

Denial of Ethnic Identity

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Wakis

turkish

minority of

Problems Regarding Land and

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western

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thrace

Freedom of Expression
and the Press

Destruction of Cultural Heritage

And The World's Largest Enclave

TURKISH MINORITY OF
WESTERN THRACE



FEDERATION OF WESTERN THRACE
TURKS IN EUROPE
1998

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TURKISH MINORITY OF WESTERN THRACE

There are nearly 150,000 ethnic Turks living in Western Thrace in the north-eastern region of Greece. This community constitutes the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace whose status is established by the *Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923*. The obligations assumed by Greece under "Section III" of this Treaty which deal with the protection of minorities, include the following basic rights and liberties:

- *Full and complete protection of life and liberty without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion,*
- *Free exercise of any creed, religion or belief,*
- *Full freedom of movement,*
- *The same civil and political rights as other Greek citizens,*
- *Admission to public employment and offices,*
- *The free use of any language in private relations, in commerce, religion, in the press or in publications of any kind or at public meetings,*
- *The full protection of its religious foundations,*
- *Equal rights to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein,*
- *To take into regard for the Turkish Minority, in so far as this concerns family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of the Minority,*
- *To grant all facilities and authorization to the pious foundations (Wakfs) and the religious and charitable institutions of the Minority.*

Furthermore, these rights conferred to the Minority are recognized as fundamental laws by Greece. No law, no regulation, nor official action should conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor should any law, regulation, nor official action prevail over them.

Thus, according to the Lausanne Peace Treaty, Greece is under the obligation to extend to the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace the same treatment and security as to other citizens of Greece.

Two plain objectives of these oppressive Greek policies are to assimilate and in cases where not possible, to expel members of the Minority which they regard as a threat to the integrity of Greece. Accordingly, the members of the Minority are forced to emigrate from the region, and even to leave the country.

To some extent Greek authorities are successful in this policy. Despite the high population growth rate of the Minority, the Turkish population in the Western Thrace still remains at the same level as in the 1920s. Today, there should have been at least 800.000 Turks in the region instead of the current 150.000.

One instrument of the Greek authorities to reach their aim of reducing in numbers the Turkish population was *article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code*, which stated that "a person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality...." This article, which was based on blatantly racial premises, was abused as a weapon to deprive the ethnic Turks of their citizenship. Over the years, thousands of members of the Minority lost their citizenship due to expulsion under this article. Today, despite the abrogation of the article 19 by the Greek Parliament, the suffering of the thousands of stateless minority members still persists for the abrogation is not retroactive according to the terms of the new legislation.

Another form of repression practiced by Greek authorities is the denial of ethnic identity of the Minority. The Greek government denies the existence of the Turkish Minority within its borders. The Turkish Minority is considered as a religious minority rather than an ethnic or a national one. But, the Minority members regard themselves as "Turks" and demand the right to be called "Turkish". The Greek authorities prohibit the use of the word "Turkish". The minority associations like the "Turkish Teachers Association", "Komotini Turkish Youth Association" were closed down for using the word "Turkish" in their titles and signboards. The Greek courts outlawed the use of the word "Turkish" and in 1988 the Greek High Court affirmed a 1986 decision of the Court of Appeals in this regard with the argument that the use of the word "Turkish" to describe Greek Moslems was endangering public order.

Turkey has no intention of creating a Minority problem for Greece. Turkey only wants to see the Minority to enjoy its rights recognized by international treaties and to live in peace as equal Greek citizens.

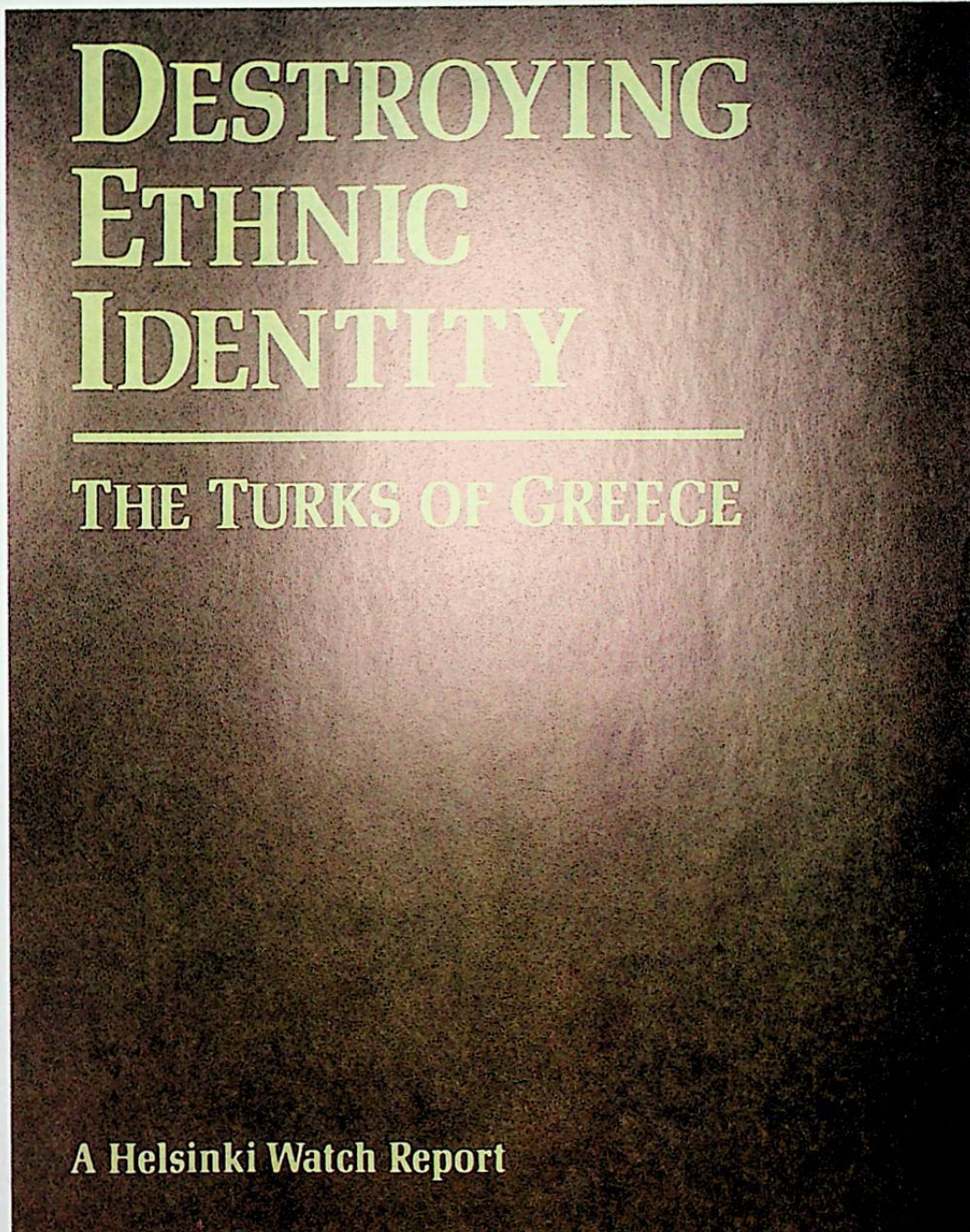
What has happened in practice is very different. Ever since the signing of the Treaty, except during the period between the 1930's and the early 1950's, there have been persistent and massive violations of human rights in Western Thrace. For years, the Greek authorities did not comply with obligations under Lausanne and other international treaties to which Greece is a party. Furthermore, the policies of the Greek authorities are contrary to the principles and values that have inspired the European Union, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter as well as other OSCE documents and declarations on the questions of minorities and even to the Constitution of the Greek State.

