

# ABTTF IN ADVOCATING RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF THE TURKISH COMMUNITY IN WESTERN THRACE, GREECE

Compilation of Statements, Submissions, Contributions and  
Interventions by ABTTF and Right of Reply Texts and  
Statements/Comments by Greece at OSCE Meetings  
2005-2020



**ABTTF**



**FEDERATION OF WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN EUROPE**

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)



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Meetings**  
**2005-2020**

Publishing

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)  
Wemerstr. 2  
D-58454 Witten  
Germany  
Tel.: +49 (0) 2302 913291  
Fax: +49 (0) 2302 913293  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)  
Web: [www.abtff.org](http://www.abtff.org)

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## Foreword

Our struggle began in 1986 when three of our associations were closed down following the removal of their signboards as the word ‘Turkish’ was in their names on grounds that there are no Turks in Greece. We showed to those who are denying our very existence that we are Turks by taking to the streets as thousands on 29 January 1988 and shouting that ‘We are Turks’.

Following this landmark day and as the Turkish community in Western Thrace who had emigrated to Germany, and thanks to the unification of the associations we had founded, we established the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) on 28 February 1988 in order to make our voices heard at the international level. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has constituted an important platform with respect to our activities at the international level for our Federation which was set up with the aim of being a voice of Western Thrace Turks abroad. Indeed, the OSCE is tackling the concept of security from a broad perspective through its political-military, economic, environmental and human dimensions. With this approach, the OSCE is a considerably effective actor in building trust between the states. From a human dimension, the OSCE provides support, assistance and expertise to participating states and civil society in democracy, the rule of law, human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination.

In this respect, our organisation participates in all meetings relating to the human dimension organized by the OSCE and expresses the discriminatory practices faced by our Turkish community in Western Thrace in the areas listed above. In doing so, our main goal is to lead our lives within the framework of the rights and freedoms we have by ensuring the return of our autonomy with respect to education and religion that is guaranteed by international treaties. In addition to the human dimension, we attach special importance to participating in the thematic meetings organized by the Office of the High Commissioner in the field of minority rights and making the voice of our community heard in dialogue with the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

Our organisation is a peaceful non-governmental organisation that is strictly bound to fundamental rights and freedoms. As an NGO that is based on the principle of transparency, and by compiling all of the statements we presented to the United Nations to this day, we have wished to share this work with all those having an interest in it as it constitutes a valuable archive.

I wish you a pleasant read,

Halit HABİP OĞLU  
ABTTF President

Witten, March 2021



**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETINGS AND  
SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETINGS**



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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**OSCE**  
**2005 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**19-30 September 2005**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session I: Democratic Institutions**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President, dear audience,

My name is Özkan Reşit, and I am present here to represent the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) having its headquarters in Germany. My institution is the umbrella organization of 29 associations founded by the Turkish minority members, who had to immigrate from the region of Western Thrace in the north-western of Greece due to economic and political reasons and carries out activities principally to defend the rights of our minority in the international arena. In my speech, I will talk about the ongoing problems of the Western Thrace Turks, who were deprived of the Greek citizenship until 1998 by my country Greece, a member of the European Union (EU), as soon as they went abroad, and due to the reason that they possessed another ethnic origin.

According to the official Statement by the Greek Interior Ministry, till today, 46,638 Western Thrace and 12 Islands' Turks were deprived of their Greek citizenship by Greece through administrative decisions due to the reasons that 'they were not from the Greek ethnic origin' and 'they had left the country without having the intention to return'. The Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Bill, which was the legal foundation of this practice, existed as a racist judgement till 1998 within the national law of an EU member country in spite of all reactions it received. The Article comprised the parents or very small children, and among the victims of it, there have been many Western Thrace Turks, who went to Turkey with the aim of education, or to Germany with the aim of working. The tragicomic application of the Article victimised even the ones performing their military service in the Greek army. A part of the victims has to live deprived of entire social rights in Western Thrace within the borders of Greece. Since 1998, any other deprivation of the citizenship has not occurred. However, the abolishment of the Article has not been retrospective. Art. 19 of the Greek Citizenship Bill was under the protection of the Constitution. Therefore, there was no possibility to abolish the Article with the claim that the Article was contrary to the Constitution. On the other hand, till

today, any serious political solution has not been able to be produced for 46,638 persons deprived of their citizenships.

The decision of deprivation of the Greek citizenship came to know merely in the consulates, or at the entries to the country at the borders. Therefore, the time to undertake a legal action against the decision was usually long since over for many victims of the Article. It is almost impossible for the ones living outside of the Western Thrace to sue against the Article due the difficulty of pursuing the action. The minority members living in the Western Thrace cannot fully participate to the economic activities. This, and that the financial inconvenience such a legal process would burden the retired minority members make it really hard to undertake legal actions against Art. 19.

Dear audience,

Today, there are many of our people living in 'stateless status' in Greece, Turkey, Western Europe and even in Australia. A part of the minority members in stateless status in Greece have been renationalized. However, I want to stress again that our people, who have been deprived of the Greek citizenship unjustifiably, are being treated so, if it was of their blame. These persons, who have been deprived of the citizenship without their own will, are being treated the same as the foreigners, who have come to the country and settled down. From the oath ceremony to the bureaucratic details, the naturalization process for them is accurate the same as the process for the ones, who have entered Greece for the first time. There is no need to explain that this application is quite derogatory for our people, who have always been loyal to their country, but for all that, they have been deprived of the Greek citizenship, although they did not commit any blameworthy act. The concerning people, who cannot get their retirement salaries in payment for the retirement premiums they paid, benefit from the social rights, participate fully to the economic activities and obtain any passport, or travel document, face very big problems. These problems are explicitly contrary to the articles in the III., IV. And V. Chapters of the United Nations (UN) 'Agreement on the Status of Stateless Persons' dated 1954.

The state of the Citizenship Bill victims, who live outside of Greece, especially in Turkey, is as tragicomic as this. In this context, it is worth to mention here, what Erdogan Hekim Ahmet had to experience. He could not see her mother for the last time in her deathbed, since he could not get an entry visa for Greece. After he had been deprived of the Greek citizenship. Erntouvan Tzambas (Erdogan Cambaz) settled down in Germany. Due to the psychological problems he has to suffer today, he cannot work anymore. These small two illustrations show, what 46 thousand victims have to suffer from.

The number of 46,638 the Greek Ministry of Interior Affairs made public reflects only and directly the victims deprived of the Greek citizenship. However, the children of these, who had not come to the world yet during the deprivation process, are not included to this number. When it is considered that the large part of the ones deprived of the Greek citizenship are relatively young people, who have gone abroad with the aim of education or working, it will be evident that the real number of the victims lies much more over the official number. To summarise, the law abolished in 1998 made racial discrimination among the citizens. It is a big shame not only of Greece, but also of Europe that this article, which is actually seen in the apartheid regimes, could be abolished shortly before the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As being the representative of the Western Thrace Turks, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe appeals that 46,638 persons and their children, who have been deprived of the Greek citizenship, are renationalized unconditionally.

Thank you very much for your interest.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2005 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**19-30 September 2005**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session I: Democratic Institutions**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President, dear audience,

My name is Özkan Reşit, and I am present here to represent the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) having its headquarters in Germany. My institution is the umbrella organization of 29 associations founded by the Turkish minority members, who had to immigrate from the region of Western Thrace in the north-western of Greece due to economic and political reasons and carries out activities principally to defend the rights of our minority in the international arena.

In my speech, I would like to present your attention the difficulties the Turkish minority in Greece has to face in the political participation process.

The Western Thrace Turkish minority was represented in the Greek Parliament by its deputies from different Greek political parties until 1990s. In this period of time, our minority could not even get driving licence for tractor and was not allowed to repair the roof of their houses. Their lands were being confiscated. Generally, to say, it was being compelled to be pariah. During such a period of time, our deputies could not undertake a lot to proclaim our voice within the strict party discipline, and therefore, our minority sought for new ways of solutions. The solution was then to elect independent deputy or deputies, who entirely represented our minority. This method was tried for the first time in 1989 and succeeded in 1990. In this year, our minority could acquire the representation power in the Greek Parliament through its independent deputies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

However, our country Greece was very much bothered by the reality that our minority could elect its own independent representatives, and therefore, a national election hurdle of 3% has been introduced through an act shortly before the national elections in 1990 in order to hinder the representation of our minority in the political arena. In many democratic regimes, a

national election hurdle is introduced in order to ensure the political stability in the country, and this is not odd. Today, in almost all of the European countries, there are different hurdle practices dependent on the political conditions of the concerning country. On the other hand, in our country Greece, this election hurdle practice comprises also the independent candidates, and the apparent aim of this practice, which is peculiar to Greece, is to hinder the political participation of our minority. The practice of independent candidacy, which does not harm the political stability and enables different voices to be heard, is one of the necessities of pluralism in democratic regimes. Due to the existing practice, there is no possibility that an independent candidate can be elected anywhere except in Athens. The population of the Turkish minority is equivalent to 1-1.5% of the country's entire population; and even when every member of the minority votes for a single independent candidate, it will not be possible that a representative is elected.

Dear audience,

On the other hand, through her population and settlement policy, Greece has been settling the immigrants, of which the largest part comes from Russia, in the regions, where the minority members live, and through this way, she tries to reduce the political power of the Turkish minority, which arises from its population density.

On the local level also, the way to political representation of our minority is wished to be blocked. Through the 'Plan of Kapodistrias', the regions, provinces and municipalities have been administratively restructured. By this way, it has been hindered that the Turkish minority, which constitutes more than half of the population in Rhodope, the only province in this sense, plays an influential role in the election of the governor of Rhodope. According to this plan, the province of Rhodope, where the Turks constitute the majority, and the province of Evros, where the Greek population has the majority, have been united, and bound to a superior governorship. In the same way, the province of Xanthi, where the Turks constitute the majority, and the provinces of Kavala and Drama, where only the Greeks live, have been also joined together. Through the same plan, the election constituencies, where the Turks constitute the majority, and the constituencies, where the Greek population has the majority, have been united, and the number of the local governments controlled by the minority has been limited to 4 municipalities, and 7 sub-districts.

Until the end of 1990s, soldiers were shipped to the region during the election periods in order that they voted at the elections. The customs officers surprisingly started to work exactly during the election periods, and by this way, the entrance of the minority members living in Turkey to Greece and their voting at the elections were hindered. Today, these old methods have been replaced by others such as the election hurdle of 3% applied to the minority, the settlement of the immigrants in the Western Thrace and uniting of the provinces and constituencies in an arbitrary way.

As being the representative of the Western Thrace Turkish minority, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) expects that the election hurdle of 3% is abolished at once, and the democratic participation means are opened to our minority completely. Second, we appeal that the 'Plan of Kapodistrias', which apparently aims at the minority, is cancelled, and an administrative structure appropriate to the geographic and population conditions is set up.

Thank you very much for your interest.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2005 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**19-30 September 2005**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 3: Fundamental Freedoms I**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President, dear audience,

My name is Özkan Reşit, and I am present here to represent the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) having its headquarters in Germany. My institution is the umbrella organization of 29 associations founded by the Turkish minority members, who had to immigrate from the region of Western Thrace in the north-western of Greece due to economic and political reasons and carries out activities principally to defend the rights of our minority in the international arena.

Today, Greece refuses to acknowledge the identity of the minority, which defines itself as 'Turkish' and lives within the territories of her. This refusal can be seen most apparently in the field of freedom to organization. The signboards of our outstanding associations such as of the Turkish Union of Xanthi founded in 1927, of the Turkish Adolescents' Union of Komotini founded in 1928 and Turkish Teachers' Union of Western Thrace founded in 1936 have been brought down since 1983. The ground was and is that these associations, which have always been peaceful and carried out cultural activities, have been possessing the word 'Turkish' in their names. Likewise, in the beginning of 2003, the foundation of Cultural Association of Turkish Women in Rhodope was not permitted due the same reason. The Greek Supreme Court of Appeals has approved ultimately the ban of the Turkish Union of Xanthi very recently, namely, in the beginning of 2005 after a long legal action. The Supreme Court of Appeals states in its justification concerning the ban decision of the Union that there is no Turkish minority in the country and the association banned has tried to create a non-existing minority problem through using the word 'Turkish' in its name.

The Turkish Union of Xanthi founded in 1927 is a cultural organization which has never went beyond the legal limits in its history, and has not committed any illegal action, which could require a ban decision. Quite contrary to this, a plaque, on which the names of the Turks, who

had lost their lives for Greece during the II. World War and subsequently, during the Greek civil war, appear, is located in one of the head corners of the association as a source of proud.

According to this decision of the Court, possession of ethnic names constitutes the limit of freedom to organization. In the European Union of the 21st century, the associations possessing the word 'Turkish' in their names are banned, or new associations are not allowed to be founded. Likewise, the Macedonian Cultural House had to experience the same ban decision. However, 40 years ago, it was insistently desired with the order of the Greek King that the name of 'Turkish' was used. The documents of this reality are to be found in the report called 'Destroying Ethnic Identity: the Turks of Greece', which was prepared by Helsinki Watch in 1990. Since the junta government onwards, which came to power in 1967, the refusal policy of the Turkish identity has been adopted. Through democracy, which could be set up again in 1974, the bad footprints of the junta regime in the country have been wiped away, but nevertheless, the military rule on our minority still continues today on the ideological level.

Dear president, dear audience,

In Europe, the fundamental text concerning the minority protection is the 'Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities' of the Council of Europe. This treaty has been also signed by our country Greece. In the preamble of the treaty, it is stated: *'Considering that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity...'* I would like to attract your attention that it is mentioned in the treaty not only about the respect to and protection of the national minorities, but also about the development of the minority identity, and that the states should play an active role in this subject matter. Although our country Greece is one of those countries which have signed the treaty, she has not ratified it yet for over 10 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What our country Greece should do today is to ratify at once this treaty she has already signed and demonstrate by this way that the international treaties are not signed due to show purposes. In Europe of the 21st century, it is a big scandal that an association is banned due to its name, although it does not have any illegal activity, and by this way, the identity of 150 thousand people is refused. In order to eliminate this, we expect from the OSCE that it employs the necessary mechanisms in order that Greece finally recognises the ethnic identity of Turks, Macedonians and Albanians, and ratifies the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Thank you very much for listening to me with patience.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**2-13 October 2006**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 10: Democratic Institutions**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyıılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Dear Commissioners and Non-Governmental Organization Delegates,  
Distinguished Guests,

My name is Özkan Reşit. I represent Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe which is the roof federation of 29 associations established by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members living in Europe. We endeavour to solve our members' problems that are due to immigration. Beyond this aim, we are occupied to gain the basic human and democratic rights of our minority members living in Western Thrace and help them during their just as well as legitimate struggle to become equal citizens. I would like to give good news that we became a member of United Nations Economic and Social Council, and we have the right to attend all meetings with representative status as of July.

After this brief introduction, I would like to talk about the barriers that Western Thrace Turkish minority face when they want to use their basic political and minority rights. I would like to begin with citizenship theme.

Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law, that was issued in 1955 and implemented between 1955 - 1988, caused directly or indirectly 46,638 Western Thrace Turks to lose their citizenship by a very simple administrative decision due to their ethnic origin as we discussed in the former meetings. The article was abolished in 1988 as a result of international pressures but it was not implemented retrospectively and due to this, the victims of the mentioned law still have serious problems and are aggrieved by that unfair implementation. We repeat our call to our country, Greece to give Western Thrace Turkish minority their basic rights back. We wish for your support in this matter. We believe strongly, Europe that is established on the principles of peace, welfare and freedom will not accept such an unfair implementation of Greece.

Last year, we discussed about the unfair laws that were specially issued to prevent Western Thrace Turkish Minority members use their democratic rights as well as the conflict of such laws with the democratic community structure at the Human Dimension Implementation meetings.

Election barrier of 3% in accordance with political stability and equality in political representation that is implemented to all political parties is acceptable, but the same election barrier is being implemented on personal base and that is not only undemocratic but also unacceptable.

After the success of Western Thrace Turkish minority independent candidates during the 1990s elections, Greek authorities decided to implement election barrier to independent candidates as to restrict political rights of the minority. We reiterate our demand of election barrier of 3% to be implemented only to political parties.

Our thesis that Kapodistrias' Plan anticipates the union the election areas and that aims to prevent the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members to elect their own governor of province in their election areas was proved by the recent surprise event during the previous months. Gülbeyaz Karahasan was nominated as the candidate for governor of İskeçe-Kavala-Drama province. Conservatives as well as other parties in the community overreacted to the candidacy of Gülbeyaz Karahasan and demanded her to announce the public that 'she is a Greek woman'. The interesting point here is that the centre point of all discussions on the theme is the 'Turkish identity' of the candidate. Greek's problem concentrating on our 'Turkish identity' has been known for years. Our organizations were formally closed due to their names containing 'Turk' and the last of the cases lasting since the 80's at the European Court of Human Rights will be adjudicated as we hope. Skandalidis, the founder of the Kapodistrias' Plan, admitted on a TV programme that mentioned plan was specially designed to prevent the election of Western Thrace Turkish minority members as governor of provinces. In the light of this admission from the founder of the mentioned plan, we invite ESCO to watch the Greek local elections on 15 October in Western Thrace. I would like to express my best regards to you all for listening to me.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2006 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**2-13 October 2006**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session: Fundamental Freedoms I**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyıılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

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Dear Commissioners and Non-Governmental Organization Delegates  
Distinguished Guests,

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The European Continent where the best practices in means of human rights is experienced and the driving force of those practices is the European Union. My country Greece, in spite of her 25-year European Union membership stands as the worst example in means of human rights implementations considering the case of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members.

I would like to talk about the violation of organizational rights. These rights constitute of education, religious, political, citizenship rights as well as the right to establish foundations and economical rights.

Organizational rights are limited by the ethnical identities with which Greek nationalism has conflicts. Turkish and Macedonian identities compose the limit of the organizational rights in Greece. Xanthi Turkish Solidarity Union, established in 1924, Komotini Turkish Youth Union, established in 1928 and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers Union, established in 1936, were formally closed by Greek authorities due to 'Turk' component in their association names in 1984. Rodop Women's Culture Association cannot get founding permission due to 'Turk'

component in its association name since 2001. Xanthi Turkish Solidarity Union and Rodop Women's Culture Association prosecute Greece at the European Court of Human Rights.

Our country, Greece, is too sensible about the usage of Turkish Identity on public platforms that she prefers to use 'Muslim minority' conceptualisation by basing on Lausanne Peace Treaty also by rejecting 'Turkish Identity'. According to the latest study of The Research Centre on Multilingualism (RCM) at University of Brussel, 80% of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members – we should consider that 80 percentage does not reflect the whole number while some of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members hesitate to reveal their real identity of Turkish- believe strongly in that Greece gives high effort to destroy Turkish Identity and takes on actions to realise that aim. Pomak Research Centre in Komotini conflicts with Lausanne Peace Treaty but Greek authorities blink at the existence of so called Pomak Research Centre.

Lingual necessity and conditions of the date determined the description of identity in the framework of Lausanne Peace Treaty and such an identity description conflicts not only with sociology but also with human rights. If we are guided by legal descriptions, Greece wrote 'Turkish' into the papers of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members during population exchange in 1925 and the treaty that shaped that population exchange was named 'Exchange of Turkish and Greek Folks'. By an administrative act in 1950, all the nameplates of the minority schools were demanded to be changed. The nameplates on which 'Muslim Schools' were written, were demanded to be exchanged with the ones on which 'Turkish School' were written. Until 1967, minority members could live with their identity without any serious problem. With military coup, ethnic identity problem was on the agenda and today's situation still reflect the signs of military coup's undemocratic implementations. Democracy came to my country, Greece, in 1974 and we wish that democracy to reach our Western Thrace Turkish Minority members with a time lag of 30 years. We wish human rights violations will come to an end as soon as possible and we expect your support in that democratization process. Tomorrow may be too late.

I would like to thank you for listening to me.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2007 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**26 September-5 October 2007**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 4: Fundamental freedoms I, including: freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, freedom of movement**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyylmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear president,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And NGO Delegates,

At first, I want to thank my country's delegation, Greece, for their kindly answers on Monday and yesterday. My colleagues indicated problems of Turkish Minority of Greece last 2 days and I will make a brief explanation about latest violations in Greece which we believe that they are violation of freedom of thought indirectly.

Minority Association of Civil Society Support could not get founding permission due to 'Minority' component in its name, in June 2007. 'Muslim' definition in Lausanne Treaty was made out as a case, but clear definition of 'Minority' for the society in Western Thracian in Lausanne Treaty has been ignored.

In July 2007 a new broadcasting law had been adopted in Greece. According to new broadcasting law signed by Greek President Karolos Papoulias in July 2007, speaking language in radio broadcasting shall dominantly and preferentially be Greek. This is a clear limitation on usage of native language in radio broadcasting. There is not such an example in another European country. Necessity, such as usage of national language in radio broadcasting, is a clear violation of rights. So, there is a clear danger for Turkish Minority of Greece to use their native language in public broadcasting and, minority radios in Western Thracian will be affected negatively from this new law. This is a clear limitation on freedom of media and a limitation on freedom of expression.

Continental Europe is the place where the best practices of human rights developments have been experienced during the last century, and the driving force of those practices is the European Union. My country Greece despite her 26-year European Union membership stands as the worst example in means of human rights implementations considering the case of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in the European Union. At first, I would like to talk about the violation of organizational rights. These rights are composed of education, religious, political, citizenship rights as well as the right to establish foundations and economic rights.

Ethnic identities, actually ethnic identities by which Greek nationalism is in an uncompromising attitude determine limits of freedom of organization. Especially Turkish identity has emerged as the limit of freedom of organization in Greece, in practice. Turkish Union of Xanthi, established in 1924, Turkish Youth Union of Komotini, established in 1928 and Turkish Teachers Union of Western Thrace, established in 1936, were formally closed by Greek authorities due to 'Turk' component in their association names in 1984. Cultural Association of Rhodope Turkish Women cannot get founding permission due to 'Turk' component in its association name since 2001 and Minority Youth Association of Maritsa cannot get founding permission due to 'Minority' component in its association name since 2004. Lastly, as it is seen, while democratization and human rights understanding shall be developed in 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece, there is a deterioration of democracy and human rights and, Greece has become a country where anti-democratic practices.

WARSAW, 26 September 2007

**OSCE HDIM-WORKING SESSION 4:  
Fundamental Freedoms I  
STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION  
in exercise of its Right of Reply**

1. Within the framework of positive measures regarding the Muslim minority in Thrace, the Muslim religious foundations (wakifs) are exempted, following a law adopted in 2007, from the obligation to pay the Major Land Property Tax which Greek citizens have to pay. In addition, loans and mortgages raised on their properties are lifted by the provisions of the abovementioned law.

2. As far as the mass media are concerned, I would like to inform you of the following:

The Greek Government recently introduced minimum standards for the operation of radio stations, through Law No 3592/2007. These standards focus on safeguarding pluralism in broadcasting and information, as well as quality and viability of the radio stations. These principles are in full conformity with both national and Community Law. The above-mentioned Law is the outcome of a lengthy co-operation (over a six months period) between the European Commission and the Secretariat General for Communication / Information in Greece.

The said Law does not include any provisions hindering local or regional media from obtaining licenses for radio stations. On the contrary, through a specific provision, (article 8 paras. 2 and 3 of the Media Law) the licenses are being granted at a prefecture level, or other, at district level.

In the same media Law, the right to information of everyone living in Greece has been taken into serious consideration. To this end, in article 8 para 13(a) of the media Law, Greek is provided for as main but not exclusive language of broadcasting. By this provision, which is only of a guiding nature, the Law provides for the use of the Greek language in conformity with the principles of the European Union which ensure and promote linguistic pluralism within the European area. Otherwise, spoken programming can be broadcast in languages other than Greek, thus ensuring the right to the free flow of information, freedom of expression and pluralism, free from any sort of language or any other discrimination.

3. Concerning the so-called 'Macedonian minority' of Greece, we would like to stress that the existence of a small number of persons who live in Northern Greece and use, without restrictions, in addition to the Greek language, Slavic oral idioms, confined to family or colloquial use, does not indicate the existence of a minority. This group of Greek citizens living in the region of Macedonia have been freely participating with their own political party in parliamentary elections in Greece, each time being able to gather an insignificant number of votes, covering no more than 0.02% of the electoral vote.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
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**OSCE**  
**2008 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**29 September-10 October 2008**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 5: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination -National Minorities**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

I, hereby, would like to quote from the keynote address by High Commissioner van der Stoel at the opening of the OSCE Minorities Seminar in Warsaw, in 1994: ‘The existence of a minority is a question of fact and not of definition. (...) First of all, a minority is a group with linguistic, ethnic or cultural characteristics, which distinguish it from the majority. Secondly, a minority is a group which usually not only seeks to maintain its identity but also tries to give stronger expression to that identity’. However, the Turkish minority in Greece, which is determined to maintain its identity, suffer problems in the field of education, although the Convention of the Rights of the Child, of which Greece is a part, recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.

The Turkish minority is granted with the right to have education in its native language, and it does have an autonomy in the management of its educational institutions by the Treaty of Lausanne signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923 determining the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general and the bilateral educational agreements, the Educational Agreement (1951) and the Cultural Protocol (1968). Due to certain particularities in the educational system, however, minority students do not have adequate opportunities in the field of education. The major problems the minority faces in education include: a mixed system of administration, outdated textbooks, poorly educated teaching staff and the absence of an efficient school curriculum.

Article 41 of the Treaty granted rights to the Muslim Turkish minority in Thrace ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language. It states:

*As regards public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision will not prevent the Turkish Government from making the teaching of the Turkish language obligatory in the said schools.*

The Greek government under Law 3518/2006 decided to extend compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008 and revised the condition of pupils' admission in pre-school education. The attendance of those pupils, who have completed the 5th year of their age, is now obligatory.

The Minority appreciates the need for the extension of compulsory education period from nine to ten years and considers the kindergartens vital for the next generations of the minority child. However, the Law 3518/2006 compels the minority children in Western Thrace who have completed the 5th year of their age to attend majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education since the Law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural differences of the children in Greece. The Turkish Minority in Western Thrace is determined to establish kindergartens in bilingual rather than the state kindergartens in which Greek language is used in the areas inhabited by the Turkish minority in line with the status of the minority and the legal framework in the field of education, the minority asserts that the kindergartens should be bilingual.

Since the OSCE participating states, including Greece, aim to create comprehensive framework for peace and stability in Europe, they deal equally with human rights. ABTTF reminds that the Helsinki Final Act acknowledges the 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief' as one of its guiding principles, and urges the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to monitor the implementation of commitments that Greece, an OSCE participating state, has undertaken in the field of human rights, in particular the right to education in mother tongue in all levels of minority education in Greece, including pre-school minority education.

ABTTF reminds the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (1996) that the ultimate object of all human rights is the full and free development of the individual human personality in conditions of equality. It recalls;

- States should create conditions enabling institutions which are representative of members of the national minorities in question to participate, in a meaningful way, in the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to minority education. (Article 5)

- In accordance with international law, persons belonging to national minorities, like others, have the right to establish and manage their own private educational institutions in conformity with domestic law. (Article 8)

- The first years of education are of pivotal importance in a child's development. Educational research suggests that the medium of teaching at pre-school and kindergarten levels should ideally be the child's language. Wherever possible, States should create conditions enabling parents to avail themselves of this option. (Article 11)

ABTTF recalls that all OSCE states are bound by United Nations obligations relating to human rights, including minority rights, and that the great majority of OSCE States are also bound by the standards of the Council of Europe. ABTTF recalls;

- Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says education shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or religious groups and contribute to the maintenance of peace.
- Article 4 (3) of the UN Declaration on the Rights on Persons Belonging to Minorities that ‘States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue’.
- Article 27 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- Article 1(2) and Article 5 of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education,
- Article 28(1) and Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Article 8 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (EChRML)
- Article 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Besides, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees the right of parents to choose for their children schools other than those established by public authorities. It also guarantees the right of individuals and bodies to establish and manage alternative educational institutions as long as these conform to minimum educational standards as laid down by the State.

#### Recommendations:

1. Education needs to be made available and accessible at all levels to the members of a minority group and, most importantly, it needs to adapt to the socio-linguistic and cultural needs of minority students.
2. A culture of respect must be maintained to protect the right to be different and the principles of non-discrimination and equality in educational level. The accomplishment of such a goal requires a satisfactory level of education that takes into consideration the special social and cultural needs of the members of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace.
3. Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), therefore, urges the Greek government that the extension of the period of compulsory education from nine to ten years under Law No. 3518/2006 should be extended to the minority schooling system.
4. We assert that the minority system of education should be reconstructed according to the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism. In this context, we encourage the Greek government to provide Muslim Turkish students with sufficient opportunities to learn both the official language of the state and their mother tongue.

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
WORKING SESSION 3: FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS II (30.9.2008)  
WORKING SESSION 5: TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION I  
(1.10.2008)  
STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION  
in exercise of its Right of Reply Freedom of Media**

Law 3592/2007 has been issued in order to provide the necessary conditions for the operation of television and radio stations. This Law is a product of lengthy consultations between the General Secretariat of Communication/Information and competent EU authorities. A number of criteria have been considered to ensure that media operators abide by high standards, safeguarding at the same time fundamental rights of media operators, individuals and consumers. Thus, media pluralism, commercial viability, quality of programming, technical requirements, freedom of expression and information are amongst other criteria specified for license eligibility. It must also be considered that frequencies constitute a 'public good', which must be carefully managed, bearing always in mind the public interest.

Provisions of the said Law in no way hinder any local or regional applicant from obtaining a license, which is granted by a local (prefecture level) or regional authority. The relevant provisions for minimum disbursed capital (distinguishing between news and information providers and others) linked to population ratio (according to latest population census data) and/or employing a certain number of staff for radio stations, are amongst other requirements which purport to guarantee commercial viability, quantity and quality of programming, professional sustainability and better employment conditions, fully respecting national and international regulations and in line with the demands of professional groups (trade unions) themselves. Serious professionals abiding by the minimum requirements and universal criteria and conditions set by this new media legislation have nothing to be afraid of.

In the said Law, Greek is provided for as main, but not exclusive language of broadcasting. By this provision, which is only of a guiding nature, the Law provides for the use of the Greek language in conformity with the principles of the European Union which ensure and promote linguistic pluralism within the European area. Otherwise, spoken programming can be broadcast in languages other than Greek, thus ensuring the right to the free flow of information, freedom of expression and pluralism, free from any sort of discrimination.

**Muslim minority in Thrace**

The Muslim minority in Thrace, which is the officially recognised minority in Greece, numbers around 100,000 persons and consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak or Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own distinct spoken language and cultural traditions. They share, however, a common religion, which is the basic reason for the denomination of the minority in its entirety as 'Muslim' in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, establishing the status of the above minority.

Members of the Muslim minority in Thrace are free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. What is not acceptable is the attempt to establish a single ethnic identity for the entire Muslim minority in Thrace, so as to subsume Pomak and Roma persons under a Turkish identity.

Greece's policy towards her Muslim minority in Thrace unfolds as follows: First, Greece **fully implements** her commitments pursuant to the relevant articles of the 1923 Lausanne International Treaty, which established the status of the Muslim minority in Thrace. In addition, the Muslims in Thrace, in accordance with the principle of equality before the law and of civil rights, enjoy the **same rights and obligations** as their Christian fellow citizens. In almost all successive parliamentary elections from 1927 onwards, there have been **Muslim deputies** within the main governing and opposition Greek political parties, whereas Muslims do participate in all the levels of **Local Administration** in Thrace. Second, in keeping with the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN human rights covenants, Greece has also adopted **positive discrimination** measures towards the Muslim minority, i.e. the two quotas (**0.5%**) for the admission of **minority students** to Universities and for their employment in the public sector. Third, members of the Muslim minority, namely **women and young persons**, have been, and continue to be, **beneficiaries under nation – wide programmes and projects**, co – financed by the E.U., i.e. on vulnerable social groups, on gender equality, on fighting racism and xenophobia, on equal opportunities as for the access to employment and on inter – cultural dialogue.

In general, over the last fifteen years, the Muslim minority has reaped all the benefits of Greece's long membership in the European Union, as have all other Greek citizens. This has been, and continues to be, tangible evidence of our political culture and of our commitment to ensure the **smooth integration** of the minority in the social, economic and educational tissue of the country.

In spite of this evident progress, the same repeated grievances on the 'plight' of the Muslim minority are being expressed by the Turkish – origin component of the minority and by Turkey itself. The more these grievances become tougher and orchestrated, the more they will bear clear evidence that Greece's policy, over these past fifteen years, accompanied by concrete positive discrimination measures, is on **the right track**.

Two concepts cannot converge in Thrace: promoting **smooth integration**, on one hand, and marginalisation and a '**ghetto**' **mentality**, on the other.

#### Positive measures in favour of members of the Muslim minority

Indicatively, the Greek state has adopted and implemented the following measures in favour of the Muslim minority:

–**Turkish language** courses have been introduced (since 2006) in public schools curricula in Thrace, as an optional foreign language.

–A programme of **Greek language & civilisation courses** has been successfully initiated for **Muslim parents**.

–As far as tertiary education is concerned, **the introduction of a 0.5 % quota** for the admission of Muslim students to Universities and Higher Technical Schools, has long borne its fruits.

–Mindful of the need to enhance the **participation** of the minority in the **public sector** in Thrace, we have introduced another **quota of 0.5 % to the State exams**, as provided for in a newly enacted law.

At the same time, the overall situation on the ground, concerning certain professions, is more than satisfactory. For instance, there is a large number of teachers from the minority, not to mention those working in banks and state hospitals in Thrace.

–In the framework of a law, adopted early in 2007, the Ministry of Education and Religion has provided for **the appointment of 240 Imams, and their remuneration**, to the three Mufti Offices.

–By virtue of the new law on the administration and the management of Muslim Wakifs in Thrace, both the members of the Wakif Committees as well as of the three main Management Committees **are to be elected**. Thus, **a longstanding request** by the Muslim minority **is being met** by the Greek state.

Previously, in 2007, the Muslim Wakifs had been **exempted** from submitting the Tax Declarations on Income, Land Property and Major Land Property of previous years, and consequently their accumulated registered **debts, fines** and existing **mortgages have been lifted**. Furthermore, as of 2008, the Muslim Wakifs **are now exempted from paying the Major Land Property tax**.

–Aiming at promoting inter – cultural dialogue, Greece has taken the initiative, in the context of an E.U. project, **to establish Youth Councils**, involving young Christians & Muslims alike, as part of the Local Administration network in Thrace.

### Muftis

The Muftis, erroneously considered religious leaders, are high ranking Muslim clerics/officials.

By means of a selection procedure, whereby prominent Muslim personalities and theology professors are consulted, the **three Muftis** are subsequently chosen and appointed by the Greek state, as is the case in all Muslim countries and in Turkey itself.

The two, illicitly and arbitrarily elected, so – called Muftis act as if they were quasi **political** – religious leaders of the minority, contravening the rules and principles of a democratic state.

The members of the Muslim minority in Thrace perform their religious duties and follow their traditions without any restriction, retaining in full the right to worship in everyday life.

### Minority Education

In implementing the letter and the spirit of the Lausanne Treaty, Greece fosters the proper functioning of the **existing** minority schools in Thrace.

In parallel, the minority is, more than ever before, determined to bring **their children** to the **public** educational system, so the Greek state needs to respond to this request. The common feature of all democracies is the policy towards integration of their minorities, while promoting their cultural and linguistic characteristics.

The Greek Government has indeed extended the period of compulsory education from nine to ten years. This tenth year applies to children between five and six years old, who attend kindergartens. Children at kindergartens do not have Greek textbooks

– actually, they do not have any textbook – and do not follow any curriculum. In keeping with international and E.U. educational standards, the various activities and games at Greek kindergartens serve as a smooth introduction to primary education. We encourage kindergarten teachers, members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, to work at kindergartens in areas where there are many Muslims. Nevertheless, for the time being, the number of university – educated kindergarten teachers from the Muslim minority is still low, not exceeding 10 members. The situation is going to improve in the following years.

### Associations

Greece, an EU member, does advocate and respect the institutional role of the European Court on Human Rights and its decisions.

It's worth mentioning that the reality in Thrace (proof that freedom of association is fully protected in the Greek legal order) is indicative: **a large number** of minority associations and non-governmental organizations have been recognised and function unimpeded.

### Stateless persons

In 1998, the Greek government abolished article 19 of the Nationality Code, on the basis of which, in the past, a number of persons of non-Greek origin, who left the Greek territory with no intention of coming back, were deprived of their nationality.

Today, the process of acquiring the Greek citizenship is being completed for the remaining number (less than 20) of 'stateless' **Muslims from Thrace.**



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2009 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**04-05 May 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 2: Improving the Policing and Prosecution of Hate Crimes**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Özkan Reşit, Ms. Fatma Reşit  
E-mail(s): [ozkan.resit@abtff.org](mailto:ozkan.resit@abtff.org), [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

I, hereby, would like to quote from the keynote address by High Commissioner van der Stoep at the opening of the OSCE Minorities Seminar in Warsaw, in 1994: ‘The existence of a minority is a question of fact and not of definition. (...) First of all, a minority is a group with linguistic, ethnic or cultural characteristics, which distinguish it from the majority. Secondly, a minority is a group which usually not only seeks to maintain its identity but also tries to give stronger expression to that identity’. However, the Turkish Minority in Greece, which is determined to maintain its identity, face serious problems and discrimination in expressing its identity.

Since hate crimes or bias-motivated crimes occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her membership in a certain social group, the Fundamental Rights Agency notes that the authorities in Greece do not provide any data on hate crimes.<sup>1</sup> Although Article 5(2) of the Greek Constitution states that ‘All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs’, there is no direct provision in the Greek Constitution which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity or nationality, religion, language.

The Criminal Code of Greece does not contain provisions which specifically the racist or other bias-motivated actions of the offender to be taken into consideration by the courts as an aggravating circumstance when sentencing, although the Greek authorities have claimed that the Criminal Code takes the motives of crimes or bias-motivated crimes into consideration

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<sup>1</sup> FRA, ‘European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Annual Report’, page 28.

when determining the sentence. However, the law does not specifically stipulate that, for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constituted an aggravating circumstance.

Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises ‘to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole grounds of the latter’s racial or national origin (or by virtue of article 24 of Law 1419/1984) religion, and, ‘to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter’s racial or national origin or religion’.

Law 927/1979 penalises incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence towards individuals or groups because of their racial, national or religious origin, through public written or oral expressions; and prohibits the establishment of, and membership in, organizations which organise propaganda and activities aimed at racial discrimination. However, as of 2003, no convictions had been attained under the law.

Law 2910/2001 grants the public prosecutor the possibility of acting *ex officio*, and no longer solely on the complaint of an individual personally wronged, in respect of offences of incitement to racial discrimination, hatred or violence as provided in article 1 of Law no. 927/1979. This amendment enables a prosecutor to act upon learning of a potential offence, such as when alerted by organizations that defend human rights or that represents a group targeted by statements constituting incitement to racial hatred. There have been no further changes to legislation in the criminal sphere on prevention of racism and intolerance.

In 2005, Law on the ‘Implementation of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation’ was adopted. Moreover, Article 16 (1) of Law 3304/2005, which amended Article 3 of Law 927/1979, provides that ‘whoever violates the prohibition of discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnic or racial origin or religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation, with respect to the supply of goods or the offer of services to the public is punished with six months’ imprisonment and a fine of €1,000 –5,000. However, the abovementioned criminal legislation has until now, had limited application in practice.

Although Article 2(a) of the Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility of the Journalists’ Union of Athens Daily Newspapers states that journalists should not make distinctions among citizens on the basis of their origin, gender, race, religion, political affiliation, economic situation and social status, the National Commission for Human Rights notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups. Today, there have been very few prosecutions and convictions under the criminal law provisions addressing racist offences, although a few exemplary penalties have been imposed. However, racist incidents have occurred in Greece - including racist statements made in public or reported in the press, and acts of racist violence - and that such incidents have not been prosecuted or indeed given all due attention by the Greek authorities. The problem is that the interpretation of the notion of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases.

Some media express certain prejudices and negative stereotypes towards members of minority groups, including the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. The statements in question are

sometimes tolerated by the judicial authorities on the name of freedom of expression. However, ABTTF would like to stress that Greek Criminal Code (Law 927/1979) the principle of freedom of expression does not extend so far as to authorise the publication of racist statements.

Although Circular No 21979/13.2003 of the Ministry of the Press and Media aims at increasing the awareness of professionals working in the media against racism and xenophobia, racist articles and opinions have been and are being published by some media.

On 4 March 2009, *Hronos*, a regional newspaper published in Greek in Western Thrace, with regard to the report submitted by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, on human rights of minorities in Greece, commented that ‘Those who have given information to the Rapporteur are those who benefit from the focal points which try to make non-existent minorities exist and destroy the stability in the country’. Unfortunately, this is not an exceptional case in Greece. Not only *Hronos*, some other regional or national newspapers in Greece have a negative approach towards the Turkish Minority in Thrace, however, hate speech is rarely prosecuted by certain judicial authorities. In this context, they do threaten the solidarity in society, because they target a specific group within the society, namely the Turkish Minority.

Lately, on 19 February 2009, Abdülhalim Dede while he was on-air during the morning programme, *Kalimera Ellada*, broadcast by the Athens, Greece-based Antenna TV. The Turkish Ziraat Bank had invited, among others, Dimitris Stamatis, Secretary General of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, to attend the opening of its first branch in Komotini, Thrace, Greece. Stamatis declined because the letter of invitation was written in English and Turkish, but not in Greek, and because the city of Komotini was referred to by its Turkish name only, *Gümülcine*. Abdülhalim Dede, activist on the promotion of minority rights of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace and publisher and director of the newspaper *Trakyanın Sesi* and owner of the radio station *IŞIK FM* in Komotini, was invited by the hosts of *Kalimera Ellada* to express his opinion live from Komotini on Antenna TV. During the interview, an unknown man approached Dede, shouted at him using obscene language, and physically attacked him. The main studio in Athens immediately terminated the live broadcasting.

ABTTF notes with concern this increasing trend of assaults against journalists in the entire region. We would like all OSCE Participating States to pay more attention to the hate or bias-motivated crimes and hate speech and to act immediately. We, hereby, urge Greek authorities;

- To make express provision in the law for racist motivation to be considered as an aggravating circumstance in the case of all common offences.
- To introduce a provision into criminal law expressly stipulating that for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constitutes an aggravating circumstance. In addition, we would like to draw attention of the Greek authorities to ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, indicating the provisions that should be included in criminal legislation.
- To take every step to prosecute and punish the culprits, in cases where racist articles have been published
- To ratify as soon as possible the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

**SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETIN ON HATE CRIMES –  
EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION**

**Session II: Improving the Policing and Prosecution of Hate Crimes**  
**Written Contribution by the Greek Delegation**

The 'Code of ethics for police officers' (Presidential Decree 254/2004) contains rules for the respect of human rights and the protection of vulnerable persons and social groups. The European Code of Police Ethics, resolutions adopted in international fora on rules of behaviour for police officers, the observations and suggestions of the National Commission for Human Rights, the recommendations of the Ombudsman, the views of the Office of the UNHCR in Greece and the views of the police personnel federations were also taken into account in the preparation of that Decree.

Copies of the Code were distributed to all police officers, border guards and special guards. The Code was included in the education and training courses of all police academies. It consists of 7 Articles, which define the general obligations of police officers, guidelines for police action, for the arrest and detention by the police and for preliminary investigation, the obligation of police officers to assist citizens and the duties of the police officer as a public servant.

It is worth citing from the aforementioned Code of Police Ethics the following articles that highlight the non-discriminatory criteria on which this Code was based:

Article 5.3: 'The avoidance of prejudice on the grounds of colour, sex, national origin, ideology, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, economic or social position or other distinctive characteristic is a fundamental parameter of the police officer's conduct'.

Article 5.4: 'The police officer shows special care for the protection especially of children, women, aged persons, persons with special needs, disabled persons, refugees, members of minority or more generally other vulnerable social groups...'

Moreover, in 2005 a Circular of the Chief of the Hellenic Police was issued on the 'Fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, during police action'. The Circular notes that respect for the diversity of perceptions and for different ways of life and cultural characteristics constitutes a primary obligation of the personnel of the Hellenic police.

The same Circular establishes the duty of police authorities to investigate racist motives in penal and administrative cases, in which foreign citizens or persons belonging to vulnerable groups are involved.

Finally, Law 3719/2008, which entered into force in November 2008, provides that the commission of a crime on the basis of national, racial or religious hatred or hatred on the grounds of a different sexual orientation constitutes an aggravating circumstance.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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**OSCE**

**2009 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**8-9 July 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Status of Religious or Belief Communities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K.  
Engin Soyylmaz

E-mail: [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe states that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations or associations (Principle 32.2). And, participating States will protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory and create conditions for the promotion of that identity.

States are obliged to respect and to ensure all individuals the right to freedom of religion or belief without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or other origin, property, birth or other status. Legislation should be reviewed to assure that any differentiations among religions are justified by genuinely objective factors and that the risk of prejudicial treatment is totally eliminated.

In relation to autonomy of religious organizations, the 2004 Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief states that States should be very reluctant to involve itself in any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the internal organizations of a religious group. Although differential treatment permissible, they should not constitute any kind of justification for discrimination. Therefore, Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe states that the participating States will, inter alia,

respect the right of religious communities to organise themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure and to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangement between them and their State (Principle 16.4).

However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace\* in Greece is not allowed to elect their religious leaders. A further problem is that the Turkish Minority in Rhodes and Kos are also subject to restrictions in practicing their religion. The seat of the Mufti has remained vacant since 1972. The minority rights laid by the Lausanne Treaty do not apply to the persons of Turkish origin on the islands of Rhodes (Rodos) and Kos (İstanköy). However, the fact that Rhodes and Kos were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed should not be a reason to deprive the Turkish Minority on the islands of their minority rights. The Turkish Minority in Rhodes and Kos should be treated in full compliance with the terms of the Lausanne Treaty and other international and European standards on minority rights.

The religious status and the religious rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are clearly established in the 1913 Athens Treaty. Although there is no specific reference to the seat of mufti in the Lausanne Treaty, it ensured religious freedoms of the Minority members and reaffirmed the 1913 Athens Treaty which laid down that 'each Mufti will be elected by the Moslem electors in their respective jurisdiction areas' (Article 11). In accordance with the provisions of the Athens Treaty, Law 2345/1920 which set down that muftis were to be directly elected by Muslims who are entitled to vote was never enacted. Since then, muftis in Xanthi, Komotini and Alexandroupolis were appointed by a special decree issued by the King. After the problems with regard to the appointment of mufti with the Greek Government in 1985, Greece repealed the Law 2345/1920.

In violation of the Athens Treaty, the Presidential Decree of 24 December of 1990 adopted a legislative decree which provides that muftis must be appointed by Presidential Decree on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In 1990, the Turkish Minority elected its own muftis, although public authorities did not recognise the elected muftis, and they were even prosecuted and sentenced to prison for illegal use of religious symbols.

In 2007, the Government passed the Law 3536/2007 through the Greek Parliament, which envisages the appointment of 240 imams to serve for the appointed muftis of Komotini, Xanthi and Dimetoka. Thence, the imams, who will serve in the mosques in the regions inhabited by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, will be appointed by the Government. The selection of the imams, who are to be appointed as religious teachers in public service by a committee of five Christians, is against the principle that 'Minority administrates its own religious and vakfs institutions' stated in the Lausanne Treaty.

In clear violation of the freedom of religion and belief of the Minority, the Law 3536/2007 has been prepared and put into effect without asking opinion of the Minority itself at any stage. This clearly indicates that the Turkish Minority does have no say on issues which directly affect it. Nevertheless, it is a great disrespect made against the Muslim Turkish Minority that under the regarding law, the selection of the imams, who will serve in the mosques belonging to the Minority, will be carried out by a delegation composed of Orthodox Christians only, but not by the Minority itself.

The 2004 *Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief* does describe the right to association as one of the basic values underlying international

standards for freedom of religion or belief. It is, thereby, stated that the right to acquire and maintain legal personality is of importance to carry out the full range of activities in a convenient and efficient way. Since the right to association extends to religious associations, undue restrictions on the right to legal personality are inconsistent with both the right to association and freedom of religion or belief. However, in Greece, there is no specific provision in the Constitution guaranteeing and protecting the freedom of religion of the Minority. Although Mufti (appointed) is a public servant in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty and the applicable legislation, it does not have a public law entity, contrary to the Jewish Central Boards and shared Jewish communities. The seat of Muftis, mosques, lodges and other religious institutions of the Turkish Minority should have a public law entity.

But this does not mean that the State should involve in/intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group. The State should extricate itself any matter which might be considered 'internal' or 'doctrinal'. Article 3 of the Constitution of Greece states 'The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ', and, the Orthodox Church of Greece is independent and inseparably united in doctrine with the Great Church in Istanbul and with every other Church of the same doctrine, observing unwaveringly the holy apostolic and synod canons and sacred traditions. The ecclesiastic of the Orthodox Church are public servants, but they are appointed/elected/selected by the Church itself, and the State is not allowed to involve in/intervene to any matter internal or doctrinal to the Church. It is unacceptable that Greece, which does not even interfere with the Orthodox Church, shall prospectively be able to select/appoint servants of the religious organizations of the Minority.

Greece should fully guarantee and realise that the members of the Turkish Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law as other Greek nationals in the management and the control of their religious institutions, and, that they should be allowed to exercise their religion freely therein.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**

**2009 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**8-9 July 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Places of Worship**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief states that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, the freedom to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes. And, the participating States will establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly.

In Greece, the right to freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed by the Constitution. The freedom of religious conscience is inviolable, and the enjoyment of civil rights and liberties does not depend on the individual's religious beliefs (Article 13.1). Article 13.2 of the Constitution of Greece states:

‘All known religions shall be free, and their rites of worship shall be performed unhindered and under the protection of the law. The practice of rites of worship is not allowed to offend public order or the good usages. Proselytism is prohibited’.

But while freedom of worship is guaranteed by the Constitution of Greece, which is a member of the European Union, Athens is the only European capital which does not have a proper mosque or cemetery to serve its more than 300,000 Muslim residents, mainly from various parts of northern Africa and Pakistan.

Even though there are mosques in the old part of Athens known as Plaka, e.g. the Fethiye or victory mosque dating back to 1458, today these buildings are not allowed to be used by Muslim prayers. Thousands of Muslims, living in the city of Athens, have been using abandoned factories and converted coffee shops as makeshift prayer houses for years. Today, there are approximately 150 illegal mosques operating across the Greek capital.

In 2007, the Greek government unveiled a bill for the construction of the mosque, which would be built on a large plot of land owned by the Greek Navy. A previous proposal to build a mosque near Athens' International Airport ahead of the 2004 Olympics was blocked following objections by residents and opposition from the Greek Orthodox Church.

Today, the only operating mosques in Greece are in the region of Western Thrace, where the Muslim Minority, which is the only officially recognised minority in Greece, has an estimated population of 150,000. By the Constitution of Greece, the persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace- who believe the known religion of Islam- shall perform their religious duties, with the condition of not offending public order or the good usages.

Although the Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe states that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own education, cultural and religious organisations or associations, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and of Rhodes and Kos islands still faces serious difficulties in construction or operation of mosques. The Turkish Minority in Rhodes and Kos encounter restrictions in practicing their religion. Only one of the still existing 12 mosques in Rhodes is open for religious services. For many years in Western Thrace, Muslim places of worship, mosques which needed reparations could not be repaired because the authorities did not grant permits.

To bring into conformity with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, Greece restricted the competent authorities' discretion in granting an administrative authorization for the construction or the operation of places of worship to the formal conditions laid down by the applicable legislation. In connection with the right to build and use temples and places of worship, Article 27 of Law 3467/2006 abolished a legislative provision according to which the opinion (of a non-binding character) of the local Orthodox Bishop was to be sought for the issue of a permit to build and to operate a non- Orthodox place of worship.

However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has still difficulties when new mosques are built, particularly in respect of the height of minarets. The height of a minaret should not exceed the bell tower of churches, which is 7.5 meters. Only the principle to the effect that the local authorities responsible for urban planning should issue permits in such cases should be retained and implemented in the light of the non-discrimination principle in exercising the right to freedom of religion.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2009 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**8 September–9 October 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms.Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K. Engin Soyylmaz  
E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) primarily would like to recall the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 which declares that ‘The participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere’.

Although Greece affirms that members of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace enjoy the same rights and obligations based on the principle of equality before the law, and of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the Turkish Minority still faces serious problems and discrimination in expressing its identity. Article 5(2) of the Greek Constitution states that ‘All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs’. There is, however, no direct provision in the Greek Constitution which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, religion or language. According to Article 16 (1) of Law 3304/2005 ‘whoever violates the prohibition of discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnic or racial origin or religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation, with respect to the supply of goods or the offer of services to the public is punished with six months’ imprisonment and a fine of €1,000–5,000’. However, until today Greek police has not presented any serious endeavour to find the perpetrators of the actions of 2 September in the village of Okçular, and the persons could neither be identified, nor punished yet.

Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises ‘to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole grounds of the latter’s racial or national origin and, ‘to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter’s racial or national origin or religion’. Nevertheless, on 12 September 2009 Georgios Karatzaferis, President of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), announced his candidacy for the province of Rhodope at a press conference during his visit to the city of Tripoli in Peloponnese on 12 September 2009 and stated with regard to his candidacy for the province of Rhodope that ‘Thus it will not seem like only the Turkish consulate is serving in this are’. After Karatzaferis’ speech a placard with the statement ‘Close the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey’ was put up in Komotini. Although Article 1c of the Code of Police Ethics states that Greek police ‘Shall always act with a view to securing public order and safety, serving public interest and guaranteeing citizens’ legitimate interests’, Greek police remained as spectator when the banners were hung up by a group of about eight people.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe has presented its concerns about the increasing number of Hate Crimes in the Western Thrace area, during the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Hate Crimes- Effective Implementation of Legislation, held from 4- 5 May 2009 in Vienna. ABTTF emphasised the importance of Police Ethical Codes, as it exists in Greece, for the OSCE region, but clearly pointed out its worries about the statements in the Hellenic Police Codex. The Greek police declares that (they) have the great honour to serve the Greek people by exercising police power trusted upon (them) according to the Constitution and law’. The expression ‘Greek peoples’ presents a clear division of ethnic groups within the country, followed by inequitable actions of crime. On 5 September 2009, Ali Karaosman, the Ramadan drummer of Koyunköy, a province of Xanthi, was attacked by an armed Greek while he was waiting for the drum playing time. Karaosman, who went to the police for appeal, was accused by the Greek perpetrator and detained by the Greek police for six hours. Unjust actions of the Greek police targeted against members of the Turkish minority are not an exception in Western Thrace. Thus, ABTTF agrees with the recommendations made during the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Hate Crimes- Effective Implementation of Legislation in Vienna and emphasises the significance of ‘OSCE participating States (creating) Codes of Ethics for the Police which should make clear that the police must serve the entire community’. In addition, we would like to remind that Greece and all ‘OSCE participating States should provide training for law enforcement to combat racial prejudices amongst the police’.

In conclusion, ABTTF notes with concern this increasing trend of assaults against members of the Turkish minority in the entire region. We ask all OSCE Participating States to pay more attention to the hate or bias-motivated crimes and hate speech and to act immediately. We, hereby, urge Greek authorities;

- To make express provision in the law for racist motivation to be considered as an aggravating circumstance in the case of all common offences.
- To introduce a provision into criminal law expressly stipulating that for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constitutes an aggravating circumstance. In addition, we would like to draw attention of the Greek authorities to ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial

discrimination, indicating the provisions that should be included in criminal legislation.

- To take every step to prosecute and punish the culprits, in cases where racist actions have been taken.
- To ratify as soon as possible the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2009 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**8 September–9 October 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 2: (Specifically selected topic) Freedom of religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

*Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* states that the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief shall include, inter alia, the freedom to worship or assemble in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes. And, the participating States will establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly.

Although persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own education, cultural and religious organizations or associations, the Turkish Minority of Western Thracian and of Rhodes and Kos islands still faces serious difficulties in construction or operation of mosques. The Turkish Minority does encounter restrictions in practicing their religion. For many years in Western Thracian, Muslim places of worship, mosques which needed reparations could not be repaired because the authorities did not grant permits.

To bring into conformity with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, Greece restricted the competent authorities' discretion in granting an administrative authorization for the construction or the operation of places of worship to the formal conditions laid down by the applicable legislation. In connection with the right to build and use temples and places of worship, Article 27 of Law 3467/2006 abolished a legislative provision according to which the opinion (of a non-binding character) of the local Orthodox Bishop was to be sought for the issue of a permit to build and to operate a non-Orthodox place of worship. However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thracian has still difficulties when new mosques are built, particularly in respect of the height of minarets. The height of a minaret should not exceed the

bell tower of churches, which is 7.5 meters. Only the principle to the effect that the local authorities responsible for urban planning should issue permits in such cases should be retained and implemented in the light of the non-discrimination principle in exercising the right to freedom of religion.

ABTTF would like to recall that all participating OSCE states have reiterated the importance of the commitment to freedom of religion or belief, also linking it to the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination. However, the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace continues to be challenged by restrictions to their rights. This includes attacks or restrictions on places of worship.

On 2 September 2009, the mosque of Okçular village in Xanthi, Greece, was set on fire. Police officers, who inspected the crime scene, ascertained the occurrence as an incendiary action and stated that unidentified person or persons spoiled gasoline on the mosque carpets, after removing the iron railings and breaking a window to enter the mosque. Today, only seven Turkish families are living in the village of Okçular, which is located on the western border of Western Thrace, next to a Christian majority. During the general elections of 2004, the mosque was set on fire for the first time on 7 March and as a result completely burned down. The second incendiary action took place in 2007, and now on the day of the early election announcement of Greece for 4 October 2009, the mosque became a place of vandalism again.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2009 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**8 September– 9 October 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 17**

**Democratic institutions, including: democratic elections; democracy at the national, regional and local levels; citizenship and political rights**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms.Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Full and effective political participation is an essential component of a peaceful and democratic society. Persons belonging to minorities should have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.

However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in society's policy and decision-making system. After the Turkish Minority elected an independent deputy in 1989, a new electoral law was introduced in Greece, which set a threshold of 3% of the nationwide vote for a party and for an independent candidate to be represented in the Parliament. Under the current electoral law of 'reinforced proportionality', political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament unless they obtain at least 3 % of the votes throughout the country, although they may have enough votes to get electoral seats in specific electoral districts. This provision makes it almost impossible for members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to be elected to the Parliament, unless they run candidates with majority political parties.

Law 2240/1994, which reduced the number of prefectures and sub-districts, established enlarged electoral districts in Western Thrace which in turn caused a decrease in number of elected representatives from the Minority. The redistribution of the electoral districts in 1994 has very adversely influenced the chances for the election of Muslim prefects or prefectural

councillors, because the election law merged Xanthi with neighbouring Kavala and Drama, and Rhodope with neighbouring Evros, where the Turkish Minority is densely populated.

Full and effective participation of the Minority in political life requires an inherently pluralistic society in which the existence of the Minority is considered as a major factor, not of division, but of enrichment for the Greek society. However, there is a strong trend in news bulletins and regional or national newspapers to reproduce negative stereotypes and certain prejudices concerning the Minority, which in turn threatens the solidarity in society.

In order to ensure that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace can fully and effectively participate in political life of Greece, ABTTF calls upon Greece and all OSCE Participating States to protect and promote full and effective participation of minorities in political life and take every step to prosecute and punish any bias motivated crime or discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnic or racial origin or religious or other beliefs, which is essential for an effective participation in decisions on the national and regional level concerning the region in which minorities live.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2009 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**8 September–9 October 2009**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 12: (Specifically selected topic) Freedom of expression, free media and information**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Mr. K. Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to recall that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognised human right and a basic component of a democratic society and that free, independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society. OSCE States should ensure the individual's freedom of expression and the freedom of media, and they should carry out successful investigations against acts impeding media freedom, including harassment, detention or violence against journalists.

The electronic media outlets or newspapers through which ethnic minorities can express themselves does increase the possibility of the participation of ethnic minorities in public sphere, because ethnic minorities are poorly represented in the mainstream media or they are often minorised. However, Law 3592/2007 on the 'Concentration and Licensing of Media Enterprises and Other Provisions' includes a provision which provides that the main broadcasting language for radio programmes should be Greek. The provision that the minimum human and financial resources required to obtain a license jeopardises smaller regional and minority media. The minimum disbursed capital for radio owners has been established at €100,000 for radio stations broadcasting news and €60,000 for those broadcasting music.

In July 2007, Miklos Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media expressed his concern and stated that OSCE commitments regarding pluralism of views require that all communities have access to follow of information and can contribute to it<sup>2</sup>.

Dear President,

The preservation of freedom of media and freedom of expression and promotion of respect for cultural sensitivities remains a serious concern in the OSCE area. The National Commission for Human Rights in Greece notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups.

Some media express certain prejudices and negative stereotypes towards members of minority groups, including the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. The statements in question are sometimes tolerated by the judicial authorities on the name of freedom of expression. The problem is that the interpretation of the notion of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases. Violent attacks committed against journalists and the role of authorities in carrying out against investigation remains a serious concern in the OSCE area. ABTTF notes with concern there is increasing trend of assaults against journalists in the region of Western Thrace. However, there have been very few prosecutions and convictions under the criminal law provisions addressing racist offences in Greece, although a few exemplary penalties have been imposed.

On 19 February 2009, the journalist Abdülhalim Dede was attacked while he was on-air during the morning programme, Kalimera Ellada, broadcast by the Athens, Greece-based Antenna TV. The Turkish Ziraat Bank had invited, among others, Dimitris Stamatis, Secretary General of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, to attend the opening of its first branch in Komotini, Thrace, Greece. Stamatis declined because the letter of invitation was written in English and Turkish, but not in Greek, and because the city of Komotini was referred to by its Turkish name only, Gümülcine. Abdülhalim Dede, activist on the promotion of minority rights of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace and publisher and director of the newspaper Trakyanın Sesi and owner of the radio station IŞIK FM in Komotini, was invited by the hosts of Kalimera Ellada to express his opinion live from Komotini on Antenna TV. During the interview, an unknown man approached Dede, shouted at him using obscene language, and physically attacked him. The main studio in Athens immediately terminated the live broadcasting.

We urge the Greek authorities:

- To review Law 3592/2007 and all OSCE States to ensure that media pluralism and free flow of information follows international standards and mechanisms
- To take measures to support pluralism and independence of the media, while addressing the conflict between freedom of expression and of the media and the right to freedom from discrimination
- To introduce a provision into criminal law expressly stipulating that for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constitutes an aggravating circumstance. In addition, we would like to draw attention of the Greek authorities to ECRI's General Policy Recommendation
- No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, indicating the provisions that should be included in criminal legislation.

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<sup>2</sup> Press release, New radio licensing law in Greece restricts minority media, says OSCE media freedom watchdog, Vienna, 27 July 2007, [http://www.osce.org/fom/item\\_1\\_25793.html](http://www.osce.org/fom/item_1_25793.html)

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
WORKING SESSION 2: FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS I (29.9.2009)  
WORKING SESSION 3: FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS II (29.9.2009)  
WORKING SESSION 5: TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION I  
(30.09.2009)**

**STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION  
in exercise of its Right of Reply**

**A.** Greece's policy towards the Muslim minority in Thrace is being pursued on the basis of the following paramount principles and goals:

**1.** Full respect for Greece's obligations under both the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which established the status of the Muslim minority in Thrace, and the contemporary universal and regional human rights treaties.

In conformity with the principles of equality before the law and equal enjoyment of civil rights, the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same obligations as their fellow Christian citizens.

In almost all successive parliamentary elections held since 1927, Muslims have been elected to Parliament either with the governing party or the opposition or, in most cases, on both sides of the chamber, while Muslims participate in all the levels of the Local Administration in Thrace;

**2.** Furthermore, positive measures, such as the two quotas (0.5%) for admission of minority students to Universities and for employment in the public sector, in accordance with modern standards in the field of minority protection, have been enacted;

**3.** In a broader framework, additional steps have been taken in order to enable members of the Muslim minority, especially women and young persons, to be beneficiaries of nation – wide programmes and projects, co – financed by the European Union, designed for vulnerable social groups, in particular on gender equality, combating racism and xenophobia, equal opportunities, access to employment and inter – cultural dialogue. In the same vein, when it comes to Muslim Roma – one of the three components of the Muslim minority – it's worth mentioning the wider Integrated Action Plan for the social integration of Greek Gypsies, which was launched in 2002. This Plan is being structured upon two priority axes aimed at housing rehabilitation and at providing services in the fields of education, health, employment, culture and sports.

In general, over the last fifteen years, the Muslim minority has reaped all the benefits of Greece's long membership in the European Union, as have all other Greek citizens. This has been, and continues to be, tangible evidence of our political culture and of our commitment to ensure the smooth integration of the minority in the social, economic and educational fabric of the country.

**B.1.** Any person who claims to belong to a distinct ethnic or cultural group is free to do so, with no negative consequences deriving from such a choice. However, such subjective claims or perceptions, which are not based on objective facts and criteria, are not sufficient by themselves to impose a State an obligation to officially recognise a group as a minority and to provide to its members specific minority rights, additional to those guaranteed by human rights treaties. This view is fully in line with the approach adopted in the context of modern human rights treaties in the field of minority protection, according to which the individual's subjective choice is inseparably linked to objective criteria relevant to that person's identity.

**2.** The Muslim minority in Thrace consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own distinct spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. The Muslim

minority in Thrace cannot be identified in its entirety as ‘Turkish’, despite the continuous attempts of hardliners of the Turkish-origin component to impose its cultural characteristics and traditions on the other two components (Pomaks and Roma). Such an attempt is not in conformity with the Lausanne Treaty which regulates the status of the Muslim minority in Thrace; it is also contrary to contemporary human rights standards in the field of minority protection, which require respect for the identity of a smaller group within a larger minority group, which otherwise would be at risk of being subsumed under the identity of the latter.

C. During the last years, a series of measures has been adopted in favour of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace:

- **Turkish language courses** have been introduced (*since 2006*) in public schools curricula in Thrace, as an optional foreign language.
- A programme of **Greek language & civilization courses** has been successfully initiated for Muslim parents.
- As far as tertiary education is concerned, the introduction of a **0.5 % quota** for the admission of Muslim students to Universities and Higher Technical Schools, has long borne its fruits.
- Mindful of the need to enhance the participation of the minority in the public sector in Thrace, we have introduced another **quota of 0.5 % to the State exams**, as provided for in a newly enacted law.
- In the framework of a law, adopted early in 2007, the Ministry of Education and Religion has provided for **the appointment of 240 religious faith teachers**, and their remuneration, to the three Mufti Offices.

By virtue of the new law on the administration and the management of Muslim Wakifs in Thrace, **the members of the three main Management Committees are to be elected**. Thus, a longstanding request by the Muslim minority is being met by the Greek state.

Previously, in 2007, the Muslim **Wakifs had been exempted from submitting the Tax Declarations** on Income, Land Property and Major Land Property of previous years, and consequently their accumulated registered debts, fines and existing mortgages have been written off. Furthermore, as of 2008, the Muslim Wakifs are now exempted from paying the Major Land Property tax.

- Aiming at promoting inter – cultural dialogue, Greece took the initiative, in the context of an EU project, to establish **Youth Councils**, involving young Christians & Muslims alike, as part of the Local Administration network in Thrace.

#### **D. Muftis / Religious Freedom / Application of the Sharia Law in Thrace**

1. The Muftis in Thrace have never been elected and Law 2345/1920 – enacted provisionally on the expectation of the entry into force of the Treaty of Sevres – has never been applied and long fallen in disuse. This law was formally repealed in 1991, when Law 1920/1991, regulating the status of Muftis, was enacted.

Thus, the Muftis in Thrace are appointed through transparent procedures similar to those applied all over the Muslim world – and in Turkey – since the Holy Islamic Law does not foresee popular elections for Muslim religious leaders. The appointment of the Muftis takes place with the active participation of prominent Muslim personalities. This procedure was deemed necessary given the judicial authority bestowed on the Muftis on matters of family and inheritance law. It should be stressed that, while the Muftis in Thrace were always appointed in accordance with the above – mentioned procedure, in the past few years certain individuals within the minority have staged ‘elections’ for Muftis, contravening both the relevant Greek Law and the procedures leading to the election of high ranking religious officials. Not to mention the fact, that even these so – called ‘elections’ took place with the

participation of only a part of the minority and with the exclusion of women in defiance of modern human rights standards.

The decision of the European Court of Human Rights does not impose on Greek authorities the obligation to recognise the so called ‘elected’ Muftis. The Court did not either examine the issue of the appointment of the Muftis. It has only found that the conviction of the applicants by the Greek courts for having usurped the office of the Minister of a known religion was not in conformity with the ECHR.

In the spirit of equal rights and equal opportunities (isopoliteia) pursued by the Greek state, Muslim spiritual elders, as their Christian religious counterparts, have now access, if they choose so, to a state salary, as well as health and retirement benefits. The provisions of Law 3536/2007 extend these benefits to the preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran (ierodidaskaloi) and not necessarily to the Imams (Muslim clerics) who in any case are chosen and employed by their parishioners. It goes without saying that Imams too can opt to benefit from the provisions of Law 3536/2007, since they are preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran. Therefore, the term of ‘appointed’ Imams is a shrewd distortion of the letter and the spirit of the above law, which has been enacted in the framework of offering equal access to state benefits to both Christian and Muslim taxpayers. It is strongly believed that because of the benefits of Law 3536 / 2007, the preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran will be in a better position to contribute more efficiently to the spiritual needs of their communities.

The selection process, meant for the preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran, is deliberately presented in a distorted way, since the Muftis and Muslim boards of examiners select the competent candidates. The candidates submit their applications to the official Muftis of their regions and Muslim theologians process the applications and judge on the competence of the candidate preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran. The state committee has simply the sole responsibility to see whether the chosen candidates fulfil certain formal requirements (absence of criminal record, military service, certificate of primary school etc.) a standard procedure for all state hiring. The contracts of employment are signed by the official Muftis and the preachers themselves individually and their salaries are paid through the office of the Muftis.

It is clearly untenable and self – contradictory to argue that the state’s concern for the welfare of Muslim spiritual elders constitutes ‘a clear violation of the freedom of religion and conscience of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority’. The extension of some financial and social benefit opportunities to a certain group of Greek citizens, who choose to opt for them, is in keeping with the spirit and practice in a modern state and only offend those circles that encourage introversion and isolation of the Muslim minority in Thrace.

2. It is worth mentioning that members of the minority do have the option to take their legal cases to the Civil Courts, whereas these Courts do also review the decisions taken by the Muftis within their jurisdiction. Greece takes seriously into account the need to strengthen the substantive review and control by domestic Courts.

Bearing in mind the expressed preferences and visible tendencies within the majority of the Muslim minority on religious, social and legal matters, Greece will study possible readjustments, such as the abolition of the application of the Sharia Law in Thrace, taking hereby into account its legal obligations and the potential changes of the wishes of the Muslim minority itself.

3. In general, the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace perform their religious duties and follow their traditions without any restriction, retaining in full the right to worship in everyday life.

#### **E. The right to education**

(a) In implementing the letter and the spirit of the Lausanne Treaty, Greece fosters the proper functioning of the existing minority schools in Thrace.

(b) In parallel, the minority is, more than ever before, determined to bring their children to the public educational system, so the Greek state needs to respond to this request. The common feature of all democracies is the policy towards integration of their minorities, while promoting their cultural and linguistic characteristics.

(c) The Greek Government has indeed extended the period of compulsory education from nine to ten years. This tenth year applies to children between five and six years old, who attend kindergartens. Children at kindergartens do not have Greek textbooks – actually they do not have any textbook – and do not follow any curriculum. In keeping with international and E.U. educational standards, the various activities and games at Greek kindergartens serve as a smooth introduction to primary education. We encourage kindergarten teachers, members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, to work at kindergartens in areas where there are many Muslims. Nevertheless, for the time being, the number of university – educated kindergarten teachers from the Muslim minority is still low, not exceeding 10 members. The situation is going to improve in the following years.

(d) By virtue of a draft law, the Special Pedagogic Academy of Thessaloniki is to be converted into a postgraduate Higher Education Training Centre for Intercultural Education.

In parallel, the degrees of the remaining graduates of the Special Pedagogic Academy of Thessaloniki are to be equated to those granted by the Pedagogic Departments of Universities.

#### **F. The right to freedom of association**

From the outset and with a view to dismissing any misunderstanding about compliance by Greece with the right of freedom of association, it should be stressed that in Thrace a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGOs. have already been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded, thus preserving, highlighting and promoting all aspects of the cultural, educational and economic life of the minority.

Only three judgments of the ECtHR on an equal number of associations have been rendered. At present, the three cases are pending before the competent Greek Courts. The government is considering ways and means to implement the judgments of the ECtHR.

#### **G. Respect for the cultural diversity and heritage in Thrace**

In Thrace, one may easily witness the forced ‘enculturation’ tactics by segments of the dominant in numbers, Turkish origin, minority population, who discriminate against the Pomaks and Roma of the Muslim minority.

Within the rural social environment of Muslim villages, psychological pressure ends up in massive attendance of extra – systemic ‘Quranic schools’, which fundamentally disrupt the educational process provided for by minority schools. This not only contributes to the structural inefficiency of minority schools but also promotes an ethno–religious pattern alien to both the communities and the society in Thrace as a whole. Islamic values are invested with ethnic concepts affiliated with the socio-economic processes in Turkey. It is reprehensible and alarming for the cohesion of the open society in Thrace that ‘Quranic schools’ alienate the young generation of the minority, at their first steps in life, from the social mainstream of their country, thus turning them against the values of the rest of the society.

Furthermore, and in a broader context, the cultural heritage of all segments of the minority is fully respected. As for the Turkish origin one, during the last years, an increasing number of cultural/artistic events and festivities in Thrace have been staged by municipal authorities and artists from Turkey. Cultural co-operation between local authorities from both sides of the border is being constantly strengthened, with no impediments.

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
WORKING SESSION 12: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREE MEDIA AND  
INFORMATION (06.10.2009)  
WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION  
Freedom of Media**

**A. Law 3592/2007** has been issued in order to provide the necessary conditions for the operation of television and radio stations. This Law is a product of lengthy consultations between the General Secretariats of Communication/Information and competent EU authorities. A number of criteria have been considered to ensure that media operators abide by high standards, safeguarding at the same time fundamental rights of media operators, individuals and consumers. Thus, media pluralism, commercial viability, quality of programming, technical requirements, freedom of expression and information are amongst other criteria specified for license eligibility. It must also be considered that frequencies constitute a ‘public good’, which must be carefully managed, bearing always in mind the public interest.

Provisions of the said Law in no way hinder any local or regional applicant from obtaining a license, which is granted by a local (prefecture level) or regional authority. The relevant provisions for minimum disbursed capital (distinguishing between news and information providers and others) linked to population ratio (according to latest population census data) and/or employing a certain number of staff for radio stations, are amongst other requirements which purport to guarantee commercial viability, quantity and quality of programming, professional sustainability and better employment conditions, fully respecting national and international regulations and in line with the demands of professional groups (trade unions) themselves. Serious professionals abiding by the minimum requirements and universal criteria and conditions set by this new media legislation have nothing to be afraid of.

**In the said Law, Greek is provided for as main, but not exclusive language of broadcasting.** By this provision, which is only of a guiding nature, the Law provides for the use of the Greek language in conformity with the principles of the European Union which ensure and promote **linguistic pluralism** within the European area. **Otherwise, spoken programming can be broadcast in languages other than Greek, thus ensuring the right to the free flow of information, freedom of expression and pluralism, free from any sort of discrimination.**

**B.** With regard to freedom of expression and freedom of media in Thrace, it should be said that this region has long been a place of harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims, even before the terms ‘xenophobia’ and / or ‘Islamophobia’ and ‘Christianophobia’ were brought to the agenda of the international community. Furthermore, human rights and religious freedom as well as freedom of expression of the Muslim minority in Thrace are fully respected.

