

Warsaw, 2-13 October 2006 OSCE
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Monday, 9.10.2006
10. Working Session
Democratic Institutions
Presentation of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

Dear President,
Dear Commissioners and Non Governmental Organization Delegates
Distinguished Guests,

My name is Özkan Reşit. I represent Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe which is the roof federation of 29 associations established by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members living in Europe. We endeavour to solve our members' problems that are due to immigration. Beyond this aim, we are occupied to gain the basic human and democratic rights of our minority members living in Western Thrace and help them during their just as well as legitimate struggle to become equal citizens. I would like to give good news that we became a member of United Nations Economic and Social Council and we have the right to attend all meetings with representative status as of July.

After this brief introduction, I would like to talk about the barriers that Western Thrace Turkish minority face when they want to use their basic political and minority rights. I would like to begin with citizenship theme.

The 19th Article of the Greek Citizenship Law, that was issued in 1955 and implemented between 1955 - 1988, caused directly or indirectly 46.638 Western Thrace Turks to lose their citizenship by a very simple administrative decision due to their ethnic origin as we discussed in the former meetings. The article was abolished in 1988 as a result of international pressures but it was not implemented retrospectively and due to this, the victims of the mentioned law still have serious problems and are aggrieved by that unfair implementation. We repeat our call to our country, Greece to give Western Thrace Turkish minority their basic rights back. We wish for your support in this matter. We believe strongly, Europe that is established on the principles of peace, welfare and freedom will not accept such an unfair implementation of Greece.

Last year we discussed about the unfair laws that were specially issued to prevent Western Thrace Turkish Minority members use their democratic rights as well as the conflict of such laws with the democratic community structure at the Human Dimension Implementation meetings.

Election barrier of 3% in accordance with political stability and equality in political representation that is implemented to all political parties is acceptable but the same election barrier is being implemented on personal base and that is not only undemocratic but also unacceptable.

After the success of Western Thrace Turkish minority independent candidates during 1990's elections, Greek authorities decided to implement election barrier to independent candidates as to restrict political rights of the minority. We reiterate our demand of election barrier of 3% to be implemented only to political parties.

Our thesis that Kapodistrias' Plan anticipates the union the election areas and that aims to prevent the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members to elect their own governor of province in their election areas was proved by the recent surprise event during the previous months. Gülbeyaz Karahasan was nominated as the candidate for governor of İskeçe-Kavala- Drama province. Conservatives as well as other parties in the community overreacted to the candidacy of Gülbeyaz Karahasan and demanded her to announce the public that „she is a Greek woman“. The interesting point here is that the center point of all discussions on the theme is the „Turkish identity“ of the candidate. Greek's problem concentrating on our „Turkish identity“ has been known for years. Our organizations were formally closed due to their names containing „Turk“ and the last of the cases lasting since 80's at European Human Rights Court will be adjudicated as we hope. Skandalidis, the founder of the Kapodistrias' Plan, admitted on a TV program that mentioned plan was specially designed to prevent the election of Western Thrace Turkish minority members as governor of provinces. In the light of this admit from the founder of the mentioned plan, we invite ESCO to watch the Greek local elections on 15 October in Western Thrace.

I would like to express my best regards to you all for listening to me.