In breach of its international obligations and its own constitution, Greece has been pursuing discriminatory policies against the Turkish Minority in every aspect of their lives. The Minority members cannot be sure of their security, cannot perform their professions, cannot obtain driving licenses and cannot even get permission to repair their own houses. The cultural heritage bequeathed to them by their forefathers are being intentionally destroyed.

The repression they face in the field of education and religion particularly affect the lives of the Minority members. The members of the Minority lack the opportunity to educate their children properly. School buildings are in bad condition and it is not allowed to construct new school buildings. The Minority students have to use text books which are physically worn-out and prepared according to a 1951 education program. Qualified teachers are scarce. Minority students have to take their final exams in Greek even for subjects that are taught in Turkish throughout the year. Only a limited number of students are admitted to Minority schools. Thus, nearly 70 per cent of the Minority students have to come to Turkey for education.

The members of the Turkish Minority do not enjoy full freedom of religion. Because the religious institutions such as the office of the "Mufti" (the religious leader of the Turkish - Muslim Minority) and pious foundations "wakfs" are of fundamental importance to the existence of the Minority as a community, they are primary targets for the Greek authorities. They use all possible means to prevent the Minority to elect its mufti and the trustees of its wakfs. With the introduction of new legislation recently, the principle of election has been totally abandoned. By two presidential decrees dated December 25, 1990 and January 3, 1991, the Greek authorities have taken over the authority to nominate and appoint the Mufti and the trustees of the Wakfs.

nation with the exception of the Muslim minority." These statements at the same time reflect, no doubt, the aims of those who make them.

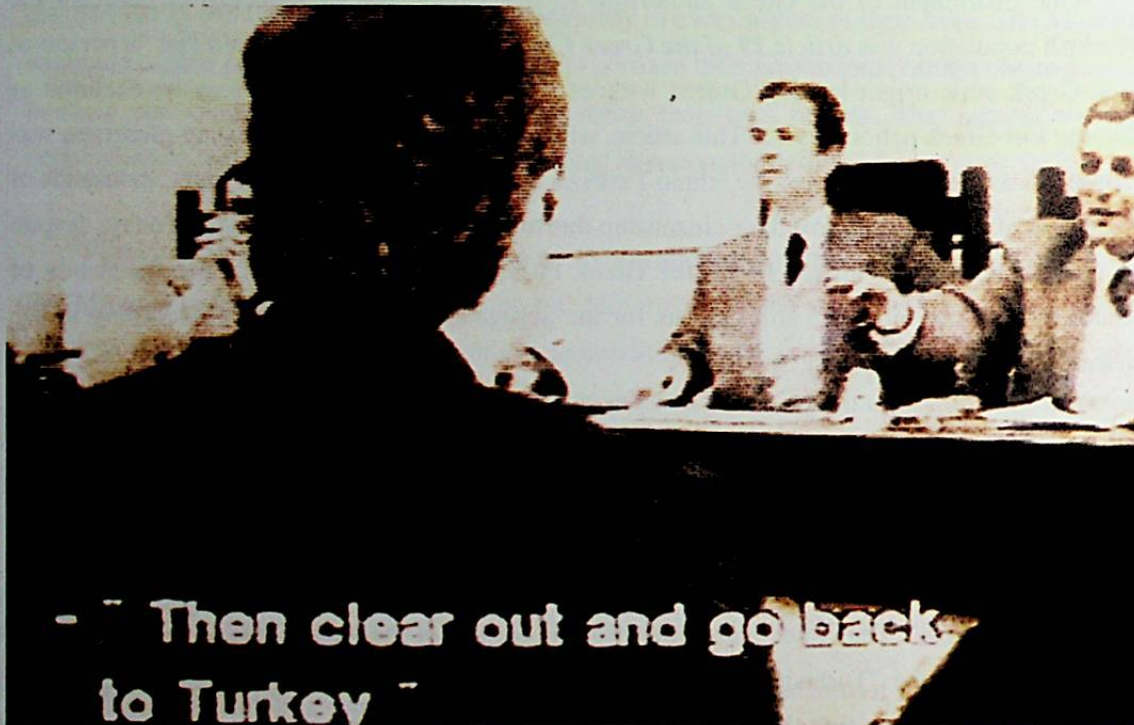


There are plenty of reports issued by the International Human Rights Organizations documenting the persecution of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.

