



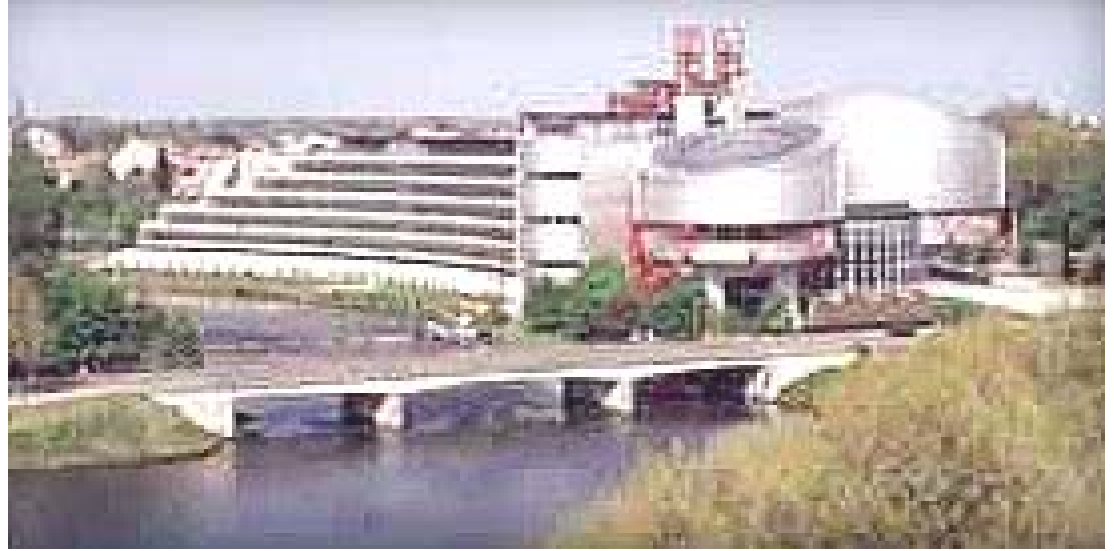
# Victory of Western Thrace Turkish Minority

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) convicted Greece for the suit that was filed by Evros Minority Youth Association. ECHR decided that Greece had violated "Article 11" which regulates freedom of organization and association. Hasan Bekir Usta had applied to ECHR in 1996 right after the Greek court closed Evros Minority Youth Association due to association's establishment objective. Meanwhile, Evros Administrative Court did not permit the establishment of the association by reason that Treaty of Lausanne described Western Thrace Turkish minority as Muslim Minority rather than Turkish Minority.

ECHR concluded the file on 11 October 2007, stating that the association was closed even before its activities were observed, as a sign of prejudiced opinions of Greek authorities against Turkish associations. In its reasoned statement, ECHR clearly stated that "Associations' conditions of establishment do not imply any kind of violence and threat against democratic society."

[The concerning judgement is available under the following link .](#)

The significance of the decision lies in the fact that this decision will be a good example for other Western Thrace Turkish minority association cases (Iskece (Ἰσκήτση) Turkish Solidarity Union, Western Thrace Teachers Association,



tion, Rodop Women' Association) which hang on ECHR.

With that decision of ECHR, it is the first time that Greece is convicted in a suit that was filed by a Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

Following the decision of ECHR, Greek courts' decisions that ban the Turkish Association due to their Turkish names might fall void. Additionally, experts claim that Greek authorities may have to recognize "Turkish Minority" definition from now on.

Another noteworthy feature of this event is that it was an unanimous decision, signalling the support of ECHR for the Western Thrace Turkish Minority. Meanwhile, it is clear that Greek and Greek Cypriot judges voted in favour of Western Thrace.

Justice at last...

"...Justice at last...Even Greek

and Greek Cypriot judges at ECHR voted in favour of Western Thrace Turks, and ECHR decision constitutes an example for the other cases of Western Thrace Associations. ECHR accepted that Greek courts violate "Article 11" which regulates freedom of organization and association of minorities. That decision must pave the way for the recognition of Turkish identity by Greek authorities." stated Halit Habipoglu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

Habipoglu underlined that ABTTF exerted great effort at every international platform to protect the rights of Turkish minority in Western Thrace, adding that endless efforts of ABTTF began to give fruits at last. Meanwhile, experts underline that this decision will force Greece to give back the rights of Western Thrace Turkish minority also recognizing the Turkish identity in Western Thrace

## CONTENTS

*ABTTF put forward the problems of the Western Thrace Minority during OSCE meetings* ..... **Page 2**

