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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Member of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe (ABTTF)

Submission to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on 2019 Annual Report on Hate Crimes – ‘Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region: Incidents and Responses’

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Foreword

1.1. Hate-motivated attacks, crimes and hate speech are part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons belonging to national minorities, religious groups and other marginalized certain individuals and groups. We are fully aware that manifestations of racism and intolerance in the form of discrimination or hate crime against persons belonging to ethnic and/or national, religious minorities and other marginalized groups threaten the security of individuals, communities and societies and may give rise to wider scale conflict and violence that undermine international stability and security.

1.2. The Turkish community in Western Thrace has been a target of hate crime attacks in recent years and persons, institutions and places of worship belonging to the Turkish minority are being attacked by unknown perpetrators. This submission is an overview of incidents motivated by bias and hatred and hate-motivated attacks against Turkish community in Western Thrace in the year 2019. The incidents and attacks documented in this submission represent the actual number of attacks against the Turkish community in the region based on the information gathered from local Turkish newspapers, national media and foreign press.

1.3. In this submission, the Federation of Western Thracian Turks in Europe (ABTTF) reports incidents and attacks including verbal attacks against the Turkish community in Western Thrace¹ from the political field with an exceptional example of hate speech in the media. Our submission includes one attack against a religious historical monument in Arta, outside the region of Western Thrace and records attacks against the kin-state Turkey since it does have a direct effect on the situation of the Turkish community in the region.

The number of recorded attacks and its nature

2.1. Our report documented three hate-motivated attacks against religious places and institutions belonging to the Turkish community in the year 2019. However, five verbal assaults against the Turkish community were recorded in 2019 and another one was recorded in the first four months of 2020. Four attacks against the diplomatic missions of kin-state Turkey in Greece were recorded in 2019.

¹ Greece officially recognizes the Minority on its religious affiliation which is, “Muslim Minority in Thrace”.

Attacks against institutions and religious places/mosques in Western Thrace

3.1. Three attacks were recorded in Western Thrace in the year 2019. One was recorded against a mosque in Xanthi, the second attack was on the outer wall of a Turkish school in Xanthi and the third incident took place in a cemetery in Alexandroupolis.

18 May 2019	<p>Xanthi- An attack was made to the Sünne Mosque in Xanthi on 18 May 2019 by unknown people at midnight. They threw eggs at the mosque's walls and racist slogans were written on the walls. The slogans written on the walls of the mosque stated "PONTIAN, 1919 I DO NOT FORGET" as well as there were expressions containing severe insults against Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of Republic of Turkey.</p> <p>http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/5753</p>
28 May 2019	<p>Alexandroupolis- An attack was made by an unknown assailant or assailants to the Turkish cemetery in Alexandroupolis, one of the three cities in Greece where the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been dwelling. Tombstones were damaged during the attack in which the perpetrators are considered to be the sympathizers of the extreme rightist Golden Dawn Party. The assailants broke some of the tombstones and drew the logo of the Golden Dawn Party on the tombstones with spray paint and wrote "Stohos" the name of a group known to be Turcophobic. Besides, assailants left a following statement "Greece belongs to Greeks" with the logo of the Golden Dawn Party.</p> <p>http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/attack-on-muslim-cemetery-shows-rising-islamophobia-expert-14387</p>
5 December 2019	<p>Xanthi- A phrase ("Pig meat is delicious") was clearly intended to provoke Turkish community with Islamic faith spray-painted on the outer door of Xanthi Minority School.</p> <p>https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6354</p>

Hate speech and verbal attacks against members of the Turkish community and Islam

4.1 Hate speech in politics is part of structural and systematic discrimination against persons with different ethnicity, religion or belief in the Greek political system. Our submission reports five incidents of hate speech against members of the Turkish community including an exceptional example to the hate speech in the media and one other hate speech directly targeted Islam in the political field which might have the potential risk to escalate tensions in general society.

4.2. Five verbal attacks against the Turkish community were recorded in the year 2019. As an exceptional example, our submission includes a hate-motivated attack in the Greek local media about the meeting of two NGO representatives belonging to the Turkish community with the former Greek Prime Minister Georgos Papandreu in their visit to Strasbourg during the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, there were many incidents of

hate-motivated speech/attack in the majority local, regional, national media against persons representing NGOs and religious leaders in the region.

4.4. There was one verbal attack recorded in the first four months of 2020 against the Turkish community.

<p>June 2019</p>	<p>Komotini- The Friendship, Equality and Peace Party (FEP) of the Turkish community in Western Thrace joined the EP elections in 2019 and received overwhelming support in two provinces of Greece's Western Thrace region, in Rhodope and in Xanthi where the Turkish minority mostly lives. The party ranked first in Rhodopi and Xanthi provinces, receiving 38% and 25% of the votes respectively. The party was not able to elect an MEP due to 3% electoral threshold.</p> <p>The statement made after the elections of 2019 for the European Parliament by Çiğdem Asafoglu, the President of the FEP Party, stating that “The FEP is a Turkish party but at the same time it is a formal political party of the Greek state, just founded by members of the Turkish minority” has caused a great reaction in the country. The President has been a target of hate speech and hate-motivated attacks with secret phone calls and messages threatening the President and her family with death.</p> <p>https://www.in.gr/2019/05/28/politics/kommata/komma-tis-agkyras-kai-mia-syzitisi-pou-de-ginetai-gia-ti-meionotita-sti-thraki/</p> <p>http://www.debpartis.org/haberler.php?s=detay&id=5948</p> <p>https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2020/04/western-thrace-contested-space-turks-northeast-greece-200408153925772.html</p>
<p>02 October 2019</p>	<p>Komotini- A news-site called Tourkika Nea published a news with the title “Georgos Papandreou and the spies of Turkish Interests” by using the photo of the Turkish delegation from Western Thrace in their visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The news article wrote, “In the photo above, we see Pervin Hayrullah and Ozan Ahmetoglu (Both know as gears of Turkish poicies in Thrace) with George Papandreou. Papandreou is not a TV person (celebrity) to have photo with whoever smiles. First, he should ask who these people are. No so much naivety!”. After legal complaint by the delegation of Western Thrace Turks, the site changed the headline and the content.</p> <p>https://tourkikanea.gr/thraki/gap-14/</p>
<p>04 November 2019</p>	<p>Athens- Speaking to THEMA 104.6, Charalampos Athanasiou, New Democracy Party MP from Lesbos expressed his concern about the dimensions of the increased influx of immigrants and targeted the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is an autochthonous minority in Greece and said, “Lesbos will soon become second Rodopi if this situation continues and one third of the island’s population will be Muslim in 15-20 years”. Athanasiou deems the members of the Turkish community in Western Thrace who are Greek citizens as a ‘threat’ and ‘danger’.</p> <p>https://www.ant1news.gr/eidiseis/article/550788/xaralampos-athanasioy-fobamai-oti-i-lesbos-tha-ginei-mia-new-rodopi</p> <p>https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6384</p>

06 November 2019	Athens- Evripidis Stilianidis, PM of New Democracy for Rhodope follows a nationalist rhetoric, calling himself “the only Christian PM of Rhodope” since 2010. He has regular statements of “dangers” of having 3 Muslims (Turkish) MPs from the region of Western Thrace in the Greek parliament. https://rodopinews.gr/58417
09 December 2019	Athens- Kyriakos Velopoulos, Head of the far-right Greek Solution Party used anti-Islamic phrases during a speech in the Parliament session on 5 December 2019. These could be summarised as: “Islam is not a religion; it is a political ideolog with religious content that envisages out-of-date practices and is incompatible with Western-type life”. https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6360
23 March 2020	Athens- The coronavirus, which affects Europe and the whole world, has also affected Greece. On 23 March 2020, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis declared a nationwide curfew to prevent the coronavirus. Despite all the measures which have been put in place, the number of cases in Greece as of 26 March rose to 821 and the number of people who lost their lives due to the virus to 23. On 23 March 2020, the village of Echinós (Şahin) in Xanthi was quarantined as the first application in the country after a 72-year-old man from the Turkish community in Western Thrace died. After the quarantine of the village of Echinós, Kyriakos Velopoulos, head of the far-right Greek Solution Party, said on Twitter, ‘Echinós is in Quarantine!!! Ankara's spies live there, coming in and out of Turkey! Think about what it is in Erdoğan’s Turkey!’ https://twitter.com/velopky https://www.abttf.org/arama-detail.php?id=6165 https://gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/6804

Attacks against kin-state Turkey

5.1. Four attacks against the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki were recorded in 2019. Two of these four attacks targeted the car belonging to the Turkish consulate employee and another Turkish national in Thessaloniki.

03 March 2019	Thessaloniki- Dozens of masked assailants attacked the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki around 2:40 AM on Sunday, throwing molotov cocktails and stones. Some 50 masked people, described as “anarchists”, attacked police guarding the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki with Molotov cocktails. Police responded with tear gas and stun grenades and gave chase. The perpetrators fled onto the grounds of nearby Aristotle University, which is off-limits to police officers. https://www.amwenglish.com/articles/attacks-against-police-department-and-turkish-consulate-ingreece/?fbclid=IwAR06VyBMNhHMULmabjzffGUIoydrVauecFE
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10 June 2019	<p>Thessaloniki- The cars of two Turkish nationals in Greece were set on fire early Monday. The car of Serkan Burali, commercial attache of the Turkish consulate, was burned in front of his house. Arsonists targeted another car of a Turkish national working for an international organization. Firefighters rushed to the scene but the vehicles were completely damaged. No casualties were reported. The Greek police and fire department have launched an investigation into the attacks.</p> <p>https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/greece-arsonists-attack-turkish-diplomats-vehicles/1500347</p>
17 October 2019	<p>Thessaloniki- The Turkish Consulate building and the Atatürk House in Thessaloniki were attacked by a group of demonstrators. Police have detained 12 people who evaded security and staged an unlawful protest against Turkey's operation in Syria at the birthplace of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic.</p> <p>The demonstrators entered the grounds of the Atatürk House in the northern city of Thessaloniki and unfurled a banner before being detained by guards and police. The museum grounds are shared by the Turkish Consulate.</p> <p>https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-protesters-attack-ataturk-house-in-thessaloniki-147640</p>
23 December 2019	<p>Thessaloniki- Unknown assailants set the car of a Turkish consulate employee ablaze early on Monday in Thessaloniki. The incident took place around 3:30 am. Firefighters put out the fire, which caused damage to the back of the car. The Thessaloniki Police Department has launched an investigation into the incident.</p> <p>https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-slams-attack-on-consulate-worker-s-car-in-greece/1682247</p>

Anti-Islamic attacks against religious places outside Western Thrace

6.1. Negative portrayals of Muslims, stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims create a general climate of mistrust, fear and hostility towards Muslim communities in the territories they are used to live in. This is a serious challenge for many OSCE participating States that they have to manage in their multicultural and multi-faith societies.

6.2. Our submission includes one attack in Arta, a city in north-western Greece, which is part of Epirus region, against Islam outside the region of Western Thrace and Athens where a great majority of Muslims with migrant background live in as an example of growing intolerance and hatred towards Muslims and Islamic places in the whole territory.

20 March 2019	<p>Arta- Anti-Islamic slogans were spray-painted on the entrance and the walls of Faik Pasha Mosque in the city of Arta. A Turkish tourist agent was in Arta and videotaped an Imaret, an Ottoman building (a public kitchen, as it was called, for the poor to eat, but also to pray in the mosque it included or even to stay in) belonged to Faik Pasha Mosque. According to the video, slogans that insult Islam are written on the</p>
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abandoned walls of the Ottoman building.

https://odatv.com/vid_video.php?id=8G1GA

https://www.ethnos.gr/ellada/28012_toyrkos-apo-tin-artana-ti-kanoy-n-oi-ellines-kata-tis-othomanikis-mas-klironomias