



MASTER'S THESIS  
INTERNATIONAL ADMINISTRATION  
AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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**EUROPEAN UNION – TURKEY RELATIONS**  
REACTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND PUBLIC IN TURKEY TO  
THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND MINORITY RIGHTS REFORMS  
CALLED BY EUROPEAN UNION AND REACTIONS OF EUROPEAN  
UNION TO THE IMPLEMENTATIONS OF THESE REFORMS

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## **ABSTRACT**

After becoming a candidate member of Turkey to European Union at the end of 2005, European Union demanded to continue implement political reforms from Turkey such as religious freedom and minority rights. However, these reforms demands in Turkey were not welcomed by the all political actors and citizens. While European Union declared that Turkey needs further efforts to implement the religious freedom and minority rights reforms; with the negative memories about both ethnic and religious minorities from the history, Turkish side were assessed the religious freedom and minority rights demands of European Union as a threat to country and Turkish side avoided to implement these reforms.

**Key Words:** European Union, Turkey, minority rights reform, religious freedom reform

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Republic of Turkey always turned its face to the western world<sup>1</sup> since its foundation in comparison to the Ottoman Empire. In this direction, Turkey always had close relationship with western countries and process of European Union (EU) membership has continued more than 30 years. There has been up and downs during this process but Turkey became officially a candidate member to EU in 2005. EU has demanded to continue the political reform implementations from Turkey who is sufficiently fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria. Within this context, EU expected from Turkey to implement religious freedom and minority rights, cultural rights and protection of minorities (thereafter “minority rights” as abbreviation) reforms and they pointed out the necessity of reform implementations regarding these topics in Turkey Progress reports. As a matter of fact, Turkey responded these reform expectations according to their own internal dynamics. The expectations of EU about these two topics have been interpreted and evaluated differently by political actors and citizens. While citizens and political parties such as Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Republican People’s Party (CHP) and Peace and Justice Party (AKP) reluctant to implementation of minority rights and religious freedom reforms, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) supported the implementation of these reforms and reactions of citizens and political parties were highly affected by the history.

As a matter of fact, non-Muslim groups are described as minorities since Ottoman Empire and only Jewish, Armenian and Greek people are seen as minorities according to Lausanne Peace Treaty. Therefore, religious freedom and minority rights reform demands of EU have been evaluated within this context in Turkey.

The Ottoman Empire in the period of loss of power had to accept the reform demands made by Western powers by using minorities. The reforms have been implemented by the Rescript of Gülhane and Edict of Reform accordingly however these reforms have been reacted negatively by both public and political elites. Comments on implemented reforms’ being mainly concessions have been made. Reactions of EU relating religious freedoms and

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<sup>1</sup> This term is used by many scholars to explain the political, social, economical and cultural relationships among Turkey and Western European countries and Turkey’s interest to become part of the Western World. i.e. Ali A. Mazrui, Müslüman Toplumlarda Demokratikleşme: Tahrir Meydanı ve Türkiye (Bilim ve Sanat Foundation, Journal 75, 2011)

minorities are commented in this respect in the light of these facts and are perceived as a threat to Turkey. Indeed the only goal of EU is to ensure that the rights of citizens who are not Turkish and live in the country should be protected and they should live in better conditions. However, the Turkish public and most of the political parties regard the EU bills for reformation as an endeavor to divide the country and oppose them. With the effect of the trails from the past, minorities have been treated like second class citizens at the level of both the state and the public in Turkey anyway and minorities are defined as a “rascally” in Turkey and they faced terrible discriminations. Therefore, religious freedom and minority rights reforms were not welcomed in Turkey by all of the political actors and citizens, and only little progress were made since 2005. Only Peace and Democracy Party supported these reform implementations in Turkey. On the other hand, European Union side found that reform reactions of Turkey are not sufficient and further steps need to be taken in future.

Within this context, I will introduce the methodology and theoretical framework and I will talk about the short historical background of EU and process of Turkey to become a member of EU in the first part of the paper. In the second part, I will write about the EU reactions regarding EU Turkey Progress reports and interview I made with an official member of European Commission. In addition, I will talk about how these two reform expectations were reacted by citizens and Turkish political actors. I will also give brief historical backgrounds of political parties.

