

**OSCE  
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
29 September to 10 October 2008  
Warsaw, Poland**

**Working Session 5  
Tolerance and Non Discrimination  
-National Minorities**

**Warsaw 1 October 2008**

**Turkish Muslim Minority  
of Western Thrace in Greece**

-An estimate number of 150.000 ethnic Turks live in the North East part of Greece. Members of the Muslim Turkish Minority who have been living in this region for centuries identify themselves as ethnic Turks. The legal status of this minority was established by the Peace Treaty of Lausanne which was signed in 1923, the bilateral agreements signed between Greece and Turkey and the international instruments concerning human and minority rights which Greece has signed and ratified.

-In the last years, the situation of the Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece has slightly improved however, still much remains to be done if the situation of the minority is to become wholly satisfactory. A draft report about the continuing violations against the minority is available at the NGOs desk.

-As a representative of the **Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association** on behalf of the **Muslim Turkish Minority of Western Thrace** I would like to make the following recommendations.

-Recalling that the European Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; principles which are common to the Member States,

-Recalling that tolerance and non-discrimination rank high among the priorities of the OSCE and participating States have repeatedly expressed concerns about manifestations of racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance,

- Recalling that the protection of minorities is inherent in the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

- Recalling that Greece has signed the Charter for Fundamental Rights of the European Union and is Party to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is Party to the European Court of Human Rights, Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights, and its Article 2 which provides for the right not to be denied an education and the right for parents to have their children educated in accordance with their religious and other views,

**We call upon the Greek state to:**

1.Respect the collective usage of individual right and recognise the existence of a Turkish ethnic and linguistic minority in Greece.

2. Ratify, without delay and without any reservations, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

3. Take steps to ensure the immediate rectification of the unfortunate consequences arising from deprivation of Greek citizenship on the basis of former Article 19 of the Citizenship Code for all persons concerned, especially ethnic Turks. In particular, we urge the authorities to genuinely facilitate these persons' recovery of their citizenship by removing any obstacle, including the need for them to go through the naturalisation procedure.

4. Ensure the revision of the new law No: 3647/2008 regarding the pious foundations (Wakfs) passed by the Greek Parliament and entered into force on February 29, 2008, which was prepared without taking the opinion and will of Western Thrace Turkish Minority and recognise that it cannot be accepted or implemented in its current form.

5. Ensure immediately that freedom of association is guaranteed by the Greek Constitution for all persons concerned and demand that the Greek authorities abolish all restrictions to the freedom of association for ethnic minorities, especially ethnic Turks. Remembering that it is prohibited using the denomination "Turkish" in names for associations by the Supreme Court which suited a prohibition procedure against the Turkish Union of Xanthi founded in 1927 and ruled out the foundation of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi, we urge the Greek State to immediately end the abuse of the right of freedom of association so that civil and political rights of ethnic minorities are guaranteed for all persons concerned. We further urge Greece to respect and act according to the recent written notifications of European Court of Human Rights on the cases of *Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others v. Greece* (no. 26698/05) and *Emin and Others v. Greece* (no. 34144/05) which resulted in favour of the said associations.

6. Ensure the equal opportunity for the instruction in mother tongue and the state language. Greece should also take immediate steps to ensure that the rights to education for the ethnic minorities are guaranteed so that children in Western Thrace have a bilingual preschool education. Remembering that the ethnic Turkish minority has the right to take education in its native language according to the Treaty of Lausanne, we in particular urge the Greek State to abolish the discriminatory clauses of the new Preschool law that anticipates the Greek language as a must in preschool education.

7. Revise the new law on media (Law no:3592/2007 which is not in line with the right to the free flow of information, freedom of expression and pluralism and makes the appropriate urgent changes, given that the said law fails to consent the use of minority languages in the media.

8. Ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the 1990 CSCE/OSCE Copenhagen Document that Greece has signed and ratified.

9. Take into consideration the Resolution adopted on the eleventh session of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference on Muslim Communities and Minorities in non-OIC member states. (OIC/SUM-II/2008/MM/RES/final, 13-14 March 2008)

10 Establish an objective and productive dialogue mechanism with the minority in order to understand and find satisfactory solutions to the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Tzemil Kapza (Mr.)