Minority written (**9 dailies**) and electronic press (**6 radio stations**), as well as **4 magazines**, are a fact of life in the open society of Thrace.

The Hellenic Radio (FRA) for Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, along with the district radio station in the city of Komotini broadcasts the following:

a. On a weekly basis:

1. An hourly information programme in the Turkish language, called after ‘Helicon’, which is prepared and presented by journalist, member of the Muslim minority.

2. In a broader framework, a musical, cultural and information programme, entitled ‘We, the others’ and prepared by two journalists, one of whom belongs to the Muslim minority.

b. On a daily basis, an approximately half — hourly news bulletin, on both nation — wide and local press, in the Turkish language is broadcasted by four Muslim journalists.

Comments by fringe press or electronic media and **one isolated incident of verbal violence — which has never been reported by the minority press or denounced to the authorities — can, by no means, constitute a hate crime whatsoever or found any claims that a racist, hostile to the Muslim minority, environment exists in Greece.**

On the contrary, one could not turn a blind eye to hate (biased) speeches by very few, but influential, Muslim religious leaders in Thrace, which insult the Christian majority.

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING  
WORKING SESSION 10: TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION  
(05.10.2009)**

**WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION**

Greece unequivocally condemned the arson attempt to a Mosque in the village of Toxotes in Xanthi (Thrace) whereas a police investigation procedure was promptly conducted.

An emphasis should be put on this particular Mosque, which, in the past, was the target of a severe attack, having resulted in its destruction. It was at that time that the Greek state undertook the initiative to completely restore and renovate it.

Notwithstanding such an isolated incident, which, by no means, could mar the long peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Thrace, Greece, in a broader framework, stands against any act of violence, intolerance and disrespect of religious freedom, whoever be the perpetrator, be it on the majority or the minority segment of a society.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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)

**OSCE**  
**2010 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**6-7 May 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session: Promotion of Gender Balance and Participation of Women in Political and Public Life**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Ms. Fatma Reşit  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

Although OSCE Participating States have committed themselves to giving effect to the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in their constitutions and legislation, equal participation of women in public and political life still remains as a serious problem in most of OSCE Participating States, including Greece. The Greek Constitution of 1975 does establish the principle of equality and the revisions of 2001 do oblige the Greek State to take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination. However, gender equality is not still balanced and the participation of women in public and political life remains as an important problem in Greece.

The General Secretariat for Equality, which is now a part of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights in Greece, is the governmental agency competent to plan, implement, and monitor the implementation of policies on equality between women and men in all sectors. New mechanisms of promoting gender equality have been established in Greece, and a permanent Parliamentary Committee on Equality and Human Rights has been created. Besides, a National Committee for Equality between the State, the social partners and NGOs for the formulation of National Strategy has been established.

The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has however criticised in 2006 that the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and society. These stereotypes present an impediment to the implementation of gender balance in society and women are still in a disadvantaged position in a number of areas, including all sectors of the labour market and in political and public life.

The OSCE Participating States, including Greece, should eliminate negative stereotypes with regard to the role of women in public and political life. For this aim, Greece launched a programme for the sensitization of public-school teachers and implemented in regions of the country. However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has not been included in the programme, since the programme only applied to the public schools. Greece also implemented a program of enriching libraries with relevant material in all public schools of technological education with the aim of tackling professional segregation and stereotypes. In order to challenge stereotypes, special training programmes which are named 'Parents' Schools' have been implemented throughout Greece first in 2003. However, the programme did not include the schools in Western Thrace where women of the Turkish Minority are in a very disadvantaged position.

The Muslim women in the region of Western Thrace, most of whom have a very low-level education. Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association (BTAYTD) implemented a research project with a view to recording the problems and the needs of the Muslim women in Western Thrace. With the project KÖYEP (Accessing to Village Project), Western Thrace Minority Graduates Association visited the minority women in their own places and the needs of the minority women have been recorded. Data has been collected with the surveys on the level of education of the minority women, their professional status and their family model.

Surveys which were made in different villages in Rhodope and Xanthi have proved that the level of education of the minority women in Western Thrace is at a very low level. Only 5.3% of women participated in the survey are university graduate or university student, 4.7% of them are high school graduate or student, and 6.6% of them are secondary school graduate or student. 82.6 % of the women interviewed are primary school graduate. The very low level of education prevents the minority women to participate in public and political life. The professional status of the participants has pointed out that 45% of the women, who are between 21-30 ages, and 38.9% of the women between 31 and 40 ages are housewives, and most of them are workers in their own small farmyard.

The participation of women in political life is still not in a gender balanced proportion in Greece. In 2002, an obligatory 1/3 quota for women has been introduced to the electoral lists for prefectural and municipal elections. Since then, there has been a steady increase of female elected members of Parliament. In October 2009 elections, the percent of women has increased to 17.33%, and today there are 52 women MPs in the Greek Parliament. The participation of minority women in political life represents another deep-rooted problem in Western Thrace. There has been no woman who is a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace elected to the Greek Parliament. In 2009 elections in Greece, mainstream parties nominated fourteen candidates who are members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, but there were only two women. Today there are only three elected minority women who do actively participate in political life at local level. These are Sibel Mustafaoğlu, Assistant Governor of Komotini, Sevgi Salim, Assistant to the Super Governor, and there is an elected woman in the Iasmos Municipality Council.

The OSCE Participating States, including Greece should pay more attention to the women who are members of the vulnerable groups, and they should carry out a program and/or project on the problems and the needs of these women in order to strengthen their participation in public and political life. It includes research with a view to recording the needs of their families and their education structures of those women, and the existing legal and institutional framework should support full and effective participation of minority women in public and political life.

Projects with the aim of strengthening the development of women, who are members to the vulnerable groups, should be implemented, and women of these vulnerable groups should be encouraged to participate in public and political life of the country which they live in. In the case of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece should implement a policy which gives a first priority to the education of the minority women in the area of Western Thrace. Since the minority women in Western Thrace live in rural areas, rural development projects should be implemented in the region. The minority women should be included in the rural development projects. Thus, their participation to the public and political life is to be strengthened in the region of Western Thrace.



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**OSCE**  
**2010 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**22-23 July 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Facilitating Integrated Education in Schools**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

The right to education is one of the core principles in international human rights and it should be faithfully implemented by States. The OSCE participating States have committed in Copenhagen that they will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, notwithstanding the need to learn the official language or languages of the State concerned, have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue. The principle of equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to education includes is a key to securing equal access to quality education for persons belonging to minority groups.

However, the right to education is not enjoyed equally by all in some OSCE participating States, including Greece. Minorities in some OSCE participating States do not have equal access to quality education due to restricted access and/or inappropriate education strategies. This lack of equal access to quality education leads to denial of civil and political rights of the persons belonging to minorities and segregation in society due to the marginalization of these minority groups, including the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

On the Recommendation of the Forum on Minority Issues<sup>3</sup> (15 and 16 December 2008), the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, states that education should serve the dual function of supporting the effort of communities to self-development in economic, social and cultural terms while opening pathways by which they can function in the wider society and promote social harmony. The expert notes in her report that States should

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.11.Add.1.pdf>

take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. The expert underlines that these measures are most critical in preschool and primary schools but may extend to subsequent stages of education.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to highlight the discrimination with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level on the children of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, northern region of Greece where the minority children who completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age has to attend in majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education, although the minority is granted the right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions which give education on the mother tongue of the minority, namely Turkish with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne signed between Greece and Turkey.

The Turkish Minority in Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its mother language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions with the Treaty of Lausanne which determined the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general. The Cultural Protocol signed between Turkey and Greece on 20 April 1951 (which was abolished and replaced by the Bilateral Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in 2000), the Exchange of Notes in 1952 regarding the issue of exchange teachers who would be assigned in Minority Schools and the Protocol of the Turkish-Greek Cultural Commission, signed in 1968 are the relevant documents which maintain the autonomous status of the minority in the field of education. Furthermore, the right to education is provided by Article 16 of the Greek Constitution which defines the scope and aim of education for the development of an ethnic and religious consciousness. The right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to education in mother tongue in its own educational institutions is regulated with laws in domestic law which provide the basic structure of the minority education.

Law 3518/2006 envisages the extension of the compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008. Under Law 3518/2006 the condition of pupils' admission in pre-school education has been revised and Article 73 has envisaged a two-year attendance in kindergartens for pupils who have completed the 4<sup>th</sup> year of their age. Because the law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural difference of the children in Greece, all pupils who have completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age is obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek.

The Representative of the Hellenic Government Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador M. Diamessis on the thematic focus on minorities and the right to education on 15-16 December 2008 at the First UN Forum on Minority Issues stated that children at kindergartens did not have Greek textbooks, because they did not have any textbooks or any specific curriculum.<sup>4</sup> The Representative underlined that activities and games were the only means used in kindergartens which served as a smooth introduction to primary education and helped to avoid segregation of the Muslim minority from the rest of the Greek society. However, it has to be pointed out that the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues stress in her report that the principle of equality does not imply uniform treatment in the field of education regardless of circumstances, but rather that differential treatment of individuals and groups is justified when specified circumstances warrant it, so that the right to equal treatment

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<sup>4</sup> See [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral\\_statements\\_forum\\_minority\\_2008.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral_statements_forum_minority_2008.htm)

is also violated when States, without permissible justification, fail to treat differently persons whose situations are significantly different.

The UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, has noted in her country visit report on Greece<sup>5</sup> that a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the minority. The expert has stated that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace should have a right to participate in the life of the State and in decisions affecting them. Greece should provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to the Turkish minority to learn its mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the mother tongue, alternatives which should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Specific forms of such opportunities should be chosen in consultation with persons belonging to minorities and considering their freely expressed wishes. In the particular context of pre-school education, delivery of educational services with the established bilingual minority kindergartens is a right stemming from their right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions. Though, the Representative of the Hellenic Government Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador M. Diamessis stated that they encouraged kindergarten teachers coming from the Muslim minority to work at public kindergartens in areas where there were many Muslims, not bilingual minority kindergartens established in accordance with the provisions of bilateral treaties in the region of Western Thrace.

In line with the status of the minority and the legal framework in the field of education, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace claim that the children belonging to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority has the right to education in its mother language. Therefore, bilingual minority kindergartens must be established in the areas which are densely inhabited by the Turkish minority rather than the public kindergartens which has education only in Greek language.

In light of the information mentioned above, ABTTF calls upon the Greek State:

- To extend the compulsory education under Law No. 3518/2006 to the minority schooling system, and therefore review and amend the Law 3518/2006 to eliminate discrimination and violation of the right to education in mother tongue for the children of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.
- To create necessary conditions and establish a dialogue with the Turkish Minority and its educational institutions, thus enabling them to participate in the development and implementation of policies relevant to the minority education.
- To act in a positive spirit in accordance with the requirements of modern education understanding with regard to the minority schooling system, and therefore to acclaim that the minority system of education should be reconstructed according to the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2010 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**9-10 December 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: OSCE Commitments on Freedom of Religion or Belief: Emerging Issues and Challenges**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of religion or belief has been a priority for the OSCE participating States since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, and the OSCE participating States have clearly expressed their determination to recognise and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.

The freedom of religion or belief involves considering persons belonging to religious minorities. These persons have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without any interference or any form of discrimination. The OSCE participating States must therefore protect the existence and religious identity of the minorities within their territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

Even though participating States have committed to the freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE region and made important steps since the Vienna Concluding Document, there are still important challenges with regard to the freedom of religion or belief and the right to manifest one's religion or belief. One of the challenges persistent in most of OSCE participating States is the interference of the state in religious institutions. The emerging issues of the question of autonomy of religious institutions and the election of religious leaders challenge the freedom of religion in the OSCE region and require paying special attention.

The unresolved issue of the Chief Mufti in Bulgaria led a wave of protest in the past months, because the Supreme Court of Cassation on 18 May 2010, reinstated Gendzhev as Chief Mufti in Bulgaria, though the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria elected Mustafa Ali Hadzhi as the Chief Mufti in Bulgaria at the National Muslim Conference in October 2009. At the protest on July 29, Imams announced they have submitted to the Parliament a declaration signed by 200,000 Bulgarian Muslims demanding yet again the annulment of the reinstatement by Gendzhev. On 27 November 2010, a private bailiff and police officers have entered the building of the Chief Mufti's Office in Sofia because of unreturned debts of nearly BGN 300,000 that the Muslim religion owed to the Bulgarian state and to an individual. All employees were forced to out of the building; the private bailiff did not present a writ and started describing the properties of the Chief Mufti's Office without witnesses.

The Mufti issue still remain unresolved in another OSCE participating State, Greece. Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is officially recognised by Greece on its religious background, i.e. Muslim, that have 'an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein, in accordance with Article 40 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923.

Although there is no specific reference to the post of mufti in the Lausanne Treaty, it has ensured religious freedoms of the Minority members and reaffirmed the 1913 Athens Treaty which laid down that 'each Mufti will be elected by the Moslem electors in their respective jurisdiction areas'(Article 11). In accordance with the provision of the Athens Treaty, Law 2345/1920 which set down that muftis were directly elected by Muslims entitled to vote has never been enacted. Since then muftis in Xanthi, Komotini and Alexandroupolis were appointed by a special decree issued by the King. After problems with regard to the appointment of mufti with the Greek government in 1985, Greece repealed the Law 2345/1920, and re-regulated the law with regard to the post of mufti, with no consult with minority members or even asking for their opinion on the issue. In violation of the Athens Treaty, the Presidential Decree of 24 December of 1990 adopted a legislative decree which provides that muftis must be appointed by Presidential Decree on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In 1990, the Turkish Minority elected its own muftis, although public authorities did not recognise the elected muftis, and they were even prosecuted and sentenced to prison for illegal use of religious symbols.

Although the Greek authorities seem to put up with the appointed and elected muftis, the Turkish Muslim Minority does not accept the post of the 'appointed' mufti. Greece doesn't still recognise the elected Muftis of the Turkish Minority, even though the European Court of Human Rights states that Greece violates the European Human Rights Convention with respect to religious freedom. Moreover, although situation of appointed and elected muftis seems to tolerate each other, it does not mean that the current situation is accepted by the member of the Minority. Besides, it is the role of authorities in these circumstances is to act in accordance with its obligations arising from bilateral treaties. Therefore, this is the responsibility of the Greek state to end this dichotomy, not coexistence.

A further problem is that the Turkish Minority in Rhodes and Kos are also subject to restrictions in practicing their religion. The seat of the Mufti has remained vacant since 1972. The minority rights laid by the Lausanne Treaty do not apply to the persons of Turkish origin on the islands of Rhodes (Rodos) and Kos (İstanköy). However, the fact that Rhodes and Kos

were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed should not be a reason to deprive the Turkish Minority on the islands of their minority rights.

A further challenge regarding the freedom of religion or belief in the OSCE region is the manifestation of intolerance against individuals belonging to different religious minority group. On August 2010, the Muslim cemetery in the northern city of Komotini, Greece was desecrated late on Friday, on the holy day of Ramadan (Vandals desecrated the Muslim cemetery of Pospos(Poşpoş) and Ifestos(Kalkanca) districts). The unidentified assailants destroyed more than twenty gravestones in the cemetery, and they spray painted the name of the organization, *Chrysi Avyi* (Golden Dawn), which is a Greek Nationalist political organization that describes itself as a popular nationalist movement and supports National Socialism.

ABTTF would like to recall the excellent results achieved by the successful Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on the Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2009. We encourage all OSCE participating States to take the recommendations of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting into account and we request the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief to have a greater role in the work of the OSCE on further implementation of the freedom of religion or belief in all participating States.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Religious Symbols and Expression**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States in Copenhagen 1990 reaffirmed that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue. The freedom of religion and its manifestation in public life has dramatically changed in the last decade in the OSCE region, since the identity crisis in Europe is in struggle with the religious identity of people living in Europe. This crisis has been evident in the ban of minarets in Switzerland, where a constitutional amendment banning the construction of new minarets was approved by 57.5 of the participating voters in the November 2009 referendum.

The practice of religion and its expression in the public sphere should include the use of religious symbols, and the persons belonging to national or ethnic and religious minorities should be enabled freely to express their religion in public with the religious symbols in their places of worship, which are part of the social life of these minorities. However, growing intolerance against different religions or faith and their presentation in the public sphere in OSCE participating States, including Greece is an important challenge persistent in the OSCE region. In Greece, the right to freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed by the Constitution. The freedom of religious conscience is inviolable, and the enjoyment of civil rights and liberties does not depend on the individual's religious beliefs (Article 13.1). Although the *Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* states that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own education, cultural and religious organizations or associations, the Turkish

Minority of Western Thrace and of Rhodes and Kos islands still faces serious difficulties in construction or operation of mosques.

To bring into conformity with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, Greece restricted the competent authorities' discretion in granting an administrative authorization for the construction or the operation of places of worship to the formal conditions in the applicable legislation. In connection with the right to build and use temples and places of worship, Article 27 of Law 3467/2006 abolished a legislative provision according to which the opinion (of a non-binding character) of the local Orthodox Bishop is required for the issue of a permit to build and to operate a non-Orthodox place of worship. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs issues 'houses of prayer' permits to the religious groups belonging to the 'known religions'. In March 2008, the Ministry of Education and Religion adopted new requirements for religious groups for new house of prayer permits to build or operate a religious venue. According to the new requirements, applicants must receive certification from the local Urban Planning Department attesting that a place of worship meets city planning regulations and requirements for safe congregation. However, the International Religious Freedom Report 2010 by the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour states that no religious group has yet received a house of prayer permit under the new requirements. Many requests for permission to build or restore mosques and minarets are still pending in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education. This is an additional administrative obstacle to freedom of religion or belief and its expression in the public sphere.

A further challenge regarding the freedom of religion or belief and its expression in the public sphere is the height of the minarets. The height of the minarets (Law 1577/1985) had been reduced from 16 meters and over to 7.5 meters, however the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs used its discretionary power and issued 16 meter and over height for the construction of new minarets. After the transformation of the authorization of the local bishop to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, there had been a period of no problem regarding the height of minarets between 1997 and 2004. However, application for construction of new mosques with minarets up to 16 meters have been refused or not answered by the Ministry. In reply to a motion for question to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs in 2008, the Minister expressed that the height of the minarets should be 7.5 meter under the current legislation without no discretionary power for reasonable and special cases. The claim that the limitation on the height of the minarets does not violate the freedom of religion or belief because it does not affect the proper functioning of the minarets, and that the height of the minarets has no religious significance is imperfect in the sense that the height of minarets up to 16 meter is a part of social dimension of religious life and Islamic tradition of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The provision that religious buildings must conform to planning laws like all buildings should not be a reason for no issuance of permits for the building of new minarets in the region of Western Thrace. In line with the freedom of religion or belief, the contents of a religion and its manifestation including the height of minarets should be defined by the minority itself, not by governments.

We would like to the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to consider the religious dimension of one's identity that belongs to ethnic or national or a religious group and the social dimension of one's religion or belief in translation of the general principles into legislation in participating States, and we urge all participating States to protect and promote the freedom of religion or belief and to protect its manifestation and display of religious symbols in public sphere from acts of intolerance through a co-operation and dialogue mechanism with the representatives of religious groups.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**26 September-7 October 2011**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session I: Fundamental Freedoms I**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık, Mr. Ercüment Mustafaoglu  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org](mailto:ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Chair,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of the media is one of OSCE's cherished values and the OSCE participating States have committed that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognised human right and a basic component of a democratic society and that free, independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society and accountable systems of government. The task of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is to observe relevant media developments in OSCE participating States and, in close co-ordination with the Chairman-in-Office, to advocate and promote full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments in respect of freedom of expression and free media.

However, the former OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr. Miklos Haraszi stated in his regular report to the Permanent Council in March 2010 that 'media freedom problems are not only omnipresent, they perpetually re-emerge'<sup>6</sup>. Mr. Haraszi added that the universality of the commitments is still being questioned by several participating States in the second decade of OSCE's existence, which in fact puts the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in question. Furthermore, the current OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic, asked her in regular report to the Permanent Council on March 2011 that whether [the OSCE commitments on media freedom that all 56 Heads of State reaffirmed and recommitted themselves to just a few months ago in Astana] these words were only valid in paper, and, she added that 'the finest language in the world rings hollow if there is no actual, practical follow-through to allow for the mechanisms to develop and exist that protects free expression'.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.osce.org/fom/41653>

Among issues raised with participating States, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has, on various occasions, expressed its serious concern on freedom of the media and the free flow of information in Greece. Law 3592/2007 on the ‘Concentration and Licensing of Media Enterprises and Other Provisions’ adopted on 16 July 2007 in Greece contains some provisions which the authorities should review, including Article 8 13) (a) which provides that the main broadcasting language for radio programs should be Greek.

Greek National Council for Radio and Television (ESR) which issued an administrative penalty of a fine of €3,000 against the radio station KRAL FM in Xanthi Prefecture on the ground that KRAL FM consisted of broadcasting by 11% in Greek and 89% in a foreign language (Turkish) in breach of Law No. 2328/1995, revised by Law 3592/2007 on the Legal Status of Private Television and Local Radio, Regulation of Issues Related to Radio and Television Market, Miscellaneous Provisions in which broadcasters are obliged to broadcast in the original language of Greek for more than twenty five percent (25%) of their transmission time excluding the time news, sports, games, advertising or teletext services for original works in the Greek language.

Previously, the ESR issued an administrative penalty recommendation (Dec.473-19.10.2009) about Tele Radio 104.2 FM broadcasting in Turkish language in Xanthi, Western Thrace that the concerning radio station must broadcast for 25 percent in the Greek language, and the Council issued a recommendation decision of warning that the Committee could even impose more harsh sanctions if Tele Radio FM, which only broadcasts in the Turkish language, does not broadcast 25 percent of qualifying time for works produced in the Greek language.

In her regular report to the Permanent Council, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic stated she wrote to the authorities to request details about the decision of the Greek National Council for Radio and Television to levy a penalty of €3,000 against radio station KRAL FM in Xanthi Prefecture. The Representative noted that she received the reply from the authorities confirming the penalty levied on KRAL FM, indicating that the station had violated the language-content requirements.

ABTTF has noted in several letters that it wrote to the Representative on Freedom of the Media that the ESR’s administrative penalties on the grounds that radio stations do not broadcast in the original Greek language more than 25% of their transmission time, do threaten maintenance of the existence of radio stations owners belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, while it undermines its freedom of expression and media and the free flow of information in the country. The Representative on Freedom of the Media also noted that her Office has said on several occasions that the relevant Greek legislation needs to be reformed, as it sets a high threshold for minority, community and low-cost broadcasters because of the language requirement, as well as financial and personnel requirements, which can endanger media pluralism.

Secondly, the Representative noted in her regular report to the Permanent Council that on 8 March, she wrote to the authorities asking for details in the cases of two Muslim minority newspapers that were given high fines by a civil court for their articles about a Greek teacher in a Muslim minority school. The newspapers, Gündem and Millet, were ordered to pay €150,000 and €120,000 respectively in the judicial cases sued by the Greek teacher Hara Nikopoulou<sup>7</sup>, who worked in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük

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<sup>7</sup> Hara Nikopoulou worked between 2005 and 2010 in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük Der- bent (Megalo Derio). The problem, which began with a discussion between the Greek teacher Hara

Derbent (Megalo Derio) on the ground that the newspapers published misinformed articles which claimed that the teacher had asked the first- grade kids in the primary school, where she had worked to draw the picture of God. An initial amount of €20,000 for Gündem and €30,000 for Millet has to be paid to the teacher immediately, even if the newspapers appeal the verdict to a higher court. In the case of non-payment of compensation, ten-month imprisonments are envisaged for the editors in chief of the newspapers.

The high amount of compensation penalties given by the authorised courts is not an amount to be able to be paid by the concerning two minority newspapers continuing their publication life with very limited resources and threatens their existence due to the result it has brought up. ABTTF has noted in several letters that it sent to the Representative that any compensatory damage award should not be a vehicle for censorship and other restrictive measures and thus weaken media pluralism in the country.

We urge all participating States, in particular Greece to reconsider to revise and amend the relevant legislation that hinders the freedom of the media and to ensure that media pluralism is guaranteed, protected and promoted in the country by all means. We kindly request the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media to have a greater role in review of the implementation of OSCE commitments related to the freedom of the media in all OSCE States.

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Nikopoulou and the school council about the maintenance and painting works of the school in the academic year of 2007-2008, deteriorated thoroughly due to the teacher's harsh attitude towards the pupils. The problem escalated as Nikopoulou continued to work in the school in the beginning of the academic year of 2008-2009. Due to the ongoing problem for about two years, the parents of the Büyük Derbent Turkish minority primary school demanded that Nikopoulou was urgently suspended to work in the school and sent to another one and decided not to send their children to the school. Upon this, Hara Nikopoulou was transferred to another school. The problem has gained another dimension due to the support given by the Greek extreme nationalists to Nikopoulou. Lastly, Nikopoulou was awarded by the Athens Academy. Prof. Dr. Anna Frangoudaki, the person in charge of the Programme of Education of Muslim Children, criticised the prize awarded to Nikopoulou by sending an open letter.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**26 September-7 October 2011**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session II: Fundamental Freedoms I**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık, Mr. Ercüment Mustafaoğlu  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org](mailto:ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Chair,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States confirmed that they will recognise and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience. The OSCE participating States in Copenhagen 1990 reaffirmed that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue.

Though the participating States reaffirmed that ‘greater efforts must be made to promote freedom of religion or belief’ (The Astana Commemorative Declaration, 2010), many individuals, religious or belief communities still face problems in practising their religion or belief throughout the OSCE region due to the lack of implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief undertaken by participating States, in particular by Greece. Although the Greek Constitution ensures the right to freedom of religion or belief, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace- which is recognised by the Greek State as a religious minority, the Muslim minority in Thrace- is challenged by prohibitions to its right to elect its own religious leaders (muftis). In stark contradiction with the OSCE commitments related to freedom of religion of belief, Greece rather appoints the muftis on the ground that the muftis are granted with judicial powers in certain matters of family and inheritance law.

The religious freedom of the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace is protected by the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923, which determined the status and the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The Treaty of Lausanne reaffirmed and acknowledged 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaties and 1913 Athens Treaty and Its Third Protocol and anticipated

that ‘minorities administrate their own religion and institutions’. The Athens Treaty (1913) noted that ‘each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti’. The treaty further elaborated that ‘the Chief Mufti will be elected by an election council composed of all Muftis in Greece and will be appointed among three candidates determined by the King of Greece’.

Law 2345/1920 adopted in accordance with provisions of Athens Treaty envisaged that muftis were to be elected by Muslims who were entitled to vote. However, this provision along with that the provision for the establishment of the position of Chief Mufti did never be implemented. Rather, Greece adopted the election of the Patriarch as a model, and appointed muftis by a special decree issued by the King. Two of three muftis one in Komotini (Gümülcine), one in Xanthi (İskeçe) were appointed by a special decree issued by the King, while mufti in Alexandroupolis (Dedeğaç) was never appointed.

After problems in regard to the appointment of mufti with the Greek government in 1985, the Government repealed the Law 2345/1920 and adopted a Presidential Decree (24 December 1990) without any consultation with minority members or even asking their opinion. Since then the muftis have been appointed by Government on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In reaction to the Government’s decision to appoint muftis, the Turkish Muslim Minority elected its own muftis, although public authorities did not recognise them. Even elected muftis were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols.

Today, Greece doesn’t still recognise the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders. The Presidential Decree published in Official Gazette on 17 December 2010 extended the terms of office of Cemali Meço, the son of Mufti(appointed) of Komotini Hafuzidris, by 24 December 2010, upon the request of Minister of Education and Religious Affairs. And, lately, on 5 August 2011, the terms of office of Mehmet Emin Şinikoğlu, the Mufti (appointed) of Xanthi was extended for ten year, till August 2021. Though Prime Minister George Papandreou stated that the effort is still long and difficult, in the areas of respect for minority rights and religious freedom, which Greece attaches paramount importance because of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek minority at the 3rd Turkish Ambassadors’ Conference in Erzurum, the extension of the terms of the muftis (appointed) of Komotini and Xanthi caused a disappointment among the members of the Turkish Minority.

A further problem is that the Turkish community in Rhodes (Rodos) and Kos (İstanköy) are also challenged by restrictions in practicing their religion. The seat of the Mufti has remained vacant since 1972. The minority rights laid by the Lausanne Treaty do not apply to the persons of Turkish origin on the islands of Rhodes (Rodos) and Kos (İstanköy). However, the fact that Rhodes and Kos were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed should not be a reason to deprive the Turkish Minority on the islands of their minority rights.

Although situation of appointed and elected muftis seems to tolerate each other, it does not mean that the current situation is accepted by the member of the Minority. Besides, it is the role of authorities in these circumstances is to act in accordance with its obligations arising from bilateral treaties. Therefore, this is the responsibility of the Greek State to end this dichotomy, not coexistence. In particular to Greece, we urge the Greek authorities not to diminish by no means autonomous establishment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

in accordance with Athens Treaty of 1913 and Its Third Protocol and to recognise the right of the Turkish Minority to elect its own religious leaders. In this regard, we recommend the Government to establish a dialogue mechanism based on mutual tolerance and understanding with the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace in order to find a long lasting and satisfactory solution to the problem of mufti.

We would like to the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to ensure that the participating States respect the right of the religious minorities and communities to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards in accordance with Vienna 1989, Questions Relating to Security in Europe. In this regard, we urge Greece and all participating States to act in accordance with the OSCE Commitments related to the freedom of religion or belief. We request the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief to have a greater role in the work of the OSCE on further implementation of the freedom of religion or belief in all participating States.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
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**26 September-7 October 2011**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session III: Fundamental Freedoms II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık, Mr. Ercüment Mustafaoğlu  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org](mailto:ercument.mustafaoglu@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Madam Chair,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States in 1990, in Copenhagen reaffirmed that ‘(...) Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. In particular, they have the right to establish and maintain organisations or associations within their country and to participate in international non-governmental organizations’. The restrictions and limitations on the right to freedom of association are still persistent in many OSCE States, including Greece. Unfortunately, a favourable environment is not created in Greece for the exercise of freedom of assembly and association by means of laws and practices consistent with OSCE commitments and international standards.

Although Greece has, on various occasions, expressed its commitment to the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding the freedom of association, there are three judgments of which domestic proceedings are still pending at the Civil Courts, which hinder the effective enjoyment of the freedom of association of the persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. This failure to execute or enforce judgments – that is, the carrying out of a final judgment in order to ensure that obligations actually are imposed or fulfilled in practice – constitutes a further obstacle to access to justice.

On 27 March 2008, the ECtHR notified in writing its Chamber judgments in the cases of Emin and Others v. Greece (application no. 34144/05) and Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others v. Greece (no. 26698/05) - the associations which bear the title of ‘Turkish’ in their

titles- and, the Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the case of Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others the ECtHR also held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time) of the Convention.

On the basis of the European Court's finding of a violation regarding the dissolution of the applicant association, the applicants in the case of Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and others introduced two separate claims currently pending: one before the Court of First Instance of Xanthi, seeking annulment of its earlier decision No. 36/1986 ordering the dissolution; and one before the Court of Appeal of Thrace, seeking annulment of its earlier decision No. 31/2002 confirming the decision No. 36/1986. Regarding the first claim, the Court of First Instance of Xanthi (judgment No. 12/2009 published on 30/04/2009) rejected the application on the basis of *res judicata*. Concerning the second claim, the application was rejected by a decision published on the 18/08/2009 for reasons similar to those adduced in the decision of the Court of Appeal of Thrace in the case of Bekir-Ousta and Others (No. 35151/05). In the present case, the Court of Appeal noted that the possibility, under the Article 758§1 of the Code of Civil Procedure, of an annulment or revision of a final domestic judgment in the framework of a non-contentious procedure, on the basis of new facts or a change in the circumstances in which the judgment had been handed down, does not extend to a judgment of the European Court.

In the case of Emin and Others, on the basis of the European Court's judgment, the applicants again applied for registration of the association before the national courts. A hearing was held at the Court of First Instance of Rodopi on 08/04/2009. The Court rejected the application on the ground that it was introduced by a lawyer who did not belong to the Bar of Rodopi. Under the terms of the Code of Civil Procedure and Code of Lawyers, claims lodged before civil courts must be signed by a lawyer belonging to the bar of the geographical jurisdiction of the court. If not, the lawyer must jointly sign the claim with a colleague of the Bar from the geographical area of the court. In the present case, the claim was only signed by the applicants' lawyer who belongs to the Xanthi Bar, the applicants' request was rejected.

Together with the problems in implementation of ECtHR's judgments regarding the cases of Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others and Emin and Others, there is the problem that associations which bear the title 'Minority' are not being registered in Greece, although the ECtHR ruled that Greece violated the freedom of association of Evros Minority Youth Association in the case of Bekir-Ousta and Others vs. Greece.

On 7 December 2009, the Thrace Court of Appeal dismissed the application of the Western Thrace Minority Educational and Cultural Association of South Evros for appeal relying on the decision of the Alexandroupolis Civil Court of First Instance, which rejected the request for registration of the association on the ground that the word 'minority' in the title of the association does have a vague meaning. Furthermore, on 13 April 2011, Civil Court of First Instance in Komotini dismissed the request for application of EM 344/27.10.2010 of the association on the ground that the word 'minority' in its title was specified neither as 'Muslim' nor as 'Turkish'. The Court of First Instance held that in case it was referred to 'Turkish' with the word 'minority', the title of the association was contrary to public policy and so dismissed the request for application of the Evrenos Minority Culture Folklore Education Association.

In light of the information above, we urge all participating States, in particular Greece to ensure the effective enjoyment of the right to freedom expression and freedom of associations, particularly in the case of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups though they are not officially recognised as minorities, and fully execute or enforce ECtHR's judgements to ensure that its obligations are fulfilled in practice. And, we kindly request the OSCE, its institutions and field operations to establish a mechanism that would allow the OSCE/ODIHR to monitor and review the implementation of OSCE participating States' commitments in regard to the freedom of association.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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)

**OSCE**  
**2011 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**26 September- 7 October 2011**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session III: Fundamental Freedoms II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Madam Chair,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States in 1990, in Copenhagen reaffirmed that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain organizations or associations within their country. However, the restrictions and limitations on the right to freedom of association are still persistent in many OSCE States, including Greece.

Although Greece has, on various occasions, expressed its commitment to the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, there are three judgments related to the freedom of association of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which domestic proceedings are still pending at the Civil Courts.

On 27 March 2008, the ECtHR held unanimously in the cases of Emin and Others v. Greece (application no. 34144/05) and Xanthi Turkish Union and Others v. Greece (no. 26698/05) that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights. On the basis of the European Court's decision, the applicants in the case of Xanthi Turkish Union and Others introduced two separate claims currently pending before the national courts which seek the annulment of the earlier decision that ordered the dissolution, but they were rejected. The Court of Appeal noted that an annulment or revision of a final domestic judgment in the framework of a non-contentious procedure does not extend to a judgment of the European Court under the Code of Civil Procedure (Article 758§1). In the case of Emin and Others, the applicants again re-applied for registration of the association before the national courts, but they were rejected, too.

Together with the problems in implementation of ECtHR's judgments regarding the cases of Xanthi Turkish Union and Others and Emin and Others, there is a further problem that associations which bear the title even 'Minority' are not being registered in Greece, although the ECtHR ruled that Greece violated the freedom of association of Evros Minority Youth Association in the case of Bekir-Ousta and Others vs. Greece (No. 35151/05). On the basis of the ECtHR's judgment, the applicants applied again for registration, but the Court rejected the application as inadmissible.

In December 2009, the Thrace Court of Appeal rejected the application for registration of South Evros Western Thrace Minority Educational and Cultural Association on the ground that the word 'minority' in the title of the association does have a vague meaning. Lately, in April 2011, the Civil Court of First Instance in Komotini dismissed the request for registration of the Evrenos Minority Culture Folklore Education Association on the ground that the word 'minority' in the title was specified neither as 'Muslim' nor as 'Turkish'. The Court held that, in case the word 'minority' in the title of the association referred to 'Turkish', the application would be contrary to the public policy.

In light of the information above, we urge all participating States, in particular Greece to fully execute or enforce ECtHR's judgements to ensure that its obligations are fulfilled in practice, and thus ensure the effective enjoyment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace the truly freedom of association in Greece.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**24 September- 5 October 2012**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session XIII: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

While the OSCE participating States have committed in Copenhagen that they will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue, it is increasingly clear that the right to education in mother tongue is not enjoyed equally by all in some OSCE participating States, including Greece.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its mother language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions with the Treaty of Lausanne which determined the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general. The Cultural Protocol signed between Turkey and Greece on 20 April 1951(which was abolished and replaced by the Bilateral Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in 2000), the Exchange of Notes in 1952 regarding the issue of exchange teachers who would be assigned in Minority Schools and the Protocol of the Turkish-Greek Cultural Commission, signed in 1968 are the relevant documents which maintain the autonomous status of the minority in the field of education. Furthermore, the right to education is provided by Article 16 of the Greek Constitution which defines the scope and aim of education for the development of an ethnic and religious consciousness. The right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to education in mother tongue in its own educational institutions is regulated with laws in domestic law which provide the basic structure of the minority education.

We would like to highlight the discrimination with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level on the children of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, northern region of Greece where the minority children who completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age

has to attend in majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education, although the minority is granted the right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions that give education on the mother tongue of the minority.

Law 3518/2006 envisages the extension of the compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008. Under Law 3518/2006 the condition of pupils' admission in pre-school education has been revised and Article 73 has envisaged a two-year attendance in kindergartens for pupils who have completed the 4<sup>th</sup> year of their age. Because the law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural difference of the children in Greece, all children who have completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age is obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek.

The Representative of the Hellenic Government Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador M. Diamessis on the thematic focus on minorities and the right to education on 15-16 December 2008 at the First UN Forum on Minority Issues stated that children at kindergartens did not have Greek textbooks, because they did not have any textbooks or any specific curriculum.<sup>8</sup> The Representative underlined that activities and games were the only means used in kindergartens which served as a smooth introduction to primary education and helped to avoid segregation of the Muslim minority from the rest of the Greek society.

The implementation of the above-mentioned law presents a serious problem for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. When the 2012-2013 school year started, some children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Echinis village in Xanthi have not been enrolled in primary schools on the ground that those children did not attend kindergarten. The parents stated that they did prefer to send their children to public kindergartens where the language of education is only Greek. The parents noted that the Greek State should ensure bilingual minority kindergartens for their children.

In the second week of problem in the Echinis Turkish Minority Primary School where 20 children have not been enrolled to the first grade of primary school on the ground that they did not attend public kindergarten, the Principal of the Minority School, Hasan Kurak has been referred to the disciplinary board by the state inspectorship of the Ministry of Education. The Principal Hasan Kurak stated that in petitions that the parents presented to the minority school and the state inspectorship in June, the parents declared that they did not send their children to public kindergartens because there are no bilingual kindergartens. The principal noted that they sent the parents' petitions to the state inspectorship in June and added that they admitted all the children of whom parents made pre-registration in June to the first grade of the school since they did not get any answer from the state inspectorship.

We would like to remind that education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable way of realising other human rights. Education is central to promoting the identity of individuals and expressing their identity, while it allows persons belonging to national minorities to pass on their culture to future generations, preserving and developing their minority characteristics. We would like to recall that Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child notes that in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is

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<sup>8</sup> See [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral\\_statements\\_forum\\_minority\\_2008.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral_statements_forum_minority_2008.htm)

indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to use his or her own language. Since Law 3518/2006 did not bring any differential treatment for the minority children, the children's right to use their own language and have education in mother tongue is being violated. Furthermore, those children who have not been enrolled to the first grade of minority primary school are deprived of their right to access to education.

The UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, had noted in her country visit report on Greece<sup>9</sup> in 2008 that a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the minority. The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues stressed in her report that the principle of equality does not imply uniform treatment in the field of education regardless of circumstances, but rather that differential treatment of individuals and groups is justified when specified circumstances warrant it, so that the right to equal treatment is also violated when States, without permissible justification, fail to treat differently persons whose situations are significantly different. The expert stated that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace should have a right to participate in the life of the State and in decisions affecting them. Greece should provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to the Turkish minority to learn its mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the mother tongue, alternatives which should not be understood as mutually exclusive. In the particular context of pre-school education, delivery of educational services with the established bilingual minority kindergartens is a right stemming from their right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions.

The Greek State should first create necessary conditions and establish a dialogue with the Turkish Minority and its educational institutions, thus enabling them to participate in the development and implementation of policies relevant to the minority education. The Greek State should act in a positive spirit in accordance with the requirements of modern education understanding with regard to the minority schooling system, and acclaim that the minority system of education should be reconstructed according to the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

In specific to the problem in the pre-school level of education, we call the Greek State to:

- establish bilingual minority kindergartens in region in line with the minority schooling system
- give bilingual education in public kindergartens in the region until bilingual minority schools are established
- allow the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be Turkish and Greek.

Thank you.

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**24 September- 5 October 2012**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session XIII: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to highlight the discrimination with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level on the children of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, northern region of Greece where the minority children who completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age has to attend in majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education, although the Turkish minority is granted the right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions that give education on the mother tongue of the minority.

Law 3518/2006 envisages the extension of the compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008. The law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural difference of the children in Greece, all children who have completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age is obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek.

The implementation of the above-mentioned law presents a serious problem for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. When the 2012-2013 school year started, some children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Echinós village in Xanthi have not been enrolled in primary schools on the ground that those children did not attend kindergarten. The parents stated that they did prefer to send their children to public kindergartens where the language of education is only Greek. The parents noted that the Greek State should ensure bilingual minority kindergartens for their children.

In the second week of problem in the Echinus Turkish Minority Primary School where 20 children have not been enrolled to the first grade of primary school on the ground that they did not attend public kindergarten, the Principal of the Minority School, Hasan Kurak has been referred to the disciplinary board by the state inspectorship of the Ministry of Education and got an administrative penalty.

The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, had noted in her country visit report on Greece<sup>10</sup> in 2008 that a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the minority. The expert stated that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace should have a right to participate in the life of the State and in decisions affecting them. Greece should provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to the Turkish minority to learn its mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the mother tongue, alternatives which should not be understood as mutually exclusive. In the particular context of pre-school education, delivery of educational services with the established bilingual minority kindergartens is a right stemming from their right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions.

In specific to the problem in the pre-school level of education, we call the Greek State to:

- establish bilingual minority kindergartens in region in line with the minority schooling system
- give bilingual education in public kindergartens in the region until bilingual minority schools are established
- allow the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be Turkish and Greek.

Thank you.

Melek Kırmacı Arık

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**24 September-5 October 2012**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session XIV: Tolerance and non-discrimination II: Review of the**  
**implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding:**  
**Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Funda Reşit and Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [funda.resit@abtff.org](mailto:funda.resit@abtff.org); [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Madam Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The rise of the far-right politics is a serious concern in Greece, where economic hardship and the increasing number of undocumented migrants in the country deepened xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and asylum seekers in central Athens and other regions in Greece. The extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) has presented a strong discourse against migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and it has gained strength and popularity among Greeks. Golden Dawn won 18 seats in the June 2012 national elections and entered the Greek Parliament for the first time in its history.

The rising Islamophobia and the increasing trend in hate-motivated attacks against migrants and asylum seekers, most of whom are Muslim, is an increasingly alarming problem for Greece in a period of deep economic crisis. Greek Helsinki Monitor stated that hate-motivated incidents against migrants and asylum seekers on the basis of the colour of their skin, their religion or their country of origin have increased dramatically and have become an almost daily phenomenon in Greece<sup>11</sup>.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece has become a vulnerable target, and activities of far right and/or extremist groups. There is a marked increase in hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of

<sup>11</sup> [http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/uploads/2012\\_files/ghm1418\\_racist\\_violence\\_diktyo\\_english.pdf](http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/uploads/2012_files/ghm1418_racist_violence_diktyo_english.pdf)

Western Thrace has created an environment of fear and anxiety among the members of the Turkish minority.

On 6 August 2012, Golden Dawn organised a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. A group of nearly 150 members of Golden Dawn marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association.

On 12 August 2012, a group of members of the Xanthi provincial organization of Golden Dawn who carried Greek flags in their hands, drove by the Turkish villages in Xanthi by motorbikes and cars and nurtured a climate of fear among the minority living in the Turkish villages of Yenice, Beyköy and Okçular.

On 23 August 2012, headquarter of Party of Friendship, Equality, Peace), which is established by Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked in the late hours of evening and illuminated sign of the party was broken with stones.

On 18 September 2012 a teacher belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked by far-rightists on Tuesday evening in Xanthi city centre as he was hanging a placard of an event and hit him and three other members of the activist group called 'Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat'.

In combat with hate-motivated attacks and crimes against the migrant groups and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the Government of Greece should investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and should condemn publicly and unequivocally such incidents, and it should undertake effective measures to prevent xenophobic and hate-motivated crimes. We urge Greek authorities to set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse.

In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

Thank you.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2012 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session XIV: Tolerance and non-discrimination II: Review of the**  
**implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding:**  
**Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which status and rights are determined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty in 1923, has become a vulnerable target, and activities of far right and/or extremist groups. The far-right has sharply risen as the economic downturn deepens in Greece and the current situation in Greece shows how quickly such political discourse against persons with different backgrounds can expand as xenophobia and racially motivated hate crimes in Greece. There is a marked increase in hate-motivated attacks against the places of worship which belong to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece. This increasing trend in hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has created an environment of fear and anxiety among the members of the Turkish minority. The extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) has presented a strong discourse against migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and it has gained strength and popularity among Greeks. Golden Dawn won 18 seats in the June 2012 national elections and entered the Greek Parliament for the first time in its history. In an interview with Human Rights Watch before the elections, the leader of the Golden Dawn, Nikolaos Michaloliakos explained, 'We want Greece to belong to the Greeks. We are proud to be Greek; we want to save our national identity, our thousands-year history. If that means we are racist, then yes, we are. We don't want to share the same fate of the Native Americans. Right now, the immigrants are the cowboys and we are the Apache'<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nikolaos Michaloliakos, Athens, January 12, 2012.

In the period following the election of Golden Dawn to the Parliament, the toughened political discourse of Golden Dawn triggered hate-motivated attacks in the country. On 6 August 2012, a group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union (Gümülcine Türk Gençler Birliği)(GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association. At that day, Golden Dawn organised a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey, then threw bottles to the garden.

On 12 August 2012, a group of members of the Xanthi provincial organization of Golden Dawn who carried Greek flags in their hands, drove by the Turkish villages in Xanthi by motorbikes and cars and nurtured a climate of fear among the minority living in the Turkish villages of Yenice, Beyköy and Okçular. On 23 August 2012, headquarter of Party of Friendship, Equality, Peace(Κόμμα Ισότητας, Ειρήνης και Φιλίας) , which is established by Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked in the late hours of evening and illuminated sign of the party was broken with stones. On 18 September 2012, Mülazım Cemali, a teacher belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked by far-rightists on Tuesday evening in Xanthi city centre as he was hanging a placard of an event. Cemali, who was a deputy candidate for the extreme-left Antarsia Party in Xanthi, is a member of a group called ‘Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat’. The assailants hit Cemali and three other members of the activist group. According to the daily Trakya'nın Sesi, the violent attack was staged by the members of the ultra-nationalist political party Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi). After the attack had been notified to the police, one of the perpetrators was arrested.

The rise of far-right in Greece makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace a vulnerable target for far-right and/or extremist groups. The hate crimes which we reported took place within a mixed-motivated context of ethnic discrimination and violence. The attack against Komotini Turkish Youth Union shows that members of Golden Dawn and its sympathisers represent a strong political opposition for persons belonging to a different nationality and/or ethnic origin, although the members of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are all Greek citizens. Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece. The Greek State should ensure co-operation, where appropriate, at the national and international levels, including with relevant international bodies and between police forces, to combat violent hate crime. ABTTF urges Greek authorities to set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse.

National consultation bodies which would act as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred should be established in OSCE participating states, in full co-operation with non-governmental organisations, including the ones that belong to the minority groups.

Thank you.

PC.SHDM.NGO/22/12  
8 November 2012  
ENGLISH only



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2012 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**8-9 November 2012**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Freedom of Association: obstacles to the full realisation of this right and ways to overcome them**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Ms. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of assembly and association constitute the cornerstones of representative democratic system and the exercise of these rights have always been at the heart of the struggle for democracy around the world, and they still remain at the heart of societies, since they are essential to the development of civil society and thus to the strength of democracy.

Although OSCE participating States have, on various occasions, reiterated that they shall respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the freedom of assembly and association is under threat in many regions in the OSCE area, including Greece. Unfortunately, a favourable environment is not created in Greece for the exercise of freedom of assembly and association by means of laws and practices consistent with OSCE commitments and international standards.

The Greek government continues to place legal restrictions on the names of associations of nationals who self-identify as Turkish or Macedonian. There is only one (ethnic) Macedonian association that attempted to register with the courts, the 'Home of Macedonian Civilisation' (Stegi Makedonikou Politismou), but denied registration, although the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 1998 ruled that Greece violated the right to association.

The three Turkish associations were dissolved simultaneously with Home of Macedonian Civilization in 1987. The government, which declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece, claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word 'Turkish' referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

In 1996, the Greek courts rejected an application for registration by 'Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association' on the ground that the Treaty of Lausanne recognised only a Muslim, and not a Turkish, minority in Western Thrace. The courts found that the title of the association was confusing, creating the impression that nationals of a foreign country, and in particular Turkish nationals, were permanently resident in Greece and that the association they had set up was not aimed at serving the interests of the Muslim minority in Evros. The applicants challenged the decision rejecting their application before the Greek courts, without success. The applicants complained of the refusal by the Greek courts to register their association and of the length of the relevant proceedings to the ECtHR in 2005, the Court in 2007 therefore held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11.

In 2001, the Greek courts dismissed a request for registration by 'Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi' on the ground that its title might mislead the public regarding the origin of its members.

In the case of Xanthi Turkish Union, which was dissolved in 1986, the Thrace Court of Appeal upheld that judgment on 25 January 2002. It found that the applicant association was not in conformity with the Treaty of Lausanne. The appeal was finally dismissed in February 2005.

The three associations (Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association) lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in 2005; the ECtHR held unanimously there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Further to the European Court of Human Rights' judgments, the applicants requested the cancellation of the decision dissolving them (the case of *Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others*) or submitted a new registration of their associations before the national courts. The applications have been declared inadmissible on the ground that it is not possible to cancel a domestic decision which has become final in the context of non-contentious procedure following a judgment of the ECtHR, and that domestic law does not provide, in civil matters, for the reopening of proceedings following a finding of violation by the ECtHR.

There is a further problem that associations which bear the title 'Minority' are not being registered in Greece. The request for registration by South Evros Minority Educational and Cultural Association and Evrenköy Minority Culture, Folklore and Education Association are dismissed by local courts on the ground that the word 'minority' in its title had a vague meaning and was specified neither as 'Muslim' nor as 'Turkish'.

Recalling the Greek Constitution that all Greeks are equal before the law and that all persons possessing the qualifications for citizenship as specified by law are Greek citizens

and Greeks shall have the right to form non-profit associations and unions, we urge Greek Government to guarantee the effective enjoyment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace its right to freedom of association without discrimination of any kind and fully execute or enforce ECtHR's judgments to ensure that its obligations are fulfilled in practice.

We recommend that all OSCE participating States should create an environment, including a legal framework, in which individuals can exercise their right to association, without any kind of discrimination and ensure their legislation regulating the activities of NGOs is in conformity with OSCE and other international commitments.

We recommend OSCE/ODIHR to establish a Panel of Experts on Freedom of Association which would monitor the situation in the OSCE region and develop a framework in relation to commitments and obligations regarding freedom of association enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties.

We recommend OSCE/ODIHR, in cooperation with the Venice Commission and the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECtHR of Council of Europe, to prepare Guidelines on Freedom of Association.



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**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Freedom of Association: obstacles to the full realisation of this right and ways to overcome them**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Ms. Moderator  
Distinguished representatives  
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In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, Member States declared that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and no one may be compelled to belong to an association (Article 20). The freedom of assembly and association constitute the cornerstones of representative democratic system and the exercise of these rights have always been at the heart of the struggle for democracy around the world, and they still remain at the heart of societies, since they are essential to the development of civil society and thus to the strength of democracy.

Among all international organizations, the OSCE attaches a great importance to the freedom of assembly and association. In Copenhagen, in 1990, the OSCE participating States committed that ‘everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards’. In Helsinki, in the Ministerial Declaration on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, participating States reiterated that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and associations.

Although OSCE participating States have, on various occasions, reiterated that they shall respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, the freedom of assembly and association is under threat in many regions in the OSCE area, including Greece. Although, most of non- governmental organizations generally operate without interference

from the authorities, some ethnic minorities in Greece face serious limitations in the use of their right to freedom of association.

There are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the words ‘Macedonian’ or ‘Turkish’ to reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. There is only one (ethnic) Macedonian association that attempted to register with the courts, the ‘Home of Macedonian Civilization’ (Stegi Makedonikou Politismou). The association was denied registration and appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). In 1998, the Court ruled that Greece violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, ‘Home of Macedonian Civilization’ has not been able to register for over years. The new application was again rejected in December 2003 on the ground that ‘the word ‘Macedonian’– defining the culture to be preserved- implies that this culture is something particular and self-contained, so that it is not clear whether the word is being used in its historical sense to refer to an integral part of Greek civilization with its local specificities, or in its geographical sense, in which case it is left undefined which part of the broader region of Macedonia is meant, as its territory took shape after the Balkan Wars’.

The government does not confer official status on any indigenous ethnic group nor recognise ‘ethnic minority’ or ‘linguistic minority’ as legal terms, it affirms an individual’s right of self-identification, not right of collective self-identification by members of an ethnic or linguistic group. The government considers the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne as providing the exclusive definition of minorities in the country and defining their group rights, recognises only a ‘Muslim minority’. The Greek government continues to place legal restrictions on the names of associations of nationals who self-identify as Turkish.

The three Turkish associations were dissolved simultaneously with Home of Macedonian Civilization in 1986. The government, which declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece, claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

In 1996, the Greek courts rejected an application for registration by ‘Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association’ on the ground that the Treaty of Lausanne recognised only a Muslim, and not a Turkish, minority in Western Thrace. The courts found that the title of the association was confusing, creating the impression that nationals of a foreign country, and in particular Turkish nationals, were permanently resident in Greece and that the association they had set up was not aimed at serving the interests of the Muslim minority in Evros. The applicants challenged the decision rejecting their application before the Greek courts, but their application was dismissed. The applicants lodged a complaint before the ECtHR in 2005, the Court, in 2007, in the case of Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece (no. 35151/05) held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11.

On March 27, 2008, the ECHR notified in writing its Chamber judgments in the case *Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others v. Greece* (no. 26698/05). The Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights in both cases, which concern associations founded by persons belonging to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace (Greece). In the case of Xanthi Turkish Union, the ECtHR also held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 6§1

(right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time) of the Convention.

On the basis of the European Court's decision, the applicants in the case of Xanthi Turkish Union and Others introduced two separate claims currently pending before the national courts which seek the annulment of the earlier decision that ordered the dissolution, but they were rejected. The Court of Appeal noted that an annulment or revision of a final domestic judgment in the framework of a non-contentious procedure does not extend to a judgment of the European Court under the Code of Civil Procedure (Article 758§1). In March 2012, the Greek Supreme Court rejected the appeal filed by the Xanthi Turkish Union.

On 25 August 2011, former PASOK MP for Xanthi, Mr. Çetin Mandacı submitted a motion for question to the Greek Parliament and asked the Ministry of the Interior, Decentralization and Electronic Governance and the Ministry for Justice, Transparency and Human Rights what the Government of Greece planned to do on the ECtHR's judgment in the case of Xanthi Turkish Union, and whether Greece had an intention to grant the Minority with right to establish associations which bear the word 'Turkish' in their titles. In its written reply (12-9-2011, Protocol no.743) to the motion for question asked by Deputy Çetin Mandacı (Protocol Number. 21855/25.8.2011), the Minister's Office of the Ministry for Justice, Transparency and Human Rights noted that the Government of Greece had completely fulfilled its obligations arising from Article 46 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Although the ECtHR awarded the association Xanthi Turkish Union €8,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage in violation of Article 6(1) of the European Convention of Human Rights, the Government of Greece has not paid yet the amount mentioned above to the association on the basis of Xanthi Turkish Union officially closed in 1986 and is not officially registered now. With regard to the applicant association's claim which seeks annulment of the earlier decision No.31/2002, which confirmed the decision no. 36/1986 that ordered the dissolution of Xanthi Turkish Union before the Thrace Court of Appeal, the Minister's Office noted that the ECtHR's judgment did not constitute a cause for change in the national jurisprudence in respect to the judicial matter brought before the national court and in particular the interpretation of the laws. The Minister's Office further claimed that the ECtHR's judgments did not constitute, per se, a cogent factor for an application seeking for annulment or revocation of the national court's judgment on the basis of new facts or a change in the circumstances in which the judgment had been handed down.

On 27 March 2008, the ECtHR held unanimously in the case of Emin and Others v. Greece (application no. 34144/05) that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the case of Emin and others, on the basis of the European Court's judgment, the applicants again applied for registration of the association before the national courts. A hearing was held at the Court of First Instance of Rodopi on 08/04/2009. The Court of First Instance of Rodopi, rejected the application on the ground that it was introduced by a lawyer who did not belong to the Bar of Rodopi. The Greek authorities confirmed that the application was rejected as inadmissible. Under the terms of the Code of Civil Procedure and Code of Lawyers, claims lodged before civil courts must be signed by a lawyer belonging to the bar of the geographical jurisdiction of the court. If not, the lawyer must jointly sign the claim with a colleague of the Bar from the geographical area of the court. Since in the present case, the claim was only signed by the applicants' lawyer who belongs to the Xanthi Bar, the applicants' request was rejected.

In the case of Bekir-Ousta and others, on the basis of the ECtHR's judgment, the applicants applied again for registration of the association in the national courts. On 09/12/2008, the

Single Member Court of First Instance of Alexandroupoli (judgment No. 405/2008) rejected the application as in- admissible on the ground of *res judicata*. The decision referred in particular to the fact that under national law, retrial of a case further to a finding of a violation by the European Court is foreseen only for criminal proceedings (Article 525§5 of the Code of Criminal Procedure) but not for civil ones. The applicants appealed to the Court of Appeal of Thrace. The Court of Appeal of Thrace, by a decision made public on 31/07/2009, also rejected the application.

Council of Europe Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights undertakes the final judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee of Ministers supervises the execution process in Greece under the name of the Bekir-Ousta Group- the cases of Bekir-Ousta and Others (no. 35151/05), Emin and Others (no. 34144/05) and Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others (no. 34144/05). Lately, on 2 December 2011, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe examined the cases of Bekir-Ousta and Others, Emin and Others, and Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others in the light of recent developments. Under the Bekir-Ousta group of cases against Greece, the Committee of Ministers referred to the letter sent by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) to the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on 3 November 2011 and decided to resume the examination of these cases in the light of the developments with regard to the proceedings pending before the Supreme Court in the case of Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis.

There is a further problem that associations which bear the title ‘Minority’ are not being registered in Greece, although the ECHR ruled that Greece violated the freedom of association of Evros Minority Youth Association in the case of Bekir- Ousta and Others vs. Greece (No. 35151/05). On 9 December 2008, the First Instance Court of Alexandroupolis rejected the application of the Evros Minority Youth Association to be registered within the framework of relevant ECHR decision on the ground that the decisions of ECHR are not obligatory regarding the Greek domestic law and they do not necessarily require the Greek authorities to register the association. The second case is that the Alexandroupolis Civil Court of First Instance in March 2009 dismissed the request for registration of South Evros Minority Educational and Cultural Association on the ground that the word ‘minority’ in its title had a vague meaning and the Thrace Court of Appeal upheld that decision on 13 December 2009. During the hearing before the Supreme Court on 7 October 2011, the association objected to the negative decision of the local court. On 13 January 2012, the Supreme Court admitted the appeal of the South Evros Minority Educational and Cultural Association and decided the case to be handled before the Thrace Court of Appeal. The third case is that the request for application of the Evrenköy Minority Culture, Folklore and Education Association is dismissed by Civil Court of First Instance in Komotini on 13 April 2011, on the ground that the word ‘minority’ in its title was specified neither as ‘Muslim’ nor as ‘Turkish’.

Recalling the Greek Constitution that all Greeks are equal before the law and that all persons possessing the qualifications for citizenship as specified by law are Greek citizens and Greeks shall have the right to form non-profit associations and unions, we urge Greek Government to guarantee the effective enjoyment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace its right to freedom of association without discrimination of any kind and fully execute or enforce ECtHR’s judgments to ensure that its obligations are fulfilled in practice.

We recommend that all OSCE participating States should create an environment, including a legal framework, in which individuals can exercise their right to association, without any kind

of discrimination and ensure their legislation regulating the activities of NGOs is in conformity with OSCE and other international commitments.

We recommend OSCE/ODIHR to establish a Panel of Experts on Freedom of Association which would monitor the situation in the OSCE region and develop a framework in relation to commitments and obligations regarding freedom of association enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties.

We recommend OSCE/ODIHR, in cooperation with the Venice Commission and the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECtHR of Council of Europe, to prepare Guidelines on Freedom of Association.



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**OSCE**  
**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**8-9 November 2012**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Freedom of Peaceful Assembly: new challenges and opportunities for dialogue**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, Member States declared that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and no one may be compelled to belong to an association (Article 20). The freedom of assembly and association constitute the cornerstones of representative democratic system and the exercise of these rights have always been at the heart of the struggle for democracy around the world, and they still remain at the heart of societies, since they are essential to the development of civil society and thus to the strength of democracy.

Among all international organizations, the OSCE attaches a great importance to the freedom of assembly and association. In Copenhagen, in 1990, the OSCE participating States committed that 'everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards'. In Helsinki, in the Ministerial Declaration on the Occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, participating States reiterated that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and associations.

The OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights with the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Assembly developed the Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, which demarcate a clear minimum baseline in relation to the standards regarding freedom of peaceful assembly enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties, which were

issued in March 2007 and endorsed by the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (Venice Commission) in June 2008.

The freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the Greek Constitution and generally protected by the government, demonstrations in order to protest austerity measures of the Greek Government in the time of deep economic crisis resulted with violence. According to 'Freedom in the World 2012' report on Greece<sup>13</sup> published by Freedom House, around 270 people were injured during in protests in June 2011, and in October, one person was killed in Athens.

Amnesty International warns that a new hard-hitting briefing on the policing of austerity protests in the EU paints a very bleak picture of human rights in the continent. In its brief on 'Policing demonstrations in the European Union', Amnesty International stated that protesters have been beaten and kicked, sprayed with tear gas, and shot at and wounded with rubber bullets by police officers in Greece. Amnesty International further added that journalists and photographers have also been victims, photographer Manolis Kypreos suffered total loss of hearing in both ears after police threw a stun grenade at him while he was covering a demonstration in Athens in June 2011.

We call upon all OSCE participating States, including Greece to ensure that administrative and law enforcement officials are adequately trained in relation to the respect of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

We call upon all participating States to respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and take all necessary measures to prevent use of excessive force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers in demonstrations, and to ensure that law enforcement authorities which violate the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly are held personally and fully accountable for such violations by an independent and democratic oversight body, and by the courts of law.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/greece>



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**OSCE**  
**2013 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**11-12 July 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: The Role of Legislative, Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks as well as**  
**Governments and Civil Society in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

The OSCE has created a large set of human rights and norms and standards that are part of traditional human rights and norms, and it has also developed a number of standards. The Copenhagen Document, with its subsequent document, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe has created a unique framework, comprising a set of norms, rules and standards, is the foundation of the OSCE human dimension as it exists today.

The participating States have covered a remarkable distance in the OSCE concept of security, where all dimensions of security are viewed as being complementary and mutually supportive and where the security of all is considered as indivisible. It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates de-tailed standards relating to national minorities. In its Helsinki Decisions of July 1992, the OSCE established the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities and High Commissioner has encouraged and facilitated the adoption by participating States of specific measures related to national minorities and the standards.

The implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States and the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. Reminding that the OSCE commitments are not legally binding, but rather political commitments, it is very important that governments should pay a particular attention to the

implementation of OSCE commitments and other relevant international commitments in the field of human rights.

Since inadequate representation of minority groups in decision making system ensues impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, full and effective participation in public and political life is of vital importance in expressing and maintaining identities of minorities. Therefore, a mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.

To conclude,

A diverse and independent civil society is a key element in securing sustainable human rights protection in all participating States. All participating States are responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights and they all should encourage civil society participation in decision-making processes.

We urge all participating States civil society to recognise the important role that civil society plays, and to do their utmost to promote and protect the rights of members of who are working through peaceful means to improve situations in their countries.

And, ODIHR's cooperation with civil society should remain a strategic priority because it bolsters our shared objectives, helps to address our mutual concerns, and supports human rights in all participating States.

Thank you.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
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**11-12 July 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session 2: Effective National and International Instruments to Protect Human Rights**  
**and Prevent Human Rights Violations: Best Practices, Current Challenges and**  
**Solutions**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

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Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

Having emphasised the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international instruments for promoting respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the development of appropriate and effective national instruments at the national level to ensure the effective implementation of international human rights standards. The national instruments have significant role in promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms and in developing and enhancing public awareness of those rights and freedoms.

There is a major gap between international human rights instruments and the level of protection and promotion of human rights at the national level. The implementation of international human rights standards at the national level rather depends on the willingness of governments at a large level and the ability of individuals and groups to promote and protect human rights in order to live their governments up their commitments and obligations.

International monitoring mechanisms such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and of the UN Treaty Bodies as well as other intergovernmental organisations have acknowledged the gap between international instruments and the actual human rights situation at the national level. Recognising that the OSCE can play a significant role in assisting the development of national instruments by setting common standards for all participating States in the protection and promotion of human rights.

The Copenhagen Document introduced a set of far-reaching and politically binding commitments which are not to be ratified by national parliaments to take effect. While this allows the OSCE to play an important role in setting standards, the OSCE commitments which are not legally binding did not succeed to close the gap between the rhetoric and the implementation regarding human rights commitments.

The Copenhagen Document which includes specific rights of national minorities is a landmark and states that belonging to a national minority is a 'matter of a person's individual choice'. Though the Copenhagen Document established an entire catalogue of minority rights and commitments for participating States to protect the rights of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities living on their territory, after more than 20 years the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. All the areas where national minority commitments have been developed require a detailed analysis.

### **Right to self-identification**

The OSCE participating States in 1990, in Copenhagen reaffirmed that (...) Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. Although the legal status and rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is determined by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, Greece does not subscribe to the right of any group to self-identification on a collective basis and the right of right of assembly or association of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

On 18 February 2009, the report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, following her mission to Greece on 8-16 September 2008, stated that 'The absence of formal recognition by the state of a particular societal group as constituting 'a minority' is not conclusive', and continued that 'Rather, the existence of a group to which a state owes minority protections is a matter of objective facts and exercise of the right of self-identification by persons belonging to the group'. The independent expert urged Greece to protect the right to self-identification and the freedoms of expression and association of minority communities<sup>14</sup>. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) similarly took note of the explanation by Greece for recognition of a single minority only and called upon Greece to ensure the non-discriminatory implementation, for all groups within the scope of the Convention.

### **Right to association**

The restrictions and limitations on the right to freedom of association are still persistent in Greece. There are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the words 'Macedonian' or 'Turkish', which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word 'Turkish' referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

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<sup>14</sup> A/HRC/10/11/Add.3, p. 2, and paras. 83, 88 and 90.

Following the dissolution of the Turkish associations in the late 1980's, the three associations (Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association) lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in 2005; the ECtHR held unanimously there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We regret that the Greek authorities has failed to implement fully and completely the judgments under consideration, although five years have elapsed since the Court's judgments became final in 2008.

### **Right to choose its own religious leaders**

Article 13(2) of the Greek Constitution of 1975 states 'all known religions shall be free, and their rites of worship shall be performed unhindered and under the protection of the law'. There is, however, no direct provision in the Greek Constitution which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, religion or language.

Due to the lack of implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief undertaken by Greek authorities, the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders is not recognised. After problems in 1985, the minority elected its own muftis in 1990. Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have judicial powers on civic issues.

Law 3536/2007 adopted by the Greek Parliament in 2007 envisaged the appointment of 240 religious preachers i.e. Imams to serve at the mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis in Komotini, Xanthi and Didymoteicho. Due to the strong reactions from the Turkish minority, Law 3536/2007 has, thus, been not implemented in Greece. In January 2013, the Greek Government adopted a new law (4115/2013) which replaced the law in 2007 and further allowed Greek government to expand its control over religion in public schools in the region through the new provision which is made for the teaching of the Quran by appointed Muslim preachers in public schools in Western Thrace in which minority students are enrolled.

We would like to stress that the State should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organisation of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal.

### **Right to education**

Education is one of the most challenging problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, which determined the status and the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the Minority has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Since every person has a right to education and to any other fundamental right dependent upon the realisation of the right to education, the principle of equality and non-discrimination

in the enjoyment of the right to education is a key to securing equal access to quality education for persons belonging to minority groups. Act 3518/2006 envisages the extension of the compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008. The pre-school education for all children at the age of 5 has been made compulsory. The Act does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural difference of the children in Greece, all children who complete the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age are obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek.

The right of the children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek in Greece, where minority children are obliged to attend to the public kindergartens of which the language of education is only Greek.

In the beginning of 2012-2013 school year, 20 children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Echinós(Şahin) village of Xanthi were not enrolled to the first grade of the minority primary school on the ground that those children did not attend public kindergarten. During our fact-finding mission, we visited Echinós village in Xanthi and met parents of the 20 minority children and the parents stated that they did not want to send their children to public kindergartens where the language of education is only Greek. The problem has been solved in November and the children were finally registered to the school. This, however, is a partial and temporary solution. Since minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the education is only Greek, a similar problem may break out in other villages in the next school year.

To conclude,

The EU has now entered a new stage in its political history with a new legal framework and new instruments, the EU should offer a much broader perspective beyond the borders of the national state. For the first time in EU history the term ‘the rights of persons belonging to minorities’ is used in legally binding text which constitutes a part of the primary law of the Union. And, The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has become legally binding and having an equal status to that of the treaties. Minorities in Europe lack the opportunity to renounce their concerns directly to the European Union, and there is still a gap in the communication between the minorities in Europe and the decision makers in Brussels. A European minority protection should be established for traditional minorities, national communities and languages in Europe, and, the EU should take the responsibility for supporting traditional minorities and national communities and languages.

Regarding Greece, we urge, first and foremost, the Government of Greece should be urged to respect its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and take measures in order to restore the autonomous structure in the field of religion and education.

The Minority must enjoy all other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to non-discrimination and equality before the law. But full protection of those rights is not a substitute for protection of their minority rights. This is why the Minority demands the restitution of their minority rights, not the establishment of new rights.

Greece should create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalised, open, sincere and continuous dialogue with representatives of the Turkish Minority.

Greece should act in full compliance with the core international human rights treaties of which Greece is a party. In particular, Greece should ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**23 September-4 October 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session II: Tolerance and non-discrimination II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

We monitor the rise of far-right extremism in Europe with great concern and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments and governments. Morten Kjaerum, the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, said that there are indicators that the situation in the EU is not improving, on the contrary, in the last few years, there is a continued and renewed violations of fundamental rights of people living in the EU through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice.

Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe's Commissioner of Human Rights recently published a comment that Europe has been experiencing a worrying intensification of activities of racist extremist organizations, including political parties and added that the upsurge has even reached the point of 'an early form of far-right terror'. The Golden Dawn in Greece won 6.92% of the vote in the national elections of June 2012 and 18 seats in the Greek Parliament.

On 19 May 2013, Spokesman for the Golden Dawn Ilias Kasidiaris party told supporters at a rally late, 'If a mosque is constructed for Islamist criminals in Greece, a front of 100,000 Greeks headed by Golden Dawn will be created'<sup>15</sup>. The threat came days after the far-right party has given a one-month ultimatum for Muslims to leave Greece or they will be 'slaughtered like chickens'. A few days later, the Muslim Association of Greece received a

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-neo-nazis-threaten-to-mobilize-against-mosque.aspx?pageID=238&nid=47230>

letter with the emblem of the far-right party threatening that ‘there will be blood’ if Muslims do not leave the country. The letter, written in Greek, English and Arabic, the letter used vulgar language against Muslims in Greece, and it was written in English that ‘Until June 30 you shut your bordela in Greece you will go to hell. From July 1 onwards those who are still here will be slaughtered like chickens on the road’<sup>16</sup>.

The Commissioner noted that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament, the attacks were recorded against the minority by perpetrators linked to Golden Dawn members or supporters.

Golden Dawn supporters made demonstrations in the villages where the Minority lives and chanted slogans against the Minority and Turkey. In Xanthi and Komotini, Golden Dawn supporters with Greek flags in their hands drove by the Turkish villages by motorbikes and cars. In August 2012, a group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) party marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union (Gümülçine Türk Gençler Birliği)(GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association. At that day, Golden Dawn organised a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey, then threw bottles to the garden<sup>17</sup>.

In September 2012, Cemali Mülazım was attacked by Golden Dawn supporters in Xanthi’s centre as he was hanging a placard of an event. A group of 7 to 9 persons attacked Cemali Mülazım and beaten him. On 25 June 2013, the perpetrator was sentenced to 7 months of imprisonment by Xanthi Criminal Court, but the enforcement of the verdict has been deferred for 3 years.<sup>4</sup> Another example of physical attack is that Golden Dawn supporters attacked Cüneyt Serdar, while he was passing through during a tension between an anarchist group and the Golden Dawn members on demonstration at Xanthi’s centre and beaten him blatantly. Cüneyt Serdar was taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face that he had to have stitches.

The Golden Dawn has triggered further intolerance and leads to the trivialization of racism in society. Lastly, on 17 September 2013, a 35-year-old rapper Pavlos Fyssas, who defined himself as anti-fascist was stabbed to death by a man who is linked to Golden Dawn. He was stabbed twice in the heart and chest on Tuesday night in a brawl after soccer match shown in a cafe in Keratsini and died within minutes of being stabbed in the chest when he and a group of seven friends were set upon by around 30 black-clad supporters of Golden Dawn in the district of Keratsini<sup>18</sup>. The alleged perpetrator, a 45-year-old man who was arrested confessed to being linked to Golden Dawn. While the extremist Golden Dawn has been blamed for numerous violent attacks in the past, the overnight stabbing is the most serious violence so far directly attributed to a member.

The death of Pavlos Fyssas drew condemnation from across Greece’s political spectrum and from abroad. Hannes Swoboda, president of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the

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<sup>16</sup> <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/05/18/greeces-muslims-cite-slaughter-threat/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-haber/yunanistanda-turklere-cirkin-saldiri.html>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/18/greece-ban-golden-dawn-pavlos-fyssas>

European Parliament, urged Greek authorities to examine banning the party altogether. ‘Golden Dawn’s openly xenophobic; neo-Nazi hatred even goes as far as murdering political opponents. This is shocking and intolerable by any standards, and more so in a European Union country’, he said. In 1999 Guidelines of the Venice Commission on the prohibition and dissolution of political parties, the Venice Commission stated that ‘prohibition or dissolution of political parties can be envisaged only if it is necessary in a democratic society and if there is concrete evidence that a party is engaged in activities threatening democracy and fundamental freedoms’.

We strongly believe that it is crucial that Greece should condemn firmly and unequivocally all manifestations of hate crime. Member of European Parliament Sophie in’t Veld asked European Commission’s view in her question for written answer on 14 August 2013 on numerous racist and xenophobic statements of Golden Dawn MPs who target not only the Jewish community, but also other minorities such as the Turks of Western Thrace in the light of Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA<sup>19</sup>.