We firmly believe that Greece, in line with its international obligations, should be urged to take measures in order to restore the rights and freedoms of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace.

What is transpiring in Western Thrace is a clear violation of human rights. It is unacceptable and inconceivable that the members of a minority can be subject to such treatment in a country which is a member of the OSCE, Council of Europe and the European Union.

A detailed study of discriminatory treatment meted out to the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace is presented under several headings at the incoming pages.



As the Greek judge refers, in Greece, claiming to be Turkish is a pretext for expulsion from the country.

Denial of Ethnic Identity

The Greek Nation is based on the principle of belonging to the Greek race and Greek Orthodox Church. Those who cannot claim to belong to both suffer rejection. On this subject, it is enough to glance at the speeches of the Greek statesmen about the "homogeneity of the Greek

Lawsuits were filed against the leaders of the Turkish Minority the late Dr. Sadık Ahmet and İbrahim Şerif, during the elections of 1989, for distributing campaign leaflets that referred to the Minority as Turkish.

Many members of the Turkish Minority were prosecuted during local elections on October 16, 1994 for having used the word "Turkish" in their campaign documents.

KINGDOM OF GREECE
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION
OF THRACE

Regist. N. A. 202

Komotini 5-11-1953

To Directory of Interior Affairs.

In spite of the severe orders of the Government communicated to us in T. S. 728/22-4-54 and A 24269/22-12-54 concerning the substitution and use in the future of the terms Turk--Turkish instead of Moslem, there still exists a very conspicuous board with the inscription «Moslem School» in the village of Aratos on the Komotini--Alexandroupolis road.

It should be immediately changed and so should every similar board which might remain in the area of the district of Rodopi.

The prefects to whom this notification is addressed should see to the substitution of any such inscriptions still existing in their prefecture.

Governor - General of Thrace
G. Fessopoulos

Copy to :

The Prefects of : Evros, Xanthi, Cavalla, Drama.

KINGDOM OF GREECE
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION
OF THRACE
DIRECTORY OF INTERIOR

Komotini 28-1-1954.

Reg. N. A. 1043

Urgent

To All Mayors and Presidents of communities of the District of Rodopi.

According to an order issued by the Prime Minister we ask you to use in the future the terms Türk, Turkish, instead of Moslem for every respective case.

Moreover, it should be substituted on the existing inscriptions in your district. For example instead of Moslem school, Moslem community the term Turkish should be used.

Governor-General of Thrace
G. Fessopoulos

Copies to :

1. Dept. of Civil Affairs, Γ. Δ. Θ.
2. To the inspector of Turkish School of Western Thrace.

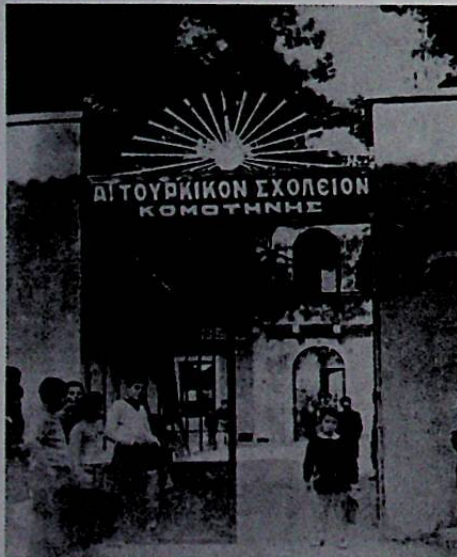
The Greek Government asserted in the years of 1954 and 1955 that the Minority was originated from the Turkish race, but later, changed its mind.

If the Greek Nation is really homogeneous, one can not help but wonder about the destiny of the Albanians, the Muslim Albanians, Vlachs, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Jews as well as the Turks.

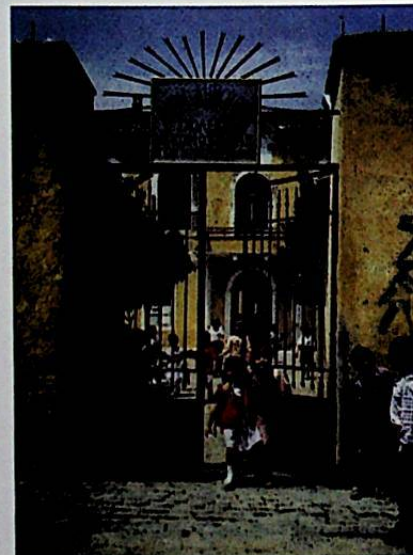
In this respect, it becomes necessary to answer the question of how homogeneity has been achieved in Greek Macedonia while ethnic variety still survives in the Republic of Macedonia.

The very existence of a Turkish Minority is officially denied in Greece. Indeed any allusion to it is punishable by law. The post office refuses to accept written communications that contain any reference to the Turkish identity of the Minority. Government leaders, even the Parliament, turn down petitions on behalf of the Minority when addressed in the name of the "Turkish" Minority.

