



# Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
Member of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

Name of the Organization: Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)

Name of (Main) Contact Person: Mrs. Melek Kırmacı Arık

E-mail: [melek.kirmaci@abtff.org](mailto:melek.kirmaci@abtff.org), [info@abtff.org](mailto:info@abtff.org)

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## Item III: Protection of the existence of and prevention of violence against religious minorities

Mme Chairperson,  
Mme Independent Expert,  
Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

Recalling draft recommendation 17, which reminds all States that they should fully implement the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities with due and dedicated attention to the situation of religious minorities present in the country, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) stresses that Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Declaration and other minority rights standards and instruments. All States should demonstrate their commitment to the protection of minority rights by ensuring that minority issues are consistently integrated into and reflected in governmental policies and practice. Though previous sessions of the forum demonstrated that a significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Declaration, there are many States which have not incorporated the provisions of the Declaration into their domestic legislation.

There are important challenges that the States should confront in promotion and protection of the identity of religious minorities within territories. The Independent Expert on Minority Issues stressed in her last year's speech that racism and xenophobia are on the rise in some countries inspired by a political and social discourse of "them and us" in which minorities, migrants and those with another faith, color, language or culture are portrayed negatively and faced with institutional discrimination or structural and administrative barriers to the enjoyment of their rights, the use of their language or the practice of their religion.<sup>1</sup>

The rise of far-right extremism in Europe is a great concern and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments and governments. Morten Kjaerum, the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, said that there are indicators that the situation in the EU is not improving, on the contrary, in the last few years, there is a continued and renewed violations of fundamental rights of people living in the EU through verbal abuse, physical attacks or murders motivated by prejudice. Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe's Commissioner of Human Rights recently published a comment that Europe has been

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Minority/Pages/Session5OralStatements.aspx>

experiencing a worrying intensification of activities of racist extremist organizations, including political parties and added that the upsurge has even reached the point of “an early form of far right terror”.

The rise of Golden Dawn in Greece, which won 6, 92% of the vote in the national elections of June 2012 and 18 seats in the Greek Parliament, shows how the economic crisis has brought a massive realignment of the Greek electorate away from mainstream parties, giving rise to anti-system and anti-immigrant sentiments. On May 19, 2013, Spokesman for the Golden Dawn Ilias Kasidiaris party told supporters at a rally late, “If a mosque is constructed for Islamist criminals in Greece, a front of 100,000 Greeks headed by Golden Dawn will be created”.<sup>2</sup> The threat came days after the far-right party has given a one-month ultimatum for Muslims to leave Greece or they will be “slaughtered like chickens”.<sup>3</sup> In November 2013, Golden Dawn has pledged to organize mass protests against the construction of a mosque in central Athens after the tender for the project was awarded. Golden Dawn said the awarding of the contract was an “unprecedented provocation” and that it would use its position “within Parliament and mainly through mass, powerful demonstrations” to prevent the mosque being built.<sup>4</sup>

Nils Muiznieks noted that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin. The Golden Dawn supporters made demonstrations in the villages where the Minority lives and chanted slogans against the Minority and Turkey. In Xanthi and Komotini, Golden Dawn supporters with Greek flags in their hands drove by the Turkish villages by motorbikes and cars. Two young minority people were attacked by Golden Dawn supporters and beaten them blatantly, and the perpetrator in the case of Cemali Mülazım was sentenced to 7 months of imprisonment by Xanthi Criminal Court, but the enforcement of the verdict has been deferred for 3 years.<sup>5</sup>

The Golden Dawn has triggered further intolerance and leads to the trivialization of racism in society. Lastly, on 17 September 2013, a 35-year-old rapper Pavlos Fyssas, who defined himself as anti-fascist was stabbed to death by a man who is a member of Golden Dawn. The death of Pavlos Fyssas drew condemnation from across Greece’s political spectrum and from abroad. The Greek Parliament suspended state funding for Golden Dawn, which is accused of criminal activities, and Golden Dawn's leader, Nikolaos Mihaloliakos was arrested.

On 1 November 2013, two members of Greece’s far-right Golden Dawn have been killed and a third wounded in a drive-by shooting outside the party’s offices in an Athens suburb. This has alarmed the authorities, and has raised our fear that this could even turn into a political clash among different groups, which threatens public safety and peace.

Though too late, we welcome government’s efforts in its fight against neo-Nazi Golden Dawn and establishment of anti-racist political units and appointment of a special prosecutor to deal with racist crime and prepare a new anti-racism legislation. All forms of hate crimes constitute serious human rights violations and there is a need to impose on the perpetrators of sentences that are effective, proportionate and appropriate to the offence committed. We welcome the government’s effort in transposing the European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 “on combating certain and in forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law” replace Law 927/1979, although the deadline was 28 November 2010.

We invite the Government of Greece to impose effective penalties or prohibition, if necessary for the extremist activities of political organizations, including Golden Dawn political party. Such politi-

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-neo-nazis-threaten-to-mobilize-against-mosque.aspx?pageID=238&nid=47230>

<sup>3</sup> <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/05/18/greeces-muslims-cite-slaughter-threat/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_ws1\\_1\\_16/11/2013\\_528140](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1_1_16/11/2013_528140)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay\\_02.php?h1\\_id=1364](http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/news/detay_02.php?h1_id=1364)

cal parties where evidence demonstrates that they advocate for and are involved directly or indirectly in acts of racist violence, must be banned and excluded from all state subsidies which are usually provided to political parties.

We underline here draft recommendation 21 that all States including Greece should protect members of minorities against hatred on any grounds, hostility or violence against minorities. This should be reinforced with awareness raising activities and human rights training. We urge Government of Greece to work closely with OSCE/ODIHR in fight against hate crime and hate speech and invite ODIHR to implement the TAHCLE program for police officials as part of its commitment to fight and hate-motivated crimes in Greece. We intend to recall draft recommendation 42 that training, monitoring and oversight mechanisms should be put in place to identify and punish unprofessional performance of law enforcement officials when dealing with religious minorities, in particular in cases of intentional exclusion or harassment and religious or ethnic profiling.