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## **HATE CRIMES IN WESTERN THRACE**

In all nation states, the points of view of dominant cultures to people with different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds are mainly based on discrimination.

In today's Europe, more than a 300 million population with different backgrounds and languages are obliged to live together. However, discrimination based on religion and belief, ethnic identity and different culture seems to be more of a threat rather than strength.

It is worth to note that communities and minorities who live for centuries in the Balkans differ from the other minorities living across Europe. While most people with different ethnic religious and linguistic background living in north Europe are immigrants, people belonging to national, ethnic or religious and linguistic minorities in the Balkans are indigenous populations.

In the Balkans, especially the Muslim communities use ethnicity and religion as an inseparable single identity. In many Balkan countries, the perception of Turkish Minority is also a Muslim Minority and vice versa. Therefore, persons belonging to these minorities are often subject to hate crimes.

## **THE MUSLIM TURKISH MINORITY OF WESTERN THRACE**

An estimate number of 150.000 ethnic Turks live in the North East part of Greece. Members of the Muslim Turkish Minority who have been living in this region for centuries identify themselves as ethnic Turks. The legal statute of this minority was established with the Peace Treaty of Lausanne which was signed in 1923, the bilateral agreements signed between Greece and Turkey and the international instruments concerning human and minority rights which Greece has signed and ratified.

In recent years the situation of the Turkish Muslim Minority has relatively improved. But there has not been progress in the field of established minority rights. Greece alleges that "equality among citizens" policy provides sufficient reforms and continues to ignore its obligations regarding the rights of the Turkish Muslim Minority by violating the bilateral and international treaty obligations to which is a party. Denial of the Turkish Identity, occupation of the Charitable Foundations and practice of the state appointed muftis instead of the elected muftis continue unabated. More than 60.000 people still suffer from the deprivation of the article 19 of the citizenship law and the situation of minority education continues to be as miserable as ever, the level of education in mother tongue decreases day by day.

As a natural result of oppressive and discriminative assimilation policies of the Greek State and the provocative nature of the majority media, the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have long suffered as victims of hate crimes in Greece.

No single person should have to live with the fear and anxiety that these crimes cause. The following has been prepared in order to reveal the conditions that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has to put up with.

Upon inspection of the following examples, it is evident that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is targeted on purpose, specifically due to its ethnic Turkish origin.

### **Denial of ethnic identity**

One of the major issues is the violation of the minority to identify itself as Turkish. In the 1950's, Greek authorities made it obligatory for the minority to be named as Turkish and its members as Turks. This policy later changed. On the other hand, the Greek authorities continue to use the term "Greek Minority" for the minority in Istanbul. The use of the adjective "Turkish" in minority associations' names is still forbidden. Xanthi Turkish Union's 25 years struggle with the law has been finalized with the European Court of Human Rights notification on 27 March 2008 in writing. (*Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis v Greece (no.26698/05)*) The Court held unanimously that there has been a violation of Article 11 and 6.1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Turks of Western Thrace are expecting Greece to respect The European Court of Human Rights' decisions and act accordingly.

### **Freedom of religion**

There has not been any progress towards the settlement of the outstanding institutional problem of Muslim religious leaders, the Muftis. The European Court of Human Rights concluded on two instances, i.e. *Serif versus Greece (14 December 1999-Case No: 38178/97)* & *Aga versus Greece (17 October 2003-Case No: 50776/99 & 52912/99)*, that Greece has violated Article 9 of the ECHR. Given the finding that there has been a violation of Article 9, State continues to disregard minority's elected Muftis and works through a number of appointed officers who lack credibility and respect even among their own people. The authority of the individuals appointed by the State to the Offices of Mufti in Komotini, Xanthi and Didimotiho is disputable since they are not accepted and recognized by the minority population. The minority, on its part, expects the government to cease interfering in the field of divine conscience and finally recognize minority's right to elect its own religious leaders.

### **Muslim Charitable Foundations**

Muslim Charitable Foundations (Waqfs) constitute an essential part of Minority's cultural, historic and religious heritage. The government has appointed the people who currently hold positions in the governing councils of the Muslim Foundations.

Disregarding their financial immunity, the State continued to impose excessive taxes and legal sanctions on the properties owned by the Muslim Charitable Foundations for ages. Minority's inability to govern and have access to the accounts of these Waqfs also prevents them from dispensing the revenues obtained thereof towards society's vital needs, such as the maintenance and improvement of schools and repairs or build mosques.

