

RESOLUTION

Friendship, Equality, Peace(FEP) Party, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)

The Assembly of Delegates of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) adopted the following resolution in Hotel des Nordens in Flensburg, Germany, on 10 May 2014:

1830 Protocol and 1881 Treaties and 1913 Athens Treaty and Its Third Protocol which states that, “Each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti”. The Treaty of Lausanne which established the status and the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace under “Section III” grants the Turkish Minority “an equal right to establish manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein”.

In violation of the Athens Treaty, the Presidential Decree of 24 December 1990 adopted a legislative decree which states that muftis must be appointed by Presidential Decree on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. In 1990, Turkish minority has elected its own muftis, though public authorities do not recognize them.

Greece doesn't still recognize the right of the Turkish minority to elect its own religious leaders and rather it appoints muftis on the ground that the muftis have legal powers on civic issues. Law 4115/2013 on the status of Muslim preachers in Western Thrace that replaced an earlier version in 2007(No. 3536/2007) which envisages the appointment of 240 “religious officers” i.e. imams to serve at the mosques in Western Thrace under the auspices of the muftis (appointed) in Komotini, Xanthi and Didymoticho was prepared and adopted on January 16, 2013 by the Greek Parliament.

According to the new legislation, two hundred forty (240) positions of religious officers of the Islamic religion (Quran teachers) are created and the task of the religious officers is the teaching of the Quran in the Mosques of Western Thrace and in public schools of primary and secondary education of Western Thrace, by the relevant decision of the competent director of primary and secondary education.

The choice of religious officers (Quran teachers) will be made by a five-member-Committee consisted of the local Mufti (appointed) as president, whom members of the Turkish Minority do not recognize. The contract is signed by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports and it also determines the area of performance of duties of each religious officer, an area which can include more Mosques. By the decision of the local Mufti (appointed) the Quran teachers can offer their services in the central service of the Muftia(appointed), as assistant administrative personnel within the legal schedule. Law 4115/2013 started in August 2013 and sixty-three (63) religious officers, among whom 3 are university graduates, 14 are graduates of Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki, 22 are high school graduates and 24 of them are graduates of basic compulsory education. With no pedagogical education or training, 23 religious officers started to teach Islam and Quran in Greek in public schools of secondary education in Western Thrace in January 2014 despite strong opposition by members of Turkish minority.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has expressed its disapproval with the legislation which is prepared and adopted without any notice to or consultation with the members of the minority. This legislation would allow the government to expand its control over religion in public schools in the region through the new provision which is made for the teaching of the Quran by appointed Muslim preachers in public schools in Western Thrace in which minority students are enrolled.

- Recalling the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,
- Reaffirming that EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits any discrimination based on any ground such as ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, membership of a national minority,
- Reaffirming that the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities states persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.

- Emphasizing that the 1989 OSCE Vienna Ministerial Council Decision stipulates that freedom of religion or belief includes respect by participating States the right of religious communities, among other things, to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respected requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangements between them and their State,

We call upon the Greek State to:

- Respect the right of the Turkish Minority to elect its own religious leaders,
- Repeal Law 4115/2013 and to respect the right of the Turkish Minority to select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards.
- Guarantee and realize that the members of the Turkish Minority would enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Greek nationals in the management and control of their religious institutions and that they could exercise their religion freely therein.

- Not involve in /intervene to any matters regarding issues of faith, belief, or the organization of a religious group, and it should extricate itself any matter which might be considered internal.

- Establish a mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and the Turkish minority in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for the minority to raise its own voice.