In the final part, I will give brief information regarding how Turkish political actors and public should behave about these reform expectations. Accordingly, I will try to find possible answers to these questions in this paper:

- How EU sides react to the implementation process of minority rights and religious freedom reforms?
- How Turkish political parties (Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Republican People’s Party (CHP) and Peace and Justice Party (AKP) and public reacted to the minority rights and religious freedom reforms called by European Union?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

I used qualitative method to write my thesis. In addition, I used best suitable designs to gain a good result for my thesis. Due to Integration process of Turkey's being a case example, the best research design for my research was to use "Case Study Design". The basic element of case study designs involves the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case.<sup>2</sup>

First of all, I used "secondary analysis of data" involves the analysis of data that others have collected related to my research question such as semi-structured or structured interviews, focus groups transcripts, observation records, and other personal, research-related documents.<sup>3</sup> I thought I need a collection of data to be better acknowledged about my research topic. Using secondary data analysis definitely provided me more time on the analysis and explanation of data. Lack of time and resource are also other relevant reasons to use secondary data to collect data.

In addition to that, I used "documents as sources of data" which include personal documents (diaries, letters, and autobiographies), official documents derived from state (Republic of Turkey) or private sources (EU) and the mass media.<sup>4</sup> I contacted to Secretariat General for EU Affairs (Turkey) to ask for related data to my research topic such as interviews, official documents. I did the same by contacting to EU as well.

To reflect the EU reactions, EU Turkey Progress Reports from 2006 to 2010 were dealt. In addition, interviews were done before with EU officials such as EU Parliament Rapporteur Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Helene Flautre and Cas-Granje were mentioned. Discourses of some groups in the EU such as European Parliament Christian Democrat Group and European Parliament Socialist Group were also touched upon in the thesis.

In order to be able to analyze the discourses of AKP on EU reforms, the discourses of the party leader and the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, of Ali Babacan, who was the chief negotiator until 2009, and of Egemen Bağış, of Abdullah Gül, who was the foreign affairs

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Oxford University) 52

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 296

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 515-535



minister from 2005 until today, and of Ahmet Davutoğlu and of the other party members, of the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits of the party have been examined. Moreover, I used official documents of Secretariat General for EU Affairs (Turkey) related to my thesis topic. And to comprehend the reactions of CHP to EU reforms, the speeches of Deniz Baykal and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu – period leaders – and the discourses of party members, the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits have been taken into account. Moreover, in order to measure the reactions of MHP to EU reforms, the discourses of Devlet Bahçeli and party members, of the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits, and Turkey and Politics magazine, which is published by Research and Development Centre belonging to the party and which is published every two months, and the reports prepared by R&D Centre have been examined. The attitudes of BDP, consisting of the gathered independent candidates because the threshold is 10%, on EU reforms have been analyzed through discourses of party members, 2011 election affidavit, party programs and regulations.

Due to not being done any scientific study to reflect the reactions of citizens about EU reforms, I used the media resources and mostly focused on actions of citizens against both ethnic and religious minorities such as attacks, murders and discriminations and researches of research institutions which reflected the reactions of citizens about minorities in Turkey.

I also arranged some semi-structured interviews. I did not use any specific questions during the interviews. I just mentioned about my master thesis topic and interviewee talked generally about my topic. According to the conversation, some critical questions were asked to interviewees regarding thesis topic. I had three interviews with an officer of an EU; representatives from Alevis and Protestants. EU and Protestant representative did not want to be used of their job title, institutions and names in the thesis. Therefore, I mentioned all of them as “representative”. Alevi Representative of Hacı Bektaş Veli Institutions Headquarters did not have any problem putting his/her name but I did not put it due to not having possible problems in the future. I used face to face interview method with EU and Alevi representative. I visited office of EU representative in Brussels and the interview was recorded with a voice recorder in a silent room. I also visited Ankara to do my interview with Alevi representative and the interview was also recorded with a voice recorder in a silent room. I used phone interview with representative of Protestants due to having limited time

and money to visit another city called Izmir. I also recorded this interview with a voice recorder. In addition, I wanted to have more interviews with officials of political parties but I was rejected due to general election period and lack of interests of political parties.

