

**THE
CONSTANTINOPOLITAN
SOCIETY
Est. 1928**

GREEKS EXPATRIATED FROM ISTANBUL
BY TURKISH COERCION

Non-Governmental Organization

117 Dimosthenous Str., GR-176 72 Kallithea
Athens, Greece
Tel.: (+30) 210 951 7072 Fax: (+30) 210 959 8967
e-mail: cpolitan@otenet.gr

OSCE / ODIHR Conference

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting,
Warsaw, 28 September 2009 - 9 October 2009

Tuesday, 29 September 2009
Working session 2: Fundamental freedoms I
Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, issued in May 2009, “the Turkish government imposes significant restrictions on religious freedom for minorities, including state policies and actions that effectively deny non-Muslim communities the right to own and maintain property, to train religious clergy, and to offer religious education, have led to the decline –and in some cases virtual disappearance- of some religious minorities on lands they have inhabited for millennia”.

Turkey, as an OSCE participating State, is urged to meet commitments on religious freedom. In light of these commitments, Turkish authorities are invited to:

- Give the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate the right to officially use the ecclesiastical title of “Ecumenical”, as it is a title that is historically established since the 6th century and globally recognized.
 - Recognize the legal personality of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, so that the latter may enjoy, inter alia, ownership rights and the exercise of property management.
 - Lift all administrative restrictions regarding the election of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Spiritual Leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians throughout the world;
 - Reopen the Halki Greek Orthodox Seminary with the same status it held before 1971 and permit students to enroll from both within and outside Turkey. The Ecumenical Patriarchate should have the right and the authority to call and employ priests from abroad without any residency constraints. Also, the closing of the Seminary makes it almost impossible for Turkish citizens to be trained to accept the highest responsibilities in the Orthodox Church today, thus creating a serious problem for the future of the Patriarchate and of the Church itself.
 - Give permission to the Ecumenical Patriarchate to have its own printing facilities for the publishing of religious editions (books, journals etc)
 - Resolve the question of religious foundations considered as *mazbut* (occupied), which should be returned to their owners. The Law 5737 / 2008 fails to address a number of issues, such as the return of some properties that have been re-sold to a third party after their confiscation
 - Proceed to additional measures in order to deal with other problems that are not addressed by the aforementioned Law (e.g. allow non-Muslim foundations to engage in international activities and abandon the principle of reciprocity between States as regards the implementation of the new Law on Foundations)
 - Lastly, return the churches of Panagyia Kafatiani, Aya Yani and Aya Nikola in Istanbul, as well as their property, which has been illegally and forcibly occupied by the so-called “Turkish Orthodox Patriarchate”. The latter’s involvement in the Ergenekon case deserves further investigation.
-