All forms of hate crimes constitute serious human rights violations and there is a need to impose on the perpetrators of sentences that are effective, proportionate and appropriate to the offence committed. MEP Sophie in’t Veld asked the Commission to ensure that Greece adopts comprehensive legislation on racism and xenophobia. We welcome the government’s effort in transposing the European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 ‘on combating certain and in forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law’ replace Law 927/1979, although the deadline was 28 November 2010.

We invite the Government of Greece to impose effective penalties or prohibition, if necessary, for the extremist activities of political organizations, including Golden Dawn political party. Such political parties where evidence demonstrates that they advocate for and are involved directly or indirectly in acts of racist violence, must be banned and excluded from all state subsidies which are usually provided to political parties.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in Europe. OSCE participating States should promote educational programs for combating intolerant discourse and ODIHR must provide training to law-enforcement officers in recognising, understanding and investigating hate crimes. Hate crimes and intolerance motivated by prejudice and bias are threats to cohesion within societies and their security, as seen in Greece. Training of police work to address hate crimes is at the very heart of the security, therefore we request from the Greek Government to invite ODIHR to implement the TAHCLE programme as part of its commitment to fight hate-motivated crimes in Greece.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hatred. And, ODIHR should pay more attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, in particular Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in re-reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2013-009567+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**23 September- 4 October 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session IV: Fundamental freedoms I**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [sebahattin.abdurrahman@abtff.org](mailto:sebahattin.abdurrahman@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of the media is one of OSCE's cherished values and the OSCE participating States have committed that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognised human right and a basic component of a democratic society and that free, independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society. The task of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media is to observe relevant media developments in OSCE participating States and, in close co-ordination with the Chairman-in-Office, to advocate and promote full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments in respect of freedom of expression and free media.

The Representative noted in her regular report to the Permanent Council that on 8 March, she wrote to the authorities asking for details in the cases of two Muslim minority newspapers that were given high fines by a civil court for their articles about a Greek teacher in a Muslim minority school. The newspapers, Gündem and Millet, were ordered to pay €150,000 and €120,000 respectively in the judicial cases sued by the Greek teacher Hara Nikopoulou<sup>20</sup>, who

<sup>20</sup> Hara Nikopoulou worked between 2005 and 2010 in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük Derbent (Megalo Derio). The problem, which began with a discussion between the Greek teacher Hara Nikopoulou and the school council about the maintenance and painting works of the school in the academic year of 2007-2008, deteriorated thoroughly due to the teacher's harsh attitude towards the pupils. The problem escalated as Nikopoulou continued to work in the school in the beginning of the academic year of 2008-2009. Due to the ongoing problem for about two years, the parents of the Büyük Derbent Turkish minority primary school demanded that Nikopoulou was urgently suspended to work in the school and sent to another one and decided not to send their children to the school. Upon this, Hara Nikopoulou was transferred to another school. The problem has gained another dimension due to the support given by the Greek extreme nationalists to Nikopoulou. Lastly, Nikopoulou was awarded by the Athens Academy. Prof. Dr. Anna Frangoudaki, the person in charge of the Programme of Education of Muslim Children, criticised the prize awarded to Nikopoulou by sending an open letter.

worked in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük Derbio (Megalo Derio) on the ground that the newspapers published misinformed articles which claimed that the teacher had asked the first-grade kids in the primary school, where she had worked to draw the picture of God. An initial amount of €20,000 for Gündem and €30,000 for Millet has to be paid to the teacher immediately, even if the newspapers appeal the verdict to a higher court. In the case of non-payment of compensation, ten-month imprisonments are envisaged for the editors in chief of the newspapers.

The incident gained nationwide publicity because of the excessive fines. Eleftherotypia noted that the law stipulates that for a national publication the minimum fine is €29,325 while for a local one it is €5,865. In other words, the fines of €150,000 and €120,000 go far beyond the stipulated legal amounts. They could result in up to ten months imprisonment for the journalists if they are unable to pay. In a related development, while waiting for the Court of Appeal session, the teacher's lawyer asked for a partial advance payment of the fine: €32,600 from Gündem and €22,300 from Millet. Since the papers did not pay, in April 2011 the personal bank accounts of four journalists were blocked.

On 22-23 March 2013, The Western Thrace Minority Culture and Education Foundation (PEKEM), Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party and the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) commonly hosted a fact-finding mission and Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) President Hans-Heinrich Hansen and The European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS) Deputy President Bojan were present at the trial as observing attendees. The Thrace Court of Appeal held the trial of Gündem and Millet v. Hara Nikopoulou on 22 March 2013 and the trial of the case, attended by MP Terens Kuik (Independent Greeks) in support to Hara Nikopoulou, has been concluded with Thrace Court of Appeal's approval of appeal by Gündem and Millet. A declaration on the verdict of court is expected within four-month period. They have visited press and media institutions, civil society organizations in representation of the Western Thrace Turkish and Mega Derio, the village in Western Thrace where the Hara Nikopoulou v. Gündem and Millet case has broken out.

ABTTF, PEKEM, and FEP Party have commonly hosted an international conference 'Minority Press in Europe; Freedom of Expression and Media' in Komotini in order to raise the problems Western Thrace Turkish Minority goes through in terms of media freedom. After their visit to the region MIDAS adopted a resolution on Gündem and Millet at its general assembly on 17 May 2013 and MIDAS called the Court of Appeal to keep into consideration the need of respect of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as freedom of expression. The high amount of compensation penalties given by the authorised courts is not an amount to be able to be paid by the concerning two minority newspapers continuing their publication life with very limited resources and threatens their existence due to the result it has brought up. ABTTF has noted in several letters that it sent to the Representative that any compensatory damage award should not be a vehicle for censorship and other restrictive measures and thus weaken media pluralism in the country.

We urge all participating States, in particular Greece to reconsider to revise and amend the relevant legislation that hinders the freedom of the media and to ensure that media pluralism is guaranteed, protected and promoted in the country by all means. We kindly request the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media to have a greater role in review of the implementation of OSCE commitments related to the freedom of the media in all OSCE States.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**23 September- 4 October 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session VI: Freedom of religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The status and the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are established by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The obligations assumed by Greece under 'Section III' of this Treaty which deal with the protection of minorities, including 'an equal right to establish manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein'.

Although the Lausanne Treaty does not specifically mention that the minority shall elect its own religious leaders, this Treaty brings up the treaties which had been taken into effect before itself and reaffirms and acknowledges 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaties and 1913 Athens Treaty and Its Third Protocol. The Athens Treaty stated that 'the life and properties, and the honour, religion, sect and customs of the folks from the places left to Greece, and who will remain under the administration of Greece, will be fully cared and respected, and these folks will possess all kind of civil and political rights like the Greek citizens of Greek origin do', and the treaty noted 'Each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti'.

After problems with regard to the appointment of mufti with the Greek Government in 1985, Greece repealed the Law 2345/1920, and re-regulated the law with regard to the post of mufti without consulting with minority members or even asking for their opinion on the issue. In violation of the Athens Treaty, the Presidential Decree of 24 December 1990 adopted a legislative decree which states that muftis must be appointed by Presidential Decree on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

In 1990, the Turkish Muslim minority of Western Thrace has elected its own muftis, though public authorities did not recognise the elected muftis. Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have legal authority on civic issues.

While the mufti issue remains still to be solved, the Government in 2007 adopted a law (3536/2007) which envisaged the appointment of 240 'religious officers' i.e. imams to serve at the mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the muftis (appointed) in Komotini, Xanthi and Didymoteicho.

Law 3536/2007 was prepared and put into effect without asking opinion of the Minority itself at any stage. Due to the reactions from members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Law 3536/2007 has, thus far, not been implemented. On 16 January 2013, the Parliament - adopted Law 4115/2013, which replaced the Articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007 about the appointment of Muslim religious officers, with the proposal of the governing parties New Democracy and PASOK. The adjustment was voted 'yes' by the governing parties of PASOK and New Democracy with the support of Golden Dawn Party and Independent Greece. Without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority, the adjustment has been approved by the Hellenic Parliament. The three deputies who are members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Mr. Ahmet Hacıosman (PASOK), Mr. Ayhan Karayusuf (SYRIZA) and Mr. Hüseyin Zeybek (SYRIZA) voted 'no' to this legislation.

The new legislation would allow the Greek government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of Muslim preachers i.e. Imams to mosques under the realm authority of the official Muftis in Xanthi, Komotini and Didymoteicho in Greece. With the new legislation, the choice of religious officers (Quran teachers) will be made by a five-member-Committee consisted of the local Mufti(appointed), a civil servant of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports with his substitute, a member of Teaching Training Staff specialised in Islamic studies with his substitute, a reputable Muslim theologian with his substitute, appointed by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports and a reputable Muslim theologian with his substitute, suggested by the local Mufti(appointed). The religious officers will be recruited with a fixed term contract, lasting up to nine (9) months, after a public announcement. The contract is signed by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports and it also determines the area of performance of duties of each Quran teacher, depending on the local needs, an area which can include more Mosques.

The new legislation started being implemented; Hellenic Ministry of Education, Life-long Learning and Religious Affairs decided the religious officers will serve only in the public schools in the first phase. The pre-selected Muslim clerics who successfully completed the first phase of the qualification exam have taken the oral exam organised by the East Macedonia and Thrace Regional Education Directorate. 63 Muslim clergymen with highest ranking at the final exam will start duty in public schools as contractual staff and religious officers will teach Quran at the public schools of secondary level.

This legislation would further allow the government to expand its control over religion in public schools in the region through the new provision which is made for the teaching of the Quran by appointed Muslim preachers in public schools in Western Thrace in which minority students are enrolled. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has expressed its disapproval

with the legislation which is prepared and adopted without any notice to or consultation with the members of the minority. It is regretful that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has no right to take a part in decision-making processes in issues which directly affect its daily life. European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) expressed its deep concern about the situation in Western Thrace and noted that the legislative regulation violates the religious autonomy of the Minority by abrogating the right to choose their own clergymen to teach Quran<sup>21</sup>. Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) also expressed its regret and stated that the strong opposition expressed by the Turkish deputies in the Greek parliament has been disregarded and thus Turkish minority has been prevented to have a say in decisions which would directly affect its daily life<sup>22</sup>

In March 2013, ABTTF sent a letter and asked for the OSCE/ODIHR to submit its opinion on Law 4115/2013 which replaced Law 3536/2007 and by the Greek Parliament in January 2013 for a legal assessment of its conformity with relevant international standards. In April 2013, ODIHR sent a reply and stated it contacted to express concern about the recent legislation and offered review the law's compliance with OSCE standards and other international standards, if the government requests.

ABTTF would like to stress that the State should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organisation of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. It is unacceptable that Greece, which does not even interfere with the Orthodox Church, shall prospectively be able to select/appoint servants of the religious organisations of the Minority. The ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are appointed/elected/selected by the Church itself, and the State is not allowed to involve in/intervene to any matter internal or doctrinal to the Church.

Greece should fully guarantee and realise that the members of the Turkish Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Greek nationals in the management and control of their religious institutions and that they could exercise their religion freely therein. Therefore, ABTTF request Greece to repeal Law 4115/2013 and allow the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to choose its own religious teacher and/or imams just like the Jewish Central Board and the Catholic and Protestant Church did.

Reminding the 1989 Vienna Ministerial Council Decision which clearly stipulates that freedom of religion or belief includes respect by participating States the right of religious communities, among other things, to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respected requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangements between them and their State, we call for the Government of Greece to fully guarantee and realise that the members of the Turkish Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Greek nationals in the management and control of their religious institutions and that they could exercise their religion freely therein.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.emisco.com/2013/01/22/press-release-situation-in-western-thrace/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.abttf.org/html/index.php?link=detay&id=4708&grup=4&l=en&arsiv=0>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2013 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**23 September- 4 October 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session IX: Freedom of assembly and association**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org); [sebahattin.abdurrahman@abtff.org](mailto:sebahattin.abdurrahman@abtff.org)

Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of assembly and association constitute the cornerstones of representative democratic system and they are essential to the development of civil society and thus to the strength of democracy. The OSCE participating States in 1990, in Copenhagen reaffirmed that (...) Persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. In particular, they have the right to establish and maintain organizations or associations within their country and to participate in international non-governmental organizations". However, the right to freedom of assembly and association is still a challenge in many OSCE participating States, including Greece.

The restrictions and limitations on the right to freedom of association are still persistent in many OSCE States. Unfortunately, a favourable environment is not created by the OSCE States for the exercise of freedom of assembly and association by means of laws and practices consistent with OSCE commitments and international standards.

Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, which determined the status and the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the Minority has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Although some other ethnic groups are recognised and even welcomed and supported by

Greek authorities, there are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the words ‘Macedonian’ or ‘Turkish’, which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. There is only one (ethnic) Macedonian association that attempted to register with the courts, the ‘Home of Macedonian Civilization’ (Stegi Makedonikou Politismou) but denied registration and appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Though, the Court ruled that Greece violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the new application for registration was again rejected in 2003 on the ground that ‘the word ‘Macedonian’ is not clear whether the word is being used in its historical sense to refer to an integral part of Greek civilization with its local specificities, or in its geographical sense, in which case it is left undefined which part of the broader region of Macedonia is meant, as its territory took shape after the Balkan Wars’.

The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

Following the dissolution of the Turkish associations in the late 1980’s, the three associations (Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association) lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in 2005; the ECtHR held unanimously there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Further to the European Court of Human Rights’ judgments, the applicants requested the cancellation of the decision dissolving them (the case of Xanthi Turkish Union) or submitted a new registration of their associations before the national courts. The applications have been declared in- admissible on the ground that it is not possible to cancel a domestic decision which has become final in the context of non-contentious procedure following a judgment of the ECtHR, and that domestic law does not provide, in civil matters, for the reopening of proceedings following a finding of violation by the ECtHR.

ABTTF organised a side-event on non-execution of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decisions on the three particular cases in which the Court ruled that Greece violated Article 11 of the Convention, i.e. right to freedom of association on 25 April 2013. The event hosted by Latvian Parliamentarian Boriss Cilevičs at the PACE 2013 Spring Session, brought together more than 50 participants from different political groups, Council of Europe (CoE) Member States and civil society members, which stressed Greece’s pertinacious attitude in non-executing with the ECtHR decisions favouring the re-establishment of the three associations founded by Western Thrace Turkish Minority members; Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi and Evros Minority Youth Association. At this side event, Hülya Emin, Chairwoman Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi, stressed the fact that Greece denies minority’s ethnic identity, which brought out the closure of associations founded by the minority. Ahmet Kurt, President of Xanthi Turkish Union said that upon the ECtHR decision, Xanthi Turkish Union applied to national court for retrieving its official status, yet the request was refused by the respective court of appeal and approved by the Court of cassation. Kurt furthermore indicated that upon the approval of Court of Cassation, Xanthi Turkish Union has re-lodged a complaint at the ECtHR in September 2012. Failure to execute or enforce judgments – that is, the carrying out of a final judgment in order

to ensure that obligations actually are imposed or fulfilled in practice – constitutes a further obstacle to access to justice. In note verbal dated 29 May 2013<sup>23</sup> from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in relation to the written statement dated 10 May 2013 and submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (A/HRC/23/NGO/35), Greece noted that full implementation of the judgments is pending, due to procedural reasons. Greece noted that Greek authorities are currently considering the most appropriate means and ways to implement the decisions, including possible legislative adjustments. We regret that although the Greek authorities note that other avenues are being explored including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure in every platform, the authorities have failed to take any precise and concrete step. Given the time that has elapsed since the Court's judgments, we believe that the Greek authorities are, in fact, unwillingness to implement the Court's decision.

In the note verbal Greece notes that even the three associations in question, albeit not officially registered, do engage freely in numerous activities. It should be noted that although a large number of minority associations and NGOs have been registered with the competent courts, there is no association which include the word 'Turk' and/or 'Turkish' in their titles.

Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers closely follows the developments about the implementation of Court's judgments under the name of Bekir-Ousta group of cases against Greece since 2008. The last exam of execution was held at 1172<sup>nd</sup> meeting (4-6 June 2013), and the Committee of Ministers noted with concern that, since the judgment of the Court of Cassation (No. 353/2012), published on 24 February 2012, dismissing the appeal in cassation of the Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis association on procedural grounds, to date no precise and concrete information has been presented to the Committee on the measures taken or envisaged regarding the individual measures in this group of cases, noted with interest the information provided during the meeting according to which other avenues are being explored, including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure. The Committee decided to resume consideration of this question at their 1186<sup>th</sup> meeting (December 2013) (DH) in order to make a substantive assessment of the developments regarding individual measures, based on the information that the authorities will provide in good time for that meeting<sup>24</sup>

The dissolution and/or non-registration of associations that bear the word 'Turkish' prevents them to operate on a legal basis which in return causes many other problems in their daily life. Founded in 1928 Komotini Turkish Youth Union was dissolved in 1987 with the decision of the Greek Supreme Court on the basis that the denomination 'Turkish' in its title referred to the citizens of Turkey and it constituted a threat to the unity and the public order of Greece do continue to operate its activities without a legal basis, because Greece does not reinstate its legal personality. The association continued its de facto operation until November 2012, when tax inspectors made an audit on Komotini Turkish Youth Union and decided to close down the club house and the canteen on the basis that the organization does not have a tax identification number and a cash register. In May 2013, the President of Komotini Turkish Youth Union was sentenced a fine of €100 and 2 months of imprisonment and the sentence has been suspended for three years by the Criminal Court in Komotini. In light of the information above, we urge Greek authorities to;

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<sup>23</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/142/72/PDF/G1314272.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases\\_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn)

-implement, without any further delay, the decisions of the European Court in the cases Turkish Association of Xanthi and Others v. Greece, Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece & Emin and Others v. Greece;

-reaffirm the commitment of the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments of ECtHR and amend the Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the European Court decisions in matters related to freedom of association;

-allow the registration of associations under the names of the choice of their founding members whether they contain the name of an ethnic group or the word 'minority';

-immediately ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

## GREECE

### **Working Session 2: Tolerance and non-discrimination II – Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding**

Madam Moderator,

Fully subscribing to the EU statement, I would like to make a statement in my national capacity.

As many other OSCE participating States, Greece is confronting, for the first time in its history, the phenomenon of racist and xenophobic attacks, associated with a political party represented in the parliament. Over the last period, there has been indeed an increase in the number of attacks against foreigners but also against Greek citizens. The recent fatal attack against a Greek national has deeply shocked and appalled the Greek society as a whole. In times of economic crisis, extremist, neo-Nazi organizations or individuals, attempt to exploit the anger or the discontent of some segments of the population to advance their hateful social and political agendas. In addition, the situation prevailing in Greece has to be seen against the background of an unprecedented rise in irregular migration (reaching, for many years, some 100,000 persons on a yearly basis), due to the geographical position of the country, as the main gateway to the European Union.

The Greek authorities are fully aware of the need to combat any racist or xenophobic acts, which undermine the values underpinning the Greek society. A number of measures have been taken at the level of law enforcement, criminal legislation and the justice system, such as:

- a) the establishment of specialised police departments and offices
- b) the registration of alleged incidents of racist violence
- c) the possibility of imposing heavier penalties for hate-motivated crimes
- d) the appointment of a special prosecutor for investigating racist crimes

After the recent heinous events, the Minister of Public Order referred more than 30 relevant criminal cases to the judiciary, which are to be investigated possibly under stricter provisions relating to criminal organizations. The Government is also considering strengthening the legislation to the same effect.

At the same time, there has been an unequivocal condemnation of such acts by the highest political authorities, which has conveyed a message of zero tolerance for any manifestation of racism or xenophobia. Moreover, any possible misconduct within the ranks of law enforcement agencies will also be thoroughly investigated and punished.

Madam Moderator,

We should also underline that there is an equally imperative need to reverse the social conditions that have allowed for the emergence of such extremist acts. The defences of any given society against hateful rhetoric and extremist acts can be weakened, as a consequence of a lasting, ongoing economic recession, rising unemployment which can, in turn, lead to the dissolution of their social fabric.

To combat effectively the scourge of neo-Nazi violence, especially in a country like Greece

that contributed decisively – paying a heavy toll in blood – to the historic vanquishing of Fascism and Nazism, apart from the decisive measures that the Government is committed to take, the root causes should be effectively addressed.

Madam Moderator,

A few days ago, the 3 OSCE Personal Representatives on Tolerance paid a joint visit to Greece upon invitation by the Government. This demonstrates the willingness of my Authorities to effectively address these worrisome phenomena and to have an open and honest dialogue with the relevant OSCE Institutions. We look forward to their recommendations and we call upon all participating States that haven't done so to consider inviting the three Personal Representatives of the Chair-in-Office.

**Statement by the delegation of Greece**  
**Working Session 6: Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Law 4115/2013**

Greece remains fully committed to safeguard the respect and protection of freedom of religion or belief, which constitutes a fundamental right for every human being, regardless of his/her origin, cultural background or conviction.

The main objective of Law 4115/2013 is to create 240 posts of Quran teachers, who may also be appointed in the Greek public schools in Thrace. It is a forward-looking initiative because, for the first time, Muslim Minority students, who attend public schools in increasing numbers, will have the opportunity, if they so wish, to study the Holy Quran in public schools.

The Quran teachers are selected, through a fully transparent and inclusive procedure, by a qualified 5-member Committee, which is composed exclusively of eminent Muslim personalities and is presided by the local Mufti.

In fact, the first stage of the procedure has been successfully concluded, at the end of August 2013, with the selection of sixty-three qualified candidate as Quran teachers. They will receive a steady salary provided by the Greek State and will enjoy social security benefits. Their standing in society, in these times of economic crisis, will improve substantially.

It should be noted that Quran teachers have the right to freely choose whether they want to join this scheme. The entire philosophy of the law is based on this principle. Should they desire to be part of it, they will be selected by a transparent procedure. In this respect, it should be made absolutely clear that Law 4115/2013 does not touch upon the status of Imams. The Imams in Thrace are selected in accordance with the Islamic law, the traditions and the practices of the Muslim Minority, without any involvement whatsoever of the State. It goes without saying that they exercise their religious duties freely, without any impediment.

The same applies with the minority students and the teaching of the Holy Quran in public schools. The children (or their parents) can freely decide whether they wish or not to attend the classes.

In light of the above it is clear that, by virtue of this law, an innovative and forward-looking policy is implemented, in full respect of the freedom of religion and in accordance with international standards, including OSCE commitments on freedom of religion. It is also clear that the new legislative framework follows closely current trends and best practices in the fields of education and respect of diversity. The ongoing campaign to present a different picture on the pretext of alleged state involvement in the religious freedom of the Minority, smack of political expediency and is misleading.

We would like to underline, that the rights of the members of the Muslim minority residing in the Greek region of Thrace, are protected and promoted through the implementation of the highest contemporary international standards in the field of human rights, the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, which established their status, the European Union *acquis* and the Greek Constitution. The members of the Muslim minority enjoy full equality before the law, without any discrimination. For Greece, meeting the needs of its Muslim citizens, members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, is an ever-evolving challenge and commitment.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2014 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**3-4 July 2014**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session 1: The Right to Freedom of Expression**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Chairperson,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO colleagues,

OSCE participating States have committed that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognised human right and a basic component of a democratic society and that free, independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society and accountable systems of government. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes relevant media developments in OSCE participating States and, in close co-ordination with the Chairman-in-Office, to advocate and promote full compliance with OSCE principles and commitments in respect of freedom of expression and free media.

Pluralism in the media allows for the expression of different opinions and safeguards individuals' abilities to express their opinions without interference. Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has, on various occasions, expressed its serious concern on freedom of the media and the free flow of information in Greece. Law 3592/2007 on the Legal Status of Private Television and Local Radio, Regulation of Issues Related to Radio and Television Market, Miscellaneous Provisions contains some provisions which the authorities should review, including the provision which provides that the main broadcasting language for radio programs should be Greek and the provision that the minimum human and financial resources required to obtain a license jeopardises smaller regional and minority media.

In March 2014, Greek National Radio and Television Council(ESR) has issued recommendation decisions of warning against Radio City FM, Çınar FM and Joy FM, the radio stations broadcasting in Turkish in the region, on the ground that they did not broadcast in the Greek language for more that 25 percent of their transmission time. ABTTF received information that that radio stations, which broadcast in English or Russian languages, are not

subjected to the requirement that they must also broadcast in the Greek language.

Previously, the ESR in 2011 issued an administrative penalty of a fine of €3,000 against the radio station KRAL FM in Xanthi Prefecture on the ground that KRAL FM consisted of broad-casting by 11% in Greek and 89% in a foreign language (Turkish) and in 2009, the ESR had issued an administrative penalty recommendation about Tele Radio 104.2 FM broadcasting in Turkish language in Xanthi.

ABTTF continuously notes that the relevant legislation does threaten maintenance of the existence of radio stations owners belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and do undermine the free flow of information in the country. The OSCE Representative on the Freedom of Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic repeatedly noted in reports of previous years to the Permanent Council that the relevant Greek legislation needs to be reformed, as it sets a high threshold for minority, community and low-cost broadcasters because of the language requirement, as well as financial and personnel requirements, which can endanger media pluralism. We urge Greece to reconsider to revise and amend the relevant legislation that hinders the freedom of the media and to ensure that media pluralism is guaranteed, protected and promoted in the country by all means.

The other most important problem for the Minority regarding media freedom is that two minority newspapers *Gündem* and *Millet* were ordered to pay €150,000 and €120,000 respectively in the judicial cases sued by the Greek teacher Hara Nikopoulou<sup>25</sup>, who worked in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük Derbent (Megalo Derio) on the ground that the newspapers published misinformed articles which claimed that the teacher had asked the first-grade kids in the primary school, where she had worked to draw the picture of God.

The incident gained nationwide publicity because of the excessive fines and ABTTF has noted in several letters that it sent to the Representative that any compensatory damage award should not be a vehicle for censorship and other restrictive measures and thus weaken media pluralism in the country. The Office of the OSCE Representative on the Freedom Media<sup>26</sup> continuously monitored the lawsuit against *Gündem* and *Millet*. In October 2013, the Thrace Court of Appeal announced its decision and decided *Gündem* and *Millet* newspapers to pay € 30,000 for compensation instead of the local court's decision of €150,000 and €120,000 compensation. The Court of Appeal decided three-months of imprisonments for the editors in chief of the newspapers in case of non-payment of compensation. The two minority newspapers filed an appeal to the Greek Supreme Court, Arios Pagos.

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<sup>25</sup> Hara Nikopoulou worked between 2005 and 2010 in the Turkish minority primary school in the village of Büyük Derbent (Megalo Derio). The problem, which began with a discussion between the Greek teacher Hara Nikopoulou and the school council about the maintenance and painting works of the school in the academic year of 2007-2008, deteriorated thoroughly due to the teacher's harsh attitude towards the pupils. The problem escalated as Nikopoulou continued to work in the school in the beginning of the academic year of 2008-2009. Due to the ongoing problem for about two years, the parents of the Büyük Derbent Turkish minority primary school demanded that Nikopoulou was urgently suspended to work in the school and sent to another one and decided not to send their children to the school. Upon this, Hara Nikopoulou was transferred to another school. The problem has gained another dimension due to the support given by the Greek extreme nationalists to Nikopoulou. Lastly, Nikopoulou was awarded by the Athens Academy. Prof. Dr. Anna Frangoudaki, the person in charge of the Programme of Education of Muslim Children, criticised the prize awarded to Nikopoulou by sending an open letter.

<sup>26</sup> Please see <http://www.osce.org/pc/109182>

The high amount of compensation penalties given by the authorised courts is not an amount to be able to be paid by the concerning two minority newspapers continuing their publication life with very limited resources and threatens their existence due to the result it has brought up. The European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS) with Federal Union of European Nationalities(FUEN) carried out a fact-finding mission on 19-22 June 2014 in order to examine the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in particular in the field of freedom of media. Six journalists from MIDAS member newspapers and 2 media students from the Andrassy University in Budapest held enlarged meeting with the representatives of the Turkish minority media and listened their problems regarding media freedom and pluralism in the country. Last year in March 2013, MIDAS Governing Board Member Bojan Brezigar visited the region and attended as observer to the trial of the two newspapers at the Thrace Court of Appeal and the General Assembly of MIDAS expressed its deep concern over excessive fines imposed on Gündem and Millet. The General Assembly of MIDAS stressed that minority language media are essential for maintaining for minority languages and cultures as integral part of European linguistic and cultural diversity, as established in Article 3 of the Treaty of European Union.

The OSCE commitments on media freedom that all participating States reaffirmed and recommitted must not be only valid in paper and there should be actual, practical follow-through to allow for the mechanisms to develop and exist that protects freedom of expression and media. We kindly request the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media to have a greater role in review of the implementation of OSCE commitments and to establish a stronger mechanism of country-monitoring in OSCE area.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2014 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**3-4 July 2014**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session 2: The Responsibilities in the Framework of Freedom of Expression**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

OSCE participating States agree that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a basic component of a democratic society. The National Commission for Human Rights in Greece notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups. The political discourse against migrants and asylum seekers has led to violence against persons with different nationality and/or ethnic origin, religion or language in other parts of the country. Some media express certain prejudices and negative stereotypes towards members of minority groups, including the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.

With the slogan ‘Europe Europe Hear Our Voice’, for the first time in history minority political party Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party has run for the EP elections, with 38 candidates from Rhodope, Xanthi and Evros. FEP Party announced that they participated in the elections to give the necessary message to the mindset which does not take into consideration the demands of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) expressed its concern over the detention of Turkish language teacher Cahit Mustafa in Rhodes for three times on the grounds of spreading propaganda for our member organisation Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party before the European Parliament elections on May 25, 2014 in Greece. Before the EP elections in Greece, Cahit Mustafa, who publicly expressed his Turkish identity, openly supported the minority party and distributed FEP Party’s election leaflets in Rhodes. He has been arrested by the police for three times and kept under detention for one hour at the first time, two hours at the second time and more long hours at the third time on the grounds that he spread propaganda for the FEP Party. We would like to stress the importance of individual right to freedom of expression including written and oral communications and their right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Therefore, we condemn the arbitrary detention of Cahit Mustafa by the Greek police and urges Greek government to respect every citizen’s right to elect and express his political opinion freely.

In the EP elections, 90% voters from the Turkish minority in Western Thrace have voted for the Friendship, Equality and Peace (DEB) party, led by Mustafa Ali Çavuş and the FEP Party has been the first party in Rhodope and Xanthi, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives. The FEP Party's success in the EP elections delivered a shock in the Greek media. Here are striking headlines: 'Greece has lost Western Thrace in the elections. The 'ostensible victory' of the politicians suffered national defeat... Thrace has been abandoned for a handful of votes'. ([http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_50.html?m=1](http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post_50.html?m=1)) 'Athens is dead on its feet: The Turkish lovers are celebrating the success of the Turkish party. No one is dealing with our national issues... They are busy with the increase of Golden Dawn'. ([http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_4746.html](http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post_4746.html)) 'Thrace wants new Kosovo: Grey Wolves(FEP Party) runs for the EP elections and Athens is sleeping'([http://ellas.me/aenaos\\_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219](http://ellas.me/aenaos_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219)) 'The aim of Turkey is to increase tension in Thrace!'

These headlines show how the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and its political party is perceived. The persistent hate speech in the mainstream media with an explicit manifestation of hatred against Turkey makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which all of whom are Greek citizens, a vulnerable target for far right and/or extremist groups. Events in Greece before the local and regional elections on 18 and 25 May 2014 show that Turkish Minority in is still perceived and accepted as 'the other' in Greece. New Democracy (NEA) Party Rodopi Deputy and former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs Evripidis Stilyanidis gave reportage to Greek daily Eleftheros Typos on 27 April 2014. Stilyanidis' statements regarding the Western Thrace Turkish Minority received big reactions. According to Birlik, a daily of Western Thrace Turkish Minority, Stilyanidis affirmed the necessity to introduce new regulations to country's administrative structure on the grounds that the municipalities have been Islamised especially when the examples of Maroneia and Iasmos were considered. Further to this point, Stilyanidis suggested the municipalities in Western Thrace, which were predominantly run by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, shall be redistributed to those which were run by Christians.

The far-right has sharply risen as the economic downturn deepens in the country and the current situation in Greece shows how quickly such political discourse against persons with different back- grounds can expand as xenophobia and racially motivated hate crimes in Greece. The period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Parliament in June 2012 has proved to be true that the political discourse which has been harshened after the June elections has turned into an anti-Greek sentiment and triggered xenophobia and racially motivated hate crimes in the country. The European elections were held in 28 Member States on 22-25 May 2014 revealed an increased ratio of support to far- right political parties throughout European Union, including Greece. The Neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn secured 3 out of 21, total seat number of Greece in the EP.

We fully support that any legislation restricting the right to freedom of opinion and expression, or the flow of information, must be applied by a body which is independent of any political, commercial or other unwarranted influence in a manner that is neither arbitrary nor discriminatory, and with adequate safeguards against abuse. The right to freedom of expression is and must be respected by all parties, but there should be a clear line between freedom of expression and of the media and the right to freedom from discrimination. The problem is that the interpretation of hate speech of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2014 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**22 September -3 October 2014**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 10 (Specifically selected topic): Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

Main contact person(s): Mr. K. Engin Soyyilmaz  
E-mail: [engin.soyyilmaz@abtff.org](mailto:engin.soyyilmaz@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO delegates,

Every person has the right to education which encompasses free and equal access to education provisions as well as the obligation to rule out discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve quality of education. The lack of equal access to quality education leads to denial of civil and political rights of children belonging to national minorities and segregation in society due to the marginalisation of minority children.

The 1990 Copenhagen Document clearly states that the OSCE participating States will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue. Yet Greece is still very far away to fulfil her commitment arising from the regarding document on her territories.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is granted with the right to education in its mother language and autonomy in the management of its education institutions under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which has determined the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general. As enshrined in the Section III of the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace shall have an equal right to establish manage and control at its own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use its own language and to exercise its own religion freely therein. Furthermore, the right to education is provided by Article 16 of the Greek Constitution which defines the scope and aim of education for the development of an ethnic and religious consciousness.

However, the children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece have been discriminated with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level for a couple of years. Under Law 3518/2006, the compulsory period in education in Greece has been extended from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008 and the pre-school education for all children who are 5 years old has been made compulsory. The regarding law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural characteristics of the children in Greece, therefore all children, who have completed their age of five, are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek.

Since the regarding law does not bring any regulation concerning the schools belonging to the Turkish Minority, it contradicts with the principle of educational autonomy enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat the children belonging to the Turkish Minority differently, who speak a different mother tongue other than Greek. This violates the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which Greece signed but not ratified yet.

Furthermore, it is recommended from a pedagogical perspective that it is crucial for children to learn the mother tongue well enough and it facilitates children's learning and a second language easily and fluently. However, Greece does not allow the establishment of bilingual minority kindergartens within minority schooling system. Furthermore, it does not allow minority institution to build and operate private bilingual kindergartens. 211 local representatives of the Turkish minority signed a petition in 2010 for the inclusion of pre-school education into the bilingual education scheme in Western Thrace. Although the petition was submitted to the Greek Ministry of Education, it was not taken into consideration by relevant Greek authorities. Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (CEFOM) had applied to the Greek local authorities for establishment of a private bilingual kindergarten in 2011. The Greek authorities did not respond the establishment of the first private bilingual kindergarten in Western Thrace.

When the former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, visited Greece on 8- 16 September 2008<sup>27</sup>, she stated a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the Minority in Western Thrace. Four years later, Willy Fautre, who wrote a report following the fact-finding mission the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party organised on 16- 20 October 2012 with the participation of President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Hans Heinrich Hansen and former MEP François Alfonsi (France) noted one of the most important problems stated during consultations with the Minority representatives and civil society organisations is pre-school minority education for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

In the beginning of school year 2012-2013, some children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Echinós (Şahin) village of Xanthi were not enrolled to the first grade of the primary school on the ground that those children had not attended public kindergarten. During the fact-finding mission in Western Thrace in October 2012, the international delegation also visited Echinós (Şahin) village in Xanthi and met parents of those children belonging to the Turkish Minority. During consultations, the parents stated they do not want to send their children to public kindergartens where the language of education is only in

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<sup>27</sup> [A/HRC/10/11/Add.3 para. 24, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement](http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement)

Greek. The problem was solved in November 2012, this, however, does not mean a long-lasting solution to the problem of bilingual minority kindergartens.

The problem is still pending, and Minority children are still obliged to attend public kindergartens in the school year 2014-2015. In June 2014, FUEN, the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS), representatives of the Danish minority in Germany and representatives of the German minority in Denmark in partnership with ABTTF, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and FEP Party carried a fact-finding mission to Western Thrace, and the delegation met the parents of the 20 minority children in Echinós (Şahin). The delegation noted with great concern the Minority children are still obliged to attend public kindergartens where the education is only in Greek and the demand for bilingual minority kindergartens is still being disregarded by the Greek authorities, though eight years' time have been elapsed since the adoption of the regarding law.

We would like to remind that education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable way of realising other human rights. Education is central to promoting the identity of individuals and expressing their identity, while it allows persons belonging to national minorities to pass on their culture to future generations, preserving and developing their minority characteristics. Under Law 3518/2006, the right of children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western to use their own language and have education in mother tongue has been violated.

Greece should provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to learn their mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the mother tongue, alternatives which should not be understood as mutually exclusive. In the particular context of pre-school education, delivery of educational services with the established bilingual minority kindergartens is a right stemming from their right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions.

We urge the Greek State to respect its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and take measures in order to restore the autonomous structure in the field of education. We expect from the Greek State to respect, protect and promote the rights enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty and act in full compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and the core international human rights treaties to which Greece is also a party.

Thus, and specifically with respect to the problem in the pre-school level of education, we call on the Greek government:

To establish bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace in line with the minority schooling system.

To give bilingual education in public kindergartens in the region until bilingual minority schools are established.

To allow the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be in Turkish and Greek.



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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 11 (Specifically selected topic): Rights of persons belonging to national minorities**

Main contact person(s): Mr. K. Engin Soyyilmaz  
E-mail: [engin.soyyilmaz@abtff.org](mailto:engin.soyyilmaz@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO delegates,

The OSCE participating States including Greece has committed in the Copenhagen document of 1990 to respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities 'to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs of relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities', and reaffirmed their commitment in the Helsinki document of 1992.

The representation of national minorities in political process, which is one of the most essential and clearest examples of participation in public life, is a strong indicator of the level of minority rights in modern democracies. National minorities can either have a right to self-government or they can participate in legislative institutions at both national and local level or take part in consultative bodies in order to take a key role in decision-making processes which are interest to them. Persons belonging to national minorities can nominate through non-minority/majority parties or they form their own parties and achieve representation at the national and regional level.

It is very important that parties and legislation are inclusive and represent broader society including national minorities. Electoral law or electoral system does have a great impact on the full and effective participation of persons, including persons belonging to national minorities. Only few states provide for specific rules on the representation of minorities in the elected bodies, but there are no established democracies that have adopted quota laws for national minorities. Yet there have been efforts among political parties to widen their support

and get their votes among ethnic communities and to recruit national minority candidates in local and national elections.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is not adequately represented in national and regional level and in decision making processes. The electoral system referred as 'reinforced proportionality' is a form of semi-proportional representation with a 3% of electoral threshold for political parties and independent candidates and an awarded extra 50 seats for the political party that wins a plurality of votes cast. Under the current electoral system of reinforced proportionality, political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament unless they obtain at least 3% of the votes throughout the country, although they may have enough votes to get electoral seats in specific electoral districts. This makes it almost impossible for members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to be elected to the Parliament as independent candidate, therefore members of the Minority stand for elections from majority parties. In the last elections, three persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace were elected to the Greek Parliament. The deputies are Ahmet Hacıosman, PASOK MP for Rhodope; Ayhan Karayusuf, SYRIZA MP for Rhodope and Hüseyin Zeybek, SYRIZA MP for Xanthi.

The regional administration in Greece has gone an extensive reform process, of which second phase was implemented in 2010. The number of municipalities have been reduced to 325, and 54 prefectures have been merged into 13 administrative regions, i.e. peripheries. Each region acquired a directly elected governor (periferiarchis) and regional council roughly proportional to its population. Political parties are not permitted to contest local and regional elections and, therefore, the elections are contested by open regional lists headed by a candidate governor. In practice, however, most of these lists are openly created, supported or otherwise endorsed by political parties. In all local elections, the winning candidacy list is guaranteed a minimum three-fifths majority in the respective councils. In 2010, Greece held its first regional elections concurrently held with municipal elections. The elections for the regional governors and councils take place every five years under a two-round majority run-off electoral system where the winning list elects the governor. The regional elections including municipal elections in Greece were held on 18 May 2014 (first round) and on 25 May 2014 (second round). Following the first and second round municipal elections in Greece, three members of the Turkish Minority in Arriana (Kozlukebir), Iasmos (Yassıköy) and Myki (Mustafçova) municipalities have been elected as mayor<sup>28</sup>

Starting in 2014, peripheral and municipal elections are to be held every five years, concurrently with elections for the European Parliament. At the second round of local elections in Greece, on 25 May 2014, European Parliament elections were held in Greece. Greece comprises one national electoral district for the EP elections and the electoral threshold is 3%, while 14 EU countries do not apply any electoral threshold for the EP elections. 49 political parties participated in the 2014 EP elections, and party lists were closed and blocked. For the first time in the history, the Turkish Minority's political party, Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party, run for the EP elections, with 38 candidates from Rhodope, Xanthi and Evros.

With the slogan 'Europe Europe Hear Our Voice', the FEP Party participated in the EP elections in order to give the message 'We are Here As well' to Athens and Europe. The FEP Party announced they participated in the EP elections to give the necessary message to the

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<sup>28</sup>[http://www.ekloges.ypes.gr/may2014/dn/public/index.html#{"page":"level","params":{"level":"snom\\_n","id":1}}](http://www.ekloges.ypes.gr/may2014/dn/public/index.html#{)

mindset which does not take into consideration the demands of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Following the results of the EP elections in Greece, the FEP Party was the first party in Rhodope and Xanthi, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives. The Minority party won 41.68% in Rhodope and 25.89% in Xanthi. The FEP Party became the third party and received 42,533 votes with 12.25% share of the vote in Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Prefecture. Since the FEP party received 46,620 votes and won 0.76% of at the nationwide<sup>29</sup>. The results clearly indicate how the application of 3% threshold for individuals prevents the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace from electing their representatives freely.

Thus, ABTTF urges the Greek government to:

- Abolish the 3% electoral threshold quota applied for political parties and independent candidates at national elections.
- Introduce special provisions to guarantee that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is represented in the Greek Parliament.
- Abolish the 3% electoral threshold quota applied at EP elections in Greece.
- Ensure that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace participates in legislative institutions at regional, local and national level or takes part in consultative bodies in order to take a key role in decision-making processes which are interest to them.

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>29</sup> For FEP Party's elections results  
[http://www.ekloges.ypes.gr/may2014/e/public/index.html#{"cls":"party","params":{"id":73}}](http://www.ekloges.ypes.gr/may2014/e/public/index.html#{)



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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II**

Main contact person(s): Mr. K. Engin Soyylmaz  
E-mail: [engin.soyylmaz@abttf.org](mailto:engin.soyylmaz@abttf.org), [info@abttf.org](mailto:info@abttf.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO delegates,

Despite the commitments and efforts of the OSCE participating States through several documents and actions to combat and prevent racism, xenophobia, discrimination and hate crimes, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region.

We have been experiencing a rapid rise of far-right extremism and aggressive nationalism in Europe for the last years, and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments, governments and lastly in the European Parliament. A striking example for this very negative development is the rise of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party in Greece. The Golden Dawn has strengthened its position both at national and European levels after it had received 9.4 % of the popular vote at the European Parliament elections in May 2014 and won three seats.

The rise of the far-right politics is a serious concern in Greece, where economic hardship and the increasing number of undocumented migrants in the country has deepened xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and asylum seekers in central Athens and other regions in Greece. There has been a great increasing trend in hate crimes against undocumented migrants and other vulnerable groups in the country. Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which status and rights are determined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty in 1923, has also become a vulnerable target, and activities of far right and/or extremist groups in Greece. Hate crimes and hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority have increased rapidly, which has created an environment of fear and anxiety among the Turkish Minority members.

On 13 April 2014, a pig's head cut into pieces and left in blood was found in front of entry door of the masjid in the city of Alexandroupolis (Dedeğaç) of Greece. The masjid has been offering Qur'an lectures to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace as well. On 29 March 2013, supporters of the extreme right Golden Dawn Party attacked Cüneyt Serdar belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at Xanthi City Centre and beat him blatantly.

Furthermore, the ethnic Muslim Turkish community living on the island of Rhodes was also the target of hate crimes. On 23 February 2014, unknown individuals tore the Quran and threw Golden Dawn leaflets at the local cemetery in Rhodes.

We strongly believe that it is crucial that Greece should condemn firmly and unequivocally all forms of hate crimes. Hate crimes constitute serious human rights violations and there is a need to impose on the perpetrators of sentences that are effective, proportionate and appropriate to the offence committed.

Greece should ensure co-operation, where appropriate, at the national and international levels, including with relevant international bodies and between police forces, to combat violent hate crimes. ABTTF urges the Greek authorities to raise the public awareness for the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse. In combating hate-motivated attacks and crimes against the migrant groups and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the Greek Government should investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and condemn publicly and unequivocally such incidents. The far-right and neo-Nazi political parties such as Golden Dawn must be banned and excluded from all state subsidies, where evidence demonstrates that they advocate for and are involved directly or indirectly in acts of racist violence.

In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in Europe. Hate crimes and intolerance motivated by prejudice and bias are threats to cohesion within societies and their security, as seen in Greece. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies. OSCE participating States should counter prejudices and misrepresentation in general society, and their efforts should in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. They should promote educational and awareness-raising programs for combating intolerant discourse, and they should encourage the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the Media, including the Internet.

Thank you for your attention.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working Session 10: Specifically selected topic: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including address by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (29.9.2014)**

With regard to the statements made earlier this morning by two NGOs, I would like to stress that Greece fully respects the right to education of members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, which is composed of persons of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, and is fully complying with the provisions of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne as well as with multilateral human rights treaties.

One of the positive results of programs which are implemented is that the number of Muslim minority girls graduating from high school has significantly increased.

Moreover, the 0,5% quota for the general admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes has led to an eightfold increase of the number of Muslim minority undergraduate students.

School-aged Muslim minority children who have opted for minority schooling have at their disposal some 150 primary, 2 secondary and 2 religious Quranic schools.

Muslim pre-schoolers can attend one the 57 public kindergartens across the region of Thrace, operating in areas where the Muslim minority resides.

At the same time, the Greek State accommodates the preference of an ever-increasing number of Muslim minority members in Thrace for the public non- minority educational system.

In this respect, the competent authorities apply modern pedagogical standards and programs having as paramount consideration the development of linguistic and other skills which will allow children of the Muslim minority in Thrace to be successfully induced and integrated into the education process and the society at large, while fully respecting religious, cultural and linguistic diversity.

Greece spares no effort in improving existing education infrastructure and renewing school equipment. We will continue to further explore ways and means to meet the needs of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace and work for their wellbeing, in cooperation with the local society.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working Session 11: Specifically selected topic: Rights of persons belonging to national minorities (continued) (29.9.2014)**

In reply to a statement made earlier by two NGOs, I would like to point out that in almost all successive parliamentary elections held in Greece since 1927, candidates from the Muslim minority in Thrace, which is composed of persons of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, have been elected as MPs (with the governing party, the main opposition party or, in most cases, with both parties). Currently, there are three minority MPs elected with two different parties.

Furthermore, the members of the minority actively participate at all levels of the region's Local Administration. In the May 2014 regional and local elections, roughly 120 Greek citizens members of the Muslim Minority were elected at the local and regional Councils in Thrace, among them three mayors.

The threshold of 3% required for obtaining seats in Parliament is among the lowest in Europe and is fully in conformity with the case-law of the ECHR, which has found that a threshold of 10% does not violate the convention.

Finally, it is to be noted that a quota of 0.5 ‰ to the State exams system for recruitment to the civil service has been established in favour of persons belonging to the Muslim minority with the obvious intention to enhance their active participation in the public sector.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (concluded) including  
combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on  
religious grounds (30.9.2014)**

In reply to references made to the situation in Greece, I would like to stress that over the last years, and in particular during the period 2012-2013, there has been an important surge in the number of attacks against foreigners living in Greece, and Greek citizens as well. Extremist organizations or individuals have attempted to exploit the anger or the discontent of some segments of the population severely affected by the economic crisis, against the background of an unprecedented rise in irregular migration. A number of measures have been taken at the level of law enforcement, criminal legislation and the justice system. Since September 2013, the leader and members of 'Golden Dawn' have been placed under judicial investigation for membership of a 'criminal organization'; the measure of pre-trial detention, or other restrictive conditions, have been imposed by the competent judicial authorities to a number of suspects, including Members of Parliament. State financing has been suspended.

Furthermore, a new tightened anti-racism law was adopted three weeks ago, on 9 September 2014, adjusting the country's legislative framework with the 2008/913/JHA EU Council Framework Decision and strengthening the existing criminal anti-racism legislation in terms both of the acts criminalised and the penalties foreseen.

In addition, racist acts and hate crimes have been condemned in the strongest possible terms by members of the political leadership of the country at the highest level, conveying an unequivocal message of zero tolerance.

Finally, in contrast to allegations about hate speech and hate crimes, Thrace is an example of a smooth and well-functioning 'living together', to use a term highlighted recently by the European Court of Human Rights, of the Christian majority and the Muslim minority.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**  
**Working Session 14: Fundamental freedoms II, including freedom of thought,**  
**conscience, religion or belief (1.10.2014)**

In reply to an NGO statement, I would like to stress that, in terms of comparative law and practice, there is not a single method for the selection of Muftis. Each country, be it Muslim or not, has the right to establish its own process, provided that such process is in accordance with the Islamic tradition and religious rights and freedoms.

The Greek law ensures the selection of notable, distinguished teachers of Islam who will perform their religious and judicial duties in the best and most responsible way.

The so-called 'elected Muftis' are not officially recognised; however, the State does not obstruct their religious or other activities, showing maximum tolerance and restraint despite the evident disrespect for the existing legislation and an often-non-constructive attitude.

Furthermore, it is obvious that there can be no analogy with the election of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Finally, our legislation has substantially enhanced the status of religious preachers who are free to choose whether or not to join the applicable legislative scheme and to benefit from it.



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Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**16-17 April 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: A human security approach to the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And NGO Representatives,

It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities. In its recommendations, the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM) encouraged and facilitated the adoption by participating States of specific measures related to national minorities and the standards the HCNM has promoted have been interpreted specifically to ensure the coherence of their application in open and democratic States.

Noting that OSCE commitments are not legally binding, but rather political commitments, the OSCE has created a sort of mini treaty of political standards on national minorities for the OSCE area. The implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States and the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. All the areas where national minority commitments have been developed require a detailed analysis in the field of participation of national minorities in public life.

In the framework of its work on the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public decision-making processes, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) underlines in a document on 'Electoral law and national minorities' that only few states provide for specific rules on the representation of minorities in the elected bodies.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in policy and decision-making system. Greek Government recognises only a 'Muslim minority' in Greece and denies the ethnic identity of the Minority as 'Turkish'. ABTTF would like to remind although the Treaty of Lausanne does not specifically mention the ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, there is a specific reference to the Turkish ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace in legal and international documents. 'Etabli Documents' which were the documents given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923 mentioned the ethnic origin of Muslim minority in Western Thrace as Turkish.

The Kallikratis Reform re-established local administration with the aim of creation of strong and viable municipalities and reduced the number of municipalities and communities in Greece. In the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the number of municipalities decreased which from 35 to 13 in total. The Reform established new municipalities of Komotini, Maroneia, Iasmos and Arriana in Rhodope(4), Xanthi, Myki, Dimokritos and Topeiros in the city of Xanthi(4) and Alexandroupolis, Soufli, Didymoteicho, Orestiada, Samothrace in Evros(5). This brought the question of adequate and fair participation and representation of the minority people at local and regional level.

The associations which bear the word 'Turkish' in their titles were dissolved in the early 1980's on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece and that this constituted a threat to public order in the country. There are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the word 'Turkish' in their title. Therefore, it is not possible for minority associations in decision-making processes at the local, regional level and national level.

Since inadequate representation of minority groups in decision making system ensues impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, full and effective participation in public and political life is of vital importance in expressing and maintaining identities of minorities. Last but definitely not least, OSCE participating States, including Greece should create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalized, open, sincere and continuous dialogue based on mutual respect and tolerance with the representatives of the minorities on issues which interest to them.

A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
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**16-17 April 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Non-discrimination and the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

The OSCE participating States have committed in the 1990 Copenhagen Document that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. The participating States committed in the Copenhagen Document that they will respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection of the identity of such minorities.

The right to freedom of assembly and association of national minorities is a prerequisite of open and democratic societies. Though, restrictions and limitations on the right to freedom of association are still persistent in many OSCE States, especially in Greece. Unfortunately, a favourable environment is not created for the exercise of freedom association by means of laws and practices consistent with OSCE commitments and international standards.

Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. However, Greece does not subscribe to the right to self-identification on a collective basis and the right of association of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is not respected by the Greek State.

Although some other groups are recognised and even welcomed and supported by Greek authorities, there are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the word ‘Turkish’, which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

There are three cases which have been brought before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the dissolution and refusal to register associations established by the persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece:

35151/05 Bekir-Ousta and others, judgment of 11/10/2007, final on 11/01/2008

26698/05 Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and others, judgment of 27/03/2008, final on 29/09/2008

34144/05 Emin and others, judgment of 27/03/08, final on 01/12/2008

These cases concern the dissolution or refusal to register the applicant associations by the competent courts on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece. On March 27, 2008, the ECtHR notified in writing its Chamber judgments in the cases of Emin and Others v. Greece (application no. 34144/05) and Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others v. Greece (no. 26698/05). The Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights in both cases, which concern associations founded by persons belonging to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. In the case of Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others the ECtHR also held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time) of the Convention.

The European Court noted that the contested measure rested only on a simple suspicion concerning the true intentions of the founders of the association and concerning the actions that the association might pursue once it began to operate. The European Court also noted that even if the real aim of the associations was to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece; this could not in itself constitute a threat to a democratic society.

Further to the European Court of Human Rights’ judgments, the applicants requested the cancellation of the decision dissolving them (the case of Xanthi Turkish Union) or submitted a new registration of their associations before the national courts. The applications have been declared inadmissible on the ground that it is not possible to cancel a domestic decision which has become final in the context of non-contentious procedure following a judgment of the ECtHR, and that domestic law does not provide, in civil matters, for the reopening of proceedings following a finding of violation by the ECtHR. The Court of Cassation also dismissed on procedural grounds the applicants’ appeals in cassation in the cases of Bekir-Ousta and others and Emin and others.

In note verbal dated 29 May 2013<sup>30</sup> from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner

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<sup>30</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/142/72/PDF/G1314272.pdf?OpenElement>

for Human Rights in relation to the written statement dated 10 May 2013 and submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (A/HRC/23/NGO/35), Greece noted that full implementation of the judgments is pending, due to procedural reasons. Greece noted that Greek authorities are currently considering the most appropriate means and ways to implement the decisions, including possible legislative adjustments. We regret that although the Greek authorities note that other avenues are being explored including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure in every platform, the authorities have failed to take any precise and concrete step. Given the time that has elapsed since the Court's judgments, we believe that the Greek authorities are, in fact, unwillingness to implement the Court's decisions.

Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers closely follows the developments about the implementation of Court's judgments under the name of Bekir-Ousta group of cases against Greece since 2008. At 1172nd meeting (4-6 June 2013), and the Committee of Ministers had noted with concern that, since the judgment of the Court of Cassation (No. 353/2012), published on 24 February 2012, dismissing the appeal in cassation of the Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis association on procedural grounds, to date no precise and concrete information had been presented to the Committee on the measures taken or envisaged regarding the individual measures in this group of cases, noted with interest the information provided during the meeting according to which other avenues are being explored, including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure<sup>31</sup>

At the execution held on 5 December 2013(1186th meeting), the Committee of Ministers urged the Greek authorities to provide in due time, in order to enable its examination at their meeting of June 2014, concrete and tangible information on the measures that they are currently exploring in order to implement the individual measures, accompanied by an indicative calendar for their adoption<sup>32</sup>. According to the statement issued on 5 January 2015, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) will rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (35151/05), Emin and others (34144/05) and Turkish Association of Xanthis and others (26698/05). This statement means that Greece will be re-judged by the ECtHR on the basis of its non-compliance with the three court rulings in 2007 and 2008.

Decisions of ECtHR are not implemented although seven-year time elapsed, and Greece did not ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. ABTTF urges Greek Government to implement, without any further delay, the decisions of the European Court in the cases Turkish Association of Xanthis and Others v. Greece, Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece & Emin and Others v. Greece; and reaffirm the commitment of the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments of ECtHR and amend the Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the European Court decisions in matters related to freedom of association.

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<sup>31</sup>[http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases\\_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn)

<sup>32</sup>[https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH\(2013\)1186/10&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH(2013)1186/10&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**16-17 April 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Enhancing the participation of associations in public decision-making processes**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And NGO Representatives,

It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities. In its recommendations, the High Commissioner for National Minorities(HCNM) encouraged and facilitated the adoption by participating States of specific measures related to national minorities and the standards the HCNM has promoted have been interpreted specifically to ensure the coherence of their application in open and democratic States.

Noting that OSCE commitments are not legally binding, but rather political commitments, the OSCE has created a sort of mini treaty of political standards on national minorities for the OSCE area. The implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States and the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. All the areas where national minority commitments have been developed require a detailed analysis in the field of participation of national minorities in public life.

In the framework of its work on the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public decision-making processes, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) underlines in a document on 'Electoral

law and national minorities' that only few states provide for specific rules on the representation of minorities in the elected bodies.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in policy and decision-making system. Greek Government recognises only a 'Muslim minority' in Greece and denies the ethnic identity of the Minority as 'Turkish'. ABTTF would like to remind although the Treaty of Lausanne does not specifically mention the ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, there is a specific reference to the Turkish ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace in legal and international documents. 'Etabli Documents' which were the documents given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923 mentioned the ethnic origin of Muslim minority in Western Thrace as Turkish.

The Kallikratis Reform re-established local administration with the aim of creation of strong and viable municipalities and reduced the number of municipalities and communities in Greece. In the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, the number of municipalities decreased which from 35 to 13 in total. The Reform established new municipalities of Komotini, Maroneia, Iasmos and Arriana in Rhodope (4), Xanthi, Myki, Dimokritos and Topeiros in the city of Xanthi (4) and Alexandroupolis, Soufli, Didymoteicho, Orestiada, Samothrace in Evros(5). This brought the question of adequate and fair participation and representation of the minority people at local and regional level.

The associations which bear the word 'Turkish' in their titles were dissolved in the early 1980's on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece and that this constituted a threat to public order in the country. There are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the word 'Turkish' in their title. Therefore, it is not possible for minority associations in decision-making processes at the local, regional level and national level.

Since inadequate representation of minority groups in decision making system ensues impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, full and effective participation in public and political life is of vital importance in expressing and maintaining identities of minorities. Last but definitely not least, OSCE participating States, including Greece should create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalized, open, sincere and continuous dialogue based on mutual respect and tolerance with the representatives of the minorities on issues which interest to them.

A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.



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**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**2-3 July 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Freedom of Religion or Belief and fostering mutual respect and understanding in the OSCE area-opportunities and challenges**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

In the Astana Commemorative Declaration in 2010, the participating States reaffirmed that ‘greater efforts must be made to promote freedom of religion or belief’, but religious minorities still face problems in practising their religion or belief throughout the OSCE region due to the lack of implementation of commitments undertaken by participating States. In Greece, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is officially recognised as ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’, is challenged by prohibitions to its right to elect its own religious leaders (muftis).

The religious freedom of the Turkish Muslim minority of Western Thrace is protected by the 1913 Athens Treaty. The muftis were to be elected by Muslims who were entitled to vote, but this provision along with the provision for the establishment of the position of Chief Mufti has never been implemented. Two of three muftis, one in Komotini(Gümülcine), and one in Xanthi(İskeçe) have been appointed by a special decree issued by the King, while mufti in Alexandroupolis(Dedeagaç) has never been appointed. After problems with regard to the appointment of mufti with the Greek Government in 1985, Greece repealed the relevant law and decided to appoint the muftis on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In reaction to that, the Turkish Minority elected its own muftis, however public authorities did not recognise them. Today, Greece doesn’t still recognise the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders. Greek authorities stated that they are examining possible ways of introducing new elements that would allow an even more representative and

transparent process for the selection of the Muftis. Any efforts to improve this framework by Greek authorities should be in accordance with the rights and freedoms granted to the Minority by international treaties.

A further problem is that Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013) which envisages of appointment of 240 'Quran teachers' who will offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself. Law 4115/2013 start implemented in August 2013 and 63 religious' officers, among whom only 3 are university graduates, started to teach Islam and Quran in Greek in public schools of secondary education in Western Thrace in January 2014 despite strong opposition by members of Turkish minority.

Reminding the 1989 Vienna Ministerial Council Decision, we call upon the Government of Greece:

- not to diminish by no means autonomous establishment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace;
- to recognise the right of the Turkish Minority to elect its own religious and repeal Law 4115/2013,
- to establish a dialogue mechanism based on mutual tolerance and understanding with the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace,

We request the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion or Belief to have a greater role on further implementation of the OSCE commitments in all participating States.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**2-3 July 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief and fostering mutual respect and under- standing through dialogue and cooperation among and between authorities, religious and belief communities and civil society**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

The national instruments have significant role in promoting and protecting freedom of religion and fostering mutual respect and understanding between the authorities and the religious minorities and communities. There is a major gap between international human rights instruments and the level of protection and promotion of freedom of religion at the national level. The implementation of international human rights standards at the national level rather depends on the willingness of governments at a large level and the ability of individuals and minority groups to promote and protect their rights in order to live their governments up their commitments and obligations.

The Copenhagen Document includes specific rights of national minorities established an entire catalogue of minority rights and commitments for participating States. The results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. Greece only recognises a 'Muslim minority in Thrace' and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims further create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in Greece. Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks noted in his country visit report on Greece that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin.

Golden Dawn Deputy Ilias Panagiotaros, who was arrested under the police investigation for the murder of hip-hop singer Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, submitted question in the Greek Parliament and asked the cancellation of FUEN Congress 2015, which was hosted by three minority organizations, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe(ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association(WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party(FEP Party) in hometown region of the Turkish Minority, Western Thrace in Greece on 13-17 May 2015.

The main theme discussed in the Congress was the current status in educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Although Greek national and local authorities were invited to the Congress 2015, no representatives from the majority participated or even sent a reply to the invitation of FUEN. Before the Congress, an arson attack against a mosque in Yenice District in Komotini, and an attack against a masjid in Alankuyu District in Komotini took place on the same day in April 2015.

The Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers(HRWF) Int'l Willy Fautré, who made fact- finding mission to the region in 2012 and wrote a report on the Turkish minority, said during the FUEN Congress that 'It is essential to assure mutual trust and respect in order to obtain a long- lasting solution between Greek state and the minority'.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and the Minority should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for the Turkish minority to raise its own voice.



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**OSCE**  
**2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**21 September- 2 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 14: Tolerance and non-discrimination II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abttf.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abttf.org), [info@abttf.org](mailto:info@abttf.org)

Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Although some other groups are recognised and even welcomed and supported by Greek authorities, there are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the word ‘Turkish’, which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

ECRI Report on Greece (fifth monitoring cycle) notes discrimination against Turkish Minority in Western Thrace in fields of education and citizenship in particular and examines the extent to which ECRI’s main recommendations from fourth monitoring cycle report in 2009 have been followed and includes recommendations to Greek Government<sup>33</sup>. ECRI notes in its report that the influence of the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in issues concerning the Minority creates a perception that members of the Minority are not equal citizens and that they are still perceived as ‘others’ in their home country where they live for centuries. Although the Greek authorities claim that the offices of the Ministry exercise over issues concerning the status of the minority, it is perceived that Greece feels threatened by the existence of the Minority in the border region Greece and Turkey. In the EP elections, 90% voters from the Turkish minority in Western Thrace have voted for the Friendship, Equality

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<sup>33</sup> [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece_CBC_en.asp)

and Peace (DEB) party, led by Mustafa Ali Çavuş and the FEP Party has been the first party in Rhodope and Xanthi, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives in. The FEP Party's success in the EP elections delivered a shock in the Greek media. Here are striking headlines: 'Greece has lost Western Thrace in the elections. The 'ostensible victory' of the politicians suffered national defeat... Thrace has been abandoned for a handful of votes'.([http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_50.html?m=1](http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post_50.html?m=1)) 'Athens is dead on its feet: The Turkish lovers are celebrating the success of the Turkish party. No one is dealing with our national issues... They are busy with the increase of Golden Dawn'.([http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_4746.html](http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post_4746.html)) 'Thrace wants new Kosovo: Grey Wolfes(FEP Party) runs for the EP elections and Athens is sleeping'.([http://ellas.me/aenaos\\_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219](http://ellas.me/aenaos_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219))

These headlines show intolerance against members of the Minority and the political party representing its interests. Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks noted in his country visit report on Greece that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin<sup>34</sup>. In the past few years, the far-right extremist Golden Dawn party supporters made demonstrations in the villages where the Minority lives and chanted slogans against the Minority and Turkey. Golden Dawn Deputy Ilias Panagiotaros, who was arrested under the police investigation for the murder of hip-hop singer Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, submitted question in the Greek Parliament and asked Ministers of Justice, Interior and Foreign for the cancellation of FUEN Congress 2015, which was hosted by three minority organizations, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe(ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association(WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party(FEP Party) in hometown region of the Turkish Minority, Western Thrace in Greece on 13-17 May 2015<sup>35</sup>.The main theme discussed in the Congress was the current status in educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Although Greek national and local authorities were invited to the Congress 2015, no representatives from the majority participated or even sent a reply to the invitation of FUEN. Before the Congress, an arson attack against a mosque in Yenice District in Komotini, and an attack against a masjid in Alankuyu District in Komotini took place on the same day in April 2015. Mahmutağa mosque in the Komotini's district Yenice was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning face on Friday, April 17, 2015<sup>36</sup>. The Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers(HRWF) Int'l Willy Fautré, who made fact-finding mission to the region in 2012 and wrote a report on the Turkish minority, said during the FUEN Congress that 'It is essential to assure mutual trust and respect in order to obtain a long-lasting solution between Greek state and the minority'.

A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and the Minority should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for the Turkish minority to raise its own voice. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees that would reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests. Such a dialogue mechanism will help much to end discrimination and intolerance against the Minority and build mutual trust and tolerance between the parts.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2053611>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/10245-qaltin-afakq-fuen-kongresnn-ptaln-sted.html>

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya\\_bati-trakyada-cami-kundaklandi\\_2289643.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_bati-trakyada-cami-kundaklandi_2289643.html)



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**21 September- 2 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 15: Fundamental freedoms II (continued), including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace. The legal status of the Muslim minority is based on the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been in practice until the Greek military junta regime in 1967. The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority.

Due to the lack of implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief under-taken by Greek authorities, the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders is not recognised. After problems in 1985, the minority elected its own muftis in 1990. However, public authorities did not recognise the muftis who were elected by members of the Muslim community, the muftis (elected) were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. Mr. Mehmet Emin Aga, the elected Mufti in Xanthi in that period was adjudicated in several times and sent to prison. In January 1995, Mr. Aga was sentenced by the Court of Appeal in Larisa up to ten months of a charge on the ground of ‘usurping the title of Mufti’, and then sent to the Larisa Prison. Through the subsequent trials on similar charges, Mr. Aga was sentenced to an eight- year of imprisonment. In 1996 Mr. İbrahim Şerif, the elected Mufti in Komotini, stood up in a trial in Thessaloniki ‘for false pretence of authority’, and was sentenced to a six- month imprisonment, though he was released after appeal. In August 2015, İbrahim Şerif has received a subpoena to give a deposition to the attorney general and has given his deposition.

Mr. İbrahim Şerif will be adjudicated in a case appealed by a Greek citizen on the ground of usurping the Muftiate<sup>37</sup>.

Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have judicial powers on civic issues. There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish minority in the region. The Greek Governments notes although the elected Muftis are not officially recognised, the state does not obstruct their religious or other activities. We would like to stress that Muftis (elected) do not use any legal judicial authority on civic issues and they are only serving religious services for members of the Minority.

Today, Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders. The Presidential Decree published in Official Gazette on 17 December 2010 extended the terms of office of Cemali Meço, the son of Mufti (appointed) of Komotini Hafuzidris, by 24 December 2010, upon the request of Minister of Education and Religious Affairs. And, lately, on 5 August 2011, the terms of office of Mehmet Emin Şinikoğlu, the Mufti (appointed) of Xanthi was extended for ten year, till August 2021.

The Greek Government insists that there is no a unique method internationally for the selection of the Muftis and claims that the religious leaders of the Minority are being selected, through fully transparent and inclusive procedures, by a pool of esteemed teachers of Islam that are members of the minority with the full involvement of the minority as a whole is the procedure. A parallel is often underlined between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Turkey, and the muftis in Western Thrace. The Patriarch is elected by the Holy Synod after the submission of the list of would-be candidates to the public authorities, the muftis are rather appointed by the State on the ground that the muftis do have legal authority on civic issues.

Greek authorities stated that they are examining possible ways of introducing new elements that would allow an even more representative and transparent process for the selection of the Muftis. Any efforts to improve this framework by Greek authorities should be in accordance with the rights and freedoms granted to the Minority by international treaties. A dialogue mechanism on equal footings should be established by Greek authorities and the best interest of the Minority should be the priority in solution of the Mufti issue.

ABTTF urges the Greek authorities to hold a dialogue with members of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in order to find a long lasting and satisfactory solution to the problem of mufti in a way that would not diminish by no means autonomous establishment of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in accordance with the Athens Treaty of 1913 and Its Third Protocol.

Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013), which replaced the Articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007, envisages of appointment of 240 'Quran teachers' who will offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself.

Law 4115/2013 start implemented in August 2013 and 63 religious officers, among whom only 3 are university graduates, started to teach Islam and Quran in Greek in public schools of secondary education in Western Thrace in January 2014 despite strong opposition by

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<sup>37</sup> 1 <http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/10612-2015-08-27-12-20-00.html>

members of Turkish minority. The new legislation would allow the Greek government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of Muslim preachers i.e. Imams to mosques under the realm authority of the official Muftis in Xanthi, Komotini and Didymoteicho in Greece.

We regret that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has no right to take a part in decision-making processes in issues which directly affect its daily life. Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) also expressed its regret and stated that the strong opposition expressed by the Turkish deputies in the Greek parliament has been disregarded and thus Turkish minority has been prevented to have a say in decisions which would directly affect its daily life<sup>38</sup>. European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) expressed its deep concern about the situation in Western Thrace and noted that the legislative regulation violates the religious autonomy of the Minority by abrogating the right to choose their own clergymen to teach Quran<sup>39</sup>.

We would like to stress that the State should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding is-sues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. The ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are appoint-ed/elected/selected by the Church itself, and the State is not allowed to involve in/intervene to any matter internal or doctrinal to the Church.

Reminding the 1989 Vienna Ministerial Council Decision stipulating that freedom of religion or belief includes respect by participating States the right of religious communities, among other things, to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respected requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangements between them and their State,

We call upon the Government of Greece:

- not to diminish by no means autonomous establishment of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in accordance with Athens Treaty of 1913 and Its Third Protocol,
- to recognise the right of the Turkish Minority to elect its own religious leaders and repeal Law 4115/2013,
- to fully guarantee and realise that the members of the Turkish Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Greek nationals in the management and control of their religious institutions and that they could exercise their religion freely therein.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.abttf.org/html/index.php?link=detay&id=4708&grup=4&l=en&arsiv=0>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.emisco.com/2013/01/22/press-release-situation-in-western-thrace/>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**21 September-2 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 17: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued)**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States have committed in the 1990 Copenhagen Document that they will respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection of the identity of such minorities.

Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Greece only recognises a 'Muslim minority in Thrace' and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

The autonomy in education and religious affairs was in practice until the Greek military junta regime in 1967. After seven years of military rule and the return to democracy in 1974, the autonomy in education and religious affairs was not restored. The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority.

During a fact-finding mission in 2012 with the participation of Hans Heinrich Hansen, President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), former MEP François Alfonsi (France) and Willy Fautre, Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l, the delegation found that the problems in the field of education are alarming. The rapporteur Willy Fautre noted that state intervention on minority issues to such an extent that in practice, the Greek

Government, through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, has wide-ranging control over the minority schools at all levels, whether it concerns the composition and the functioning of the school boards, the hiring and firing of teachers, the distribution of textbooks or the building and repair of school buildings<sup>40</sup>.

The children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece have been discriminated with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level. Under Law 3518/2006, the compulsory period in education in Greece has been extended from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008 and the pre-school education for all children who are 5 years old has been made compulsory. The regarding law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural characteristics of the children in Greece, therefore all children, who have completed their age of five, are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek.

The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat the children belonging to the Turkish Minority differently, who speak a different mother tongue other than Greek. The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues Gay McDougall commented that bilingual education would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early age and enable greater choice of whether to go to minority or Greek public primary school<sup>41</sup>. Greece does not allow the establishment of bilingual minority kindergartens within minority schooling system. Furthermore, it does not allow minority institution to build and operate private bilingual kindergartens. 211 local representatives of the Turkish minority signed a petition in 2010 for the inclusion of pre-school education into the bilingual education scheme in Western Thrace. Although the petition was submitted to the Greek Ministry of Education, it was not taken into consideration by relevant Greek authorities. Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (CEFOM) had applied to the Greek local authorities for establishment of a private bilingual kindergarten in 2011. The Greek authorities did not respond the establishment of the first private bilingual kindergarten in Western Thrace.

When the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues carried out a fact-finding in 2008, there were 194 minority primary schools in Thrace with courses taught in both Turkish and Greek<sup>42</sup>. In 2011 Greece went for combined schooling for the sake of reducing expenditure and improving the quality of education at present schools. The number minority primary schools decreased to 188 in 2011, 170 in 2014. On 31 August 2015, the Greek Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs has decided to close down eight more primary schools belonging to the Turkish minority of Western Thrace on the grounds that these schools have recorded diminishing pupil numbers. According to the daily *Gündem*, based on the report released by the Directorate of Education of the East Macedonia and Thrace Region and beginning with the academic year of 2015-2016, four minority primary schools (Payamdere-Paterma, Karagözlü-Exochi, Muratlı-Mirana and Çuka-Tsouka) in the Rhodope prefecture, three (Sinikova-Satre, Çaymahalle-Revma and Güney Mahalle-Prosilia) in the Xanthi prefecture plus one (Aksakal-Polia) in the Evros prefecture will be closed down by the Ministry.

The decision of the Ministry of Education has gained a strong reaction from the minority's institutions. EPATH Graduates Teachers Association of Rhodope- Evros sent a letter to the

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<sup>40</sup> For the full report, please visit [https://www.abtff.org/images/22\\_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks\\_.pdf](https://www.abtff.org/images/22_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks_.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>42</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

Ministry of Education and requested for the removal of the decision. The association underlined that the closure of minority schools resulted an important decrease in the number of minority schools and the teaching staff in minority schools but no improvement in quality of education<sup>43</sup>. The Directorate revised its decision and cancelled the decision of closure of minority schools in Payamdere and Çaymahalle<sup>44</sup>. The number of minority secondary schools is not sufficient. Willy Fautre, Willy Fautre, who wrote a report following the fact-finding mission the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party organised on 16- 20 October 2012 with the participation of President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Hans Heinrich Hansen and former MEP François Alfonsi (France) noted in his report that While 52% of the population of the Rhodope Prefecture and 45% of the Xanthi Prefecture are Turkish speaking, there is only one minority school in each prefecture against 24 and 37 public (secondary and vocational) Greek-language schools respectively. In the Evros Prefecture, there are more than 45 Greek-speaking secondary schools but no minority secondary school for the Turkish-speaking families who represent 10% of the population.

