

MOVEMENT FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF NORTHERN EPIRUS

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

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Working session 3: Democratic institutions, including:

- Democracy at the national, regional and local levels
- Democratic elections

Contact Person: Dimitrios Perdakis

northernepirusmovement@gmail.com

Municipal elections were held in Albania on June 30, 2019. The opposition abstained and did not recognize the process, as did the President of the Albanian Republic, who declared that these elections were not legal and he did not recognize the result. The candidates were from the ruling Socialist Party. In some municipalities the governing party also supported some independent or coalition local people just for the pretexts. But the condemnation of this tactics came from all sides. From abroad as well as from within the country.

What happened that day is a clear attempt by Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to establish a one-party regime.

The OSCE emphasized that these elections were held with little regard to the interests of the electorate, with voter turnout at around 15%.

In the case of the Municipality of Himara, we faced a gross violation of human rights and democracy for the Greek National Minority, with the exclusion of its candidate Freddy Beleris.

In the Municipality of Himara the property of the members of the Greek National Minority is being confiscated, with vile methods that go beyond any legal concept and clear human rights violations.

On the issue of representation at the level of national elections, unlike other European countries, there is no quantitative representation of the Greek National Minority in the Albanian parliament. Based on the actual population ratios there should be at least four seats for the Greeks in total.

The current electoral system forces the parties representing the Greek National Minority to join the coalitions of major Albanian parties to have any chance of success.

Also, there is no provision for the participation of representatives of the Greek Minority parties in the electoral commissions, which results in a significant rigging of the election results especially in the areas where the Greek Minority resides.

At the same time the Albanian state has divided the single geographical area in which it recognizes the existence of a Greek Minority in just two different Regions, Argyrokastro and Avlonas (Vlora). Thus, in many areas the existence of the Greek National Minority is not recognized at all. The census data are far from representing the reality and they are a clear attempt to nullify the presence of the Greek National Minority.

With the administrative division in place since 2015, arbitrarily Municipalities have been created where provinces and villages with a purely Greek population were merged with areas with a predominantly Albanian and Muslim element, with the main case being the annexation of Vranisti at the area of Himara. This is in clear violation of the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities". The purpose of these Albanian actions are to alter the population of the area of the Greek National Minority.

Finally, Albania has never respected the Protocol of Corfu which it signed on May 17th, 1914 with the Great Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary) granting Autonomy to Northern Epirus, the area at the south of Albania where the Greek Minority resides.

Taking into account similar cases that apply to ethnic minorities in many OSCE-member countries and the European Union, Greeks in Northern Epirus are entitled to pursue the establishment of a local parliament and the acquisition of autonomy at self-government, development, education, culture and property level.