The reason I chose semi structured interview, because when it is about politics most of the time people do not give direct answers to the questions. They prefer giving indirect answers and the structure should maximize the reliability and validity of measurement of key concepts.<sup>5</sup> Besides, if I used structured interview, it would be impossible to get the answers that I sought. The aim of interview in structured one is to reflect the researcher's concern which is not suitable for my topic. I wanted to see the reflections and answers of interviewee. In addition, in qualitative interviewing, discursive or going off at tangents is mostly encouraged to understand what the interviewee sees as relevant and important.<sup>6</sup> So, interviewee can give answers related to my research topic even if I do not intend to ask such questions.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1. WESTERNIZATION AND MODERNISM**

Turks always turned their faces to the western world and moved accordingly. Even they turned their face to Asia; they always aimed to be part of the western world. Thus, Turks turned their faces to Western countries after the defeat of Vienna and to avoid from the standstill and devolution period.

Consciously or not and sometimes forced or voluntarily, Turks' way moved towards the western world. After the foundation of republic, the founder of Turkey Atatürk prioritized the modernism and westernization for the sake of country. Nonetheless, Atatürk's politics were completely different than Ottoman's. B. Oran separate the Atatürk's westernization idea from Ottoman's with like this: "Copying Western world in Atatürk's time was not eclectic and scrappy in compared to Ottoman's, it was systematic and monolith. In other words, West was tried to copy as a whole and system rather than copying it by saying some parts are good or not... Secondly, Atatürk assessed the western world as a purpose not a

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 437

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 437

tool... Western concept is identical to modernism according to Atatürk. Atatürk said the there is no such thing to resist against Western world, there is such thing to be like Western world.”<sup>7</sup> Since Atatürk, this approach remained same until today. When it comes to definition and concept of modernism; the purpose to be reached as a nation has been “contemporary civilization level”.<sup>8</sup> Within this context, political, social and cultural life of Ottoman had to be changed with the other civilization which was western world’s political, social and cultural life.<sup>9</sup> It was not a slavish westernization of Atatürk’s westernization idea and he always pointed out the westernization despite of Western.<sup>10</sup> As İ. Öztoprak’s stated, it will be better to use the modernism rather than westernization. Because, Atatürk’s modernism was not a replica, it was reaching to the level of contemporary civilization by harmonizing with the Turkey’s own values and institutions.<sup>11</sup> As a result, base of external politics of Turkey lied under the westernization and modernism. In addition, as a result of the rising of globalization, Turkey adopted itself to the European Integration process and shaped its external politics according to it.

### **3.2. GLOBALIZATION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

There has been several definitions and starting period of globalization. Like Jan Aart Scholte’s said “Each understanding of a key concept reflects a historical moment, a cultural setting, a geographical location, a social status, an individual personality and – as already noted – a political commitment.”<sup>12</sup> For some authors, globalization has started with privatization and liberalization politics introduced by the Reagan administration in USA and Thatcher in Great Britain during the 80s in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; some others like Thomas Friedman thinks that globalization started in 15<sup>th</sup> century and continue up to our days.<sup>13</sup> According to Philip G. Cerny, “Globalization is defined here as a set of economic and political

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<sup>7</sup> Baskın Oran, Atatürk Milliyetçiliği (Dost Kitabevi Publisher 1988) 211-212

<sup>8</sup> İzzet Öztoprak, Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Dış Dünyadaki Etkileri (Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi, Sayı 1, Cilt:I, November 1984)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ekrem Aksoy, Batılılaşma ve Atatürk (Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi Cumhuriyetimizin 75. Yılı Özel Sayısı) 84

<sup>11</sup> İzzet Öztoprak, Atatürk, Çağdaşlaşma ve Dış Dünyadaki Etkileri (Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi, Sayı 1, Cilt:I, November 1984)

<sup>12</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, What is Globalization? The Definitional Issues – Again (Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick CSGR Working Paper 109/02 , December 2002) 6

<sup>13</sup> Diana Bobica, European Integration and Globalization (European Integration – Realities and Perspectives, European Studies Institute, Iași, 2010) 211

structures and processes deriving from the changing character of the goods and assets that comprise the base of the international political economy—in particular, the increasing structural differentiation of those goods and assets.”<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, European countries tried to adopt their external policies according to rising trend of globalization.<sup>15</sup> Globalization was the new system for USA in shaping their external policies and European countries took some measures not to fall behind of USA. Consequently, they decided to establish a community to keep the peace in Europe through steel and coal. B. Rosamond defines this reflection as “...tendency of groups of territorially adjacent states to cluster together into blocks.”<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, first steps of the EU started with the signing the ECSC Treaty in 1951 by France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. Further integration processes until today brought us to an establishment of a community called as European Union which today has 27 members.

