

The Speech presented to the conference held in Geneva 26-27, November 2013 on Religious Freedoms for Minorities by Hussein Housa Mohammed, the representative of the Religious Teachers' Association in Komotini, Greece

May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you.

I, Hussein Housa Mohammed, the official representative of our association and the Imam in the central mosque in Komotini, Greece, am taking part in this sixth conference on minorities and religious freedoms and I represent our association "The Islamic association for religious teachers".

The work of the members of our association is done under the supervision of formal legal advice in the region in order to carry out education, teaching and reciting of the Koran and religious knowledge in mosques, schools and government institutes in which a large number of the children of Muslim minorities study.

In the last few years our government has decided to increase the percentage of entry into universities of children from Muslim minorities by one in a thousand. Following this, entries from minorities increased showing the desire of the students to study in government schools. Their numbers have grown to hundreds of students.

The country is praised for passing a law which appoints teachers to government schools.

However, the scope was extended when the Mufti was given the power to choose those who wanted to teach the Koran in mosques in order to make their children more devout. Likewise the Imams who want to be government officials, rely on the Mufti with issues such as insurance and the likes of it.

For the first time in a European country a law has been implemented whereby the Greek government has given full opportunity to teach

and study the Koran [in mosques, schools and government institutions] by religious teachers who will later become government officials.

In support of this, Law 2013/4115 was issued by the Greek government. This law is known as the 240 Imam law. The doors have opened for the position with the first round of filled positions being 90 out of 240. So, 132 references were put forward with their applications along with religious and educational qualifications for nomination to undertake this government post.

Following the intervention of the Mufti, and after extensive scrutiny, the committee of lawyers whose members were all professors and Muslim scholars suggested that the committee making the appointments should be made up just of Muslims.

This was met with approval by some people and rejected completely by another department.

I suggest that satisfying everyone is an unattainable goal.

I also think that the hearts of people are not heaven and we do not try to remain there but we do what we think is right.

In agreement with the principle of our law, there are benefits for Muslim minorities even if we get them from the instructions and commands of others.

Thank you.

Thank you for listening.

May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allah be upon you.

Presented by Hussein Housa Mohammed, representative of the Association of Religious teachers and Imam of the Central Mosque, Komotini, Greece.