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

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OSCE

High- Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination (including human rights youth education on tolerance and non-discrimination)

Tirana, 21 and 22 May 2013

**Morning Plenary Session 1:** Combating intolerance and discrimination against any person, including racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, in accordance with the existing OSCE commitments

Mr. Moderator,  
Distinguished representatives of delegates,  
And esteemed NGO representatives,

Despite commitments of participating States and their efforts to eradicate racism and intolerance with manifestations of hate crime, crimes motivated by bias or hatred remain a daily reality across the OSCE region. Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, the Director of ODIHR, said that the level of bias-motivated violence across the region remains a cause for serious concern, although a number of steps have been taken by the OSCE and by individual states over the past year<sup>1</sup>. 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 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".

We monitor the rise of far-right extremism in Europe with great concern and the situation is all the more serious as extremist political parties have gained an increased influence in national parliaments and governments. The Jobbik party in Hungary and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece has strengthened their position at their national parliaments and at the European level. We are seriously concerned by the increase in hate crimes against undocumented migrants and other vulnerable groups in Greece. Racist Violence Recording Network headed by UNHCR and the National Commission for Human Rights reported 220 racist attacks between October 2011 and December 2012. On 6 May, a 14-year-old Afghan teenager was attacked in central Athens on by three men who beat him and carved his face with a broken bottle. The injured youth was taken to a free clinic by a group

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odhr/97298>

of his compatriots, where he received 300 stitches on his face alone<sup>2</sup>. Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights noted in his report that the interlocutors said that the recorded numbers does not reflect the real situation, since a large number of victims are actually irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who often abstain from contacting state authorities. Unfortunately, hate crimes in many OSCE participating states are not or under reported in many participating States, due to the fact that many of them do not collect data on hate crimes consistently at national level including Greece.

The Commissioner noted that in addition to migrants, other social groups have also been targeted by hate speech and violence including Muslim minority of Turkish origin. In the period after the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament, the attacks were recorded against the minority by perpetrators linked to Golden Dawn members or supporters. We share the concern expressed by Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights in his report on Greece<sup>3</sup> and U.S. Department of State in Greece 2012 Human Rights Report<sup>4</sup> that no Golden Dawn MP had been charged for hate speech or for his/her links with hate-motivated incidents and crimes.

Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies. OSCE participating States should counter prejudices and misrepresentation in general society, and their efforts should in particular be targeted at the younger generation in order to build up their understanding of the need for tolerance and the importance of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. They should promote educational and awareness-raising programs for combating intolerant discourse, and they should encourage the promotion of tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the Media, including the Internet.

Reaffirming the importance to collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about hate crimes motivated by racism and related discrimination and intolerance to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Participating States should take investigate and full prosecute any act and/or threat of violence motivated by hatred or racism.

In addressing the phenomenon in the OSCE Participating States, raising awareness on racism must be at the root of any coherent strategy to combat hate crimes which are based on racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim propaganda and/or hate based on any grounds. This should be a part of action plan which sets out a coherent framework for combating racism in all OSCE Participating States. Emphasis should be placed on the need to develop new models and multiply their use across the OSCE region, and to promote the value of diversity and pluralism. ODIHR should pay more and continuing attention to hate-motivated incidents and crimes against Muslims in the OSCE area, including Greece and establish a more concrete cooperation mechanism with NGOs in reporting racism and racist hate crimes they face in countries which they live, which indeed needs organization of an OSCE High Level Conference on Intolerance against Muslims.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/ w\\_articles\\_wsite1\\_1\\_14/05/2013\\_498689](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/ w_articles_wsite1_1_14/05/2013_498689)

<sup>3</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?Index=no&command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2270794&SecMode=1&DocId=2002226&Usage=2>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204503.pdf>