



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

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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

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OSCE
THE 2012 HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

24 September- 5 October 2011

Warsaw

Dear President,
Distinguished representatives
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, of which status and rights are determined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty in 1923, has become a vulnerable target, and activities of far-right and/or extremist groups. The far-right has sharply risen as the economic downturn deepens in Greece and the current situation in Greece shows how quickly such political discourse against persons with different backgrounds can expand as xenophobia and racially motivated hate crimes in Greece.

There is a marked increase in hate-motivated attacks against the places of worship which belong to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece. This increasing trend in hate-motivated attacks against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has created an environment of fear and anxiety among the members of the Turkish minority.

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. In an interview with Human Rights Watch before the elections, the leader of the Golden Dawn, Nikolaos Michaloliakos explained, "We want Greece to belong to the Greeks. We are proud to be Greek; we want to save our national identity, our thousands-year history. If that means we are racist, then yes we are. We don't want to share the same fate of the Native Americans. Right now, the immigrants are the cowboys and we are the Apache."¹

¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Nikolaos Michaloliakos, Athens, January 12, 2012.

In the period following the election of Golden Dawn to the Parliament, the toughened political discourse of Golden Dawn triggered hate-motivated attacks in the country. On 6 August 2012, a group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union (Gümülcine Türk Gençler Birliği)(GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association. At that day, 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. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey, then threw bottles to the garden.

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(Κόμμα Ισότητας, Ειρήνης και Φιλίας) , 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, Mülazım Cemali, 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. Cemali, who was a deputy candidate for the extreme-left Antarsia Party in Xanthi, is a member of a group called “Movement Against Racism and Fascist Threat”. The assailants hit Cemali and three other members of the activist group. According to the daily Trakya'nın Sesi, the violent attack was staged by the members of the ultra-nationalist political party Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi). After the attack had been notified to the police, one of the perpetrators was arrested.

The rise of far-right in Greece makes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace a vulnerable target for far-right and/or extremist groups. The hate crimes which we reported took place within a mixed-motivated context of ethnic discrimination and violence. The attack against Komotini Turkish Youth Union shows that members of Golden Dawn and its sympathizers represent a strong political opposition for persons belonging to a different nationality and/or ethnic origin, although the members of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace are all Greek citizens.

Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece.

The Greek State should ensure co-operation, where appropriate, at the national and international levels, including with relevant international bodies and between police forces, to combat violent hate crime. ABTTF urges 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.

National consultation bodies which would act as a permanent monitoring centre and increase public awareness of the problem of the dissemination of incitement to hatred should be established in OSCE participating states, in full co-operation with non-governmental organizations, including the ones that belong to the minority groups.

Thank you.
Melek Kırmacı Arık