Greek courts also have outlawed the use of the term 'Turkish Minority'. In 1988, the Greek High Court upheld a 1986 decision by the Court of Appeals of Thrace shutting down the Turkish Teachers Union of Western Thrace. The Court held that the word "Turkish" referred to citizens of Turkey and that the use of the word "Turkish" to describe Greek Moslems endangered public order. This decision led to vigorous protests from the Turkish Minority. As a result of the High Court's decision, most Turkish associations have remained closed.



*The Turkish Primary School (1967)
The sign denoted that,
"It is a Turkish Primary School"*



*The Turkish Primary School (present days)
The new sign of the same school says
"School of Muslims"*

According to a document released in the local "Hronos" newspaper on November 7, 1997, the number of people deprived of their citizenship through the implementation of Article 19 is around **450,000**. The Article, based on racial premises, was employed as a weapon to deprive ethnic Turks of their citizenship. This article was in contradiction with Article 4 of the Greek Constitution which states that "every Greek citizen has the freedom to go abroad and return to his country; travel and settlement within the country cannot be restricted". In addition, it was against the basic rules of the fairness and justice since there was no possibility of appeal of the decision taken by administrative authorities.

The Greek authorities, making use of the article expelled thousands of Greek citizens of Turkish origin. The administrative decision taken by the Greek authorities was published in the Official Gazette while the person concerned was not officially notified of the action taken against him or her. Over the years, many thousands of the members of the Turkish Minority lost their Greek citizenship due to expulsion under Article 19.

Although the exact number is not known, it is definite that thousands of the members of the minority were expelled from citizenship and currently they have neither rights nor guarantees. Claiming that it was offering a remedy to the problems of its former citizens, Greece decided to give them the status of "heimatlos" prior to abrogation of Article 19. There is no consistency in, first expelling the citizens from citizenship then, giving them the status of heimatlos with the assertion of finding a solution to their problems. Because, the status of heimatlos not only lacks the right to property and right to appeal to a court, but also, it is a fact that, there is no obligation for the state to give a passport to a person of heimatlos status or to accept those persons back when they leave the country. Therefore, neither the status of heimatlos, nor the abrogation of Article 19 is a remedy for the suffering of the thousands of stateless minority members.

Educational Problems

The Turkish Minority's problems regarding education continue and are growing steadily more serious. This conflicts not just with the provisions of the *Treaty of Lausanne*, but also with the *1951 Cultural Agreement between Greece and Turkey*, and the *1968 Protocol between Greece and Turkey*. Deprived of proper teachers, educational materials and modern buildings, the children of the Minority face the bleak alternatives of becoming either undereducated second

The methods which Greece uses to destroy the ethnic identity of the minority are described in the report "Destroying Ethnic Identity - The Turks of Greece" published by "Helsinki Watch" in 1990.

The Turkish identity of the minority has been established in several ways. The instruction which was conveyed to the subordinate departments by the General Secretary of Thrace, Fesopulos in 1954, saying that the minority should be called as the "Turkish Minority" must also be mentioned. This notice was repeated one year later in 1955.

Moreover, according to the provisions of the Agreement on the Exchange of Turkish and Greek Populations on January 30, 1923, the people of Greek and Turkish origin who were left out of the exchange procedure were given "Etabli Documents". These documents mentioned their ethnic origin as Greek and Turkish.

At the international level, the document of the League of Nations submitted to the Council on December 23, 1924 and remarked C. 774 on the " Minorities of Turkish Race In Western Thrace", should also be cited.

Deprivation of citizenship

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace constituted 65 % of the population in Western Thrace in 1920 when it was ceded to Greece. Now, it only makes up 35 % of the population, despite their high birth rate. In order to achieve its goal to eradicate the Turkish Minority as an ethnic, religious and cultural entity, Greece arbitrarily expelled thousands of Minority members from citizenship, through application of the former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code. Article 19 was abrogated by the Greek Parliament in June 1998. Yet, in as much as the abrogation is not retroactive in nature, thousands of stateless minority members are still unable to regain their Greek citizenship unlawfully taken away by Greek authorities.

Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code, reads as follows: "A person of non-Greek ethnic origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared as having lost Greek nationality".

Academy of Thessaloniki". These teachers, chosen arbitrarily and educated by the Greek Government, lack basic qualifications and even have difficulty speaking proper Turkish.

Furthermore, in October 1995, despite the minority's unanimous opposition, the Greek Government put into effect the new Education Act targeted at the Minority. The act created new mechanisms to put pressure on the Minority.

Religious Rights - Election of Muftis

Article 11 of the Treaty of Athens (1913) laid down the following provision:

Article XI.- "Each Mufti will be elected by the Moslem electors in their respective jurisdiction areas."

This provision is also repeated in the Third Protocol annexed to the Treaty.

In 1920, Greece put into effect the Law No: 2345 for the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Athens.

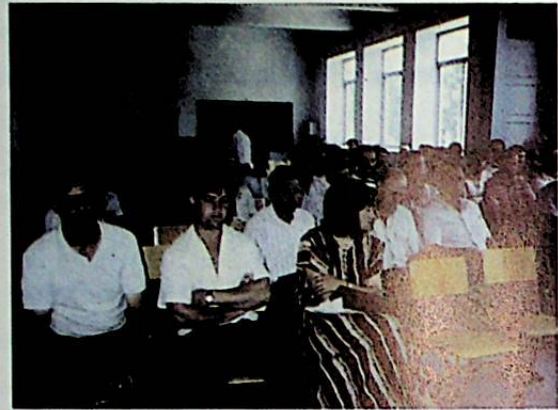
In 1990, in violation of the provisions of the Treaty of Athens, Greece promulgated a Presidential Decree which envisages the abrogation of the Law No: 2345 and the appointment of muftis by the governors of the provinces.

