



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

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Working Session XIV: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims

Contact Persons: Onour Moustafa Achmet & Ali Chousein Oglou
onurmustafaahmet@gmail.com & alihuseyinoglu1@gmail.com & btaytd@otenet.gr

Thank you Ms/Mr Moderator,

Distinguished Delegates,

Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association calls upon the Greek State:

- To take necessary steps to eliminate the problems derived from the duality of the religious leaders,
- To put an end to those policies that aim to create social division within the Turkish society,
- To recognize the popularly elected muftis of the Turkish Minority,
- To abolish the practice of state appointed officials / appointed muftis and imams that is against the religious autonomy of the Turkish-Muslim Minority,
- To respect the Greek historical leaders who signed 1913 Athens Treaty and 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty,
- To have a dialogue with the representatives of the Turkish Minority while preparing laws and regulations related to the Turkish Minority,
- To revise the Law No: 3647/2008 regarding the charitable foundations (Waqfs) that undermines the religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority,
- To stop the implementation of the Law No: 4115/2013 regarding the appointment of imams.

One of the most significant problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the realm of religious freedoms is the non-recognition of the elected Muftis by Greek state authorities. Based on bilateral agreements and international treaties, the Turkish Minority has the right to freely “establish, manage and control any charitable, religious and social institutions” and thus elect its own religious leaders. However, Greek authorities do not fully implement the relevant provisions of those international binding documents.

Besides the Mufti issue, the problems about the implementation of the Law No: 4115/2013 on the appointment of imams and appointment of the administrative boards of Awqaf / Religious Charitable Foundations continue to limit religious liberties of the Turkish Minority.

Similar to the aforementioned controversies with muftis, disputes over matters about the administration of religious charitable foundations / waqfs (Vakıf in Turkish) continues to problematize relations between the Greek state and the Muslim Turkish Minority. Starting from the 1967 Junta regime, Greek officials started to interfere in administration of these religious foundations by rejecting the Minority’s right to elect members of the Waqfs’ Administrative Boards. As of 2015, this state interference still continues.

Along with problems about appointment to the Waqf Boards, Greece also keeps disregarding Waqfs’ financial immunity and continues imposing excessive taxes and legal sanctions on their properties.

Thank you very much.