

Doc. 11249
17 April 2007

Plight of the ethnic Macedonian national minority of northern Greece

Motion for a resolution
presented by Mr Jurgens and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. The undersigned are deeply concerned about the high number of sustained human rights violations against the Macedonian ethnic and linguistic minority of northern Greece.
2. The Greek state refuses to recognise the existence of a Macedonian ethnic or linguistic minority within its borders. Government authorities have and continue to systematically exclude ethnic Macedonians from the political process, refusing even to acknowledge correspondence from the political representatives of the minority.
3. Despite the existence of a Macedonian speaking population in northern Greece the Macedonian language is not recognised by the Greek state and thus members the Macedonian speaking minority do not enjoy the right to learn the Macedonian language within the framework of the Greek education system.
4. In 1990, a group of citizens decided to form a non-profit-making association called the "Home of Macedonian Culture" in the town of Florina/Lerin. However Greek courts rejected the application. After exhausting all domestic remedies, the case was appealed to the European Court of Human Rights. In 1998, the court ruled on the matter and unanimously found that there was a violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (*see Sidiropoulos and Others vs. Greece, ECtHR, 57/1997/841/8107*). Deplorably however, almost ten years following this decision the "Home of Macedonian Culture" remains unregistered. Subsequent applications to register the association have been also been rejected by Greek courts.
5. During the Civil War in Greece (1946-1949) thousands of Greek citizens fled the country. Following the end of the war, all those who left Greece during this period were stripped of their Greek citizenship and property. In 1982 and 1985, the Greek government passed laws which restores citizenship and property rights to such individuals provided that they are "Greeks by genus". Thus ethnic Macedonians and others were deliberately excluded. These laws are still in force today.
6. We suggest that the Legal Committee is required to make a Report of the cases of human rights violations against the Macedonian ethnic and linguistic minority of northern Greece during which the opportunity is provided for a number of representatives of this minority to bear witness in a hearing.
7. Greece has refused to ratify the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Minority Languages. However the undersigned note the obligations of Greece are not only those in the various conventions of the Council of Europe to which it is a party, but also include various Conventions and Covenants of the United Nations and a number of legally binding texts of the OSCE.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹:

JURGENS Erik, Netherlands, SOC
ALMÁSSY Kornél, Hungary, EPP/CD
BOUSAKLA Mimount, Belgium, SOC
CILEVIČS Boriss, Latvia, SOC
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GROSS Andreas, Switzerland, SOC
HAJIYEV Sabir, Azerbaijan, SOC
KELEMEN András, Hungary, EPP/CD
KOZMA József, Hungary, SOC
LAMBERT, Geert, Belgium, SOC
LINDBLAD, Göran, Sweden, EPP/CD
Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON, United Kingdom, ALDE
POPESCU, Ivan, Ukraine, SOC
SZABÓ, Zoltán, Hungary, SOC
Van den BRANDE Luc, Belgium, EPP/CD

¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group