



**OSCE
HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Warsaw, Poland**

Working Session III: Fundamental Freedoms I, Including Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

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Thank you very much Ms./ Mr. Moderator,

My name is Aysel Homko. I am representing the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association. I am a lawyer and I am the Deputy President of the Turkish Union of Xanthi which was closed down because of the term “Turkish” in its title. And it is still being closed down despite the positive verdict of the European Court of Human Rights in favor of the Turkish Union of Xanthi.

Ms./Mr. Moderator,

I would like to bring the recent information regarding the freedom of association and the Greek violation to your kind attention.

Founded in 1927 and functioned until the beginning of 1980s without any problems with the local or national Greek state apparatuses, it took more than 20 years for the Xanthi Turkish Union to exhaust all local remedies and bring the case before the ECtHR in Strasbourg. After the ECtHR’s decision in favor of the Union, our officials started to say that “We strive for the solution of the problem” as a delaying tactic just to gain time and keep the issue pending. Our country fails to implement the ECtHR’s decisions and international standards regarding the freedom of association.

Similar to the case of the Xanthi Turkish Union, the Case of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi is still pending the implementation of international standards by the authorities of our country. The Greek courts rejected its establishment since it had the term ‘Turkish’ in its title. After exhausting all local remedies, it brought the case before the ECtHR (*Emin and Others v. Greece – No: 34144/05*). The result is like the case of the Xanthi Turkish Union.

The above-mentioned cases and the case of Evros Minority Youth Association show that the impediments on the freedom of association in our country still remain untouched and the democracy is utopia in the cradle of democracy.

Members of the Muslim Turkish minority frequently complain that the Greek authorities keep postponing the implementation of the ECtHR decisions in matters of freedom of association in Western Thrace. On the other hand, the Greek officials repeat at various national and international fora that they are working on new regulations for amending the Greek domestic law so as to cease contradicting with the ECtHR’s jurisprudence. However, the above- mentioned cases exemplify that our authorities are quite decided not to allow the operation or re-registration of the associations bearing the word “Turkish” in their titles. Our



authorities also seem to have no intention to make legal arrangements for the implementation of the ECtHR decisions.

We, the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace would like to recommend Greece

To respect the fundamental freedoms that were expressed in all the international documents as well as the OSCE commitments.

To respect the ethnic denomination of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

To guarantee the full enjoyment of the freedom of peaceful assembly and association for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Thank you very much.