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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)

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

Name of Main Contact Person(s): Mrs. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail(s): melek.kirmaci@abttf.org; info@abttf.org

OSCE

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Assembly and Association 8-9 November 2012

SESSION II: Freedom of Peaceful Assembly: new challenges and opportunities for dialogue

Mr. Moderator, Distinguished representatives of delegates, And esteemed NGO representatives,

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, Member States declared that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association and no one may be compelled to belong to an association (Article 20). The freedom of assembly and association constitute the cornerstones of representative democratic system and the exercise of these rights have always been at the heart of the struggle for democracy around the world, and they still remain at the heart of societies, since they are essential to the development of civil society and thus to the strength of democracy.

Among all international organizations, the OSCE attaches a great importance to the freedom of assembly and association. In Copenhagen, in 1990, the OSCE participating States committed that "everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards". In Helsinki, in the Ministerial Declaration on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, participating States reiterated that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and associations.

The OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights with the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Assembly developed the Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, which demarcate a clear minimum baseline in relation to the standards regarding freedom of peaceful assembly enshrined in international and regional human rights treaties, which were issued in March 2007 and endorsed by the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (Venice Commission) in June 2008.

The freedom of assembly is guaranteed by the Greek Constitution and generally protected by the government, demonstrations in order to protest austerity measures of the Greek Government in the time of deep economic crisis resulted with violence. According to "Freedom in the World 2012" report on Greece¹ published by Freedom House, around 270 people were injured during in protests in June 2011, and in October, one person was killed in Athens.

Amnesty International warns that a new hard-hitting briefing on the policing of austerity protests in the EU paints a very bleak picture of human rights in the continent. In its brief on "Policing demonstrations in the European Union", Amnesty International stated that protesters have been beaten and kicked, sprayed with tear gas, and shot at and wounded with rubber bullets by police officers in Greece. Amnesty International further added that journalists and photographers have also been victims, photographer Manolis Kypreos suffered total loss of hearing in both ears after police threw a stun grenade at him while he was covering a demonstration in Athens in June 2011.

We call upon all OSCE participating States, including Greece to ensure that administrative and law enforcement officials are adequately trained in relation to the respect of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

We call upon all participating States to respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and take all necessary measures to prevent use of excessive force and other human rights violations by law enforcement officers in demonstrations, and to ensure that law enforcement authorities which violate the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly are held personally and fully accountable for such violations by an independent and democratic oversight body, and by the courts of law.

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¹ http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/greece