Two private minority secondary schools operate in Xanthi and Komotini while two Quranic schools operate in Komotini and Echinós. All the teachers are paid by the school board. Muzaffer Salihođlu High School in Xanthi and Celal Bayar High School in Komotini are privately owned, although they are regulated by the Greek state. Although these minority secondary schools should be administered and run as any other private secondary schools in Greece, the Greek state determines how many students can attend that school and how they will be enrolled. Other problems at the secondary school level include the shortage of adequate textbooks. The 1968 Cultural Protocol provides for the production and use of textbooks in minority schools for both the Turkish minority of Western Thrace and the Greek minority in İstanbul. However, there are long delays in distribution of the textbooks to the minority schools in Western Thrace. The textbooks sent from Turkey have last been distributed not at the beginning of the school year, but in spring.

The shortage in the number of classrooms in the two minority secondary schools is an urgent problem which has resulted in many minority children enrolling in Greek-language state schools. The number of students in these two minority schools will increase in the next school year of 2015-2016, but there are not enough classrooms for their students. The number of students at Celal Bayar High School in Komotini rise from 780 to 860 and from 550 to 640 at Muzaffer Salihođlu High School in Xanthi with new enrolments. There is an urgent need for new classrooms or a new building at the high school in Xanthi.

The Director of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Panagiotis Keramaris declared on 25 August 2015 that double-shift schooling will be done at Muzaffer Salihođlu High School in Xanthi in order to accommodate growing student numbers. The demand for a new building or a new classroom for the minority secondary-high school in Xanthi has not returned a positive answer<sup>45</sup>. Keramaris noted that the registrations at the minority secondary schools both in Komotini and Xanthi are very high and added that two modular classrooms will be placed at the garden of Celal Bayar High School in Komotini. The Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority applied to the Greek authorities for opening new minority secondary schools in some localities with high minority populations, e.g. Fillira, Sappes, Ariana and Organi. Although the municipality of Fillira

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/715>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/743>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/644>

allocated a plot of land for the construction of a secondary school, their demands were not accepted. On 20 December 2011, an application submitted to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs for opening a minority secondary school in Rhodope Prefecture, but no reply received.

The drawing-lots system for early registration procedure in minority secondary and high schools has very highly been criticised by members of the Turkish minority. The Directorate of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace declared in June that the registration to the minority secondary and high schools will be in accordance with the drawing-lots system. This system for registration had been applied first applied in 1994 to 1999 and continued till 1999. In August 2015, the Director Keramaris declared that they called in drawing-lots system for early registration procedure and decided to manage all applications for enrolment.

The problems in minority schooling system due to various practices of the Greek government in disadvantage of the autonomous structure in minority education resulted in many children stopping their education at the end of primary school, enrolling in Greek-language state school.

The Director of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Panagiotis Keramaris declared that the new Department of Minority Programme Teacher School which will be included in Department of Pedagogy in Democritus University of Thrace will start to operate in the academic year 2015-2016. The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School has been established under Law 4310/2014 which introduced reforms and changes in administrative organizations that were described as a heavy blow to the autonomous structure of the minority schooling system.

On 27 November 2014, the new Law for ‘Research, Technological Development and Innovation and other Provisions’ was approved by the Greek Parliament. Law 4310/2014 introduces reforms and changes in administrative organisations, in issues related to teaching staff at minority schools, issues related to the functioning and scientific-pedagogical support of the minority schools, establishment of a teacher’s school under Democritus University of Thrace and appointment and hiring of educators to primary minority schools. Law 4310/2014 was prepared with no prior consultation and/or dialogue with the Turkish minority.

However, in its replies to the list of issues which is submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Fifty-sixth session on 21 September - 9 October 2015, Greece claimed that Law 4310/2014 has been adopted after prior consultation with the Minority Teachers' Associations<sup>46</sup>. But, EPATH Graduates Teachers Association of Xanthi declared on 26 August 2015 that the new law has not been consulted to them<sup>47</sup>.

The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School will give a graduate diploma to members of the Minority who have a four-year undergraduate education and the right to education in this department will only belong to members of the Minority who are graduated from domestic elementary pedagogic departments in Greece. ABTTF would like to stress that the right to education in that department should not be limited to only those who are graduated from pedagogic departments in Greece. Members of the minority who are

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<sup>46</sup>[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=9&DocTypeID=8](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=9&DocTypeID=8)

<sup>47</sup><http://www.rodopruzgari.com/item/5012-iske%C3%A7e-ili-s%C3%B6pa-mezunu-%C3%B6%C4%9Fretmenler-derne%C4%9Fi-nden-a%C3%A7%C4%B1klama.html>

graduated from other universities in Europe and other countries and received diploma equivalence in Greece should have the right to enter that department. Furthermore, one-year education after graduation of four-year undergraduate education will not be enough for a high-quality education in Turkish curriculum at minority schools. ABTTF recommends the establishment of a department of Turkish Literature and Language in Democritus University of Thrace for educators who will teach in Turkish curriculum at minority schools.

The law notes that under 694/1977 only members of the Minority are allowed to serve in minority programme in Turkish curriculum at primary minority schools. Through Law 4310/2014 that member of the Minority is not allowed to teach in Greek curriculum at minority schools. Members of the Minority who are graduated from Greek faculties of education and teach in the Greek curriculum at minority schools reacted against that on the ground that this is a violation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Greek constitution. Furthermore, ABTTF would like to stress that there is no ‘Turkish’ word in the text of the law while mentioning the curriculum in minority schools, which is Turkish. The word ‘minority programme’ is used to define Turkish curriculum, while the word ‘Greek programme’ is used for Greek curriculum in minority schools. We would like to remind that Greece does not subscribe to the right of Turkish minority to self-identification as ‘Turkish’ on a collective basis and the right of assembly or association for minority associations which include the word ‘Turkish’.

In its replies to the list of issues which is submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Fifty-sixth session on 21 September - 9 October 2015, Greece noted that Law 4310/2014. The law only applies to members of the Muslim minority who wish to become teachers of the minority programme in minority schools in Thrace. The law ensures that the teaching positions of the minority programme of minority schools in Thrace will be occupied exclusively by members of the Muslim minority.

However, in its parallel report on Greece’s compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 16 January 2015, Greek Helsinki Monitor criticised the ban on teachers from the Turkish minority, even if they have the formal qualifications, to teach in the Greek language program of the minority schools. Additionally, Greek Helsinki Monitor noted that the new Minority Program Teachers’ Academy in the University of Thrace which all aspiring minority language teachers, after having graduated from any regular Teachers’ Academy, must attend before they are qualified to teach Turkish language classes in minority schools. This means that whereas all teachers in Greece become qualified after graduating from a four-year Academy, Turkish-language minority teachers will have to study five or more years to become qualified, while at the same time they are disqualified to teach the Greek-language classes in the minority schools after graduating from the four year Teachers’ Academy. Greek Helsinki Monitor stressed that with these legal provisions, minority educators are doubly discriminated against<sup>48</sup>.

In April 2015, the Xanthi Minority Schools Teachers’ Association, sent a public letter to the Minister of Education asking him inter alia to ‘abolish the Minority Program Teachers’ Academy in the University of Thrace. On 25 July 2015, the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates’ Association (WTMUGA) issued a bulletin supported by the Associations of Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki Graduates Teachers of Rodopi, Evros and Xanthi and opposes the discriminatory character of the training of teachers for the

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<sup>48</sup>[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fICO%2fGRC%2f19296&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fICO%2fGRC%2f19296&Lang=en)

Turkish-language program for 5,5 years where all other teachers in Greece are trained for four years<sup>49</sup>.

The problems mentioned above makes education counteracted in Western Thrace and prevent minority schooling system to provide a qualified education to the children belonging to the Turkish Minority. Various challenges in minority education result in fewer graduates and an unsatisfactory level of education. The new law which was prepared with no dialogue with members and representatives of the Minority will not be enough to solve current problems in minority education.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and the Minority should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for the Turkish minority to raise its own voice.

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<sup>49</sup> <http://btaytd.com/en/default.asp?P=Read&ID=84>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**29-30 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
**Session 1: 25 years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Document**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abttf.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abttf.org); [info@abttf.org](mailto:info@abttf.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

The Copenhagen Document established an entire catalogue of minority rights and commitments for participating States to protect the rights of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities living on their territories. After 25 years the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging.

There is a major gap between international human rights instruments and the level of protection and promotion of human rights at the national level. The implementation of international human rights standards at the national level rather depends on the willingness of governments at a large level and the ability of individuals and groups to promote and protect human rights in order to live their governments up their commitments and obligations. Therefore, the OSCE commitments which are not legally binding did not succeed to close the gap between the rhetoric and the implementation regarding human rights commitments.

An example to the gap between the rhetoric and the implementation is Greece, which does not subscribe to the right of any group to self-identification on a collective basis. On 18 February 2009, the report of the former Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, following her mission to Greece on 8-16 September 2008, stated that ‘the absence of formal recognition by the state of a particular societal group as constituting ‘a minority’ is not conclusive’, and continued that ‘Rather, the existence of a group to which a state owes minority protections is a matter of objective facts and exercise of the right of self-identification by persons belonging to the group’.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace of which legal status and the rights are determined by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty is officially recognised as the 'Muslim minority' based on its religious affiliation, not ethnic background. Although the Treaty grants the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein, there are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the word 'Turkish', which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members.

The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word 'Turkish' referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

There are three cases which have been brought before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the dissolution and refusal to register associations established by the persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece:

35151/05 Bekir-Ousta and others, judgment of 11/10/2007, final on 11/01/2008

26698/05 Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and others, judgment of 27/03/2008, final on 29/09/2008

34144/05 Emin and others, judgment of 27/03/08, final on 01/12/2008

These cases concern the dissolution or refusal to register the applicant associations by the competent courts on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece. On March 27, 2008, the ECtHR notified in writing its Chamber judgments in the cases of Emin and Others v. Greece (application no. 34144/05) and Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others v. Greece (no. 26698/05). The Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights in both cases, which concern associations founded by persons belonging to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. In the case of Tourkiki Enosis Xanthis and Others the ECtHR also held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time) of the Convention.

The European Court noted that the contested measure rested only on a simple suspicion concerning the true intentions of the founders of the association and concerning the actions that the association might pursue once it began to operate. The European Court also noted that even if the real aim of the associations was to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece; this could not in itself constitute a threat to a democratic society.

Further to the European Court of Human Rights' judgments, the applicants requested the cancellation of the decision dissolving them (the case of Xanthi Turkish Union) or submitted a new registration of their associations before the national courts. The applications have been declared in- admissible on the ground that it is not possible to cancel a domestic decision which has become final in the context of non-contentious procedure following a judgment of the ECtHR, and that domestic law does not provide, in civil matters, for the reopening of proceedings following a finding of violation by the ECtHR. The Court of Cassation also

dismissed on procedural grounds the applicants' appeals in cassation in the cases of Bekir-Ousta and others and Emin and others.

In note verbal dated 29 May 2013<sup>50</sup> from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in relation to the written statement dated 10 May 2013 and submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (A/HRC/23/NGO/35), Greece noted that full implementation of the judgments is pending, due to procedural reasons. Greece noted that Greek authorities are currently considering the most appropriate means and ways to implement the decisions, including possible legislative adjustments. We regret that although the Greek authorities note that other avenues are being explored including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure in every platform, the authorities have failed to take any precise and concrete step. Given the time that has elapsed since the Court's judgments, we believe that the Greek authorities are, in fact, unwillingness to implement the Court's decisions.

Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers closely follows the developments about the implementation of Court's judgments under the name of Bekir-Ousta group of cases against Greece since 2008. At 1172nd meeting (4-6 June 2013), and the Committee of Ministers had noted with concern that, since the judgment of the Court of Cassation (No. 353/2012), published on 24 February 2012, dismissing the appeal in cassation of the Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis association on procedural grounds, to date no precise and concrete information had been presented to the Committee on the measures taken or envisaged regarding the individual measures in this group of cases, noted with interest the information provided during the meeting according to which other avenues are being explored, including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure<sup>51</sup>.

At the execution held on 5 December 2013(1186th meeting), the Committee of Ministers urged the Greek authorities to provide in due time, in order to enable its examination at their meeting of June 2014, concrete and tangible information on the measures that they are currently exploring in order to implement the individual measures, accompanied by an indicative calendar for their adoption<sup>52</sup>. On 5 June 2014, the Committee of Ministers adopted an interim resolution and called upon the Greek authorities to take all necessary measures so that the applicants benefit from proceedings in compliance with the Convention requirements, in the light of the Court's case-law.

According to the statement issued on 5 January 2015, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decided to rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (35151/05), Emin and others (34144/05) and Turkish Association of Xanthi and others (26698/05) on the basis of its non-compliance with the three court rulings in 2007 and 2008. The Court reheard the three cases in July 2015; the decision of the Court is being awaited.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in its Autumn Session 2015 adopted a resolution deploring the persistent slowness in the implementation of decisions from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and called for more firm measures. In its

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<sup>50</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/142/72/PDF/G1314272.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases\\_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/execution/Reports/pendingCases_en.asp?CaseTitleOrNumber=35151/05&StateCode=GRC&HideClones=1&SectionCode=ENHANCED%20SUPERVISION&OrderBy=FinalOn)

<sup>52</sup> [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH\(2013\)1186/10&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH(2013)1186/10&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)

eighth report on the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights written by Klaas de Vries, Greece is one of the nine member states with the highest number of unenforced Court judgments with 558 cases which have not been implemented by the Greek authorities by the end of 2014.

ABTTF urges the Greek Government to implement, without any further delay, the decisions of the European Court in the cases *Turkish Association of Xanthi and Others v. Greece*, *Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece & Emin and Others v. Greece*; and reaffirm the commitment of the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments of ECtHR and amend the Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the European Court decisions in matters related to freedom of association.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**29-30 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session 2: Integration of diverse societies and the Ljubljana Guidelines**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies refers key policy areas in order to combat discrimination in all relevant spheres of life for an effective equality with no barriers to the enjoyment of equal opportunities regardless of any backgrounds.

**Self-identification**

It is noted in the guidelines that minority rights include the right of individual members of minority communities to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such. Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace. On 18 February 2009, the report of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, following her mission to Greece on 8-16 September 2008, stated that ‘The absence of formal recognition by the state of a particular societal group as constituting ‘a minority’ is not conclusive’, and continued that ‘Rather, the existence of a group to which a state owes minority protections is a matter of objective facts and exercise of the right of self-identification by persons belonging to the group’. The former independent expert urged Greece to protect the right to self-identification and the freedoms of expression and association of minority communities<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> 1 A/HRC/10/11/Add.3, p. 2, and paras. 83, 88 and 90.

## **Citizenship**

The Guidelines state that an inclusive and non-discriminatory citizenship policy is an important aspect of integration policy. The right of everyone to a citizenship from the moment of birth is part of international human rights. However, approximately 60,000 members of the Turkish minority were deprived of their citizenship under former Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code between 1955 and 1998. Those who remain stateless within Greece (about 200 today), and those who adopted the nationality of another country after losing their Greek citizenship and having left Greece (in this case mostly the Turkish nationality) have no right under Greek law to recover their Greek citizenship. The stateless individuals have difficulty receiving social services like health care and education, and although they worked many years in Greece and paid to the social system till deprivation of their citizenship, they have no right receiving pension.

Greece has not taken measures that would lead to the reparation of the serious consequences that arose from the deprivation of citizenship on the basis of Article 19. Persons who were deprived of their citizenship and have remained in Greece and wish to recover their Greek nationality have had to go through the normal naturalization process applicable to aliens, which is ‘long, expensive and uncertain as regards the outcome, and humiliating for persons who have wrongly lost their citizenship’, as former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg described. We note with very concern that there is very slow progress on the above-mentioned problem and recall ECRI’s recommendation in its fourth report that the Greek authorities should take steps to ensure the immediate rectification of the unfortunate consequences arising from deprivation of Greek citizenship on the basis of former Article 19 of the Citizenship Code for all persons concerned, whether resident in Greece or abroad, whether stateless or holding another nationality.

## **Freedom of religion**

The Guidelines note that States should also ensure minorities’ religious rights, notably their freedom of religion. It is noted that integration of society requires that persons belonging to minorities are effectively granted the right to preserve and develop their own cultural heritage and identity, as well as the right to take part and interact in the cultural life of the wider society. It is essential that the fundamental right of persons belonging to minorities to decide their own cultural issues does not result in their isolation.

Greece doesn’t recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have judicial powers on civic issues. After problems in 1985, the minority elected its own muftis in 1990. However, public authorities did not recognise the muftis who were elected by members of the Muslim community, the muftis (elected) were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish minority in the region. The Greek Governments notes although the elected Muftis are not officially recognised, the state does not obstruct their religious or other activities.

The Greek Government insists that there is no a unique method internationally for the selection of the Muftis and claims that the religious leaders of the Minority are being selected, through fully transparent and inclusive procedures, by a pool of esteemed teachers of Islam that are members of the minority with the full involvement of the minority as a whole is the

procedure. A parallel is often underlined between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Turkey, and the muftis in Western Thrace. The Patriarch is elected by the Holy Synod after the submission of the list of would-be candidates to the public authorities, the muftis are rather appointed by the State on the ground that the muftis do have legal authority on civic issues.

Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013), which replaced the Articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007, envisages appointment of 240 ‘Quran teachers’ who offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself. It should be reminded there that the mother tongue of the minority children is Turkish, and the minority children in the public schools will learn their own religion Islam in Greek under Law 4115/2013. European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) expressed its deep concern about the situation in Western Thrace and noted that the legislation violated the religious autonomy of the Minority by abrogating the right to choose their own clergymen to teach Quran<sup>54</sup>.

Greece should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. The ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are appointed/elected/selected by the Church itself, and the State is not allowed to involve in/intervene to any matter internal or doctrinal to the Church. Therefore, we request from the Greek authorities to recognise the right of the Turkish Minority to elect its own religious leaders and repeal Law 4115/2013.

## **Education**

The Guidelines underline that States should respect the right of persons belonging to minorities to be taught their language or to receive instruction in this language, as appropriate, especially in are-as inhabited by them traditionally or in substantial numbers.

When the former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, visited Greece on 8-16 September 2008<sup>55</sup>, she stated that a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the Muslim minority. The compulsory period in education was extended from nine to ten years in accordance with Law 3518/2006 and the pre-school education for all children at the age of 5 was made compulsory. Since relevant law does not bring any regulation concerning minority schools belonging to Turkish Minority, it contradicts with the principle of educational autonomy enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek.

The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, had recommended in her country visit report on Greece<sup>56</sup> in 2008 that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration, and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.emisco.com/2013/01/22/press-release-situation-in-western-thrace/>

<sup>55</sup> A/HRC/10/11/Add.3 para. 24, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>56</sup> See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

We urge Government of Greece to establish bilingual minority kindergartens in region in line with the minority schooling system, to give bilingual education in public kindergartens in the region until bilingual minority schools are established, to allow the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be Turkish and Greek.

### **Participation in public affairs**

The minority must enjoy all other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to non-discrimination and equality before the law. Therefore, we urge the Government of Greece to respect its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and take measures in order to re-store the autonomous structure in the field of religion and education. But full protection of those rights is not a substitute for protection of their minority rights. This is why the Minority demands the restitution of their minority rights, not the establishment of new rights.

Greece should create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalized, open, sincere and continuous dialogue with representatives of the Turkish Minority. Therefore, a mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2015 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**29-30 October 2015**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session 3: National minorities in inter-State relations and the Bolzano/Bozen**  
**Recommendations**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr/Mrs. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

The legal status of the Muslim minority is based on the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 signed between Turkey and Greece. The obligations assumed by Greece under Section III of this Treaty which deal with the protection of minorities, include the following basic rights and liberties with a right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

In the Bolzano recommendations it is noted that States may help support education abroad, for example, with regard to textbooks, language training, teacher training, scholarships and school facilities. However, the educational autonomy enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty signed between Turkey and Greece has been diminished by governmental practices over years through more than seventy legislations. State intervention on minority issues to such an extent that in practice, the Greek Government, through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, has wide-ranging control over the minority schools at all levels, whether it concerns the composition and the functioning of the school boards, the hiring and firing of teachers, the distribution of textbooks or the building and repair of school buildings.

- At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten

years, but not includes minority schooling system. The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues Gay McDougall commented that bilingual education would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early age and enable greater choice of whether to go to minority or Greek public primary school<sup>57</sup>. Due to the persistent lack of bilingual kindergartens, a number of families have reluctantly decided to send their children to Greek-language state kindergartens despite the risk of losing their linguistic and cultural identity.

- At the primary level, when the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues carried out a fact-finding in 2008, there were 194 minority primary schools in Thrace with courses taught in both Turkish and Greek<sup>58</sup>. The number minority primary schools decreased to 188 in 2011, 170 in 2014, and 164 in 2015. The closure of minority schools ended with an important decrease in the number of minority schools and the teaching staff in minority schools but no improvement in quality of education.
- The number of minority secondary schools is not sufficient. While 52% of the population of the Rhodope Prefecture and 45% of the Xanthi Prefecture are Turkish speaking, there is only one minority school in each prefecture against 24 and 37 public (secondary and vocational) Greek-language schools respectively. In the Evros Prefecture, there are more than 45 Greek-speaking secondary schools but no minority secondary school for the Turkish-speaking families who represent 10% of the population.
- Two private minority secondary schools operate in Xanthi and Komotini while two Quranic schools operate in Komotini and Echinus. All the teachers are paid by the school board. Although these minority secondary schools should be administered and run as any other private secondary schools in Greece, the Greek state determines how many students can attend that school and how they will be enrolled.
- The shortage in the number of classrooms in the two minority secondary schools is an urgent problem which has resulted in many minority children enrolling in Greek-language state schools. The number of students in these two minority schools has increased in the school year of 2015-2016, but there are not enough classrooms for their students. Double-shift schooling is being applied at the in Xanthi and two modular classrooms have been placed at the garden of the school in Komotini.
- The 1968 Cultural Protocol provides for the production and use of textbooks in minority schools for both the Turkish minority of Western Thrace and the Greek minority in İstanbul. There are long delays in distribution of the textbooks to the minority schools in Western Thrace. However, the textbooks sent from Turkey have last been distributed not at the beginning of the school year, but in spring.
- On 16 September 2015, the right of horizontal transition in graduate programs for the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace which has a special quota of % 0.05 in entrance to the higher education in Greece has been removed by the interim government in Greece headed by the Prime Minister Vassiliki Thanou. Horizontal transitions which have been applied since 1996 since the establishment of a special quota for the minority students, has thus been ended for the Minority students. Most of the minority students prefer to

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<sup>57</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>58</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

have education in universities which are close to their home town due to the huge economic crisis in Greece. This decision may have a significant impact on the minority students in entrance to the higher education.

- On 27 November 2014, the new Law for ‘Research, Technological Development and Innovation and other Provisions’ was approved by the Greek Parliament. Law 4310/2014 introduces reforms and changes in administrative organizations, in issues related to teaching staff at minority schools, issues related to the functioning and scientific-pedagogical support of the minority schools, establishment of a teachers school under Democritus University of Thrace and appointment and hiring of educators to primary minority schools. Law 4310/2014 was prepared with no prior consultation and/or dialogue with the Turkish minority.
- The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School will give a graduate diploma to members of the Minority who have a four-year undergraduate education and the right to education in this department will only belong to members of the Minority who are graduated from domestic elementary pedagogic departments in Greece. The right to education in that department should not be limited to only those who are graduated from pedagogic departments in Greece. Members of the minority who are graduated from other universities in Europe and other countries and received diploma equivalence in Greece should have the right to enter that department. Furthermore, one-year education after graduation of four-year undergraduate education will not be enough for a high-quality education in Turkish curriculum at minority schools.
- Members of the Minority are not allowed to teach in Greek curriculum at minority schools any more. Teaching positions of the minority programme of minority schools in Thrace will be occupied exclusively by members of the Muslim minority. Whereas all teachers in Greece become qualified after graduating from a four-year Academy, Turkish-language minority teachers will have to study five or more years to become qualified, while at the same time they are disqualified to teach the Greek-language classes in the minority schools after graduating from the four year Teachers’ Academy.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. We urge the Government of Greece to revise its policies concerning the minority primary and secondary schools, including their number and their location, the training and hiring of teachers, curriculum and textbooks to be used. As noted in the Bolzano recommendations, we request from the Greek Government to make good use of all available domestic and international instruments including advisory and consultative bodies in order to address problems in minority issues.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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OSCE

**2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**19-30 September 2016**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including address by the**  
**OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,

Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

The Copenhagen Document and other OSCE commitments stipulate that the exercise of the right to access, disseminate and exchange information in mother tongue, without discrimination, is essential for persons belonging to national minorities to express, preserve and develop their identities and to maintain and develop their culture.

**The right to learn mother tongue and preservation and development of minority identity and culture**

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its native language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. The autonomy in education and religious affairs was in practice until the Greek military junta regime in 1967 but was not restored after the return to democracy in 1974. The educational autonomy has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years. The Greek government has wide-ranging control over the minority schools at all levels. This resulted in a low-qualified education in minority schools with structural problems regarding training of teachers, the curriculum and textbooks.

At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten years. The extension of compulsory education period does not include minority schooling system, there are, therefore, no minority/private kindergartens or minority/private nurseries for the minority children to learn their mother

tongue in their early childhood. The requests for the establishment of minority kindergartens or private bilingual kindergartens are dismissed, although the former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, had recommended in her country visit report on Greece<sup>59</sup> in 2008 that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration, and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school. Today, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens and families reluctantly send their children to Greek-language state kindergartens despite the risk of losing their linguistic and cultural identity.

The right to learn mother language is restricted by the closure of two branch offices of a minority NGO in Greece on 23 May 2016 for their activities for the minority children on the ground that the branch offices were unlicensed nurseries.

Since there is no choice for minority children other than home to learn their mother tongue in early childhood, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) supports minority children's learning their mother tongue in a socialised environment with social and cultural activities in branch offices.

The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) is a minority NGO established and legally registered in 1982 with more than 1200 members from different professions and regularly attends OSCE's human dimension meetings.

With a vision to preserve culture and traditions of the Minority and contribute to cultural, social and intellectual progress of the Minority, its mission includes organising cultural and academic events generally in education and culture fields and preparing reports, statements and submitting proposals to the relevant authorities on the problems of its members. With its vision to promote and develop the ideals of friendship, humanitarian values and human rights, democracy and freedom between the nations, in particular between Turkish and Greek nations, the association continues its activities with no legal restrict since 1982, while minority associations which bear the title of 'Turkish' in their names were dissolved in 1986 and no new registration is authorised for minority association with the word 'Turkish' in their names, even with the word 'minority' in some cases.

On 12 April 2016, Social Assistance Unit of the Municipality of Komotini sent a letter to the association and requested information about the activities in its branch offices A and B in the city of Komotini based on the prior letters by the Rhodope Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Macedonia-Thrace Local Government Unit. Following two police raids on 21 April and 10 May, the two branches were closed down by the decision of the Mayor of Komotini on 23 May 2016.

The minority NGO published a press release that it does not operate any kindergartens or nurseries in its branch offices and the branch offices carries out social and cultural activities and work for the children along with other activities in accordance with its statutes. The NGO noted only activities for the minority children in branch offices were taken into consideration and claimed that the NGO is operating unlicensed nurseries, while all other activities in branches were totally ignored. The association underlined that there is no nursery or

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<sup>59</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

kindergarten under its roof, but there are branches in different places with many activities for minority people<sup>60</sup>.

The learning and the use of the mother tongue in early childhood education is very important during transition to school to prepare children for multi-language education in primary school. Research has shown that children's first language is the optimal language for literacy and learning throughout primary school. In spite of growing evidence and parent demand, Greece ignores the need for the establishment of minority kindergartens and private nurseries and insists on the enrolment of minority children to state kindergartens based on the argument that the children do not have any textbooks and do not follow any curriculum<sup>61</sup>.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace. We request from Greek authorities to establish bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace in line with the minority schooling system and allow the Turkish Minority to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be in Turkish and Greek.

### **The dissemination of information in mother tongue and minority media**

As noted in the annotated agenda, the right to access to media and the exercise of the right to access, disseminate and exchange information in mother tongue is also underpinned by the OSCE political commitments related to freedom of expression and free media.

Among issues raised with participating States, we have, on various occasions, expressed our serious concern on freedom of the media and the free flow of information in Greece. The media law in Greece requires television stations to broadcast at least 25 percent of their programming in Greek. The law contains a number of provisions regarding language, employment and finances that hinder potential local and regional media from obtaining licenses for news and music radio stations.

The minority radio stations KRAL FM and Tele Radio FM were penalised on the ground that they did broadcast in the Greek language less than 25 percent of their transmission time in 2011. National Radio and Television Council (ESR) has issued recommendation decisions of warning against Radio City FM, Çınar FM and Joy FM for the same reason in March 2014.

As a recent development, the owner of KRAL FM, Hüseyin Karadayı has been fined 15.000€ and has been sentenced to 17 months imprisonment for illegal transmission. Hüseyin Karadayı explained that KRAL FM has been listed illegal by ESR in 2015 on the ground that it has established a new radio FM station without legal permission in Stavroupoli near mountainous area in Xanthi. Karadayı notes that their radio station has been shut off by the decision of the public prosecutor, although they appealed to the ESR.

On 4 May 2016, Hüseyin Karadayı was detained for 18 hours and fined 7500€ monetary penalty and sentenced to 7 months imprisonment. On 10 May 2016 Hüseyin Karadayı was arrested again and kept under custody with his wife Mümine Hasanoğlu, owner of Radio Dee Jay, for 24 hours upon ungrounded warnings that the KRAL FM continued transmitting. Hüseyin Karadayı and his wife were fined 7500€ monetary penalty and sentenced to 10 months imprisonment by summary court. However, Karadayı notes that KRAL FM has not

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.btaytd.com/v2/view.php?lng=tr&id=158>

<sup>61</sup> <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/93252.5843381882.html>

established a new radio station, but it has set up a mid-range FM in Stavroupoli in order to reach the people in the mountainous region of Xanthi<sup>62</sup>.

ABTTF has noted in several letters that it wrote in previous years to the Representative on Freedom of the Media that the ESR's administrative penalties on the grounds that radio stations do not broadcast in the original Greek language more than 25% of their transmission time, do threaten maintenance of the existence of radio stations owners belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, while it undermines its freedom of expression and media and the free flow of information in the country. The Representative on Freedom of the Media also noted that her Office said on several occasions that the relevant Greek legislation needs to be reformed, as it sets a high threshold for minority, community and low-cost broadcasters because of the language requirement, as well as financial and personnel requirements, which can endanger media pluralism.

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/11620-2016-05-16-17-12-57.html>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**19-30 September 2016**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued)**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Despite efforts of European states to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the EU region, including Greece. In his letter of 25 July 2016 addressed to Mr. Toskas, Alternate Minister of Interior and of Administrative Reconstruction of Greece, and to Mr. Paraskevopoulos, Minister of Justice of Greece, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks noted that during his last visit to the country, he received reports indicating an increase of hate crimes in Greece<sup>63</sup>.

This issue has intensively been discussed during Greece's UPR Second Cycle Review held on 3 May 2016 at the 25th Session of the UPR Working Group, and several Member States made recommendations to Greece on the prevention of hate crimes against vulnerable groups including religious minorities.

The Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace<sup>64</sup>, which is the only recognised minority as 'Muslim minority in Thrace' in Greece had become a target of hate-motivated attacks in the past five years. The United States Mission to the United Nations in Geneva has also raised its

<sup>63</sup><https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2437603&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true>

<sup>64</sup> Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Greece only recognises a 'Muslim minority in Thrace' and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

concern about instances of discrimination against members of the Muslim minority during the second cycle- review of Greece.

The U.S. International Religious Freedom Report for 2015 on Greece mentioned that there were incidents of vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and memorials and attacks on Muslim houses of worship<sup>65</sup>. Throughout the year of 2015 and the start of 2016, many hate crimes motivated by racism were conducted against the people and institutions of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Today there is a risk of tension, and even conflict in the region of Western Thrace based on the provocative events that have taken place in the recent months.

On 7 March 2015, In Dimetoka(Didymoteicho), a town inhabited with a significant proportion of Turkish Minority members, Dimetoka Muslims, Sports, Cultural and Educational Association was attacked by unknown assailants. Nobody was injured, but windows were broken<sup>66</sup>.

On 10 April 2015, Easter is celebrated in Echinós, a minority village in Xanthi's mountainous area, where no Christians live in but keeps a church at the entrance of the village. A group of Greek Orthodox Christians, composed of 55-60 including commando soldiers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Army Corps and retired military officers, carried wooden crosses and candles along the streets of Echinós and celebrated Good Friday in St. Georgios Church<sup>67</sup>.

On 17 April 2015, the Komotini (Gümülcine) Mahmutağa mosque located in the same yard as Yenice Neighbourhood Minority School in Komotini, was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning<sup>68</sup>. At the Alankuyu Masjid, a hundred meters away, trees were cut. Another noteworthy aspect of this attack is that the elected Mufti of Komotini İbrahim Şerif's residence is very close.

On 8 December 2015, the only political party of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, the Friendship Equality and Peace (FEP) Party suffered an attack. The new headquarters of the FEP Party was attacked during the late hours by an organization called 'ΟΙ ΦΡΟΥΡΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΘΡΑΚΗΣ' –'Guardians of Thrace'; the building's windows were broken, and the organization's name was written on the walls with blue paint. Also, a photocopy machine was broken, cupboards and mirrors were smashed<sup>69</sup>. The most painful was the theft of the Party's founder and minority's leader Dr. Sadık Ahmet's car, in which he lost his life in 1995. Following these events, the criminal complaint and investigation started by the police, like in other attacks, brought no solution and no official explanation by authorities regarding the attack.

Another hate crime was reported in Xanthi on 28 January 2016. Fully covered with masks, a group of men kidnapped an imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi and forced him to get on a minibus. According to the imam, they threatened him to say that they would kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi and would attack his children. They also told that they were closely following the movements of the Mufti Office. The perpetrators called themselves 'The Guardians of Thrace' and in the end they released the imam to bring these threatening

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/4592/dimetoka-musulmanlari-dernegine-saldiri.html>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/10165-ahnde-qpaskalya-aynq-.html>

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5026/gumulcinede-camii-kundaklandi.html>

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.debpartisi.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&id=3963>

messages to the Mufti himself. It is important to note that all perpetrators of these attacks remain unknown and unpunished. Therefore, we urge the Government of Greece to find the perpetrators and try them at a court. Also, we stress the importance of taking the necessary steps to prevent similar future hate crimes against the Minority of Western Thrace and other groups in the country.

According to the statement by the Elected Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete, the Mufti has constantly been receiving death threats since he was elected Mufti in 2007. He noted that if anything happens to him or his family, the responsible would be the Greek State, because the elected Muftis are under threat while performing their religious duties<sup>70</sup>. The hatred against representatives and institutions of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has increased in the last few years and the organization that names itself ‘The Guardians of Thrace’ targets the autochthonous Turkish minority in the region. ECRI Report on Greece (fifth monitoring cycle) notes that the influence of the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in issues concerning the Minority creates a perception that members of the Minority are not equal citizens and that they are still perceived as ‘others’ in their home country where they have lived for centuries<sup>71</sup>.

Another hate-motivated incident took place at the EP building in Brussels. On 2 March 2016, our organisation, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) organised a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels in association with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO). The conference, hosted by Csaba Sógor MEP (EPP) and entitled ‘Freedom of Association in Greece: A Loophole in European Minority Rights Standards’, received unexpected attention as two Golden Dawn MEPs (non-attached) came to the meeting room just before the beginning of the conference and verbally attacked and threatened the host MEP Csaba Sógor. They were caught on camera attempting to derail the conversation, immediately denying the existence of any minority other than the ‘Muslim minority’ referred to in the Lausanne Treaty<sup>72</sup>.

A last incident took place in the Greek parliament. On 4 August 2016, during the parliamentary debate regarding the construction of a mosque in Athens, SYRIZA MP from Xanthi Hüseyin Zeybek, a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked by neo-Nazi Golden Dawn MPs Ilias Panagiotaros and Yannis Lagos. During the debate in the parliament, Golden Dawn MPs accused him of recently burning the Greek flag during the funeral of a young minority member who died while performing his military service in the Greek army. Another Golden Dawn MP Yannis Lagos called Hüseyin Zeybek ‘pro-Turk’ and a ‘Turkish agent’ during the debate. The Vice President of Parliament Nikitas Kaklamanis intervened and ordered the Golden Dawn MPs to ‘sit down’ and leave the room<sup>73</sup>.

We note with very concern that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been a target of hate crime attack in recent years and persons, institutions and places of worship belonging to the Turkish minority are being attacked by unknown perpetrators. There is a very high concern that the stability and peace in the region may break down and would escalate the tensions in the society.

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353>

<sup>71</sup> [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece_CBC_en.asp)

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/anthellhniko-aischos-sthn-eurwboulh-to-laiko-komma-nd-sundiorganwnei-ekdhlw>

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=820062>

We request from the Greek Government to take result-oriented measures for eliminating discrimination and hate speech against the Minority and to improve diversity throughout the system by eliminating prejudices 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 the country.

We kindly request OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ms. Astrid Thors and her Office to pay a greater attention to the risk of escalation of tensions in the region of Western Thrace in Greece.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working session 12: Fundamental freedoms I (continued), including freedom of thought, con- science, religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abttf.org](mailto:info@abttf.org), [melek.kirmaci@abttf.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abttf.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

The OSCE participating States in Copenhagen 1990 reaffirmed that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue.

Many individuals, religious or belief communities still face problems in practising their religion or belief throughout the OSCE region due to the lack of implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief undertaken by participating States, in particular by Greece. Although the Greek Constitution ensures the right to freedom of religion or belief, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace- which is recognised by the Greek State as a religious minority, the Muslim minority in Thrace- is challenged by prohibitions to its right to elect its own religious leaders (Muftis) and appoints its religious personnel.

The legal status of the Muslim minority is based on the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 signed between Turkey and Greece. The obligations assumed by Greece under Section III of this Treaty which deal with the protection of minorities, include the following basic rights and liberties with a right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. The Lausanne Treaty reaffirms and acknowledges 1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaties and 1913 Athens Treaty and Its Third Protocol. The Athens Treaty notes, 'Each Mufti will be

elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti’.

The religious autonomy of the minority has been undermined and diminished through several governmental practices and laws without prior consultation with the minority representatives. In 1991, Greece started to appoint the religious leaders (Muftis) of the Turkish minority. After problems in 1985, the minority elected its own muftis in 1990. However, public authorities did not recognise the muftis who were elected by members of the Muslim community, the muftis (elected) were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish minority in the region. In its right to reply in last year’s HDIM meeting, Greece noted that although the elected Muftis are not officially recognised, the state does not obstruct their religious or other activities. Although Greece notes that each country, including Muslim ones, establishes its own process for the selection of Muftis, we would like to remind that the ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are appointed/elected/selected by the Church itself.

Greece has repeated in many international platforms that it is currently considering ways to meet the needs of the Muslim minority in this field through an open consultation process. Any efforts to improve this framework by Greek authorities should be in accordance with the rights and freedoms granted to the Minority by international treaties. A dialogue mechanism on equal footings should be established by Greek authorities and the best interest of the Minority should be the priority in solution of the Mufti issue.

The other important problem in the religious field in recent years is that under a law adopted in 2013, the government appointed Islamic religious instructors to teach Islam to the children belonging to the Turkish minority in Greek-language public primary and secondary schools and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the government-appointed muftis. This law provides for Islamic religious instructors to teach Islam to the Muslim minority in Greek-language public schools in Thrace in lieu of mandatory Greek Orthodox religious courses offered twice a week for two hours.

The Law 4115/2013 was implemented first in the Greek-language public schools in Western Thrace in 2013. 63 Islamic religious instructors, among whom only 3 were university graduates, started in January 2014, despite the strong opposition by the Turkish minority members. 44 Islamic religious instructors and Quran teachers were appointed in the province of Rhodope in 2014 and 60 in 2015.

It should be reminded there that the mother tongue of the minority children is Turkish, and the minority children in the public schools will learn their own religion Islam in Greek under Law 4115/2013, to which minority deputies of the period expressed their strong opposition during the vote in the Parliament. European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) expressed its deep concern about the situation in Western Thrace and noted that the legislation violated the religious autonomy of the Minority by abrogating the right to choose their own clergymen to teach Quran.

As the second part of the implementation of the law, an Islamic religious instructor, i.e. muezzin was appointed in March 2014 to the mosque in the Turkish minority village of Mega

Derio. Many uniformed police officers deployed themselves in the coffee house of the village just half an hour before the Friday Adhan. The instructor walked into the mosque with apparent intention to lead the service. The community in the mosque of course did not allow him. But those police officers asked the people coming out of the mosque if he could lead the prayer or not. This police escort continued several weeks. This is against the well-established traditions since in all the villages in Western Thrace the Muslims employ the imams and the muezzins themselves.

The new legislation would in practice allow the government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of religious officers i.e. Imams to mosques and public schools under the realm authority of the official Muftis (appointed) in Xanthi, Komotini and in Didymoteicho in Greece.

We would like to stress that States should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. We therefore urge Greece to fully comply with the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and prior Athens Treaty of 1913 and Its Third Protocol and allow the Turkish minority in Western Thrace to elect freely its own religious leaders as the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church. We request from the Greek government to repeal the Law 4115/2013 which hinders the minority from managing and controlling its own religious institutions and exercising its religion freely therein.

We would like to the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to ensure that the participating States respect the right of the religious minorities and communities to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards in accordance with Vienna 1989, Questions Relating to Security in Europe.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working Session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including address by the  
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (26.9.2016)**

In reply to statements made by three NGOs, I would like to recall that the Muslim minority in Thrace is defined by its religious identity and is not an ethnic or national minority. In fact, Muslim minority members have different origins (Turkish, Pomak or Romani); hence, the 1923 Lausanne Treaty identifies the minority as a religious one. Greek Muslim citizens residing in Thrace are free to identify themselves as they wish despite their distinct cultural background. However, any attempt to establish a single ethnic identity for the entire religious Muslim minority in Thrace, so as to subsume Pomak and Roma members of the minority under a Turkish identity which is not their own contradicts the letter and the spirit of the OSCE principles and cannot be accepted.

With regard to freedom of association, Greece fully respects the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and currently elaborates on the appropriate measures to implement them. The Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights is already establishing a special structure responsible for the execution of the Court's judgments, which was taken note with interest by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March 2016. I would like to stress that, as also explained last week, tens of minority associations have been established and recognised since 2008, in full conformity with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, including an association in the title of which the word 'Turkish' was used to denote the mother language of its members.

In almost all successive parliamentary elections held in Greece since 1927, candidates that were members of the Muslim minority in Thrace have been elected as Members of Parliament (MPs) - with the governing party, the opposition or, in most cases, on both sides of the Parliament. Currently, there are four MPs that are members of the said minority. Furthermore, the members of the minority do actively participate in all levels of the region's Local Administration. This continues to be the case, following the most recent (May 2014) regional and local elections. Roughly 120 Greek citizens - members of the Muslim minority - were elected at the local and regional Councils in Thrace. The threshold of 3% required for obtaining seats in Parliament is among the lowest in Europe and is fully in conformity with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, which has found that a threshold of 10% does not violate the European Convention. On the right to education, we continue our policy of improving the functioning of the existing 132 primary minority schools, 2 secondary and 2 Quranic/Islamic schools, while successfully accommodating the preference to the public, non-minority educational system shown by the minority members who select it. There are also at least 57 public kindergartens in minority villages, which minority children can attend before entering primary education schools.

Finally, I would like to recall that, as recognised by the European Court of Human Rights, States have the right to control the entry and stay of foreign nationals in their territory. The prohibition to enter a specific country is a national prerogative that every State uses in a discretionary manner. As far as we have been informed, regarding the case referred to in one NGO statement, the measure of prohibition to enter the country's territory was neither related to the concerned person's personal identity (nationality, gender, religion or beliefs, etc.), nor to any other ground covered by the OSCE commitments.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
RIGHT OF REPLY**

**Working Session 11: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued), including prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area and combatting racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds.**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to reiterate the steadfast commitment of the Greek Government to the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In 2014 and 2015, Parliament adopted laws to strengthen our criminal anti-racism legislation, to facilitate its implementation and to introduce more severe penalties for racist crimes. Furthermore, five Special Prosecutors for racist crimes have been appointed in five different cities. Within the Hellenic Police, 2 new Sections and 68 new Offices throughout the country have been established, tasked with the investigation of acts of racist violence.

Regarding the political party "Golden Dawn", I would like to mention that members of that political party, including Members of Parliament, have been brought to trial, which is still ongoing.

Considering the incident mentioned, which took place in Brussels, I would like to stress that the Greek civil society expects from its political leaders and representatives to present no behaviour or rhetoric of intolerance and discrimination. However, no society is immune of phenomena of racism and discrimination. But when representatives of extreme political movements are disrespectful of democratic principles, then they are marginalised within their society.

Finally, regarding the two other incidents of December 2015 and of January 2016, I would like to underline that the Thrace Muslim Minority's relations with the Christian majority in the area are in absolute harmony and there are no crimes that could be designated as hate crimes or discrimination against Muslim by the local community. Two isolated incidents involving Muslim persons and property, are individual cases that do not target the Muslim element as a whole. Yet, there are extended and thorough investigations by the police authorities to identify and punish the perpetrators.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working Session 12: Fundamental freedoms I (continued), including freedom of  
thought, conscience, religion or belief (27.9.2016)**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to stress that a 1991 Greek law stipulates that the three (3) Muftis are being selected, through an open and all-inclusive process, by a pool of notable and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the minority and subsequently being nominated to the Mufti Offices by the state.

These religious leaders have also judicial responsibilities as to family and inheritance cases of domestic law, which are brought before them by those members of the Muslim minority, who avail themselves of their optional right to have Islamic law applied to their cases.

The abovementioned law allows the selection of notable, distinguished teachers of Islam who will perform these responsibilities in the best and most responsible way. It is well known that, internationally, there is not a single method for the selection of the Muftis. Each sovereign country, be it Muslim or non-Muslim, has the right to establish its own process, provided that it is in accordance with the Islamic tradition and religious rights and freedoms.

The so called 'elected Muftis' are not officially recognised: despite attitudes of evident disrespect to the existing legislation and an often-provocative attitude, the State does not obstruct their activities, showing maximum tolerance and restraint. Furthermore, it is self-evident that there can be no analogy with the election of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

By virtue of Law 3647/2008 on the administration and the management of the Muslim Foundations in Thrace, the members of the three main Management Committees are to be elected. This was a longstanding request of the Muslim minority, met by the Greek state. The same Law for the election of the administrative Board is applicable also for the rest of the Waqf Committees. Nevertheless, the regulation is not implemented by the minority members. The reason is unclear, but it presumably is the fact that, according to the Law, a simple certification of the election results by the Mufti has to follow. This provision does not at all restrict the minority's right of free and fair elections for their waqf administrative boards. In case that no elections take place, a provisional board is appointed by the state administration. In addition, there are measures of positive differentiation regarding the Waqf properties in Thrace and despite the challenging financial situation of the country. In particular, the Muslim Foundations are exempted from submitting tax declarations on: income, land property and major land property (Art. 7 of Law 3554/2007). As a result, their accumulated registered debts, fines and mortgages have been written off. Moreover, as of 2008, the Muslim Foundations are exempted from paying the Major Land Property tax for property that is being used for the charitable purposes of the Foundations.

Finally, our legislation has substantially enhanced the status of religious preachers, who are free to choose whether or not to join the applicable legislative scheme and to benefit from it. Likewise, minority pupils can freely decide whether they wish to attend the Quranic classes or not.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2016 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**10-11 November 2016**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Legal mechanisms for bridge building across States**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Persons belonging to national minorities could act as a model for integration as bridge-builders between their resident and kin state. The Schleswig case of the 20th century is a true model of cross-border integration and co-operation in Europe. As true Europeans bilingual and bicultural national minorities in border regions could be the very link between two neighbouring states. The important question is that are minorities perceived as an important factor in cross border integration or are they treated as a barrier to cross-border cooperation because of the fear of hidden agenda?

The Turkish Muslim population living in Greece (with the exception of the Turkish population in Western Thrace) and the Greek Orthodox population living in Turkey (with the exception of those in Istanbul, Gökçeada and Bozcaada) were subject to a population exchange, in line with the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations in 1923. The population in Western Thrace constitutes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace whose status was established by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and whose rights were guaranteed by several bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish minority in Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Based on Article 45 in Section III of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, 'The rights conferred by the provision of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory' in Turkey and Greece, the issue of minorities between Greece and Turkey is generally assessed within the scope of the principle of reciprocity. This is a parallel obligation that Greece and

Turkey have undertaken to reciprocally grant each other's minorities certain rights; not to violate the rights of each other's minorities.

Greece does not confer official status on any indigenous ethnic group nor recognise 'ethnic minority' or 'linguistic minority' as legal terms, it affirms an individual's right of self-identification, not right of collective self-identification by members of an ethnic or linguistic group. Greece defines the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace by its religious identity, namely as the 'Muslim Minority in Thrace', and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in the country on its territory. 'Etabli Documents' which were the documents given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923 mentioned the ethnic origin of Muslim minority in Western Thrace as Turkish.

Under former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (No. 3370), which mentioned, 'A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality', approximately 60,000 individuals were deprived of their citizenship under Article 19 between 1955 and 1998. Greece used Article 19 as a reprisal to the decline of the population of the Greek-Orthodox minority in İstanbul. Those who remain stateless within Greece (about 200 today), and those who adopted the nationality of another country after losing their Greek citizenship and having left Greece (in this case mostly the Turkish nationality) have no right under Greek law to recover their Greek citizenship.

Furthermore, Greece does not recognise any minority rights of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos on the ground that the islands were under the rule of Italy at the time the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed, which determined the status and the rights of the Turkish Muslim minority in Western Thrace in 1923. The rights of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos to learn their native language was abrogated with the closure of the schools providing bilingual education in 1972, as a reaction to the closure of the Halki Seminary in İstanbul. Today there are no Turkish schools on the islands of Rhodes and Kos and the Turkish children do not have the chance to develop their Turkish language skills in state schools.

The minorities were the ones paying the price when the relations of Turkey and Greece were strained. The confrontation of Turkey and Greece over the Aegean Sea and Cyprus in the 1970s continued the implementation of the principle of reciprocity as retaliation by Greece. The suppression and assimilation policies, started against the Western Thrace Turks in 1960s and grew in intensity through 1970s, brought out a mass emigration wave from the region. The policies put in place by Greek authorities with motivations of intimidation of the minority eventually led the de-cline of the population in the region due to migration to other countries.

A new era has begun in the relationship between Turkey and Greece as of 1999, marked with the establishment of a variety of dialogue mechanisms streamlining the relations such as regular political consultations, exploratory contacts on Aegean Issues, confidence-building measures, high-level cooperation council meetings as well as high-level visits and contacts.

Nevertheless, the rapprochement and good relations between Greece and Turkey could not resolve the problems of the minorities. The autonomy in education and religious affairs in Western Thrace was not restored after the return to democracy in Greece since 1974. This autonomy has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the

Turkish Minority. Today, Turkish minority is confronted with prejudices, discrimination, intolerance and social exclusion in its everyday life.

During his visit to Komotini on the occasion of Independence of Komotini on 14 May 2016, Greek President Karolos Papoulias mentioned in his speech at Komotini Chamber of Commerce and Industry that the Minority, of which rights are guaranteed by the Lausanne Treaty has a religious status, it is a Muslim minority, while minorities in Turkey are ethnic, which proves that there is a Greek minority there. The President continued that 'Every person has a right to self-identify, but the situation is different in Western Thrace. Since it is a 'religious minority' according to the Treaty of Lausanne, they cannot legally express themselves with another identity different from the one mentioned in the Treaty"<sup>74</sup>. On 25 May 2016 Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Kotzias stated in his speech during presentation of a book titled 'Thrace: The Next Step' by former minister and former deputy Evripidis Stilyanidis that 'the minority in Thrace is Greek'. Kotzias noted that Greece respects the rights of all special groups and it will not allow the Minority to be an instrument for motherlands and an instrument of foreign policy<sup>75</sup>.

For the first time in the history, the Turkish Minority's political party, Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party, run for the EP elections in 2014, with 38 candidates from Rhodope, Xanthi and Evros. The FEP Party announced they participated in the EP elections to give the necessary message to the mindset which does not take into consideration the demands of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Following the results of the EP elections in Greece, the FEP Party was the first party in Rhodope and Xanthi, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives. The Minority party won 41.68% in Rhodope and 25.89% in Xanthi. The FEP Party became the third party and received 42,533 votes with 12.25% share of the vote in Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Prefecture. Since the FEP party received 46,620 votes and won 0.76% of at the nationwide. In the EP elections, 90% voters from the Turkish minority in Western Thrace have voted for the Friendship, Equality and Peace (DEB) party, led by Mustafa Ali Çavuş and the FEP Party has been the first party in Rhodope and Xanthi, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace lives. The FEP Party's success in the EP elections delivered a shock in the Greek media. Here are striking headlines:

'Greece has lost Western Thrace in the elections. The 'ostensible victory' of the politicians suffered national defeat... Thrace has been abandoned for a handful of votes'.([http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_50.html?m=1](http://www.freepen.gr/2014/05/blog-post_50.html?m=1))

'Athens is dead on its feet: The Turkish lovers are celebrating the success of the Turkish party. No one is dealing with our national issues... They are busy with the increase of Golden Dawn'.([http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post\\_4746.html](http://www.stoxos.gr/2014/05/blog-post_4746.html))

'Thrace wants new Kosovo: Grey Wolves(FEP Party) runs for the EP elections and Athens is sleeping'.([http://ellas.me/aenaos\\_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219](http://ellas.me/aenaos_ellhnismos.php?action=detail&id=1397133219))

Since Greece does not recognise ethnic identity of the Turkish minority, there is no formal relationship and/or dialogue mechanism between minority civil society and governmental bodies. Therefore, there is no participation from the minority or any special programme for minority members in Greece. This inadequate representation of the minority in decision

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/pavlopulos-tan-azinlikkonusunda-aciklama-5162016.html>

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/1745>

making system ensue impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, which also hinders free expression and maintenance of identities of the minority.

A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as youth, housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2016 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**10-11 November 2016**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Promoting the bridge building role of national minority issues across various policy areas**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

As part of Germany's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2016, the High Commissioner on National Minorities has tasked the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) with conducting a study highlighting the abilities of diverse ethnic groups and minorities (including national, linguistic, religious, cultural and similar) as bridge-builders and agents of reconciliation between states. The outcome of the project will be to provide OSCE members with recommendations based on positive examples of these diverse groups and their institutions working productively in collaboration with local municipalities and authorities. In order to gather information for this project, ECMI asked minority organizations, civil society and regional or local municipalities to participate in a nine-question survey, which will help us build a picture of ethnic groups' and minority communities' activity across the OSCE member states. We would like to hear the outcomes of this project which could gather best-practices for national minorities in bridge-building.

The role of education as a tool for integration is being disregarded in Greece, which in turn hinders the development of a cohesive society. In its survey ECMI asked whether ethnic groups and minority communities cooperate with institutions of their kinstate concerning issues of education. They might have student and teacher exchanges, a representative on the school ministry, common discussion of teaching materials, common study programmes at universities, or support for minority schools.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its native language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions.

a) The Treaty of Lausanne which was signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923 determining the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general. Article 41 of the Treaty granted rights to the Muslim Turkish minority in Thrace ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language.

b) The Cultural Protocol signed between Turkey and Greece on 20 April 1951 and the Exchange of Notes in 1952 regarding the issue of exchange teachers who would be assigned in Minority Schools. The 1951 Educational Agreement was abolished and replaced by the Bilateral Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in 2000 (hereinafter ‘the Bilateral Agreement’). The Bilateral Agreement is based on the context of strengthening the political relations between Greece and Turkey on an educational level. The educational cooperation between the two countries is based on an international model of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and UNESCO.

c) The Protocol of the Turkish-Greek Cultural Commission signed in 1968.

Although the right to education of the Minority is guaranteed and protected under the Lausanne Treaty, the autonomy of the Minority in education has systematically been violated by the State. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was called as ‘Turkish’ by Greek authorities back in the 1950’s and the minority schools were legally referred as ‘Turkish schools’. However, the Greek authorities changed their policy in 1970s on political grounds and thus started calling the minority as the ‘Muslim minority’.

The autonomy in education and religious affairs was exercised until the Greek military junta regime in 1967 but was not restored after the return to democracy in 1974. During a fact-finding mission in 2012 with the participation of Hans Heinrich Hansen, President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), former Member of the European Parliament François Alfonsi (France) and Willy Fautre, Director of Human Rights without Frontiers Int’l, the delegation found that the problems in the field of education are alarming<sup>76</sup>.

Considering that in Greece;

1. At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten years, but this does not include the minority schooling system.
2. At the primary level, when the former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues Ms. Gay McDougall carried out a fact-finding in 2008, there were 194 minority primary schools in Thrace with courses taught in both Turkish and Greek. The Greek authorities merged the minority primary schools in the region without taking into consideration the autonomous status of minority education. In accordance with the decision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion in 2010 that schools which do not have sufficient number of students will be closed down for economic reasons, the total number of minority primary schools closed down by Greek authorities reached to 60. Although the Turkish Minority should be autonomous in the field of education under the Lausanne Treaty, the Ministry’s decision included the

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<sup>76</sup> [https://www.abttf.org/images/22\\_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks\\_.pdf](https://www.abttf.org/images/22_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks_.pdf)

minority schooling system. The number minority primary schools decreased to 188 in 2011, 170 in 2014, and 164 in 2015 and 132 in 2016.

3. The number of minority secondary schools is not sufficient. Although almost half of the population in Western Thrace is Turkish-speaking, there are only two minority schools operating in Komotini and Xanthi and two Islamic schools in Komotini and Echinós against many public (secondary and vocational) Greek-language schools.
4. All the teachers are paid by the school board. Although the above-mentioned minority secondary schools should be administered and run as any other private secondary schools in Greece, the Greek Government determines how many students can attend and how they will be enrolled.
5. In accordance with Exchange of Notes of 1952 and 1955 between Turkey and Greece, number of teachers to be assigned by Turkey and Greece to work in each other's minority schools was mutually agreed as 35. Yet, this number was unilaterally reduced by Greece to 16 as of 1990-91 school year. The Greek authorities do not allow the teachers from Turkey to work at the Turkish minority schools in Xanthi. The teachers who had education in Turkey have not been allowed to work at minority elementary schools since 2002-2003 school year either.
6. The 1968 Cultural Protocol between Greece and Turkey provides for the production and use of textbooks in minority schools for both the Turkish minority of Western Thrace and the Greek minority in Istanbul. There are long and unreasonable delays in distribution of the textbooks sent from Turkey to the minority schools in the region.
7. Law 4310/2014 was prepared with no prior consultation and/or dialogue with the Turkish minority and introduced reforms and changes in administrative organizations, in issues related to teaching staff at minority schools, issues related to the functioning and scientific-pedagogical support of the minority schools, establishment of a teacher training school under Democritus University of Thrace and appointment and hiring of educators to primary minority schools.
  - The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School will give a graduate diploma to members of the minority who have a four-year undergraduate education. In addition to that, teachers who have graduated from domestic elementary pedagogic departments in Greece should complete the supplementary teaching training programme in order to have the right to teach in minority schools. The right to education in that department should not be limited to only those who have graduated from pedagogic departments in Greece but also graduates of universities abroad.
  - According to the provisions of the above-mentioned law, members of the Turkish Minority who have graduated from Greek faculties of education and are teachers of Greek curriculum in minority schools are not allowed to teach the mentioned curriculum any more. This application is an example of violation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Greek constitution.

**We call on the Government of Greece to:**

1. respect its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and take measures in order to restore the autonomous structure in the field of education and religion. Greece should respect, protect and promote the rights enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty and act in full compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and the core international human rights treaties of which Greece is a party,

2. establish bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace in line with the minority schooling system, and allow the Turkish Minority to establish private nursery schools where the language of education will be Turkish and Greek,
3. revise its policies concerning the minority primary and secondary schools, including their number and their location, the training and hiring of teachers, curriculum and textbooks to be used,
4. amend Law 4310/2014 regarding the educational supervision and the appointment of minority school teachers and improve the quality of minority schooling system,
5. make good use of all available domestic and international instruments including advisory and consultative bodies in order to address problems in minority issues.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2016 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**10-11 November 2016**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Empowering civil society to build bridges on the grassroots level**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

There is an important problem in the field of minority protection in Europe. There is a loophole, a large discrepancy between the rhetoric and the implementation of minority rights both at the EU and at the national level. In its replies to the written questions submitted by MEPs on the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the EU Commission repeats that the question exceeds the competence and sphere of responsibility of the Commission, in view of the fact that the Commission has no general powers as regards minorities. Since there is no general policy framework on the protection of historical and/or national minorities in the EU, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as one of the core values of the EU – a value the Union has committed to promoting and protecting worldwide should be protected and promoted by the Member states themselves.

Greece recognises a single minority only, this is us, as they call it ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’. For a strong civil society, freedom of association has an utmost importance. The first association established by the Turkish Minority is Xanthi Turkish Union; of which first name was ‘House of Turkish Youth of Xanthi’ established in 1927 and registered by Xanthi Court of First Instance. Not only Xanthi Turkish Union, but Komotini Turkish Youth Union established in 1928, Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union established in 1936 were legally registered associations with the ‘Turkish’ word in their titles. The signboards of the associations and the minority schools in the region as well included the word ‘Turkish’ and the names of the associations and minority schools were written both in Greek and Turkish.

After seven years of military rule and the return to democracy in 1974, the autonomy in education and religious affairs was not restored. The Cyprus question between Turkey and Greece in 1974 worsened the situation of the Turkish minority. The Greek government declared in 1983 that there were no Turks in Greece and claimed that the members of Muslim minority are Greek Muslims. Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and

Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word 'Turkish' referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece.

The ban on the associations; namely, the 'Western Thrace Turkish Teacher's Union', the 'Komotini Turkish Youth Association' and the 'Turkish Union of Xanthi' has continued until today. Following the exhaustion of the internal remedies, the case concerning the banning of the Turkish Union of Xanthi was taken to the ECtHR by the Minority. 'Rodopi Turkish Woman Association' and the 'Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association' have not been registered by the Greek courts as well.

Today, there are three cases which have been brought before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the dissolution and refusal to register associations established by the persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece:

1. Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association: The Case of Bekir-Ousta and others (35151/05), judgment of 11/10/2007, final on 11/01/2008
2. Xanthi Turkish Union: The Case of Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and others(26698/05), judgment of 27/03/2008, final on 29/09/2008
3. Rodopi Turkish Woman Association: Emin and others(34144/05), judgment of 27/03/08, final on 01/12/2008

The Court considered that freedom of association involved the right of everyone to express, in a lawful context, their beliefs about their ethnic identity. However shocking and unacceptable certain views or words used might appear to the authorities, their dissemination should not automatically be regarded as a threat to public policy or to the territorial integrity of a country. Accordingly, the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 11.

These three cases (Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, Xanthi Turkish Union, Rodopi Turkish Woman Association) concern the dissolution or refusal to register the applicant associations by the competent courts on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece. The Court held unanimously in 2007 and 2008 that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights in both cases, which concern associations founded by persons belonging to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. Today, the implementation of the three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights finding a violation of freedom of association due to the dissolution and/or refusal to register by the Greek authorities of the associations established by the persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have been still pending.

With regard to freedom of association, Greece notes that tens of minority associations have been established and recognised since 2008, in full conformity with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, but there are no associations established with the word of 'Turkish' in its title in order to notify ethnic Turkish identity in Greece.

Some other groups such as Pomaks and Roma, which are described by Greek authorities as the constituent elements of the Muslim minority in Thrace along with the Turks are welcomed and supported by Greek authorities, they have associations which bear the word 'Pomak' or 'Roma' in their titles, but the Turks have not! There are currently no associations in Greece

operating legally with their names including the word ‘Turkish’ which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members.

In its reply at 2016 HDIM’s meeting in Warsaw, Greece noted the Muslim minority in Thrace is defined by its religious identity and is not an ethnic or national minority. In fact, Muslim minority members have different origins (Turkish, Pomak or Romani); hence, the 1923 Lausanne Treaty identifies the minority as a religious one. Concerning freedom of association, Greece noted that it currently elaborates on the appropriate measures to implement them and the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights is already establishing a special structure responsible for the execution of the Court’s judgments, which was taken note with interest by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March 2016.

We urge Greek Government to implement, without any further delay, the decisions of the European Court in the cases *Turkish Association of Xanthi and Others v. Greece*, *Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece & Emin and Others v. Greece*; and reaffirm the commitment of the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments of ECtHR and amend the Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the European Court decisions in matters related to freedom of association.

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
National Minorities, Bridge building and Integration  
STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
- RIGHT OF REPLY- (Session 1)**

In Greece, one group of persons is qualified as ‘minority’, namely the Muslim minority in Thrace, the status of which was established by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The Muslim minority consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. The only common denominator of the aforementioned three, otherwise distinct, components is their Muslim faith, and this objective fact explains why this minority is recognised as a religious one. In view of the above, the attempt to establish a single ethnic identity for the entire Muslim minority in Thrace, so as to subsume Pomak and Roma persons under a Turkish identity which is not their own, cannot be accepted.

Greece fully respects the principle of individual self-identification. Persons living in Greece are free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. However, our firm position is that the decision of a State to recognise a group as a minority and to provide to its members specific minority rights, additional to those guaranteed by human rights treaties, must be based, not only on subjective claims or perceptions of numerically small number of persons but also on objective facts and criteria.

Relying on solid and objective legal and factual grounds, Greece does not recognise other groups as ‘minorities’. However, the members of groups which are not officially recognised as ‘minorities’, since they do not fulfil the relevant objective criteria, fully enjoy their rights under relevant human rights treaties.

With regard to the Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing in Rhodes and Kos, I would like to stress that they are fully integrated in the local society, living peacefully with all other residents, no matter their religion. They enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as all Greek citizens. No Treaty or other international instrument designates them as a ‘minority’. Nevertheless, their religious and cultural rights are fully respected.

Finally, I would like to stress the meaning of the topic of this SHDIM, pointing to the fact that, regrettably, there was no mention by the young representative of the NGO ABTTF to the various activities taking place in Thrace, the focus of which is to build bridges. Let me refer indicatively to only a few of them, such as the establishment of Youth Councils with the Participation and active involvement of young Christians and Muslims alike and also the cultural festivities that have been hosted in Thrace, through the cooperation of Greek – Turkish municipal authorities with the active involvement of minority associations and NGOs, including artists invited from Turkey.

Nevertheless, we have a genuine understanding that criticism is a result of insufficient available information to persons that have no connection with the region.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2017 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**22-23 June 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Freedom of religion or belief, non-discrimination and other human rights and fundamental freedoms as the essential normative basis for peaceful coexistence and security in the OSCE region**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities. The OSCE commitments which are not legally binding did not succeed to close the gap between the rhetoric and the implementation regarding human rights commitments. Therefore, implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States and the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging.

In the Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief, it is noted that States are obliged to respect and to ensure to all individuals subject to their jurisdiction the right to freedom of religion or belief without distinction of any kind. And legislation should be reviewed to assure that any differentiations among religions are justified by genuinely objective factors and that the risk of prejudicial treatment is minimised or totally eliminated. As regards to autonomy/self-determination of religious/belief organisations, the Guidelines underlined that States should be very reluctant to involve itself in any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the internal organisation of a religious group.

The right of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>77</sup> in Greece to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which determined the legal status of the Turkish and Greek minorities in İstanbul. The obligations assumed by Greece and Turkey under Section III of this Treaty include the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Following the death of the Mufti of Rodopi in 1985, Greece abolished the right to freedom to choose its own religious leaders and transferred it to the state by the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs by Presidential Decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors<sup>78</sup>. The Muslim Turkish community members declared it contrary to the religious autonomy and elected their own Muftis as their own religious leaders in Komotini and Xanthi.

The appointment of Muftis by the state is a clear intervention into religious autonomy of the Muslim Turkish community. The Greek state did not recognise the Muftis who were elected by the community and elected muftis were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. In the cases lodged by elected muftis against Greece, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ordered that there has been a violation of Article 9 of the Convention<sup>79</sup>.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community in the region. There are new policies and practices of the Greek government in order control the religious leadership and the religious instructors in order to increase its control over the Muslim Turkish community. We have received information from the ground that the Greek government plans to make Mufti elections by religious instructors hired in the public schools in the region of Western Thrace under Law 4115/2013[4] (known as 240 Imam Law), which regulated how religious instructors to teach Islam to the children belonging to the Muslim Turkish community would be appointed to Greek-language public primary and secondary schools and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the government-appointed muftis.

This development in the religious field raise concerns of the Muslim Turkish community on grounds that the Greek government is planning to take a step on the election of Muftis with no prior consultations or dialogue with the community representatives in a way which would further destroy the autonomy in the religious field. Unfortunately, there is no channel or mechanism of dialogue and/or consultation with community members on issues which would directly affect their daily lives.

The Government of Greece insists that there is no a unique method internationally for the selection of the Muftis and claims that the religious leaders of the Minority are being selected, through fully transparent and inclusive procedures, by a pool of esteemed teachers of Islam that are members of the minority with the full involvement of the minority as a whole is the

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<sup>77</sup> The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is recognised by the Greek State as ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ on the ground that there is no single ethnic identity for the entire minority and rejects definition of the ‘Turkish Minority of Western Thrace’, although the ethnic identity of members belonging to the Minority is defined as ‘Turkish’ in legal documents.

<sup>78</sup> Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors, Official Gazette, vol. A., no.11 of February 4, 1991

<sup>79</sup> Case of Serif v. Greece (Application no. 38178/97) and Case of AGGA v. Greece (Application no. 32186/02)

procedure. A parallel is often underlined between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Turkey, and the muftis in Western Thrace. The Patriarch is elected by the Holy Synod after the submission of the list of would-be candidates to the public authorities, the muftis are rather appointed by the State on the ground that the muftis do have legal authority on civic issues.

Greek authorities previously stated that they are examining possible ways of introducing new elements that would allow an even more representative and transparent process for the selection of the Muftis. Any efforts to improve this framework by Greek authorities should be in accordance with the rights and freedoms granted to the minority by international treaties. A dialogue mechanism on equal footings should be established by Greek authorities and the best interest of the minority should be the priority in solution of the Mufti issue.

Greece should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. We would like to highlight that the ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are selected by the Church itself. And, the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church are free to elect its own religious leaders in Greece. Therefore, Greece should respect the right of the Turkish community to select, appoint and replace its personnel in accordance with its respective requirements and standards in accordance with international human rights documents and norms.

It is very important that governments should pay a particular attention to the implementation of OSCE commitments and other relevant international commitments in the field of human rights. Recalling that persons belonging to national minorities should have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue, we demand from Greek authorities to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece and recognise the Muftis elected by the community as official religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in the region.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
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Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

**OSCE**  
**2017 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**22-23 June 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Revisiting the normative status and scope of the right to freedom of religion or belief – issues of conceptualisation and the challenge of implementing OSCE commitments**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
Delegates and NGO representatives,

The freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental right enshrined in many international documents and OSCE commitments. Ever since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief has been one of the core commitments that each of the OSCE's participating States has agreed to respect. The OSCE participating States in Copenhagen 1990 reaffirmed that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue.

The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools prepared by the ODIHR Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2007 notes that there are a number of important legal factors including the interests of minority and religious communities that have to be taken into account when teaching about religions and beliefs in state schools. In developing implementing programmes related to teaching about religions and beliefs, attention needs to be paid to the rights and distinctive needs of minority groups.

The Hague Recommendations, prepared under the auspices of the HCNM, were developed with a primary focus on the issues of national ethnic minorities, they have obvious relevance to issues of concern to religious communities, whether or not they are ethnic minorities as well. The Hague recommendations raises six points with strong relevance to teaching religion

in state schools. First, 'States should consistently adhere to the fundamental principles of equality and non-discrimination' (Recommendation No. 2). Second, 'States should approach minority education rights in a proactive manner' (Recommendation No. 4). Third, just as importance and value should be attached 'to the highlighting of minority histories, cultures and traditions', so attention should be paid to the teaching of the 'histories, cultures and traditions' of religious communities that are present in a particular school (Recommendation No. 19). Fourth, 'States should create conditions [...] [allowing national minorities] to participate, in a meaningful way, in the development and implementation of policies and programmes related to minority education' (Recommendation No.5). Curriculum content 'should be developed with the active participation of bodies representative of the minorities in question' (Recommendation No.20). Any programme will need to make selections and choices, but inaccurate or disrespectful coverage should be subject to challenge and correction, and sound justifications for selections should be available. Finally, in accordance with a variety of international instruments, 'the right of minorities to maintain their collective identity should be respected' (Recommendation No. 1).

Teaching of Islam to the Turkish children in the Greek state schools in the region of Western Thrace under Law 4115/2013 does not consider any of points raised in the Hague recommendations. The religious autonomy of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is officially recognised as Muslim minority in Thrace by Greek authorities, which was granted with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish community.

Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013), which replaced the Articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007, envisages appointment of 240 'Quran teachers' who offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself. Law 4115/2013 start implemented in August 2013 and 63 religious officers, among whom only 3 are university graduates, started to teach Islam and Quran in Greek in public schools of secondary education in Western Thrace in January 2014 despite strong opposition by members of the Turkish community.

Despite strong objection to this legislation, so-called 'Law on 240 Imams' among members of the Turkish community, religious instructors have been trained and textbooks for teaching Islam in Greek state schools in the region of Western Thrace are being prepared. It should be reminded there that the mother tongue of the minority children is Turkish, and the minority children in the state schools will learn their own religion Islam in Greek under Law 4115/2013. European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) and the Federal Union of European Nationalities(FUEN) expressed their deep concern about the situation in Western Thrace and noted that the legislation violated the religious autonomy of the minority by abrogating the right to choose their own clergymen to teach Quran.

Law 4115/2013 has been first implemented in public schools in 2013, not in the mosques which belong to the community in minority villages. However, a religious instructor i.e. muezzin has been appointed to the mosque in the village of Mega Derio. This is against the well-established traditions since in all the villages in Western Thrace where Muslims employ imams and muezzins them-selves. However, on March 14, 2014, in that village, many uniformed police officers deployed themselves in the coffee house of the village just half an hour before the Friday Adhan. The instructor walked into the mosque with apparent intention

to lead the service. The community in the mosque of course did not allow him. But those police officers asked the people coming out of the mosque if he could lead the prayer or not. This police escort continued several weeks.

The new legislation would in practice allow the government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of religious officers i.e. Imams to mosques and state schools under the realm authority of the official Muftis (appointed) in Xanthi, Komotini and in Didymoteicho, whom are not accepted and recognised by members of the Muslim Turkish community due to a long-standing Mufti issue in Greece.

We regret that the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace has no right to take a part in decision-making processes in issues which directly affect its daily life. We, again, request from Greek authorities to repeal Law 4115/2013 and respect freedom of religion or belief, including the right to choose their own clergyman to teach Quran.

We would like to the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to ensure that the participating States respect the right of the religious minorities and communities to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards in accordance with Vienna 1989, Questions Relating to Security in Europe.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2017 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**22-23 June 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Challenges of combatting anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination**  
**against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abttf.org](mailto:info@abttf.org), [melek.kirmaci@abttf.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abttf.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in Europe. Inadequate representation of minority groups in decision making system ensues impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, full and effective participation in public and political life.

Greece only recognises a 'Muslim minority in Thrace' and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace. The legal status of the Muslim minority is based on the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been in practice until the Greek military junta regime in 1967. The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority.

