



**Rodos, İstanköy ve Onikiada Türkleri Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği/ Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association**

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Name of the Organization: Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association

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As the President of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture And Solidarity Association. I would like to stress the main problems of the Turks living in Rhodes and Kos, which place in the Aegean Sea.

The world public opinion has a misconception that the presence of the Turks living in Greece is only limited to the Western Thrace.

In addition to the Turkish population in the Western Thrace, about 6000 Turks live mostly in Rhodes and Kos.

However, the Greek Authorities do not accept the minority status of the Turkish community claiming that the Dodecanese were under the administration of Italy when the Lausanne Treaty was signed in 1923.

There are many problems of the Turks living in Rhodes and Kos. One of them is the religious problems. The Italian administration abolished the Office of Kadı (Religious Judge) by passing an act and accepted the Office of Müfti as the only religious representative of the Turkish Community.

Until 1937 The Italian administration allowed the Turkish and Religion lessons both at the Turkish schools and Madrasahs.

However, because of severe oppression and fascist policies of the Italian administration, the Madrasahs were closed in 1937.

The Turkish Children were allowed to attend the Islam Religion lessons only at schools by the Italian administration.

After the invasion of the islands by the British army, the British administration allowed the Turkish children to attend the Turkish and Islam Religion lessons, too.

After 1947, the Greek administration forced the hodjas whose salaries were paid by Evkafi Mektebiye (school foundation) to be the government officers and started education in Greek in the Turkish schools.

In 1972, the Greek authorities closed all Turkish schools on the islands and prohibited education in Turkish and the Religion lessons.

This caused the immigration of a great number of Turks to Turkey.

Today, the Turkish children who attend the public schools in Greece are exempted from Christian Religion lessons.

However, they are deprived of the right to learn their Religion, Islam

Mufti of the Western Thrace is, in fact, an officer appointed by the Greek Government. At present, the great majority of the Turks in Rhodes do not trust the Mufti as he is isolated) from the Turks and only serves the interests and policies of the Greek Government. In short, the Greek Governments deny the national identity the Turkish community but only accept their religious identity as the Muslim Greek Citizens.

However, there is a paradox in the present policies of the Greek Governments.

Though they define the Turks as the Muslim Greek citizens, interestingly they do not allow them to learn their religion, too.