*ABTTF participated FUEN Minority Education Conference* ..... **Page 3**

*ABTTF at the 6th United Nations ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meeting* ..... **Page 4**

*Western Thrace Turkish Minority won two seats at the general elections* ..... **Page 5**

*1. Regional meeting in Schwabach* ..... **Page 6**

*A cultural night in Munich* ..... **Page 7**

*80th Foundation Celebrity of İskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Solidarity Ass.* ..... **Page 8**

# ABTTF put forward the problems of the Western Thrace Minority during OSCE meetings



## ABTTF put forward the problems of the Western Thrace Minority during OSCE meetings

Human Dimension meeting of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) began on 24 September in Warsaw, capital city of Poland. Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated the meetings on minorities. Baris Hasan, Director of ABTTF Academic Research and the Association of Western Thrace Turkish Minority with Higher Education presented ABTTF during the meetings and had the opportunity to bring the problems of the minority on to the OSCE's agenda. Baris Hasan made a speech at the third day of the meet-

ings and talked about the human rights violations that took place in 2007 in Western Thrace. Hasan explained the unfair implementations of new "Press Law" and the current situation of "Minority Civil Society Support Association", called Greece Government, European Union and the international society for solving the problems of the minority.

Delegation of Greece to OSCE stated that Greek authorities had answered the arguments that were put forward by ABTTF permanently, adding that Greece would not answer any of the arguments of ABTTF anymore. However, following the speech of Hasan about the new "Press Law", Greek delegation responded.

Greek Ambassador Pantelis Karkavasis only told the sub-articles of the press law which defended the multilingualism, not stating the most critical point that with the new press law those sub-articles would be void.

### We should follow a constructive and active policy

Halit Habipoglu, chairman of ABTTF, assessed the OSCE's meeting, underlining that ABTTF become an influential institution on international platforms. Habipoglu stated that ABTTF achieved to attract the attention of Greece that permanently ignored Western Thrace Minority Associations.

"We keep ourselves always updated on the problems of

Turkish minority, following a very active policy instead of complaining about the same issues all the time. Up to this year, the same topics were discussed at the OSCE's meetings. That is why Greek delegation expressed their intention not to answer the claims of Western Thrace Minority Associations. Yet, ABTTF put forward current problems of the minorities, making Greek delegation answer ABTTF's questions. However, their answers were not satisfactory." said Habipoglu.

Habipoglu underlined that establishments that represented Western Thrace should be constructive, following an active policy to solve the problems of the minority.

## Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF) participated FUEN Minority Education Conference

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FUEN Minority Education Conference was held between 31 August- 2 September in Flensburg. Problems of European minorities in education and the solution proposals were discussed during the conference.

Ozkan Resit, ABTTTF General Secretary and Baris Hasan, Director of Academic Research, and Cemil Kabza, chairman of Western Thrace Turkish minority with higher education association participated the conference. The conference was crucial in means of comparing the Western Thrace Turkish minority improvement in education with other European minorities.

In fact, the topic of the conference was the problems of German minority in Denmark and Denmark minority in Germany.

However, the problems regarding Western Thrace Turkish minority was one of the issues on the agenda.

Following the long lasting efforts of ABTF to present the problems of the minority on FUEN platform, Hans Heinrich Hansen, chairman of FUEN, underlined the necessity to organize conferences on the problems of South Eastern and Balkan minorities.



FUEN proposes to discuss the problems of Balkan minorities...

Hans Heinrich Hansen, chairman of FUEN, stated that minorities in West Europe are living in better conditions, yet the Balkan minorities were facing serious problems. Thus, "FUEN will concentrate more on the problems of minorities in Balkan region and try to find solutions for their problems" told the Chairman of FUEN.



Ozkan Resit, ABTTTF General Secretary, told that current situation in Greece should immediately improve and the Non- Governmental Organizations should set up democracy- based mechanisms to urge the government for solving the minority's education problems. Resit made a speech following the conference and said "Being here and participating the conference was a very important step for ABTTTF as we had the opportunity to discuss the current situation in Western Thrace. We also compare the problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority problems with the other minorities living in Europe". Every year, FUEN organizes that regional conferences under the hostage of one minority and during the conference, problems of that minority are discussed. In the following annual conferences, problems of Balkan minorities are likely to be the main discussion topic of the conference.