The new law (Law no: 3647/2008) passed on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008 was prepared without taking in consideration Minority's opinions and proposals. The Greek State should recognise that the new law cannot be accepted or applied in its current form. Minority is expecting a dialogue with state authorities.

## **Expelled Citizens and Stateless Persons**

Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law (No: 3370 of 1955) was an obvious case of racial discrimination and a flagrant violation of the fundamental right to citizenship. It was in breach of the Greek constitution and international law. It provided that: "A citizen of non-Greek origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared having lost Greek citizenship." On 23 January 1998, Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship was repealed by the Greek Parliament. This act was welcomed both by the international community, as well as within the ranks of the Turkish minority. However abolishment did not include a retroactive effect. The Minister of Interior on April 2005 announced the number of Muslim Turks deprived from the Greek citizenship until 1998 was 46.638, which is actually around 60.000.

So far, no steps have been taken in order to reinstate thousands of unlawfully expelled citizens and their children who continue living abroad.

If the case of the victims of article 19 is not an example for hate crime, than definitely is a good example of "ethnic cleansing".

## **Education**

According to articles 40 and 41 of the Peace Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, Turkish Minority's education has an autonomous statute. These articles provide equal rights for the minority to establish, manage and control all their schools at their own expense. However local authorities systematically undermine the autonomy of the minority education system through different ways such as selection, training and appointing teachers to these schools.

Minority students are subject to a 6 year compulsory education, thus unable to benefit from the 9-years compulsory education applied to the Greek majority. There are no longer well-trained teachers for the instruction in Turkish.

According to the Law No. 3518/2006, pre-school education in Greece since 2007 has become compulsory for children of 4 and 5 years age. The new law is not in line with the international and bilateral agreements concerning the minority education system in a way that all pupils with different linguistic, religious and cultural background across the country as well as the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are obliged to follow the compulsory pre-school education which is only in Greek language. The new law on pre-school education does not stipulate any special measures for the minority.

There is no minority nursery school in Western Thrace. The recent announcements of the Minister of Education and Religious Affairs regarding the establishment of multicultural nurseries is ambiguous and far from sincerity.

In its current form, the Minority Education System does not reinforce and promote relations between the State and the Minority. On the contrary, it creates tension and crisis of trust. This state of affairs not only undermines the obligations that Greece has undertaken by treaties and agreements, but it also contradicts with the EU legislation. The current distorted structure of the Minority Education drives the minority children who enjoy both Greek and EU citizenship, into becoming inadequate, second-class citizens.

The Greek education system in the recent years has been undergoing significant structural transformations. However, combating inequality and discrimination in the Greek educational

system and improving the situation of minority groups and the dialogue among the ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities is and will continue to be a matter of concern. Since, the Greek government does not recognize any ethnic and linguistic minorities within its territory.

In an ethnic sense, the Turkish Minority is viewed as a possible threat. Although the former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs attempted to change the contents of history books, they still imply some prejudiced data against “Turks” and this causes a racist tendency among the majority people. The school children at a very young age are still taught that the eastern neighbour is an enemy.

## **MEDIA AND HATE SPEECH**

In Greece, the media plays an effective role among the governments / public opinion and minorities. Also, it plays an important role in shaping the public opinion that the authorities generally take into account.

Until recently, the media exercised its role with a constructive manner to enhance conflicts, especially in Western Thrace. Although after 90’s, with the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations the influence of the media turned into a positive attitude towards the minority, some local and national Greek newspapers like “Hronos”, “Stohos”, “Antifonitis” and “Eleftheri Thraki” still continue their strong nationalistic discourses that strengthen “the other” as anti-self.

The Turkish-Muslim Minority in Western Thrace has suffered from the discriminatory applications of the Greek authorities and their refusal to recognize the minority’s self-identification.

The aforementioned newspapers reject to use minority’s identity as “Turkish”. They promote “Muslim” identity instead.

In some of the examples of the Greek Media, Turkish Minority is reflected as “the other” and is alleged to endanger the national Greek identity.

The construction of the Greek identity is influenced by “the other” who is a threatening image to the nation’s independence. (Because Turkish Minority has a kin-state, Turkey, neighbouring to Greece).