Even though there is no direct effect, the integration policy of European Union was an economical and a political step towards USA’s globalization process.<sup>17</sup> As Diana Bobica stated, “The retrospective look on the formation of the European Union allows us to come up with an answer regarding the role played by the European integration in the general context of globalization.”<sup>18</sup>

Needless to argue, globalization triggered the European Integration process and results of the integration process contributed to the globalization. Arguably we can say that both globalization and European integration has close relationship and they affect each other negatively or positively in terms of political, social, economical or security.<sup>19</sup>

During all these globalization and EU integration processes, as a new founded Republic, Turkey decided to take part in these globalization and European Integration processes while it aimed at westernization and modernism for itself. Within this context, Turkey became a

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<sup>14</sup> Philip G. Cerny, Globalization and the changing logic of collective action (International Organization 49, 4, Autumn 1995 pp. 595-625) 596

<sup>15</sup> George Ross, European Integration and Globalization Ch. 10 (Globalization and Europe: theoretical and empirical investigation by Roland Axtmann, 1998) 164

<sup>16</sup> Ben Rosamond, Theories of European Integration (Macmillan Press, 1. Edition, 2000 London) 15

<sup>17</sup> George Ross, European Integration and Globalization Ch. 10 (Globalization and Europe: theoretical and empirical investigation by Roland Axtmann, 1998) 164-5

<sup>18</sup> Diana Bobica, European Integration and Globalization (European Integration – Realities and Perspectives, European Studies Institute, Iași, 2010) 213

<sup>19</sup> George Ross, European Integration and Globalization Ch. 10 (Globalization and Europe: theoretical and empirical investigation by Roland Axtmann, 1998) 165

member of international organizations such as NATO, OECD. In addition, Turkey applied to become a member of EEC in 1959 to actively involved in globalization and EU integration processes.

#### **4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EUROPEAN UNION**

The idea of European Union was just a dream in the thoughts of thinkers/philosophers and visionaries before it became a real political goal. For instance, Victor Hugo, inspired by humanistic ideals, dreamt of a 'United States of Europe' in peace.<sup>20</sup> However this dream was destroyed by terrible wars which devoured the continent in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides, there were many attempts, Pan-European movements in particular<sup>21</sup>, in order to form a union after the World War II and the organizations such as Organization for European Cooperation (OECC) or European Council failed.<sup>22</sup> Afterwards, Robert Schuman, Foreign Minister of France, offered to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 9 May 1950 by using the idea which was originally suggested by Jean Monnet as a base. The production of coal and steel in the countries which once fought against each other would be collected under the supervision of a common 'Authority'. Raw materials of the war would turn into the tools of peace and reconciliation practically but mostly symbolically. This offer was put into effect by the Paris Treaty in 18 April 1951. By this way, a coal and steel market was formed between the six founding countries (Belgium, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxemburg and Holland). The aim was to establish peace between the nations of Europe which gained a victory and which disappeared and to gather these countries by cooperation in the shared institutions equally. Despite the inadequateness of ECSC in terms of institutional and federalist aspects, the achievement of it made a way for the Rome Treaty.<sup>23</sup> Afterwards, in 25 March 1957 the six founding countries established the European Economic Community (EEC) which is a broader based common market comprising every kind of product and service and the customs transactions was removed in 1 July 1968 between these six countries and instead, common politics was formed in 60s especially in trade and

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<sup>20</sup> Pascal Fontaine, AB Nedir? (European Commission) 5

<sup>21</sup> Desmond Dinan, Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration (Palgrave Macmillan, 3rd Edition, 2005) 41

<sup>22</sup> Walter Hallstein, United Europe: challenge and opportunity (Harvard University Press, 1962) 7-9

