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Föderation der West-Thrakiens Türken in Europa
Federation of Western Thracian 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)

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Working Session XIV: Tolerance and non-discrimination II: Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding: Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims

OSCE
THE 2012 HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

24 September- 5 October 2011
Warsaw

The rise of far-right politics in Greece and hate-motivated attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thracian

Madam Moderator,
 Distinguished representatives
 And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The rise of the far-right politics is a serious concern in Greece, where economic hardship and the increasing number of undocumented migrants in the country deepened xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and asylum seekers in central Athens and other regions in Greece. The extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) has presented a strong discourse against migrants and asylum seekers in Greece and it has gained strength and popularity among Greeks. Golden Dawn won 18 seats in the June 2012 national elections and entered the Greek Parliament for the first time in its history.

The rising Islamophobia and the increasing trend in hate-motivated attacks against migrants and asylum seekers, most of whom are Muslim, is an increasingly alarming problem for Greece in a period of deep economic crisis. Greek Helsinki Monitor stated that hate-motivated incidents against migrants and asylum seekers on the basis of the colour of their skin, their religion or their country of origin have increased dramatically and have become an almost daily phenomenon in Greece¹.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thracian in Greece has become a vulnerable target, and activities of far-right and/or extremist groups. There is a marked increase in hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thracian has created an environment of fear and anxiety among the members of the Turkish minority.

¹ http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr/uploads/2012_files/ghm1418_racist_violence_diktyo_english.pdf

On 6 August 2012, Golden Dawn organized a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. A group of nearly 150 members of Golden Dawn marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association.

On 12 August 2012, a group of members of the Xanthi provincial organization of Golden Dawn who carried Greek flags in their hands, drove by the Turkish villages in Xanthi by motorbikes and cars and nurtured a climate of fear among the minority living in the Turkish villages of Yenice, Beyköy and Okçular.

On 23 August 2012, headquarter of Party of Friendship, Equality, Peace), which is established by Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked in the late hours of evening and illuminated sign of the party was broken with stones.

On 18 September 2012 a teacher belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, was attacked by far-rightists on Tuesday evening in Xanthi city centre as he was hanging a placard of an event and hit him and three other members of the activist group called “Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat”.

In combat with hate-motivated attacks and crimes against the migrant groups and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, the Government of Greece should investigate and prosecute perpetrators, and should condemn publicly and unequivocally such incidents, and it should undertake effective measures to prevent xenophobic and hate-motivated crimes. We urge Greek authorities to set up of a national consultation body which acts as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred in public discourse.

In addressing the phenomenon in general terms, ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

Thank you.