights Committee within the scope of the contribution

process of NGOs for the consideration of Greece to be held at this session and conveyed the minority issues of our community to the Committee with a detailed report within the framework of Article 27 of the Covenant, including the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, education, freedom of association, freedom of religion, political representation and hate speech against the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Greece's progress in the field of civil and political rights was discussed within the scope of the consideration carried out after the country submitted its third country report in April 2023, which should have been submitted in 2022 in accordance with the ICCPR Convention. Prior to the consideration of Greece, civil society representatives participated in the information meeting of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) organised by the Human Rights Committee, which consists of independent experts, on Monday,

21 October and answered the questions of Committee members regarding Greece.

ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kirmaci, who participated in this meeting online, raised the issue of the violation of freedom of association and non-execution of ECtHR judgments. ABTTF indicated that the Turkish community in Western Thrace won three cases at the ECtHR under the name of the Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases where the European Court had ruled that the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace was violated, but it was further noted that the relevant ECtHR judgments have not been executed for the past 16 years. Furthermore, ABTTF stated that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is examining the aforementioned group of cases and that not only these three cases but also the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association, which is a simple fans' association, was dissolved after its registration on grounds that

the words “Western Thrace” in its name was against national integrity. Moreover, ABTTF explained that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is perceived as the “other” in the country and that the discriminatory policy of the state towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace within the context of the minority policy is at the root of the issues in education and religious autonomy as defined by the Treaty of Lausanne and in other areas as stipulated in ABTTF’s contribution to the Committee.

The Greek delegation answered the questions of the members of the Committee during the consideration held on 21-22 October after the NGO briefing where the issues



of excessive use of force by the police, the situation in detention centres and push backs, the situation of human rights defenders in the country came to the fore. In this framework, regarding the freedom of association, Greece repeated the usual rhetoric; with the expression “Muslim minority in Thrace”, it explained that there are more than 200 associations in the region and that they operate freely. Regarding the execution of ECtHR judgments, Greece indicated that in 2017, an amendment was made to the relevant legislation, paving the way for the re-examination of cases for the implementation of civil law decisions.

*Image: <https://webtv.un.org/>

ABTTF participated in an event on teaching regional and minority languages in pre-scholar age

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated in an event organised by the Brussels Representation of the Autonomous Region of South Tyrol in cooperation with the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) on 3 October 2024 in Brussels. Deniz Servantie from ABTTF Brussels Office attended the event entitled “Regional and Minority Languages Teaching in Pre-Scholar Age”.

In the two thematic panel sessions of the event moderated by FUEN Policy Advisor Johan Häggman, stakeholders from various parts of Europe discussed, among others, the impact of artificial intelligence in teaching, the resources and structures needed in the education system to preserve regional or minority languages, and future projects and recommendations.

Vice President of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano-South Tyrol and Vice-President of FUEN Daniel Alfreider, Senior Expert at the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission Anna Sole Mena and Head of Office of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) Vicent Fenollar i Sastre delivered their speeches at the all-day event.



During the panel session on language acquisition of children from different cultural backgrounds, ABTTF made a presentation on access to quality pre-school education for

children belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace living in Greece. In its presentation, ABTTF drew attention to the fact that the autonomous status of the schools belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been significantly weakened by various legal regulations and ministerial decisions and noted that Turkish schools have been turned into schools managed under the supervision and control of the state.

ABTTF further indicated that the children belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace are subjected to discrimination in equal access to education and this is evident in three main areas: the lack of bilingual kindergartens providing education in Turkish and Greek languages, the systematic closure of Turkish primary schools each year, the inability of the two Turkish secondary schools to meet the current needs in terms of student capacity and the lack of new schools/buildings. Reminding that Greece is not a party to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECMRL), ABTTF called on Greece to restore the educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the OSCE Human Dimension Conference

ABTTF brought to the agenda the violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the investigations against its elected muftis and the targeting of its leading representatives.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Conference organised by the 2024 OSCE Chairpersonship of Malta and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw, the capital of Poland on 30 September-11 October 2024.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace was represented by K. Engin Soyyilmaz from ABTTF and Dr. Pervin Hayrullah and Kerem Abdurahimoğlu from WTMUGA at the ten-day conference organised by the OSCE Chairpersonship of Malta with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the OSCE region and the impact of current events and trends on the security of the region.

Intervening at the session on fundamental freedoms on 7 October of the conference attended by OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions, international organisations and civil society representatives, ABTTF indicated that Greece has not executed the three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) with respect to the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases concerning the Turkish associations for more than 16 years and underscored that this situation is not only a violation of the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace but also a clear attack on its rights and freedoms.

ABTTF also stated that after its success in the European Parliament (EP) elections on



9 June 2024, the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party was stigmatised in politics and the media and that applications were made to the Council of State and the Court of Cassation for the dissolution of the party, claiming that it posed an alleged threat to the national security and territorial integrity

of Greece.

Moreover, ABTTF called on Greece to fully and effectively execute the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases and to respect the right to freedom of opinion, expression and association and the right to vote and be elected of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Speaking on 8 October at the session on tolerance and non-discrimination, ABTTF underlined that the Turkish community in Western Thrace, whose status was determined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, has been subjected to systematic discrimination in Greece for years and noted that when the Greek state wants to increase the pressure on the Turkish community, it resorts to financial and judicial investigations and that the leaders of the Turkish community are prosecuted on various grounds.

