



OSCE

Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

19-20 April 2012

Hofburg, Vienna

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## Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport

### The Experience in Western Thrace-Greece

In Greece, there is a general protection for human and minority rights.

There are also few specific anti-racism laws. On the other hand, there is no official body registering anti-racist or hate crimes incidents in Greece.

In the recent years, hatred towards the holy places of the Muslim-Turkish Minority, which are often triggered by local and national media and anti-Turkish/Muslim hysteria of some ultra-nationalist groups, appears to be widespread. The authorities, on the other hand, have not introduced satisfactory measures or precautions, but simply announce investigations and occasionally condemn the hate crimes.

During the last couple of years **WTMUGA** recorded many hate crimes incidents towards Turkish Muslim Minority's holy places or associations. Some of these hate crimes incidents are also indicated in the latest **US International Religious Freedom Report**. These attacks continue also in 2012.



#### Attack to Poshbosh (Poşboş) Muslim Cemetery (16 February 2012)

On Thursday evening, 16 February 2012, unknown people attacked to the Poshbosh neighborhood Muslim cemetery. Around 10 gravestones were damaged. This is the third attack in two years to the same cemetery.

#### Attack to Xanthi Turkish Union (23 March 2012)

On Friday, 23 March 2012 unidentified person or persons attacked Xanthi Turkish Union by writing "ΕΞΕΙ ΟΙ ΤΟΥΡΚΟΙ" (TURKS OUT) on the front door and the walls of the association.





### Attack to Bektashi Tomb in Xanthi (23 March 2012)

The Bektashi Tomb in Xanthi was attacked by unidentified person or persons on 23 March 2012. The perpetrators wrote "ΤΟΥΡΚΟΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΜΟΝΟ ΝΕΚΡΟΣ (Best Turk is dead Turk)" on the walls.



The above examples display very clearly the intolerance against Turkish people in Western Thrace - Greece.

**Another example is state-hand discrimination.** The mayor of Alexandroupolis, Mr Evangelos Lambakis ignores the existence of Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. In his letter to a minority organization which was also sent to local Greek media organizations he stated that "There is no Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, if you (the members of the minority) identify yourselves as Turkish, then you don't have place in Greece"





The next and horrible example is an article in the newspaper Stohos dated 29 March 2012. It is related about an elected member of Kozani regional assembly, Mr. Stefanos Topalidis. According to what is written on the newspaper, Mr. Topalidis said that "Some managed to make soap, but I will do color shampoo with those colors." This is a really unfortunate/unacceptable statement for the sake of "others" in Greece.

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The last point that we would like to address is related about the discrimination in sport. There are several incidents in which many successful young people/children in Western Thrace face with discrimination by trainers based on their ethnicity. For example, a couple of years ago, on trials for selecting competent football players to the Xanthi professional football team, a minority player managed to get into the final four out of 100 contestants. However, after the leading figures of the contests were announced (which included the name of Oztzan Mehmet) the number of cadres was declined to three, leaving the Muslim Turkish football player out.

Our hope and expectations are to stop **Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination** incidents which are harassing the harmony between the Christian and the Muslim societies therefore we hardly recommend the Greek State:

To end all oppressive and discriminative practices targeting the minorities in Greece,

To pay more attention on arresting the perpetrators of these incidents,

And finally, to implement an objective and satisfactory legislation in order to prevent racism, intolerance, and discrimination, as well as hate motivated discourse and to take all necessary precautions to better police and prosecute them.