

MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF NORTHERN EPIRUS

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

10 September - 21 September 2018

Warsaw – Poland

Working session 1: Democratic institutions, including democracy at the national, regional and local levels, and democratic elections

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Thank you Mr/Mrs Moderator,

Honorable representatives,

The Movement for the Renaissance of Northern Epirus takes part in the OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING 2018 to internationally address the many and important problems faced by the Greek National Minority of Albania, living in the southern part of the territory of the Albanian state, which we call with its the historical - geographic name "North Epirus".

Although the population of the Albanian Greeks before the fall of the Communist regime in 1991 and the large migration that followed, was in excess of 300,000 people, the Albanian state recognizes as native Greek minority the residents of only 99 villages in the Regions of Avlona and Gjirokastra. As a result of the 1989 census, Greeks across Albania numbered only 58,000 people.

In the 2011 census carried out by the Albanian government, significant restrictions were placed on the choice of nationality for areas outside the so-called "Greek minority zone". As an example, mainly in the areas of Argyrokastro, Agioi Saranta, Delvino, Himara, Koritsa and Premeti where the residents declared their Greek nationality, more often than not employees of the census were writing down the answers to the relevant form with using a pencil...

The results of the parody-census found only about 24,243 Greeks, with only 15,196 having Greek as their first language. These untrue data are being used by the Albanian state to limit the participation of Greeks in public administration.

In the above census, this expression of self-identification was also criminalized. It was specifically stated that if a respondent declared a different national origin than the one written in the official registry catalogs, it would be considered a false statement, which would amount to a fine of 700 Euros.

On the issue of representation on the national elections level, unlike other democratic countries in Europe, there is no quantitative representation of the Greek National Minorities in the Albanian parliament. Based on actual population ratios, there should be a total of at least four seats for the Greeks: Two in the Avlona Region, one in the Region of Argyrokastro and one in the Region of Koritsa.

Today's electoral system actually forces the parties representing the Greek National Minority to participate in the coalition of large Albanian parties in order to have any chance of success.

Also, there is no participation of representatives of the Greek Minority parties in the electoral committees, resulting in a significant alteration of the election results.

At the same time, the Albanian state has divided the single geographical area in which it recognizes the existence of a Greek minority in two different regions, Argyrokastro and Avlona, while the whole region should belong to the Region of Argyrokastro. The result is the limited representation of the Greek National Minorities to each of these Regional Councils.

With the administrative division in force since 2015, arbitrary municipalities were created where provinces and villages with a pure Greek population merged with areas where the Albanian and Muslim elements prevailed, with the annexation of the province of Vranisti in the municipality of Himara being a characteristic example. The aim of these actions is to alter the population of the Greek National Minorities.

Finally, Albania has never respected the Protocol of Corfu it signed on May 17, 1914 with the Great Powers of the time (Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Austro-Hungary), which recognized Autonomy in Northern Epirus.

The Protocol of Corfu is signed by the same countries just 5 months after the signing of the Florence Protocol establishing the Albanian state and identifying its borders. This protocol can be seen as an official addition to the Florence protocol, and this is of particular importance.

Considering similar cases that apply for national minorities in many member states of the OSCE and the European Union, the Greeks of Northern Epirus are entitled to request the establishment of a local parliament and the acquisition of autonomy status at the level of local government, development, education, culture and property.