Due to the lack of implementation of commitments related to freedom of religion or belief under-taken by Greek authorities, the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders is not recognised. After problems in 1985, the minority elected its own muftis in 1990. However, public authorities did not recognise the muftis who were elected by members of the Muslim community, the muftis (elected) were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. Mr. Mehmet Emin Aga, the elected Mufti in Xanthi in that period was adjudicated in several times and sent to prison. In

January 1995, Mr. Aga was sentenced by the Court of Appeal in Larisa up to ten months of a charge on the ground of ‘usurping the title of Mufti’, and then sent to the Larisa Prison. Through the subsequent trials on similar charges, Mr. Aga was sentenced to an eight- year of imprisonment. In 1996 Mr. İbrahim Şerif, the elected Mufti in Komotini, stood up in a trial in Thessaloniki ‘for false pretence of authority’, and was sentenced to a six- month imprisonment, though he was released after appeal.

Greece doesn’t still recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have judicial powers on civic issues.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish minority in the region. Though, the Greek Government notes that although the elected Muftis are not officially recognised, the state does not obstruct their religious or other activities.

However, juridical investigations against religious leaders of the Turkish community have revealed there is an environment of political intimidation and pressure against the community. İbrahim Şerif, Elected Mufti in Komotini, gave his testimony for six times with the charge of usurpation of the mufti authorities since the beginning of 2017.

İbrahim Şerif, elected Mufti of Komotini, elected by the Western Thrace Turks living in Greece, bore testimony at the police department upon the order by the prosecution office on 31 May 2017. Mufti Şerif, who went to the Police Department of Komotini with his advocate within the scope of investigation regarding the circumcision ceremony held in 2016 in Alankuyu neighbourhood in the Province of Komotini for the boys belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, presented his defence statement against the accusation of ‘usurpation of mufti authorities and office’. Mufti Şerif in his explanation he provided to the newspaper informed the circumcision of boys is a significant issue in Islam religion, adding with this circumcision ceremony they had tried to a certain extent to help poor residents of Alankuyu neighbourhood living through tough times with the economic crisis experienced in Greece-wide, and the incident is consisted of these. Previously, İbrahim Şerif made his second deposition to the police on 23 January 2017 for his speech at the opening ceremony of the new headquarters of the FEP Party in January 2016, at which he chanted the slogan and carried the campaign flag the FEP Party used during the EP elections in 2014 to attract attention to the problems of the Turkish community in the region<sup>80</sup>.

Ahmet Mete, elected Mufti of Xanthi was asked to make a deposition on 24 January 2017 for his speech about the Law 4115/2013, known as ‘240 Imams Law’ which regulates how the 240 Imams/religious instructors of Islam would be appointed to public schools and mosques in Western Thrace. The relevant law met strong reaction by minority members because the law prepared with no consultation with the minority clearly violated minority’s religious autonomy guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty<sup>81</sup>.

Furthermore, Ahmet Mete will be tried on 20 June 2017 for his actions of the funeral of a young minority member who died while performing his military service in the Greek army. During the memorial ceremony on 14 July 2016, the appointed Mufti of Xanthi, who is not

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<sup>80</sup> <http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12395-mueftue-brahm-erf-avrupa-avrupa-duy-sesmez-bayraini-elne-aldi-dye-pulse-fade-verd.html>

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/2585>

recognised by the community, wanted to make the prayer at the funeral where minority members voiced their strong objection. After the public prosecutor's office in Xanthi had filed a suit against the elected Mufti of Xanthi and the Imam of Glafki (Gökçepınar), Ahmet Mete will be tried for allegedly usurpation of the Mufti office and for allegedly being the instigator for disruption of the public order and the removal of the appointed Mufti from the funeral.

We ask from the Government of Greece to end discrimination and eliminate prejudices against the Turkish community at all levels of government and law enforcement departments. We ask the Greek government to end the strategy of intimidation and deterrence against members of the minority in full respect for the right to freedom of expression and opinion and treat members of the Turkish minority as equal citizens of the country.

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Freedom of Religion or Belief: Issues, Opportunities, and the Specific Challenges of**  
**Combatting Anti-semitism and Intolerance and discrimination against Christians,**  
**Muslims and Members of Other Religious**  
**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**- RIGHT OF REPLY- (Session I)**

Regarding the appointment of the Muftis that it was mentioned by the representatives of the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and ABTTF, I would like to underline that Greece is in consultation with the Muslim minority in Thrace and cares for the protection of its human rights, including religious freedom. The Heads of the three Mufti-offices, who are the religious leaders of the minority in Thrace, are selected by a pave of esteemed preachers of Islam through transparent and inclusive procedures.

Concerning allegations that Muftis should be elected, it is to be noted that every sovereign state, be it Islamic or not, has the right to determines the appropriate legal framework, always in accordance with the Islamic tradition and the religious rights and freedoms. There is no internationally binding procedure for the appointment of Muftis. Besides, quite all Islamic States (also Turkey, Saudi Arabia etc.) abide by the traditional assignment method for the Muftis, which is their appointment after a selection procedure.

With regard to the allegations contained in their statement as to what is happening in other religious communities in Greece, the following should be noted: the bishops of the Orthodox Church of Greece are not elected through general elections in which its adherents would participate, but by elections conducted by the Holy Synod in which only the Bishops of the Church of Greece have the right to vote. The bishops of the Catholic Church in Greece are not elected but selected by the Pope. Neither the Rabbis of the Jewish community are elected through elections involving all Greek Jews; instead they are selected by the boards of the Jewish communities.

From the above, it is clear that in none of the cases mentioned, are the religious leaders being elected by their adherents but either their election is the choice of their supreme religious leader, or it is the choice of an electoral body, which is composed of religious officers, or a limited number of representatives of their community. And of course, there is another distinctive difference: none of the above is exerting judicial powers over his followers, as the Muftis in Greece do. Therefore, the «Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe» requests from Greece to apply a preferential status for the Muslims of Thrace that it is neither provided in the Treaty of Lausanne, nor followed by any other major religious community in Greece, or applied by any Islamic country in the world.

Finally, concerning the closure of worships, also mentioned, I would like to stress that the proper function of legal ‘masjids’ is not prohibited. The Greek authorities closed down a number of so - called ‘masjids’ that were illegally run by certain associations without having obtained the necessary administrative license thereto.

To conclude, I would like to repeat the words of the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Yannis Ammanatidis, who said, - during the recent visit of the Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim in Western Thrace, - ‘that the region of Thrace is an example of peaceful and harmonious co-existence of different religions, Muslims and Christians’.

**Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Freedom of Religion or Belief: Issues, Opportunities, and the Specific Challenges of**  
**Combatting Anti-semitism and Intolerance and discrimination against Christians,**  
**Muslims and Members of Other Religious**  
**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**- RIGHT OF REPLY- (Session III)**

It is extremely surprising that the name of Ahmet Mete, the so-called 'elected Mufti' was mentioned by the representative of ABTTF. Ahmet Mete has expressed racist views and has made racist statements in the recent past backing Hitler's opinions and practices against the Jews, statements that provoked harsh reaction of the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece.

In Greece, the Greek judicial authorities enjoy full independence, according to the principle of separation of powers in a democratic society. No Greek citizen is persecuted or convicted without a reason. In case of a prosecution that results in innocence, there is, of course, no crime conviction.

Finally, with regard to the allegations that Greece does not treat the Muslim minority as equal citizens of the country, I would like to stress that Greece aims at furthering their integration in social, economic, political and other structures, on both local and national level, but it is necessary to have residence in Greece.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**11-22 September 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental right enshrined in many international documents and OSCE commitments. Ever since the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief has been one of the core commitments that each of the OSCE's participating States has agreed to respect. It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which established a framework for national minorities. This framework was strengthened in OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions, in which participating States reiterated their commitment to prevent discrimination on the basis of religion or belief.

However, not-legally-binding commitments did not succeed to close the gap between the rhetoric and the implementation in the OSCE area. Discrimination remain a reality for many members of different religious or ethnic groups in many participating States. As noted by the ODIHR, such practices are institutional and systemic, which makes them more difficult to address and dismantle. Some minority communities are disproportionately targeted by security policies that include ethnic profiling in some participating States like Greece.

The right of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>82</sup> in Greece to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne

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<sup>82</sup> The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is recognised by the Greek State as 'Muslim minority in Thrace' on the ground that there is no single ethnic identity for the entire minority and rejects definition of the 'Turkish

Treaty which determined the legal status of the Turkish and Greek minorities in İstanbul. The obligations assumed by Greece of this Treaty include the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Following the death of the Mufti of Rodopi in 1985, Greece abolished the right to freedom to choose its own religious leaders and transferred it to the state by the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs by Presidential Decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors<sup>83</sup>.

The Muslim Turkish community members declared it contrary to the religious autonomy and elected their own Muftis as their own religious leaders in Komotini and Xanthi. The Greek state did not recognise the Muftis who were elected by the community and elected muftis were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. In the cases lodged by elect-ed muftis against Greece, the European Court of Human Rights(ECtHR) ordered that there has been a violation of Article 9 of the Convention<sup>84</sup>.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community in the region. There are new policies and practices of the Greek government in order to increase its control over the Muslim Turkish community. We have received information from the ground that the Greek government plans to make Mufti elections by religious instructors hired in the public schools in the region of Western Thrace under Law 4115/2013[4] (known as 240 Imam Law), which regulated how religious instructors to teach Islam to the children belonging to the Muslim Turkish community would be appointed to Greek-language public primary and secondary schools and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the government-appointed muftis. For further implementation of Law 4115/2013 which is known as ‘240 Imams Law’, the Greek Ministry of Education has made an announcement in August 2017 for filling of positions of in the region and noted that one hundred and twenty (120) positions of Islamic religious instructors will be recruited under a fixed term contract of nine (9) months duration.

These developments in the religious field raise concerns of the Muslim Turkish community on grounds that the Greek government is planning to take a step on the election of Muftis with no prior consultations or dialogue with the community representatives in a way which would further destroy the autonomy in the religious field. Unfortunately, there is no channel or mechanism of dialogue and/or consultation with community members on issues which would directly affect their daily lives.

The Government of Greece insists that there is no a unique method internationally for the selection of the Muftis and claims that the religious leaders of the Minority are being selected, through fully transparent and inclusive procedures, by a pool of esteemed teachers of Islam that are members of the minority with the full involvement of the minority as a whole is the procedure.

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Minority of Western Thrace ‘, although the ethnic identity of members belonging to the Minority is defined as ‘Turkish’ in legal documents.

<sup>83</sup> Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors, Official Gazette, vol. A., no.11 of February 4, 1991

<sup>84</sup> Case of Serif v. Greece(Application no. 38178/97) and Case of AGGA v. Greece (Application no. 32186/02)

A parallel is often underlined between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Turkey, and the muftis in Western Thrace. The Patriarch is elected by the Holy Synod after the submission of the list of would-be candidates to the public authorities, the muftis are rather appointed by the State on the ground that the muftis do have legal authority on civic issues.

Greek authorities previously stated that they are examining possible ways of introducing new elements that would allow an even more representative and transparent process for the selection of the Muftis. Any efforts to improve this framework by Greek authorities should be in accordance with the rights and freedoms granted to the minority by international treaties. A dialogue mechanism on equal footings should be established by Greek authorities and the best interest of the minority should be the priority in solution of the Mufti issue.

In the Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief, it is noted that States are obliged to respect and to ensure to all individuals subject to their jurisdiction the right to freedom of religion or belief without distinction of any kind. And legislation should be reviewed to assure that any differentiations among religions are justified by genuinely objective factors and that the risk of prejudicial treatment is minimised or totally eliminated. As regards to autonomy/self-determination of religious/belief organizations, the Guidelines underlined that States should be very reluctant to involve itself in any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the internal organisation of a religious group.

Greece should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal. Recalling that persons belonging to national minorities should have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue, we demand from Greek authorities to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece and recognise the Muftis elected by the community as official religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in the region.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**11-22 September 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Despite commitments of participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region. As noted by the ODIHR, serious discrimination has continued across the OSCE region, manifesting itself, inter alia, through hate crimes and other acts of intolerance targeting religious and/or ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups.

A particular concern is the lack of proper engagement by key institutions with civil society, since government responses to hate-motivated incidents and attacks are inadequate in many participating states, including Greece. Our organization, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), reports every year to the ODIHR's hate-motivated attacks and incidents against members, institutions and places which belong to the Turkish community in the region of Western Thrace.

We share ODIHR's comment that hate crimes are message crimes, a rejection of the victim's identity which often has a marginalising effect on the entire communities. Greece witnessed violations of fundamental rights of people through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice with the rise of far-right extremist neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece. The US International Religious Freedom Report for 2016 on Greece reported that there were incidents of anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic discrimination and hate speech, including against immigrants in 2016, although the law prohibits discrimination and criminalises hate speech on the grounds of religion.

Greece witnessed violations of fundamental rights of people through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice with the rise of far-right extremist neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece. The Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>85</sup>, which is the only recognised minority as ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ in Greece has been a target of hate-motivated attacks in the past years.

The US International Religious Freedom Report for 2016 on Greece<sup>86</sup> noted the Golden Dawn’s attack during the anniversary of death of the Turkish community’s leader, Dr. Sadık Ahmet in July 2016. Participants in a demonstration organised by Golden Dawn threw rocks and shouted racist slogans ‘Turks are murderers’ and threw stones at commemoration ceremony of Dr. Sadık Ahmet, leader of the Western Thrace Turkish community and founder of the Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party, organised with participation of 800 people on the occasion of 21st anniversary of death. The report stated that it is the first time where an attack was made at the commemoration of Sadık Ahmet and indicated the police used tear gas to break up the crowd and there are no arrests made by the police.

Two attacks against civil society organisations which represent the Turkish community in Western Thrace took place in 2016 outside the region of Western Thrace, one in Brussels and one in Athens. Neo-Nazi Golden Dawn MPs in the European Parliament in Brussels and in the Greek Parliament disrupted events about the rights of the Turkish community in Greece. In March 2016, two MEPs from fascist Golden Dawn party in Greece yesterday forcefully disrupted a European Parliament conference titled ‘Freedom of Association in Greece: A Loophole in European Minority Rights Standards’. MEP Csaba Sógor (Romania/EPP), hosted the conference in association with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF). In December 2016, a group of people including three MPs from fascist Golden Dawn forcefully disrupted the conference and used abusive language against the Turkish community’s political party leader during a roundtable meeting organised by Greek Helsinki Monitor and the community’s Friendship, Equality, Peace Party on national minorities in Greece.

Vasilis Levendis, President of Central Union Party in Greece, as a response to a question related to election system addressed at the press conference held at Thessaloniki International Trade Fair in September 2017 stated, ‘If the votes of the Muslim party were 5%, we would make the threshold 5%’ implying FEP Party, the political party of the Western Thrace Turkish community. Levendis stated that since Muslims have a voting power between 1.8 and 2.2%, they wouldn’t allow a Muslim party to enter the parliament. He further insisted that this is not an issue of 3% but about the interests of the country.

Negative portrayals, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslim Turkish community in the region create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. An Imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi Ahmet Mete was kidnapped by unknown assailants fully covered with mask in

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<sup>85</sup> Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

January 2016. The perpetrators called themselves as ‘The Guardians of Thrace’ threatened Imam saying that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him<sup>87</sup>.

The Western Thrace Turkish media in the region has been a target in the region. A private radio station belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace was attacked in January 2017, and a month later, the private car of the owner of a minority newspaper was burned in the Komotini city centre. Police launched an investigation, but no assailants were brought before the justice.

In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

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<sup>87</sup> 3 <http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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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)

**OSCE**  
**2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**11-22 September 2017**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 9: Tolerance and non-discrimination (continued)**

Mam contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The right to education is one of the core principles in international human rights and it should be faithfully implemented by all participating States. In the 1990 Copenhagen Document, OSCE participating States noted the critical role of education to promote tolerance in the context of the principles of non-discrimination and equality.

Education plays an essential role in countering racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism and other forms of intolerance, including against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions. Principle of equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to education is a key to securing equal access to quality education for persons belonging to minority groups.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece is granted with the right to education in its mother tongue and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions with the Treaty of Lausanne which determined the status and basic rights in general. Although the Turkish community in the region has autonomous structure in the field of education under the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, more than 60 minority primary schools in the region have been closed down with the decision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion on closure of schools with low number of pupils since 2010.

According to the decision of the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education in the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace State on July 11, 2017, three more primary schools belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace were closed down. Karakurca and Kızıllağaç

minority primary schools in Rhodope province and Kütüklü minority primary schools in Evros province will be closed in the 2017-2018 academic year due to the low number of students.

Furthermore, there are no bilingual kindergartens or nurseries for the Turkish children to learn their mother tongue in their early childhood, although compulsory education includes pre-school education under a law adopted in 2006. As noted in the US International Religious Freedom Report for 2016 on Greece, leaders of the Turkish community in the region continued to criticise the absence of bilingual kindergartens in Thrace<sup>88</sup>.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (ECRI) mentioned in its fifth report on Greece in 2015 that there are no special measures for the minority under Law No. 3518/2006 which has made pre-school education compulsory. ECRI noted that the Government has rejected proposals to open Turkish-Greek bilingual kindergartens in the existing bilingual primary schools and referred to the case in Echinus where the regional school inspectors refused to enrol 20 children who had not attended the obligatory kindergarten and dismissed a bilingual school's principal, who had registered and taught them. ECRI stressed that children's right to schooling should not be jeopardised and further recommended that the authorities should take all necessary steps to ensure that minority children have access to a bilingual or monolingual elementary school, as per their parents' choices<sup>89</sup>. There is still no step taken by Greek authorities or there are no plans on how to avoid such situations like in Echinus in the next school year.

Despite many applications by the community organizations for establishment of bilingual kindergartens within the special education system that the Turkish community has been granted and establishment of other private bilingual kindergartens in the region, the Greek government rejected proposals to open Turkish-Greek bilingual kindergartens in the existing bilingual primary schools and rather adopted a legal framework in August 2017 for the implementation of a pilot project which envisages that a bilingual minority member, graduated from one of the higher education institutions in Greece, would work with a teacher in a kindergarten class in public schools in six provinces where children belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace lives. Previously, the Institute of Educational Policies under the Ministry of Education of Greece declared that the pilot project would be implemented in the remaining part of the academic year in six public kindergartens for an easy adaptation of the children to kindergartens, where minority children have no option than to go the public kindergartens since there is no permit for minority kindergartens in the country.

The US report further noted that the Greek government provided funding to the Muslim minority in Thrace to select and pay salaries of teachers of Islam in state schools and the salaries of the three official muftis appointed by the state. Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013), which is known as '240 Imams Law', provides appointment of 240 'Quran teachers' who would offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself.

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<sup>88</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/GRC-CbC-V-2015-001-ENG.pdf>

Despite strong objection by the Turkish community to the law, Islamic preachers were trained and appointed to public schools in the region and textbooks in Greek language for teaching Islam in public schools were prepared. For its further implementation, the Greek Ministry of Education made an announcement in August 2017 for filling of positions of in the region and noted that 120 positions of Islamic preachers will be recruited under a fixed term contract of nine months duration.

The leaders of the Turkish community note that the law would in practice allow the government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of religious officers i.e. Imams to mosques and public schools under the realm authority of the official Muftis (appointed) in Xanthi, Komotini and in Didymoteicho, whom are not accepted and recognised by members of the Muslim Turkish community.

The religious autonomy of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish community.

We regret that the Turkish community in Western Thrace has no right to take a part in decision-making processes in issues which directly affect its daily life. We, again, request from Greek authorities to repeal Law 41 t S /2013 and respect freedom of religion or belief, including the right to choose their own clergyman to teach Quran.

We would like to the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to ensure that the participating States respect the right of the religious minorities and communities to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards in accordance with Vienna t 989, Questions Relating to Security in Europe.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working session 6: Fundamental freedoms II, including: – Freedom of thought,  
conscience, religion, or belief**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to stress the following.

The Muslim minority in Thrace is defined by its religious identity and is not an ethnic or national one.

The three (3) Muftis in Thrace are selected through an open and inclusive process, by a pool of notable and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the minority, and are subsequently nominated to the Mufti Offices by the state. Greece assigns the Muftis to their Office in accordance with the Islamic tradition, fully respecting freedom of religion. There is no single, internationally established method for the Muftis' assignment. It is noteworthy that, in all Muslim countries, Muftis are appointed by the State and are not elected.

The so called 'elected Muftis' are not officially recognised: despite attitudes of evident disrespect to the existing legislation and an often-provocative attitude, the State does not obstruct their activities, showing maximum tolerance and restraint. The Muslim charitable foundations (waqfs) have been granted property and tax exemptions, as it is the case with the Greek Orthodox Church. Additionally, Law 3647/2008 provides for their self-governance, pursuant to Islamic tradition. It is the wish of the Greek State to see Law 3647/2008 be fully implemented.

Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing in the Greek islands of Rhodes and Kos neither constitute nor consider themselves as a minority. Their religious and cultural rights are fully respected by the State, as it is the case with every Greek citizen. The Greek State has devoted significant resources to the restoration of Ottoman monuments, including in Rhodes and Kos, thus stressing the importance given to cultural heritage monuments in the country.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**  
**Working session 7: Tolerance and non-discrimination I**

In reply to three, rather repetitive, NGO statements, I would like to stress the following.

During the last years, we have strengthened the legislative framework against racism and hate crimes and have taken institutional and operational measures at all levels to improve its implementation and to increase reporting and recording of hate crimes. We also have a very constructive cooperation with ODIHR, and we are encouraged that the progress accomplished so far has been recognised by the OSCE mechanisms.

Members of Golden Dawn, including Members of Parliament, have been brought to trial, which is still ongoing. The Muslim minority's relations with the Christian majority in Thrace are harmonious and there are no crimes that could be designated as hate crimes or discrimination against Muslims by the local community. Any incident which may -or may not-be identified as hate crime is thoroughly investigated.

Our legislation has substantially enhanced the status of religious preachers, who have the right to teach the Holy Quran to minority students in public schools. The religious preachers are free to choose whether or not to join the applicable legislative scheme and to benefit from it. Likewise, minority pupils can freely decide whether they wish to attend the Quranic classes or not.

Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing in Rhodes and Kos neither constitute nor consider themselves as a minority. They enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as all Greek citizens. There is neither a bilateral treaty nor any other international instrument designating them as minority. Nevertheless, their religious and cultural rights are fully respected by the State. They enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations as all Greek citizens and show no interest for the political agendas pursued by their self-proclaimed 'representatives'.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working session 8 (specifically selected topic): Tolerance and non- discrimination**

In reply to two more statements about the situation in Greece, which bring the total number of, repetitive ad nauseam, interventions by the same three organisations to 12 for this year's HDIM, and counting, I would like to stress the following.

During the last years, we have developed a robust legislative and operational framework against racism, hate crimes and hate speech. We are encouraged that the progress accomplished so far has been recognised by all human rights mechanisms. The region of Thrace is an example of successful living together of a Christian majority and a Muslim minority. Any incident which may -or may not-be identified as hate crime is thoroughly investigated.

However, gratuitous insinuations about a 'suspicious fire in a historic mosque', despite the fact that, according to the investigation, the fire outbreak was due to an accident and despite the commitment expressed by the authorities to restore the damage as soon as possible, speak volumes about the fanaticism and lack of credibility of those who disseminate them.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE  
-RIGHT OF REPLY-**

**Working session 9 (specifically selected topic): Tolerance and non- discrimination**

In exercising my right of reply, I would like to stress that Greece is firmly committed to continue its policy to uphold the right to education of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace.

We are ready, on the one hand to improve the functioning of the existing minority schools in Thrace (130 primary minority schools, 2 secondary and 2 Quranic/Islamic schools) and, on the other, to successfully accommodate the preference to the public educational system shown by the minority members who select it. Such an accommodation is being pursued in parallel with courses aiming at preserving the linguistic and cultural characteristics of persons belonging to the minority who attend public schools.

Furthermore, Law 4115/2013 introduced the teaching of the Holy Quran on a voluntary basis into public schools in Thrace, with the possibility to employ 240 Imams with proven track record in this regard. A 0.5% quota for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes of students who are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace has long been introduced in order to improve the access of minority students to the labour market.

Unsurprisingly, such measures and trends are ignored by all those seeking to promote political agendas based on 'autonomous structures' rather than integration with respect for diversity and interaction between the majority and the minority.

Finally, in the current challenging economic situation, we will continue to seek further ways and means to meet the needs of the members of the Muslim minority and enhance their progress, prosperity and well-being.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**10-21 September 2018**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 6: Tolerance and non-discrimination I**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Aykut Garipoğlu  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Freedom of religion or belief is one of the core fundamental rights enshrined in international mechanisms and OSCE commitments. Non-implementation of the OSCE commitments by the participating states including freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief endangers democratic values and can trigger nationalism and populism. Vulnerable groups such as ethnic and religious minorities are often affected first by such trends. Therefore, discrimination and intolerance against religious and ethnic minorities remain important obstacles to pluralist and democratic societies in the OSCE region, especially given the rise of populism and xenophobia in European countries. When authorities ignore the existence of these communities, it makes it challenging for minorities to combat the intolerance and discrimination they face, such as in Greece.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece, whose members are Muslim, is officially recognised by their religious identity by Greece, as 'Muslim minority in Thrace'. Greece does not confer official status on any indigenous ethnic group, nor does it recognise 'ethnic minority' or 'linguistic minority' as legal terms. It affirms an individual's right of self-identification, but not the right of collective self-identification by members of an ethnic or linguistic group. This policy contradicts the Etabli Documents which were the documents recognised by Greece and given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin, in Turkey and Greece respectively, who were left out of the exchange procedure following the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923. These documents affirm the ethnic origin of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace as Turkish.

The rights of the Turkish community in Western Thrace regarding freedom of religion guaranteed by international treaties are not respected by Greece. The 1913 Treaty of Athens granted the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect their religious leaders (Muftis) and subsequently their rights were guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which defined the legal status of the Turkish community in Greece as well as that of the Greek community in Turkey. Following the death in 1985 of the Mufti of Rodopi who was indeed elected by the community in line with the Athens Treaty, the Turkish community's right to elect its religious leaders was taken away and transferred to the state with the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs after the implementation of Presidential Decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors.

Today, the Mufti question causes duality between the Muftis appointed by the State contrary to the Athens Treaty who are not recognised by the members of Turkish community and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community. Hence, the Turkish community in Western Thrace cannot enjoy their rights to choose their religious leaders while other religious groups living in Greece such as the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church are enjoying this right. Today, religious leaders elected by the community have been facing criminal charges on the grounds of usurpation of the Mufti office and illegal use of religious symbols. In the cases lodged by elected muftis against Greece, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that Greece breached Article 9 of the Convention<sup>90</sup>.

As it is underlined in the para.15 of 2015 OSCE Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities that, 'the freedom to practice and teach religion or belief includes, but is not limited to, acts integral to the conduct by religious groups of their basic affairs, such as the right to organise themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structures and the right to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards, as well as with any freely accepted arrangement between them and their state'<sup>91</sup>.

As noted in the para. 16(6) and 16 (8) of the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting, the participating States, including Greece, agreed that they would respect the right of citizens to give and receive religious education in the language of their choice, whether individually or in association with others and allow the training of religious personnel in appropriate institutions<sup>92</sup>.

Moreover, the right to conduct religious educational activities in the mother tongue of the persons belonging to national minorities was affirmed as one of the commitments by participating States of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which established a framework for national minorities<sup>93</sup>. However, Greece failed to undertake its commitments stated above by implementing the Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013) so-called 240 Imams Law, without the approval of members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which led to Turkish children receiving religious lesson by religious instructors, among whom only 3 are university graduated, in Greek in public schools of secondary education in Western Thrace.

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<sup>90</sup> Case of Serif v. Greece (Application no. 38178/97) and Case of AGGA v. Greece (Application no. 32186/02)

<sup>91</sup> OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission, Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities, 2015, para. 15.

<sup>92</sup> Vienna 1989, para. 16. 6, 16.8.

<sup>93</sup> Copenhagen 1990, para. 32.

The critical role of education to promote tolerance in the context of the principles of non-discrimination and equality were affirmed by the OSCE participating states in the 1990 Copenhagen Document. However, education is one of the areas where the members of the Turkish community are subjected to discrimination.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece was granted the right to open its own minority schools by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. However, the autonomy of the Turkish community at all levels in education has been undercut throughout years by wide-ranging control of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs over the minority schools at all levels whether it concerns the composition and the functioning of the school boards, the hiring and firing of teachers, the distribution of textbooks or the building and repair of school buildings. This certainly leads to a low-quality education in minority schools with structural problems. The absence of bilingual minority kindergartens for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace remains a crucial obstacle for the minority children's development. The importance of receiving education in mother tongue is highlighted by the UNESCO since it has an important impact on the future of the child<sup>94</sup>. The right not to be discriminated is violated given that Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek. At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten years, but not includes minority schooling system. The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues Gay McDougall commented that bilingual education would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early age and enable greater choice of whether to go to minority or Greek public primary school. Due to the persistent lack of bilingual kindergartens, a number of families have reluctantly decided to send their children to Greek-language state kindergartens despite the risk of losing their linguistic and cultural identity. Greece disregarded proposals by the community organizations for establishment of bilingual kindergartens within the special education system that the Turkish community has been granted and establishment of other private bilingual kindergartens in the region. Yet, the Greek government adopted a legal framework in August 2017 which was implemented as pilot project. As part of the pilot project, minority children have no option than to go the public kindergartens since there is no permit for minority kindergartens in the country although a bilingual minority member, graduated from one of the higher education institutions in Greece, works with a teacher in a kindergarten class in public schools in six provinces in Western Thrace region.

Moreover, the number of the minority bilingual schools are decreasing every year after the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion decided in 2010 that schools which do not have sufficient number of students will be closed down for economic reasons. Since then, the number minority primary schools decreased from 194 to 188 in 2011, 170 in 2014, and 164 in 2015 and 133 in 2016 and 130 in 2017.

We emphasise that respecting fundamental rights and democratic values are the corner stone for stability and sustainable security. As noted by the OSCE Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities 'Under international human rights law, a refusal by the state to accord legal personality status to an association of individuals based on a religion or belief amounts to an interference with the exercise of the right to freedom of religion or belief, read in the light of the freedom of association'.

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<sup>94</sup> UNESCO, Multilingual education Why is it important? How to implement it?, Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002265/226554e.pdf>, September 2018

We call on the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to remind the participating States of their responsibility to act on its commitments in accordance with Vienna 1989. We urge Greece to respect the freedom of religion and act on its commitments derived from international treaties such as the 1913 Treaty of Athens, Treaty of Lausanne and its OSCE commitments.

We urge Greek authorities to establish bilingual minority kindergartens in region in line with the minority schooling system and allow the Turkish community in Western Thrace to establish private kindergartens where the language of education will be Turkish and Greek.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish community of Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and implement policies in line with the OSCE Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities. We urge the Government of Greece to revise its policies concerning the minority primary and secondary schools, including their number and their location, the training and hiring of teachers, curriculum and textbooks to be used.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**10-21 September 2018**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 7: Fundamental freedoms I, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Aykut Garipoğlu  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The Ministerial Council of OSCE in its twentieth meeting held in Kyiv in 2013 called on participating states to fully implement OSCE commitments on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief as well as refraining from imposing restrictions inconsistent with OSCE commitments and international obligations on the practice of religion or belief by individuals and religious communities<sup>95</sup>. It does not seem that all participating states such as Greece respond adequately since certain religious communities still face obstacles in practicing their religion or belief throughout the OSCE region.

The right to freedom of religion or belief of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece has been constantly hampered by several governmental practices and laws although their religious autonomy is guaranteed by the international agreements which Greece is part of such as the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the 1913 Athens Treaty. The third section of the Treaty of Lausanne regarding the protection of minorities, confers basic rights and liberties on the Muslim minority in Greece including the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Moreover, the relevant articles of the 1830 Protocol, the 1881 Treaties and the 1913 Athens Treaty's third protocol are affirmed by the Treaty of

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<sup>95</sup> 1 Decision No. 3/13 Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief, Twentieth Meeting of the Ministerial Council 5 and 6 December 2013, p. 16.

Lausanne. The Muslim minority in Western Thrace is granted the right to elect its religious leaders as it is noted in the 1913 Treaty of Athens that ‘Each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti’.

This right was abolished by a presidential decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors and since then Muftis have been appointed by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The appointed Muftis are not recognised by the members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and consequently the community elects its own religious leaders in line with the 1913 Treaty of Athens. Therefore, the elected Muftis in Komotini and Xanthi have been facing criminal charges and this creates an environment of political intimidation towards the members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece. For instance, on 13 November 2017, Ahmet Mete, Elected Mufti of Xanthi, was sentenced to a seven-month imprisonment with the allegation that he usurped the Mufti’s Office at the funeral of Ahmet Katunlu in village of Gökçepınar(Glafki) who lost his life while he was in military service last year when the members of the Turkish minority rejected the government-appointed mufti to lead the prayer and requested the elected Mufti to lead the prayer during the funeral.

The religious autonomy of the minority has been undermined, especially with the recent amendments adopted by the Greek Parliament. In recent years, the statements by the Greek authorities to find more representative and transparent process for the selection of muftis raised expectations within the Turkish community for the solution of Mufti question. However, the recent developments indeed disappointed the members of the Turkish community. On 9 January 2018, the Greek Parliament adopted a law which made Islamic law as optional to settle family and inheritance issues of persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace. The bill was submitted to the Greek Parliament after a legal inheritance case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights by a Muslim Turkish woman from Thrace (Molla Sali v. Greece. (application no. 20452/14). The law rendered the sharia authorities in the field of inheritance, marriage and divorce utilised by muftis preferential and enabled the Greek Civil Law applicable in the case that there is disagreement between the parties. The new legislation was drafted once again without prior consultation with the representatives of the Turkish community; therefore, it was opposed by the people belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece. The law is another blow against the religious freedom of the Turkish community in Western Thrace. Furthermore, it is contradictory to the Art. 13(1) of the constitution of Greece which guarantees the freedom of religion by stating that ‘Freedom of religious conscience is inviolable’<sup>96</sup>. However, it seems that Greece is not even acting in line with the provisions of its constitution since they are interfering in the matters concerning the issues of faith, belief.

More recently, a draft presidential decree regarding the implementation of the above-mentioned law has been issued on 2 September 2018, once again without any consultation with the members of the Turkish community of Western Thrace, Greece. The draft decree envisages restructuring of Mufti offices with autonomous structure in Western Thrace, Greece and bringing in a new working system. In addition to previous legislations, this will further undermine the autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace guaranteed by the international treaties. The decision was condemned by the representatives of the Turkish

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<sup>96</sup> Art. 13 of the Constitution of Greece, Available at: <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/f3c70a23-7696-49db-9148-f24dce6a27c8/001-156%20aggliko.pdf>, September 2018

community representatives and NGOs including the minority's party Friendship, Equality and Peace Party (FEP Party) in the region<sup>97</sup>.

As it is clearly noted in the para. 31 of OSCE Guidelines that 'in the regime which governs access to legal personality for the religious or belief communities, states should observe their obligations by ensuring that national law leaves it to the religious or belief community itself to decide on its leadership, its internal rules, the substantive content of its beliefs, the structure of the community and methods of appointment of the clergy and its name and other symbols'<sup>98</sup>.

We would like to highlight that participating states should not interfere in the matters concerning the issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group and act in line with the OSCE commitments which are the crucial aspects to ensure the freedom of religion or belief. Hence, we urge that Greece respect its OSCE commitments on the freedom of religion and withdraw the legal amendments jeopardising the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace which is guaranteed by the international agreements such as the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 and prior the Athens Treaty of 1913 and Its Third Protocol. We call upon Greece to apply the same standards regarding the election of religious leaders as it applies for other religious groups including the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church in Greece, therefore to allow the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect freely its own religious leaders and freely run the Mufti offices.

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<sup>97</sup> Statement by FEP Party, Available at: <http://www.debpartisi.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&id=5716>, September 2018.

<sup>98</sup> OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission , Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities, 2015, para. 31.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued)**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Aykut Garipoğlu  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The importance of the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in associations is specifically stressed in the Decision VI of the Helsinki Document of 1992 of the OSCE. In the same document, the participating states affirmed that ‘they would intensify in this context their efforts to ensure the free exercise by persons belonging to national minorities, individually or in community with others, of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to participate fully, in accordance with the democratic decision-making procedures of each State, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their countries including through democratic participation in decision-making and consultative bodies at the national, regional and local level, inter alia, through political parties and associations’<sup>99</sup>. Non-governmental organizations and associations, as part of civil society, are core elements for a better functioning democracy and are established in accordance with the right to freedom of association affirmed by the international mechanisms.

However, the commitments in these international agreements are not adequately implemented or not applied equally to all parts of society such as in Greece. Associations founded by the members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece whose names include the word ‘Turkish’ are not currently allowed to operate legally. It can be asserted that Turkish community in Western Thrace is subjected to double standards since some other ethnic groups’ associations are recognised and even welcomed and supported by Greek authorities. The associations such as Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western

<sup>99</sup> Decision VI of the Helsinki Document of 1992 of the OSCE, para. 24.

Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts, although they were legally registered and operated since their establishments in 1920's and 1930's.

The Supreme Court ruled that the dissolution of these associations was justified, claiming that the word 'Turkish' referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece. Following to the final judgment of Supreme Court, three associations, namely Xanthi Turkish Union and Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, of which applications for registration were rejected applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in 2005 for the revocation of the Supreme Court's decision. The ECtHR ruled unanimously that Greece breached the Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Consequently, on 5 January 2015, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decided to rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (35151/05), Emin and others (34144/05) and Turkish Association of Xanthi and others (26698/05) on the basis of its non-compliance with the three court rulings in 2007 and 2008. The Court reheard the three cases in July 2015 and in December that year ruled its decision to reject the applications of Emin and others and Turkish Association of Xanthi for being inadmissible, claiming there were no new elements concerning the merits of the procedure to register one of them and contest the dissolution of the other. A law proposal brought to the Greek parliament in September 2017 which would make Greek domestic courts implement judgements of ECtHR on the associations belonging to national minorities living in Greece. Pursuant to the reactions by ANEL party, the junior coalition partner of the government, the initial legislation was modified and new conditions were added to the final text adopted in October 2017(no.4491/2017), for instance the associations should not 'should not threaten the state security' and 'should not violate international treaties' as well as new restrictions on 'national security', 'public security' and 'freedom of third parties'.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers closely follows the developments about the implementation of the Court's judgments on these Bekir-Ousta cases since 2008 and consequently decided to resume consideration of these cases when re-opened proceedings are delivered under the mentioned law adopted in October 2017. After the adoption of the above-mentioned law by the Greek parliament, Xanthi Turkish Union, which was established as the first association of Western Thrace Turkish community in 1927 and closed in 1986 for having the word 'Turkish' in its name, has started a legal process for the return of its official legal entity. Accordingly, on 22 June 2018, the Thrace Court of Appeal delivered its judgment on the Xanthi Turkish Union's request for the re-opening of its case after the adoption of Law No. 4491/2017. In its judgment(no.96/2018) Thrace Court of Appeal rejected Xanthi Turkish Union's application for the re-opening of the domestic proceedings on the basis of Article 30 of Law 4491/2017 on grounds that the transitional provision does not cover cases in which a re-examination has already been made or an application requesting the implementation of the ECHR's judgment which has already been issued. Therefore, the case was rejected on procedural grounds. Similarly, the application of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Xanthi for the cassation of the decision by the first instance Greek court on the registration of the association was rejected by the Single-Judge Appeals Court of Thrace in 2014, which was a violation of the general measures in Bekir-Ousta that the Greek Government is supposed to be implementing. The application of the same association to the Supreme Court on the appeal of cassation heard on 13 January 2017, however, their application was rejected by the Supreme Court by quoting extensively from the Appeals Court

judgment in which the association's title was considered 'misleading' as its members are not and cannot be proven to be 'Turks' and cannot claim a 'Turkish national identity'.

As it is noted by ODIHR in the Guidelines on Freedom of Association, 'Minorities should be able to join associations and/or establish their own associations, without discrimination and it may also be appropriate to adopt legislative incentives aimed at supporting associations that promote the role of minorities in a democratic society'<sup>100</sup>. In the same document, the importance of the associations is highlighted as they are often active in 'addressing and resolving challenges and issues that are important to society, such as (...) empowering women, social justice, (...) and the realization of all human rights'<sup>101</sup>. We urge Greece to act on the principles in the guidelines, recognise the important role of these associations and treat all of its citizens without discrimination.

We call upon Greece to take, without any further delay, all necessary measures so that the applicants benefit from proceedings in compliance with the ECtHR's judgments. Moreover, we call on Greece to provide tangible information on changes in the domestic courts' case law concerning registration of associations in Thrace following the adoption of the above-mentioned law, in light of the judgment(no.96/2018) of the Thrace Court of Appeal.

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<sup>100</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, Venice Commission and Council of Europe, Guidelines on Freedom of Association, 2015, para. 15.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**  
**Working session 6: Tolerance and non-discrimination I**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to stress that the region of Thrace is an example of harmonious and successful living together of a Christian majority and a Muslim minority. Any incident which may -or may not-be identified as hate crime is thoroughly investigated.

The Ministry of Education takes special care for the promotion of the religious and spiritual cultivation of Muslims in Thrace, where 260 mosques are in operation. Thus, all Muslim minority pupils, at public schools in Thrace, have the possibility to be taught the Quran at school, and not at special classes, by Islamic Religion teachers specially appointed by the State at the Muftiates of Thrace.

The Ministry of Education has decided to launch a pilot program in six public kindergartens in Thrace, where alongside the main educator in the classroom there will be language facilitators in the mother tongue of the children. It is to be noted that, as recognised by the relevant OSCE documents, it is of paramount importance for minority children to learn the language of the country in which they are living, otherwise they cannot be active members of this society

Turning to a different issue, proper legal adjustments have been made in order to expedite the construction of the Athens Mosque, which has already begun and is nearing completion. Its Board of Directors, in which two representatives of the Muslims who live in Attica participate, has already been appointed. Furthermore, eight Muslim houses of prayer, complying with urban-planning, safety and health regulations, have been licensed.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**  
**Working session 7: Fundamental Freedoms I**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to stress that the process for the appointment of the three Muftis in Thrace is fully consistent with the practice followed by other states, including Muslim ones, bearing also in mind that the Muftis in Thrace exercise judicial responsibilities alongside their religious tasks.

According to recently adopted laws, the jurisdiction of the Muftis in family and inheritance law matters of the Muslim minority in Thrace is exceptional and depends on the mutual consent of the parties. A draft Presidential Decree defining the relevant procedural rules as well as the organization and operation of the respective Department at the Muftiates, has been drawn up.

Such measures are fully in line with the international treaty establishing the status and protecting the rights of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace, namely the Treaty of Lausanne, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights and the recommendations of UN treaty bodies. Furthermore, Muftis must compulsorily leave their post at the age of 67, in order for the State to program a smooth succession procedure. Finally, the operating expenditures of the Muftiates are to be borne by the budget of the Ministry of Education, so as to cover the religious needs of the Muslim minority in the best possible way and to safeguard transparency.

The abovementioned measures improve substantially the legal framework of the Muftiates and further strengthen the protection of the rights of persons belonging to the religious Muslim minority in Thrace.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF GREECE**  
**-RIGHT OF REPLY-**  
**Working session 8: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued)**

In reply to two NGO statements, I would like to recall that the Muslim minority in Thrace consists of three distinct groups whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, having the Muslim faith as their common denominator. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state. The only common denominator of the aforementioned three, otherwise distinct, components is their Muslim faith. It is on the basis of this objective fact that the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that establishes the status of the minority in Thrace refers to it as being a religious minority.

In keeping with the principle of individual self-identification, persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace are free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. What is not acceptable, in accordance with all relevant international standards, is the attempt to establish a single ethnic identity for the entire Muslim minority in Thrace, so as to subsume Pomak and Roma persons under a Turkish identity which is not their own.

In the field of education, in Thrace, there are more than 120 minority primary schools, 2 minority high schools and 2 Quranic schools, in respect of which special measures have been designed and put in place by the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with other entities. At the same time, measures with regard to the religious education of Muslim minority students are implemented in public schools.

On freedom of association, a law adopted in October 2017 allows the reopening of non-contentious judicial procedures, including those related to the registration of associations, following a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights finding a violation of the Convention. Relevant cases under the new legislation have not yet been brought before the Supreme Court. There is a thriving social society in Thrace and dozens of minority associations have been registered by the courts in the last ten years.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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**OSCE**  
**2019 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**1–2 April 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Root Causes and Consequences of Racism and Discrimination in Connection**  
**to Religion or Belief: Implementing the OSCE's Comprehensive Approach while**  
**Addressing the Particular Needs of Marginalized Groups**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Despite commitments of OSCE participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, racial and ethnic hatred, xenophobia, and discrimination against Muslims remain a daily reality across the OSCE region.

ODIHR has constantly shared its concern that bias-motivated violence and discriminatory discourse and practices have reached a worrying point across the region. We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime against persons belonging to ethnic and/or national, religious minorities and other marginalised groups threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies and may give rise to wider scale conflict and violence that undermine international stability and security. As Mr. Max van der Stoep, the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), turned his attention, there are many disputes between minorities and central authorities in Europe which has the potential to escalate. Persons belonging to national/ethnic groups who constitute the numerical majority in one State but the numerical minority in another State are considered as part of bilateral relations between States and may be subject to manifestations of racism, hatred and hate speech on grounds of their race, ethnicity and religion. The Turkish Muslim population in Greece and the Greek Orthodox population in Turkey were subject to population exchange in accordance with the agreement which Turkey and Greece signed in 1923. The Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Greek population in İstanbul, Gökçeada(Imbros) and Bozcaada(Tenedos) were exempted

from population exchange and become minorities in the territories they live in for centuries. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne determined the treatment of the minorities on the basis of reciprocity. The attitudes of the two countries towards their relevant minorities have been shaped according to the level of relations between them. When Turkey and Greece's relations have been moderate; minorities have benefited but when their relations soured, they suffered.

The religious autonomy of the Turkish community granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and ensured by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne has been undermined and diminished through several governmental practices and laws without prior consultation with representatives of the Turkish community. Greece doesn't recognise the right of the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders. Today in Western Thrace there is a dual structure where there are muftis appointed by the state and muftis elected by Western Thrace Turkish community. In the past elected muftis were prosecuted and sentenced to prison with charges of usurping the Office of Mufti and illegal use of religious symbols. The Turkish community in Western Thrace are considered as representatives of Turkey, whose very existence is a tool for irredentist foreign policies. Historically, the Turks of Western Thrace were seen as reminiscent of the era of Ottoman yoke. Such views have produced an understanding of the Turkish community as 'Trojan horses' which are seen as hindrances to national unity and integrity as well as public order. Turkish MPs in the Greek parliament have been even accused of 'Turkish spy' in many occasions. The hatred against representatives and institutions of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace has increased in the last few years. An organization which calls itself as 'The Guardians of Thrace' targets the Turkish community in the region. Furthermore, historical mosques outside the region of Western Thrace are not allowed to use for Friday prayers or religious holidays. Applications made by Turkish associations for permission for the use of a historical mosque for a religious prayer or a religious event which will last only two hours were declined on grounds that the mosques were used for exhibitions and cultural events.

Furthermore, the Turkish community is highly concerned about attempts of intimidation and deterrence by the governmental authorities in the region in recent years. Juridical investigations and lawsuits against religious leaders have revealed there is an environment of political intimidation and pressure against the community. The elected Mufti of Komotini, İbrahim Şerif was subjected to seven juridical investigations within ten months in 2017. He was summoned to testify at State Security Department in Komotini Police Department in November 2017 upon the order of the Public Prosecutor of Alexandroupolis on the ground that he executed Friday prayer in 2016 with Western Thrace Turks in the Turkish village Musaköy (Komara). Recalling that every person should have a right to freedom of expression and the right to freely to profess and practice their religion in the framework of freedom of religion or belief, we demand from Greek authorities to stop intimidation and deterrence against religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in full respect for the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. I would demand from the Government of Greece to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece.

We call on Greece and all participating States not to interfere in matters concerning the issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group and continue their efforts to ensure the effective practical enforcement of the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and to ensure effective enforcement of the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia to tackle persisting discrimination against marginalised groups including Muslims.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2019 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**1–2 April 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session II: Security of Communities and Support to Victims: Good Practices of**  
**Addressing Discrimination, Hate and Violence against Christians, Jews, Muslims and**  
**other Religious or Belief Communities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Hate-motivated attacks, crimes and hate speech are part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons belonging to national minorities, religious groups and other marginalised certain individuals and groups. In order to fully address racism and discrimination, we need to analyse manifestations of them, understand their root causes and consequences. ODIHR publishes an annual hate crime report ever year based on the data from states and NGOs for its annual hate crime report. As ODIHR notes many victims do not report these incidents to law enforcement or the authorities for a variety of reasons despite being victims of hate crimes and hate incidents which results with under-reporting. Concerning the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece, the Lausanne Treaty does not give definition of minorities concerned or situate them geographically. On this ground, Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace on grounds that the Lausanne Treaty only refers to the Muslim minority in the region. Even though Turkey-Greece relations have progressed in the post-1999 era, the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace did not change and problems of the Turkish community remain unsolved. The main reason of this situation is that Greece did not take minority issues within humanitarian and lawful context and did not establish any formal dialogue with representatives of the minority in the region. Furthermore, opening the Halki Seminary School and the election of the Muftis has continued to act as an obstacle between Turkey and Greece and directly affected the situation of the Turkish community in the region.

The first visit to Greece by a Turkish president for 65 years in December 2017 unexpectedly turned into an escalation of the dispute over the status of the minority and created a risk for escalation of tensions in the region of Western Thrace. Erdoğan said that 94-year-old treaty should to be revised, however Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos ruled out any change to the treaty and said, 'This is the bedrock of our friendship. It has no flaws; it does not need to be reviewed or updated'. Erdogan replied, 'It was also supposed to protect the Turkish minority in northern Greece, whom Erdogan said were still discriminated against. You can't find such treatment of my citizens of Greek origin in Turkey'<sup>102</sup>. On the other hand, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs published on its website that the attempt by Turkey to revise and change the Treaty of Lausanne raises disputes and claims against the sovereign rights and the jurisdiction of Greece<sup>103</sup>. Before Erdogan's visit to the region, twenty-two associations functioning in Western Thrace belonging to Greek majority published a joint statement and protested the visit of the Turkish president. In a joint letter sent to the Greek President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister with an headline 'No to Erdoğan's visit to Thrace', associations used offensive and racist language saying 'Following divisive cries of Hakan Çavuşoğlu (Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey) and yet the local community has not settled now they will bring us their boss'. Regarding Turkish president's visit to Komotini and Xanthi where Western Thrace Turks live, threatening messages were distributed to houses belonging to the Turks in region noting that 'Think once again! Erdoğan will leave, but you will be here tomorrow too...' and crosses were drawn on the walls of some of houses belonging to the Turkish representatives, including the house of the leader of Western Thrace Turks deceased Dr. Sadık Ahmet.

These incidents of hate-motivated bias and hate speech against persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace are bias motivations based on racism and bias against Muslims with an indicator of racial, ethnic and religious differences. As ODIHR indicates in its Annual Hate Crime Report for 2017 that our organization regularly reports hate-motivated attacks and incidents and hate speech against persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, there were violent attacks against people and attacks against property with a racist motivation. A vehicle belonging to the owner of a Turkish newspaper was subjected to an arson attack with flammable liquids and a Molotov cocktail. A minority school's doors and windows were vandalised over two consecutive days, and a Turkish language news radio station was attacked and the main antenna damaged, which temporarily stopped the broadcasting. Although Greece regularly reports hate crime data to ODIHR, there is an important gap between hate crimes reported by police and hate crimes reported by other resources. Hate crimes by bias against Muslims reported by the police in 2017 is 3, while data gathered by other sources in this category is 8. The other problem is the implementation of the Criminal Code which contains a general penalty-enhancement provision for hate crimes. Although 123 hate crimes were recorded by police in 2017, 46 were prosecuted and only 6 hate crimes were sentenced.

As ODIHR notes growing instances of violations of freedom of religion or belief as well as of related human rights threaten internal and regional stability and security and limit the potential of religious communities to contribute social cohesion and peace. Therefore, ODIHR and participating States must address this very important issue and dedicate a special effort in order to increase reporting and punishment of hate crimes.

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<sup>102</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/erdogan-greece-tsipras-visit-old-disputes-athens-latest-a8097961.html>

<sup>103</sup> <https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/turkey/>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**  
**2019 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**Vienna, Austria**  
**1–2 April 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: The Role of Educational Programs and Civil Society Initiatives as a Means to Address Negative Stereotyping and Stigmatization and Promote Mutual Respect and Understanding: State Responses, Coalition Building, Community Resilience**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies. There is a need for an effective strategy and policy to address racism, xenophobia, discrimination or related intolerance against Muslims.

There is not any other religious group other than Muslim Turkish community in Greece and in any country in Europe where the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs directly or indirectly intervenes in selection/election of the leaders. Although Article 3(1) of the Greek Constitution notes that the prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, the ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ is selected by the Church itself. Likewise, the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church are free to elect its own religious leaders.

Although Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, noted during a press conference following the EU Leaders' Summit in Brussels in December 2017, that they wanted to reach a point where the religious leaders recognised by the Greek state were not questioned by the minority, the steps taken by the government since then have proved that the government unilaterally takes decisions in a way which would further destroy the autonomy in the

religious field with no informal or formal dialogue with the community representatives in the Mufti issue.

Under a law adopted in 2013, the government appointed Islamic religious instructors to teach Islam to the children belonging to the Turkish minority in Greek-language public primary and secondary schools and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the government-appointed muftis, which in turn led a huge reaction and objection among members of the Turkish community.

Furthermore, a draft Presidential Decree published by the Ministry of Education and Religious on 28 August 2018 which aims to establish the procedural rules for cases under the jurisdiction of the Mufti and the adoption of his decisions, and the regulation of issues of organization, establishment and filling of staff positions and the operation of the Mufti Jurisdiction Affairs Directorate in the Mufti Offices raised concerns of the Turkish community concerning their religious freedom. Because, the decree recommends the establishment of the Mufti Jurisdiction Affairs Directorate in the Mufti Offices in Komotini, Xanthi and Didymoteicho, which are independent decentralised public services of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion, at the level of general directorate under the Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The Department for Mufti Jurisdiction Affairs, an organizational unit under the Directorate, would be responsible for the diligence of all the necessary details and for keeping the appropriate procedure each time for initiating the procedure before Mufti(appointed) while he is exercising his jurisdiction power. All the institutions representing the Turkish community and the Turkish MPs in the Greek parliament declared that this is in stark violation of the autonomy in religious affairs granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty as the Mufti Office becomes a regular public institution under ministerial management and supervision, where only the official language Greek is spoken.

On 9 January 2018, the Greek parliament adopted a law which would make optional Islamic law to settle family and inheritance issues of persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace. The law is not consulted with the elected religious leaders, whom Greece does not recognise.

The non-recognition of elected Muftis by the government and no formal dialogue with representatives of the Turkish community in issues concerning their religious rights cause a lack of trust to governmental authorities. There are no inclusive policies and awareness-raising programmes that promote tolerance and mutual understanding between the Turkish community and governmental authorities. Besides, there are no educational programs or any partnerships with civil society representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace as a means to address negative stereotyping and stigmatization in relation to racism.

It is very important that governments should pay a particular attention to the implementation of OSCE commitments and other relevant international commitments in the field of human rights. Recalling that persons belonging to national minorities should have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue, we demand from Greek authorities to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece and recognise the Muftis elected by the community as official religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in the region.

Greece and all other participating States should review their national integration strategies to ensure that all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion gender or any other status are empowered to engage actively in the process of inclusion by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society. Greece should take result-oriented measures for eliminating discrimination and hate speech against the Turkish community and improve diversity throughout the system by eliminating prejudices while developing strategies that are inclusive of minorities which would be part of an overall governmental policy for the promotion and protection of minority rights in the country.

In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live and national training seminars for civil society in addressing and reporting hate motivates attacks and crimes to national authorities and international organizations.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2019 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**16-27 September 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 6: Fundamental freedoms (continued), including: Freedom of peaceful assembly and association**

Main contact person(s): Mr. K.us Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished delegates and representatives,

The Copenhagen Document and other OSCE commitments stipulate the right to freedom of association of persons belonging to national minorities. In the Copenhagen Document, the participating States recognise that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to establish and maintain organizations or associations within their country and to participate in international non-governmental organisations<sup>104</sup>.

However, Greece ignores evidently its commitment regarding the right to freedom of association as the associations established by the persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace which bear the word 'Turkish' in their names have been either dissolved or denied registration by the Greek domestic courts. There are three judgments against Greece of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding the dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union and denial of registration of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association. The ECtHR found Greece in 2007 and 2008 in violation of freedom of association guaranteed under Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights in these three separate cases.

Despite the fact that the rulings were issued more than 10 years ago, their implementation by Greece is still pending. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe closely

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<sup>104</sup> Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, 1990, para. 32.6

supervises the execution of the said ECtHR judgments under the name of 'Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases v. Greece' (Application No. 35151/05).

Following to the ECtHR's judgments, the three applicants requested the cancellation of the decision dissolving them (the case of Xanthi Turkish Union) or asked for registration of their associations before the Greek domestic courts. Their applications have been declared inadmissible on the ground that the Code on Civil Procedure does not provide, in civil matters, for the reopening of proceedings following a finding of violation by the ECtHR. On 10 October 2017, the Law No. 4491/2017 was adopted modifying the Code of Civil Procedure. This law has introduced a strict limitation on civic space through terms and restrictions provided in the relevant provisions concerning the protection of national security, public order, the prevention of crime, the protection of health or morals and the protection of rights and freedoms of others for the admissibility of an application of revocation or amendment following an ECtHR judgment to be issued in the future.

Following the adoption of the new law by the Greek parliament, the Xanthi Turkish Union submitted on 4 December 2017 a request to the Thrace Court of Appeal to revoke the judgment validating its dissolution. However, the Court ordered on 22 June 2018 there is no possibility of the re-opening of the proceedings after the first application following the ECtHR's decision. The Xanthi Turkish Union lodged on 30 October 2018 an appeal against this judgment to the Court of Cassation. The association was asked to submit all legal documents it and all other involved parties have submitted since 1984. After a long and hard process of collection of the copies of these legal documents from domestic courts by 19 February 2019, the association lodged its appeal on 25 February 2019 and requested an urgent date for the hearing. The association was informed on 5 April 2019 the Court of Cassation will hear the case of Xanthi Turkish Union in Athens on 20 March 2020. On the other hand, the requests of the other two associations, Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, will be heard by the Thrace Court of Appeal on 25 October 2019. This means further delays in legal proceedings before domestic courts and consequently in the implementation by Greece of the relevant judgments of the European Court.

At the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' human rights meeting in December 2018, the Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases related to the three associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace were also reviewed. The Ministers' Deputies invited the Greek authorities to rapidly take all necessary measures so that the applicants' cases are examined by the domestic courts in full and effective compliance with Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the ECtHR judgments. The Committee decided to resume the examination of these three cases at the first meeting following the delivery of the Court of Cassation's judgment in response to the appeal lodged by the Xanthi Turkish Union, or at its meeting on 23-25 September 2019 at the latest.

We strongly regret that Greece refuses to execute individual and general measures in Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases although it persistently claims that it is considering the most appropriate solution to execute the said ECtHR judgments.

We as ABTTF call on Greece to fully respect the right to freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and take, without any further delay, all necessary measures for the implementation of the ECtHR's judgments regarding the Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases. Thank you for your attention.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakiens Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**  
**2019 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**16-27 September 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session 7: Fundamental freedoms I, including: Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief**

Main contact person(s): Mr. K.us Engin Soyyılmaz  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished delegates and representatives,

In many OSCE documents, the participating States are called on to fully respect freedom of religion or belief of individuals and communities, and to prevent discrimination based on religion or belief. It is especially important to recall the 1990 Copenhagen Document which has established a framework for national minorities throughout the OSCE region.

The right of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which determines its legal status. The obligations assumed by Greece of this treaty include the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

The election of religious leaders was incorporated into Greek domestic legislation in 1920 with a procedure which enabled the Turkish community to select its own religious leaders i.e. muftis in Rodopi, Xanthi and Didymoteicho. However, in violation of the Athens and the Lausanne Treaties guaranteeing the religious autonomy of the Turkish community, Greece appointed muftis under Presidential decree of 24 December 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 which retroactively validated the Presidential decree. Since the Turkish community viewed this as interference in its religious autonomy, it elected its own muftis in Rodopi and Xanthi. Greece does not recognise today the Muftis elected by the Turkish community. In the past, the elected muftis of Rodopi and Xanthi were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. In the cases lodged by them against Greece, the European Court of

Human Rights (ECtHR) ordered there has been a violation of Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

There is a duality today in Western Thrace; the government-appointed muftis and the ones elected by the Turkish community. Greece claims that there is no single, internationally established method for the muftis' assignment and further argues that in all Muslim countries, muftis are appointed by the state, not elected by the community. However, Greece ignores the fact that the mufti election in Greece should be governed by the Treaty of Lausanne which grants the Turkish community religious autonomy. In other words, the mufti election in Western Thrace should be compared to the election of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarch in İstanbul by the Holy Synod, based on the principle of reciprocity provided by the said treaty.

The religious autonomy of the Turkish community has been further undermined by the Presidential decree No. 52/2019 which envisages the restructuring of the three mufti offices in Western Thrace. According to the said decree adopted and entered into force on 11 June 2019, the mufti offices of the Turkish community are completely affiliated to the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and transformed into an ordinary government office. The decree consisting 26 articles envisages the appointment of the personnel to be employed at the mufti offices by the ministry and quite limits the muftis' powers. The regarding decree is contrary to the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which grants the Turkish community in Western Thrace the right to establish and manage its own religious institutions as well as other international law documents on freedom of religion.

We as ABTTF urge Greece to abide by its commitments to fully respect freedom of religion or belief contained in OSCE documents. We call on Greece not to interfere in religious autonomy of the Turkish community, to ensure that it enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as the other known religions in Greece, to recognise the muftis elected by it as its official religious leaders in the region and to develop a mechanism for dialogue with the Turkish community to find solutions for the problems pertaining to freedom of religion or belief.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Greece Right of Reply Session 6**

I would like to exercise my right of reply with regard to the intervention made by the representative of 'Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe' (ABTTF).

First of all, it is to be noted that the above-mentioned NGO continues to use inaccurately the term 'Turkish community' in Thrace instead of Muslim minority which is the correct term used in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne which established the status of the said religious minority in Greece.

It is regretful to see that the Statement by the ABTTF is referring to issues that have already been answered by Greece many times.

Freedom of association is unequivocally, firmly and broadly protected by the Greek Constitution. It applies to all citizens, irrespective of ethnic origin, culture or religion.

In Thrace there is a thriving civil society, comprising a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGO's that have been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded.

As regards the 2008 European Court of Human Rights rulings, Greece has done its utmost in order to enable their implementation by the Greek courts. In particular, in October 2017, the Greek Parliament adopted the law 4491/2017, which introduced an amendment to the Code of Civil Procedure, allowing for the re-examination of the case of minority union by the Greek courts.

Although the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal of Thrace have dismissed the new requests submitted by the minority associations based on Law 4491/2017, an overall assessment of the implementation of this law can only be made after the completion of the ongoing judicial procedures.

In any case the Greek Government has to respect the rulings of the independent Greek judicial system.

It is utterly disappointing to witness once again government NGO's which follow an intentionally misleading strategy, within the OSCE meetings, hoping for unsubstantiated dividends.

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, 16-27 September 2019**

**GREECE  
RIGHT OF REPLY**

**Working session 12: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including address by the  
OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities: – Rights of persons belonging to  
national minorities**

In reply to another, rather repetitive NGO statement, I would like to recall that the Muslim minority in Thrace, the status of which was established by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, consists of three distinct groups, whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin, having the Muslim faith as their common denominator.

We fully respect the principle of individual self-identification. Persons living in Greece are free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. What is not acceptable is the attempt to establish a single ethnic identity for the entire Muslim minority in Thrace, so as to subsume Pomak and Roma persons under a Turkish identity which is not their own.

Our general approach and policies with regard to the Muslim minority in Thrace are based on the Treaty of Lausanne, but also on the implementation of modern human rights treaties, which are applied without discrimination to the members of the Muslim minority, including with regard to freedom of association.

As far as minority education is concerned, there are 123 minority elementary schools in Thrace, hosting more than 4,500 minority students. There are also about 40 public kindergartens in minority villages in Thrace. Since May 2018, a pilot program has been launched in public kindergartens in the region, where, alongside the main educator in the classroom, there are language facilitators who speak the mother tongue of the children belonging to the Muslim minority. This aims at facilitating the integration into the educational system of children who do not speak sufficiently well the Greek language and at better preparing them for minority elementary school, where half of the curriculum is taught in Greek. Currently, the pilot programme is implemented in 12 kindergartens. Minority children in these schools do not have sufficient knowledge of the Greek language, which is the most significant challenge for them. We firmly believe that it is of paramount importance for minority children to learn the language of the country in which they are living, in order for them to be active members of this society.

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, 16-27 September 2019**

**GREECE  
RIGHT OF REPLY**

**Working session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including: – Combating racism, xenophobia, and discrimination – Combating anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Muslims and members of other religions**

In reply to another repetitive statement by the same Organization, I would like to recall that the three Muftis in Thrace are selected, through an open and all-inclusive process, by a pool of distinguished and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the minority, and are subsequently nominated to the Mufti Offices by the state.

This process is fully consistent with the relevant international standards, as well as with the practice followed by other States, including Muslim ones. In fact, it is well known that, internationally, there is not a single method for the appointment of the Muftis. There is no country in the Muslim world where the Muftis are elected directly by the people. Each sovereign country, be it Muslim or non-Muslim, has the right to establish its own process, provided that it is in accordance with the Islamic tradition and religious rights and freedoms.

The so called ‘elected Muftis’ are not officially recognised; despite attitudes of evident disrespect to the existing legislation and an often-provocative attitude, the State does not obstruct their activities, showing maximum tolerance and restraint.

Recent measures adopted by the State have improved significantly the legal and operational framework of the Mufti Offices and further strengthened the protection of the rights of persons belonging to the religious Muslim minority in Thrace.

References to hate crimes against minority members are simply inaccurate. The region of Thrace is an example of harmonious and successful living together of a Christian majority and a Muslim minority in a country where the rule and law and human rights are fully respected.

**Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, 16-27 September 2019**

**GREECE  
RIGHT OF REPLY**

**Working session 14 (specifically selected topic): Hate crime**

Following up on a NGO statement made earlier, I would like to point out that in the recent past some extremist groups in my country have attempted to use both the financial and the unprecedented migration and refugee crises as a pretext for committing despicable criminal acts and for advancing a heinous political agenda. However, both our institutions and the Greek people have successfully resisted such efforts. We have put in place over the years a robust legislative, judicial and operational framework against racism and hate crimes, also in cooperation with ODIHR. Leaders and members of the extremist Golden Dawn party were brought to justice; their trial is now reaching its final stage. In the recent elections, held last July, that party failed to enter Parliament. Furthermore, the unparalleled influx of migrants and refugees has not led to a rise of anti-foreigner sentiment among the Greek population. These are positive developments which encourage us in strengthening our efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination and hate crimes.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2020 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**25-26 May 2020 (online)**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Challenges to Realizing Tolerance and Non-Discrimination and the Impact of Compound Crises**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Hate-motivated attacks, crimes and hate speech are part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons belonging to national minorities, religious groups and other marginalised certain individuals and groups. We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime and hate speech against persons belonging to ethnic and/or national, religious minorities has the potential to exacerbate in times of crisis with a less tolerant attitude towards the other.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, intolerant discourse and scapegoating of minorities has been observed throughout the OSCE region. ODIHR has constantly shared its concern that bias-motivated violence and discriminatory discourse and practices have reached a worrying point across the region. Despite commitments of OSCE participating States racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, racial and ethnic hatred, xenophobia, and discrimination against national or ethnic or religious minorities remain a daily reality across the OSCE region.

As Mr. Max van der Stoel, the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), turned his attention, there are many disputes between minorities and central authorities in Europe which has the potential to escalate. Persons belonging to national/ethnic groups who constitute the numerical majority in one State but the numerical minority in another State are considered as part of bilateral relations between States and may be subject to manifestations of racism, hatred and hate speech on grounds of their race, ethnicity and religion.

Hate speech in politics is part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons with different ethnicity, religion or belief in the Greek political system. The Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is the only official minority group as a religious minority, is considered as representatives of the kinstate Turkey of which very existence is a tool for irredentist foreign policies. Historically, the Turks of Western Thrace were seen as reminiscent of the era of Ottoman yoke. Such views have produced an understanding of the Turkish community as ‘Trojan horses’ which are seen as hindrances to national unity and integrity as well as public order. Turkish MPs in the Greek parliament have been even accused of ‘Turkish spy’ in many occasions.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 did not change this misperception towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace. When Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared a nationwide curfew to prevent the coronavirus on 23 March 2020 due to the heightened risk of coronavirus, on the same day, the village of Echinós (Şahin) in Xanthi was the first village quarantined in the country after a 72-year-old man from the Turkish community in Western Thrace died. After the quarantine of the village of Echinós, Kyriakos Velopoulos, head of the far-right Greek Solution Party, said on Twitter, ‘Echinós is in Quarantine!!! Ankara's spies live there, coming in and out of Turkey! Think about what it is in Erdoğan’s Turkey!’<sup>105</sup>

This political opportunism with racist and discriminatory Statement by the head of the far-right Greek Solution Party targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace through the coronavirus was met with a huge backlash among the Turkish community. The scapegoating of the Turkish community during this time of crisis might exacerbate the hate speech and hate-motivated attacks against the Turkish community both physically and online.

On 12 May 2020, a fountain in the village of Nimfea (Yanıköy) in Komotini, Greece, which was built by a philanthropist belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, was damaged by unidentified persons. According to the newspaper *Gündem*, the fountain plate written in Turkish was removed on Tuesday night on 12 May 2020 and a slogan against the Turks was written with spray paint on the fountain. While shattering the marble plate where the name of the benevolent Western Thrace Turk who built the fountain and the construction date were shown, the unidentified persons wrote the slogan ‘Erdoğan Turks Nazi’ on the fountain wall<sup>106</sup>. We strongly condemn this abominable hate-motivated and racist attack which bears motifs of enmity against Turks and is clearly targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace, and we want the perpetrator to be identified immediately by the police and brought to justice.

Furthermore, it is very important to inform the Turkish community in the mother tongue by governmental authorities. Since there could be difference in how hard the pandemic hit the Turkish community compared to the Greek majority in the country, official information provided in mother tongue in the region of Western Thrace would much help in order to implement special measures due to the virus since there is approximately 150 thousand Turkish people living in this region in the provinces of Rhodope, Xanthi and Evros.

FUEN has conducted a survey between March 31 – April 30 2020 to analyse to what extent communication in minority languages is assured by diverse stakeholders in the Member States of the European Union, as well as among the members of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN). The online questionnaire focused on the availability of information

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<sup>105</sup> <https://twitter.com/velopky>

<sup>106</sup> <https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/7084>

related to COVID-19 in general, healthcare information related to the outbreak, the existence of an emergency hotline operated in minority language and the availability of online education in mother tongue. The survey was completed for 29 minority groups in 18 European countries. Only 21 percent of the countries in the survey provided official information in minority languages<sup>107</sup>. In Greece, there is no official information provided in Turkish in the region, because the government only recognised a religious minority in the region, with the official use of the term ‘Muslim minority in Greece’. The ethnic Turkish identity of the minority is not recognised and associations which bear the word ‘Turkish’ in their titles were dissolved in 1986 and are not registered since then, although there are three ECtHR judgments on violation of the freedom of association in 2007 and 2008.

Due to non-recognition of the ethnic Turkish identity of the minority in the region, Turkish language is not used in any official documents, including official correspondences in the existing minority schools in their communication to their own students or governmental authorities.

Under such circumstances there is no exceptional official information provided in Turkish targeting the people in the region in their decisions to implement confinement policies in specific Turkish villages in the region. General information on the coronavirus outbreak provided most often community organisations as well as minority press. This non-recognition of the community even during the time of the pandemic has deepened the feeling of insecurity and mistrust towards governmental authorities.

As noted in the annotated agenda, in times of crisis, the threat posed by hate speeches and crimes has heightened the sense of fear and uncertainty. This makes it even more important that Greece and all OSCE participating States uphold their commitments to record and investigate hate crimes swiftly in order to strengthen trust to governmental authorities and inform the public in minority language in order to have a proper fight against the virus.

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<sup>107</sup> <https://www.fuen.org/en/article/Do-You-Speak-Corona-Many-European-countries-do-not-offer-information-on-the-pandemic-in-minority-languages>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2020 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**25-26 May 2020 (online)**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: From Early Warning to Early Action: Prevention of Discrimination from Escalation into Tensions or Conflict**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Since 1990, the OSCE has created a large set of human rights and norms and standards that are part of traditional human rights and norms, and it has also developed a number of standards. The Copenhagen Document, with its subsequent document, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe has created a unique framework, comprising a set of norms, rules and standards, is the foundation of the OSCE human dimension as it exists today.

The OSCE participating States have covered a remarkable distance in the OSCE concept of security, where all dimensions of security are viewed as being complementary and mutually supportive and where the security of all is considered as indivisible. In its Helsinki Decisions of July 1992, the OSCE established the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities to be ‘an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage’. This mandate was created largely in reaction to the situation in the former Yugoslavia. However, Mr. Max van der Stoep, the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), turned his attention to the many disputes between minorities and central authorities in Europe which had the potential, in his view, to escalate. In this relation, it is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities.

The Turkish Muslim population in Greece and the Greek Orthodox population in Turkey were subject to population exchange in accordance with the agreement which Turkey and Greece signed. The Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Greek population in İstanbul, Gökçeada(Imbros) and Bozcaada(Tenedos) were exempted from population exchange and become minorities in the territories they live in for centuries. The status of the Turkish

community in Western Thrace and the Greek community in İstanbul is established by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and their rights were guaranteed by several bilateral and multilateral agreements. The Lausanne Peace Treaty (Articles 37-45) cover the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, while Article 45 states that 'the rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory'.

Concerning the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece, the Lausanne Treaty does not give definition of minorities concerned or situate them geographically. On this ground, Greece only recognises a 'Muslim minority in Thrace' and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace on grounds that the Lausanne Treaty only refers to the Muslim minority in the region.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace is officially recognised as 'Muslim minority in Thrace'. Therefore, Greece prohibits to use the word 'Turk' in association names or on official papers in Greece. Even though Turkey-Greece relations have progressed in the post-1999 era, the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace did not change and problems of the Turkish community remain unsolved. Despite improvements in individual human rights in the last two decades, many issues remain to be tackled in the area of minority rights in Greece. The Turkish community is not still seen as equal citizens and still discriminated against.

Recent challenges during the COVID-19 crisis and forms of intolerance against the Turkish community in this trying period affected the Turkish community in a way that they are being scapegoated for the high numbers of cases of COVID in the villages they live due to political statements and differentiated language in the media while reporting cases from the region. Since there is no official information on this vital issue in their own language Turkish due to the non- recognition of ethnic Turkish identity of the only officially recognised minority in the country, Turkish community felt more marginalised and disadvantaged.

Moreover, implementation of discriminatory practices concerning their own minority rights during the COVID-19 pandemic has created counterproductive effect on the Turkish community. Arbitrary restrictions in this time of crisis are questioned by the Turkish community and has increased the sense of fear and mistrust towards governmental authorities.

