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Contribution of

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Prolonged Minority Human Rights Violations Creates Fragility to Future Crisis Conditions:

The Case of the Expatriated Greek Community of Istanbul

The effects of prolonged human rights violations against minority communities results into not only trans-generation trauma but also conditions of fragility of these communities in case of economic and social crisis even many decades later. The damage caused to a minority community, destroys the social fabric and structure of it and makes it vulnerable to future crisis conditions when they appear. The case of the Greek-Orthodox Minority of Istanbul is a case in point. This Minority although being under the International Protection of the Lausanne Treaty and despite the fact the Republic of Turkey was among the first countries to endorse the European Human Rights Conventions in Rome(1954), it has been a victim of long term anti-minority policies throughout the period 1923-2003. The most severe violations towards the Greek-Orthodox minority of Istanbul were: (a) the mobilization to work battalions of minority males aged 18-45 in 1941 under terrible conditions, (b) the "welfare tax" of 1942-44 aiming at the economic destruction of minorities, (c) the massive scale Pogrom of the 6-7 September 1955 in Istanbul, one of the most severe massive scale violence in post War Europe, (d) the forced deportation of members of the Greek Community of Istanbul holding the "Etablis" status according to Lausanne Treaty. Furthermore, the anti-minority state measures were strengthened after the Coup de Etad of 1960 by the establishment of the "Special Minority Commission (Azinliklar Taali Komisyonu)" with superseding powers of all executive, legislative and judicial authorities and whose members were primarily selected from the state security services until 2004.

It is important to emphasize the fact that these anti-minority measures were also serious violations of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and are

therefore linked with the acts against the rule of law and democracy in the Country.

The massive scale expatriation of the Community taken place in 1964-74 decreasing the population living in Istanbul from almost 100.000 to 10.000 and presently to few thousands resulted into an Expatriated Community primarily taking refuge in Greece but also in various Countries of Europe, America and Australia.

A significant part of this Expatriated Community (estimated to be 20%) were not able to overcome the trauma of deportation and forced immigration, during the decades passed. The expatriation followed by mass scale personal loss of fortune as well as lost opportunities. This part of the expatriated community, because of the prolonged crisis in various countries is currently, is facing serious problems such lack of pensions, medical care and unemployment and in some cases lack of shelter.

In order to cope with this crisis situation, the EFC during the past four years has been carrying out an extensive social solidarity program. This project needs to be supported by the Greek-Orthodox Welfare Foundations in Istanbul since these Foundations were established by the predecessors of present Minority members. However the numerous pending issues of the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey such as the prohibition of elections of administrative boards and non-return more than 1200 real estate properties confiscated in the past by the Government are preventing the expatriated Community to receive the necessary support.

In conclusion, taking into account the fact that crisis conditions make past social traumas to reappear especially in Minorities and the imperative necessity for the present Government of Turkey to implement a long term remedy and revitalization program towards the Greek-Orthodox Community as a first step the solution of long lasting problems of the Minority Welfare Foundations should be addressed by the Government of Republic of Turkey. The first step should be to allow the elections in Minority Welfare Foundations which have been prevented during the past 4 years, in contravention to the existing laws and even more importantly to the Constitution of the Republic Turkey.