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Working Group of Turkic Minorities in FUEN

**The masjid belonging to an association of Western Thrace Turks in Imathia-Veria was closed
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ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu: "Although it is clearly written in the statute, the requirement for a separate work permit for the masjid is typical of Greece in the sense that it put obstacles in order to intervene in the freedom of religion and belief"



The masjid inside Imathia (Veria) Muslims Education, Culture and Sports Association, an association belonging to the Western Thrace Turks, who immigrated to Alexandria (Gida), a district in Veria-Imathia (Karaferre) province of Greece, was closed on grounds that that it had no work permit for the masjid.

According to the minority newspaper *Gündem*, the President of the association Hüseyin Hüseyinođlu explained that although the association operated in accordance with its statute in which it is clearly noted that the association could conduct Quran religious courses and perform religious activities, the police ordered them to close down the masjid inside the association until it gets a separate work permit for the masjid from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs.

Following the amendment in the statute of Imathia (Veria) Muslims Education, Culture and Sports Association which was which was established in Gide, a district of Imathia-Vera where approximately one thousand Western Thrace Turks live, the masjid inside the association is used for religious prayers and Quran religious courses since 2015.

The closure of the masjid, where approximately 30 students were having Quran courses, had gained a strong reaction from Western Thrace Turks living in the district. The president of the association, Hüseyin Hüseyinođlu noted that would meet with the deputies and local authorities in the following days and would try to find a solution to the problem.

The President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Halit Habip Ođlu made the following explanation on the issue: “Despite a clear reference in the statute of the association which is operating legally, the ban of Quran courses and religious prayers in the masjid of the association is a clear intervention in the freedom of religion and belief of those persons living in the district. There are thousands of mosques which enjoy the status as non-governmental organizations and operate legally in many countries of Europe. Thus, religious prayers and practices are freely done in these mosques. On the other hand, the requirement for a separate work permit for a masjid is typical in the sense that Greece puts various obstacles and restrictions in order to intervene in the freedom of religion and belief in the country. While condemning this intervention in freedom of religion and belief, we want from the Greek authorities to allow them to re-open the masjid within the association and not to intervene in the religious prayers and activities here”.

*Photo: www.gundemgazetesi.com