During the pandemic, the holy Ramadan started. But prohibitive actions against the traditional and cultural values of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece persisted under the pretext of the coronavirus pandemic. The Ramadan drummer announcing the iftar and sahur times was prevented from playing in the Western Thrace, especially in the villages where Turks and Greeks live together. In the villages of Topiros (İnhanlı) and Lefkopetra (Sakarkaya) in Xanthi (İskeçe) province, Ramadan drummers were reportedly warned by the police not to play the drum, otherwise that they would be fined for it. Similar issues regarding playing the Ramadan drum were also reported in other villages which have a mixed population in Xanthi province.

Although the necessary permissions for playing the Ramadan drum were obtained from the municipal administrations by the board of trustees in the villages of Topiros (İnhanlı) and Lefkopetra (Sakarkaya), and there is nothing unlawful, the police warning and hindering to play the Ramadan drum was met with opposition from the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Moreover, due to the measures taken due to the virus, as in previous years, the Turkish community did not meet together at iftar tables or pray together in mosques in the region like other religious groups in the country. However, an imam belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece was called to testify on grounds of having led a collective prayer in the mosque where he is preaching albeit this is banned as a result of the coronavirus outbreak on 25 April 2020. According to the Millet News, in his explanation to the police, Ali Mahmut Paşa who has been working for many years as Imam in Hebilköy (Hloi) village, which is bound to Kozlukebiri (Arriana) Municipality, indicated that there was absolutely no collective prayer within the mosque and that the video which had been shared on social media and shown as an alleged proof dates back at least 5 or 6 years. In his statement to the police station director, Ali Mahmut Paşa said that within the framework of the measures taken in Greece against the coronavirus outbreak, neither prayers nor Friday prayers have been conducted collectively in the village mosque for the last six weeks<sup>108</sup>.

The Appointed Deputy Mufti of Rodopi Cihad Halil designated by the Greek government, appointed new imams to the mosque located in the neighbourhood of Harmanlık in Komotini (Gümülçine) and Hamidiye Mosque in Sapes (Şapçı) albeit the Turkish community in Western Thrace had not made such request and has not shown consent in that respect. Although the imams elected and supported by the community and the board of trustees are serving in both mosques, these appointments by the government-appointed deputy mufti were met with strong criticism for the Turkish community in Western Thrace. The residents of the neighbourhood of Harmanlık started a signature campaign against this appointment by upholding and defending their imam Nihat Kaplan elected by the village community and served under the Mufti elected by the Turkish community.

We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime against persons belonging to national minorities and other marginalised groups threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies and may give rise to wider scale conflict. Therefore, it is the responsibility of OSCE participating States to respect, protect and promote -rights of national minorities and governments should not use the pandemic as a pretext for political opportunism in order to curb existing minority rights and increase political pressure on national minorities in times of crisis.

Greece and all other participating States should review their national integration strategies to ensure that all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion gender or any other status are empowered to engage actively in the process of inclusion by promoting their social, economic, political and cultural participation in society in crisis and post-crisis period. Greece should take result-oriented measures for eliminating discrimination against the Turkish community and improve diversity throughout the system by eliminating prejudices while developing strategies that are inclusive of the Turkish community which would be part of an overall governmental policy for the promotion and protection of minority rights in the country in the post-Corona period.

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<sup>108</sup> <http://www.milletnews.com/view.php?id=1210>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2020 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**22-23 June 2020 (online)**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Freedom of expression and its relation to other fundamental freedoms**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

As the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Lamberto Zannier noted on 22 April 2020 that as governments rush to introduce emergency measures, it is also vital that they remember to include the needs of everyone in society, including persons belonging to national minorities and other marginalised communities.

However, Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, intolerant discourse and scapegoating of minorities has been observed throughout the OSCE region, although the High Commissioner asked authorities to be especially vigilant in monitoring and combatting instances of intolerance and xenophobia and other forms of ‘otherization’ based on identity, ethnicity, language, religion or culture.

A month later, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities noted in its statement on 28 May 2020 that the crisis has exacerbated the vulnerability of persons belonging to national minorities and deepened the already existing inequalities in the Council of Europe member States<sup>109</sup>.

The annual report released on 16 June 2020 by the Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN), which was established in mid-2011 on initiative by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR), notes that the stigmatisation of people with different backgrounds by acts of public authorities, institutions, the media, political parties is an act of racial discrimination and could create of a very dangerous environment that reinforces racist

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<sup>109</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/acfc-statement-covid-19-and-national-minorities-28-05-2020-final-en/16809e8570>

attitudes and prejudices in Greece<sup>110</sup>. The RVRN further notes that racist rhetoric at central and local political levels played a key role in the development of such behaviours, and significantly contributed to the normalisation of xenophobia and intolerance and adds that this is further aggravated when it is affected by institutional racism.

The Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is located at the border region with Turkey and Bulgaria, have been experiencing difficult times during the pandemic. In the province of Xanthi, where almost half of the population is Turks, is among the top five provinces that most affected by COVID-19.

As the Advisory Committee of the FCNM, persons belonging to national minorities have often faced discrimination, hate speech and stigma, as well as a lack of relevant information in minority languages. Intolerant discourse and scapegoating of the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been observed in politics and the media during the pandemic.

The Government does not recognise the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in the region and officially recognises a Muslim minority based on its religious background. Although there is bilingual education in Turkish and Greek languages in schools belonging to the Turkish community, the use of Turkish language is prohibited in public space. For this reason, the government did not provide any information in the Turkish language to combat the virus at the local level, although the Turkish community constitutes the majority in the province of Rhodope.

During the first days of the pandemic, the names of cities of the persons who lost their lives due to COVID-19 were not declared. However, when a 70-year-old Turkish man lost his life due to the virus lost his life in the Mustafçova(Myki) Municipality in Xanthi, all his personal information was declared to the public as the 21st person who lost his life in the pandemic. Subsequently, the village of Şahin(Echinos) was quarantined for 21 days in Xanthi until the measures taken due to the outbreak were loosened. Zümbülmahalle and Arnavutmahalle villages in the Mustafçova Municipality were also quarantined for 14 days.

When Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared a nationwide curfew to prevent the coronavirus on 23 March 2020 due to the heightened risk of coronavirus, on the same day, the village of Echinos (Şahin) in Xanthi was the first village quarantined in the country after a 72-year-old man from the Turkish community in Western Thrace died. After the quarantine of the village of Echinos, Kyriakos Velopoulos, head of the far-right Greek Solution Party, said on Twitter, 'Echinos is in Quarantine!!! Ankara's spies live there, coming in and out of Turkey! Think about what it is in Erdoğan's Turkey!'<sup>111</sup>

The freedom of expression and the right to access to information as an essential condition for accountability must not stigmatise the persons belonging to Turkish community in Western Thrace by governmental authorities and the media while providing information to the public on COVID-19 cases. Because as the RVRN notes, there is a trend in incidents of everyday racist violence which describes the expression of racist behaviours or even racist violence, usually of low intensity, expressed by individuals in the context of everyday life: in public transport, at school, at work, in public services against Greek citizens targeted them as «less» Greeks on grounds of ethnic origin.

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<sup>110</sup> <http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ETHSIA-EKTHESH-2019-english.pdf>

<sup>111</sup> <https://twitter.com/velopky>

After the normalization process in the country on 4 May, the eyes were turned back to Xanthi after a relatively rapid increase in COVID-19 cases. Macedonian - Thrace Minister Theodoros Karaoglu said that if necessary, measures can be taken at the local level in Xanthi to combat the pandemic. However, due to non-recognition of the ethnic Turkish identity of the minority in the region, Turkish language is not used in any official documents, including official correspondences in the existing minority schools in their communication to their own students or governmental authorities. Under such circumstances there is no exceptional official information provided in Turkish targeting the people in the region in their decisions to implement confinement policies in specific Turkish villages in the region. General information on the coronavirus outbreak provided most often community organizations as well as minority press. This non-recognition of the community even during the time of the pandemic has deepened the feeling of insecurity and mistrust towards governmental authorities.

We underline the importance of the freedom of expression and right to access to information in public life in times of crisis and therefore defends the freedom of media. However, we must not forget that racist rhetoric at politics and media plays a key role in the development of racist behaviours, and significantly contributes to the normalization of xenophobia and intolerance. And as noted in the annotated agenda measures aimed at countering disinformation, must respect international human rights obligations and standards, including those concerning the right to privacy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law.

We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime against persons belonging to national minorities and other marginalised groups threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies and may give rise to wider scale conflict.

We call on the Greek government representatives and regional and local representatives as well as media representatives, to refrain from the racist rhetoric that normalises and encourages xenophobic reactions. We recall the recommendation of the RVRN for the effective strengthening of its mechanisms for identifying media hate speech, which may lead to the manifestation of hate crime, as well as the imposition of relevant sanctions.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**  
**2020 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**9-10 November 2020**  
**(Online)**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: The State of Freedom of Religion or Belief in the OSCE region: Challenges and Opportunities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

It is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities. In the Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief, it is noted that States are obliged to respect and to ensure to all individuals subject to their jurisdiction the right to freedom of religion or belief without distinction of any kind. And legislation should be reviewed to assure that any differentiations among religions are justified by genuinely objective factors and that the risk of prejudicial treatment is minimized or totally eliminated.

As regards to autonomy/self-determination of religious/belief organizations, the Guidelines underlined that States should be very reluctant to involve itself in any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the internal organization of a religious group. In Greece, the right of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>112</sup> in Greece to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which determined the legal status of the Turkish and Greek minorities in İstanbul. The obligations assumed by Greece and Turkey under Section III of this Treaty include the right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

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<sup>112</sup> The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is recognized by the Greek State as “Muslim minority in Thrace” on the ground that there is no single ethnic identity for the entire minority and rejects definition of the „Turkish Minority of Western Thrace“, although the ethnic identity of members belonging to the Minority is defined as „Turkish“ in legal documents.

In 1990, Greece abolished the right to freedom to choose its own religious leaders and transferred it to the state by the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs by Presidential Decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors<sup>113</sup>. The Muslim Turkish community members declared it contrary to the religious autonomy and elected their own Muftis as their own religious leaders in Komotini and Xanthi. The fact that the Turkish community do not recognize the government-appointed Muftis indicate that that the current selection process of Muftis by the government is done without its approval and implemented in spite of its opposition.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community in the region. The Turkish community is highly concerned about attempts of intimidation and deterrence by the governmental authorities through juridical investigations and lawsuits against elected religious leaders. Elected Muftis in Rhodope and Xanthi were lodged many files with the charge of the “usurpation of Mufti offices” for religious services they conducted in the region and were fined with prison sentence.

The Presidential Decree 52/2019 published by the Ministry of Education and Religious established the procedural rules for cases under the jurisdiction of the government-appointed Mufti and the adoption of his decisions, and the regulation of issues of organization, establishment and filling of staff positions and the operation of the Mufti Jurisdiction Affairs Directorate in the Mufti Offices. The religious autonomy of the Turkish community has been further undermined by this Presidential decree since the mufti offices are completely affiliated to the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and transformed into an ordinary government office. A former MP belonging to the Turkish community appealed the decree to the Council of State on grounds that the decree was contrary to international agreements and procedural law. The Council rejected the appeal and ruled that there was nothing in the Presidential Decree contrary to the Constitution, international law and the procedural law.

We would like to highlight that the ecclesiastic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, which is the prevailing religion in Greece, are public servants, but they are selected by the Church itself. And, the Jewish Central Board or the Catholic and Protestant Church are free to elect its own religious leaders in Greece. Greece should not unduly interfere in the internal affairs of the Turkish community. The way Muftis are currently appointed by the state contradicts the traditions and self-understanding of the Turkish community. Greece should not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal and should respect the right of the Turkish community to select, appoint and replace its personnel in accordance with its respective requirements and standards in accordance with international human rights documents and norms.

In daily life, nothing about the situation of Turkish community in Western Thrace has changed into better. The fight against the historical prejudices is going on, pig’s heads are being left at the doors of the leaders, cars are being burned and hate speech is being spread<sup>114</sup>. In December 2019, a hatred phrase (“Pig meat is delicious”) was clearly intended to provoke

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<sup>113</sup> Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors, Official Gazette, vol. A., no.11 of February 4, 1991

<sup>114</sup> <https://minorityrights.org/publications/the-turkish-minority-in-western-thrace-the-long-struggle-for-rights-and-recognition-english-greek-and-turkish/>

Turkish community with Islamic faith spray-painted on the outer door of Xanthi Minority School<sup>115</sup>.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, intolerant discourse and scapegoating of minorities has been observed in Greece like most of European countries. On 12 May 2020, a fountain in the village of Nimfea (Yanıköy) in Komotini, Greece, which was built by a philanthropist belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, was damaged by unidentified persons. The fountain plate written in Turkish was removed on Tuesday night on 12 May 2020 and a slogan against the Turks was written with spray paint on the fountain.

During the pandemic, the holy Ramadan started. But prohibitive actions against the traditional and cultural values of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece persisted under the pretext of the coronavirus pandemic. The Ramadan drummer announcing the *iftar* and *sahur* times was prevented from playing in the Western Thrace, especially in the villages where Turks and Greeks live together, although the necessary permissions for playing the Ramadan drum were obtained from the municipal administrations.

Due to the measures taken due to the virus, as in previous years, the Turkish community did not meet together at iftar tables or pray together in mosques in the region like other religious groups in the country. However, an imam belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece was called to testify on grounds of having led a collective prayer in the mosque where he is preaching albeit this is banned as a result of the coronavirus outbreak on 25 April 2020 with an alleged proof of a video which had been shared on social media and shown dates back at least 5 or 6 years<sup>116</sup>.

Recalling that persons belonging to national minorities should have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue, we demand from Greek authorities to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece and recognize the Muftis elected by the community as official religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in the region.

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<sup>115</sup> <https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6354>

<sup>116</sup> <http://www.milletnews.com/view.php?id=1210>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**OSCE**  
**2020 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**  
**9-10 November 2020 (Online)**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: The Role of Civil Society in Advancing the Right to Freedom of religion or**  
**Belief for All**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık  
E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

The OSCE participating States have committed in the Copenhagen Document that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will.

Article 3(1) of the Framework Convention provides similarly that ‘Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice’.

As an autochthonous national minority group, Greece only recognizes Muslim minority in Thrace based on the 1923 Lausanne Treaty and denies existence of an ethnic Turkish minority, although the Turkish community had been active with its associations bearing the word Turkish for about half a century without hindrance. The Government of Greece notes that there is a thriving civil society, comprising a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGO’s that have been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded. However, referring to the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece claims that the Minority is Muslim. Associations whose names include with the words “Pomak” and “Roma” are registered in Greece, but those ones with the word “Turkish” are denied registration. No “Turkish” associations are permitted. Even, some associations with the word “minority” in their names were not allowed on the grounds that it this implies an ethnic Turkish minority. The religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace is guaranteed by the Athens Treaty and the Treaty of Lausanne. Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, the Turkish community in Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in

Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Although Article 40 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty grants this right, matters relating to the administration of religious charitable foundations (vakfs) is another highly contentious issue and the Turkish community does not enjoy its right to manage its charitable foundations since 1967. Vakfs form an essential part of the minority cultural, historical and religious heritage. For decades, they have been serving the religious, cultural and social needs of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace.

The Turkish community is still unable to govern its vakfs and access their funds. It limits the ability of the Turkish community to support the maintenance and improvement of its schools and repairs or building of mosques as well as providing social assistance for those in need. This prevents the Turkish community protecting and practicing their culture, religion and language.

As per the Lausanne Treaty, the government operates two Islamic religious schools in Western Thrace. Religious schools in Western Thrace are historical educational institutions which have been providing religious trainings and training clergymen like imams, muezzins, preachers and muftis. Students of the religious school in Komotini, Hayriye Madrasah, boycotted the reduction in Turkish course in protest against the ministerial decision which reduces the hours in courses taught in Turkish in the curriculum in 2018. Furthermore, in July 2020 the government adopted a new law which envisages the introduction of government-appointed acting muftis who are not recognized by the Turkish community in Western Thrace to the presidency of the school boards of two madrasahs in Komotini and Xanthi. Despite the autonomy granted in education, the government-appointed acting mufti of Rhodope and the government-appointed acting mufti of Xanthi will be heading the school boards of the religious schools in Komotini and Xanthi. The law also provided that the employment contracts of the teachers currently working in the religious schools to be terminated in August.

On the other hand, the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Interior announced in a joint decision that 120 religious' instructors, who will serve under the authority of the government-appointed acting muftis in Western Thrace, will be hired under Law 4115/2013, known as 240 Imams Law, which provided optional Islamic religious instruction in public schools and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the government-appointed muftis. The Ministry announced that if there is a need for, some of the religious instructors who will be assigned within the framework of the "240 Imams Law", that the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been fiercely opposing against from the very beginning, could serve also in religious schools in Komotini and Xanthi.

Freedom of religion also entails the right of individuals and groups to create religious institutions that operate in accordance with their religious status, self-understanding and organization. Religious institutional arrangement is crucial for minorities in order to maintain their existence and survival, and freedom of religion thus entails respect for the autonomy of religious institutions. Internal questions such as the appointment of religious leaders and management of its religious institutions like religious schools and charitable foundations derive from tenets of the faith and the religious autonomy granted to the Turkish community.

ABTTF calls upon Greece;

- to restore religious and educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.
- to repeal Law 4115/2013 and respect freedom of religion or belief and granted religious rights to the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

to restore the right to elect members of the administrative board of the charitable foundations belonging to the Turkish community with a full and effective right to manage them with no interventions by the state or government-appointed muftis.

- to revise its policies concerning the minority schools, including two religious schools in the region, their number and location, management of school councils, recruitment and training of teachers of both Greek and the Turkish curriculum, revision and modernization of textbooks and education materials to be used for both curriculums.

ABTTF calls on all Participating States;

- to create favourable conditions for persons belonging to religious minorities to ensure that they can take their faith-related affairs in their own hands in order to preserve and further develop their religious community life and identity.

## **OTHER OSCE MEETINGS/CONFERENCES**



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**

**Expert Meeting ‘Incitement to Hatred vs. Freedom of Expression: Challenges of combating hate crimes motivated by hate on the Internet’**

**Warsaw, Poland**

**22 March 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

Main contact person(s): Fatma Reşit

E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished representatives  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

In the Greek Constitution, there norms that speak as well for as against the prohibition of hate speech.

On one hand, freedom of expression (Art. 14 I grC) and freedom of press (Art. 14 I and II grC) are guaranteed. In Art. 13 I grC freedom of religion is provided as an inalienable right, which is of great importance if hate speech and the incorporated intolerance within the hate message present itself as part of a religious creed. On the other hand respect and protection of human dignity are proclaimed as a state duty in Art. 2 I grC, while Art. 5 II grC guarantees that in addition to life and liberty, the honour of each person within the Greek territory is protected without discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, language and religious or political views.

Legal restrictions of communicative freedoms, which may be relevant for hate speech, can as well be find in general criminal laws for the protection personal honour ( §§ 361 et seqq GrC) and for the protection of public order ( §§ 183 et seqq grC), as in the 927/1979 numbered law which is addressed specifically against discriminatory remarks on the basis of race, ethnic and origin. Law No. 927/1979 has been amended three times, latest by law no. 2910/2001. However, concerning is the fact, that despite its speciality, law no. 927/1979 has not been applied until today.

The question whether there are laws in Greek legal system, which may be relevant for hate communication to protect human dignity, is negative. In chapter six of the Greek penal code,

which is dedicated to the protection of public order, no provisions can be found, which parallel to public order, protect human dignity.

Art. 14 I grC provides, that anyone can express and distribute his opinion orally, in writing and through the press, 'halting the laws of state'. The enumeration of means of expression are not inclusive. Art. 14 I grC refers to any kind of communication, which are covered specifically in other provisions, including e-mail and internet communication. Until 2001 restriction on the dissemination of facts have been discussed under Art. 14 I grC. After the constitutional amendment in 2001, the right to information has been explicitly provided in Art. 5A grC.

The prohibition of those types of hate speech, which simply – without motivation to certain actions, that would transform them to value judgments – distribute falsehood about alleged inferiority of certain races or the social danger of a group, has now to be examined under Art. 5 A grC. A simple Statement by fact about a group always involves the solicitation of an act or omission, whose mistakes instead of untruths have to be prior. The problem of hate speech or racism in general, however, is rather a problem for the practical and moral, instead of epistemic thinking.

Although law no. 927/1979 refers to personal honour and public policy as subject of protection, it appeals against discriminatory remarks against persons or groups on the basis of race, religion, or ethnic origin. Law no. 927/1979 represents the opinion- specific hate speech regulation. Because of the substantive, law legally protected interest of neutrality, which prevails in Greece, also opinion- specific laws are assumed to be constitutional, unless the requirements of the principle of proportionality cannot be met. Still, law no. 927/1979 has not been examined in court. According to prevailing opinion, the law does not meet the requirements of proportionality. Proponents of a major public interest in combating racism and intolerance, the restriction of freedom of expression can only be proportionate with regard to individual defamation and individual, imminent security endangerment.

In addition, § 198 grPC punishes those, insulting God publicly and maliciously. § 199 grPC punishes those, who publicly and maliciously insult the Eastern Orthodox Church or any other known religion. However, the constituent element of religious freedom in §§ 198, 199 grPC does not protect religious freedoms as such, but the freedom of the individual to choose, to have and to exercise a religion, and to be discriminated on the basis of this religion. Even though the sentiments may be used as evidence for the fact that someone is treated unfairly or unequally in relation to his religious identity, this, however, requires an individual harassment. Consequently, the feelings are rationalized by decline at a cognitive level and signal the loss of the normative- coordinated spheres of freedom.

Therefore, ABTTF urges Greek authorities:

- To determine the condition of racial motivation explicitly in law.
- To introduce a provision into criminal code that provides racial motivation as an aggravating circumstance for all ordinary crimes.
- To ensure measures for the prosecution and punishment of hate crimes.



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**OSCE**

**Expert Meeting ‘Incitement to Hatred vs. Freedom of Expression: Challenges of combating hate crimes motivated by hate on the Internet’**

**Warsaw, Poland**

**22 March 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Ms. Fatma Reşit, Mr. Ercüment Mustafaoğlu

E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
Esteemed Experts  
And NGO Representatives,

Safe use of the Internet remains an important problem in the information society which plays a crucial role in promoting in enhancing citizens’ ability to participate fully in democratic processes. However, safe use of the Internet needs combating the use of the Internet for incitement to racial hatred or racial discrimination, because the widespread circulation of material motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet is worrying in today’s information society.

Aware that freedom of opinion and expression is an essential right in democracies, the circulation of hate material on the Internet still remains a serious concern and needs to be balanced. Therefore, the OSCE and its Participating States should provide adequate legal responses to the hatred propaganda, and they should combat all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, national legislation in most of the OSCE Participating States does not apply to racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and it does not prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to analyse the situation in Greece, where there is an estimated population of 150,000 Turkish Minority lives in the northern region, Western Thrace. In Greece, Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises ‘to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in

discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole grounds of the latter's racial or national origin (or by virtue of article 24 of Law 1419/1984) religion, and, 'to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter's racial or national origin or religion'. Besides, Law 3719/2008 entered into force in November 2008 stipulates that a crime committed on the basis of national, racial or religious hatred, or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation constitutes an aggravating circumstance for sentencing. Nevertheless, on 12 September 2009 Georgios Karatzaferis, President of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), announced his candidacy for the province of Rhodope at a press conference during a visit to the city of Tripoli in Peloponnese, and he stated that 'Thus it will not seem like only the Turkish consulate is serving in this area'. After Karatzaferis' speech, a placard on which 'Remove the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey' is written has been placed in the city centre of Komotini. And, a sign petition for the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Western Thrace has been started via the website named [www.proxeneio-stop.gr](http://www.proxeneio-stop.gr), which is established by the group that placed the placard over the bridge around the city centre in Komotini. And the group and the website are supported by a local newspaper, Antifonitist<sup>117</sup>, which is an indication that the propaganda on the Internet and the hate speech fuelled by racism and discrimination based on the ethnic origin of the Minority in Western Thrace has been intertwined.

The sign petition and the campaign about the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Komotini has had an adverse effect on the Turkish Minority living in the region, and it raised the tension between the minority and the majority which in turn destroys the unity in diversity in the region.

On 21 September 2009, there has been a statement on the website:

***Who needs the Turkish Consulate in our city?***

- *Are there any Turkish nationals in Thrace?*
- *Are there really so many bureaucratic procedures in place – especially after the abolition of visas for Turkey – that would justify the presence of such a highly-staffed and costly service in Komotini?*
- *Are there minority rights issues within modern Greece, a member of the EU, which would require the presence of such a 'guarantor', e.g. those of the Turkish-occupied Kurdistan?*
- *Or does the Lausanne Treaty, which Turkey has turned into a piece of toilet paper from the day it was signed, require the presence of its own violator?*

*The answer is obviously negative to all these questions, as dictated by common sense.*

***Why is it then that the Turkish Consulate exists in Thrace?***

- *Is it to maintain a false flag diversion leading our fellow Muslim citizens to form a closed population that refuses to integrate?*
- *Is it to put in place or manipulate selected minority leaders in order to control the minority?*
- *Is it to contemplate how to 'Turkify' Pomaks and Roma and through this 'ethnic cleansing' to create a 'Turkish minority'?*

The challenge in combating incitement to hatred on the Internet is to find a proper balance between freedom of expression and an effective fight against acts of racist and xenophobic nature. Although national legislation prohibits any acts or activities aiming at racial

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<sup>117</sup> See <http://antifonitis.gr/online/>

discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas through any means, it has a limited application in practice in Greece, like most of the OSCE Participating States. And, it should be noted here that Greece has signed but not ratified yet the Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness of hate on the Internet must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating hate crimes in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. In particular, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) should consider paying more attention to hate crimes on the Internet in the annual OSCE hate crime reports in which it should stress the importance of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, including through the Media and the Internet within strategies based on a variety of measures.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hate on the Internet, while ensuring that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of opinion and expression for all individuals and groups, including minority and/or youth organizations.

In this combat against hate on the Internet, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media should be granted a more active role in promoting both freedom of opinion and expression on the Internet and monitoring the national legislation in the Participating States. The Representative should go further in observing relevant developments in all the Participating States, including early warning when laws or other measures prohibiting speech or crime motivated by hate are enforced in a discriminatory or selective manner for political purposes which can lead to impeding the expression of alternative opinions and views. The Representative should also be in close cooperation with NGOs in monitoring the Internet for hate crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim content.

In light of the above information, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) request Greek authorities:

- ensure that relevant national legislation applies also to racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences;
- set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred via the Internet.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thracians in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
Member of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  
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**OSCE**

**Expert Meeting ‘Incitement to Hatred vs. Freedom of Expression: Challenges of combating hate crimes motivated by hate on the Internet’**

**Warsaw, Poland**

**22 March 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracians in Europe**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı, Ms. Fatma Reşit, Mr. Ercüment Mustafaoğlu

E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,

Distinguished Representatives

Esteemed Experts

And NGO Representatives,

In modern society Internet has a very large role to play, so much that people’s lives have become dependent on it. That being said internet has also bring with it a number of problems which have yet to be resolved. Being able to control all the information that is distributed through the internet is a very large task as there are millions of users worldwide. To be able to control such activities social network sites have to be able to enforce new strategies in order to control the information that is shared within their portals. Online forums and major global socialising websites have to be monitored by independent sources as well as its own security systems.

Internet-related hate crimes can be caused by a number of different factors but the most dominant one is the political climate which a region faces and the way this climate is portrayed to the public by the media sources. The media has a large role to play for such crimes as people often get offended by what they read or see on the media which, results in actions being taken with anger and hatred. There is no doubt that people should freely be able to express their political views, but this should not result in insults regarding an individual’s ethnicity or their beliefs. We are able to see many examples of media coverage’s which provoked hate crimes on the internet, it has to be remembered that people are able to express their opinions more freely on the internet than the real life, as they do not need to reveal their personal information. Individuals are aware that these crimes are more likely to be overseeing on the internet community, so they do not hesitate to take such actions; where as in the real community which they live in these sorts of antisocial behaviour will be addressed to with serious consequences. Therefore, such systems need to be adapted to the information

community to address this issue, if the problem is to be solved same strict procedures needs to be put in place to monitor and control the internet community.

For the case of Western Thrace Turkish minority, hatred crimes have been long ongoing physically, many examples of such is evident, as the attacks on Sunne Mosques, journalist and the verbal attacks towards the republic of Turkey consulate in Komotini. These physical attacks then continue on the internet community with discussion boards' social networking websites and the issue is ongoing. Earlier I mentioned the fact that the media has a large role to play on such issues, Ethnos newspaper which is known for its radical views has published an article on 19 January 2010, which touched on the subject that students who were members of the Western Thrace Turkish minority were creating and using socialising websites in order to form an independent state within the region. With this article were screen shots of the groups and websites also names of the individuals involved. Not only there is no evidence of truth in such an article, but it also provokes individuals to act to such groups and people. As a result, a number of racial attacks were made on such groups on the global network site 'Facebook' and individuals were also attacked via emails and messages. Therefore, the problem does not only limit itself to the internet community, it is the ongoing thread of reactions and internet as its final destination. If the problem is to be solved it needs to start from the origin of its source, media sources need to set an example rather than make examples to target.

Another major issue is regarding internet blogs and forums, there are many examples of such websites which contain very disturbing phrases of hatred attacks. Such websites and its administrators post up subjects which provokes individuals to insult ones beliefs or ethnic origins, examples of such websites can be seeing in Greece which continually target Western Thrace Turkish minority. (<http://www.stoxos.gr/>, <http://www.e-grammes.gr/>, <http://www.greekalert.com/>) Also it is very clear that there are strong bonds and cooperation between the websites, similar topic is posted on a number of forums, meaning that a wider profile of individuals can gain access to such blogs. Forums of the kind can also be found regarding Turkish Greek relations, most posts are in English and often turns into 'heated arguments' as it is described, which is a polite term used for the insults which is contained within the forums. (<http://www.greekalert.com/>)

It is very clear such websites are designed to provoke feelings of hatred also that they appeal to large number of people; a strong action needs to be taken towards such forums and blogs to address the issue.

In conclusion, government bodies need to be able to introduce such legislation to target internet hate crimes and to make public aware that it is a criminal activity to take such actions. Also, media organizations need to be aware of the causes of its publications as there are many examples that individuals perspectives can change as the result of such articles or other types of media.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakiens Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**

**Copenhagen Anniversary Conference**

**'20 years of the OSCE Copenhagen Document: Status and future perspectives'**

**Copenhagen, Denmark**

**10-11 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Democratic processes – Elections and human rights**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı

E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,

Distinguished Representatives

And NGO Representatives,

This year, the OSCE, is commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the human dimension of the CSCE, the Copenhagen Document. Since 1990, the OSCE has created a large set of human rights and norms and standards that are part of traditional human rights and norms, and it has also developed a number of standards. The Copenhagen Document, with its subsequent document, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe has created a unique framework, comprising a set of norms, rules and standards, is the foundation of the OSCE human dimension as it exists today.

The OSCE participating States have committed in the Copenhagen Document that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. I would like to remind that the right to freedom of assembly and association of national minorities is a prerequisite of open and democratic societies. However, the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to the freedom of association does present a major problem in social and political life of the Minority. There are three cases which have been brought before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the dissolution and refusal to register associations established by the persons belonging to Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece:

35151/05 Bekir-Ousta and others, judgment of 11/10/2007, final on 11/01/2008

26698/05 *Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and others*, judgment of 27/03/2008, final on 29/09/2008  
34144/05 *Emin and others*, judgment of 27/03/08, final on 01/12/2008

These cases concern the dissolution or refusal to register the applicant associations by the competent courts on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece. The European Court noted that the contested measure rested only on a simple suspicion concerning the true intentions of the founders of the association and concerning the actions that the association might pursue once it began to operate. The European Court also noted that even if the real aim of the associations was to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece; this could not in itself constitute a threat to a democratic society.

In all these cases, the European Court of Human Rights concluded that the finding of a violation of Article 11 constituted sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage sustained. Despite the three judgements by the European Court of Human Rights, the right of the Turkish Minority to the freedom of association is still not guaranteed by the state authorities.

Lawsuit filed by Xanthi Turkish Union before the Xanthi Civil Court of First Instance to retrieve its legal status as of before 1983 ended up negatively. On 30 September 2009, the Thrace Court of Appeal rejected the application of the Union on the grounds that it is not envisaged in the procedural law of Greek civil code that the regarding court judgment already taken is not altered in this manner by ECHR. Hence, both applications of Xanthi Turkish Union for restitution of its legal rights to the Greek court authorities were rejected. On 30 September 2009, Thrace Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of Xanthi Turkish Union on the ground that Greek rules of civil procedure do not require decision of the ECHR to be directly implemented. On 27 October 2009, Thrace Court of Appeal decided to adjourn the case of Xanthi Turkish Union to the date of 8 October 2010.

Furthermore, on 4 February 2010, the Komotini Civil Court of First Instance refused the application of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi, which had applied to the ECHR after its request for registration had been rejected by Greek courts, dismissed its appeal for the registration. The Civil Court of First Instance refused the application of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi with the justification that none of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), excluding criminal cases, are required to be implemented in the Greek domestic law. After the decision of ECHR in the case of *Emin and Others v. Greece* (application no. 34144/05), which convicted Greece that it had had violated Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi had applied to the Rhodope Civil Court of First Instance. But in June 2009, the Court had stated the in validity of the case due to improper application, because Orhan Hacıbram, lawyer of the association, was not registered in the province of Rhodope, but in the prefecture of Xanthi.

I would like to state that associations which bear the title of ‘Turkish’ are still not registered, although associations that bear the title of ‘Roman’ and/or ‘Pomak’ are registered by Greek authorities. Not only the associations which bear the title of ‘Turkish’, but the title of ‘Minority’ is not being registered in Greece, although the ECHR ruled that Greece violated the freedom of association of Evros Minority Youth Association in the case of *Bekir-Ousta and Others vs. Greece* (No. 35151/05). On 9 December 2008, the First Instance Court of

Alexandroupolis rejected the application of the Evros Minority Youth Association to be registered within the framework of relevant ECHR decision on the ground that the decisions of ECHR are not obligatory regarding the Greek domestic law and they do not necessarily require the Greek authorities to register the association. Furthermore, on 7 December 2009, the Thrace Court of Appeal rejected the petition for foundation of the Western Thrace Minority Educational and Cultural Association of South Evros, which applied for registration of the association in April 2009. The Thrace Court of Appeal rejected the petition for establishment of the association, relying on the decision of the Alexandroupolis Civil Court of First Instance. Alexandroupolis Civil Court of First Instance had rejected the petition on the ground that the word "minority" in its title does have a vague meaning. Afterwards, Western Thrace Minority Educational and Cultural Association of South Evros had applied to the Thrace Court of Appeal in May 2009. After the decision of the Court of Appeal, the association announced that it would move the case to the Supreme Court. The final decision is still pending.

The effective participation in public affairs includes the right of the freedom of association. The OSCE participating States, including Greece, have committed in the Copenhagen Document that they will respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection of the identity of such minorities. Therefore, participating States should guarantee that persons belonging to national minorities can exercise and enjoy their rights individually as well as in community with other members of their group.

The OSCE with its institutions and bodies should monitor and report the situation in participating State and advance co-operation with non-governmental organizations on reporting of human rights violation to the police and improve the quality of data collection.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**  
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**Copenhagen, Denmark**

**10-11 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**

**Session III: National Minorities**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Fatma Reşit, Ms. Melek Kırmacı

E-mail(s): [fatma.resit@abtff.org](mailto:fatma.resit@abtff.org), [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,

Distinguished Representatives

And NGO Representatives,

This year, the OSCE, is commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the human dimension of the CSCE, the Copenhagen Document. Since 1990, the OSCE has created a large set of human rights and norms and standards that are part of traditional human rights and norms, and it has also developed a number of standards. The Copenhagen Document, with its subsequent document, the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe has created a unique framework, comprising a set of norms, rules and standards, is the foundation of the OSCE human dimension as it exists today.

The OSCE participating States have covered a remarkable distance in the OSCE concept of security, where all dimensions of security are viewed as being complementary and mutually supportive and where the security of all is considered as indivisible. In its Helsinki Decisions of July 1992, the OSCE established the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities to be 'an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage'. This mandate was created largely in reaction to the situation in the former Yugoslavia. However, Mr. Max van der Stoep, the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), turned his attention to the many disputes between minorities and central authorities in Europe which had the potential, in his view, to escalate. His involvement has focused primarily on those situations involving persons belonging to national/ethnic groups who constitute the numerical majority in one State but the numerical minority in another State, thus engaging the interest of governmental authorities in each State. In this relation, it is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990

Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities.

In its recommendations, the HCNM has encouraged and facilitated the adoption by participating States of specific measures related to national minorities and the standards the HCNM has promoted have been interpreted specifically to ensure the coherence of their application in open and democratic States. Noting that OSCE commitments are not legally binding, but rather political commitments, the OSCE has created a sort of mini treaty of political standards on national minorities for the OSCE area.

Dear participants,

The implementation of OSCE commitments by participating States and the results achieved in further standard-setting and interpretation of minority standards is still challenging. All the areas where national minority commitments have been developed requires a detailed analysis in the 20th anniversary of the Copenhagen Document, however, a focused debate on the progress and challenges in the field of participation of national minorities in public life is rather advised in this special meeting.

Full and effective political participation of national minorities is an essential component of a peaceful and democratic society, and the electoral law or electoral system does have a great impact on the full and effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities. The participation of persons belonging to national minorities in the national Parliaments requires a detailed examination of electoral law and, in particular, of the influence of the electoral systems on the representation of political groups.

In the framework of its work on the participation of persons belonging to national minorities in public life, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) underlines in a document on '[Electoral law and national minorities](#)' that only few states provide for specific rules on the representation of minorities in the elected bodies.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in society's policy and decision-making system. After the Turkish Minority elected an independent deputy in 1989, a new electoral law was introduced in Greece, which set a threshold of 3% of the nationwide vote for a party and for an independent candidate to be represented in the Parliament. Under the current electoral law of 'reinforced proportionality', political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament unless they obtain at least 3 % of the votes throughout the country, although they may have enough votes to get electoral seats in specific electoral districts. This provision makes it almost impossible for members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to be elected to the Parliament, unless they run candidates with mainstream parties. In 1993, the independent minority candidate who had the largest vote among all Greek and Turkish candidates in Rhodope was unable to be elected to the Parliament, although the candidate exceeded the district's electoral quota for a seat.

The representation of the minority at local level is another deep-rooted question. Law 2240/1994, which reduced the number of prefectures and sub-districts, established enlarged electoral districts in Western Thrace which in turn caused a decrease in number of elected representatives from the Minority, because the election law Xanthi with neighbouring Kavala and Drama, and Rhodope with neighbouring Evros, where Turkish Minority is densely populated. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated in its first report that 'the redistribution of the electoral districts in 1994 had adversely influenced the chances for the election of Muslim prefects or prefectural councillors'.

Have been voted and adopted in principle in the Parliament in May 2010, the Kallikratis Plan, which re-establishes local administration with the aim of creation of strong and viable municipalities, is of vital importance for the participation and representation of the minority in national and local level in the sense that it reduces the number of municipalities from 1034 to less than 370. The Kallikratis Plan reduces the number of municipalities and communities in the region of Thrace, which is comprised of Xanthi(10), Rhodope(12), Evros(13), from 35 to 13 in total. The Plan establishes new municipalities of Komotini, Maroneia, Iasmos and Arriana in Rhodope(4), Xanthi, Myki, Dimokritos and Topeiros in the city of Xanthi(4) and Alexandroupolis, Soufli, Didymoteicho, Orestiada, Samothrace in Evros(5).

It is intended that local government elections are to take place on 14 November 2010 under the new set-up of fewer municipalities. The new municipal and regional authorities will then be created on January 1, 2011 with the newly elected officials. This brings the question of adequate and fair participation and representation of the minority people at local and national level. The Government should ensure that the Minority, which establishes the majority in the region of Thrace, is participated and represented in local and national bodies, and it should engage in active dialogue with representatives of the minority in this process.

Dear colleagues,

Since inadequate representation of minority groups in decision making system ensues impediments to the full enjoyment of many civic, cultural, economic, political and social rights, full and effective participation in public and political life is of vital importance in expressing and maintaining identities of minorities. Therefore, a mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for national minorities to raise their own voices. Such bodies might also include special purpose committees for addressing such issues as housing, land, education, language, and culture. The composition of such bodies should reflect their purpose and contribute to more effective communication and advancement of minority interests.

Last but definitely not least, OSCE participating States, including Greece should create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalized, open, sincere and continuous dialogue based on mutual respect and tolerance with the representatives of the minorities on issues which interest to them.

## **THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THRACE: A GENERAL OUTLINE**

### **A. The Muslim Minority in Thrace: religion as the common denominator**

The Muslim minority in Thrace consists of three distinct groups whose members are of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin. Each of these groups has its own spoken language, cultural traditions and heritage, which are fully respected by the Greek state.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that establishes the status of the minority in Thrace refers to it as being a religious minority - the Muslim faith being the common denominator of the aforementioned components.

### **B. Legal basis and basic principles**

Greece fully respects its obligations under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, as well as contemporary human rights Treaties.

In conformity, in particular, with the principles of equality before the law and equal enjoyment of civil rights, persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same obligations as their fellow citizens.

Indeed, persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace actively participate in all aspects of everyday, public, civil and political life on the regional as well as the national level.

### **C. The introduction and adoption of concrete measures – an overview**

A number of important measures in favour of the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace were adopted by the Greek Governments in recent years.

These measures attest Greece's commitment to further pursue, promote and enhance the integration of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace to the wider society they live in and prosper.

Due to its cardinal importance, particular attention was paid to the field of education. Other measures also adopted aim at promoting and safeguarding the cultural identity of the persons belonging to the Muslim minority and facilitating their access to employment in the public sector.

Additional steps have also been initiated in order to enable members of the Muslim minority, especially women and young persons, to be beneficiaries of nationwide programmes and projects, co-financed, in some cases, by the European Union, designed for vulnerable social groups, focusing, in particular, on issues of gender equality, combating racism and xenophobia and promoting equal opportunities, access to employment and inter-cultural dialogue.

#### **D. The right to education**

*-Pre-school Education:* in keeping with international and EU educational standards and contemporary trends, the various activities introduced at public kindergartens serve as a tool for the smooth transition to primary education. Kindergarten teachers that are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace are encouraged to work at kindergartens in areas where there is an increased number of Muslim students<sup>118</sup>.

*-Primary and Secondary Education / Public vs Minority Education:* In accordance with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Greece guarantees the proper functioning of the existing minority schools<sup>119</sup> (194 primary minority schools, 2 secondary and 2 Quranic schools) in Thrace.

An increasing number of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace are showing a preference for the public educational system<sup>120</sup>. The Greek state has successfully accommodated this preference, while at the same time offering courses aimed at preserving the cultural and linguistic characteristics of persons belonging to the minority who attend public schools.

Indeed, Turkish language courses have been introduced, as a pilot programme, to public schools curricula in Thrace, as an optional language course. At the same time, Greek language & civilization courses are available for Muslim parents. This two-tier approach has proven useful to both students and parents who are members of the Muslim minority.

*-Higher Education:* A 0.5% quota for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes & Institutions of students who are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace has been introduced. The obvious advantages of this measure are the promotion of further integration of persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace into wider society, in an effective and inclusive way and the improved access to the job market.

#### **E. Religious Freedom - The Muftis & the Application of the Holy Islamic Law in Thrace**

*-The Muftis selection process:* There is no tradition for the election of Muftis in Thrace. Law 1920 / 1991, regulating the status of Muftis, provides that the Muftis in Thrace are selected following fully transparent procedures.

By virtue of the 1920 / 1991 Law, the selection procedure of the Muftis takes place with the active participation of prominent Muslim personalities of the local society.

The integrity and transparency of the process is also important given the judicial authority bestowed on the Muftis on certain matters of family and inheritance law.

It should be noted that members of the Muslim minority also have the option to take their legal cases pertaining to family and inheritance law to the country's Civil Courts. These Courts also review the decisions taken by the Muftis within their jurisdiction in order to determine their compatibility with and non-contradiction to the Greek Constitution. Greece

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<sup>118</sup> Currently, the number of university-educated kindergarten teachers that are members of the Muslim minority in Thrace is still low, however it is expected that this will change in the near future.

<sup>119</sup> These schools are not private; They are supported and funded by the Greek state.

<sup>120</sup> This is also consistent with international trends in this respect, considering the comparative advantages of the public – as opposed to minority – educational structures.

takes seriously into account the need to strengthen the substantive review and control by domestic Courts.

- *Appointment of religious teachers – Extension of benefits*: 240 religious faith teachers were appointed to the three Mufti Offices, following a Law (3536) adopted early in 2007 by the Ministry of Education, Life-Long Learning and Religion. This very substantial appointment of religious faith teachers aimed at efficiently accommodating the spiritual needs of the Muslim community in Thrace. In line with the principles of equal rights and equal opportunities and by virtue of the aforementioned law, the selected Muslim spiritual elders have access to a state salary, if they so choose, and to health and retirement benefits, as is the case with their Christian religious counterparts.

The provisions of Law 3536/2007 extended these benefits to the preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran. The option to benefit from the afore-mentioned provisions is also offered to the Imams (Muslim clerics), as they are also preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran.

Allowing for the provisions of the 3536/2007 Law to include the preachers and teachers of the Holy Quran as beneficiaries is widely perceived as a means to facilitate their unimpeded devotion to their spiritual duties, thus further contributing to the efficient accommodation of the religious needs of the Muslim community in Thrace.

-*The Muslim Foundations (Wakifs)*: By virtue of the new law 3647/2008 on the administration and the management of the Muslim Foundations in Thrace, the members of the three main Management Committees are to be elected. This was a longstanding request of the Muslim minority, met by the Greek state.

In 2007, the Muslim Foundations were exempted from submitting the Tax Declarations on Income, Land Property and Major Land Property of previous years. As a result, their accumulated registered debts, fines and mortgages were written off.

As of 2008, the Muslim Foundations are exempted from paying the Major Land Property tax for property that is being used for the charitable purposes of the Foundations.

## **F. Participation in public and political life:**

A quota of 0.5 % to the State exams system for civil service has been established in favour of persons belonging to the Muslim minority with the obvious intention to enhance their active participation in the public sector.

In almost all successive parliamentary elections held in Greece since 1927, candidates belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace have been elected as members of the Parliament either with the governing party or the opposition or, in most cases, on both sides of the chamber. Currently, there are two MPs members of the Muslim minority in Thrace, both elected with the governing party<sup>121</sup>. No restriction exists as to a possible creation of a party by members of the Muslim minority. Such a party's access to the Parliament will be subject to acquiring the 3% of votes of the electoral body, as is the case with every other political party in Greece. It should be noted that the specific percentage required for a party to gain seats in the Hellenic Parliament is in line with what is internationally in force and was introduced for political stability purposes.

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<sup>121</sup> Overall, sixteen candidates - members of the Muslim minority in Thrace were included in the electoral lists of almost all political parties that participated in the October 2009 national elections.

-The participation of persons belonging to the Muslim community in Thrace at all levels of the region's Local Administration is highly encouraged. Following the local administrations elections of 2006, a total number of about 240 persons belonging to the minority were elected or appointed to a wide range of positions (from Vice Prefects to Mayors and Town Counsellors etc).

### **G. The right to freedom of association**

There is a thriving civil society comprising a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGOs that have been registered by the competent courts and operate unimpeded, thus preserving, highlighting and promoting all aspects of the cultural, educational and economic life of the minority. Three judgments of the ECtHR on an equal number of associations' cases have been rendered. At present, the three cases are pending before the competent Greek Judiciary Authorities. The Greek Government is considering ways to implement the judgments of the ECtHR.

### **H. Respect for the cultural diversity and heritage in Thrace**

-The Greek Government is endeavouring to preserve the distinct cultural heritage of all three components of the Muslim minority in Thrace. This commitment is often challenged by sometimes forceful tactics and methods pursued by certain individuals promoting their own agendas at the expense of the harmonious co-existence of the population in Thrace, irrespectively of their religious beliefs.

-The Government is committed to undertaking and sponsoring initiatives that highlight inter-cultural dialogue, integration and social coherence, including through projects in the context of the EU. An example of such a project is the initiative to establish Youth Councils, with the participation and active involvement of young Christians & Muslims alike, as part of the Local Administration network in Thrace.

-In particular with respect to the cultural heritage and sense of identity of that component of the minority that is of Turkish origin, an increasing number of cultural and artistic events and festivities, with the participation of artists from Turkey, were hosted in Thrace by municipal authorities. Cultural co-operation between local authorities from both sides of the border is being constantly strengthened.

### **I. Freedom of expression and freedom of the media**

The freedoms of expression and media, the existence of pluralistic media and the free flow of information constitute a basic element of every democratic society. Seven (7) minority radio stations, nine (9) minority newspapers and nine (9) minority magazines are part of an open and pluralistic media environment in Thrace, which functions without restrictions.

### **J. A concluding point**

The Greek Government attaches great importance to the dialogue with local society. This dialogue is an all-inclusive process and aims at promoting and enhancing prosperity, stability and equal opportunities for all Greek citizens. It is through this process with the citizens, irrespectively of their religious beliefs, that the Greek Government will continue to seek further ways and means to enhance their progress, prosperity and well-being.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
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**Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship**  
**Civil Society Preparatory Meeting ahead of the High-level**  
**Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**  
**Astana, Kazakhstan**  
**28 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

**Session I: Hate motivated incidents and crimes: the role of civil society in assisting**  
**implementation of OSCE commitments**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
Esteemed Experts  
And NGO Representatives,

The OSCE participating States, concerned by the proliferation of acts of racial, ethnic and religious hatred, xenophobia and discrimination, stress their determination to condemn, on a continuing basis, such as acts against anyone. Further, the participating States did declare in Geneva 1991 that they will further take effective measures, including the adoption of laws that would prohibit acts that constitute incitement to violence based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including policies to enforce such laws.

Since hate crimes or bias-motivated crimes occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her membership in a certain social group, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace expresses its concern over the rise in recent years of acts of incitement to hatred, which have targeted Turkish Minority and persons belonging to the Minority, whether involving the use of print, audio-visual or electronic media or any other means, and emanating from a variety of sources.

Article 5(2) of the Greek Constitution states that 'All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy full protection of their life, honour and liberty irrespective of nationality, race or language and of religious or political beliefs', there is, however, no direct provision in the Greek Constitution which prohibits discrimination on the

grounds of ethnicity or nationality, religion, language.

The Criminal Code of Greece does not contain provisions which specifically the racist or other bias-motivated actions of the offender to be taken into consideration by the courts as an aggravating circumstance when sentencing, although the Greek authorities does claim that the Criminal Code takes the motives of crimes or bias-motivated crimes into consideration when determining the sentence. However, the law does not specifically stipulate that, for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constituted an aggravating circumstance.

Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence towards individuals or groups because of their racial, national or religious origin, through public written or oral expressions; and prohibits the establishment of, and membership in, organisations which organise propaganda and activities aimed at racial discrimination. However, as of 2003, no convictions had been attained under the law.

In 2005, Law on the ‘Implementation of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation’ was adopted. Moreover, Article 16 (1) of Law 3304/2005, which amended Article 3 of Law 927/1979, provides that ‘whoever violates the prohibition of discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnic or racial origin or religious or other beliefs is punished with six months’ imprisonment and a fine of €1,000–5,000’. However, the above-mentioned criminal legislation has until now, had limited application in practice. Because 3304/2005 prohibits direct or indirect discrimination, it should however be noted that a difference of treatment based on a characteristic related to racial or ethnic origin, is not deemed as ‘discriminatory’ provided that the aim pursued is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate (Article 5). This loophole leads a more limited effect in prevention of discrimination.

The National Commission for Human Rights notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups. Today, there is few prosecutions and convictions under the criminal law provisions addressing racist offences, although a few exemplary penalties have been imposed. However, racist incidents have occurred in Greece - including racist statements made in public or reported in the press, and acts of racist violence - and that such incidents have not been prosecuted or indeed given all due attention by the Greek authorities. The problem is that the interpretation of the notion of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has experienced violence and attacks which are motivated by hatred against its ethnic background. On 19 November 2009, İbrahim Baltalı, owner of the journal *Rodop Rüzgârı* and the website *Burası Batı Trakya*, was attacked by a group of fanatic Greeks while he was following the lawsuit filed with the claim that Hara Nikopoulou, Greek teacher serving at the Minority school in the village of *Büyük Derbent*, had been battered by Osman Kasayka. İbrahim Baltalı was attacked at the exit of the court building by a group of fanatic Greeks who were following the suit to support Hara Nikopoulou. Baltalı unsuccessfully tried to shelter at a place near

the court building and he survived through police intervention. He was injured as a result of the assaulters' beat and brought to the Alexandroupolis Faculty of Medicine for treatment.

The properties and mosques and associations established by persons belonging to the Turkish Minority are targeted in violent attacks. On 20 May 2010, some gravestones in the cemeteries of Kahveci and Kirmahalle in the city Komotini, Greece have been destroyed by an unknown person or a group of persons. The recent incident is that an attack took place against the Turkish Youth Union of Komotini, on March 21, 2010. During the attack on Sunday night around 03:00 am, an unidentified person or persons broke the windows of the building with paving stones.

ABTTF calls the OSCE participating States, including Greece to:

- Guarantee that violent crimes on the grounds of the victim's race, religion, ethnicity, gender, or other similar status are taken into consideration by the courts as an aggravating circumstance, when sentencing the offender.
- Consider that ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination is included in their national criminal legislation.
- Conduct outreach and education efforts to persons or groups with different background in order to combat hate incidents and crimes, advance co-operation with non- governmental organizations on reporting of hate crimes to the police and improve the quality of data collection, so that Governments and civil society could actively engage in implementation of OSCE commitments.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship**  
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**Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**  
**Astana, Kazakhstan**  
**28 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session III: Challenging intolerant discourse**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kirmacı  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
Esteemed Experts  
And NGO Representatives,

Safe use of the Internet remains an important problem in the information society which plays a crucial role in promoting in enhancing citizens' ability to participate fully in democratic processes. However, safe use of the Internet needs combating the use of the Internet for incitement to racial hatred or racial discrimination, because the widespread circulation of material motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet is worrying in today's information society.

Aware that freedom of opinion and expression is an essential right in democracies, the circulation of hate material on the Internet still remains a serious concern and needs to be balanced. Therefore, the OSCE and its Participating States should provide adequate legal responses to the hatred propaganda, and they should combat all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, national legislation in most of the OSCE Participating States does not apply to racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and it does not prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences.

Internet related hate crimes can be caused by a number of different factors but the most dominant one is the political climate which a region faces and the way this climate is portrayed to the public by the media sources. The media has a large role to play for such

crimes as people often get offended by what they read or see on the media which, results in actions being taken with anger and hatred. There is no doubt that people should freely be able to express their political views, but this should not result in insults regarding an individual's ethnicity or their beliefs. We are able to see many examples of media coverage's which provoked hate crimes on the internet, it has to be remembered that people are able to express their opinions more freely on the internet than the real life, as they do not need to reveal their personal information. Individuals are aware that these crimes are more likely to be overseeing on the internet community, so they do not hesitate to take such actions; where as in the real community which they live in these sorts of antisocial behaviour will be addressed to with serious consequences. Therefore, such systems need to be adapted to the information community to address this issue, if the problem is to be solved same strict procedures needs to be put in place to monitor and control the internet community.

ABTTF would like to analyse the situation in Greece, where there is an estimated population of 150,000 Turkish Minority lives in the northern region, Western Thrace. In Greece, Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises 'to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole grounds of the latter's racial or national origin(or by virtue of article 24 of Law 1419/1984) religion, and, 'to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter's racial or national origin or religion'. Besides, Law 3719/2008 entered into force in November 2008 stipulates that a crime committed on the basis of national, racial or religious hatred, or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation constitutes an aggravating circumstance for sentencing. Nevertheless, on 12 September 2009 Georgios Karatzaferis, President of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), announced his candidacy for the province of Rhodope at a press conference during a visit to the city of Tripoli in Peloponnese, and he stated that 'Thus it will not seem like only the Turkish consulate is serving in this area'. After Karatzaferis' speech, a placard on which 'Remove the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey' is written has been placed in the city centre of Komotini. And, a sign petition for the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Western Thrace has been started via the website named [www.proxeneio-stop.gr](http://www.proxeneio-stop.gr), which is established by the group that placed the placard over the bridge around the city centre in Komotini. And the group and the website are supported by a local newspaper, Antifonitist, which is an indication that the propaganda on the Internet and the hate speech fuelled by racism and discrimination based on the ethnic origin of the Minority in Western Thrace has been intertwined. The sign petition and the campaign about the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Komotini have had an adverse effect on the Turkish Minority living in the region, and it raised the tension between the minority and the majority which in turn destroys the unity in diversity in the region.

Another major issue with regard to internet blogs and forums, there are many examples of such websites which contain very disturbing phrases of hatred attacks. Such websites and its administrators post up subjects which provokes individuals to insult ones beliefs or ethnic origins, examples of such websites can be seeing in Greece which continually target Western Thrace Turkish minority. It is very clear that there are strong bonds and cooperation between the websites, similar topic is posted on a number of forums,

meaning that a wider profile of individuals can gain access to such blogs. Forums of that kind can also be found regarding Turkish- Greek relations, most posts are in English and often turns into ‘heated arguments’ as it is described, which is a polite term used for the insults which is contained within the forums(<http://www.greekalert.com/>). Since such websites appeal to large number of people, they may easily provoke feelings of hatred.

The challenge in combating incitement to hatred on the Internet is to find a proper balance between freedom of expression and an effective fight against acts of racist and xenophobic nature. Although national legislation prohibits any acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas through any means, it has a limited application in practice in Greece, like most of the OSCE Participating States. And, it should be noted here that Greece has signed but not ratified yet the Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness of hate on the Internet must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating hate crimes in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. In particular, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) should consider paying more attention to hate crimes on the Internet in the annual OSCE hate crime reports in which it should stress the importance of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, including through the Media and the Internet within strategies based on a variety of measures.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hate on the Internet, while ensuring that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of opinion and expression for all individuals and groups, including minority and/or youth organizations.

In this combat against hate on the Internet, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media should be granted a more active role in promoting both freedom of opinion and expression on the Internet and monitoring the national legislation in the Participating States. The Representative should go further in observing relevant developments in all the Participating States, including early warning when laws or other measures prohibiting speech or crime motivated by hate are enforced in a discriminatory or selective manner for political purposes which can lead to impeding the expression of alternative opinions and views. The Representative should also be in close cooperation with NGOs in monitoring the Internet for hate crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim content.

In light of the above information, ABTTF calls the OSCE participating States to:

- Ensure that relevant national legislation applies also to racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences;
- Set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred via the Internet.

With regard to the fight against the intolerant discourse, we recommend that,

- The OSCE participating States should counter prejudices and misrepresentation in general society, and their efforts should in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
- The participating States should promote educational and awareness-raising programmes for combating intolerant discourse, and they should encourage the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the Media, including the Internet.
- The participating States should welcome and encourage continued and increased efforts by NGOs to monitor and their efforts to fight against intolerant discourse among societies they live in.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship**  
**High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**  
**Astana, Kazakhstan**  
**29-30 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session I: Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

Main contact person(s). Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail (s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
Esteemed Experts  
And NGO Representatives,

There is an increasing trend in anti-Muslim sentiment in many OSCE participating States, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in 2001 and 2005. This trend is now evident in public discourse, including the field of media and politics. Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi- faith societies.

While there is an estimated population of 20 million Muslims across the OSCE region, the increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in public and political discourse in many states is a serious concern for the Muslims of Europe. This rising Islamophobia leads the erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms, and religious discrimination and questions over identity and civic belonging are issues of concern in the OSCE region.

Incidences of discrimination have been widespread in many OSCE region, including Greece. Increase in hostility and discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia is manifested in different ways. Violent manifestations of intolerance motivated by hatred against Muslims are perpetrated against individuals, their property or propagated on the Internet.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is the only officially recognised minority by the Greek State, is being threatened and feared by incidents of violence and attacks motivated by hatred. On 27 June 2009, the drinking fountain on the name of Mehmet Hilmi, teacher and founder of the Xanthi Turkish Union, was attacked by unidentified persons. The drinking fountain which was being built by Seçek Minority Education and Culture Association in the Seçek Plateau in Mehrikoz subdistrict in Rhodope, where traditional Seçek Oil Wrestling Festival is held, had a poet written in Turkish dedicated to Mehmet Hilmi on its marble, which was destroyed during the attack. On 27 June 2009, *Hronos*, had a heading ‘Seçek Culture Association is building a provocative and illegal monument’ and stated that ‘The Mehmet Hilmi Fountain was being built on the honour of the Greek enemy who struggled for Turkifying the Minority’. The same night, the fountain was attacked, and the marble was partially destroyed. A second against the Mehmet Hilmi Fountain took place, and the marble was damaged. The word ‘Alevites’ was written to the other parts of the fountain. A third attack against the Mehmet Hilmi Fountain took place, and upper parts of the wall on which the marble lie were destroyed.

On 2 September 2009, an arson attack took place against the Okçular (Toxotes) Village Mosque, and the fire damaged interior carpets, the engine of air conditioner and part of the roof. Besides lustres, timber panels, pulpit, the book of Qur’an and the stone nish were also damaged in the fire. Police officers, who inspected the crime scene, ascertained the occurrence as an incendiary action and stated that unidentified person or persons spoiled gasoline on the mosque carpets, after removing the iron railings and breaking a window to entry the mosque. This was the third time the mosque had been attacked since 2004, each time prior to national elections. During the general elections of 2004, the mosque was set on fire for the first time on 7<sup>th</sup> March and as a result completely burned down. The second incendiary action took place in 2007, and now on the day of the early election announcement of Greece for 4 October 2009, the mosque became a place of vandalism again.

On 5 September 2009, the Ramadan drummer of Koyunköy, a province of Xanthi, was attacked by an armed Greek while he was waiting for the drum playing time. Karaosman, who went to the police for appeal, was accused by the Greek perpetrator and detained by the Greek police for six hours. The problem of reporting is another question in many OSCE states. Many participating States do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level. The Fundamental Rights Agency has noted that the authorities in Greece do not provide any data on hate crimes. ABTTF would like to suggest that reporting should not be left only to police agencies, but that NGOs should play a role in monitoring incidents and providing alternative data sources. NGOs could play a more user-friendly interface for community members impacted by hate crime.

In light of the above information, ABTTF calls the OSCE participating States:

- To ensure that relevant national legislation applies also to racist, xenophobic and anti- Semitic and anti-Muslim offences and prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences;
- To set up a national consultation body that acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred.
- To encourage continued and increased efforts by NGOs to monitor and their efforts to fight against intolerant discourse among societies they live in.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**Kazakh OSCE Chairmanship**  
**High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**  
**Astana, Kazakhstan**  
**9-30 June 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Session VI: Addressing public manifestations of intolerance, in accordance with the**  
**OSCE commitments and promoting understanding through open dialogue in the**  
**media, including the Internet**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
Esteemed Experts  
And NGO Representatives,

Safe use of the Internet remains an important problem in the information society which plays a crucial role in promoting in enhancing citizens' ability to participate fully in democratic processes. However, safe use of the Internet needs combating the use of the Internet for incitement to racial hatred or racial discrimination, because the widespread circulation of material motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet is worrying in today's information society. Aware that freedom of opinion and expression is an essential right in democracies, the circulation of hate material on the Internet still remains a serious concern and needs to be balanced. Therefore, the OSCE and its Participating States should provide adequate legal responses to the hatred propaganda, and they should combat all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, national legislation in most of the OSCE Participating States does not apply to racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and it does not prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences.

The challenge in combating incitement to hatred on the Internet is to find a proper balance between freedom of expression and an effective fight against acts of racist and xenophobic nature. Although national legislation prohibits any acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas through any means, it has a limited application in practice in Greece, like most of the

OSCE Participating States. And, it should be noted here that Greece has signed but not ratified yet the Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness of hate on the Internet must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating hate crimes in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. In particular, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) should consider paying more attention to hate crimes on the Internet in the annual OSCE hate crime reports in which it should stress the importance of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, including through the Media and the Internet within strategies based on a variety of measures.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hate on the Internet, while ensuring that the Internet remains an open and public forum for freedom of opinion and expression for all individuals and groups, including minority and/or youth organizations. The OSCE participating States should train law enforcement agents and prosecutors on how to address crimes motivated by racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic or other related bias on the Internet and should share information on successful training programmes. The participating States and Internet service providers should take steps to establish joint training programmes to encounter racism, xenophobic, anti-Semitic or other related bias.

In this combat against hate on the Internet, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media should be granted a more active role in promoting both freedom of opinion and expression on the Internet and monitoring the national legislation in the Participating States. The Representative should go further in observing relevant developments in all the Participating States, including early warning when laws or other measures prohibiting speech or crime motivated by hate are enforced in a discriminatory or selective manner for political purposes which can lead to impeding the expression of alternative opinions and views. The Representative should also be in close cooperation with NGOs in monitoring the Internet for hate crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim content.

In light of the above information, ABTTF calls the OSCE participating States to:

- Ensure that relevant national legislation applies also to racist, xenophobic and anti- Semitic and anti-Muslim offences committed via the Internet and prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences;
- Set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred via the Internet.



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**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**

**Human Dimension Sessions of the 2010 Review Conference**

**Warsaw, Poland**

**30 September-8 October 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

**Working Session I: Forward-looking discussions- Freedom of Media**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı

E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,

Distinguished Representatives

And NGO Representatives,

In the 45 states that belong to Europe, there exist over 300 minorities with about 100 million members. This means that about 1 in 7 Europeans admit to belonging to an autochthonous and/or national minority. Although there is a heightened interest in the protection of minorities, discrimination persists and is a part of real life in many parts of the world, even in many OSCE participating States. And, OSCE High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination on 29 June 2010 discussed that the media has a large role to play that free and independent media can have on preventing the increase of bias and prejudice and in promoting mutual respect and understanding, including through specific educational and awareness-raising programmes, while racist, xenophobic and intolerant statements against specific groups and intolerant speech in the media could provoke intolerance and violence against the vulnerable groups in society, including autochthonous and/or national minorities.

Aware that freedom of opinion and expression is an essential right in democracies, the circulation of hate material on the media, including Internet still remains a serious concern and needs to be balanced. Therefore, the OSCE and its participating States should provide adequate legal responses to the hatred propaganda, and they should combat all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. However, national legislation in most of the OSCE Participating States do not/cannot provide adequate legal measures and mechanisms to combat against racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim propaganda in the media.

The National Commission for Human Rights in Greece notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups.

Today, there have been very few prosecutions and convictions under the criminal law provisions addressing racist offences, although a few exemplary penalties have been imposed. However, racist incidents have occurred in Greece - including racist statements made in public or reported in the press, and acts of racist violence - and that such incidents have not been prosecuted or indeed given all due attention by the Greek authorities. The problem is that the interpretation of the notion of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases.

Some media express certain prejudices and negative stereotypes towards members of minority groups, including the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. In Greece, Law 927/1979 on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises 'to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole grounds of the latter's racial or national origin (or by virtue of article 24 of Law 1419/1984) religion, and, 'to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter's racial or national origin or religion'. Besides, Law 3719/2008 entered into force in November 2008 stipulates that a crime committed on the basis of national, racial or religious hatred, or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation constitutes an aggravating circumstance for sentencing. Although Circular No 21979/13.2003 of the Ministry of the Press and Media aims at increasing the awareness of professionals working in the media against racism and xenophobia, racist articles and opinions are being published by some media organizations in the country.

ABTTF notes with concern this increasing trend of assaults against journalists in the entire region, which may translate into greater violence in future. On 19 February 2009, Abdülhalim Dede while he was on-air during the morning programme, *Kalimera Ellada*, broadcast by the Athens, Greece-based Antenna TV. The Turkish Ziraat Bank had invited, among others, Dimitris Stamatis, Secretary General of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace at that time, to attend the opening of its first branch in Komotini, Thrace, Greece. Stamatis declined because the letter of invitation was written in English and Turkish, but not in Greek, and because the city of Komotini was referred to by its Turkish name only, Gümülcine. Abdülhalim Dede, activist on the promotion of minority rights of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace and publisher and director of the newspaper *Trakyanın Sesi* was invited by the hosts of *Kalimera Ellada* to express his opinion live from Komotini on Antenna TV. During the interview, an unknown man approached Dede, shouted at him using obscene language, and physically attacked him. The main studio in Athens immediately terminated the live broadcasting.

The OSCE participating States, including Greece should promote educational and awareness-raising programmes for combating intolerant discourse, and they should encourage the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the Media, including the Internet. They should counter prejudices and misrepresentation of the persons belonging to national minorities and the journalist with minority background in general society, and their efforts should in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**Human Dimension Sessions of the 2010 Review Conference**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**30 September-8 October 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session VII: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail (s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

While the OSCE participating States have committed in Copenhagen that they will endeavour to ensure that persons belonging to national minorities, notwithstanding the need to learn the official language or languages of the State concerned, have adequate opportunities for instruction of their mother tongue or in their mother tongue, it is increasingly clear that the OSCE participating States may not/cannot/do not fully meet the need to provide for an equal access to quality education for persons belonging to minority groups, which prevents a broader inclusion of minorities.

The right to education in mother tongue is not enjoyed equally by all in some OSCE participating States, including Greece. Minorities in some OSCE participating States do not have equal access to quality education due to restricted access and/or inappropriate education strategies. This lack of equal access to quality education leads to denial of civil and political rights of the persons belonging to minorities and segregation in society due to the marginalization of these minority groups, including the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. This marginalization of these minority groups and their economic, social and political exclusion is often resulted with discrimination against these marginalised groups in general society. And, existing institutional practices and legal standards cannot guarantee equal access of persons belonging to national minorities. The Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on 22-23 July 2010 clearly indicated that the role of education as a tool for integration is being disregarded, which in turn hinders the development of a cohesive society.

The OSCE participating States should develop institutional arrangements and mechanisms that will ensure full and effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in

the societies where they live, while they, at the same time, ensure that these minorities receive education in their mother tongue. This may seem contradictory by many of OSCE participating States, but it is clearly the responsibility of the participating States to take measures to ensure that the right to development of persons belonging to national minorities.

On the Recommendation of the Forum on Minority Issues<sup>122</sup> (15 and 16 December 2008), the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, states that education should serve the dual function of supporting the effort of communities to self-development in economic, social and cultural terms while opening pathways by which they can function in the wider society and promote social harmony. The expert notes in her report that States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. The expert underlines that these measures are most critical in preschool and primary schools but may extend to subsequent stages of education.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to highlight the discrimination with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level on the children of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, northern region of Greece where the minority children who completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age has to attend in majority kindergartens under the Ministry of Education, although the minority is granted the right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions which give education on the mother tongue of the minority, namely Turkish with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne signed between Greece and Turkey.

The Turkish Minority in Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its mother language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions with the Treaty of Lausanne which determined the status and the basic rights of the Minority in general. The Cultural Protocol signed between Turkey and Greece on 20 April 1951 (which was abolished and replaced by the Bilateral Agreement on Cultural Cooperation in 2000), the Exchange of Notes in 1952 regarding the issue of exchange teachers who would be assigned in Minority Schools and the Protocol of the Turkish-Greek Cultural Commission, signed in 1968 are the relevant documents which maintain the autonomous status of the minority in the field of education. Furthermore, the right to education is provided by Article 16 of the Greek Constitution which defines the scope and aim of education for the development of an ethnic and religious consciousness. The right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to education in mother tongue in its own educational institutions is regulated with laws in domestic law which provide the basic structure of the minority education. Law 3518/2006 envisages the extension of the compulsory period in education from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008. Under Law 3518/2006 the condition of pupils' admission in pre-school education has been revised and Article 73 has envisaged a two-year attendance in kindergartens for pupils who have completed the 4<sup>th</sup> year of their age.

Because the law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural difference of the children in Greece, all pupils who have completed the 5<sup>th</sup> year of their age is obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek.

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<sup>122</sup> See <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/10session/A.HRC.10.11.Add.1.pdf>

The Representative of the Hellenic Government Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador M. Diamessis on the thematic focus on minorities and the right to education on 15-16 December 2008 at the First UN Forum on Minority Issues stated that children at kindergartens did not have Greek textbooks, because they did not have any textbooks or any specific curriculum<sup>123</sup>. The Representative underlined that activities and games were the only means used in kindergartens which served as a smooth introduction to primary education and helped to avoid segregation of the Muslim minority from the rest of the Greek society. However, it has to be pointed out that the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues stress in her report that the principle of equality does not imply uniform treatment in the field of education regardless of circumstances, but rather that differential treatment of individuals and groups is justified when specified circumstances warrant it, so that the right to equal treatment is also violated when States, without permissible justification, fail to treat differently persons whose situations are significantly different.

The UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, has noted in her country visit report on Greece<sup>124</sup> that a commonly stated problem is the absence of bilingual kindergartens for the minority. The expert has stated that bilingual kindergartens would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early stage therefore providing benefits in terms of integration and enabling greater choice of whether to go minority of Greek public primary school. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace should have a right to participate in the life of the State and in decisions affecting them. Greece should provide adequate opportunities to persons belonging to the Turkish minority to learn its mother tongue or to learn through the medium of the mother tongue, alternatives which should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Specific forms of such opportunities should be chosen in consultation with persons belonging to minorities and considering their freely expressed wishes. In the particular context of pre-school education, delivery of educational services with the established bilingual minority kindergartens is a right stemming from their right to establish, maintain and manage its own educational institutions. Though, the Representative of the Hellenic Government Deputy Permanent Representative of Greece, Ambassador M. Diamessis stated that they encouraged kindergarten teachers coming from the Muslim minority to work at public kindergartens in areas where there were many Muslims, not bilingual minority kindergartens established in accordance with the provisions of bilateral treaties in the region of Western Thrace.

In line with the status of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and international norms and values in the field of education, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and the Turks of Rhodes and Kos should have the right to education in its mother language. Greece should act in a positive spirit in accordance with the requirements of modern education understanding with regard to the minority schooling system, and acclaim that the minority system of education should be reconstructed according to the principles of multiculturalism and multilingualism. However, it should first create necessary conditions and establish a dialogue with the Turkish Minority and its educational institutions, thus enabling them to participate in the development and implementation of policies relevant to the minority education. Afterwards, Greece and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace should work together to find solution to the problem of bilingual education in minority kindergartens, taking fully account into the opinion of the Minority itself.

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<sup>123</sup> See [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral\\_statements\\_forum\\_minority\\_2008.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/minority/oral_statements_forum_minority_2008.htm)

<sup>124</sup> See <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
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**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
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**OSCE**

**Human Dimension Sessions of the 2010 Review Conference**  
**Warsaw, Poland**  
**30 September-8 October 2010**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Working Session VIII: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination II**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı  
E-mail (s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org),

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

There is an increasing trend in anti-Muslim sentiment in many OSCE participating States, especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in 2001 and 2005. This trend is now evident in public discourse, including the field of media and politics. Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies.

While there is an estimated population of 20 million Muslims across the OSCE region, the increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in public and political discourse in many states is a serious concern for the Muslims of Europe. This rising Islamophobia leads the erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms, and religious discrimination and questions over identity and civic belonging are issues of concern in the OSCE region.

Incidences of discrimination have been widespread in many OSCE participating States, including Greece. Increase in hostility and discrimination against Muslims and Islamophobia is manifested in different ways. Violent manifestations of intolerance motivated by hatred against Muslims are perpetrated against individuals, their property or propagated on the Internet.

The discrimination and intolerance against Muslims have recently become ever more prevalent in Greece. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is the only officially recognised minority by the Greek State, is being threatened and feared by incidents of

violence and attacks motivated by hatred. The most recent incident is that the Muslim cemetery in the northern city of Komotini, Greece late on Friday, on 13 August 2010, on the holy day of Ramadan [2](<http://greece.greekreporter.com/2010/08/15/vandals-desecrate-turkish-graves-in-greece/>). Vandals desecrated the Muslim cemetery of Pospos (Poşpoş) and Ifestos (Kalkanca) districts. The unidentified assailants destroyed more than twenty gravestones in the cemetery, and they painted the name of the organization, Chrysi Avyi (Golden Dawn), which is a Greek nationalist political organization that describes itself as a popular nationalist movement and supports National Socialism.