Citing the case against Ozan Ahmetoğlu, the president of the Xanthi Turkish Union, the oldest association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which was dissolved due to the word “Turkish” in its name, and the investigation against Mufti of Komotini Ibrahim Şerif, elected by the Western Thrace Turks, on grounds of “usurpation of office” despite the ECtHR’s March 2000 judgment against Greece on the same issue, ABTTF called on Greece to take result-oriented measures to eliminate discrimination and hate speech against the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

ABTTF submitted two written statements to the 57th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

United Nations

A/HRC/57/NGO/3



General Assembly

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ABTTF brought the defamatory campaign targeting the political representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the dissolution of the FEP Party to the UN agenda

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted two written statements titled “Demand for Dissolution of the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party in Greece and Right to Vote and Stand for Election of the Turkish Community in Thrace” and “Targeting of Political Representatives of the Turkish Community in Western Thrace” to the 57th Session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council held in Geneva, Switzerland between 9 September-11 October 2024.

Stating that the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece, which was recognised as a “minority” under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and granted autonomy in the fields of education and religion, is denied and rejected, ABTTF noted that as a reflection of the official state policy, MPs and members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, all of whom are Greek citizens, are subjected to serious hate speech in the mainstream Greek media. ABTTF further indicated that unfounded and defamatory news were published about the rights defenders of the Turkish commu-



nity in Western Thrace and that Turkish MPs were scapegoated just because they participated in the activities of Turkish organisations in Western Thrace or because of their work in Parliament to protect the rights of the Turkish community.

In a written statement with respect to the demand for the dissolution of the FEP Party, ABTTF brought to the agenda the demands for the dissolution of the Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party, the political party of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, after the aforementioned party became the first party in the European Parliament (EP) elections held on 9 June 2024 by receiving the highest number of votes in the prefectures of Rodopi and Xanthi, as in 2014 and 2019. ABTTF stated that following the party’s large vote rate and success in the elections, political speeches and media reports were made claiming that the party was supported by Türkiye and that it posed a supposed

danger to Greece’s national security and territorial integrity, and that this situation turned into a smear campaign for the dissolution of the party.

ABTTF reminded that the applications made to the Court of Cassation and the Council of State for the suspension of the party’s activities as a result of this ugly campaign launched against the FEP Party is an extremely negative situation for democracy and law in Greece since the party participated in the elections with the approval of the Court of Cassation and noted that this defamation and discrediting targeting the FEP Party is a direct attack on the freedom of opinion of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and its right to vote and be elected.

ABTTF urged the Greek authorities to use all legal measures and mechanisms at their disposal to prevent hate and racist discourse in politics and media directly targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace and to impose criminal sanctions against speech that provokes hatred.

Please click below to access the two written statements submitted by ABTTF to the UN Human Rights Council:

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/165/39/pdf/g2416539.pdf>

<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/165/37/pdf/g2416537.pdf>



Provocation from appointed mufti regents in Western Thrace!



ABTTF President: “We strongly condemn this provocative action of the appointed mufti regents, which the Turkish community in Western Thrace has never accepted, disregarding the will of our community and aiming to disturb the peace in the region”.

On Friday, 11 October 2024, the appointed muftis of Komotini, Xanthi and Didymoteicho, who attended the opening ceremony of the Xanthi Madrasah with the participation of the Secretary General of the Greek Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, Yorgos Kalancis, attempted to provoke during the Friday prayers in the Aşağımahalle Çınar Mosque in Xanthi.

While the congregation started to pray in the mosque, the appointed mufti regents, who

are not recognised by the Turkish community in Western Thrace, tried to enter the mosque wearing their robes and turbans and faced the opposition of the congregation. The congregation prevented the appointed mufti regents from entering the mosque by highlighting that Elected Mufti of Xanthi Mustafa Trampa was present in the mosque.

The appointed mufti regents had to leave the mosque after the strong reaction of the congregation to this provocation attempt, while the appointed mufti of Komotini performed his prayer outside the mosque.

“We strongly condemn this provocative action of the appointed mufti regents, which the Turkish community in Western Thrace has never accepted, disregarding the will

of our community and aiming to disturb the peace in the region. The congregation of the mosque gave the best answer to the appointed mufti regents by protecting our elected mufti of Xanthi right there and then. Our community has always been and will continue to be in unity and solidarity against such provocation attempts, as in the case of the Aşağımahalle Çınar Mosque in Xanthi. As ABTTF, we call on our country Greece not to allow such attempts, which ignore the will of our community and blatantly exploit its religious values, and to recognise our elected muftis as a matter of urgency”, said Halit Habip Oğlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

*Image: www.gundemgazetesi.com

ABTTF Newsletter

ABTTF Newsletter, which has been distributed since May 2005, is published in Turkish, Greek, English and German.

ABTTF Newsletter covers matters of grave concern to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, current developments in Western Thrace and Greece, ABTTF's international activities and lobbying as well as the activities of ABTTF member associations and plays an important role in promoting the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

ABTTF Newsletter is sent to homes by mail and can also be obtained from our member associations.

In order to receive ABTTF Newsletter by mail and for further information on the newsletter:

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