The history and the basic characteristics of the Greek-Turkish conflict and stereotypes play a key role in the Greek Media’s attitude towards the Turkish Minority. Greek Media promote the fear of “the other” by emphasizing differences between the minority and the majority. Of course, it must not be forgotten that journalists are also part of the social community, which carries long-ingrained stereotypes reinforced by the education system in Greece.

### **Some examples of hate speech in local newspapers:**

The journalists of Hronos, Stohos, Antifonitis, and Eleftheri Thraki generally use degrading phrases that constitute hatred or prejudice against the Turkish minority.

#### **Hronos: 7-10-2003**

The one who wants to be called Turk should go wherever s/he wants. The beginning of the judicial process for the members of The Muslim Minority of Thrace desiring not to be named as Greeks but Turks is irrational, ridiculous and anachronistic. Because it is well known that the identity of a person is not related with his or her ethnicity but where he/she is born, grew up and what is written in his/her own ID card. According to these criteria s/he is determined as a Greek citizen. If those

people want to be called as Turks, Turkey is not far away from the region and the roads are open. Let them go to their motherland country and let us be calm in our region...

**Hronos: 8-10-2003**

...The Lausanne Treaty, as well as our responsibilities emerging from the one-sided application of this treaty should be abolished. The minority schools, teachers and textbooks coming from Turkey ... and all other inventions of Ankara should stop functioning.

Whoever wants to be a Turk should take the seal and stamp and relieve Thrace of this gangrene and let it breathe.

**Hronos: 7-12-2006**

... Therefore the situation is becoming ordinary day by day and those who have secret ambitions for the idea that one day this minority, attributed to be a silent lamb would rebel, if not the minority, Turkey would rebel, are becoming ridiculous and disgraced...

... Congratulations my brothers and sisters! Greece observes how the minority acts and behaves and all the Greeks have realized that the minority plays "the zurna" (a double-reed instrument) of those who have the intention and ambitions for putting Greece in a blind situation with their speeches and acts against the home country of minority.

... Greece is quite aware that there are white lambs, but also black lambs that have not good intention, who are actually grey wolves dressed in the fur of sheep.

**Hronos: 1-3-2007**

Complaint and black teardrop for not being allowed to establish the association of "Turkish Women"

Mobility to Turkey prepares Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association that does not lose any chance to participate in congresses embracing and unifying the minorities of Balkans where the entire interest of Turkish side is expressed for all their demands...

**Hronos: 29-3-2008**

Pseudo-Muftis celebrated the decision of European Court of Human Rights in unity with the officials of Consulate General of Turkey in Komotini and officials from Turkey...

The programmed religious day was celebrated with the participation of Mr. Gormez from Ankara and more than 1500 members of Muslim Minority at a nightclub, Politea, in Ksanthi. This gave a chance to the organizers for celebrating it like a festival with many speeches in which the recognition and reopening of banned association was stressed with the decision of ECHR.

**Hronos : 9-9-2008**

The intense mobility in the Consulate General of Turkey in Komotini during the last time interval, of course is related with the visit of the representative of Committee of Human Rights of UN, Ms. McDougall and the meetings that will realize in Thrace, so that she examines the situation of minority.

The script of course is acquaintance and also in a repeated pattern, where the briefing becomes unilaterally in a line of subjects and problems, that placed in the agenda of discussions with associations and institutions that are controlled by the Turkish consulate and direct the interest to the problems of minor importance far away from the economic base.

Problems that do not interest the medium Muslim Greek citizens but help the ones who support hardness to check their electoral base and pass their own propaganda, and who are disorientating the visitors from an existing reality and the real problems that pass the region of Thrace that do not of course only touch upon the minority.

The predetermined appointments are multiplied little while ago of her visit and according to the reports of the diplomat and author of "Ethnos" Nikos Meletis, suddenly, at the last moment; Ms. McDougall decided to visit not only the minority of Thrace but also the representatives of "Rainbow".

For this meeting intervened Mr. Fox, her English colleague, who was obviously convinced by the cries pseudo-Macedonians.

It seems that the combination of parallel claim existent and non-existent minorities is within the political pressure that the Americans, their bosses want they apply.

Of course, no one informed us why the aforementioned lady who possesses such a position, whose only visits were to Ethiopia and Uganda three years ago, considered advisable to check us in minorities with priority in the agenda of her visits.

Once again, the pressure of Turks that participated in the UN gives the fruits.

