



# 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)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)  
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)  
22 September - 3 October 2014  
Warsaw, Poland

HDIM.NGO/0300/14

30 September 2014

## Working Session 13: Tolerance and non-discrimination II

Name of the Organization: Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)

Main contact person(s): Mr. K. Engin Soyylmaz

E-mail: [engin.soyylmaz@abtff.org](mailto:engin.soyylmaz@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

### **The rise of far-right politics and xenophobia in Greece, and hate crimes against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace**

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 Koran 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.