



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Twenty-first session

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Note verbale dated 24 September 2012 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece on the written statement submitted by the “Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe”, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/21/NGO/74), submitted to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-first session under agenda item 3.\*

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the attached text as a document of the twenty-first session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 3.

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

## Annex

*[English only]*

The Greek region of Thrace has always been a place of harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims. All citizens, irrespectively of their religious beliefs or cultural backgrounds, enjoy the same rights and have the same obligations, without any discrimination. Religious freedoms, human and minority rights are fully respected and protected by the highest international standards.

There were very few isolated incidents in Thrace this year, as indicated in the written statement of the NGO "ABTTF", which could be seen as acts of intolerance. These sporadic incidents are regrettable and have been condemned in the strongest terms.

The authorities, the local society and the overwhelming majority of the Greek people disapprove and reject similar acts, considering them as direct attacks to our democratic principles, institutions and values.

It should be noted that when incidents involving members of the Muslim minority occur, these are dealt with the required sensitivity, in full compliance with the relevant Greek legislation and in accordance with international standards. This was also the case with the incidents in question. The competent authorities reacted swiftly and effectively, restoring order and tranquility, and thus preventing possible escalation. Necessary Investigations were duly launched by the police.

No modern society is totally free from acts of violence and hate crimes. Nevertheless, attempts to present isolated incidents as "*part of a broader pattern of growing intolerance and an increasing trend of hate crimes against persons, properties and places of worship belonging to the members of the Muslim minority in Thrace*" are misleading, distorting reality.

Greece remains committed to safeguarding all human rights and fundamental freedoms of every individual. The efforts of the Greek authorities have intensified regarding the fight against incidents of intolerance and discrimination, including hate crimes of any form.

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