### **Hronos: 10 – 10- 2008**

Has Thrace Fallen?

Is the Greek State present in the Pomak villages?

Some thoughts about the unbelievable events in Mega Derio village. Has Thrace Fallen? The term might seem exaggerated and unbelievable. But some events prove it. ...

Major forces came to the village in the month of Ramadan. The Muslim MPs Mantatzi and Hatiziosman and three Turkish MPs, Consul General of Turkey in Komotini, and Pseudo-Muftis visited the village and they talked to the villagers from the minaret of the mosque: "Be in continues conflict with the Greek State", "Thrace is Turkish". Although the Greek Teacher of the village Nikolopoulou applied for Police protection, even the Greek Police was absent....

... In the regions called minority areas is the Greek State present? Or is a new Kosovo trying to be created gradually?

### **Hronos: 22 -11 – 2008**

Americans investigated deeply again Human Rights Issues in Thrace...

One should wonder whether we should establish a commission that will investigate how Americans wiped out millions of Native Indians, ghettos in the cosmopolitan cities where people die of

hunger and high level of crime in the wildest capitalist society in the world....

Or should we investigate their official terror on the basis of the peace operations in different parts of the globe.

...

The authors of “Hronos” use phrases that alert the majority people to raise their negative feelings and their prejudices against minorities. Actually, they try to affect the innocent majority people’s feelings towards the minority.

The newspaper “Stohos”, on the other hand, always uses much more degrading phrases against the Turkish Minority as it can be seen in the headline of the issue 331 on 27-3-2008:

### “The Mongols Endanger Thrace”



Stohos: 29 – 1 – 2009

Here is Thrace... Attention!

The Minority in Thrace turns its back to the hired...

Simple failure of the organization of speeches for the “anniversary” of 29 January 1988 and 1990.

... In the Pseudo-Union of Xanthi and also in its corresponding in Komotini, which were renewed instead of closing down after the decision of the Supreme Court of Greece. Nevertheless, the meeting was crowned with...solemn failure!!!!!!

In Pseudo-Union of Xanthi. All the dogs: A. Faikoglou, O. Achmetoglou, A. Mete, G. Karachasan etc. In Komotini, little more than 50 that was in Xanthi. But this number doubled because of the employees and salaried of the Turkish Consulate.

## **Stohos: 29 - 1 – 2009**

Gkalip and Sherif in Turkish Channels

Today, on 29 – 1 – 2009 Grey Wolf Gkalip and Pseudo-Mufti of Komotini Ibrachim Sherif are invited to the Turkish Channel TRT INT to dynamite the climate for Thrace.

And in the same Turkish Channel on 31 – 1 – 2009, on Saturday at 19:45 pm, the spirits will be dynamited with the interview of Chouligia Emin, editor of Turkish Newspaper of Komotini, Gudem.

All of these are because of the pseudo-anniversary of Mongol-Turks of Thrace on the 29-1-1988 and 1990 for ... autonomy of Thrace.

## **Stohos: 27 – 1 – 2009**

We will not forget ... we will turn back

In an evening we will parade in the City (Istanbul),

Icons we will paint in the St. Sofia...

Thirty thousand 'black times' at the end of January

That has taken us near to our death heroes and leaders...

Grivas that recreated our Cyprus

At the end of January he left us alone

Before giving the joy to our Nation

For reunion of Cyprus with motherland Greece

However, you should know we don't forget you

We swore for the revenge in front of your grave

We will save the pride of our Nation in Cyprus

Breaking one day the green line

It was at the end of January ... and another betrayal

In Imia... Across the Asia Minor

Three Greek brilliant, blessed heroes

With the bullets of enemy fell down wounded

Brothers, we don't forget you, the holy day is coming

Where your souls will be free tearing the air

The dishonesty aches much more from the defeat

However, the revenge will fall in the Parliament

At the end of January... the mind doesn't dare to divide it

Thunder that put thousands of enemies in the middle wither

And leaves daybreak for immortality

And leaves Greece and Church as a widower and an orphan

Get up nimble thunder and look at your children

They are baptized in your words and they swear in your name:

"In an evening we will parade in the City (Istanbul),

Icons we will paint in the St. Sofia..."

"The Wave" Stohos



**Stohos: 27 – 1 – 2009**

Lazaros Mavros from the newspaper “Simerini”

....