# ABTTF participated 6th United Nations ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meeting

## ABTTF participated 6th United Nations ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meeting

United Nations (UN) 6<sup>th</sup> ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meeting began in Geneva on 10 September. The meetings will continue until 28<sup>th</sup> September. Meanwhile, Baris Hasan, Director of ABTTF Academic Research presented ABTTF during the meeting, putting the problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members on the agenda of ECOSOC Human Rights Council.

Meanwhile, ABTTF submitted a proposal to the Council and thus, problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members were filed to the formal minutes of United Nations.

The proposal regarding the human rights violations in Western Thrace submitted by ABTTF was announced to be accepted by the Council Presidency. You can access the proposal by clicking on the link: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/018/62/PDF/G0701862.pdf?OpenElement>

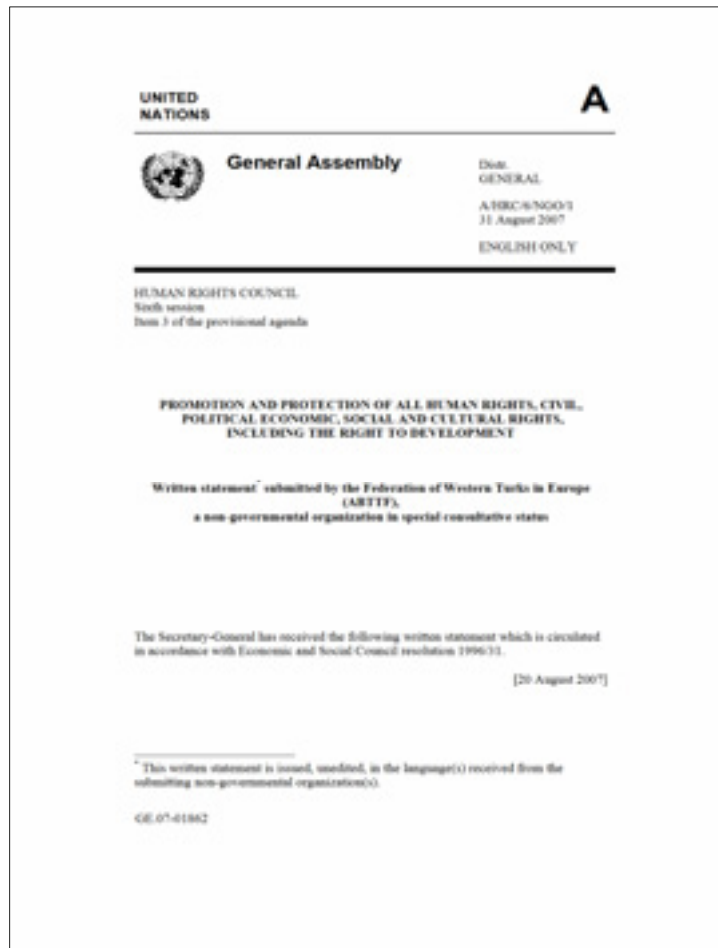
[Western Thrace problem is becoming an issue of United Nations agenda...](#)



With the acceptance of the proposal submitted to the United Nations and following the formal issuance of the proposal, the problems stemming from human rights violations in Western Thrace are likely to become one of the most debated issues on the UN's agenda

Halit Habipoglu, chairman of ABTTF, made a declaration about the 6<sup>th</sup> ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meeting and stated that the acceptance of the ABTTF's proposal, which explained the human rights violations via concrete examples, was a very significant improvement. Habipoglu underlined that with the mentioned proposal, the situation of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members would be on the international community's agenda, also giving ABTTF motivation to renew their efforts.

Habipoglu also gave information on the significance of ECOSOC Human Rights Council Meetings as those meetings meant great international experience for ABTTF and platform to express the unfair situation facing Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. ABTTF will participate the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting which will be held in December, in Geneva.



# Western Thrace Turkish Minority won two seats at the general elections

[Western Thrace Turkish Minority won two seats at the general elections](#)

Western Thrace Turkish minority won two seats at the Parliament, Ahmet Haciosman (PASOK) from Gumulcine (Komotini) and Cetin Mandaci (PASOK) from Iskece (ϑanthi) at the general elections held in Greece on 16 September.

New Democracy Party (ND), the governing party, got 41.84% of the votes and won 152 seats in the 300-seat Parliament, again retaining a slim majority in parliament. Meanwhile, PASOK won 102 seats with 38.10% share of the votes. Other than two main parties, Communist Party (KKE) won 8.14% of the vote and 22 seats, while Radical Left Coalition (Syriza), won 5.03% and 14 seats. The fifth party in the Parliament is Popular Orthodox Alarm with (LAOS) 3.79% of the votes, being represented by 10 PMs.

