



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

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**The Basic Humanity and Minority Problems of Turks Living in Rhodes and Kos**

My name is Mustafa Kaymakçı. I am the President of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association. I would like to give brief information to you about the basic humanity and minority problems of Turks, living in Rhodes and Kos. The said islands are located in Aegean Sea.

There is a perception in the world public opinion that the Turk existence in Greece is limited in Western Thrace. In addition to this, there is a Turkish population, whose number is about 6.000 and lives in the Dodecanese, mainly in Rhodes and Kos.

The Islands were given to Greece in 1947 with Paris Treaty. The Greek authorities have not recognized our mentioned cognates in "minority" statue due to the fact that the Dodecanese were under the Italian control when Lausanne Peace Treaty was concluded in 1923.

Since 1965, Greek governments have been restricted the rights of Turkish population gradually. In the year of 1972, the schools, providing education in Turkish, were closed without any reason. Moreover, the chair of mufti has been kept empty in the field of religion. In 1974, an extra-ordinary fear environment was created for Turks and the migration was accelerated.

Greek authorities define them as Greek Muslims. However, they are not Greek Muslims but they are Turks. Living in the Islands, Turks have got to vanishing point. If the assimilation policy of Greece is not "stopped", in a short time, it will be impossible to mention Turks in the Dodecanese.

Turks, living in Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese, have problems such as citizenship, right to learn Turkish, religion and worship, environment of hate and pressure, protection of cultural heritage, being inherited from Ottoman Turks, and associations.

Our demands from Greek authorities are as follow:

Firstly, Greek government should take care of protection, maintenance and restoration for cultural works in Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese.

Secondly, the Turkish identity of our cognates in Rhodes and Kos should be accepted and the pressures on the organizations with cultural identities should be stopped.

Thirdly, Turkish children, living in Rhodes and Kos, should be provided with right to learn Turkish, in other word, right of mother tongue based education and training should be provided.

“Freedom, equality and justice” are concepts, mentioning universal values for all the humanity. These principles are the basic principles of United Nations, European Union and European Council. In this frame, I would like to emphasize that the efforts of Island Turks to protect and sustain the main values of the social and cultural life such as learning and speaking mother tongue and freedom of worship are the universal and basic human rights.

Briefly, we are considering that it is a humanity problem for Turks, living in the islands, to live with their cultural identities. We do not approve to remove or ignore any cultural identities. In this regard, we would like to state that protection and development of Turkish cultural identity in Western Thrace should be one of the leading duties of Greece as a member of European Union.