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**Working Group of Turkic Minorities in FUEN**

### **FUEN-member Turkish associations raise their problems at OSCE meeting**

The representatives of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Meskhetian Turks and Crimean Tatars who are members of FUEN (Federal Union of European Nations) attended the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Implementation Meeting organised during 19-30 September 2016 in Warsaw. FUEN Legal Adviser and FUEN Brussels Office Manager Frank de Boer also participated to the meeting for two weeks where civil society representatives raised the problems of discriminatory practices faced in their homelands.



ABTTF (Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe) and WTMUGA (Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association) represented the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the meeting while Meskhetian Turks were represented by International Society of Meskhetian Turks VATAN and the Crimean Tatars by the Crimean Tatar Society.

### **Western Thrace Turks strongly criticised Greek minority policies**

Representatives of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace criticised the non-recognition of ethnic Turkish identity by Greece in their interventions at different sessions and further explained the substantial problems they face in the fields of education and religion. The representatives drew attention to the rise of hate speeches in the country and questioned the constant failure of the state in finding the perpetrators of hate-motivated crimes against the minority.



The fundamental problems that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace face regarding the issue of foundations were highlighted during a side event organised by FUEN member organization WTMUGA in partnership with the Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria where the issues confronted by Western Thrace Turks and the Turks in Bulgaria on religious freedom, mufti office and foundations were put on the table.

### **Meskhetian Turks underlined the fact that repatriation process to Ahıska didn't work**

FUEN-member International Society of Meskhetian Turks VATAN's press secretary Ansar Usmanov declared at OSCE meeting that Georgia who is responsible for finalising the



repatriation process of Meskhetian Turks has not fulfilled its obligations and that there were many problems with repatriation process. Usmanov clarified their demands of amending the regulations in order to succeed completely in repatriation process.

The Council of Meskhetian-Turk American Associations who is the umbrella organisation of Meskhetian Turks in the USA delivered a presentation at the meeting where they raised the challenges faced by Meskhetian Turks living in Russia.



### **The problems of Crimean Tatars were at the top of the OSCE agenda**

The invasion of Crimea by Russia and the process faced afterwards have many times been on the table during most of the OSCE sessions. State officials and NGO representatives severely criticised the unlawful practices committed against the local people in Crimea following the invasion.

Refat Çubarov who used to be the president of Crimean Tatar National Assembly, which was the highest representative body of Crimean Tatars, before it was banned by Russia on the grounds that it was a radical institution attended the meeting this time as a Ukrainian deputy and delivered his official speech where he provided first-hand information about the problems of Crimean Tatars.

Crimean Tatars were represented by many civil society organisations at OSCE and organised two side events. Two lawyers from Crimean Tatars, namely Emil Kurbedinov and Edem Samedlâyevev informed about the injustice and arbitrary detentions and arrests towards Crimean Tatars after Russian invasion. The coordinator of Crimean Tatar Society Elvin Kadyrov delivered a speech during a side event where two members of the Crimean Tatar National Assembly, Eskender Bariyev ve Gayana Yüksel talked about the latest situation in Crimea including the freedom of speech and media while listing their proposals aimed at increasing international support for Crimean Tatars.