Results of the election showed that two PMs from Western Thrace Turkish minority were elected. However, in Gumulcine (Komotini) two candidates lost their chance to become MPs narrowly. Meanwhile, Ahmet Haciosman, PASOK

candidate from Gumulcine (Komotini) got 14.873 votes, being the PASOK MP with highest number of votes.



Ilhan Ahmet, ND candidate could not be elected although he achieved 14.188 votes. In Gumulcine (Komotini), PASOK and New Democracy Party (ND) got 36.665 and 36.540 votes, respectively. As PASOK was the winning party in Gumulcine (Komotini), the party will be represented by two MPs in the Parliament while one MP from NP will enter the Parliament.

As a result, Eviropidis Stilianidis, Greek candidate of NP, was elected as PASOK Gumulcine (Komotini) MP and Ilhan Ahmet, due to a very small vote difference of 125, could not be elected.

Meanwhile, we see an increasing trend in the votes for Western Thrace Turkish minority candidates in Iskece

(ϑanthi). Western Thrace Turkish minority members who were not represented in the Parliament for two



terms, succeeded to elect Cetin Mandaci, by 15.211 votes.

[It is success to increase minority MPs in the Parliament, yet...](#)

Western Thrace Turkish minority members were represented in the Parliament during the previous term only by one MP and when we compare the current election success of sending two minority MPs to the Parliament, we should admit that it is a worth-mentioning success for the minority. However, on the other hand, it is a big pity that third minority MP missed being MP with 165 votes.

Halit Habipoglu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

(ABTTF), underlined the same issue. "First to say, it is a real success for our minority to send two minority MPs to the Parliament. Additionally, I would like to wish success to our friends and express my belief in their effort to protect the rights of our minority at the Parliament.

Meanwhile, I would like to express my grief for Ilhan Ahmet as he could not be elected. We were expecting to achieve three MPs but Stilianidis, NP candidate of majority, lost 5000 votes which caused NP to be the second party in and we could not send Ilhan Ahmet to the Parliament as our third MP." said Habipoglu.

Habipoglu stated that it was a great success to increase votes in Iskece (ϑanthi), sending one MP to the Parliament. Habipoglu underlined the support of Ahmet Mete, elected Mufti of Iskece (ϑanth), in that success. However, Habipoglu stated that as long as the 3% threshold was not abolished, the real representation of the minority would not be possible while all the MPs had to represent the view of their party. Meanwhile, vote of confidence for the new government will be held on 23 September.

# First regional meeting was held in Schwabach

## First regional meeting was held in Schwabach

Under the framework of new strategy of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) which targets to strengthen the cooperation between the member associations, the first regional meeting was held in Schwabach on 10 November.

Schwabach Western Thrace Turkish Minority Cultural Association hosted the meeting. Meanwhile, five out of seven member association in Bavaria participated the meeting while Halit Habipoglu, chairman of ABTTF, Sami Yusuf, Vice-Chairman and Cengiz Ismail, chairman of Schwabach Western Thrace Turkish Minority Cultural Association and head of ABTTF's South Europe branch represented ABTTF during the meeting.

The meeting began at 9:00 and continued until 15:00 and the current situation of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority Associations was discussed. Habipoglu made the opening speech, giving



information about the activities of ABTTF. The main item on the agenda was the common problems of the associations and the possible solutions to those problems. The participants reached consensus on organizing common cultural events. Additionally, experience sharing among associations and organizing sportive events were strongly recommended to strengthen the solidarity between minority members and the associations.

**14<sup>th</sup> Dr. Sadik Ahmet Football Tournament is likely to be held in Munich**

Western Thrace Turkish Minority Association in Bavaria conveyed information about 14<sup>th</sup> Dr. Sadik Ahmet Football Tournament which had been decided to be held in Munich by ABTTF'S Board of Directors. Meanwhile, second regional meeting was scheduled to be held in February in Herzogenaurach under the hostage of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Solidarity Association and regional meeting dates for Bavaria were set.

# Western Thrace Turkish organized a cultural night in Munich

**Western Thrace Turkish Minority organized a cultural night in Munich**

Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Bavaria organized a cultural night in Munich on 10 November. Western Thrace Turkish Minority members also commemorated grand Turkish Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Erhan Halim, Chairman of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Association in Bavaria, members of executive board, Halit Habipoglu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Sami Yusuf, Vice-Chairman of ABTTF, Mustafa Kasap, member of ABTTF Executive Board, Cengiz İsmail, head of ABTTF's South Europe branch, Orhan Yunusoglu, member of ABTTF Discipline Board, Engin İsmail, member of ABTTF Audit Board and Rifat Köksal, Turkish Consul General in Munich participated the night.