This Decree is a breach of the provisions of both the Treaty of Athens and the Treaty of Lausanne. Article 40 of the Lausanne Treaty states that the persons belonging to the Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Greek (or in the case of Greek Minority in Turkey, Turkish) nationals in the management and control of their religious institutions. While by the "Law on the Organization of the Greek Orthodox Church", No: 590-77, "the Holy Synod of the Greek Church is determined as the primary body in selecting the Metropolitan Bishops who form the Holy Synod itself" and , by Law No: 2456/20, the Jewish Communities are given the right to select their Chief Rabbi and other Rabbis, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace cannot elect its Müfti since 1990.

class citizens of Greece or of going to Turkey for their education and so becoming alienated from their own country and in many cases, losing their citizenship as a result.



The Greek academician determining the fate of the students by drawing lots.



The anxious wait of the parents.

There are numerous problems in the field of education.

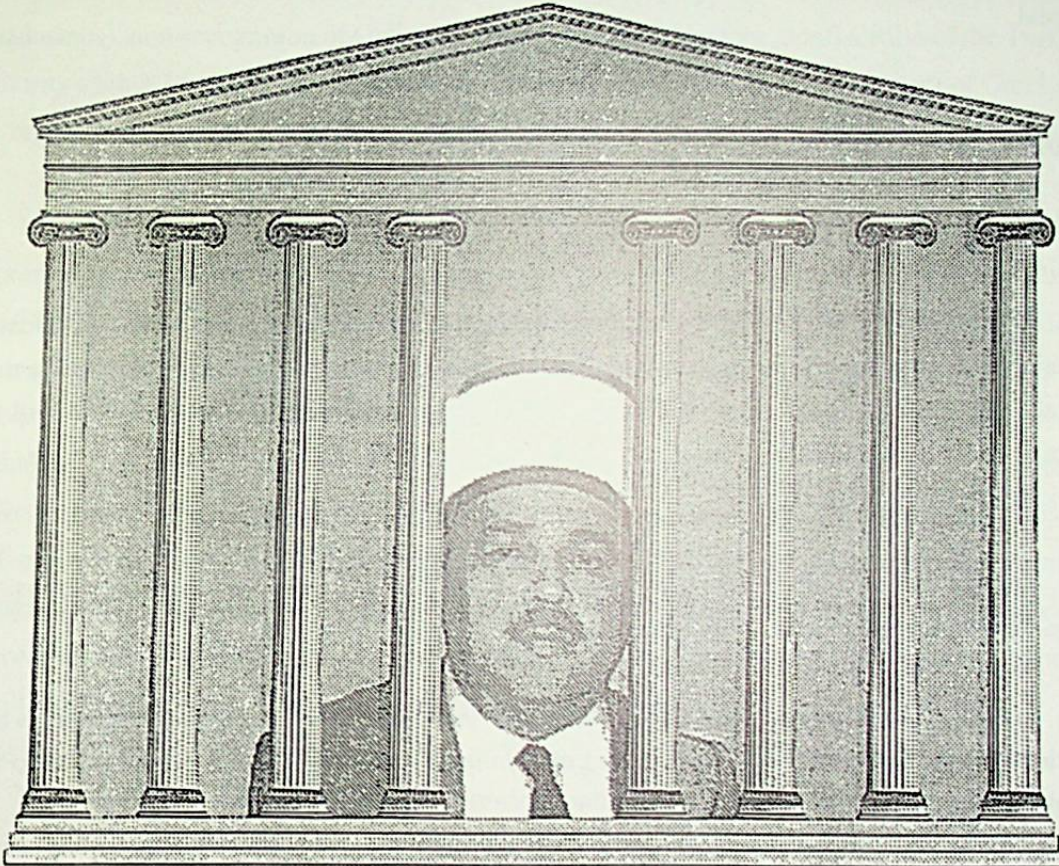
To cite a few:

The ethnic Turkish Minority today can neither establish, nor manage or control its own educational establishments despite the explicit provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne.

By an order of the Minister of Education in 1993, students to enroll in the Minority's two high schools are selected by an arbitrary lottery system. In 1998, in accordance with this regulation, the Celal Bayar High School in Komotini and Muzaffer Salih High School in Xanthi have not been permitted to accept Turkish students exceeding the number of forty. This is a stark indication of how Greece treats its Turkish Minority, since every year about one thousand students graduate from the Minority's primary schools. As stated above, the Treaty of Lausanne gives the Minority the right to establish its own educational institutions. The response of the Turkish Minority to this policy as well as the reactions of some Greek groups have passed unnoticed.

The Minority is also deprived of the right to choose its own teachers. Since 1968, the Greek State has been unilaterally training "minority teachers" in the so called "Special Pedagogical

KEEPING FAITH BEHIND BARS



- Mehmet Emin Aga, spiritual leader of Turkish minority in Western Thrace is victim of religious persecution in Greece.
- Greece sells sunshine to the world but its own citizens are condemned to the darkness of the prison.
- Mehmet Emin Aga, the Mufti of Xanthi, unanimously elected by the Turkish Minority, was imprisoned on January 24th 1995, for giving spiritual solace to his community.
- In spite of protection foreseen in international legal instruments, the Turkish minority in Western Thrace has suffered from significant human rights abuses over the years, as verified by the newly published State Department Report of 1994.
- Let your conscience sit in judgement on these gross abuses of human rights by a country which claim to be a member of the community of civilized nations.

