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26 September 2016

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

19 to 30 September 2016

Warsaw –Poland

Working Session XI: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area, and combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance on religious grounds.

Contact Persons: Onour Moustafa Achmet & Esra Ismail

info@btaytd.com

Thank you Ms/Mr Moderator,

In Western Thrace, the hate-motivated crimes and attacks targeting the Turkish Minority who is the oldest Muslim community in Europe, have increased parallel to increasing nationalist and extreme nationalist movements across Europe and the Balkans in recent years.

I would like to give you some examples:

- On 4th March 2015 – Cinar FM, a broadcaster of Cinar Association, had its antennas, located in the antenna park, damaged to a great extent – perpetrators not found.
- On 7th March 2015 – In Didimoticho, a town inhabited with a significant proportion of Turkish Minority members, ultra-nationalist / racist people disturbed by the work of the Didimoticho Muslim Sports Culture and Education Association and broke the association's doors and windows – perpetrators not found.
- On 17th April 2015 - A suspicious fire caused damage to the Mahmut Agha Mosque, located in the “Yenice” neighborhood, in Komotini in the early morning. Furthermore by the fact that in the same hours, the trees in the compound of “the Alankuyu Masjid (Prayer Room)” located a few meters away from the Mahmut Agha Mosque were cut down by unknown persons.
- On 8th December 2015 – The only political party of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, the Friendship, Equality and Peace Party suffered an attacked, the windows of the headquarters of the party were broken and the name of the organization of ‘Guardians of Thrace’ was written on the walls. – Perpetrators not found.
- On 17th December 2015 – The funeral vehicle of the Macedonia – Thrace Muslim Cultural and Educational Association was damaged. – Perpetrators not found.
- On 28th January 2016 – An official of the elected mufti of Xanthi was beaten by the members of the ‘Organization of the Guardians of Thrace’ – Perpetrators not found.
- On 24th July 2016 – The Turkish Minority, with the leadership of Friend, Equality and Peace Party, actualized a peaceful walk for human rights at the city center of Komotini with thousands of participants. The 3rd largest Greek party, the Nazi Golden Dawn Party with its members tried to stop this peaceful walk by attacking to Minority members. They had fight with Greek police officers and fortunately a bad event was prevented.

The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Nils Muiznieks also underlines the increasing hate crimes in Greece with his letter dated on 25th July 2016.

Therefore, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association calls upon the Greek State,

- To take urgent measures to eliminate attacks targeting Muslim Turkish minority as well as other non-Greek ethnic origin inhabitants of Greece.
- To arrest those who are responsible for the hate motivated attacks and crimes against the Turkish Minority and its foundations.

Thank you for your attention.