<sup>23</sup> Şaban H. Çalış, Türkiye – Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri Kimlik Arayışı, Politik Aktörler ve Değişim (Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 3rd Edition, 2006) 44

agriculture.<sup>24</sup> Then, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom decided to join the Community. At the same time, new social and environmental politics were come into effect and European Regional Development Fund was established in 1975.<sup>25</sup> Greece joined the Community in 1981 and Spain and Portugal followed it in 1986. In 1985, the European Commission under the presidency of Jacques Delors published the White Book containing the timetable regarding the completion of European Single Market in 1 January 1993.<sup>26</sup> The new European Union Treaty which was adopted in December 1991 in Maastricht by the European Council consisting of the member countries, the president and the prime ministers came into force in 1 November 1993 and the Maastricht Treaty which added the cooperation regions among the governments to the existing structure of united Community established the European Union (EU).<sup>27</sup> In 1995, Sweden, Denmark and Finland joined the union. After this, the countries that cut loose from the Soviet Union lined up to be a member of the European Union. The EU indulged this enterprise which will bring about stabilizing the Continental Europe and making these young democracies benefit from the association of Europe.<sup>28</sup> The negotiations for the future memberships began in December 1997. EU's expansion up to 25 countries as a result of expansionary politics was realized by the participation of 10 countries out of 12 candidates in 1 May 2004. Lately, Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union in 1 January 2007.

## **5. REACTIONS OF TURKEY TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE UNION<sup>29</sup>**

Turkey applied for the full membership of the Community in July 1959 after the establishment of European Economic Community in 1958. The equating of westernization and modernization has lead the Republic of Turkey to join all the politic and security formations established in Europe or by centering it especially after the World War II since its establishment and even earlier. In this way, Turkey joined the European Council, OECD and NATO. Thus, it can be said that the aims of integration with the Europe have been political rather than economical for Turkey since the beginning. In the reply by the European Economic Community then for the full membership application, it was reported that the

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<sup>24</sup> Pascal Fontaine, AB Nedir? (European Commission) 10

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 11

<sup>29</sup> All the information is taken from the web page of ABGS unless otherwise specified.

development level of Turkey was not adequate for fulfilling the requirements of the full membership and an association agreement which will be valid until the realization of full membership circumstances was suggested and the said agreement was signed in Ankara in 12 September 1963. The agreement has proposed three periods as preparatory period, transitional period and final period. And at the end of the preparatory period, the completion of the customs union was planned. By the end of preparatory period proposed in the agreement, the provisions of the transitional period and the obligations of the parties were determined by the Additional Protocol signed in 13 November 1970 and come into force in 1973. Turkey avoided fulfilling its obligations arising from the Additional Protocol because of the economical crisis in 1970 and some political preferences. When Turkey started not to fulfill its obligations and to discountenance the relations with the Community, Community started to hinder its obligations and avoid endeavoring to improve the partnership relation. At the beginning problems were just economical but these problems acquired political dimensions in 12 September period and with the Greece's becoming full membership of the Community in 1980. Relations of Turkey-Community were frozen and financial cooperation was terminated. All the provisions of Additional Protocol were continued to work but the commercial clauses. EU Commission suggested in its response to our application for full membership in 1989 that the Community should complete the deepening process inside and be waited for its next expansion and meanwhile customs union process with Turkey should be completed while accepting the capability of Turkey regarding the EU membership. At the end of the negotiations lasted for 2 years, pursuant to the decision made in the Association Council meeting in 5 March 1995, the customs union between Turkey and the EU came into effect in 1 January 1996. After these processes, Turkey was accepted and announced as the EU candidate country unanimously in the Summit of EU Heads of State and Government in Helsinki dated 10-11 December 1999 and it was stated clearly and precisely that Turkey would be equivalent to the other candidate countries. To follow and conduct the EU relationships better and started to work within this respect, Secretariat General for EU Affairs (now Ministry for EU Affairs) were established in Ankara. As a result of the following developments, it was noted in Brussels European Council Summit that Turkey was meeting the political criteria sufficiently and it was decided that accession negotiations would be started in 3 October 2005.

