

OSCE

Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2024
30 September to 11 October 2024

Contribution of
ECUMENICAL FEDERATION OF CONSTANTINOPOLITANS
Plenary Session 9: Tolerance and non-discrimination II
Wednesday, 9 October 10:00 – 13:00

Assuming the solution to the so-called “minority problem” is not their banishment, it is important to emphasize the necessity for remedy and reparations, in case of violations of minority rights that lead to the massive expatriation of its members; such measures are needed to preserve the existence of a minority in its native land and prevent its disappearance. This is the case of the Greek-Orthodox minority of Istanbul, which in 1950 consisted of 120.000 members while today it numbers only 1.000 persons, the majority being elders of more than 60 years of age. The members of the Minority – irrespective of their registration as citizens of Türkiye or Greece – all enjoyed the status of Etablis, having the right of permanent living in Türkiye, according to the international Treaty of Lausanne (1923). The grave erosion of the Minority’s population is the result of the mass scale Pogrom of 6-7 September 1955, of the deportation, during the years 1964-65, of its Greek citizenship members with their family members, most of them citizens of Türkiye, and a long-term discriminatory policy orchestrated and implemented by the Special Minority Committee (Azinlik Taali Komisyonu). This Committee had powers superseding of the administrative, legislative and judicial powers. The present Government of R.T. which was elected in 2003 changed to a significant degree the attitude towards non-Muslim minorities and abolished the said Committee, in 2004. However, the damage occurred to the G.O. minority in the past, led its population that lives in their native city to drop extremely. This means that in five years the Minority in Istanbul will be less than 500 persons.

EFC, starting from 2010, entered to dialogue with authorities of Turkey to find means to prevent the complete disappearance of the Minority. The only feasible way is the repatriation of young members of the expatriate Minority, living today in various European and American countries. Even though EFC has submitted several proposals to the authorities of R.T., unfortunately no progress has been achieved so far. The main obstacle to remove is the difficulty that the young members of the minority face in obtaining the Turkish citizenship because of the restrictions of the law and the gap of one generation, created when 50.000 members of the Minority were stripped from their citizenship during 1960-2000.

We invite the authorities of R.T. to support the repatriation of young members of the Minority to Istanbul.

We also invite the authorities of Republic of Türkiye to honor the recent decision of the Constitutional Court of Türkiye on the necessity elections must take place in the major Greek-Orthodox Balikli Foundation after 33 years against the Laws of Türkiye.