



HDIM.NGO/0216/15
29 September 2015

**OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION
IMPLEMENTATION MEETING**
21 September – 2 October 2015
Warsaw – Poland

Working Session XII: Combating hate crimes and ensuring effective protection against discrimination

Contact Persons: Ali Chousein Oglou & Onour Moustafa Achmet
alihuseyinoglu1@gmail.com & onurmustafaahmet@gmail.com & btaytd@otenet.gr

Thank you Ms/Mr Moderator,

Distinguished Delegates,

Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association calls upon the Greek State:

- To respect and promote basic principles of equality and non-discrimination across the country, treat members of the Turkish Minority as equal citizens and promote their ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural characteristics,
- To trial those who are responsible for the hate motivated attacks and crimes against the Turkish Minority and its foundations,
- To start an objective, effective, result-oriented dialogue mechanism with representatives of the Turkish Minority that aims to fight against any kind of actions based on discrimination, inequality and intolerance towards Muslim and Turkish identities in Western Thrace.

Parallel to growing nationalist and extreme nationalist movements across Europe and the Balkans, racism and xenophobia has increased across Greece in recent years. For instance, "Golden Dawn" Party which is known to be the ultra nationalist and xenophobic still stands as the third largest party in Greek Parliament. It is a political party that does not refrain from provocative actions and intimidations targeting members of the Turkish Minority.

From time to time, houses of worships that belong to the Turkish Minority are attacked by extreme nationalist, Islamophobic and racist groups. Unfortunately, perpetrators of these violent acts mostly remain unidentified, which also encourages others to continue their actions against the Turkish Minority.

As the representatives of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, we would like to bring to your kind attention a few unpleasant incidents that recently took place in Western Thrace.

The Minority was deeply distressed to learn that a suspicious fire caused damage to the Mahmut Agha Mosque, located in the "Yenice" neighbourhood of Komotini early in the morning on Friday, April 17, 2015. Furthermore, in the same hours, the trees in the compound of the Alankuyu Masjid (Prayer Room) located a few meters away from the Mahmut Agha Mosque were cut down by unidentified persons. It is noteworthy that these events took place on a symbolically very important day for Muslims, "the celebrations of the birth of Prophet Mohammad". Another noteworthy aspect of the attacks was the location; they took place only a couple of hundred meters from the house of the elected



Mufti of Komotini. Clearly all adding up to a multiple message of intolerance to the Turkish Muslim Minority!

As of 2015, members of the Turkish Minority are still waiting solutions for the issues of discrimination and hate crimes from the Greek public officials. However, Greece refrains from taking effective measures so as to prevent any kind of actions targeting Turkish and Islamic identities of its Minority members in Western Thrace. This actually contributes to strengthening of stereotypes and prolongs the general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards the members of the Muslim Turkish Minority.

Thank you for your attention.