Erhan Halim, Chairman of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Association in Bavaria, made the opening speech, thanking to all the participants and underlined the importance of solidarity for Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Europe. "We, Western Thrace Turks, preserve our solidarity, thanks to such cultural events, and we commemorated grand leader Atatürk" stated Hasim at his opening speech.



**Western Thrace Turkish Minority will continue to be a symbol of friendship and peace**

Halit Habipoglu emphasized the importance of solidarity for Western Thrace Turkish Minority members to preserve their cultural heritage, mentioning Atatürk as a symbol for the importance of Western Thrace for Turkey. Habipoglu stated that Western Thrace Turkish Minority was an important bridge between motherland Turkey and his country Greece, underlining the commitment of the minority to continue their important role. Habipoglu said "We mention our citizen and founder of Turkish Republic, grand leader Atatürk today with respect. We have determination to maintain Atatürk's idea of peace and brotherhood with our country and Turkey. At this point, we know that Turkey is at our side and we are very happy to get her support."

Rifat Köksal, Turkish Consul General in Munich, at his speech following Habipoglu, stated that Turkey was always with Western Thrace Turkish Minority, supporting their fair struggle with Greece.

Cengiz İsmail, head of ABTTF's South Europe branch, congratulated football team of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Association in Bavaria and gave them their medals. The activities continued all night.



# Iskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Solidarity Association celebrated 80th Foundation anniversary

Iskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Solidarity Association celebrated 80<sup>th</sup> Foundation anniversary on 2-4 November in Iskeçe (Xanthi). Halit Habipoglu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Mustafa Kasap, member of ABTTF Executive Council, participated the anniversary, representing Western Thrace Turkish Minority members in Europe. The organization kicked off with opening ceremony which was held on 2 November and then a concert was performed. The speakers celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> foundation anniversary of the Association and Habipoglu conveyed his best wishes, underlining ABTTF's long-lasting efforts to represent Western Thrace Turkish minority members' fair struggle on international platform would continue.

**Current situation of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Association was the issue on the agenda...**



**ciation was the issue on the agenda...**

Under the framework of foundation activities, a panel on "freedom of organization" was held. Halit Habipoglu, Mumtaz Soysal, former Foreign Minister of Turkish Republic, Dr. Basak Cali, academician at University of London, Cetin Mandaci, MP from PASOK, İlhan Ahmet, former Gumulcine MP from New Democracy Party, Mustafa Mustafa, former Gumulcine MP from Left Alliance, Stamatis Sakelion, journalist, Sebahattin Karaduman, Doctorate student

from University of London, Nalan Mustafaoglu, lawyer and Mustafa Trampa, General Secretary of Iskeçe (Xanthi) Turkish Solidarity Association participated the panel. Morning and afternoon sessions were held.

Following speech of Dr. Basak Cali, Halit Habipoglu said that problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members were political rather than juridical, underlining Greece's did not even care European Council of Human Right's decisions regarding minority cases for which Macedonian Culture

Centre could be a good example.

Habipoglu also stated that Greece saw Turkish minority as a threat rather than cultural wealth and that view lay under all the problems. "We are Greek citizens who work for the welfare and development of our country. When our country does not see us as a threat, then all these problems will come to an end" said Habipoglu.

The panel ended with a dinner. Meanwhile, Habipoglu said it was good and satisfactory to have the Western Thrace Turkish minority members' interest for the panel, yet worrisome not to have any representative from majority which could be taken as a sign of Greek's attitude against minority. We all hope, Greek side will change their attitude against minority members and we all live in peace." said Habipoglu.

## ABTTF NEWSLETTERS

News Bulletins published in Turkish, German, English and Greek by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) will start its 3. incoming year.

ABTTF News Bulletins in which there are current events in Western Thrace, minority policy of Greece, international activities of ABTTF related with problems of Western Thrace Turks, information about Western Thrace Turkish associations in Europe are followed up by Western Thrace Turks at first and large parts of society interestingly.

*In addition and for abonman you can contact with us and get information at the web site [www.abtff.org](http://www.abtff.org) or telephone number 0049.2302.913291*

### ABTTF Newsletter

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