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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 16 February 1990 from the Minister of
Foreign Affairs of Greece to the United Nations Office
at Geneva addressed to the Secretary-General

1. At a time of momentous development which is rapidly reshaping the established world order, I am aware that I am imposing on you by raising a question which should not have been raised at all. All the more so, since it is founded on arguments which both you and I would rather have seen long forgotten.
2. However, as a Minister of Foreign Affairs conscious of his duties, I feel obliged to refute the allegations contained in the letter which purports to present the alleged "plight" of the Muslim Greeks in Western Thrace that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yilmaz, recently addressed to you.
3. It is sad indeed that at the very moment Europe is experiencing through such a critical and decisive phase of her history, Turkey should still feel the need to create artificial problems. It is even sadder that Ankara should persist in her policy of fabricating nationalistic issues in an attempt to distract Turkish public opinion from everyday realities.

4. The letter in which Mr. Yilmaz accuses the Greek Government of being responsible for the sentencing by a First Instance Court of two Greek nationals, Mr. Ahmet Sadik and Mr. Ibrahim Serif, brings ample evidence that Ankara has not yet realized that, since Montesquieu, all modern democracies scrupulously respect the principle of the separation of powers. It should also be obvious that Ankara is apparently not aware that there exists in Greece a Constitution which neither the Government nor the Judiciary can infringe upon even if they wished to do so. Justice in Greece does not depend on the wishes of the Government in power.

5. The numerous foreign observers who attended the trial - among whom were representatives of Amnesty International - bear witness to this point. It would indeed be a cause of great satisfaction to us if the principle of the separation of powers were to be implemented to Turkey also.

6. Mr. Yilmaz has hastened to make unfounded accusations against Greece even while the Sadik-Serif case is still pending at the courts. This fact suffices to reveal the political motivations underlying the Turkish Minister's ostensible concern for the protection of human rights.

7. Mr. Yilmaz inaccurately claims, among other things, that the Greek Government has failed to provide the necessary protection to the Muslim population of Komotini during the incidents there a few days ago. These incidents were the result of the extremist appeals of a group of people whose aim it was to fire hatred and confrontation between Muslims and Christians in Western Thrace. Their efforts were supported by the Turkish Government which fuelled the tensions by public statements of high-ranking officials and by incendiary reports of the Turkish mass media which, as it is well known, are under State control.

8. As Mr. Yilmaz himself had to recognize, it is obviously the Greek Government's sole responsibility to ensure the protection and security of all its citizens, irrespective of their religion, by all appropriate means. This is precisely what the Greek authorities did in this case. They did so in a way designed to avoid increasing tensions. Greek police, thanks to its careful handling of the situation, ensured that human casualties were avoided, while such material damages, as unfortunately occurred, were of a limited extent.

9. The occasion for the above-mentioned incidents - in themselves a result of the campaign of hatred and divisiveness undertaken by Mr. Sadik and Mr. Serif - was provided by the brutal attack against a Christian customs employee, who has since been declared clinically dead.

10. Nevertheless, Mr. Yilmaz's letter provides the opportunity for further comments. Turkey is now curiously posing as an advocate of human rights. But it is not possible to ignore the particularly poor record of Turkish Governments concerning their protection that one cannot but underline that, despite all human rights conventions Turkey has ratified, everyday life there does not in any way reflect her will to abide by her responsibilities. One needs only to consider that various international organizations have denounced the lamentable conditions of detention of politicians, intellectuals, students and ordinary people in Turkish prisons, as well as the restrictions of the freedom of expression. The most telling example of such a restriction is the fact that Turkey has prohibited - in direct violation of the Lausanne Treaty - the free use of dialects and languages spoken by millions of her citizens.

11. As far as specific events that set light on the implementation of the minority clauses of the Lausanne Treaty it should be underlined that Turkey has, since the 1930s, implemented a policy of systematic oppression and brutal persecution against the Greek minorities of Constantinople, Imbros and Tenedos, with a view to driving them out of the country. It is worth reminding that the Greek minority in Turkey and the Muslim minority of Western Thrace were exempted by the Treaty of Lausanne from the compulsory exchange of populations in 1923.

12. As a result of Turkish persecutions, in the form of either discriminatory legal and administrative measures or of direct incitement of the Turkish mob to violence, the Greek minority of Constantinople numbering 146,000 members in 1928, has shrunk today to only 3,500. Of the various persecutions responsible for its present situation, the most appalling was the pogrom of September 1955 which resulted in 16 deaths, 32 injured persons, 200 raped women, the destruction of 1,004 homes, 4,348 shops, 27 pharmacies, 21 workshops, 110 hotels and restaurants, 2 monasteries, 26 schools and 5 sports clubs.

13. Equally impressive are the figures concerning the two islands of Imbros and Tenedos, which were granted a status of special administrative organization by article 14 of the Treaty of Lausanne as they were then populated almost exclusively by Greeks. The population of the former has dwindled from 6,762 to only 350 and the population of the latter from 2,500 to only 140.

14. In striking contrast, the Muslim minority in Greece numbers today some 120,000 persons enjoying all the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Greek Constitution and the international conventions on human rights. The minority has more than 206 mosques and 279 schools.

15. It would be easy for me not to limit my letter to the refutation of the allegations levied against my country by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. I would have every right to present a long and detailed enumeration of facts concerning the lot, over the years, of the Greek minority in the hands of Turkey.

16. However, I will refrain from doing so, in order to help Turkey realize that it will be a benefit to all parties, and primarily to Turkey itself, to defuse tensions. The whole world and first of all Turkey stands in need of rejecting the policy of artificially creating problems in view of the real and pressing ones we are confronted with. What we need are co-ordinated efforts for the freedom and well-being of the world and not the fuelling of confrontations.

17. I hope that neighbouring Turkey will also adopt this policy. Further developments will indicate whether we will have to propose new plans and ideas.

(Signed): Andonis Samaras
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of Greece

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