Safe use of the Internet remains an important problem in dissemination and widespread circulation material motivated by racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim propaganda, and needs to be balanced in the information society which plays a crucial role in promoting in enhancing citizens' ability to participate fully in democratic processes.

An interesting example to this situation is that Georgios Karatzaferis, President of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS), announced his candidacy for the province of Rhodope on 12 September 2009 at a press conference during a visit to the city of Tripoli in Peloponnese, and he stated that 'Thus it will not seem like only the Turkish consulate is serving in this area'. After Karatzaferis' speech, a placard on which 'Remove the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey' is written has been placed in the city centre of Komotini. And, a sign petition for the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Western Thrace has been started via the website named [www.proxeneio-stop.gr](http://www.proxeneio-stop.gr), which is established by the group that placed the placard over the bridge around the city centre in Komotini. And the group and the website are supported by a local newspaper, Antifonitist1, which is an indication that the propaganda on the Internet and the hate speech fuelled by racism and discrimination based on the ethnic origin of the Minority in Western Thrace has been intertwined. The sign petition and the campaign about the removal of the Turkish Consulate in Komotini have had an adverse effect on the Turkish Minority living in the region, and it raised the tension between the minority and the majority which in turn destroys the unity in diversity in the region.

Almost a year after, the Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki, a city in the northern part of Greece, was attacked on 12 August 2010, only one day before the desecration of the Muslim cemetery of Pospos and Ifestos. Unknown assailants threw a firebomb at the Consulate General; it did without damage or casualties. The attack happened at 4:15 a.m., and three men wearing motorcycle helmets approached two police guards outside the Turkish consulate building and threatened to burn them and threw a Molotov bomb and ran away. On 18 September 2010, unknown assailant or assailants threw Molotov cocktail outside the Thessaloniki Turkish Consulate General, which is located in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki. On Saturday night, around 02.30 a.m., unknown assailants threw firebombs to the police post outside the consulate, where Greek police officers are in charge.

Another major issue with regard to internet blogs and forums, there are many examples of such websites which contain very disturbing phrases of hatred attacks. Such websites and its administrators post up subjects which provokes individuals to insult ones beliefs or ethnic origins, examples of such websites can be seeing in Greece which continually target Western Thrace Turkish minority. It is very clear that there are strong bonds and cooperation between the websites, similar topic is posted on a number of forums, meaning that a wider profile of individuals can gain access to such blogs. Forums of that kind can also be found regarding Turkish-Greek relations, most posts are in English and often turns into 'heated arguments' as

it is described, which is a polite term used for the insults which is contained within the forums (<http://www.greekalert.com/>). Since such websites appeal to large number of people, they may easily provoke feelings of hatred.

Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece. The Fundamental Rights Agency has noted that the authorities in Greece do not provide any data on hate crimes, although there is slight improvement in the last year. In fact, reporting should not be left only to police agencies, but that NGOs should play a role in monitoring incidents and providing alternative data sources. However, national consultation bodies which would act as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred should be established in OSCE participating states, in full co-operation with non-governmental organizations, including the ones that belong to the minority groups.

The challenge in combating incitement to hatred on the Internet is to find a proper balance between freedom of expression and an effective fight against acts of racist and xenophobic nature. Although national legislation prohibits any acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas through any means, it has a limited application in practice in Greece, like most of the OSCE Participating States. And, it should be noted here that Greece has signed but not ratified yet the Additional Protocol to the Convention on cybercrime, concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness of hate on the Internet must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda on the Internet. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating hate crimes in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. In particular, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) should consider paying more attention to hate crimes on the Internet in the annual OSCE hate crime reports in which it should stress the importance of promoting tolerance, mutual respect, dialogue and understanding, including through the Media and the Internet within strategies based on a variety of measures.

The OSCE participating States, including Greece should ensure that relevant national legislation applies also to racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim offences and prosecute those responsible for this kind of offences, and they should encourage continued and increased efforts by NGOs to monitor and their efforts to fight against intolerant discourse among societies they live in. And, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights should pay more and continuing attention to racist incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with non-governmental organizations in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims. This would enhance the opportunity to discuss on a working definition of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, which may substantially lead to adopt a specific OSCE Ministerial Decision on measures to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims at the national, regional and international levels.

In this combat against hate on the Internet, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media should be granted a more active role in promoting both freedom of opinion and expression on the Internet and monitoring the national legislation in the Participating States. The Representative should go further in observing relevant developments in all the Participating States, including early warning when laws or other measures prohibiting speech or crime motivated by hate are enforced in a discriminatory or selective manner for political purposes which can lead to impeding the expression of alternative opinions and views. The Representative should also be in close cooperation with NGOs in monitoring the Internet for hate crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim content.



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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**OSCE**

**High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (including human rights youth education on tolerance and non-discrimination)**

**Tirana, Albania**

**21-22 May 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

**Morning Plenary Session 1: Combating intolerance and discrimination against any person, including racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, in accordance with the existing OSCE commitments**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Moderator,

Distinguished representatives of delegates,

And esteemed NGO representatives,

Despite commitments of participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region. Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, the Director of ODIHR, said that the level of bias- motivated violence across the region remains a cause for serious concern, although a number of steps have been taken by the OSCE and by individual states over the past year<sup>125</sup>. Morten Kjaerum, the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, said that there are indicators that the situation in the EU is not improving, on the contrary, in the last few years, there is a continued and renewed violations of fundamental rights of people living in the EU through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice.

Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe's Commissioner of Human Rights recently published a comment that Europe has been experiencing a worrying intensification of activities of racist extremist organizations, including political parties and added that the upsurge has even reached the point of 'an early form of far-right terror'.

<sup>125</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/97298>

We monitor the rise of far-right extremism in Europe with great concern and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments and governments. The Jobbik party in Hungary and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece has strengthened their position at their national parliaments and at the European level. We are seriously concerned by the increase in hate crimes against undocumented migrants and other vulnerable groups in Greece. Racist Violence Recording Network headed by UNHCR and the National Commission for Human Rights reported 220 racist attacks between October 2011 and December 2012. On 6 May, a 14-year-old Afghan teenager was attacked in central Athens on by three men who beat him and carved his face with a broken bottle. The injured youth was taken to a free clinic by a group of his compatriots, where he received 300 stitches on his face alone<sup>126</sup>. Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights noted in his report that the interlocutors said that the recorded numbers do not reflect the real situation, since a large number of victims are actually irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who often abstain from contacting state authorities. Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece.

The Commissioner noted that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament, the attacks were recorded against the minority by perpetrators linked to Golden Dawn members or supporters. We share the concern expressed by Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights in his report on Greece<sup>127</sup> and U.S. Department of State in Greece 2012 Human Rights Report<sup>128</sup> that no Golden Dawn MP had been charged for hate speech or for his/her links with hate-motivated incidents and crimes.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies. OSCE participating States should counter prejudices and misrepresentation in general society, and their efforts should in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. They should promote educational and awareness-raising programs for combating intolerant discourse, and they should encourage the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the Media, including the Internet.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hatred or racism.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness on racism must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist,

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<sup>126</sup> [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_wsite1\\_1\\_14/05/2013\\_498689](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite1_1_14/05/2013_498689)

<sup>127</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?Index=no&command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2270794&SecMode=1&DocId=2002226&Usage=2>

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204503.pdf>

xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda and/or hate based on any grounds. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating racism in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
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**OSCE**

**High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (including human rights youth education on tolerance and non-discrimination)**

**Tirana, Albania**

**21-22 May 2013**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

**Afternoon Plenary session 4: Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail(s): [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org); [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Mr. Moderator,

Distinguished representatives of delegates,

And esteemed NGO representatives,

Despite commitments of participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region. We monitor the rise of far-right extremism in Europe with great concern and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments and governments. The Golden Dawn in Greece won 6.92% of the vote in the national elections of June 2012 and 18 seats in the Greek Parliament. In an interview with Human Rights Watch before the elections, the leader of the Golden Dawn, Nikolaos Michaloliakos explained, ‘We want Greece to belong to the Greeks. We are proud to be Greek; we want to save our national identity, our thousands-year history. If that means we are racist, then yes, we are. We don’t want to share the same fate of the Native Americans. Right now, the immigrants are the cowboys and we are the Apache’<sup>129</sup>.

The rising Islamophobia and the increasing trend in hate-motivated attacks against migrants and asylum seekers, most of whom are Muslim, is an increasingly alarming problem for Greece in a period of deep economic crisis. Greek Helsinki Monitor stated that hate-motivated incidents against migrants and asylum seekers on the basis of the colour of their skin, their religion or their country of origin have increased dramatically and have become an almost daily phenomenon in Greece<sup>130</sup>.

<sup>129</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nikolaos Michaloliakos, Athens, January 12, 2012.

<sup>130</sup> [http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/uploads/2012\\_files/ghm1418\\_racist\\_violence\\_diktyo\\_english.pdf](http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/uploads/2012_files/ghm1418_racist_violence_diktyo_english.pdf)

The Commissioner noted that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament, the attacks were recorded against the minority by perpetrators linked to Golden Dawn members or supporters. The Golden Dawn supporters made demonstrations in the villages where the Minority lives and chanted slogans against the Minority and Turkey. In Xanthi and Komotini, Golden Dawn supporters with Greek flags in their hands drove by the Turkish villages by motorbikes and cars. In August 2012, a group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) party marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union (Gümülcine Türk Gençler Birliği) (GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association. At that day, Golden Dawn organised a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey, then threw bottles to the garden.

The attack against the Komotini Turkish Youth Union resulted in an environment of fear among the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace that racist attacks against persons and properties belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace will increase. In September 2012, Cemali Mülazım was attacked by Golden Dawn supporters in Xanthi's centre as he was hanging a placard of an event. A group of 7 to 9 persons attacked Cemali Mülazım and beaten him. One of the perpetrators was sentenced to 8 months of imprisonment by Xanthi Criminal Court, but the enforcement of the verdict has been deferred for 3 years. Another example of physical attack is that Golden Dawn supporters attacked Cüneyt Serdar, while he was passing through during a tension between an anarchist group and the Golden Dawn members on demonstration at Xanthi's centre and beaten him blatantly. Cüneyt Serdar (30) was taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face that he had to have stitches.

We strongly believe that it is crucial that Greece should condemn firmly and unequivocally all manifestations of hate crime. It is very essential that political leaders should condemn and refrain from hate-motivated speech in politics. We regret that the Greek Parliament's reaction to hate speech has been weak. On 16 January 2013, PASOK Rhodope MP Mr. Ahmet Hacıosman was verbally attacked by Golden Dawn deputies during a debate about the adjustment of Law 3536/2007 in the Greek Parliament. Mr. Panayotis Iliopoulos, the deputy from Golden Dawn Party accused Mr. Hacıosman of being an 'agent' of Turkey. The Parliamentary Group Spokesperson of Golden Dawn Party Christos Pappas said that Golden Dawn will work hard to prevent any Turkish deputy from being sworn into the Parliament. The deputies showed a photograph of Hacıosman while he was visiting a foundation in Turkey dedicated to issues regarding Western Thrace as evidence of their claims. Unfortunately, there was no strong reaction by the parliament to this hate-motivated speech. All forms of hate crimes constitute serious human rights violations and there is a need to impose on the perpetrators of sentences that are effective, proportionate and appropriate to the offence committed. Law 927/1979 (as subsequently amended) on punishing acts or activities aiming at racial discrimination with regard to the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas penalises 'to wilfully and publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means, incite to acts or activities which may result in discrimination, hatred or violence against individuals or groups of individuals on the sole

grounds of the latter's racial or national origin (or by virtue of article 24 of Law 1419/1984) religion, and, 'to express publicly, either orally or by the press or by written texts or through pictures or any other means offensive ideas against any individual or group of individuals on the grounds of the latter's racial or national origin or religion'. The Commissioner noted that Law 927/1979 is rarely applied. The Commissioner noted that The Greek Minister of Justice, Antonios Roupakiotis, confirmed in October 2012 that 'few prosecutions for crimes regulated by Law 927/1979 have been initiated in recent years, at least on the basis of data that are sent from prosecutors' offices to the Ministry, while the relevant statistical data never record criminal offences carried out on racist grounds'.

The Commissioner noted that the problem of non-application of the aggravating circumstance provision originates in the non-inclusion in the file or non-examination by the police, prosecutors or courts, of evidence related to the racist or other motivation of a criminal offence caused ineffective application, or non-application, of the existing anti-racism legislation. The Criminal Code stipulates that a crime committed on the basis of national, racial or religious hatred, or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation constitutes an aggravating circumstance for sentencing. During the assessment of a penalty courts must evaluate the defendant's personality and consider as an aggravating circumstance the fact that the criminal act at issue has been committed on grounds related to ethnic, racial or religious hatred or hatred due to the victim's sexual orientation. Council of Europe's Commissioner noted with grave concern that that it has never been applied by courts in Greece so far, leading to the imposition of excessively lenient, non-dissuasive penalties. For example, in September 2012 the Xanthi Magistrates Court imposed a suspended sentence of eight months and a pecuniary fine of €200 on a person reportedly linked to 'Golden Dawn' who had violently attacked Cemali Mülazım, a member of the Muslim minority of Turkish ethnic origin<sup>131</sup>

We welcome the government's effort in transposing the European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 'on combating certain and in forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law' replace Law 927/1979, although the deadline was 28 November 2010. The Ministry of Justice has prepared a new legislation against racism which proposes harsher penalties for all forms of hate speech, with prison sentences from three to six years and fines up to €20,000, while deprivation of political rights would be considered in certain cases, we regret that the government has suspended the new legislation for reassessment. The government should immediately finalise the legislation text and send it to the parliament with no further delay.

Greece should ensure co-operation, where appropriate, at the national and international levels, including with relevant international bodies and between police forces, to combat violent hate crime. ABTTF urges Greek authorities to set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse. We invite the Government of Greece to impose effective penalties or prohibition, if necessary, for the extremist activities of political organisations, including Golden Dawn political party. Such political parties where evidence demonstrates that they advocate for and are involved directly or indirectly in acts of racist violence, must be banned and excluded from all state subsidies which are usually provided to political parties.

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<sup>131</sup>[https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH\(2013\)6&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorIntranet=B9BDEE&BackColorIntranet=FFCD4F&BackColorLogged=FFC679](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CommDH(2013)6&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorIntranet=B9BDEE&BackColorIntranet=FFCD4F&BackColorLogged=FFC679)



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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)

**OSCE**

**Conference: ‘A holistic approach to addressing intolerance and discrimination against Muslims in the OSCE region’**

**Vienna, Austria**

**19 February 2016**

**Thematic Session I: Security of Muslim communities across the OSCE region**

Main contact person(s): Mr. Fatih Hafizmehmet (Fatich Chafouz Memet)

E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Moderator,

Distinguished representatives, delegates and NGO representatives,

Despite commitments of participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region. ODIHR has constantly shared its concern in the past few years that the level of bias-motivated violence across the region remains a cause for serious concern, although a number of steps have been taken by the OSCE and by individual states over the past year<sup>132</sup>. The activities of racist extremist organizations have reached a worrying point in many participating States.

Greece witnessed violations of fundamental rights of people through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice with the rise of far-right extremist neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece. The Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace<sup>133</sup>, which is the only recognised minority as ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ in Greece had become a target of hate-motivated attacks in the past five years. Although 2014 was a silent year regarding hate crimes for the Muslim-Turkish minority 2015 was the opposite, unfortunately. Throughout the year of 2015 and the start of 2016, many hate crimes motivated by racism were conducted against the people and institutions of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

On 17 April 2015, Komotini(Gümülcine) Mahmutağa mosque in the Komotini’s district Yenice was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning. As a result of the

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<sup>132</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/97298>

<sup>133</sup> Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

arson attack, a fire broke out at the mosque's entrance, but thanks to the fire brigade operation did not spread to the other parts of the mosque and to the minority primary school next to it. On the same day, another attack occurred on a masjid (small mosque) in the Alankuyu district of Komotini. An unidentified person or persons uprooted ten cypress trees around the masjid and destroyed a grave stone.

Furthermore, on 7 March, Dimetoka Muslims, Sports, Cultural and Educational Association was attacked by unknown assailants. Nobody was injured, but windows were broken. The police realised that the association was attacked at night and called the president of the association, Süleyman Macur. The president came to the association and opened the door with the police officers. They found out that the windowpane was broken with profile iron.

Then on 7 December, a major attack occurred at the Friendship Equality and Peace Party (FEP) headquarters in Komotini, which is the only political party of the Minority. According to the party officials, still unknown perpetrators invaded the party's new premises in Komotini and vandalised them, destroying equipment, doors and windows. Before leaving, they used blue spray to write 'Guardians of Thrace' in several walls of the building and also stole the car driven by FEP founder Sadık Ahmet when he was killed in 1994 (a crane was used to remove the vehicle).

Lastly, another hate crime was reported in Xanthi one week ago. Fully covered with masks, a group of men kidnapped an imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi and forced him to get on a minibus. According to the imam, there they threatened him to say that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him, and they are following closely the movements of the Mufti office. The perpetrators called themselves as 'The Guardians of Thrace' and in the end they released the imam to bring these threatening messages to the Mufti himself. It is important to note that all perpetrators of these attacks remain unknown and unpunished. Therefore, we urge the Government of Greece to find the perpetrators and try them at a court. Also, we stress the importance of taking the necessary steps to prevent the similar future hate crimes against the Minority of Western Thrace and other groups in the country.

According to the statement by the Elected Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete, the Mufti is constantly taking death threats since he was elected Mufti by minority members in 2007. Mete explained that an Imam working close to him was also harassed five years ago. Ahmet Mete noted that if anything happens to him or his family, the responsible would be the Greek State, because the elected Muftis are under threat while performing their religious duties<sup>134</sup>.

It should be reminded here that Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders and rather in violation of international and bilateral treaties of which Greece is a part, it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have legal authority on civic issues since 1990. Today there is a duality of the Muftis (elected by the minority and appointed by the State) in the region. Greek authorities do not recognise the Muftis elected by members of the minority.

The hatred against representatives and institutions of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has increased in the last few years and the organization which calls itself as 'The Guardians of Thrace' targets the autochthonous Turkish minority in the region. ECRI Report

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<sup>134</sup> <http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353>

on Greece (fifth monitoring cycle) notes that the influence of the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in issues concerning the Minority creates a perception that members of the Minority are not equal citizens and that they are still perceived as ‘others’ in their home country where they live for centuries<sup>135</sup>.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies. In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

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<sup>135</sup> [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece\\_CBC\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/Greece_CBC_en.asp)



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**OSCE**

**Anniversary Conference of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities  
in Inter-State Relations: New Challenges and Lessons Learned**

**Udine, Italy**

**15-16 July 2018**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe**

Main contact person(s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear Chairperson,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

The OSCE participating States have covered a remarkable distance in the OSCE concept of security, where all dimensions of security are viewed as being complementary and mutually supportive and where the security of all is considered as indivisible. In its Helsinki Decisions of July 1992, the OSCE established the position of High Commissioner on National Minorities to be 'an instrument of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage'. This mandate was created largely in reaction to the situation in the former Yugoslavia. However, Mr. Max van der Stoep, the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), turned his attention to the many disputes between minorities and central authorities in Europe which had the potential, in his view, to escalate. His involvement has focused primarily on those situations involving persons belonging to national/ethnic groups who constitute the numerical majority in one State but the numerical minority in another State, thus engaging the interest of governmental authorities in each State. In this relation, it is important to recall the commitments undertaken by all OSCE participating States, in particular those of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the Conference on the Human Dimension which, in Part IV, articulates detailed standards relating to national minorities.

This year, the OSCE, is commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations. In its recommendations, the HCNM has encouraged and facilitated the adoption by participating States of specific measures related to national minorities and the standards the HCNM has promoted have been interpreted specifically to ensure the coherence of their application. All the areas where national minority commitments have been developed requires a detailed analysis in the 10th

anniversary of the Bolzano Recommendation, however, a focused debate on the progress and challenges on national minorities in inter-state relations.

The Bolzano Recommendations note that the minority communities serve as a bridge between States. Persons belonging to national minorities should be able to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across State borders and to develop cultural and economic links.

### **Recognition of the Turkish community in Western Thrace**

The Turkish Muslim population in Greece and the Greek Orthodox population in Turkey were subject to population exchange in accordance with the agreement which Turkey and Greece signed. The Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Greek population in İstanbul, Gökçeada(İmbros) and Bozcaada(Tenedos) were exempted from population exchange and become minorities in the territories they live in for centuries.

The status of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Greek community in İstanbul is established by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and their rights were guaranteed by several bilateral and multilateral agreements. The Lausanne Peace Treaty (Articles 37-45) cover the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, while Article 45 states that ‘the rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory’.

The Lausanne Treaty does not give definition of minorities concerned or situate them geographically. On this ground, Greece only recognises a ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’ and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace on grounds that the Lausanne Treaty only refers to the Muslim minority in the region. Although the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which has established the official status of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace which has an estimated population of 150,000 today, does not specifically mention its ethnic identity, there is a specific reference to the Turkish ethnic identity of the minority in Western Thrace in legal and international documents. ‘Etabli Documents’, which were the documents having been given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923, mention the ethnic origin of the minority in Western Thrace as Turkish. The document of the League of Nations submitted to the Council on 23 December 1924 and remarked C. 774 on the ‘Minorities of Turkish Race in Western Thrace’ used the term ‘Turkish’ for the minority living in Greece.

The Treaty of Lausanne determined the treatment of the minorities on the basis of reciprocity. The attitudes of the two countries towards their relevant minorities have been shaped according to the level of relations between them. When Turkey and Greece’s relations have been moderate; minorities have benefited but when their relations soured, they suffered.

A new era has begun in the Turkish-Greek relations in 1999. Dialogue mechanisms such as regular political consultations, exploratory contacts on Aegean Issues, High-Level Cooperation Council meetings as well as high-level visits and contacts were established. In 2010, the High-Level Cooperation Council (HLCC) between Turkey and Greece was set up and prime ministers of both countries under the coordination of Foreign Ministers, the HLCC is envisaged to convene in Turkey and Greece alternately. The HLCC aims at addressing various issues of Turkish-Greek relations at high level, thus contributing to progress in existing and prospective areas of cooperation and rendering an ‘institutional’ ground for Turkish-Greek relations.

Although Turkey-Greece relations developed rapidly after 1999, the new positive atmosphere has not fully affected the positions of the minorities. For example, opening the Halki Seminary School and the election of the Muftis has continued to act as an obstacle between Turkey and Greece. The President of the Republic of Turkey, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Greece, including Athens and Komotini, on December 7 and 8, 2017. This has been the first official visit at the level of heads of state between Turkey and Greece since 1952.

However, the first visit to Greece by a Turkish head of state for 65 years unexpectedly turned into a recital of bilateral grievances as Mr Erdogan publicly exchanged barbs with Greek president over the status of the minority. Erdoğan said that 94-year-old treaty should be revised, however Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos ruled out any change to the treaty and said, ‘This is the bedrock of our friendship. It has no flaws; it does not need to be reviewed or updated’. Erdogan replied, ‘It was also supposed to protect the Turkish minority in northern Greece, whom Erdogan said were still discriminated against. You can’t find such treatment of my citizens of Greek origin in Turkey’<sup>136</sup>. On the other hand, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes on its website that the attempt by Turkey to revise and change the Treaty of Lausanne raises disputes and claims against the sovereign rights and the jurisdiction of Greece<sup>137</sup>.

Before Erdogan’s visit to the region, twenty-two associations operating in the region of Western Thrace belonging to Greek majority published a joint statement and showed reaction to the visit of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkish Republic, motherland of Western Thrace Turks.

In the letter sent to the Greek President, Prime Minister and Foreign Ministry with the topic ‘No to Erdoğan’s visit to Thrace’, associations called out ‘Now apply our sovereignty’ and used aggressive and racist language saying ‘Following divisive cries of Hakan Çavuşoğlu (Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey) and yet the local community has not settled now they will bring us their boss’.

Regarding Turkish President Erdoğan’s visit to Komotini and Xanthi where Western Thrace Turks live, papers full of messages with threat were left at the doors of houses. In the message it wrote ‘Think once again! Erdoğan will leave, but you will be here tomorrow too...’. And in Xanthi crosses were drawn on the walls of some of the Turkish houses. Crosses were also drawn on the walls of the houses of the leader of Western Thrace Turks deceased Dr. Sadık Ahmet and the General President Mustafa Ali Çavuş, President of Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (DEB), political party of Western Thrace Turks.

Even though Turkey-Greece relations have progressed in the post-1999 era, the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace did not change and problems of the Turkish community remain unsolved. The main reason of this situation is that Greece did not take minority issues within humanitarian and lawful context and did not establish any formal dialogue with representatives of the minority in the region, of whom ethnic Turkish identity does not recognise.

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<sup>136</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/erdogan-greece-tsipras-visit-old-disputes-athens-latesta8097961.html>

<sup>137</sup> <https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/turkey/>

The Bolzano Recommendations note that States should respect and promote the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including the right freely to express, preserve and develop their cultural, linguistic or religious identity free from any attempts at assimilation against their will. However, educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish community has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish community.

### **Deprivation of Citizenship**

Former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (No. 3370) noted, ‘A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality’. This included clear racist expositions and divided Greek citizens into two: ethnically Greeks and ethnically non-Greeks. Approximately 60,000 minority individuals were deprived of their citizenship under Article 19 between 1955 and 1998. The Greek Ministry of Interior announced the number of the Greek citizens who were stripped of their nationality under Article 19 as 46,638.

Those who remain stateless within Greece (about 200 today), and those who adopted the nationality of another country after losing their Greek citizenship and having left Greece (in this case mostly the Turkish nationality) have no right under Greek law to recover their Greek citizenship.

The Greek authorities failed to take measures that would lead to the reparation of the serious consequences that arose from the deprivation of citizenship on the basis of Article 19. Persons who were deprived of their citizenship and have remained in Greece and wish to re-cover their Greek nationality have had to go through the normal naturalization process applicable to aliens, which is ‘long, expensive and uncertain as regards the outcome, and humiliating for persons who have wrongly lost their citizenship’, as former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg described.

ABTTF notes with very concern that there is very slow progress on the above mentioned-problem and recalls ECRI’s recommendation in its third report that the Greek authorities should take steps to ensure the immediate rectification of the unfortunate consequences arising from deprivation of Greek citizenship on the basis of former Article 19 of the Citizenship Code for all persons concerned, whether resident in Greece or abroad, whether stateless or holding another nationality.

Not only the persons who were deprived of citizenship but also their descendants were deprived of the Greek nationality, and they also lost advantages of being an EU citizen. However, as for the denationalized persons who have remained abroad and are not willing to return, Greece stated that ‘according to the general principles of international law the obligation to reparation results from the commission of an internationally wrongful act by the responsible State’ and added that ‘in the present case, no decision of a judicial body has ever determined the commission of an internationally wrongful act by Greece as a result of the stripping of nationality on the basis of article 19, especially since the individuals concerned do not live in the country and have already acquired a foreign citizenship’.

## **Freedom of Association**

The Treaty of Lausanne recognises a Muslim religious minority in Thrace rather than a Turkish national minority. The Greek authorities use this fact to reject the use of the word 'Turkish' in the names of the relevant associations.

Xanthi Turkish Union (1927), Komotini Turkish Youth Union (1928) and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union (1936) have been officially registered and pursued its activities unhindered for nearly half a century. These three associations were dissolved in 1986 by local courts on grounds that they constituted a threat to democratic society with an aim to promote the idea that there was an ethnic minority with the word Turkish which refers to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece. The ECtHR found Greece in violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights in the Bekir-Ousta group of cases and others against Greece concerning Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi due to the refusal to register associations and to the dissolution of an association on the sole basis of a suspicion that the applicants intended to promote the idea that an ethnic minority existed in Greece.

Greece does not execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in Bekir-Ousta group of cases and others against Greece concerning violations of the freedom of association, although more than ten years have elapsed since the judgments of the European Court in 2008. Following the adoption of a new law (No. 4491/2017) which would allow the re-opening of the cases adjudicated by the ECtHR on 13 October 2017, execution of the ECtHR's judgments in this group of cases has vital importance for the recognition of ethnic identity of the minority in Greece.

Law 4491/2017, which would enable an application of revocation or amendment in the domestic courts following an ECtHR judgment, was adopted on 10 October 2017 with restrictions concerning the protection of national security, public order, the prevention of crime, the protection of health or morals and the protection of rights and freedoms of others and international conventions implying the Treaty of Lausanne which officially refers to the religious affiliation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace with the term 'Muslim minority in Thrace'.

The Xanthi Turkish Union applied to the domestic court for the re-opening of its case. At the hearing held at the Court of Appeal of Thrace on 9 February 2018, the Xanthi Turkish Union asked for cancellation of the decision of Court of Appeal dated 2002, which ratified the dissolution of the Xanthi Turkish Union and return of its official legal entity. The State of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, which represents the former Governor, asked the rejection of the application and the re-registration of the Turkish Union of Xanthi. On 22 June 2018, the Court of Appeal rejected Xanthi Turkish Union's application.

In its judgment(no.96/2018) Thrace Court of Appeal rejected Xanthi Turkish Union's application for the re-opening of the domestic proceedings on the basis of Article 30 of Law 4491/2017 on grounds that transitional provision does not cover cases in which a re-examination has already been made or an application requesting the implementation of the ECHR's judgment which has already been issued.

Concerning the Court's decision, the Spokesperson of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Hami Aksoy, in response to a question regarding the rejection of the application of Xanthi Turkish Union for its re-registration by a regional Court of Appeals in Greece said that the decision of the court demonstrates that the legislation adopted by the Greek Parliament is not enough for the realisation of the right to association and that they expect from Greece to register the NGOs of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace without discrimination and make arrangements that will enable the application of ECHR rulings<sup>138</sup>.

## **Education**

The Turkish community in Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its native language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions. The autonomy in education has been undermined through a number of regulations and practices, which resulted in a low-qualified education in minority schools with structural problems regarding training of teachers, the curriculum and textbooks.

The 1968 Cultural Protocol provides for the production and use of textbooks in minority schools for both the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Greek community in Istanbul. There are long delays in distribution of the textbooks to the minority schools in Western Thrace.

One of the most important problem stated during consultations with minority representatives and civil society organisations is the absence of bilingual minority kindergartens for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek. At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten years, but not includes minority schooling system.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (ECRI) mentioned in its fifth report on Greece in 2015 that there are no special measures for the minority under Law No. 3518/2006 which has made pre-school education compulsory. The ECRI noted that the Government has rejected proposals to open Turkish- Greek bilingual kindergartens in the existing bilingual primary schools and referred to the case in Echinus where the regional school inspectors refused to enrol 20 children who had not attended the obligatory kindergarten and dismissed a bilingual school's principal, who had registered and taught them. The ECRI stressed that children's right to schooling should not be jeopardised and further recommended that the authorities should take all necessary steps to ensure that minority children have access to a bilingual or monolingual elementary school, as per their parents' choice<sup>139</sup>.

Despite many applications by the community organizations for establishment of bilingual kindergartens within the special education system that the Turkish community has been granted and establishment of other private bilingual kindergartens in the region, the Greek government rejected proposals to open Turkish-Greek bilingual kindergartens in the existing bilingual primary schools and rather adopted a legal framework in August 2017 for the implementation of a pilot project which envisages that a bilingual minority member,

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<sup>138</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc\\_-49\\_-iskece-turk-birligi-nin-yeniden-tesciline-iliskin-basvuru-hk-sc\\_en.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/sc_-49_-iskece-turk-birligi-nin-yeniden-tesciline-iliskin-basvuru-hk-sc_en.en.mfa)

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Greece/GRC-CbC-V-2015-001-ENG.pdf>

graduated from one of the higher education institutions in Greece, would work with a teacher in a kindergarten class in public schools in six provinces where children belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace lives.

More than 60 minority primary schools in the region have been closed down with the decision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion on closure of schools with low number of pupils since 2010. According to the decision of the Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education in the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace State on July 11, 2017, three more primary schools belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace were closed down.

The law in Thrace provides for Islamic religious instructors to teach Islam to the Muslim minority in Greek-language public schools in lieu of mandatory twice weekly Greek Orthodox religious courses. Law on Muslim Preachers (4115/2013), which is known as ‘240 Imams Law’, provides appointment of 240 ‘Quran teachers’ who would offer their services in the public schools of primary and secondary education and mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the official muftis who are appointed by the State itself. Despite strong objection by the Turkish community to the law, Islamic preachers were trained and appointed to public schools in the region and textbooks in Greek language for teaching Islam in public schools were prepared.

With regard to the secondary education, the main problem is the number of schools. While 52% of the population of the Rhodope Prefecture and 45% of the Xanthi Prefecture are Turkish speaking, there is only one minority school in each prefecture against 24 and 37 public (secondary and vocational) Greek-language schools respectively. In the Evros Prefecture, there are more than 45 Greek-speaking secondary schools but no minority secondary school for the Turkish-speaking families who represent 10% of the population.

Two private minority secondary schools operate in Xanthi and Komotini while two Quranic schools operate in Komotini and Echinós. All the teachers are paid by the school board. Although these minority secondary schools should be administered and run as any other private secondary schools in Greece, the Greek state determines how many students can attend that school and how they will be enrolled. The shortage in the number of classrooms in the two minority secondary schools is an urgent problem which has resulted in many minority children enrolling in Greek-language state schools.

## **Religion**

The right of the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. A parallel is often underlined between the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in İstanbul and the Muftiate in Western Thrace as the rights of the concerning Greek and Turkish communities have been determined by the same treaty. The Greek Orthodox Patriarch of İstanbul is elected by the Holy Synod after the submission of the list of would-be candidates to the public authorities. A similar method was implemented for the Turkish community in Western Thrace. The election of the religious leaders was incorporated into Greek domestic legislation in 1920 for the implementation of the provisions of the 1913 Athens Treaty by Law 2345/1920 on the provisional Chief Mufti and muftis of Muslims in Greece.

The community members elected their Muftis in Rodopi, Xanthi and Didymoteicho until the start of the problems in 1985. Greece abolished the right to choose its own religious leaders

with the Presidential Decree of 24 December 1990 and transferred it to the state by the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

The Muslim Turkish community elected their own Muftis in Komotini and Xanthi. However, the Greek state did not recognise the Muftis who were elected by the community and elected muftis were prosecuted and sentenced to prison for the illegal use of religious symbols. In the cases lodged by elected muftis against Greece, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ordered that there has been a violation of Article 9 of the Convention.

There is a duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community in the region. Greece has repeated in many international platforms that the three Muftis in Western Thrace (appointed) are selected through an open and inclusive process, by a pool of notable and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the minority, and are subsequently nominated to the Mufti Offices by the state. Greece claims that there is no single, internationally established method for the Muftis' assignment and further argues that in all Muslim countries, Muftis are appointed by the State and are not elected.

In recent years, juridical investigations against religious leaders of the Turkish community have revealed there is an environment of political intimidation and pressure against the community. İbrahim Şerif, Elected Mufti in Komotini, gave his testimony for six times with the charge of usurpation of the mufti authorities since the beginning of 2017. İbrahim Şerif, elected Mufti of Komotini, elected by the Western Thrace Turks living in Greece, bore testimony at the police department upon the order by the prosecution office on 31 May 2017. Mufti Şerif, who went to the Police Department of Komotini with his advocate within the scope of investigation regarding the circumcision ceremony held in 2016 in Alankuyu neighbourhood in the Province of Komotini for the boys belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, presented his defence statement against the accusation of 'usurpation of mufti authorities and office'.

On 9 January 2018, the Greek parliament adopted a law which would make optional Islamic law to settle family and inheritance issues of persons belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace. The bill was submitted to Greek parliament after a legal inheritance case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights by a Muslim Turkish woman from Thrace (Molla Sali v. Greece. (application no. 20452/14). The law made the sharia authorities in the field of inheritance, marriage and divorce utilised by muftis preferential and enabled the Greek Civil Law applicable in the case that there is disagreement between the parties. The new legislation changed how Islamic law is applied in the region and was supported by a vast majority of Greek parties. Every party voted in favour of the bill except for the far-right Golden Dawn party, who opposed it because they said it failed to spell out what powers will be retained by Islamic courts.

Concerning the issue, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release and criticised that the law is not consulted with the minority's elected religious leaders, whom Greece does not recognise. And Turkey noted that Greece increased the level of pressure against them through legal investigations against the elected Muftis of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace<sup>140</sup>. In reply to Turkey's press release, Greece issued a press release and noted that the legislation is a Greek domestic affair, regarding which outside interventions are unacceptable. Greece added that elected Muftis, described by Greece as 'the persons being

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<sup>140</sup> [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no\\_-9\\_-yunanistan-parlamentosunun-kabul-etti-gi-seri-yetkilere-iliskin-yasa-hk\\_en.en.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-9_-yunanistan-parlamentosunun-kabul-etti-gi-seri-yetkilere-iliskin-yasa-hk_en.en.mfa)

prosecuted for unlawful impersonation of religious authority cannot be held up as self-appointed and credible interlocutors on any issue'<sup>141</sup>.

It is very important that governments should pay a particular attention to the implementation of OSCE commitments and other relevant international commitments in the field of human rights. Recalling that persons belonging to national minorities should have the right freely to profess and practice their religion, including acquisition, possession and use of religious materials, and to conduct religious educational activities in their mother tongue, we demand from Greek authorities to ensure that Muslim Turkish community enjoys its right to elect its own religious leaders as other known religions in Greece and recognise the Muftis elected by the community as official religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in the region.

## **Conclusion**

The Turkish community in Western Thrace is officially recognised as 'Muslim minority in Thrace'. Therefore, Greece prohibits to use the word 'Turk' in association names or on official papers in Greece. The Turkish community has been perceived as representatives of Turkey; whose very existence is a tool for irredentist foreign policies. This has been particularly evident in the case of Greece due to the geographical proximity of the minority to the Greek-Turkish border. Historically, the Turks of Western Thrace were seen as reminiscent of the era of Ottoman yoke (Tourkokratia). Such views have produced an understanding of minorities as 'Trojan horses' which are seen as hindrances to national unity and integrity as well as public order. Turkish MPs in the Greek parliament have been even accused of 'Turkish spy' in many occasions.

Despite improvements in individual human rights in the last two decades, many issues remain to be tackled in the area of minority rights in Greece. The Turkish community is not still seen as equal citizens and still discriminated against. The solution of the problems in education and religion on equal footings through an advisory or consultative body/committee composed of representatives of the Turkish community would constitute a major step towards the completion of Greece's convergence with European human rights standards and would support the consolidation of Greece's strategic vision as a regional model, leader and promoter of Europeanization in South-eastern Europe. Further social, educational and economic reforms need to be undertaken to integrate the Turkish community in Western Thrace into Greek society.

As laid down in the Bolzano Recommendations, Greece and Turkey should continue to support minorities in both countries on the basis of friendly relations and any concern raised by the kinstate should not be an issue of sovereignty. As the protection of human rights, including minority rights, falls within the scope of international co-operation, bilateral and multilateral instruments established between Greece and Turkey should include minority issues as a means to implement the protection and promotion of the identity of persons belonging to national minorities.

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<sup>141</sup> <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-announcement-on-todays-announcement-from-the-turkish-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-regarding-the-hellenic-parliaments-approval-of-legislation-on-sharia.html>



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
**Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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

**From Lund to Ljubljana: Promoting the participation of national minorities as a pathway to the integration of diverse societies**

**Lund, Sweden**

**14 November 2019**

**Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**

Main contact person (s): Ms. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail: [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives  
And NGO Representatives,

This year, the OSCE, is commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life. Since 1990, the OSCE has created a large set of human rights and norms and standards that are part of traditional human rights and norms, and it has also developed a number of standards. The Lund Recommendations and the Ljubljana Guidelines comprised a set of norms and principles in order to ensure effective participation of national minorities in public and political life.

As set out in the general principles, the Lund Recommendations build upon fundamental principles and rules States have a duty to respect internationally recognised human rights and the rule of law, which allow for the full development of civil society in conditions of tolerance, peace, and prosperity in full respect for human dignity, equal rights, and non-discrimination.

It is commented in the Recommendations that an individual's freedom to identify oneself as one chooses is necessary in both private and public life. Article 3(1) of the Framework Convention provides similarly that 'Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice'.

The OSCE participating States have committed in the Copenhagen Document that persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects, free of any attempts at assimilation against their will. And they are entitled to the

right to effective participation in public life, as expressed in paragraph 31 of the Copenhagen Document, Article 4 of the Framework Convention, and Article 4(1) of the UN Declaration on Minorities.

The effective participation in public life includes the right of identify oneself and the freedom of association. And, the essence of participation is involvement, including the right to participate fully, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life through democratic participation in decision-making and consultative bodies at the national, regional, and local level, inter alia, through political parties and associations.”

The Turkish community in Western Thrace presents a very relevant and multiple-layered case in terms of barriers to the participation in public life at each level.

### The right to identify

The 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty grants the Turkish community in Western Thrace an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Since the Treaty of Lausanne recognises ‘a Muslim religious minority in Thrace’ rather than a Turkish national minority, Greece recognises a single minority only, as they call it ‘Muslim minority in Thrace’. Based on the Treaty of Lausanne, Greece claims that the Muslim minority in Thrace includes three different groups as Pomaks, Roma and the Turkish origin. Greek authorities use this argument to reject the use of the word ‘Turkish’ in the names of the relevant associations. While denying existence of ethnically Turkish identity and dissolving the existing associations with the word Turkish, there are Pomak and Roma associations legally registered in the region.

Although the Treaty of Lausanne does not specifically mention the ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace, there is a specific reference to the Turkish ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace in legal and international documents and ‘Etabli Documents’ which were the documents given to the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on 30 January 1923.

### Participation in decision-making:

Article 6 of the Lund recommendations mentions arrangements at the level of the central government and further notes that States should ensure that opportunities exist for minorities to have an effective voice at the level of the central government, including through special arrangements such as reserved number of seats.

Full and effective political participation of national minorities is an essential component of a peaceful and democratic society, and the electoral law or electoral system does have a great impact on the full and effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities. The participation of persons belonging to national minorities in the national Parliaments requires a detailed examination of electoral law and, in particular, of the influence of the electoral systems on the representation of political groups.

The Ljubljana Guidelines further notes that adequate representation ensures direct participation and is also important as a means to provide a genuine opportunity for minority voices to be heard.

However, the Turkish community in Western Thrace is inadequately represented in society's policy and decision-making system. After the Turkish community elected an independent deputy in 1989, a new electoral law was introduced in Greece, which set a threshold of 3% of the nationwide vote for a party and for an independent candidate to be represented in the Parliament. Under the current electoral law of 'reinforced proportionality', political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament unless they obtain at least 3 % of the votes throughout the country, although they may have enough votes to get electoral seats in specific electoral districts. This provision makes it almost impossible for members of the Turkish community to be elected to the Parliament, unless they run candidates with mainstream parties. In 1993, the independent minority candidate who had the largest vote among all Greek and Turkish candidates in Rhodope was unable to be elected to the Parliament, although the candidate exceeded the district's electoral quota for a seat.

The Turkish community is represented by Turkish MPs from majority political parties. In the last elections held on 7 July 2019, three Turkish MPs were elected to the Greek parliament. Although they were elected by votes of the Turkish community members in Rodopi and Xanthi, it is not easy for Turkish MPs to raise concerns of the Turkish community in the parliament due to the strict party policy and discipline.

The political party of the Turkish community, the Friendship, Equality and Peace Party(FEP), established in 1991, had never a chance to get in the Greek parliament due to the 3% electoral threshold. The FEP received overwhelming support in two provinces of Greece's Western Thrace region, where the Turkish minority mostly lives. The party ranked first in Rhodopi and Xanthi provinces, receiving 38% and 25% of the votes, respectively. Still, despite the success, the party was not able to elect a parliamentarian due to the relatively low number of Turkish minority voters that could pass the electoral threshold. The party sees the European elections as an opportunity to make the voices of the Turkish community heard. The votes cast for the FEP is a proof of Turkish identity in Western Thrace.

As noted in Article 9 of the Lund Recommendations, the electoral system should facilitate minority representation and influence and where minorities are concentrated territorially, single member districts may provide sufficient minority representation. And lower numerical thresholds for representation in the legislature may enhance the inclusion of national minorities in governance.

The latest MRG report on the Turkish community noted that states must also ensure that their participation has a meaningful impact on actions taken and, to the greatest possible extent, reflects a broad consensus from across the community. And the MRG noted that this is of particular importance in the case of Greece as the 1990 electoral law introduced a 3 per cent threshold which makes it nearly impossible for the Turkish community to be represented in the Parliament through independent candidates or their own party, given that the population of Greece exceeds 11 million while the Turkish minority is estimated to be around 145,000 at most.

## Advisory and Consultative Bodies

Articles 12 and 13 of the Recommendations note that States should establish advisory or consultative bodies within appropriate institutional frameworks to serve as channels for dialogue between governmental authorities and national minorities and add that governmental authorities should consult these bodies regularly regarding minority-related legislation and administrative measures in order to contribute to the satisfaction of minority concerns and to the building of confidence.

Article 38 of the Ljubljana Guidelines further note that the process of integration can only be facilitated if opportunities for participation are provided to all members of society. Effective participation in public affairs and all aspects of social, economic and cultural life, including of persons belonging to minorities, is both a right in itself and an essential precondition for equal opportunities in practice.

Unfortunately, there is no such a mechanism in Greece in order to establish channels for dialogue between the government and the Turkish community. Despite improvements in individual human rights in the last two decades, many issues remain to be tackled in the area of minority rights in Greece. The Turkish community is not still seen as equal citizens and still discriminated against. The solution of the problems in education and religion on equal footings through an advisory or consultative body/committee composed of representatives of the Turkish community would constitute a major step towards for solving the existing problems and establish further social, educational and economic reforms to integrate the Turkish community in Western Thrace into Greek society.

Since there are no dialogue channels between the Turkish community and the government, there is no option for the Turkish community rather than democratic protests in order to raise its voice to governmental authorities. As an example, to this, due to the implementation of double shift system in Xanthi Turkish minority secondary and high school belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace (Greece) which was recently relaunched after 2 years, the parents of students organised a protest in the school on 12 September 2019. The parents, school council and parent-teacher association opposed the decision to introduce classes in two shifts, which was taken due to the high number of students. On 23 September, they organised a march for the solution of the school building problem. The Parent-Teacher Association and School Council stated that they demanded a solution of the school building problem in February and June 2019 against the implementation of the 'class shift' in Xanthi Turkish Minority Secondary and High School after the number of students reached to 740 in the school year of 2019-2010. However, their demand was not considered. Roughly 2 thousand people participated in the protest on 23 September Monday in Xanthi to demand a solution for the problem. Christos Metios, Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Region said regarding the meetings he had in Athens that some legal regulations must be introduced since there should be a legal regulation concerning the exceptional situation to install prefabricated classes otherwise the government should find another solution. The boycott ended on 26 September 2019 after Metios informed the School Council. It is regretful to see that there is no other mechanisms rather than organising a protest in order to attract the regional and central governors.

The OSCE participating States, including Greece, have committed in the Copenhagen Document that they will respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the

protection of the identity of such minorities. Therefore, participating States should guarantee that persons belonging to national minorities can exercise and enjoy their rights individually as well as in community with other members of their group.

### Integration

As noted in the Ljubljana Guidelines, integration is a process that requires that all members of a given society accept common public institutions and have a shared sense of belonging to a common State and an inclusive society. This does not exclude the possibility of distinct identities, which are constantly evolving, multiple and contextual.

### *Citizenship*

In this regard, the guidelines refer to the importance of citizenship which has social and symbolic dimensions. It is a tangible signal of common belonging and of shared core values for both the holder of citizenship and the State granting it. The European Convention on Nationality refers that non-discrimination also applies to the area of citizenship, with the consequence that discretion in citizenship issues cannot amount to discrimination based on, inter alia, sex, religion, race, colour or national or ethnic origin.

Unfortunately, Former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (No. 3370) included clear racist expositions and divided Greek citizens into two: ethnically Greeks and ethnically non-Greeks. Approximately 60,000 individuals were deprived of their citizenship under Article 19 between 1955 and 1998.

Those who remain stateless within Greece and those who adopted the nationality of another country after losing their Greek citizenship and having left Greece (in this case mostly the Turkish nationality) have no right under Greek law to recover their Greek citizenship. Greek authorities should take steps to ensure the immediate rectification of the unfortunate consequences arising from deprivation of Greek citizenship on the basis of former Article 19 of the Citizenship Code for all persons concerned, whether resident in Greece or abroad, whether stateless or holding another nationality.

Not only the persons who were deprived of citizenship but also their descendants were deprived of the Greek nationality, and they also lost advantages of being an EU citizen. However, as for the denationalized persons who have remained abroad and are not willing to return, Greece stated that ‘according to the general principles of international law the obligation to reparation results from the commission of an internationally wrongful act by the responsible State’ and added that ‘in the present case, no decision of a judicial body has ever determined the commission of an internationally wrongful act by Greece as a result of the stripping of nationality on the basis of article 19, especially since the individuals concerned do not live in the country and have already acquired a foreign citizenship’.

In its fifth country report on Greece, the ECRI recommended that the authorities reinforce their efforts to rectify the negative consequences of Article 19 of the citizenship law, which resulted in many persons still being unable to regain their Greek citizenship.

### *Social and economic participation*

Article 40 of the Guidelines note that States should formulate and implement policies in relevant areas, such as education and training, employment, healthcare, housing and access to

public goods and services, so that these promote socio-economic inclusion in a comprehensive manner.

ECRI noted in its fifth report on Greece that it information and complaints from representatives of the minority about the low rate of members of the minority working in the civil service, especially in decision-making positions - including in Western Thrace itself. Although there is a quota of 0.5% for members of the Turkish community in public positions, there is a very small number of persons recruited in public sector. ECRI recommended that the Greek authorities take steps to increase the number of minority members who work in the civil service of the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

#### *Participation in cultural and religious life*

Article 41 States should create the conditions for persons belonging to minorities to effectively participate in the cultural life of their own community and of wider society. Freedom of religion and belief, and opportunities for voluntary participation in the religious life of a community, should be ensured, including through mutual accommodation, as appropriate. The Guidelines note that undue limitations to full participation in cultural and religious affairs should be avoided and such limitations may include excessive requirements for the registration of cultural or religious organisations.

Greek authorities state that a large number of Muslim minority associations and NGOs are officially registered and freely operate in Western Thrace; there is currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the words ‘Turkish’, which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. Although some other ethnic groups are recognised and even welcomed and supported by Greek authorities, Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union were dissolved in 1986 by local courts and the Supreme Court decided the dissolution of the associations on the ground that the word ‘Turkish’ referred to citizens of Turkey and could not be used to describe citizens of Greece. The three associations (Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association) lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in 2005; the ECtHR held unanimously there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

There is another refusal for registration of a newly formed Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Xanthi. Their request for registration was rejected in 2017 by a final judgment of the Court of Cassation. This association applied to the ECtHR on 10 July 2018. In the last decision of the Ministers’ Deputies on 25 September 2019, the Deputies noted with deep regret that the registration of another association in the Thrace region was rejected in 2017 by a final judgment of the Court of Cassation on grounds already criticised by the European Court in its 2008 judgments concerning the present case.

Concerning religious life of the Turkish community, right of the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece to elect its own religious leaders is granted by the 1913 Athens Treaty and guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty which determined the legal status of the Turkish minority in Greece and Greek minority in Turkey. Greece abolished the right to freedom to choose its own religious leaders and transferred it to the state by the appointment of muftis by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs by Presidential Decree of December 24, 1990 and Law no. 1920/1991 on Muslim religious instructors. There is a

duality today, the Muftis appointed by the State and the Muftis elected by the Turkish community in the region. Greece doesn't still recognise the right of the Turkish community in Western Thrace to elect its own religious leaders.

The Turkish community is highly concerned about attempts of intimidation and deterrence by the governmental authorities in the region in recent years. In violation of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, juridical investigations and lawsuits against religious leaders have revealed there is an environment of political intimidation and pressure against the community. There are many lawsuits against the Elected Muftis in Rhodope and Xanthi. On 5 November 2019, İbrahim Şerif, Elected Mufti of Rhodope was convicted by a court in Alexandroupoli (Dedeğaç) on Tuesday on the basis of his participation in a Friday prayer in one of the villages of Evros province in March 2016. Serif previously won a case in 1999 over the same charge after appealing to the European Court of Human Rights.

Ahmet Mete, Elected Mufti of Xanthi, First, Ahmet Mete was sentenced to seven-month imprisonment on 13 November 2017 on charges of usurping the Office of the Mufti(appointed) at the funeral of Ahmet Katunlu who lost his life in 2016 during his military service because Ahmet Mete led the prayer during the funeral. The imprisonment was delayed for 3 years.

Recalling that every person should have a right to freedom of expression and the right to freely to profess and practice their religion in the framework of freedom of religion or belief, I would demand from Greek authorities to stop intimidation and deterrence against religious leaders of the Muslim Turkish community in full respect for the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion.

### *Education*

Article 45 of the Guidelines note that States should respect the right of persons belonging to minorities to be taught their language or to receive instruction in this language, as appropriate, especially in areas inhabited by them traditionally or insubstantial numbers.

The Turkish community of Western Thrace is granted with the right to education in its native language and autonomy in the management of its educational institutions. The autonomy in education has been undermined through a number of regulations and practices, which resulted in a low-qualified education in minority schools with structural problems regarding training of teachers, the curriculum and textbooks.

The Guidelines further note that States should respect minorities' right to establish or maintain separate education institutions (public or private) for linguistic or religious reasons that provide education in keeping with the wishes of the pupil's parents or legal guardians.

The latest MRG report released on 23 October 2019 noted that the barriers confronting the Turkish minority have increased further in recent decades. This has resulted in a wide range of restrictions on their ability to establish associations, practice their culture and provide education in the Turkish language, representing a serious threat to their identity, participation and self-expression.

One of the most important problem in the region is the absence of bilingual minority kindergartens for the Turkish community of Western Thrace. The right not to be

discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat differently minority children who speak a different language other than Greek. At the pre-school level, minority children are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek under Law 3518/2006 which extends the compulsory period in education in Greece from nine to ten years, but not includes minority schooling system. ECRI mentioned in its fifth report on Greece in 2015 that there are no special measures for the minority under Law No. 3518/2006 which has made pre-school education compulsory. Despite many applications by the community organizations for establishment of bilingual kindergartens within the special education system that the Turkish community has been granted and establishment of other private bilingual kindergartens in the region, the Greek government rejected proposals to open Turkish- Greek bilingual kindergartens in the existing bilingual primary schools.

#### *Diversity of symbols and their use in the public domain*

Article 50 of the Guidelines note that States should promote integration by respecting the claims and sensitivities of both minority and majority groups regarding the display and use of symbols in shared public space. Unfortunately, the use of Turkish in topographical and street signs is forbidden in Western Thrace, although 52% of the population of the Rhodope Prefecture and 45% of the Xanthi Prefecture are Turkish speaking. Even, there are some minority municipalities like Mustafçova(Myki) with 100% of Turkish population, and the use of Turkish in signboards, street names are forbidden. As an example to this, in June 2017, within the framework of the EU programme which foresees establishment of social centres at the municipalities in the state-wide Mustafçova Municipality, after having been included in the EU programme through accomplishing the necessary procedures, made a vacancy call for recruitment of three people to run this programme with the approval of the Administrative Secretary General and by consulting the institution which executes the State Employee Examination. At the Municipality where all its population is Turks, in line with the decision taken by city council unanimously in order to run the programme better, demand for the personnel to be recruited to have a command of Turkish caused a great reaction. On 6 June 2017, Mayor of Mustafçova(Myki) Cemil Kabza gave his written testimony and submitted official documents concerning the procurement of the staff with a proficiency of Turkish language. On June 22nd, the prosecutor's office in Xanthi asked from the Municipality of Myki for the submission of applicants with the certificate of Turkish language obtained from TÖMER from Ankara University in Turkey for the position which was cancelled by the ASEP.

## **OSCE/ODIHR HATE CRIME REPORTS**



**Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu**  
**Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa**  
**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**  
**Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης**  
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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)

**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)**  
**Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2009**  
**Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and**  
**Responses’**  
**March 2010**

	Date	Incident
1	<b>29 January 2009</b>	Komotini- On the day of National Resistance Day of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the dead-end Grigoriu Marasli Street around the <i>Çayüstü</i> region in Komotini, where members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are densely populated. The unidentified Molotov cocktail attack around 00.20 a.m. resulted with no harm.
	<b>19 February 2009</b>	Komotini- The physical attack on journalist Abdulhalim Dede while he was on-air during the morning programme, Kalimera Ellada, broadcast by the Athens, Greece-based Antenna TV. The Turkish Ziraat Bank had invited, among others, Dimitris Stamatis, Secretary General of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, to attend the opening of its first branch in Komotini, Thrace, Greece. Stamatis declined because the letter of invitation was written in English and Turkish, but not in Greek, and because the city of Komotini was referred to by its Turkish name only. Abdulhalim Dede, publisher and director of the newspaper <i>Trakyanin Sesi</i> and owner of the radio station <i>ISIK FM</i> in Komotini, was invited by the hosts of Kalimera Ellada to express his opinion live from Komotini on Antenna TV. During the interview, an unknown man approached Dede, shouted at him using obscene language, and physically attacked him. The main studio in Athens immediately terminated the live broadcasting.
	<b>27 June 2009</b>	Rhodope- The drinking fountain on the name of Mehmet Hilmi, teacher and founder of the Xanthi Turkish Union, was attacked by unidentified persons. The drinking fountain, which was being built by Seçek Minority Education and Culture Association in the Seçek Plateau in Mehrikoz subdistrict in Rhodope, where traditional Seçek Oil Wrestling Festival is held, had a poet written in Turkish dedicated to Mehmet Hilmi on its marble, which was destroyed during the attack. On 27 June 2009,

		<i>Hronos</i> , had a heading ‘Seçek Culture Association is building a provocative and illegal monument’ and stated that ‘The Mehmet Hilmi Fountain was being built on the honour of the Greek enemy who struggled for Turkifying the Minority’. In the same night, the fountain was attacked, and the marble was partially destroyed.
	<b>1 July 2009</b>	Rhodope- A second against the Mehmet Hilmi Fountain took place, and the marble was damaged. The word ‘Alevites’ was written to the other parts of the fountain.
	<b>9 July 2009</b>	Rhodope- A third attack against the Mehmet Hilmi Fountain took place, and upper parts of the wall, on which the marble lies, were destroyed.
	<b>2 September 2009</b>	Xanthi- An arson attack took place against the Okçular (Toxotes) Village Mosque, and the fire damaged interior carpets, the engine of air conditioner and part of the roof. Besides lustres, timber panels, pulpit, the book of Qur’an and the stone nish were also damaged in the fire. Police officers, who inspected the crime scene, ascertained the occurrence as an incendiary action and stated that unidentified person or persons had spoiled gasoline on the mosque carpets after removing the iron railings and breaking a window to enter the mosque. This was the third time the mosque had been attacked since 2004, each time prior to national elections. During the general elections of 2004, the mosque was set on fire for the first time on 7 <sup>th</sup> March and as a result completely burned down. The second incendiary action took place in 2007, and now on the day of announcement of early elections in Greece for the 4th of October 2009, the mosque became a place of vandalism again.
	<b>5 September 2009</b>	Xanthi- Ali Karaosman, the Ramadan drummer of Koyunköy, a province of Xanthi, was attacked by an armed Greek while he was waiting for the drum playing time. Karaosman, who went to the police for appeal, was accused by the Greek perpetrator and detained by the Greek police for six hours.
	<b>12 November 2009</b>	Xanthi- An attack against the Hürriyet(Liberty) Mosque took place by unidentified persons. The windows of the mosque on the northern-west side were broken.
	<b>19 November 2009</b>	İbrahim Baltalı, owner of the journal <i>Rodop Rüzgârı</i> and the website <i>Burası Batı Trakya</i> , was attacked by a group of fanatic Greeks while he was following the lawsuit filed with the claim that Hara Nikopoulou, Greek teacher serving at the Minority school in the village of Büyük Derbent, had been battered by Osman Kasayka. İbrahim Baltalı was attacked at the exit of the court building by a group of fanatic Greeks who were following the suit to support Hara Nikopoulou. Baltalı unsuccessfully tried to shelter at a place near the court building and he survived through police intervention. He was injured as a result of the assaulters’ beat and brought to the Alexandroupolis Faculty of Medicine for treatment.

	<b>6 December 2009</b>	Xanthi- The Sünne District Mosque was attacked by an unidentified person, or an unidentified group of persons. On Sunday night, around 11:40 pm, windows of the Sünne District Mosque were broken by stones thrown during the attack, and slogans were written on the walls of the mosque. After the imam of the mosque Remzi Şaban had immediately reported the incident to the police, they investigated the crime scene and detected that two windows of the mosque, one at the entrance and one on the side showing to the direction of Mecca, had been broken.
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**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)**  
**Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2010**  
**Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and**  
**Responses’**  
**March 2011**

**Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against persons, associations, and places of worship, cemeteries and properties belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace throughout 2010 and till March 2011 in the region of Western Thrace, northern Greece. It does rely on incidents reported by a small number of local newspapers published in the Turkish language which belong to the Turkish Minority.

1.2 The fact that Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) is a non-governmental organisation which does particularly focuses on the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece, the incidents that are documented in this submission only report hate motivated incidents and attack against the Turkish Minority the Greek State officially recognises on its religious affiliation that is Muslim Minority in Thrace. Therefore, this submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece. On the other hand, the incidents and attacks that are documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information in minority newspapers.

1.3 In this submission that relies on media reported hate-motivated incidents and attacks, we provide a systematic way in which to document the incidents in chronological order and the context within which incidents and attacks take place, with reference to internet links to the media that reported incidents.

**The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented six attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and three attacks in the first months of 2011.

2.2. Our report exposes different manifestations of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Six involved damaging, vandalising and spraying graffiti on the wall of a graveyard, and one incident was religious humiliation and threat with a pig head nailed at the door of an historical mosque. Two were direct physical attacks against the animals which belong to the Turkish people that a group of unknown person/s attacked a sheepfold and a cattle shelter and killed thirty of sheep in the fold.

## Attacks on mosques and Muslim cemeteries

3.1 There occurred attacks against the places of worship and Muslim cemeteries in Western Thrace in the year 2010 and the first months of 2011. Of the five incidents we documented, three were carried out on mosques and included throwing Molotov cocktail and pieces of asphalt and stones, the smashing of windows and damaging the interior part of the mosques and nailing an object (a severed pigs head on the entrance door).

<b>13 December 2010</b>	Xanthi - Beyköy (Avato) Mosque in Xanthi, Greece was attacked by vandals in the early hours of December 13, 2010 ( <a href="http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=96">http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=96</a> ). The exterior window was broken by the explosion, and the Molotov bomb did not get inside the mosque. The imam of the mosque, Mr. Sunay Uzun, described what happened: ‘My wife did not get asleep at that time. She heard a voice of motorbike and she woke me up with a huge voice of explosion. I flanged out of the room, but the motorbike had moved away. Only the exterior window had been broken since windows were double glazed, and thanks to God, the Molotov did not home in the mosque. Then I called the police station’.
<b>3 February 2011</b>	Kavala - On February 3, 2011, Halil Bey Mosque, which is today known as Alaca Mosque in Kavala, staged an atrocious incident. An unknown person and/or a group of persons cut off a pig, which is forbidden to eat in Islam, in front of the front-entrance door of the mosque, nailed its head to the door and left other pieces there.
<b>2 March 2011</b>	Komotini - The mosque of the Uysallı village in Komotini was attacked by an unknown person or a group of persons. The two windows of the mosque were broken with pieces of asphalt and stones brought about by the assailants.

3.2 Two incidents took place against the Muslim cemeteries in Komotini and involved a far-right organization which sprayed the name of the organization, *Chrysi Avyi* (Golden Dawn), and the other attack took place in Komotini, and it included breaking of gravestones in the cemetery. On none of incidents the assailants were caught and arrested.

<b>20 May 2010</b>	Rhodope - Some gravestones in the cemeteries of Kahveci and Kırmahalle of the city Komotini, Greece were destroyed by an unknown person or a group of persons. According to the news of daily Olay ( <a href="http://www.btrolay.gr/haberdetay.asp?ID=13">http://www.btrolay.gr/haberdetay.asp?ID=13</a> ), it was supposed that the attacks had been occurred in the previous days, and mainly the cemetery of Kahveci had been destroyed. After a woman had called the daily Olay, and told about the incident, the daily Olay went to see the situation on site and observed that numerous gravestones in the cemetery of Kahveci had been destroyed. The woman told the daily Olay on phone that the gravestones had been broken for a month. In the news, it is stated that in the cemetery of Kırmahalle, the destruction of the gravestones is small scaled, and it was claimed that they had been broken by the kids of the district. Since the gravestones in the cemetery of Kahveci are of a kind, which is hardly to be broken, it is
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	more likely that the gravestones in this cemetery were deliberately destroyed.
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<b>13 August 2010</b>	Rhodope - The Muslim cemetery in the northern city of Komotini, Greece was desecrated late on Friday, on the holy day of Ramadan (Vandals desecrated the Muslim cemetery of Pospos (Poşpoş) and Ifestos (Kalkanca) districts. The unidentified assailants destroyed more than twenty gravestones in the cemetery, and they spray painted ‘The Consulate General, Get Out’ on the cemetery walls. The perpetrators spray painted the name of the organization, <i>Chrysi Avyi</i> (Golden Dawn), which is a Greek Nationalist political organization that describes itself as a popular nationalist movement and supports National Socialism).
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### Attacks on a Turkish association and the Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki

4.1 Our report indicates that there are mixed-motivated incidents and attacks intertwined with anti-Muslim hate crime. Given the fact that the question of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is heavily influenced by history and emotionally highly charged in Greece, the treatment of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been determined with its relation to the kin state, Turkey. Therefore, in our report we face a mixed motivation in hate-motivated incidents and attacks. The persistent hate speech in the mainstream media with an explicit manifestation of hatred against Turkey makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which all of whom are Greek citizens, a vulnerable target for far right and/or extremist groups.

4.2 There occurred an attack on a Turkish association in Komotini which involved throwing stones and smashing the windows in March 2010. The Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki was attacked two times, respectively in August and September 2010. The assailants threw firebomb to the Consulate General, no serious damage occurred.

<b>21 March 2010</b>	Rhodope - An attack took place on the Turkish Youth Union of Komotini. During the attack on Sunday night around 03:00 am, an unidentified assailant or assailants broke the windows of the building with paving stones. There did no damage any goods inside the building. Police officers investigated the crime scene and estimate that the attacks took place approximately around 03:00 am. Because windows were broken with cobblestones, it was estimated that at least two persons were involved in the attack. The assailants failed to enter the building, because that the door on the west-side of the building could not be opened. The police teams from the Organised Crime Unit of the Rhodope Police Department investigated and took fingerprints of the crime scene.
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<b>12 August 2010</b>	Thessaloniki - The Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Thessaloniki, a city in the northern part of Greece, was attacked on Thursday, only one day before the desecration of the Muslim cemetery of Pospos and Ifestos. Unknown assailants threw a firebomb at the Consulate General; it did without damage or casualties. The attack happened at 4:15 a.m., and three men wearing motorcycle helmets
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	approached two police guards outside the Turkish Consulate building and threatened to burn them and threw a Molotov bomb and ran away. The firebomb landed against the fence of the consulate and went off without any major damage but endangered the safety of the police guards outside the building.
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<b>18 September 2010</b>	Thessaloniki - Unknown assailant or assailants threw Molotov cocktail outside the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Thessaloniki, Greece. On Saturday night, around 02.30 a.m., unknown assailants threw firebombs to the police post outside the consulate, where Greek police officers are in charge. The fire at the police post was put out by the fire gang. No one either died or injured; no damage resulted at the Consulate building, since the attack aimed at the police post outside the Consulate. This was the second attack on the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey in Thessaloniki in a month.
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### Attacks against minority properties

5.1 An attack against the properties of the different Turkish people was recorded in March 2011. The attack in the village of Ircan, Komotini caused fear among the Turkish people, because the assailants attacked a sheepfold and a cattle shelter at the same night, while cutting the tyres of two cars and one tractor.

<b>2 March 2011</b>	Komotini - An unknown person and/or a group of persons invaded into a sheepfold in the village of Ircan and killed thirty sheep belonging to Mr. Sali Fikret, a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Mr. Fikret, the owner of the herd said that thirty sheep had been cut from their throat but none of them had been stolen. On the same day at the same night in the same village, assailants fired a cattle shelter belonging to a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and cut the tyres of three cars and two tractors.
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### Conclusion

6.1 The anti-Muslim hate crimes, which we have reported in this submission, took place within a mixed-motivated context of ethnic discrimination and violence. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace that has been systematically discriminated faces an increasing trend in hate-motivated incidents and attacks due to stereotypes and hate-motivated speech in printed and audio-visual media. This makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace a vulnerable target, and activities of far right and/or extremist groups and their widely use of Internet does create a fragile situation in the region.

6.2 Our report indicates that there is a distinct and discernible pattern of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The attacks against mosques and cemeteries indicate an explicit manifestation of violence, while attacks against associations and the Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki indicate a simultaneous manifestation of ethnic hatred with mixed motivations.



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**Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and**  
**Responses’**  
**March 2012**

**Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the properties belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in the region of Western Thrace, northern Greece in the year 2011. The incidents and attacks that are documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information in minority newspapers.

1.2 The fact that Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) is a non-governmental organization which does a particular focus on the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece, the incidents that are documented in this submission only report hate motivated incidents and attack against the Turkish Minority, which the Greek State officially recognises on its religious affiliation which is, Muslim Minority in Thrace. Therefore, this submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece.

1.3 In this submission that relies on media reported hate-motivated incidents and attacks, we provide a systematic way in which to document the incidents in chronological order and the context within which incidents and attacks take place, with reference to internet links to the media that reported incidents.

**The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented four attacks against the properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and three attacks against one Muslim cemetery in February 2012, one against a Bektashi lodge in March 2012 and one against a Turkish association in March 2012.

2.2. Our report exposes different manifestations of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Two involved damaging and vandalising the mosques in cities of Kavala and Komotini, one of which was a religious humiliation and threat with a pig head nailed at the door of an historical mosque in Kavala. One was direct physical attack against the animals which belong to the Turkish people, in which a group of unknown person/s attacked a sheepfold and a cattle shelter and killed thirty of sheep in the fold and cut the tyres of two cars and one tractor at the same night. Two were attacks against

the Turkish war cemetery in Athens and the Muslim cemetery in Komotini. One involved an unidentified person or group of persons, who dumped paint and wrote racist slogans on the grave markers of Turkish martyrs and the other involved in vandalising gravestones in the Muslim cemetery.

### Attacks on mosques and Muslim cemeteries

3.1 There occurred attacks against the places of worship in Western Thrace in the year 2011 and one attack against one Muslim cemetery in February 2012. Of the four incidents we documented, two carried out on mosques and included throwing Molotov cocktail and pieces of asphalt and stones, the smashing of windows and damaging the interior part of the mosques in Komotini and nailing an object (a severed pigs head) on the entrance door of the mosque in Kavala.

<b>3 February 2011</b>	Kavala - On February 3, 2011, Halil Bey Mosque, which is today known as Alaca Mosque in Kavala, staged an atrocious incident. An unknown person and/or a group of persons cut off a pig, which is forbidden to eat in Islam, in front of the front-entrance door of the mosque, nailed its head to the door and left other pieces there ( <a href="http://www.batitrakya.org/component/content/article/6-bati-trakyadan-haberler/456-kavaladaki-tarihi-cami-girisine-domuz-basi-asildi.html">http://www.batitrakya.org/component/content/article/6-bati-trakyadan-haberler/456-kavaladaki-tarihi-cami-girisine-domuz-basi-asildi.html</a> )
<b>2 March 2011</b>	Komotini - The mosque of the Uysallı village in Komotini was attacked by an unknown person or a group of persons. The two windows of the mosque were broken with pieces of asphalt and stones brought about by the assailants ( <a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay_04.php?h3_id=1303">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay_04.php?h3_id=1303</a> ).
<b>23 March 2012</b>	Xanthi- An identified person or a group wrote ‘ΤΟΥΡΚΟΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΜΟΝΟ ΝΕΚΡΟΣ’(‘The only good Turk is dead Turk’ on the wall of the Bektashi lodge in Aşağımahalle(Kato Thermes) ( <a href="http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/bati_trakya_haber/view-news.php?t=%C4%B0ske%C3%A7e%E2%80%99de%20%C4%B0TB%E2%80%99nin%20giri%C5%9F%20kap%C4%B1s%C4%B1%20ile%20Bekta%C5%9Fi%20tekkesinin%20duvar%C4%B1na%20%C4%B1rk%C3%A7%C4%B1%20yaz%C4%B1lar%20yaz%C4%B1ld%C4%B1">http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/bati_trakya_haber/view-news.php?t=%C4%B0ske%C3%A7e%E2%80%99de%20%C4%B0TB%E2%80%99nin%20giri%C5%9F%20kap%C4%B1s%C4%B1%20ile%20Bekta%C5%9Fi%20tekkesinin%20duvar%C4%B1na%20%C4%B1rk%C3%A7%C4%B1%20yaz%C4%B1lar%20yaz%C4%B1ld%C4%B1</a> )

3.2 One incident took place in 2011 against the Turkish war cemetery in Athens, Piraeus and involved an unidentified person or group of persons, who dumped paint and wrote racist slogans on the grave markers of Turkish martyrs. In February 2012, the Poşpoş Muslim cemetery in Komotini vandalised and gravestones in the cemetery were broken.

<b>25 March 2011</b>	Athens, Piraeus- The Turkish war cemetery in Athens-Piraeus was attacked by an unidentified person or group of persons, who dumped paint and wrote racist slogans on the grave markers of Turkish martyrs early in the morning on 25 March 2011. The Spokesman of the Greek Government George Petalotis condemned the attack in a written statement and said that that heinous attack against the memory of the fallen was also against the history and civilization of his country, adding that these provocations will not succeed as the entire society
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	stood against them. ( <a href="http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya/492-atinada-turk-sehitligine-cirkin-saldiri.html">http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya/492-atinada-turk-sehitligine-cirkin-saldiri.html</a> )
<b>16 February 2012</b>	<p>Komotini- The Muslim cemetery of Pospos was desecrated by one or more unidentified vandals. According to the Chairman of the Kalkanca Cultural Association Ali Çakır, the ten gravestones destroyed during the desecration were found by the visitors. Upon this, the authorities were informed about the incident.</p> <p>On 13 August 2010, the cemetery had been desecrated by unidentified vandals who had destroyed about twenty gravestones and removed them from the graves. They had also spray-painted texts like ‘The Consulate General, Get Out’ and ‘The Organization of Chrysi Avyi (Golden Dawn)’ on the cemetery walls. (<a href="http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisi-pospos-mezarligi-aciklama-2182012.html">http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisi-pospos-mezarligi-aciklama-2182012.html</a>)</p>
<b>23 March 2012</b>	<p>Xanthi- An unidentified person or a group spray painted some figures on the walls of the Xanthi Turkish Union and wrote ‘ΕΞΩ ΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ’ (Turks Out) on the entrance door.</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/oku.php?habid=282">http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/oku.php?habid=282</a>)</p>

### Attacks against minority properties

4.1 An attack against the properties of the different Turkish people was recorded in March 2011. The attack in the village of Ircan, Komotini caused fear among the Turkish people, because the assailants attacked a sheepfold and a cattle shelter at the same night, while cutting the tyres of two cars and one tractor.

