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Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities

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ECUMENICAL FEDERATION OF CONSTANTINOPOLITANS

Waiting of Remedy and Reparations towards the Greek-Orthodox Community of the Republic of Turkey at the 50th Anniversary of their Massive Deportation

The Greek-Orthodox Minority of the Republic of Turkey is the only case, in postwar Europe, which was forced to live till today as an expatriated Community outside of their native fatherland to an overwhelming percentage up to 98%. This situation came out as a result of a long standing policy of violations of minority and human rights implemented on various stages during the era 1923-2003. The international legal status of this Community was established by the international Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which incidentally is the founding convention for the international recognition of Republic of Turkey. According to the Annex of this Treaty, the convention of the Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey, the members of the Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul - independent of their citizenship status - were exempted of Population Exchange. The population of this Community according to the first census carried out in Republic of Turkey in 1927 was 125.000 members while today the members of this Community living in their native lands – Istanbul and the islands of Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos) is less than 2.200 persons.

The worst volations of this state policy resulting to this massive expatriation were: mobilization of Minority men aged 18-45 into work battalion camps during the years 1941-42; the implementation of a capital tax towards Minorities aimed at their economical destruction during 1942-44; the massive scale of pogrom in Istanbul on the night of 6-7/9/1955 against the Community members and institutions. The date of 16 March 1964 marks one of the darkest moments in the history of the Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul, when the time Government of the Republic of Turkey implemented a massive deportation and forced to expatriation members which have been exempted from the Exchange of Population Agreement of 1923. All these anti-minority measures were related to the retreat of democracy in Turkey and has to do very little with the strained relations between the states of Greece and Turkey.

Although after the year 2003 the present government of Turkey has taken some measures of abandoning anti minority policies still several administrative measures of the previous era exists as it has been recognized by the Prime Minister Circular of 15 May 2010, while the remedy measures have has been very limited. Still the State doesn't recognize the legal status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. During the last 3 years the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans submitted specific proposals to present government of Turkey, requesting remedy and reparation towards the Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul taking into account the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 60/147. These measures include:

- Support actively their repatriation by Turkey and provide guarantees of not to repeat of past injustices. Along this line the specific proposals of the Federation to formulate a repatriation programme, including such as opening research centres in Istanbul, remained unanswered.
- The reinstitution of their citizenship status.
- Take measures of remedy and reparations towards the institutional and private property ownership rights without limitations.
- Respect the religious, educational and cultural rights and specifically open the Heybeliada – Halki Religious Seminary closed illegally in 1971 and return to a Minority Foundation the Archives and Books of the historical Greek Literary Society confiscated by the State in 1924.

The fact that the last 19 months there has been prohibition of the elections at the Minority Welfare Foundations, despite numerous appeals towards the government of Turkey, is a very disturbing development while the statements made by the new President of Turkey Mr. R.T. Erdogan (2/9/2014) just after taking office interrelating the reinstitution of human rights of the Greek-Orthodox minority with the interstate relation between Turkey and Greece is very disappointing.