



1928

**THE  
CONSTANTINOPOLITAN  
SOCIETY**

GREEKS EXPATRIATED FROM ISTANBUL  
BY TURKISH COERCION

## **Warsaw Human Dimension Conference**

2 October 2023 - 13 October 2023

Thursday, 5 October

Plenary Session III: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I  
Addressing racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance

### **The Greek Minority in Türkiye**

#### **STATEMENT**

My name is Leonidas Koumakis and I represent the Constantinopolitan Society, a civil society organization, established in 1928 in Greece by forcibly expatriated members of the Greek Minority of Istanbul.

We thank the OSCE and the North Macedonia Chairmanship for the opportunity to present our concerns about the actual implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments and identify further action, which may be taken by Türkiye, as participating State, regarding the Greek Minority in this country.

Non-Muslim minorities in Türkiye have suffered numerous injustices, as a result of discriminatory and oppressive state policies. The annihilation of the Greek Minority in Türkiye is the continuation of the Genocide that had systematically exterminated the Greek populations of Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, Imvros, Tenedos and Istanbul through combined means of massacres, mass deportations and atrocities of 1914 - 1922 which resulted in the expulsion of more than 1,300,000 Greeks from their native land. The pogrom of 1955 and the forced expulsions of 1964 in Istanbul and oppressive measures later on stand as a historical affirmation that the permanent goal of every successive Turkish regime is to totally annihilate the Greek Minority in Türkiye. After the Lausanne Treaty (1923), there were still over 130,000 Greeks in Istanbul. Since

then, as a consequence of systematic persecutions by the Turkish State, these policies have led to the dramatic decline of the Greek population of Turkey, from over 100,000 in the 1950's to less than 2,000 at present.

In contrast, the thriving Muslim minority in Greek Thrace numbers around 120,000 members at present, while the two minorities were equal in number at the time the Lausanne Treaty was signed. The numbers speak for themselves.

### **Persisting shortcomings**

The Greek minority in Türkiye continues to suffer numerous injustices, as a result of discriminatory and oppressive policies. The rule of law regarding minorities often is not respected. The Turkish Grand National Assembly has repeatedly rejected the prospect of giving the floor to minority representatives or invite them in parliamentary committee gatherings to share their insight with the rest of the lawmakers.

The property rights of the Greek Minority Foundations continue to be violated. The most serious shortcomings are the following:

The new Law does not provide for the return of “seized/fused foundations” and their properties. The management of them has been assumed by the General Directorate of Foundations(GDF). The provisional article 7 does not allow for the holding of new elections for the 23 seized foundations.

Article 5 provides for the establishment and management of new foundations in accordance with the Turkish Civil Code (TCC). However, TCC in article 101 (4) does not allow the establishment of foundations of non-Muslim minorities. Unfortunately, the new Regulation for elections (June 2022) does not include any provisions concerning the handover of the management of seized/fused foundations, whose management and administration had been taken over.

Finally, the new regulation does not bring minority communities freedom or allow foundations to be run democratically. It extends state control, and sometimes authorizes direct intervention into minority affairs.

### **Educational issues**

Despite some favorable regulations, Greek Minority schools still face a number of procedural difficulties and bureaucratic obstacles.

- Minority schools are still treated as private schools and they are being deprived of state funds, even though it is foreseen by the Lausanne Treaty. 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

- The registration and attendance of European and other nationalities students to Greek minority schools is only permitted as “guest students”, without receiving graduation certificates and, as a consequence, those students are not admitted to universities etc.
- Due to intended bureaucratic, time-consuming procedures, the approval of new schoolbooks is delayed at the expense of the educational requirements

All these measures are leading to the gradual dissolution of the Greek Minority schools protected under the Lausanne Treaty (Articles 40 & 41).

#### **Discriminatory practices - Hate speech**

All members of non-Muslim minorities continue to be treated by the Turkish authorities as “aliens”. As a consequence, the members belonging to the non-Muslim minorities are excluded from posts in public sector and services, the police forces, the army or the judiciary. Hate speech and intimidation directed against Greek Minority remain a serious problem. Attacks or acts of vandalism on minority worship places continued and need to be investigated.

#### **Denial of succession rights**

Turkey continues refusing the succession rights of members of the minority with Greek nationality. The descendants of expatriated Greeks are deprived of their hereditary rights and forced to liquidate or sell their properties. The Turkish administration by means of arbitrary and deliberate actions is expropriating the real estate of the Greek minority.

Türkiye should ensure that Greek citizens are able to fully enjoy their rights over inherited property, and Turkey conform to the relevant rulings of the European Court for Human Rights and implement its own Registry Law.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our association, Constantinopolitan Society, as a civil society organization, calls on Türkiye to:

- protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rules of Law, including property rights of citizens belonging to minorities;
- initiate measures and policies of affirmative action that would guarantee the survival, the well-being and the future of the Greek Minority
- redress violated rights of non-Muslim foundations so as to provide justice. The sized-fused foundation practice, which is against the principles of a democratic State, governed by the rule of Law, must be abandoned immediately. \_

