



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
19 October 2021

Original: English

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-eighth session

13 September–1 October 2021

Agenda item 9

### **Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance: follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

## **Note verbale dated 12 October 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva provides herewith the comments of the Government of Greece with regard to the remarks made by Turkey during the general debate under agenda item 9 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to circulate the present note verbale and the annex thereto\* as a document of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 9.

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\* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Annex to the note verbale dated 12 October 2021 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

### **Statement by the Permanent Representation of Greece to the United Office at Geneva on the Muslim Minority in Thrace**

In light of recent remarks by the Permanent Representation of Turkey to the United Office at Geneva regarding, among others, the Muslim Minority in Thrace and the respective policy of the Greek State, the Permanent Representation of Greece to the United Office at Geneva would like to clarify the following:

**The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne established the status of the Muslim Minority in Thrace**, Greece, identifying it on the basis of the common denominator among its members, i.e. the Muslim faith, without reference to their ethnic origin (Turkish, Pomak and Roma). Each of these groups has its own language, as well as distinct heritage and cultural traditions. Its members are Greek citizens, who enjoy a wide range of minority rights, in addition to the rights and freedoms which are guaranteed to all Greek citizens without any discrimination. The 1923 Peace Treaty of Lausanne is there for everyone to read and draw his/her conclusions; its provisions are clear and cannot be changed or distorted just because some party feels it no longer serves its agenda and narrative.

Members of the Muslim Minority in Thrace, like all individuals living in Greece, are free to declare their origin, speak their language, exercise their religion and observe their particular customs and traditions. What cannot be accepted is the **attempt to impose a sole collective identity** on all of its members; a sole collective identity other than their religious one, which is firmly established by the Treaty of Lausanne.

The Greek State has, systematically and consistently, **adopted several advantageous measures to the benefit of the Greek citizens who are members of the Muslim Minority in Thrace**. Persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace actively participate in all aspects of everyday public, civil and political life at the regional as well as the national level.

The Greek authorities have long used the **case-law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)** as a benchmark for State practice. Turkey lecturing Greece on the issue is somehow ironic. According to the official data of ECtHR, Turkey has been historically figuring prominently on the top of the list in terms of violation of the European Convention of Human Rights (3742 judgments in the last 60 years).

When it comes to the **selection of the Muslim religious leaders**, there is no single method internationally for this selection. It is to be noted that Turkey appoints the Muftis as well. Regarding the three (3) Muftis of the Muslim Minority in Thrace, according to Greek legislation, they are selected through an open and all-inclusive process from a pool of notable and esteemed teachers of Islam, members of the Minority, and subsequently nominated to the Mufti Offices by the State. The persons appointed as Muftis are obviously members of the Minority and serve the Minority; thus, nothing happens against the will or the knowledge of the Minority.

Last but not least, it is to be stressed that the Muslim Minority in Thrace numbers over 120.000 members, who enjoy all the benefits and rights of European citizens. On the contrary, the Greek Minority in Turkey, numbering at the time of the signing of Lausanne more than 120.000 members, has dramatically decreased, comprising nowadays of less than 3.000 members. Those numbers are a fitting testament to the **degree of compliance by Greece and Turkey with the letter and spirit of Lausanne**.