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The problems of Turks, living in Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese, related to the right to learn mother tongue and to obtain education

My name is Mustafa Kaymakçı. I am the President of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association. In the previous speeches, I had given information to you about the basic humanity, minority and foundation problems of Turks, living in Rhodes and Kos. The said islands are located in Aegean Sea.

In this presentation, I would like to mention the problems of Turks, living in Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese, related to the right to learn mother tongue and to obtain education.

The education and training problems of the Turks in the islands get stuck between being a member of a Turkish family and being a citizen of Greece. As per Lausanne Treaty, it is not possible to assign teachers from Turkey to the Turkish schools in the Islands as the minority rights have not been recognized for the Dodecanese Turks, in contradistinction to Turks in Western Thrace.

In the last periods of Italian domination, the social and cultural life of Turk / Muslim population in Rhodes and Kos was restricted. When Turkish Muslim community was liberalized with the invasion of England, Ten Turkish Schools in Rhodes and Kos were opened again. In that period, there was an organization called as Union of Turkish Schools.

In the period after domination of Greece on the Islands, up to the year 1972, Turkish education was provided in the schools in Rhodes and Kos. However, the name of Suleymaniye Madrasah, one of the last schools providing Turkish education in Rhodes, was changed as Rhodes 13th City Primary School in 1972 and since then, Turkish education has been prohibited completely. The same condition is also for Kos. Turkish teachers, providing education in the schools, were retired enforcedly.

At present, Turks, living in Rhodes and Kos, obtain education in Greece State Schools; however they are exempt from religion lessons. Obtaining education in state schools, Turkish children can speak Turkish in a very low level today. Furthermore, there is an uncertainty for the graduated children to work in their professions in the Islands.

Up to today, any Turks have not been tasked in any official organization in Rhodes and Kos. Turks can make benefit of secondary and high schools in limited level, and are quite below the Greece average from the point of education. Closing Turkish schools has put Turks in the Islands in a tight spot.

Deprivation of Turks in the Islands from their mother tongue and increase of the education period are factors accelerating the assimilation gradually.

Greek education language has prompted some Turks to protect their identity and cultures against assimilation. Many Turks, rejecting assimilation, have migrated to Turkey from Rhodes and Kos.

As you know, Governments of Republic of Turkey opened Greek Schools in the level of primary, secondary and high school, closed in 1964, in District of Gökçeada in Çanakkale. As association, we are glad due to the opened schools for our Greek-originated Turkish citizens living in Gökçeada, and find proper from the point of execution of a humanity right.

In this regard, we demand Greek authorities to re-open Turkish Schools in Rhodes and Kos.

Briefly, we are considering that it is a humanity problem for Turks, living in the islands, to live with their cultural identities. We do not approve to remove or ignore any cultural identities. In this regard, we would like to state that protection and development of Turkish cultural identity in Rhodes and Kos should be one of the leading duties of Greece as a member of European Union.