Note: <http://www.apoellas.com/>: Who will dare us to retell that the sign ‘Turkish Mongolians Murderers’ is racist, nationalistic, and fascist? Turks are their names; Mongols are their origins and murderers as it is seen from their higher “culture”.

**Stohos: 9 – 1 – 2009**

They Prepare Congress on 19 and 20 January

The Turks set up Anti-Greek theater in Thrace

In the trick “The Turks of Germany”, Deputies of PASOK, and Americans...

The Turks set up a dangerous Anti-Greek theater in this period in our Thrace. More concretely, the Turks try to internationalize the question of “recognition of Muslim Minority, as Turkish”. The known snakes that are controlled by the Consulate General of Turkey in Komotini have already begun to activate for this aim. Thus, various minority politicians, municipal authorities, journalists, Turkish channels activate intensely during the last month. It is seen, as they believe that they will benefit from the important changes in the region.

The Anti-Greek Congress

In the effort of internalization, the question of recognition of “Turkish Minority” in Western Thrace is the basic vehicle that constitutes the main theme of the international Congress. It is organized on 29 and 30 January 2009 in Munich in Germany. For the success of the congress, the known anti-Greek snakes in our Thrace have been alarmed in all organizations that are under control of the known snakes of the Consulate General of Turkey.

Accordingly, with the information that leaks to Stohos from the Greek soul of the region, the main aim of the congress will be de facto the recognition one and only “Turkish Minority” in our Western Thrace.

How much important is the particular congress is also proved by the names of invited people ... not only from the pseudo-state of possessed territories of our Cyprus... but also from Thrace, all the famous agents of Turkey who are representatives of Minority will assist, that is to say, two Muslim MPs of PASOK, Hatziosman and Mantatzi, and the known former MP, Ilchan Achmet, the pseudo-Muftis of Ankara and other representatives of Anti-Greek organizations ...

And it is certain that Turkish Consulate provides great moral and economic support for the organization...

... the climate that is cultivated little before the congress is extremely anti-Greek and provocative ...

The American Support

...during their visit to Thrace the Americans met with the known servant snakes of Thrace, the lawyer, Achmet Kara, ...and with smaller snakes like Toulai Kioultsioglou and Gkioulai Kioroglou. Furthermore, they met with Tzemil Kapza, the head of the branch of International Relations....

The American Diplomats promised the Turkish snakes that they will support the internalization of question of the recognition of the Turkish Minority...

In reality, what does the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs do? ...

### **Antifonitis: 1 – 1 – 2009**

The professional Turks once more put Greece in a difficult position at an international Forum and addressed Greece as a country that abuses human rights. The aforementioned conference was held in Geneva and from Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association Tzemil Kapza and Pervin Chairoula, from ABTTF Kamuran Omeroglou and Melek Kirmaci and from Rainbow Pavlos Voskopoulos participated in the Forum.

...other Turkish representatives (sorry, I meant Greek Muslims) were on the same direction. The same topics and arguments were mentioned. Pervin Chairoula, merely, added impurities like “The prejudiced data against “Turks” cause a racist tendency among the majority people...”

### **Eleftheri Thraki: 30- 9- 2008**

The members of the Greek Patriot Union distributed declaration in Lavara in Evros Region, in which slogans like “take your hands from the Pomaks and the teacher”, “ agents and anti-Greeks out of Thrace” “The Consulate General of Turkey in Komotini must immediately be closed” ....

The prejudice and hatred against the Turks of Western Thrace sometimes is depicted on the walls of the mosques as in cases in the following pictures.



Above the window of the mosque it is written as follows: “The best Turk is the dead Turk”.



“Turks, you’re going to die”

(In these two photos, the name “Stohos” and its emblem represent a fascist, radical Christian orthodox and ultra nationalistic group that is quite popular all over Greece for their attitude against Greek citizens without Greek ethnic origin as well as migrant workers living in Greece.)

## **CONCLUSION**

As can be seen from the above examples, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace is constantly subject to hate crimes as a result of the unjustifiable and discriminative policies of the Greek Administration as well as the provocative and degrading context of the Greek Media.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has under no circumstances confronted the Greek State, nor ever rebelled against it. Quite on the contrary, the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have always been law abiding exemplary citizens.

Therefore, it is outrageous that the Greek Administration and the media perceive the Minority as a threat against national security.