



1928  
**THE  
CONSTANTINOPOLITAN  
SOCIETY**

GREEKS EXPATRIATED FROM ISTANBUL  
BY TURKISH COERCION

## **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting (SHDM) III on Digital Technologies and Human Rights - Opportunities and Challenges**

**12 - 13 July 2021**

Day 2, Session II: Collection and Use of Personal Data

### **The Greek Minority in Turkey Digital technologies applied by the Turkish government undermine fundamental human rights**

#### **STATEMENT**

We represent the Constantinopolitan Society, a non - governmental / non - profit organization, established in 1928 in Greece by forcibly expatriated members of the Greek minority of Istanbul.

Our intervention will focus on new digital technologies applied by the Turkish government to disseminate misleading news about minorities living in Turkey and undermine fundamental human rights.

According to the European Commission's Turkey 2020 Report "On electronic communications and information and communications technologies, there was no progress in aligning the legislation with the EU *acquis*. The media ownership structure fails to provide the public with unbiased, pluralistic and independent news. The concentration of media outlets in the hands of a few holding groups with strong ties to the government or dependent on public contracts, represents a threat to free and independent media. According to professional media organizations, 90% of Turkish media is now owned by pro-government groups".

Minority schools are still governed by Law No. 5580 on Private Educational Institutions. They are treated as private schools and they are being deprived of state funds, even though it is foreseen by the Treaty of Lausanne. Consequently, their outdated infrastructure does not meet the current requirements and training needs regarding the

use of new technologies and digital tools to improve the educational process. This policy leads to discrimination against minorities and further degradation of the education provided to them.

In 2010, the ECtHR ruled that a mandatory listing of religious affiliation on Turkish identity cards violated the European Convention. Thereafter, the Turkish parliament passed a law removing the requirement from the front side of the cards. The new biometric identity cards, which went into effect on January 2, 2017, do not show the holders' religious identification, although it is a non-required biodata point on the card's microchip. The information on religious affiliation is recorded in the chip and remains visible to authorized public officials as "qualified personal data". Turkey being a secular state, no data on religious affiliation should be collected or filed.

Concerns remain that microchips data could lead to discrimination in the workplace and other places where the microchip can be read.

The Greek Minority as well as other minorities in Turkey remain concerned that a biodata field on religious affiliation could lead to discrimination if the field is left blank or lists a faith other than Islam.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was accused of providing assistance to Fethullah Gülen so that he could stage a coup against Tayyip Erdogan.

In a special 176-page edition of the pro-Islamist Turkish magazine *Gerçek Hayat*, which belongs to the press group of the well-known pro-government newspaper *Yeni Şafak*, leading members of religious minorities in Turkey, including the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, claimed that they collaborated with the Fethullah Gülen movement. The special edition entitled "FETO: Who is the chief terrorist Fethullah Gülen? The 100-year history of the most vicious terrorist organization," which was released on May 4, 2020, targets Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, making unsubstantiated allegations that he was among those who helped Fethullah Gülen to stage the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016.

The Turkish pro-government digital media has repeatedly made similar false allegations against the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew as well as against minorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

OSCE / ODHIR are called upon to urge Turkey -as OSCE participating State- to:

- Align the legislation on electronic communications technologies and information with the EU *acquis*.
- finance minority schools education to benefit from new digital technology infrastructure
- ensure the right to free and independent digital media and abolish any manipulation and censorship on them. \_