



**EDUCATIONAL CENTER OF GLAFKI,
XANTHI PREFECTURE**

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Thank you Moderator,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Orhan Aziz and I am a member of the indigenous Muslim minority in Western Thrace, Greece. I am a Pomak teacher at a minority school; as well as the coordinator of the Educational Center of Glafki, a NGO with active participation in the improvement of the educational level of the members of the minority and the integration of Muslim minority students and women of the mountainous region of Xanthi.

We believe that education is the single most important instrument for social and economic transformation and forms a prerequisite for any form of combat against discrimination policies and persecution on religious and ideological grounds as laid down by the Copenhagen Document of 1990.

An educated person can easily confront discrimination practices, racism and xenophobia. The role of education is therefore extremely important in enforcing the principle of equality and non-discrimination as well as the rule of law. In doing so, the cooperation between states and organizations concerned with issues of education of sensitive social groups such as minorities is required. It is from our point of view essential for State institutions and governments to not only hear but assess and, under certain occasions, adopt NGO practices that result from the vast experience held by NGO staffs.

When it comes to minority education, it is with great joy that I stand here today to inform you, that the last time I stood here and addressed a speech I concluded my words by asking the Greek

state to ensure the teaching of the holy Quran in public schools, besides minority schools, in order to promote equality education and the integration of young members of the minority in the broader Greek educational system.

We, Muslim teachers that graduated from Greek Universities, salute the integration of the teaching of the Holy Quran in Greek public schools as not only it helps young members of the minority who do not choose minority schools to be educated about issues concerning their faith, it also helps Christians understand and experience firsthand the differences and many similarities between them and their Muslim classmates making public schools a place of not only mere lecture but tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.