

Stateless for 22 years

"My country is my prison," says Mrs Gülten Kayal. HRWF Int'l urges Greece to solve this case

HRWF (31.08.2015) - A high number of ethnic Turks in Greece have had their citizenship withdrawn under Article 19 of the Citizenship Law that was in force from 1955 until 1998. This law was abused by the Greek authorities during that period to get rid of a maximum of ethnic Turks.

The most amazing case is the story of Mrs Gülten Kayal from Rhodes who HRWF Int'l met last week. She went to Germany in 1985 and was married in Frankfurt to another ethnic Turk two years later. On several occasions, she had her visa renewed without any problem at the local Greek consulate. In 1993, she went back to Greece to take part in the elections. Imagine her surprise when she was told she had lost her citizenship! Her husband however was not deprived of his but until he went back to Rhodes several years later, he lived and worked abroad without his wife because she did not dare leave Rhodes in case she would not be allowed back to her country.

Since then she has tried three times with the help of a lawyer to get back her citizenship. To no avail. This has dramatic consequences because she is still stateless more than 20 years later. She cannot vote, she cannot open a bank account, she cannot get a loan, she cannot get her pension, she cannot be covered by the national health insurance, she cannot...



"Since 1993, my country has been my prison because I am undocumented," she told HRWF Int'l.

According to a reply by the Greek Ministry of the Interior to a parliamentary question asked by Ilhan Ahmet, the former MP for Rhodope in the Greek Parliament in May 2005, 46,638 Turks (Muslims) in Thrace and the Island of Rhodes (Dodecanese Islands) were deprived of citizenship until 1998.

The provision was repealed in 1998, although failing to nullify previous decisions of withdrawal of citizenship. The only process made available for regaining Greek citizenship was to apply for naturalization as any foreign citizen.

The former Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code was in contravention of, inter alia, Article 12, paragraph 4, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

(ratified by Greece by Law 2462/1997), which provides that 'no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country,' and Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Fourth Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that 'no one shall be deprived of the right to enter the territory of the State of which he is a national.' This Fourth Protocol has yet to be ratified by Greece. National and international organizations continue to urge Greece to resolve the negative consequences of Article 19.

The case of Mrs Gülten Kayal is probably only one among many others that are still pending. HRWF Int'l urges the Greek authorities to solve this case and any other that will come to its knowledge.