<b>2 March 2011</b>	<p>Komotini - An unknown person and/or a group of persons invaded into a sheepfold in the village of Ircan and killed thirty sheep belonging to Mr. Sali Fikret, a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Mr. Fikret, the owner of the herd said that thirty sheep had been cut from their throat but none of them had been stolen. On the same day at the same night in the same village, assailants fired a cattle shelter belonging to a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and cut the tyres of three cars and two tractors.</p> <p>(<a href="http://balkangunlugu.com/2011/03/guemuelcinede-vahet/">http://balkangunlugu.com/2011/03/guemuelcinede-vahet/</a>)</p>
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### Conclusion

5.1 The hate crimes which we have reported in this submission took place within a mixed-motivated context of ethnic discrimination and violence. In the time of deep economic crisis, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace becomes a vulnerable target, and activities of far right and/or extremist groups.

5.2 Our report indicates that there is a distinct and discernible pattern of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The attacks against mosques and cemeteries indicate an explicit manifestation of violence, while attacks against the Turkish war cemetery in Athens, Piraeus indicate a manifestation of historical hatred and prejudices in relations with Greece and Turkey.



# **Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu** **Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa** **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe** **Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης** **Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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## **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)** **Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2012** **Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and** **Responses’** **April 2013**

### **Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of hate-motivated incidents and attacks against the properties belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in the region of Western Thrace, in the year 2012 and first three months of 2013. The incidents and attacks that are documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information in minority newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.<sup>142</sup> This submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece.

1.3 In this submission, which relies on minority media reported hate-motivated incidents and attacks, we provide a systematic way in which to document the incidents in chronological order and the context within which incidents and attacks take place, with reference to internet links to the media that reported incidents.

### **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented six attacks on members, institutions and religious places of the Minority in the year 2012. Two attacks on religious places were recorded, one included an attack against a cemetery, and one included against a religious lodge. Out of six attacks in the year 2012, there attacks occurred against the institutions which belong to the Turkish Minority. The attacks on Xanthi Turkish Union and Friendship, Equality and Peace Party included physical damage and the assailants have not been arrested. The attack against Komotini Turkish Youth Union was staged during Golden Dawn Party supporters’ protest against the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi, and, the party supporters marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union. The attack resulted in physical damage; the assailants have not been arrested.

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<sup>142</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

2.2. Our report exposes one physical assault against a member of the minority in the year 2012. In September, a Turkish teacher, Cemali Mülazım, who is a member of a group called ‘Movement against Racism and Fascist Threat’ was attacked by Golden Dawn members. One of the assailants was arrested and sentenced to 8 months of imprisonment by Xanthi Criminal Court, but the verdict has been deferred for 3 years.

2.3 Another physical assault happened in March 2013. The Golden Dawn supporters attacked Cüneyt Serdar and blatantly beaten during the amid between Golden Dawn and the anarchist group. He has been taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face.

2.4. Out of two attacks happened in 2013; Golden Dawn supporters attacked the car of the Komotini Turkish Consul General, when he visited the Kavala Municipality. The attack included no serious physical damage, but verbal assault against Turkey and the Turkish people.

### Attacks against Muslim cemeteries and religious places

3.1 There occurred one attack against one Muslim cemetery in February 2012 and one attack against a religious lodge in March 2012. In February 2012, the Poşpoş Muslim cemetery in Komotini vandalised and gravestones in the cemetery were broken, and in March 2012 assailants spray painted the wall of a religious lodge in Xanthi and wrote, ‘The only good Turk is the dead one’.

<b>16 February 2012</b>	<p>Komotini- The Muslim cemetery of Pospos was desecrated by one or more unidentified vandals. According to the Chairman of the Kalkanca Cultural Association Ali Çakır, the ten gravestones destroyed during the desecration were found by the visitors. Upon this, the authorities were informed about the incident.</p> <p>On 13 August 2010, the cemetery had been desecrated by unidentified vandals who had destroyed about twenty gravestones and removed them from the graves. They had also spray-painted texts like ‘The Consulate General, Get Out’ and ‘The Organization of Chrysi Avyi (Golden Dawn)’ on the cemetery walls.(<a href="http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisi-pospos-mezarligi-aciklama-2182012.html">http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisi-pospos-mezarligi-aciklama-2182012.html</a>)</p>
<b>23 March 2012</b>	<p>Xanthi- An identified person or a group wrote ‘TOYPKOΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΜΟΝΟ ΝΕΚΡΟΣ’(‘The only good Turk is dead Turk’ on the wall of the Bektashi lodge in Aşağımahalle(Kato Thermes)(<a href="http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/bati_trakya_haber/view-news.php?t=%C4%B0ske%C3%A7e%E2%80%99de%20%C4%B0TB%E2%80%99nin%20giri%C5%9F%20kap%C4%B1s%C4%B1%20ile%20Bekta%C5%9Fi%20tekkesinin%20duvar%C4%B1na%20%C4%B1rk%C3%A7%C4%B1%20yaz%C4%B1lar%20yaz%C4%B1ld%C4%B1">http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/bati_trakya_haber/view-news.php?t=%C4%B0ske%C3%A7e%E2%80%99de%20%C4%B0TB%E2%80%99nin%20giri%C5%9F%20kap%C4%B1s%C4%B1%20ile%20Bekta%C5%9Fi%20tekkesinin%20duvar%C4%B1na%20%C4%B1rk%C3%A7%C4%B1%20yaz%C4%B1lar%20yaz%C4%B1ld%C4%B1</a>)</p>

### Attacks against minority institutions

4.1 Three attacks on minority institutions happened in the year 2012. One incident happened in the same day with the attack against the religious lodge and it took place against the oldest minority institution in the region, Xanthi Turkish Union. The incident targeted Turks living in the region.

<b>23 March 2012</b>	Xanthi- An unidentified person or a group spray painted some figures on the walls of the Xanthi Turkish Union and wrote 'ΕΞΩ ΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ' (Turks Out) on the entrance door. ( <a href="http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/oku.php?habid=282">http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org/oku.php?habid=282</a> )
<b>23 August 2012</b>	Komotini- Headquarter of Party of Friendship, Equality, Peace, which is established by Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked in the late hours of evening and illuminated sign of the party was broken with rocks. ( <a href="http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisinin-tabelasini-kirdilar-8232012.html">http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/deb-partisinin-tabelasini-kirdilar-8232012.html</a> )

4.2 Since the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament in the June 2012 general elections, the Minority faces an increasing hostile environment. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament, one attack took place against the Komotini Turkish Youth Union, and the far-right groups threw bottles to the garden of the association.

<b>6 August 2012</b>	Komotini- A group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn(Chrysi Avgi) party marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union(Gümölcine Türk Gençler Birliği)(GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association. At that day, Golden Dawn organised a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey, then threw bottles to the garden ( <a href="http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-haber/yunanistanda-turklere-cirkin-saldiri.html">http://www.batitrakya.org/bati-trakya/bati-trakya-haber/yunanistanda-turklere-cirkin-saldiri.html</a> )
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4.3. The attack against the Komotini Turkish Youth Union resulted in an environment of fear among the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace that racist attacks against persons and properties belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace will increase. The supporters of Golden Dawn made demonstrations in the villages where the Minority lives and chanted slogans against the Minority and Turkey.

<b>12 August 2012</b>	Xanthi- A group of members of the Xanthi provincial organization of Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi), who carried Greek flags in their hands, drove by the Turkish villages in Xanthi by motorbikes and cars and nurtured a climate of fear among the minority living in the Turkish villages of Yenice (Genisea), Beyköy(Avato) and Okçular(Toxotes). ( <a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=5458:yunanli-neo-nazler-yne-ramazan-akaminda-tuerk-koeylener-gttler&amp;catid=34:haberler&amp;Itemid=54">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=5458:yunanli-neo-nazler-yne-ramazan-akaminda-tuerk-koeylener-gttler&amp;catid=34:haberler&amp;Itemid=54</a> )
<b>9 September 2012</b>	Komotini- The Golden Dawn members with pick-ups and motorcycles held a parade on Sunday evening, 9 September through the streets of Komotini. According to the daily Birlik, the group consisting of 50 persons organised its first event on the occasion of the establishment of the Golden

	<p>Dawn's Rhodopi province branch. The group carrying Greek flags in hands drove close by the Turkish General Consulate in Komotini. The police blocked the roads to the General Consulate in order to prevent a potential attack.</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=5576:altin-afak-guemuelcnede-yueruedue&amp;catid=34:haberler&amp;Itemid=54">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/index.php?option=com_content&amp;view=article&amp;id=5576:altin-afak-guemuelcnede-yueruedue&amp;catid=34:haberler&amp;Itemid=54</a>)</p>
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## Attacks against members of the Minority

5.1 One incident of hate-motivated attack against a member of the Minority took place in 2012 and another happened in 2013.

<b>18 September 2012</b>	<p>Xanthi- Cemali Mülazım, a teacher belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked by far-rightists on Tuesday evening, September 18 in Xanthi city centre as he was hanging a placard of an event. Mülazım, who was a deputy candidate for the extreme-left Antarsia Party in Xanthi, is a member of a group called 'Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat'. The assailants hit Cemali and three other members of the activist group. According to the daily Trakya'nın Sesi, the violent attack was staged by the members of the ultra-nationalist political party Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi). Following the attack performed by a group of 7-9 people, one of them has denounced the act he was involved. Upon his denunciation, he has been arrested by police and sentenced to 8 months of imprisonment by Xanthi Criminal Court on the trial held on 21 September 2012. Yet, the enforcement of the verdict has been deferred for 3 years.</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?nid=908#">http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?nid=908#</a>) (<a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay_manset.php?id=1541">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay_manset.php?id=1541</a>)</p>
<b>29 March 2013</b>	<p>Xanthi- A group of supporters affiliated to the extreme right Golden Dawn Party in Greece attacked Western Thrace Turkish Minority member Cüneyt Serdar. Amid the rising tension between an anarchist group and the Golden Dawn members on demonstration at Xanthi City Centre, Cüneyt Serdar has been blatantly beaten by the Golden Dawn supporters. Cüneyt Serdar (30) has been taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face that he had to have stitches.</p> <p>According to the Azınlıkça, upon anti-racist slogans voiced by an anarchist group demonstrating in Xanthi City Centre yesterday late afternoon the extreme right and racist Golden Dawn members gathered at the same square. In opposition to the anarchist group, the Golden Dawn members chanted slogans against Turkey and Turks. The tension escalated into fray and Cüneyt Serdar, being on the square where the anarchist group withdrawn, has been exposed to Golden Dawn members' attack. Upon the arrival of police, Golden Dawn members dispersed into the Avenue of Komotini at Xanthi.</p> <p>(<a href="http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/altin-safak-tan-iskece-de-kanli-saldiri-3292013.html">http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/altin-safak-tan-iskece-de-kanli-saldiri-3292013.html</a>)</p>

5.2. The persistent hate speech in the mainstream media with an explicit manifestation of hatred against Turkey resulted in an attack on Komotini Turkish Consul General Osman İlhan Şener in Kavala during his visit to Kavala Municipality.

<b>9 January 2013</b>	Kavala- A group of supporters of Golden Dawn party attacked the car of Komotini Turkish Consul General Osman İlhan Şener in Kavala, where the Consul General had a meeting with the mayor of Kavala. A group of 30 protesters from the Golden Dawn, holding Greek flags, gathered in front of the municipality building, and chanted slogans against Turkey and founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. After the Consul General had got into his car, some persons from the group attacked it with punches and kicks and smirched its front screen. ( <a href="http://www.todayszaman.com/news-303601-greek-nationalists-attack-vehicle-of-turkish-consul-general.html">http://www.todayszaman.com/news-303601-greek-nationalists-attack-vehicle-of-turkish-consul-general.html</a> )
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## Conclusion

6.1 Our report indicates that the Minority has become a vulnerable target of far-right and/or extremist groups in the year 2012. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn hate-motivated attacks and incidents has sharply risen in the region. In the time of deep economic crisis, biased political discourse with explicit manifestation of hatred against Turkey has made the Turkish Minority, of which members are all Greek citizens, the primary target for Golden Dawn and its supporters.

6.2. The Greek Government should investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and should condemn publicly and unequivocally such incidents, and it should undertake effective measures to prevent xenophobic and hate-motivated crimes. The Greek State should ensure co-operation, where appropriate, at the national and international levels, including with relevant international bodies and between police forces, to combat violent hate crime.

6.3. ABTTF urges Greek authorities to set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse.



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**Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and**  
**Responses’**  
**April 2014**

**Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in Greece’s Thrace region, namely in Komotini, Xanthi and Alexandroupolis in the year 2013 and first four months of 2014. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information in minority newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.<sup>143</sup> This submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece, except one incident at a Muslim cemetery in Rhodes, where an ethnic Turkish population live.

**The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented only one attack against a member of the Minority by supporters of neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party. In the first four months of 2014, two attacks on religious places were recorded; one included an attack against a cemetery in Rhodes, and the other against a masjid in Alexandroupoli. Only one attack against a minority association took place during 2013.

2.2. Our report exposes one physical assault against a member of the minority by an extreme nationalist organisation in the year 2013. The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party supporters attacked Cüneyt Serdar and blatantly beat him during amid between Golden Dawn and the anarchist group. He has been taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face.

2.3. The extreme nationalist organization Golden Dawn supporters attacked the car of the Komotini Turkish Consul General in 2013, when he visited the Kavala Municipality. The attack included no serious physical damage, but verbal assault against Turkey and the Turkish people. A Molotov attack took place against police officers at the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki in September 2013. The attack resulted with no injury.

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<sup>143</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

## Attacks against Muslim cemeteries and religious places

3.1 There occurred no attack against Muslim cemeteries in 2013. Only one attack against a Muslim masjid in Alexandroupoli occurred in April 2014. Outside Greece's Thrace region, in Rhodes, where an ethnic Muslim Turkish community lives there for centuries, unknown individuals tore the Quran and threw Golden Dawn leaflets at the local cemetery in Rhodes.

<b>23 February 2014</b>	Rhodes- Unknown individuals tore the Quran and threw Golden Dawn leaflets at the local cemetery in Rhodes. Authorities rushed to the spot and an official investigation has been launched into the incident. ( <a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8683-rodosta-kuran-i-kerm-yirttilar-ve-mueslueman-mezarliina-attilar.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8683-rodosta-kuran-i-kerm-yirttilar-ve-mueslueman-mezarliina-attilar.html</a> )
<b>13 April 2014</b>	Alexandroupoli- A pig's head cut into pieces and left in blood was found in front of entry door of the masjid built approximately year ago in Avandos in the city of Dedeğaç (Alexandroupolis) of Greece. The masjid has been offering Qur'an lectures to the Minority as well. The community members who arrived at masjid on Sunday, the 13 April, for morning prayer found the persecuted pig's head in front of the door and reported the attack to police. The police forces in charge of the incident started investigation. Chairman of the Board of Trustees Selim Hasanoğlu stated: 'We all were shocked when we saw this attack. This is an unacceptable insult for us. Here we do our prayer five times a day and offer Qur'an courses to our children. We do not accept this unbearable insult and we condemn it'.( <a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8897-dedeacta-mescd-kapisina-domuz-kafasi-koydular.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8897-dedeacta-mescd-kapisina-domuz-kafasi-koydular.html</a> )

## Attacks against minority institutions

4.1 Only one attack against a minority institution took place in the year 2013.

<b>27 December 2013</b>	Komotini- Unidentified assailants attacked Komotini Turkish Youth Union in Komotini. The attack took place on Friday at 02.15 Sunday night and was noticed by the executives of the Union in the morning. Assailants broke the windows of the Union with a paving stone. Local police forces came to the scene of the incident and watched the records of surveillance cameras. ( <a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8422-guemuelcne-tuerk-gencler-brlne-saldiri.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/8422-guemuelcne-tuerk-gencler-brlne-saldiri.html</a> )
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## Attacks against members of Minority

5.1 One incident of hate-motivated attack against a member of the Minority took place in 2013.

<b>29 March 2013</b>	<p>Xanthi- A group of supporters affiliated to the extreme right Golden Dawn Party in Greece attacked Western Thrace Turkish Minority member Cüneyt Serdar. Amid the rising tension between an anarchist group and the Golden Dawn members on demonstration at Xanthi City Centre, Cüneyt Serdar has been blatantly beaten by the Golden Dawn supporters. Cüneyt Serdar (30) has been taken to hospital with ambulance given the serious injury he has got on his head and face that he had to have stitches.</p> <p>According to the Azınlıkça, upon anti-racist slogans voiced by an anarchist group demonstrating in Xanthi City Centre yesterday late afternoon the extreme right and racist Golden Dawn members gathered at the same square. In opposition to the anarchist group, the Golden Dawn members chanted slogans against Turkey and Turks. The tension escalated into fray and Cüneyt Serdar, being on the square where the anarchist group withdrawn, has been exposed to Golden Dawn members' attack. Upon the arrival of police, Golden Dawn members dispersed into the Avenue of Komotini at Xanthi. (<a href="http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/altin-safak-tan-iskece-de-kanli-saldiri-3292013.html">http://www.azinlikca.net/bati-trakya-haber/altin-safak-tan-iskece-de-kanli-saldiri-3292013.html</a>)</p>
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### Hate-motivated attack against Turkey in Greece

6.1. An explicit manifestation of hatred against Turks and Turkey resulted in an attack on Komotini Turkish Consul General Osman İlhan Şener in Kavala during his visit to Kavala Municipality.

6.2. An unknown group of persons with masks on their face threw Molotov to the police officers located in front of the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki.

<b>9 January 2013</b>	<p>Kavala- A group of supporters of Golden Dawn party attacked the car of Komotini Turkish Consul General Osman İlhan Şener in Kavala, where the Consul General had a meeting with the mayor of Kavala. A group of 30 protesters from the Golden Dawn, holding Greek flags, gathered in front of the municipality building, and chanted slogans against Turkey and founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. After the Consul General had got into his car, some persons from the group attacked it with punches and kicks and smirched its front screen. (<a href="http://www.todayszaman.com/news-303601-greek-nationalists-attack-vehicle-of-turkish-consul-general.html">http://www.todayszaman.com/news-303601-greek-nationalists-attack-vehicle-of-turkish-consul-general.html</a>)</p>
<b>29 September 2013</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- An unknown group of persons with masks on their face threw Molotov to the police officers on watch located in front of the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki. No one has got wounded or dead, only a car got damaged. (<a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/7992-tc-selank-bakonsolosluu-oenuendek-polslere-molotoflu-saldiri.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.info/haberler/7992-tc-selank-bakonsolosluu-oenuendek-polslere-molotoflu-saldiri.html</a>)</p>



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## **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)** **Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2014** **Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and** **Responses’** **April 2015**

### **Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in Greece’s Thrace region, namely in Komotini, Xanthi and Alexandroupolis in the year 2014 and first four months of 2015. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information in minority newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.<sup>144</sup> This submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece.

### **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report did not document any attack in the year 2014. In the first four months of 2015, two attacks on religious places were recorded; one included an arson attack against a mosque in Komotini, one attack against a masjid in Komotini, and one attack against a minority association in Dimetoka.

### **Attacks against Muslim cemeteries and religious places**

3.1 There occurred no attack against Muslim cemeteries in 2014. An arson attack against a mosque in Yenice District in Komotini, and an attack against a masjid in Alankuyu District in Komotini took place on the same day in April 2015.

<b>17 April 2015</b>	Komotini- Mahmutağa mosque in the Komotini’s district Yenice was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning face on Friday, April 17, 2015. As a result of the arson attack, a fire broke out at the mosque’s entrance, but thanks to the fire brigade operation did not
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<sup>144</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

	spread to the other parts of the mosque and to the minority primary school next to it. <a href="http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5026/gumulcinede-camii-kundaklandi.html">http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5026/gumulcinede-camii-kundaklandi.html</a>
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<b>17 April 2015</b>	Komotini- Another attack on a masjid (small mosque) in the Alankuyu district of Komotini. An unidentified person or persons uprooted ten cypress trees around the masjid and destroyed a gravestone. <a href="http://www.burasibatirakya.com/item/4741-vak%C4%B1f-arsas%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-a%C4%9Fa%C3%A7lar%C4%B1n%C4%B1-kestiler.html">http://www.burasibatirakya.com/item/4741-vak%C4%B1f-arsas%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-a%C4%9Fa%C3%A7lar%C4%B1n%C4%B1-kestiler.html</a>
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### Attacks against minority institutions

4.1 No attack against a minority institution took place in the year 2014, but in March 2015 one attack against a minority organisation took place in March 2015.

<b>7 March 2015</b>	Dimetoka- Dimetoka Muslims, Sports, Cultural and Educational Association attacked by unknown assailants. Nobody was injured, but windows were broken. The police realised that the association was attacked at night and called the president of the association, Süleyman Macur. The president came to the association and opened the door with the police officers. They found out that the windowpane was broken with profile iron. <a href="http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/4592/dimetoka-muslumanlari-derneğine-saldırı.html">http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/4592/dimetoka-muslumanlari-derneğine-saldırı.html</a>
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### Attacks against kinstate Turkey

5.1. The police kiosk guarding Turkey's Thessaloniki Consulate, which includes the house that the Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was born as the Atatürk Museum, was attacked by anti-government protestors.

<b>18 April 2015</b>	Thessaloniki- Molotov cocktails along with the police bus located on the same street on late Friday. Turkish Consulate building was also hit by Molotov cocktails. The attack was carried out by anti-government protestors who were demonstrating against high security cell-type prisons. Outer walls of the consulate building were harmed due to fire, and a police car that caught fire was extinguished by the consulate staff. <a href="http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/18/protesters-attack-greek-police-guarding-turkeys-thessaloniki-consulate">http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/18/protesters-attack-greek-police-guarding-turkeys-thessaloniki-consulate</a>
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**April 2016**

## **Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece’s Thrace region, namely in Komotini, Xanthi and Alexandroupolis in the year 2015 and on the first four months of 2016. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish minority in the region of Western Thrace based on the information gathered from minority newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.<sup>145</sup> This submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece, except one incident which took place against a Muslim association in Thessaloniki in 2015.

## **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented eight attacks in the year 2015, three attacks were against cemeteries and religious places; two attacks against minority institutions and one attack against a Muslim association in Thessaloniki and two attacks against the kinstate Turkey. In the first four months of 2016, only one attack against a religious clergyman belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was recorded.

### **Attacks against mosques and religious places belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace**

3.1 An arson attack against a mosque in Yenice District in Komotini, and an attack against a masjid in Alankuyu District in Komotini took place on the same day in April 2015. An unidentified person or persons spray-painted black ‘ΕΞΩ ΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ (Turks Out)’ on the historical wooden door of the Yenice Mosque in Komotini on 10 October 2015.

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<sup>145</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

<b>17 April 2015</b>	Komotini- Mahmutağa mosque in the Komotini's district Yenice was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning face on Friday, April 17, 2015. As a result of the arson attack, a fire broke out at the mosque's entrance, but thanks to the fire brigade operation did not spread to the other parts of the mosque and to the minority primary school next to it. <a href="http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5026/gumulcinede-camii-kundaklandi.html">http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/5026/gumulcinede-camii-kundaklandi.html</a>
<b>17 April 2015</b>	Komotini- Another attack on a masjid (small mosque) in the Alankuyu district of Komotini. An unidentified person or persons uprooted ten cypress trees around the masjid and destroyed a gravestone. <a href="http://www.burasibatitrakya.com/item/4741-vak%C4%B1f-arsas%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-a%C4%9Fa%C3%A7lar%C4%B1n%C4%B1-kestiler.html">http://www.burasibatitrakya.com/item/4741-vak%C4%B1f-arsas%C4%B1n%C4%B1n-a%C4%9Fa%C3%A7lar%C4%B1n%C4%B1-kestiler.html</a>
<b>10 October 2015</b>	Komotini- The New Mosque (Yeni Cami) belonging to the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in Komotini was attacked. According to the daily Millet, an unidentified person or persons spray-painted black, presumably at night, 'ΕΞΩ ΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ (Turks Out)' on the historical wooden door of the mosque. It is quite conspicuous that the attack occurred on the same day as men's football team of Galatasaray Istanbul SK arrived in Komotini to play a friendly match against PAE Panthrakikos. <a href="http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gumulcinede-camiye-saldiri-duzenlendi-30286655">http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gumulcinede-camiye-saldiri-duzenlendi-30286655</a>

### Attacks against minority institutions

4.1 Two attacks against minority organizations took place in the year 2015, one attack against a minority association in Dimetoka and one attack against the Minority's political party headquarters in Komotini. Another attack took place outside the region of Western Thrace, in Thessaloniki. Macedonia – Thrace Muslim Cultural and Educational Association's funeral vehicle's windows were broken, and tires were cut.

<b>7 March 2015</b>	Dimetoka- Dimetoka Muslims, Sports, Cultural and Educational Association attacked by unknown assailants. Nobody was injured, but windows were broken. The police realised that the association was attacked at night and called the president of the association, Süleyman Macur. The president came to the association and opened the door with the police officers. They found out that the windowpane was broken with profile iron. <a href="http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/4592/dimetoka-muslimanlari-dernegine-saldiri.html">http://www.trakyaninsesi.com/haber/4592/dimetoka-muslimanlari-dernegine-saldiri.html</a>
<b>8 December 2015</b>	Komotini- The new Head Office of the Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party, which politically represents the Turkish minority in Greece, which is located approximately 8 km away from Komotini in the region of Western Thrace at the early hours of December 8, 2015. According to the Statement by the FEP Party, unknown perpetrators invaded the new Head Office and destroyed equipment, doors and windows. The perpetrators used spray and wrote 'Οι Φρουροί της Θράκης – Guardians of Thrace' in the walls of the new building. We feel very sad that the car on display which belongs to the Party's

	<p>founder and first president and the Minority's leader, Dr. Sadık Ahmet, who lost his life in 1995 during a traffic accident, was stolen. The police started an investigation, but the perpetrators are still unknown.</p> <p><a href="http://www.debpartisi.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&amp;id=3963">http://www.debpartisi.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&amp;id=3963</a></p>
<b>17 December 2015</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- An attack took place against Macedonia – Thrace Muslim Cultural and Educational Association in Thessaloniki. The association's funeral vehicle's windows were broken and tires cut. The perpetrators were not found by the authorities.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/1133">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/1133</a></p>

### Attacks against members belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

5.1 An Imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi Ahmet Mete was kidnapped by unknown assailants fully covered with mask. The perpetrators called themselves as 'The Guardians of Thrace' threatened Imam saying that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him.

<b>28 January 2016</b>	<p>Xanthi- Fully covered with masks, a group of men kidnapped an imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi and forced him to get on a minibus. According to the imam, there they threatened him to say that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him, and they are following closely the movements of the Mufti office. The perpetrators called themselves as 'The Guardians of Thrace' and in the end they released the imam to bring these threatening messages to the Mufti himself.</p> <p>According to the statement by the Elected Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete, the Mufti is constantly taking death threats since he was elected Mufti by minority members in 2007. Mete explained that an Imam working close to him was also harassed five years ago. Ahmet Mete noted that if anything happens to him or his family, the responsible would be the Greek State, because the elected Muftis are under threat while performing their religious duties.</p> <p><a href="http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353">http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353</a></p>
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### Attacks against kinstate Turkey

6.1. The police kiosk guarding Turkey's Thessaloniki Consulate, which includes the house that the Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was born, was attacked two times in the year 2015 by Molotov cocktails.

<b>18 April 2015</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- Molotov cocktails hit the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki along with the police bus located on the same street on late Friday and Turkish Consulate building was also hit by Molotov cocktails. The attack was carried out by anti-government protesters who were demonstrating against high security cell-type prisons. Outer walls of the consulate building were harmed due to fire, and a police car that caught fire was extinguished by the consulate staff.</p> <p><a href="http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/18/protesters-attack-greek-police-guarding-turkeys-thessaloniki-consulate">http://www.dailysabah.com/nation/2015/04/18/protesters-attack-greek-police-guarding-turkeys-thessaloniki-consulate</a></p>
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<b>18 December 2015</b>	Thessaloniki- A group of 25 perpetrators with masks on their faces hit the police kiosk in front of the Turkish Consulate and the police bus in the same region. The 15 Molotov cocktails hit the outer walls of the Consulate building and no one got injured. <a href="http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2015/12/18/selanik-baskonsolosluguna-saldiri">http://www.sabah.com.tr/dunya/2015/12/18/selanik-baskonsolosluguna-saldiri</a>
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# **Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu** **Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa** **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe** **Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης** **Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

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)

## **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)** **Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2016** **Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and** **Responses’** **April 2017**

### **Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish community in Western Thrace in the year 2016 and in the first four months of 2017. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish community in the region of Western Thrace based on the information gathered from minority institutions and newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks against the Turkish community in Western Thrace.<sup>146</sup> This submission does not cover any other incident or attack against the Muslim people living in other parts of Greece, but it includes three verbal attacks against members of the Turkish community outside the region of Western Thrace. This submission further reports three attacks against diplomatic missions of the kinstate Turkey, one in Komotini, two in Thessaloniki.

### **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented four attacks in the year 2015, two attacks against minority institutions and two attacks against members of the Turkish community. In the first four months of 2017, one attack against a minority radio station and one attack against a minority newspaper were recorded. Three attacks against the diplomatic missions of kinstate Turkey in Greece were recorded, two in Thessaloniki in 2016 and 2017 and one in Komotini in 2017.

### **Attacks against minority organisations and institutions**

3.1 Two attacks against minority organisations took place in the year 2016 outside the region of Western Thrace, one in Brussels and one in Athens. Neo-Nazi Golden Dawn MPs in the European Parliament in Brussels and in the Greek Parliament disrupted events about the rights of the Turkish minority in Greece. The minority high school in Komotini was attacked twice in a row, eggs were thrown to doors and windows of the school.

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<sup>146</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

<b>2 March 2016</b>	Brussels- Two MEPs from fascist Golden Dawn party in Greece yesterday forcefully disrupted a European Parliament conference titled 'Freedom of Association in Greece: A Loophole in European Minority Rights Standards'. MEP Csaba Sógor (Romania/EPP), hosted the conference in association with the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF). Greek MEPs Lampros Fountoulis and Eleftherios Synadinos, along another three assistants claimed that no Turkish minority exists in Greece. The MEP hosting the event, Csaba Sógor faced up to the MEPs until they left. <a href="https://www.abttf.org/html/index.php?link=detay&amp;id=5407&amp;grup=4&amp;language=en&amp;arsiv=0">https://www.abttf.org/html/index.php?link=detay&amp;id=5407&amp;grup=4&amp;language=en&amp;arsiv=0</a>
<b>12 December 2016</b>	Athens- On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority's political party Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party co-organized a roundtable meeting about "National Minorities in Greece and Recommendations of International Organizations" which was held at the Journalist Union of Athens on 12 December 2016. Before the panel started, a group of people including three MPs from fascist Golden Dawn, namely Ilias Kassidiaris, Ioannis Lagos, Konstantinos Barbaroussis forcefully disrupted the conference and used abusive language against FEP Party leaders and other panellists. The MPs insulted minority members and threatened FEP Party President Mustafa Ali Cavus with death. <a href="http://www.vice.com/gr/read/ekdilwsi-meionotites-eshea">http://www.vice.com/gr/read/ekdilwsi-meionotites-eshea</a>
<b>2 and 3 March 2017</b>	Komotini- An unknown person or group of persons threw eggs to the doors and windows of the Celal Bayar Minority High School in Komotini first at night on 2 March and a day later on 3 March 2017. The attack, which was supposed to take place late on Friday, March 3, was noticed by the school councils on Saturday morning. <a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/2744">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/2744</a>

### Attacks against minority media

4.1 A private radio station belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace was attacked. A month later, the private car of the owner of a minority newspaper was burned.

<b>10 January 2017</b>	Komotini- The first and only Turkish language news radio station Çınar FM of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is based in Komotini, Greece, was attacked. The main antenna of Çınar FM, which was established by the persons belonging to the Turkish minority, was intentionally damaged by unidentified persons. Due to the major damage of the main antenna following the attack, Çınar FM will be broadcasting temporarily through the spare antenna until the completion of repair works. The Çınar FM officials stated, a similar attack took place in the recent past and during this attack in January 2015, both the antenna and the transmitters of Çınar FM were damaged. <a href="http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?id=6502">http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?id=6502</a>
<b>15 February 2017</b>	Komotini- The private vehicle belonging to İlhan Tahsin, the owner

	<p>and editor-in-chief of a newspaper belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace was burned. On 15 February 2017, an unidentified person or a group broke the right rear window of the car parked in the Komotini city centre. The assailants set the vehicle on fire with inflammable liquids and Molotov cocktail. The car was severely damaged after it caught fire. Police launched an investigation, but no assailants were brought before the justice.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12487-bati-trakyada-gazetec-lhantahsnn-aracini-yaktilar.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12487-bati-trakyada-gazetec-lhantahsnn-aracini-yaktilar.html</a></p>
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### Attacks against members belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace

5.1 An Imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi Ahmet Mete was kidnapped by unknown assailants fully covered with mask. The perpetrators called themselves as ‘The Guardians of Thrace’ threatened Imam saying that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him. A verbal attack by Golden Dawn MPs against a minority MP, Hüseyin Zeybek from the governing party SYRIZA took place in the Greek Parliament. The minority MP, Hüseyin Zeybek was verbally attacked by the Rector of the Democritus University of Thrace in March 2017.

<b>28 January 2016</b>	<p>Xanthi- Fully covered with masks, a group of men kidnapped an imam who is working at the Elected Mufti Office of Xanthi and forced him to get on a minibus. According to the imam, there they threatened him to say that they will kill the Elected Mufti of Xanthi, will attack the children of him, and they are following closely the movements of the Mufti office. The perpetrators called themselves as ‘The Guardians of Thrace’ and in the end, they released the imam to bring these threatening messages to the Mufti himself.</p> <p>According to the statement by the Elected Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete, the Mufti is constantly taking death threats since he was elected Mufti by minority members in 2007. Mete explained that an Imam working close to him was also harassed five years ago. Ahmet Mete noted that if anything happens to him or his family, the responsible would be the Greek State, because the elected Muftis are under threat while performing their religious duties.</p> <p><a href="http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353">http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org/haber.php?duyid=353</a></p>
<b>04 August 2016</b>	<p>Athens- During the parliamentary debate SYRIZA MP from Xanthi Hüseyin Zeybek, a member of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was attacked by neo-Nazi Golden Dawn MPs Ilias Panagiotaros and Yannis Lagos. Golden Dawn MP Ilias Panagiotaros called Zeybek a ‘Turk’ and accused him of recently burning the Greek flag during the funeral of a young minority member who died while performing his military service in the Greek army.</p> <p><a href="http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=820062">http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=820062</a></p>
<b>25 March 2017</b>	<p>Xanthi- Athanasios Karabinis, the Rector of the Democratic University of Thrace verbally attacked Hüseyin Zeybek, SYRIZA MP from Xanthi and Grigoris Stoyannidis at the reception on the Greek Independence Day on 25 March 2017. After the official parade ceremony, due to the 25th of March Greek Independence Day, during the reception held in the former governorship of Xanthi, Rector Karabinis told Zeybek and</p>

	<p>Stoyannidis that ‘Stay away from our university’ and added, ‘I will not let you make Thrace Turkey’.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/2859">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/2859</a></p>
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### Attacks against kinstate Turkey

6.1. An anarchist group named Rouvikonas attacked the Turkish consulate in Komotini and threw paint to the building. Two attacks took place outside the region of Western Thrace, the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki was attacked twice by Molotov cocktails.

<b>19 June 2016</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- The Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki was attacked at 4:00 on Sunday. A group of unknown assailants threw Molotov cocktails to the building and ran away. No serious damage was recorded.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/1848">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/1848</a></p>
<b>5 February 2017</b>	<p>Komotini- A group of people with concealed faces threw paint at the Turkish consulate in Komotini on Sunday, shouting slogans in favour of the DHKP / C, the far-left Turkish organization that Ankara and the U.S. have branded as terrorists.</p> <p>According to Greek police, at noon on Sunday, about 20 to 30 Greek anarchists approached the consulate, threw flyers and wrote slogans in favour of DHKP-C on the walls. Police of the northern Greek city acted quickly, bringing five suspects in for questioning, but no evidence of their involvement in the attack were found. Anarchist group Rouvikonas claimed responsibility for the attack with wall paint against the Turkish consulate in Komotini.</p> <p><a href="http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/02/06/unknown-assailants-hurl-paint-at-turkish-consulate-in-komotini/#sthash.1hEWbzaT.dpuf">http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/02/06/unknown-assailants-hurl-paint-at-turkish-consulate-in-komotini/#sthash.1hEWbzaT.dpuf</a></p>
<b>23 April 2017</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- The Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki was attacked at 5:30 on Sunday. A group of people with concealed faces threw Molotov cocktails to the building and ran away.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12710-tuerkyenn-selank-bakonsolosluuna-molotoflu-saldiri.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12710-tuerkyenn-selank-bakonsolosluuna-molotoflu-saldiri.html</a></p>



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## **Foreword**

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish community in Western Thrace in the year 2017 and in the first four months of 2018. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish community in the region of Western Thrace based on the information gathered from minority institutions and Turkish newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, the Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe (ABTTF) only reports hate motivated incidents and attacks and verbal attacks against the Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>147</sup> and outside the region of Western Thrace in some cases and attacks against the kinstate Turkey since it does have a direct effect on the situation of the Turkish community in the region.

## **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1 Our report documented seven attacks in the year 2017, one attack against the historical mosque in Didymoteicho, four attacks against minority institutions and two attacks against the Turkish media and seven verbal attacks against members and representatives of the Turkish community. Three attacks against the diplomatic missions of kinstate Turkey in Greece were recorded, one in Komotini and one in Thessaloniki in 2017 and one in Athens in 2018.

## **Attacks against Muslim mosques and religious places**

3.1. One serious attack was recorded in the historical Beyazıt mosque in Didymoteicho, and an unknown fire broke out at the mosque.

<b>22 March 2017</b>	Didymoteicho- A fire broke out towards morning at the historical Mosque Çelebi Sultan Mehmet (Beyazıt) in Didymoteicho in the province of Evros. During the fire, which is yet not known how it started, the roof, purely wooden, and many of internal parts of the
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<sup>147</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

	<p>mosque, closed for prayer for two years with ongoing restoration works, were completely destroyed. 600 years old Mosque Çelebi Sultan Mehmet (Beyazıt) located in city centre of Didymoteicho is one of the most significant Turkish-Islamic artefacts in the Balkans and Europe and it is also specific for being the first mosque constructed by the Ottoman Empire on the European continent. The fire started on the roof where welding works were carried out and spread on all of the roof. As firefighters from Didymoteicho and surrounding provinces had difficulty in responding the fire due to severity of the flames, firefighting efforts lasted for hours.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ekathimerini.com/217321/article/ekathimerini/community/community-reacts-tobayezid-mosque-fire-in-northern-greece">http://www.ekathimerini.com/217321/article/ekathimerini/community/community-reacts-tobayezid-mosque-fire-in-northern-greece</a></p>
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### Attack against minority organizations

4.1 Four attacks against minority organizations took place in the year 2017 in Western Thrace. The minority high school in Komotini was attacked twice in a row, eggs were thrown to doors and windows of the school. The second attack against minority schools took place in Komotini again and dynamite producing severe noise was thrown by unknown assailant or assailants to İdadiye Turkish Minority Primary School. Furthermore, one association in Didymoteicho within the borders of Western Thrace, and one association in Thessaloniki outside the borders of the region were attacked by unknown assailants.

<b>02-03 March 2017</b>	<p>Komotini- An unknown person or group of persons threw eggs to the doors and windows of the Celal Bayar Minority High School in Komotini first at night on 2 March and a day later on 3 March 2017. The attack, which was supposed to take place late on Friday, March 3, was noticed by the school councils on Saturday morning.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/2744">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/2744</a></p>
<b>06 October 2017</b>	<p>Didymoteicho- Ferecik(Feres) Branch of Didymoteicho- Evros Muslims Education and Cultural Association was attacked with stones in Alexandroupoli. Ferecik(Feres) Branch of Didymoteicho-Evros Muslims Education and Cultural Association was opened, and a day later an attack was made with stones. Window of the premises was damaged by the attack by unknown assailant or assailants.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13285-dedeaac-fereck-ubes-dahaduen-acildi-buguen-tali-saldiri-yapildi.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13285-dedeaac-fereck-ubes-dahaduen-acildi-buguen-tali-saldiri-yapildi.html</a></p>
<b>11 October 2017</b>	<p>Komotini- Dynamite producing severe noise was thrown by unknown assailant or assailants to İdadiye Turkish Minority Primary School in Komotini. Severe noise producing dynamite was thrown into the garden of İdadiye primary school where the students were having their PE class. Upon the incident some students were scared and some of them cried. As regards the statement by the teacher, he/she looked in the direction where the noise came from but couldn't see anybody.</p> <p>For further information:</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haberyunanistan/detay/3535">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haberyunanistan/detay/3535</a></p>
<b>08 December 2017</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- Macedonian-Thrace Muslims Education and Culture Association in Thessaloniki was attacked with eggs. Prior to Friday prayer unknown assailant or assailants passed by the Association throwing the eggs on the windows of the Association and they</p>

	<p>immediately walked away from the place of incidence.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13600-selankmuesluemanlari-dernene-yumurtali-saldiri-.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13600-selankmuesluemanlari-dernene-yumurtali-saldiri-.html</a></p>
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## Hate speech and verbal attacks against members of the Turkish community

5.1 Five verbal attacks were recorded in the year 2017 and two verbal attacks were recorded in the first two months of 2018 against the Turkish community. The hate speech in the political field against members of the Turkish community and the kinstate Turkey has created serious concern, since it directly affects the situation of the Turkish community in the region.

<b>25 March 2017</b>	<p>Xanthi- Athanasios Karabinis, the Rector of the Democratic University of Thrace verbally attacked Hüseyin Zeybek, SYRIZA MP from Xanthi and Grigoris Stoyannidis at the reception on the Greek Independence Day on 25 March 2017. After the official parade ceremony, due to the 25th of March Greek Independence Day, during the reception held in the former governorship of Xanthi, Rector Karabinis told Zeybek and Stoyannidis that ‘Stay away from our university’ and added, ‘I will not let you make Thrace Turkey’.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/2859">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/2859</a></p>
<b>11 September 2017</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- In response to a question concerning the election system addressed at the press conference held at Thessaloniki International Trade Fair in September 2017, Vasilis Leventis, President of Central Union Party in Greece, stated, ‘If the votes of the Muslim party were 5%, we would make the threshold 5%’ implying the political party of the Turkish community in Western Thrace (Friendship, Equality, Peace Party).</p> <p>Leventis said, ‘Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras is ready to lower the electoral threshold to 2% however he insists on 3% electoral threshold as the issue is related with Muslims’. Leventis added, ‘Muslims have a voting power between 1.8 and 2.2. We wouldn’t allow a Muslim Party to enter the parliament. Yes, today, SYRIZA and other parties recruit Muslim candidates, but entrance of an independent Muslim Party into the parliament would be very unfavourable. Understand it, this is not an issue of 3%. If Muslim votes were 5%, we would make the threshold 5%, let me indicate this openly. Interest of the country is above everything. Let others undertake this responsibility and let ones saying ‘Hurray Erdoğan’ at the parliament be Muslims. The issue is a critical one. And I don’t want the 3%. Because of this threshold I could not enter the parliament for 40 years. I would be the first to ask for removal of this. However, when I see that the Muslims would enter the parliament what do you expect me to do?’</p> <p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbr-VJYdaas">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbr-VJYdaas</a></p>
<b>02 October 2017</b>	<p>Xanthi- A ci which called themselves the ‘High-Level Patrol Group’ targeted executives of Xanthi Turkish Union on Facebook and on some websites and requested ‘Guardians of Thrace’, an organization which attacked members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, to act against them.</p> <p>In its written statement, the group noted that there are huge mistakes in</p>

	<p>Greek national policy and claimed if the draft law concerning the Xanthi Turkish Union was approved, there would be many associations which would change their names and add ‘Turkish’ in their titles. The group published photos of members of the executive and audit board and noted, ‘Be ready to give message to those men’.</p> <p>Xanthi Turkish Union filed a complaint against the racist group, no action has been taken.</p> <p><a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/3512">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/3512</a>  <a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13455-skece-tuerk-brl-yueksekduezeyl-devrye-grubu-hakkinda-savcilia-suc-duyurusunda-bulundu.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13455-skece-tuerk-brl-yueksekduezeyl-devrye-grubu-hakkinda-savcilia-suc-duyurusunda-bulundu.html</a></p>
<b>09 November 2017</b>	<p>Didymoteicho-A doctor commissioned at Didymoteicho State Hospital expelled spouse of Süleyman Macır, President of Didymoteicho Muslims Education and Culture Association, who went to the hospital with the complaint of high fever. According to the explanation by Macır, due to high fever spouse of Macır was put under observation by the doctor to have the necessary checks conducted. Later in the day the doctor who took over the shift expelled the spouse of Macır telling her: ‘Who accepted you into the hospital? Now it’s my shift and I won’t examine you; your people are always like this; you shouldn’t be here. Sign this document and leave here’. Upon the complaint filed by Macır the problem was overcome however it was discovered that this doctor has always behaved likewise against Western Thrace Turks.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13454-dmetokada-bayan-doktorben-sze-bakmiyorum-dyerek-soyda-hastayi-hastaneden-kovdu.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/13454-dmetokada-bayan-doktorben-sze-bakmiyorum-dyerek-soyda-hastayi-hastaneden-kovdu.html</a></p>
<b>08 December 2017</b>	<p>Xanthi- 22 associations operating in the region of Western Thrace belonging to Greek majority published a joint statement and showed reaction to the visit of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkish Republic, motherland of Western Thrace Turks, on 8 December 2017. In the briefing the associations indicated that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has come only to ‘create fanaticism, make the Greek sovereignty ‘gray’ and strengthen the extreme factors in the minority’ and blamed the Greek Government and provided an explanation saying ‘The government has got a great responsibility in allowing for such an increasing agitation however it should have stopped these visits which started in 2004’.</p> <p>Regarding Turkish President Erdoğan’s visit to Komotini and Xanthi where Western Thrace Turks live, papers full of messages with threat were left at the doors of houses. In the message it wrote ‘Think once again! Erdoğan will leave, but you will be here tomorrow too...’. And in Xanthi crosses were drawn on the walls of some of the Turkish houses. Crosses were also drawn on the walls of the houses of the leader of Western Thrace Turks deceased Dr. Sadık Ahmet and the General President Mustafa Ali Çavuş, President of Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (DEB), political party of Western Thrace Turks.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/12/08/turkey-greece-resolved-to-launchconfidence-building-measures-despite-disagreements-1512673076">https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/12/08/turkey-greece-resolved-to-launchconfidence-building-measures-despite-disagreements-1512673076</a></p>
<b>14 February 2018</b>	<p>Athens- Theodoros Pangalos, Greek Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, with his statement he made for Radio Skai created a scandal.</p>

	<p>Concerning a question related to interventions of Turkey in the Aegean said, ‘The best Turk is the dead one. I believe in this. Because I did meet no good Turk. They lack basic values. A Turk has not got a sense of justice’. Racist and fascist statement by Pangalos caused a great reaction in Western Turkish community.</p> <p>Pangalos who made an assessment on the relations of Greece with Turkey on SKAI radio stated ‘... No matter how much good will Turkey approaches with, it is not possible to establish good and friendly relations with Turkey. Because Turkey is extremely inconsiderate and a wild enemy’.</p> <p><a href="http://en.protothema.gr/the-only-good-turk-is-a-dead-turk-says-ex-foreign-affairs-minister-of-greece-pangalos/">http://en.protothema.gr/the-only-good-turk-is-a-dead-turk-says-ex-foreign-affairs-minister-of-greece-pangalos/</a></p>
<b>06 March 2018</b>	<p>During the speech of Nikos Kocias, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Cyprus issue and relations with Turkey, a quarrel had come through due the statement by the Golden Dawn MP Ellias Kassidiaris who said, ‘SYRIZA Rodopi MP, member of Western Thrace Turks, Mustafa Mustafa has to be expelled from the meeting’. Implying Mustafa Mustafa, Kassidiaris said ‘We cannot keep Turkish MPs among us. The Turkish spy out’. Following the verbal assault against Mustafa Mustafa, SYRIZA Party declared its support to Mustafa Mustafa, who is Golden Dawn Party is known for its racist and fascist approach against Western Thrace Turkish community.</p> <p><a href="http://int.ert.gr/parliament-to-consider-escalating-verbal-attacks-by-far-right-golden-dawn/">http://int.ert.gr/parliament-to-consider-escalating-verbal-attacks-by-far-right-golden-dawn/</a></p>

### Attack against minority media

7.1 A private radio station belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace was attacked. A month later, the private car of the owner of a minority newspaper was burned.

<b>10 January 2017</b>	<p>Komotini- The first and only Turkish language news radio station Çınar FM of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is based in Komotini, Greece, was attacked. The main antenna of Çınar FM, which was established by the persons belonging to the Turkish minority, was intentionally damaged by unidentified persons. Due to the major damage of the main antenna following the attack, Çınar FM will be broadcasting temporarily through the spare antenna until the completion of repair works. The Çınar FM officials stated, a similar attack took place in the recent past and during this attack in January 2015, both the antenna and the transmitters of Çınar FM were damaged.</p> <p><a href="http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?id=6502">http://www.milletgazetesi.gr/view.php?id=6502</a></p>
<b>15 February 2017</b>	<p>Komotini- The private vehicle belonging to İlhan Tahsin, the owner and editor-in-chief of a newspaper belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace was burned. On 15 February 2017, an unidentified person or a group broke the right rear window of the car parked in the Komotini city centre. The assailants set the vehicle on fire with inflammable liquids and Molotov cocktail. The car was severely damaged after it caught fire. Police launched an investigation, but no assailants were brought before the justice.</p>

<http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12487-bati-trakyada-gazetec-lhantahsnn-aracini-yaktilar.html>

## Attacks against kinstate Turkey

8.1. An anarchist group named Rouvikonas attacked the Turkish consulate in Komotini and threw paint to the building. Two attacks took place outside the region of Western Thrace, the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki was attacked by Molotov cocktails in 2017 and the Turkish embassy in Athens was attacked in 2018. Furthermore, a branch of Turkish state bank in Komotini was attacked in March by an anarchist group.

<p><b>5 February 2017</b></p>	<p>Komotini- A group of people with concealed faces threw paint at the Turkish consulate in Komotini on Sunday, shouting slogans in favour of the DHKP / C, the far-left Turkish organization that Ankara and the U.S. have branded as terrorists.</p> <p>According to Greek police, at noon on Sunday, about 20 to 30 Greek anarchists approached the consulate, threw flyers and wrote slogans in favour of DHKP-C on the walls. Police of the northern Greek city acted quickly, bringing five suspects in for questioning, but no evidence of their involvement in the attack were found. Anarchist group Rouvikonas claimed responsibility for the attack with wall paint against the Turkish consulate in Komotini.</p> <p><a href="http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/02/06/unknown-assailants-hurl-paint-at-turkish-consulate-in-komotini/#sthash.1hEWbzaT.dpuf">http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/02/06/unknown-assailants-hurl-paint-at-turkish-consulate-in-komotini/#sthash.1hEWbzaT.dpuf</a></p>
<p><b>23 April 2017</b></p>	<p>Thessaloniki- The Turkish Consulate General in Thessaloniki was attacked at 5:30 on Sunday. A group of people with concealed faces threw Molotov cocktails to the building and ran away.</p> <p><a href="http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12710-tuerkyenn-selank-bakosolosluuna-molotoflu-saldiri.html">http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12710-tuerkyenn-selank-bakosolosluuna-molotoflu-saldiri.html</a></p>
<p><b>21 March 2018</b></p>	<p>Komotini- The branch of the Turkish bank, Ziraat Bank in Komotini was attacked. An anarchist group of 25 people stoned the bank located in the city square, after demonstration against Turkey. The door and the windows at the entrance were damaged. Police took security measures in the surroundings after the attack. Attack a research investigation has been initiated.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/21/ziraat-bank-branch-in-greece-targeted-in-possible-pro-ypg-attack">https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/21/ziraat-bank-branch-in-greece-targeted-in-possible-pro-ypg-attack</a></p>
<p><b>04 April 2018</b></p>	<p>Athens- A group of 15 to 20 people came to the street where the consulate is located in the evening of April 4 and began smearing the building's walls with red paint. No one was injured in the attack; however, the windows of the consulate's waiting room were broken. The assailants later escaped. The Greek group called Rubikon, who view themselves as anti-government anarchists, claimed responsibility over the attack. Greek police said they were probing the incident.</p> <p><a href="http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-athens-consulate-comes-under-attack-129811">http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-athens-consulate-comes-under-attack-129811</a></p>



# Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe

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)

## Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2018 Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and Responses’ April 2019

### Foreword

1.1 This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish community in Western Thrace in the year 2018. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish community in the region of Western Thrace based on the information gathered from minority institutions and Turkish newspapers.

1.2 In this submission, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) reports hate motivated incidents and attacks and verbal attacks against the Turkish community in Western Thrace <sup>148</sup> and outside the region of Western Thrace in some cases and attacks against the kinstate Turkey.

### The number of recorded attacks and its nature

2.1 Our report did not document and hate-motivated attacks in the year 2018. However, three verbal assaults against Turks and representatives of the Turkish community in the Greek parliament were recorded. Five attacks against the diplomatic missions of kinstate Turkey in Greece were recorded, in 2018 and in the first four months of 2019.

### Verbal and Physical Attacks outside Western Thrace

<b>18 January 2018</b>	Athens- Muslim Association of Greece received a threatening phone call from a group called ‘Kyreptia’ which said that they are a group that burns, hits, kills immigrants and Muslims and added that the Muslim Association of Greece is a target. <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Association-of-GreeceMAG-%CE%9C%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%83%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-">https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Association-of-GreeceMAG-%CE%9C%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%83%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%BC%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%89%CF%83%CE%B7-</a>
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<sup>148</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

	<p><a href="https://www.ekathimerini.com/227031/article/ekathimerini/news/extreme-right-group-claims-arson-on-afghan-center">https://www.ekathimerini.com/227031/article/ekathimerini/news/extreme-right-group-claims-arson-on-afghan-center</a></p>
<p><b>22 March 2018</b></p>	<p>Athens- The Afghan Migrants &amp; Refugees Community in Greece was attacked by racist and fascist arson attack, today, 22 March just after 13.00 at noon at their premises. The attack on the fifth-floor premises of the community centre in the crowded Omonia area of the capital caused some significant material damage, but fortunately there were no injuries. The centre had been full of people, including children, not long before. An extremist group has reportedly claimed responsibility for the racist attack, which came a day after the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ekathimerini.com/227031/article/ekathimerini/news/extreme-right-group-claims-arson-on-afghan-center">http://www.ekathimerini.com/227031/article/ekathimerini/news/extreme-right-group-claims-arson-on-afghan-center</a></p>
<p><b>20 May 2018</b></p>	<p>Thessaloniki- The mayor of Greece’s second city Thessaloniki was hospitalised early on May 20 after an assault by suspected far-right members at a rally, officials said. Yiannis Boutaris, 75, has repeatedly angered hardliners in Greece with controversial statements on Macedonia, Turkey and Israel. Among them is calling Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, a ‘great leader’. The mayor had to be escorted from an event commemorating incident during and after World War I in Turkey’s Black Sea region.</p> <p><a href="http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-mayor-hospitalized-after-far-right-attack-132060">http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-mayor-hospitalized-after-far-right-attack-132060</a></p>
<p><b>10 September 2018</b></p>	<p>Thessaloniki- A Turkish family, who went to the Greek city of Thessaloniki for a weekend holiday, has been attacked by a Greek ultra-nationalist group who thought they were Macedonians.</p> <p>Turkish citizen Mehmet Özeren arrived in Thessaloniki on Sept. 8 with his wife and two children. After parking their car at Tsimiski Street, the family started to walk to the coast when they found themselves in a protest by more than 5,000 ultranationalists, titled ‘Macedonia is Greek’.</p> <p>The group, which attacked nearby cars and shops while clashing with the police, also targeted the Turkish family. According to Özeren, one protester yelled, ‘They are Macedonian’ before the attack. ‘We ran for our lives’, Özeren said, adding they hid inside an apartment building as several protesters followed them.</p> <p><a href="http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-nationalists-attack-turkish-">http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-nationalists-attack-turkish-</a></p>

### Hate speech and verbal attacks against members of the Turkish community

3.1. Three verbal attacks were recorded in the year 2018 and two verbal attacks were recorded in the first four months of 2019 against the Turkish community.

<b>14 February 2018</b>	Athens- Theodoros Pangalos, Greek Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, with his statement he made for Radio Skai created a scandal. Concerning a question related to interventions of Turkey in the Aegean said, ‘The best Turk is the dead one. I believe in this. Because I did meet no good Turk. They lack basic values. A Turk has not got a sense of justice’. Racist and fascist statement by Pangalos caused a great reaction in Western Turkish community. Pangalos who made an assessment on the relations of Greece with Turkey on SKAI radio stated ‘... No matter how much good will Turkey approaches with, it is not possible to establish good and friendly relations with Turkey. Because Turkey is extremely inconsiderate and a wild enemy’. <a href="http://en.protothema.gr/the-only-good-turk-is-a-dead-turk-says-ex-foreign-affairs-minister-of-greece-pangalos/">http://en.protothema.gr/the-only-good-turk-is-a-dead-turk-says-ex-foreign-affairs-minister-of-greece-pangalos/</a>
<b>06 March 2018</b>	Athens- During the speech of Nikos Kocias, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Cyprus issue and relations with Turkey, a quarrel had come through due the statement by the Golden Dawn MP Ellias Kassidiaris who said, ‘SYRIZA Rodopi MP, member of Western Thrace Turks, Mustafa Mustafa has to be expelled from the meeting’. Implying Mustafa Mustafa, Kassidiaris said ‘We cannot keep Turkish MPs among us. The Turkish spy out’. Following the verbal assault against Mustafa Mustafa, SYRIZA Party declared its support to Mustafa Mustafa, who is Golden Dawn Party is known for its racist and fascist approach against Western Thrace Turkish community. <a href="http://int.ert.gr/parliament-to-consider-escalating-verbal-attacks-by-far-right-golden-dawn/">http://int.ert.gr/parliament-to-consider-escalating-verbal-attacks-by-far-right-golden-dawn/</a>
<b>22 March 2018</b>	Athens- The wife of Panayotis Iliopoulos, a Golden Dawn MP in the Greek parliament, verbally attacked Hüseyin Zeybek, Turkish MP from SYRIZA. When walking out of the Greek parliament, the wife of the Golden Dawn MP assaulted Hüseyin Zeybek and shouted loud ‘Nasty Turks, Turkish agents, traitors!’. <a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haberyunanistan/detay/4195">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haberyunanistan/detay/4195</a>

### Attacks against kinstate Turkey

4.1. A branch of Turkish state bank in Komotini was attacked in March by an anarchist group. Three attacks against the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki and Athens were recorded in 2018, and one in 2019 in Thessaloniki. Police units guarding the Turkish consulates were attacked many times in the past. Turkey asked Greece to take necessary measures to protect diplomatic missions of Turkey in Greece.

<b>21 March 2018</b>	Komotini- The branch of the Turkish bank, Ziraat Bank in Komotini was attacked. An anarchist group of 25 people stoned the bank located
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	<p>in the city square, after demonstration against Turkey. The door and the windows at the entrance were damaged. Police took security measures in the surroundings after the attack. Attack a research investigation has been initiated.</p> <p><a href="https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/21/ziraat-bank-branch-in-greece-targeted-in-possible-pro-ygg-attack">https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/03/21/ziraat-bank-branch-in-greece-targeted-in-possible-pro-ygg-attack</a></p>
<b>04 April 2018</b>	<p>Athens- A group of 15 to 20 people came to the street where the Turkish consulate is located in the evening of April 4 and began smearing the building's walls with red paint. No one was injured in the attack; however, the windows of the consulate's waiting room were broken. The assailants later escaped. The Greek group called Rubikon, who view themselves as anti-government anarchists, claimed responsibility over the attack. Greek police said they were probing the incident.</p> <p><a href="http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-athens-consulate-comes-under-attack-129811">http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-athens-consulate-comes-under-attack-129811</a></p>
<b>2 June 2018</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- A firebomb attack on the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki and a firebomb assault on riot police trying to protect happened. A group of anti-establishment assailants has claimed responsibility for Saturday's firebomb attack in Thessaloniki against a riot unit van guarding the Turkish Consulate which put the lives of some 20 officers at risk. A statement posted on an anarchist website, signed simply as 'insurgents', said that 'we choose to stare the real enemy in the eye, to stare its armed guards in the eye and burn them'. 'Cops are a first obstacle; they are the armed guard of the establishment. And they are not indestructible', the statement said 'They are a target because of the role they have chosen to undertake in public life. They are protectors of the state and of the masters; they are always prepared to suppress every effort for rebellion or revolution'. On Tuesday officers holding banners protested against what they called 'murderous attacks' against their colleagues and accused the state of 'indifference'. They said that since 2010, riot police units guarding the Turkish Consulate in Thessaloniki have been attacked at least 17 times without anyone ever getting arrested.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ekathimerini.com/229323/article/ekathimerini/news/anti-establishment-group-claims-responsibility-for-firebomb-attack-on-police">http://www.ekathimerini.com/229323/article/ekathimerini/news/anti-establishment-group-claims-responsibility-for-firebomb-attack-on-police</a></p>
<b>30 September 2018</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- An attack that targeted police officers protecting the country's Consulate General took place in Thessaloniki. The attack was carried out with six Molotov cocktails in the early hours of Sunday, at around 2:30 a.m. local time. The attack did not cause any damage or personal injury in the consulate building. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey published a press release and wanted Greek authorities to take necessary measures for the security of the personnel and buildings of diplomatic missions in Greece.</p> <p><a href="http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-256_-selanik-baskonsoloslugumuza-yapilan-saldiri-hk_en.en.mfa">http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-256_-selanik-baskonsoloslugumuza-yapilan-saldiri-hk_en.en.mfa</a></p>
<b>03 March 2019</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- Dozens of masked assailants attacked the Turkish consulate in the Greek port city of Thessaloniki on Sunday, tossing Molotov cocktails and clashing with police. Some 50 masked people,</p>

	<p>described as ‘anarchists’, attacked police guarding the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki with Molotov cocktails. Police responded with tear gas and stun grenades and gave chase. The perpetrators fled onto the grounds of nearby Aristotle University.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ekathimerini.com/238263/article/ekathimerini/news/a-barrage-of-violent-incidents-in-athens-and-thessaloniki-overnight">http://www.ekathimerini.com/238263/article/ekathimerini/news/a-barrage-of-violent-incidents-in-athens-and-thessaloniki-overnight</a></p>
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# **Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu** **Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa** **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe** **Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης** **Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe**

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
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## **Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)** **Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2019** **Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and** **Responses’** **April 2020**

### **Foreword**

1.1. Hate-motivated attacks, crimes and hate speech are part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons belonging to national minorities, religious groups and other marginalised certain individuals and groups. We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime against persons belonging to ethnic and/or national, religious minorities and other marginalised groups threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies and may give rise to wider scale conflict and violence that undermine international stability and security.

1.2. The Turkish community in Western Thrace has been a target of hate crime attacks in recent years and persons, institutions and places of worship belonging to the Turkish minority are being attacked by unknown perpetrators. This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and attacks against Turkish community in Western Thrace in the year 2019. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish community in the region based on the information gathered from local Turkish newspapers, national media and foreign press.

1.3. In this submission, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) reports hate motivated incidents and attacks and hate-motivated verbal attacks against the Turkish community in Western Thrace<sup>149</sup> from the political field with an exceptional example from the media. Our submission includes one attack against a religious historical monument in Arta, outside the region of Western Thrace and reports attacks against the kinstate Turkey since it does have a direct effect on the situation of the Turkish community in the region.

### **The number of recorded attacks and its nature**

2.1. Our report documented two hate-motivated attacks against the religious places belonging to the Turkish community in the year 2019. However, three verbal assaults against the Turkish community were recorded in 2019 and one was recorded in the first four months of 2020. Two attacks against the diplomatic missions of kinstate Turkey in Greece were recorded in 2019.

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<sup>149</sup> Greece officially recognises the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, ‘Muslim Minority in Thrace’.

## Attacks against institutions and religious places/mosques in Western Thrace

3.1. Three attacks were recorded in Western Thrace in the year 2019. One was recorded against a mosque in Xanthi, the second attack was on the outer wall of a Turkish school in Xanthi and the third incident took place in a cemetery in Alexandroupolis.

<b>18 May 2019</b>	Xanthi- An attack was made to the Sünne Mosque in Xanthi on 18 May 2019 by unknown people at midnight. They threw eggs at the mosque's walls and racist slogans were written on the walls. The slogans written on the walls of the mosque stated "PONTIAN, 1919 I DO NOT FORGET" as well as there were expressions containing severe insults against Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Republic of Turkey. <a href="http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/5753">http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/5753</a>
<b>28 May 2019</b>	Alexandroupolis- An attack was made by an unknown assailant or assailants to the Turkish cemetery in Alexandroupolis, one of the three cities in Greece where the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been dwelling. Tombstones were damaged during the attack in which the perpetrators are considered to be the sympathisers of the extreme rightist Golden Dawn Party. The assailants broke some of the tombstones and drew the logo of the Golden Dawn Party on the tombstones with spray paint and wrote 'Stohos' the name of a group known to be Turcophobic. Besides, assailants left a following statement 'Greece belongs to Greeks' with the logo of the Golden Dawn Party. <a href="http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/attack-on-muslim-cemetery-shows-rising-islamophobia-expert-14387">http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/attack-on-muslim-cemetery-shows-rising-islamophobia-expert-14387</a>
<b>5 December 2019</b>	Xanthi- A phrase ('Pig meat is delicious') was clearly intended to provoke Turkish community with Islamic faith spray-painted on the outer door of Xanthi Minority School. <a href="https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6354">https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6354</a>

## Hate speech and verbal attacks against members of the Turkish community and Islam

4.1 Hate speech in politics is part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons with different ethnicity, religion or belief in the Greek political system. Our submission reports three incidents of hate speech against members of the Turkish community and one hate speech directly targeted Islam in the political field which might have the potential risk to escalate tensions in general society.

4.2. Five verbal attacks were recorded in the year 2019.

4.3. As an exceptional example, our submission includes a hate-motivated attack in the Greek local media about the meeting of two NGO representatives belonging to the Turkish community with the former Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou in their visit to Strasbourg during the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, there were many incidents of hate-motivated speech/attack in the majority local, regional, national media against persons representing NGOs and religious leaders in the region.

4.4. There was one verbal attack recorded in the first four months of 2020 against the Turkish community.

<p><b>June 2019</b></p>	<p>Komotini- The Friendship, Equality and Peace Party (FEP) of the Turkish community in Western Thrace joined the EP elections in 2019 and received overwhelming support in two provinces of Greece's Western Thrace region, in Rhodope and in Xanthi where the Turkish minority mostly lives. The party ranked first in Rhodopi and Xanthi provinces, receiving 38% and 25% of the votes respectively. The party was not able to elect a MEP due to 3% electoral threshold.</p> <p>The statement made after the elections of 2019 for the European Parliament by Çiğdem Asafoğlu, the President of the FEP Party, stating that ‘The FEP is a Turkish party but at the same time it is a formal political party of the Greek state, just founded by members of the Turkish minority’ has caused a great reaction in the country. The President has been a target of hate speech and hate-motivated attacks with secret phone calls and messages threatening the President and her family with death.</p> <p><a href="https://www.in.gr/2019/05/28/politics/kommata/komma-tis-agkyras-kai-mia-syztisi-pou-de-ginetai-gia-ti-meionotita-sti-thraki/">https://www.in.gr/2019/05/28/politics/kommata/komma-tis-agkyras-kai-mia-syztisi-pou-de-ginetai-gia-ti-meionotita-sti-thraki/</a>  <a href="http://www.debpartisi.org/haberler.php?s=detay&amp;id=5948">http://www.debpartisi.org/haberler.php?s=detay&amp;id=5948</a>  <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2020/04/western-thrace-contested-space-turks-northeast-greece-200408153925772.html">https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2020/04/western-thrace-contested-space-turks-northeast-greece-200408153925772.html</a></p>
<p><b>17 October 2019</b></p>	<p>Xanthi- Mayor of Xanthi Manolis Tsepelis attended the opening ceremony of the new branch of the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) in Xanthi, which led him to be the target of all the opposition lists in the municipality, as well as the Greek local press. Local media reports and comments targeted WTMUGA and the Turkish community in Western Thrace, while WTMUGA was described as an ‘illegal’ organization. The newspaper Protothema wrote, ‘The mayor of Xanthi not only stayed on for purely electioneering purposes campaign photos in staffing his ballot with first-class FEP executives but continues to provoke with his behaviour and moves. I remind you that one of the first people he received in the office as mayor of Xanthi was the Turkish Consul of Komotini, who immediately after his announcement mentioned his meeting with the Mayor of Xanthi without disturbing our mayor’.</p> <p><a href="https://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/936499/perierga-paihnidia-me-tous-tourkofrones-tis-meionotitas-apo-ton-dimarho-xanthis/">https://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/936499/perierga-paihnidia-me-tous-tourkofrones-tis-meionotitas-apo-ton-dimarho-xanthis/</a></p>
<p><b>04 November 2019</b></p>	<p>Athens- Speaking to THEMA 104.6, Charalampos Athanasiou, New Democracy Party MP from Lesbos expressed his concern about the dimensions of the increased influx of immigrants and targeted the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is an autochthonous minority in Greece and said, ‘Lesbos will soon become second Rodopi if this situation continues and one third of the island’s population will be Muslim in 15-20 years’. Athanasiou deems the members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace who are Greek citizens as a ‘threat’ and ‘danger’.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ant1news.gr/eidiseis/article/550788/xaralampos-athanasioy-fobamai-oti-i-lesbos-tha-ginei-mia-new-rodopi">https://www.ant1news.gr/eidiseis/article/550788/xaralampos-athanasioy-fobamai-oti-i-lesbos-tha-ginei-mia-new-rodopi</a>  <a href="https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6384">https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6384</a></p>

<b>06 November 2019</b>	Athens- Evripidis Stilianidis, PM of New Democracy for Rhodope follows a nationalist rhetoric, calling himself ‘the only Christian PM of Rhodope’ since 2010. He has regular statements of ‘dangers’ of having 3 Muslims (Turkish) MPs from the region of Western Thrace in the Greek parliament. <a href="https://rodopinews.gr/58417">https://rodopinews.gr/58417</a>
<b>09 December 2019</b>	Athens- Kyriakos Velopoulos, Head of the far-right Greek Solution Party used anti-Islamic phrases during a speech in the Parliament session on 5 December 2019. These could be summarised as: ‘Islam is not a religion; it is a political ideology with religious content that envisages out-of-date practices and is incompatible with Western-type life’. <a href="https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6360">https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6360</a>
<b>23 March 2020</b>	Athens- The coronavirus, which affects Europe and the whole world, has also affected Greece. On 23 March 2020, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared a nationwide curfew to prevent the coronavirus. Despite all the measures which have been put in place, the number of cases in Greece as of 26 March rose to 821 and the number of people who lost their lives due to the virus to 23. On 23 March 2020, the village of Echinós (Şahin) in Xanthi was quarantined as the first application in the country after a 72-year-old man from the Turkish community in Western Thrace died. After the quarantine of the village of Echinós, Kyriakos Velopoulos, head of the far-right Greek Solution Party, said on Twitter, ‘Echinós is in Quarantine!!! Ankara's spies live there, coming in and out of Turkey! Think about what it is in Erdoğan’s Turkey!’ <a href="https://twitter.com/velopky">https://twitter.com/velopky</a> <a href="https://www.abttf.org/arama-detail.php?id=6165">https://www.abttf.org/arama-detail.php?id=6165</a> <a href="https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6804">https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6804</a>

### Attacks against kinstate Turkey

5.1. Four attacks against the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki were recorded in 2019. Two of these four attacks targeted the car belonging to the Turkish consulate employee and another Turkish national in Thessaloniki.

<b>03 March 2019</b>	Thessaloniki- Dozens of masked assailants attacked the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki around 2:40 AM on Sunday, throwing Molotov cocktails and stones. Some 50 masked people, described as ‘anarchists’, attacked police guarding the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki with Molotov cocktails. Police responded with tear gas and stun grenades and gave chase. The perpetrators fled onto the grounds of nearby Aristotle University, which is off-limits to police officers. <a href="https://www.amwenglish.com/articles/attacks-against-police-department-and-turkish-consulate-ingreece/?fbclid=IwAR06VyBMNhHMULmabjzFGUIoydrVaecFEpTfBVVpDU8u7rv283otH_1Pw">https://www.amwenglish.com/articles/attacks-against-police-department-and-turkish-consulate-ingreece/?fbclid=IwAR06VyBMNhHMULmabjzFGUIoydrVaecFEpTfBVVpDU8u7rv283otH_1Pw</a>
<b>10 June 2019</b>	Thessaloniki- The cars of two Turkish nationals in Greece were set on

	<p>fire early Monday. The car of Serkan Burali, commercial attaché of the Turkish consulate, was burned in front of his house. Arsonists targeted another car of a Turkish national working for an international organization. Firefighters rushed to the scene, but the vehicles were completely damaged. No casualties were reported. The Greek police and fire department have launched an investigation into the attacks.</p> <p><a href="https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greece-arsonists-attack-turkish-diplomats-vehicles/1500347">https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greece-arsonists-attack-turkish-diplomats-vehicles/1500347</a></p>
<b>17 October 2019</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- The Turkish Consulate building, and the Atatürk House in Thessaloniki were attacked by a group of demonstrators. Police have detained 12 people who evaded security and staged an unlawful protest against Turkey's operation in Syria at the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic.</p> <p>The demonstrators entered the grounds of the Atatürk House in the northern city of Thessaloniki and unfurled a banner before being detained by guards and police. The museum grounds are shared by the Turkish Consulate.</p> <p><a href="https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-protesters-attack-ataturk-house-in-thessaloniki-147640">https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-protesters-attack-ataturk-house-in-thessaloniki-147640</a></p>
<b>23 December 2019</b>	<p>Thessaloniki- Unknown assailants set the car of a Turkish consulate employee ablaze early on Monday in Thessaloniki. The incident took place around 3:30 am. Firefighters put out the fire, which caused damage to the back of the car. The Thessaloniki Police Department has launched an investigation into the incident.</p> <p><a href="https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-slams-attack-on-consulate-worker-s-car-in-greece/1682247">https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-slams-attack-on-consulate-worker-s-car-in-greece/1682247</a></p>

### **Anti-Islamic attacks against religious places outside Western Thrace**

6.1. Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies.

6.2. Our submission includes one attack in Arta, a city in north-western Greece, which is part of Epirus region, against Islam outside the region of Western Thrace and Athens where a great majority of Muslims live in as an example of growing intolerance and hatred towards Muslims and Islamic places in the whole territory.

<b>20 March 2019</b>	<p>Arta- Anti-Islamic slogans were spray-painted on the entrance and the walls of Faik Pasha Mosque in the city of Arta. A Turkish tourist agent was in Arta and videotaped an Imaret, an Ottoman building (a public kitchen, as it was called, for the poor to eat, but also to pray in the mosque it included or even to stay in) belonged to Faik Pasha Mosque. According to the video, slogans that insult Islam are written on the abandoned walls of the Ottoman building.</p> <p><a href="https://odatv.com/vid_video.php?id=8G1GA">https://odatv.com/vid_video.php?id=8G1GA</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ethnos.gr/ellada/28012_toyrkos-apo-tin-arta-na-ti-kanoynoi-ellines-kata-tis-othomanikis-mas-klironomias">https://www.ethnos.gr/ellada/28012_toyrkos-apo-tin-arta-na-ti-kanoynoi-ellines-kata-tis-othomanikis-mas-klironomias</a></p>
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**ABTTF**



**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe**