

RESOLUTION 2016-07

Resolution on the situation of the Turkish community in Rhodes and Kos

submitted by the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association

At the Assembly of Delegates in Wrocław / Breslau, on 21 May 2016, the Delegates of the Member Organisations of the Federal Union of European Nationalities adopted the following resolution:

In view of the fact that, along with the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, in Greece, there is also a Turkish minority of 6,000 people living in the Dodecanese, based mainly in Rhodes and Kos;

Taking into consideration that the Greek authorities do not recognise the minority rights of the Turkish community in Rhodes and Kos on grounds that they were under Italian rule when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed in 1923;

Bearing in mind that the ethnic identity of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos is denied by Greece, which calls the minority as “Greek Muslims” and that the Greek authorities also interfere with the right of the Turkish minority to freedom of assembly and association by not registering the associations which bear the word “Turk/Turkish” in their titles;

Noting that the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos cannot enjoy the right to learn their mother tongue since 3 bilingual schools, including the “Suleymaniye Madrasa” in Rhodes and 2 bilingual schools in Kos were closed down in 1972 by the Greek authorities;

Taking into consideration that the children of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos, who are identified as “Greek Muslims” by the authorities are paradoxically not given the option to have classes on Islam at schools although they are exempted from the classes on Christianity;

Given that the right of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos to enjoy freedom of religion remains limited and their right to choose their religious preachers is denied;

Due to the fact that the Greek Government supervises the administration of waqfs (foundations) belonging to the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos since 1967; with many waqf properties being managed by an administrator assigned by Greek authorities/waqf properties being sold despite the fact that it is forbidden to sell the waqf properties;

Recognizing the need for the Greek authorities to take further measures to ensure that their historical monuments/mosques are protected and renovated to their original state;

Emphasising that some 60 thousand members of the Turkish minority in Greece, including those living in the Dodecanese, were stripped of their Greek nationality and accordingly of their EU citizenship under Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code, and that the repeal of this article in 1998, which had applied only to Greek nationals of non-Greek ethnic origin, did not pave the way for those who lost their nationality to automatically regain their citizenship;

Given the fact that that the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos occasionally becomes the target of hate speech, and is subject to increasing pressure by authorities when they engage in efforts to protect their culture and identity;

The Assembly invites the Greek authorities to:

1. Fulfil its responsibilities in the field of human rights as a member of the European Union, as stated in its Constitution and in line with international conventions such as the European Convention on Human Rights and other human rights documents;
2. Acknowledge the right of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos to express their ethnic identity and the right of freedom of assembly and association and take necessary measures to protect their ethnic identity, culture and religion;
3. Provide the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos with the right to education in their mother-tongue, by allowing the opening of bilingual private schools in Turkish and Greek as well as the re-opening of the "Suleymaniye Madrasa";
4. Respect the religious autonomy of the Turkish minority in Greece in Rhodes and Kos and acknowledge their right to choose their religious preachers;
5. Allow the members of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos to elect the boards of their waqfs and ensure their full control and supervision over their waqfs/waqf properties;
6. Take the relevant steps to protect and renovate their cultural heritage and monuments;
7. Restore the Greek citizenship of the members of the Turkish minority in Greece, including those in the Dodecanese, who had been stripped of their Greek citizenship under the now-repealed Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code;
8. Engage in dialogue with the representatives of the Turkish minority in Rhodes and Kos to settle their long-standing problems.