U.S. COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE BALKANS

The manifesto of the U.S. Council for Human Rights after the imprisonment of the elected Mufti of Xanti.



Mehmet Emin Aga, Mufti of Xanti, elected by the Turkish minority of Western Thrace has been tried unfairly many times and imprisoned. In June 1998, his total term of imprisonment has reached the total of seventy-nine months.

Another example of Greek oppression in the religious field is the imprisonment of Mehmet Emin Aga who in 1990 was elected as Mufti of Xanthi by the Turkish Muslim Minority in Western Thrace. The Mufti was sentenced in January 1995 by the Larisa Court of Appeals in Greece to ten months on charges of "usurping the title of Mufti" and he was then sent to Larissa Prison. On similar charges :

In May 1996, sentenced to another twenty months,

On April 3, 1997 sentenced to another twenty months by Larisa Court,

On November 6, 1997 sentenced to twenty-two months by Lamia Court,

On December 11, 1997 sentenced to eight months of imprisonment,

On February 25, 1998, sentenced to fourteen months of imprisonment,

On April 29, 1998, sentenced to 7 months of imprisonment.

On June 24, 1998, he was further sentenced to 14 months of imprisonment for three different cases. As a result, his total imprisonment has now reached to seventy-nine months. Here, it should be underlined that the Amnesty International declared Mr.Aga as "Prisoner of Conscience" in February 24,1998.

proportion has fallen below % 25 today. Behind this change in the ownership of land was the lending of extra-beneficial credits to the citizens of Greek origin to encourage the purchase of real estate from the members of Turkish minority, expropriation, the unification of land (anadasmos), non-recognition of Ottoman land titles and possessions, confiscation of the Turkish Minority's lands by claiming that they were arbitrarily occupied, and the settlement of Greeks in the region brought from the Republics of former Soviet Union in the last years.

Expropriations have played the greatest role in the loss of land ownership. These expropriations were either made by targeting solely Turkish land or % 80-90 of Turkish and only % 10-20 of Greek lands. In this context, in 1978, with the aim of building an industrial site, 4.000 hectares of fertile land most of which was owned by the minority; in 1980, to be used as university zone 3.200 hectares of land belonging to the minority in north-western part of Komotini; and in 1980, 4.300 hectares of land, with the aim of building barracks for the Greek military, were expropriated. Today, while the University of Thessaloniki, the biggest university in Greece rests on 640 hectares, it is very interesting that Dimokritos University in Komotini is designed to be built on 3200 hectares of land which is almost six times greater than the land of University of Thessaloniki. This makes the campus of the Dimokritos University, among those of all world universities, the largest with regard to land size.

With the method of unification and re-distribution of land (anadasmos) which became divided in time and economically less valuable, the land-owners are given new unique pieces of land with equal fertility and quantity. However, as the quality of lands are shown less than their original level, less valuable land is given to the ethnic Turks instead of the fertile land taken from them. Therefore, the ethnic Turks are deprived of land also in terms of quality.

Another practice is either the transfer of pastures of villages to the Treasury or their distribution to the Greek farmers. Although the Ottoman titles are valid in Greece, they are usually not recognized when the Minority is concerned. In 1974, 1800 hectares of land belonging to the Turks in the sub-district of Inhanly was tried to be taken away by a decision of Council of Greek State Properties which claimed that it was the property of the Treasury, although it had an Ottoman title since 1872.

On October 21, 1996, Mr. İbrahim Şerif, Mufti of Komotini elected in 1990 by members of the Turkish Minority, was convicted in Salonica "for false pretense of authority" because he had used the title of Mufti. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment but was released after appeal.

Wakfs

Article 12 of the Treaty of Athens has laid down the following provision:

Article XII. "The statute of the Mazbut, Mülhak and Müstesna Ottoman Wakfs with Idare-i Vahide, Icarateyn and Mukataa within the ceded territories will be respected considering their legal status in Ottoman Law at the time of military occupation. These Wakfs will be administered by the Moslem Community of the ceded territory and the rights of their trustees and beneficiaries will be recognized."

The Law No: 2345 relating to the election of Muftis, also contained the provisions regarding how the Board of Administration of Wakfs should be elected.

In 1967, the military Junta of Greece abolished the wakfs' then existing administrations and replaced them with a new pro-Junta Board of Administrators composed of persons alien to the Turkish Minority.

Since the re-establishment of democracy in Greece, all remnants of the Junta regime has been cleansed. The only exception to this purification is the Junta regulations on the administration of the Wakfs of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. Therefore, since 1967, many Legislative Acts which envisage the appointment of the Board of Administration of Wakfs by the concerned Governors were put into effect but none could be implemented due to strong protest of the Minority.

Problems Regarding Land and Acquisition of Immovable Properties

According to the official records of the Lausanne Peace Conference, while, at the beginning of 1920, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace owned % 84 of the land in Western Thrace, the

envisaged in the Law No: 1366 was also retained in the new law.

For the last 4-5 years, selective permission for the selling of real estate between the minority members or from a person of Greek origin to members of the Turkish minority has been granted. But the number of such cases are few and getting a reply from the authorities takes months.

Restrictions on Political Rights

In the second paragraph of Article 4 of the "Framework Agreement for the Protection of Minorities", which was signed by the members of the Council of Europe including Greece, it is stated that in order to achieve real and full equality between the members of the minority and the majority in all the fields of economic, social, political and cultural life, all parties promise to take necessary measures. However, Greece generally follows a contradictory policy to this provision.

