

MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF NORTHERN EPIRUS

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

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Warsaw – Poland

Working session 6: Fundamental freedoms (continued), including:

- Freedom of peaceful assembly and association

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Over the past five years, the Albanian state has used various methods to engage in psychological terrorism against members of the Greek National Minority who are active in the human rights struggle of their community.

These people are being systematically detained by the Albanian police for hours at the Greek-Albanian border, without being given the necessary explanations, they are being interrogated. Their free passage is thus being obstructed not because they have committed a crime but simply because they will not remain silent to the minority rights violations of the Albanian state.

But especially in the last year, following the unjust and unjustified murder of the member of the minority Konstantinos Katsifas by the Albanian Police Special Forces Unit "Renea", in the village of Vouliarates on October 28th, 2018, these phenomena have multiplied.

On December 8th, 2018, the Albanian authorities stopped about 200 Greek citizens, even people who were also citizens of Albania, from entering the Albanian territory, in order to prevent them from attending Konstantinos Katsifas' memorial service.

Stavros Ginos, a member of the Greek National Minority, in the border pass Qafe Bota was questioned for 3 hours with a lot of verbal pressure. Then in the detention center of Agioi Saranta for seven hours answering various questions. He was then taken to the detention center of Argyrokastro, where

he was interrogated for another eight hours answering the same questions, a total of 18 hours! At no point was he informed of any charges or the suspicion of any crime, other than being active in the Greek Minority's affairs.

Similar treatment was waiting on that day many other Greeks of Northern Epirus, who were unjustly detained and interrogated for hours by the Albanian police.

At the same time, the Albanian police set up roadblocks around the village of Vouliarates, checking all those who would go there to the village's church to pray for the murdered young man. There are also cases of members of the Greek Minority who were threatened by the Albanian police in the days before the memorial service, and were forced not to attend.

Albanian police repeated the same tactics on May 11th, 2019, banning dozens of Greek citizens from attending Konstantinos Katsifas' six-month memorial service.

In no democratic country has it been observed, people wanting to attend a religious memorial service, be intimidated or prevented to do so.

The Albanian police has also repeatedly interrogated Greeks this year regarding their participation in peaceful human rights events of the Greek National Minority.

As a result, many are afraid to participate again in such events.

Also, in the summer of 2019, the Albanian police banned entry into the country to Greek citizens who are married to members of the Greek National Minority of Albania, without any explanation.

In the village of Krania, twice in December 2018 and once in July 2019, Albanian nationalists destroyed the Monument to Thymios Lolis, a hero of the Greeks of Northern Epirus, where human rights events of the Greek National Movement often take place. The Albanian authorities made no arrests, sending the message of tolerance to actions against the peaceful expression of the Greek National Minority.