

MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF NORTHERN EPIRUS

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

10 September - 21 September 2018

Warsaw – Poland

Working session 16 (specifically selected topic): Combating racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination

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Thank you Mr/Mrs Moderator,

Honorable representatives,

Starting from our suggestions it should be made clear to the Albanian government and elsewhere that they must respect the National Greek Minority in Albania and pass this message to all the citizens of the country.

On August 12, 2010, Albanian nationalists murdered in Himara in Northern Epirus, the member of the Greek minority Aristotelis Goumas, a few meters away from his home simply because he insisted on his right to speak his mother tongue, Greek, in his native place.

The passengers of the vehicle that run him over twice were released after a few days, while the driver Ilir Mukai was sentenced to just 12 years in prison and it is not known if he actually did any time in prison at all. It is worth noting that the victim's parents were not even informed by the Albanian justice to be present at the trial. They learned about the trial from a journalist who asked them to comment on the court's decision...

A portion of Albanian politicians and media even presented the perpetrators of this racist murder as heroes who killed a Greek who allegedly provoked them. It must be underlined that the Albanian state does not recognize the existence of a Greek National Minority in Himara, although the region is a well-documented part of the Greek history, while the vast majority of its inhabitants have a clear Greek conscience.

It is an everyday phenomenon, whether it is urban areas where the majority is Albanians or indeed in villages of the Greek minority, for Albanians to reprimand Greeks because they communicate with each other in Greek.

For the past two years, a nationalist gang calling itself the "Movement for the Great Albania", headed by Tahir Veliou, is attacking towns and villages in Northern Epirus,

where they lower the Greek flag from Monuments, public buildings and private residences and then they desecrate them. Veliou's gang filmed their actions and post them on the social media from where the Albanian media reproduce them. The Albanian Police, apart from bringing Tahir Veliou in only once for a simple questioning, lets him continue with his acts undisturbed.

Another unresolved issue for many years is the street signs along the Kakavia-Argyrocastro highway, which crosses the Greek minority municipality of Dropolis. The streets signs are written in Greek, as it is an internationally established right of every national minority for the places they reside. However, they are been constantly destroyed and vandalized with racist anti-Greek racist slogans. Unfortunately, the Albanian authorities have failed to do anything, they have not conducted any inquiry nor have they arrested any of perpetrators.