* Greece's intervention in the political life of minority is seen in two ways ; to prevent the reflection of voters' will and to narrow the scope of political actors. Until the last elections in order to prevent the reflection of the will of the voters, the following actions have been taken:

- The prevention from voting of Greek citizens of Turkish ethnic origin who stay in Turkey for higher education or tourism reasons by closing down the borders a few days before the elections.

- Bringing in military troops from outside of the region to vote in Western Thrace in order to outweigh the Minority's votes.

- Making the process of voting more difficult by limiting the number of ballot-boxes especially in the Turkish dominated regions.

- As it is not possible for members of the minority to transfer their registers of birth from their place of birth to place where they live, a member of the minority must travel to his place of birth to vote if he is not residing there. There is no such an obligation for ethnic Greeks.

In accordance with the state policy of leaving the minority without land, which is summarized by examples above, the valley between Barakly and Demircili villages, 11 km north of the city, totally populated by the Turks, was chosen as the refuse dump of Komotini by the Municipal Assembly on April 18, 1996. With this decision, Greece has acted also against the principles and legislation of the European Union. According to Rule No: 91/156 of the EU, although the member states are obliged to notify their suggestions for alternative solutions about refuse, Greece made no notification, knowing it was acting illegally.

While on the one hand, the Turkish minority is being deprived of its land, on the other hand, acquisition of new land was prevented for a long time by Law No: 1366 dated 1938 which declared more than half of Greece's territory, including whole of the Western Thrace, as a border zone and introduced an obligation to get permission from the commission established in the concerned border provinces for the Greek citizens who want to buy and sell immovable in this zone.

On the basis of this law, no permission was granted to the selling of property between the members of the Turkish minority or from people of Greek origin to the minority members for many years.

The European Commission, judging that this law ran counter to EU legislation on free movement of persons, services and capital and the acquisition of property, sued the case before Court of Luxembourg. The Court decided that the Greek legislation about this subject is contrary to Article 52 of the Treaty of Rome.

Following this decision of the Court, a new Law No: 1892, which determined the principles for the buying and selling on the border zones, came into force on July 31, 1990 and the Law No: 1366 was abrogated.

In the new law, instead of "border zone" it was preferred to use the term, "the zones in which permission is required for acquisition of real estate". A provision allowing the citizens of EU member states to buy immovables in these zones, like the Greek citizens and third country citizens of Greek origin, was added. On the other hand, the requirement for permission which was

renewed his application five times between 1982-1990 but he could not get any reply. Finally, he applied to the Council of State. But the result was frustration again, for his file was claimed to have been lost.

In 1990, he decided to try his chance in Komotini. As he could not get a reply again, he applied to the European Commission of Human Rights. Only after his complaint was upheld by the Commission, was he able to open up his pharmacy. But this came only after he lost thirteen years of his life and his profession.

This example is the most salient but not the only one. Other persons with different professions also faced similar fate. Most gave up. Some preferred to migrate to Turkey and to EU countries.

Freedom of Expression and the Press

Even though the Minority is allowed to publish its own newspapers and magazines in Turkish, distribution of the newspapers, magazines and books published in Turkey is not permitted in Western Thrace.

Furthermore, Turkish television and radio broadcasts are jammed by the Greek authorities. The journalists who work for newspapers in the Turkish language are frequently subjected to pressure by the Greek authorities. Many of them were prosecuted for articles they publish, especially for ones criticizing the Greek Government.

Destruction of Cultural Heritage

Despite a common Ottoman historical heritage with Turkey, lasting well-over six centuries, the Greek authorities have no respect for the Turkish epoch architectures in Western Thrace as well as in other regions of Greece.

All of these measures distort the choices of the voters and do not allow the democratic will to be truly expressed.

The great success achieved by "independent" Turkish candidates in the parliamentary elections disturbed Greek policy-makers who brought a % 3 national threshold for the election of independent candidates. Greece, which could not manage to abrogate the racist Article 19 of Greek Citizenship Law for years has become the only country in the world to apply a national threshold for independent candidates.

Though formerly it was not possible to say that these measures were effective in local elections, by regulating the system of administrative division of districts, the regions populated by mainly ethnic Turks were divided and put under administration of districts with ethnic Greek majorities. This also deters possible candidates who want to take part in local administrations.

Greece has adopted a new administrative structure under the name of the "Kapodistrias Plan". According to it, instead of the old structure in the provinces of Xanthi, 6 municipalities and 4 sub-districts and in Rodopi, 9 municipalities and 2 sub-districts are being established. This regulation has been formulated in such a way that, Turkish Minority would dominate the total votes merely in three municipalities despite the fact that the Turkish population provides at least half of the total population in the province. The same situation is seen also in Xanthi where the overwhelming Turkish population is put behind in all local elections.

It is also interesting that, among more than 70 villages populated by Turks, only eight have been transferred to the municipalities where the Turkish Minority permanently constitutes the majority.

The Problems in the Performance of Professions

The situation of Chemist Yüksel Nurioglu is a macabre example. In 1982, he applied to local authorities to open up a pharmacy in Xanthi but his file of application was lost every time. He

Only 13 days after this event, on May 18, 1997, the Hasan Baba Shrine was damaged severely when several pieces of dynamite planted inside the historical monument exploded.

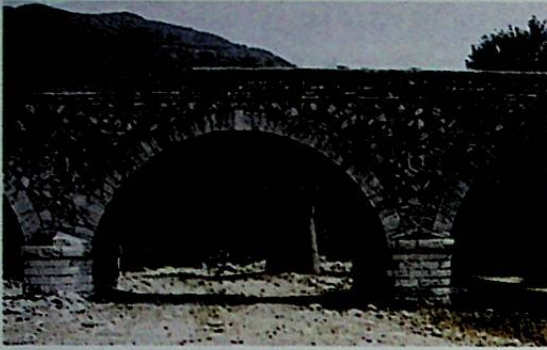
And The World's Largest Enclave

The problems above are even graver for the section of the Turkish Minority who live in the military restricted zone and make up the largest enclave group in the world today. During the turbulent period leading up to the Second World War, the mountainous area of Western Thrace (which borders Bulgaria) and all the northern regions of Greece were put under military control and this was maintained during the Greek Civil War as "a measure taken against the spread of communism".

