

## **FEDERATION OF WESTERN THRACE TURKS IN EUROPE**

Warsaw, 26 September-5 October 2007  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Wednesday, 26.09.2007  
Working Session 4

Fundamental freedoms I, including: freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, freedom of movement

Dear president,  
Distinguished representatives,  
And NGO Delegates,

At first I want to thank our my country's delegation, Greece, for their kindly answers on Monday and yesterday. My colloques indicated problems of Turkish Minority of Greece last 2 days and I will make a brief explanation about latest violations in Greece which we believe that they are violation of freedom of thought indirectly.

Minority Association of Civil Society Support could not get founding permission due to "Minority" component in its name, in June 2007. "Muslim" definition in Lausanne Treaty was made out as a case, but clear definition of "Minority" for the society in Western Thrace in Lausanne Treaty has been ignored.

In July 2007 a new broadcasting law had been adopted in Greece. According to new broadcasting law signed by Greek President Karolos Papoulias in July 2007, speaking language in radio broadcasting shall dominantly and preferentially be Greek. This is a clear limitation on usage of native language in radio broadcasting. There is not such an example in another European country. Necessity, such as usage of national language in radio broadcasting, is a clear violation of rights. So, there is a clear danger for Turkish Minority of Greece to use their native language in public broadcasting and, minority radios in Western Thrace will be affected negatively from this new law. This is a clear limitation on freedom of media and a limitation on freedom of expression.

Continental Europe is the place where the best practices of human rights developments have been experienced during the last century, and the driving force of those practices is the European Union. My country Greece despite her 26-year European Union membership stands as the worst example in means of human rights implementations considering the case of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in the European Union. At first, I would like to talk about the violation of organizational rights. These rights are composed of education, religious, political, citizenship rights as well as the right to establish foundations and economic rights.

Ethnic identities, actually ethnic identities by which Greek nationalism is in a uncompromising attitude determine limits of freedom of organization. Especially Turkish identity has emerged as the limit of freedom of organization in Greece, in practice. Turkish Union of Xanthi, established in 1924, Turkish Youth Union of Komotini, established in 1928 and Turkish Teachers Union of Western Thrace, established in 1936, were formally closed by Greek authorities due to „Turk“ component in their association names in 1984. Cultural Association of Rhodop Turkish Women can not get founding permission due to „Turk“ component in its association name since 2001 and Minority Youth Association of Maritsa can not get founding permission due to "Minority" component in its association name since 2004. Lastly, As it is seen, while democratization and human rights understanding shall be developed in 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece, there is a deterioration of democracy and human rights and, Greece has become a country where anti-democratic practices

are seen as so legitimate. And, Turkish Union of Xanthi and Cultural Association of Rhodop Turkish Women prosecute Greece in European Court of Human Rights.

Our country, Greece, is too sensible about the usage of Turkish Identity on public platforms that she prefers to use „Muslim minority“ conceptualization by basing on Lausanne Peace Treaty also by rejecting „Turkish Identity“. But, while Turkish identity is rejected according to the idea that minorities are not defined as ethnic minority in Lausanne Treaty, Greece gave permission for establishment of an association which has an ethnic definition in its name: Pomak Cultural Association, in 2007, in Xanthi. So, Greece is in a great and flagrant political and juridical contradiction. So, close of associations having the term “Turk” in their names is completely anti-democratic and illegal. Besides all, Greece tries to legitimize intolerance to different identities with laws and if we assess objectively we face with a much more desperate situation than in the past. Because, we can clearly say that this is a limitation on people who do not use another language except their native language.

### **Recommendations**

1. International society should consider this situation and make some attempts by Greek Government in order to cure those injustices. Because, violations explained before cause not only anti-democratization of Greece but also give harm to European democracy and human rights values which are accepted globally.
2. European society which always defends democracy and human rights should intervene to those anti-democratic practices. If not, it should be known well that European values will be wounded seriously and inexpably.

Thank you for your attention.