The establishment of the military restriction zone is stipulated by Greek law (376/1936). The civil war ended 50 years ago, but this restriction was never lifted from the northern third of Western Thrace, extending between the Nestos and Evros rivers, and encompassing parts of the prefectorates of Xanthi, Rodopi and Evros. Even today, after Communism has collapsed, the restricted military zone continues to exist without justification, constituting a bitter anachronism in an era where cooperation reigns and borders are fading.



This photograph reminiscent of a former Communist country was very recently taken in a EU country.



*In Greece, all kinds of cultural values of the Turkish Minority are being destroyed.
Unfortunately, these examples can be multiplied.*

There are many Turkish historical buildings, mosques and monuments in Greece, especially in Western Thrace. Regrettably, the Greek authorities fail to regard these historic monuments as the common heritage of mankind, and are destructive towards them. Most of them are abandoned and intentionally left to decay and disappear. In the region of Alexandropolis, almost all the Turkish-Islamic monuments have been destroyed. The Pospos Shrine in Komotini which dates back to 1390's was demolished in December 1989 by the Greek authorities on the grounds that the Shrine was about to collapse and it was threatening the public safety. Several years have now passed since its demolition, but there is still no serious effort to restore the Shrine.

In February 1997, several attacks were carried out against the Murat Reis Shrine in Rhodes and to the historical tomb stones in its garden. On May 1997, a historical Turkish Bath in a small town called Tirnova in the vicinity of Larissa was badly damaged as a result of a bomb placed inside the building.

The restricted military zone is rigidly secluded from the outer world. Border crossings at Xanthi and Rodopi, between Greece and Bulgaria, remain firmly sealed. Local businessmen regularly appeal for the reopening of these crossings on grounds that it would boost local trade and development. The Greek authorities turn a blind eye to these appeals. Their concern is to prevent any link between the members of the Turkish Minority in Greece and their kinsmen in Bulgaria.

All the inhabitants of the Xanthi, Rodopi and Evros sectors of this restricted military zone are ethnic Turks. They number around 40.000 and live in 118 villages. There is not a single ethnic Greek village in this area. As to the segment of the military zone in the Evros prefectorate, where the local Turks were subjected to vicious policies of forced expatriation and immigration with a view to "cleansing" the land, 7 Turkish villages still continue their existence.

All the roads leading to the restricted military zone are blocked by military checkpoints. In order to go in and out of the restricted military zone, anyone living within the zone has to produce a special identity card at the checkpoints. Anyone living outside the zone and wishing to visit it has to obtain special short-duration permits issued by the authorities in charge.

Even the people who hold those permits, can only travel within an area that has a diameter of 30 kilometers when their homes are taken as center of the said diameter. In case they wish to travel any further, they need to obtain another permission.

Moreover, access to and from the restricted military zone is forbidden from midnight to 5 a.m.

Ethnic Turks inhabiting this huge enclave are not only deprived of their basic right to freely travel from one place to another in their own country, they are also relegated to wretched economic and social conditions even when compared to their kinsmen outside the zone. It is not by chance that the most underdeveloped regions in Greece are within the military restricted zone. Rigid restrictions on farming, forestry and manufacturing induce the locals of the zone live mainly on animal husbandry. Roads, telephones and other means of communication, health services, running water in houses and other basic facilities are either rudimentary or non-existent. As a result, there is a growing tendency among young people to leave the land of their birth and migrate.

Education and religious services are also of especially poor quality in the military restricted zone. The inhabitants of the zone are victims of policies aimed at destroying their Turkish ethnic identity. These policies are pursued by lowering the quality of schools and mosques by staffing them with unqualified teachers and religious men, specially handpicked by the Greek Government. Yet again, this is a clear usurpation of the rights of the Turkish Minority recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne, which stipulates total freedom in the fields of education and religion.

Some important documents on Western Thrace

Exchange of notes between Turkey and Greece concerning the number of teachers to be appointed at the Minority schools in their respective countries.

List of Greek minority schools in Istanbul. (Turkish)

La Convention d'Athènes du 1er Novembre 1913.

Türk-Yunan Barış Andlaşması (Atina Andlaşması) 1-14 Kasım 1913.

Helsinki Watch Report of 1990 - Section on Election of Muftis in Western Thrace.

Conclusion

This brief glance at a very blatant case of the violations of the rights of the Turkish Minority at both collective and individual level ends here. All these violations are taking place in a country which is a member of the OSCE, EU and the Council of Europe. We believe that these violations should be brought to an end. But we note with concern that there is no indication today which could be considered as an improvement of the situation in Western Thrace. Therefore, governments, international organizations, media, institutions and organizations which are directly concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights are called upon to intervene with the case of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. In this respect, Government of Greece should be reminded by all existing means and ways to respect and fulfil its obligations arising from international treaties and commitments.

Denial of Ethnic Identity

Deprivation of Citizenship

Educational Problems

Religious Rights

Election of Muftis

Wakfs

Problems Regarding Land and
Acquisition of Immovable Properties

Restrictions on Political Rights

The Problems in the
Performance of Professions

Freedom of Expression
and the Press

Destruction of Cultural Heritage

And The World's Largest Enclave