Needless to argue, Turkey has tried to adopt its economical, legal and political system according to European Union standards since the beginning of the relationship. When we look at the adaptation process through expected reforms, Turkey managed to implement many reforms to become more democratic and liberal state, namely to reach the European (Copenhagen) standards. Nevertheless, reform implementation process has been interrupted with some relevant reasons in the specific time periods and these reform implementations have never been on the expected level to become a member of the EU. Still, after the Helsinki Summit, Turkey has started comprehensive reform process to fulfill the Copenhagen Political Criteria which is the pre-condition of the starting full membership negotiations.<sup>30</sup> Turkey made the necessary arrangements to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria with the Constitutional changes, revision of basic legal codes and harmonization packages. Within this concept, Government made Constitutional changes in 2001 and 2004. In addition, government announced eight “harmonization packages” which have made revolutionary impact people’s life in Turkey including religious freedom and minority rights.<sup>31</sup> As a result, European Council confirmed that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria. Thereby, Turkey and EU started negotiations in 2005.

Since the Ankara Agreement, Turkey was governed by very different political parties, but all of them showed great interest in becoming a member of EU. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Turkey, believed that Westernization is necessary to reach the level of contemporary civilization. Westernism was one of the principles of M. Kemal Atatürk’s in external affairs. New founded Republic followed a path to have close relationships with the western world although Republic of Turkey had fought against western powers. Atatürk also played important role in modernization process by his both internal and external policies to adapt Turkey modern life. Namely, when Turkey decided to reach and go beyond developed countries level, he shaped his external policies by developing relationships with western countries. As a definite result, Turkey moved to become a part of modern civilization by having good relationships with western countries. Therefore, all the governments in Turkey formed their external politics according to these policies and made an effort to become a part of the Western world and member of the

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<sup>30</sup> ABGS, Türkiye’de Siyasi Reform Uyum Paketleri ve Güncel Gelişmeler (ABGS, Ankara 2007) 3

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 21



European Union.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, there has been always an opposition both from public and political actors to these relationships of Turkey with Western (European) countries.

Of course, relationship with European Union also had one's share from these criticisms. Some people strongly stood against of being member of European Union. Some of them criticized the general concept of relationships<sup>33</sup> and political parties like CHP and MHP criticized the some reforms have been implemented.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond doubt, most of the criticisms were made to the political reforms in this mutual relationship. In general, people mostly supported the membership of Turkey to the union even though it shows a decrease in recent years<sup>35</sup>. On the other hand, citizen often stood against the specific political reform implementations such as freedom of religion and minority rights.

These two topics are very important, problematic and sensitive issues in Turkey and the reasons lied down in the history itself. In addition, these concepts are sometimes being misused and overlapped in Turkey. Definition of minorities in Turkey is classified according to religion (in the Lausanne Treaty - 1923) and Republic of Turkey only acknowledges Armenian, Jewish and Greek people as minorities.<sup>36</sup> Rest of the unrecognized minorities in society has not being seen as a minority group.

As we all know, Copenhagen criteria especially sensitive in political reforms. Therefore, after starting full negotiations process in 2005, European Union demanded from Turkey to be more active in implementing minority rights and religious freedom reforms. Within this context, European Commission asked Turkey to implement concrete reforms to provide citizens better standards such as minority rights, cultural rights, protection of minorities and freedom of religion.<sup>37</sup> When we look at the Turkey side, these reform calls have not welcomed by the all of the political actors and citizens. Moreover, most of the citizens also reacted negatively to these reforms. As I said earlier, there have been sympathy (even

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<sup>32</sup> İdris Bal, Türk Dış Politikasının 87 Yıllık Analizi

<sup>33</sup> Şaban H. Çalış, Türkiye – Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri Kimlik Arayışı, Politik Aktörler ve Değişim (Nobel Yayın Dağıtım, 3rd Edition, 2006) 164-180

<sup>34</sup> Oğuz Esen - Filiz Başkan, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye İlişkileri Beklentiler ve Kaygılar, Filiz Başkan, Siyasi Partilerin Avrupa Birliği Söylemleri (Eflatun Yayınevi, 2009) 101

<sup>35</sup> Oğuz Esen - Filiz Başkan, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye İlişkileri Beklentiler ve Kaygılar; Özgehan Şenyuva, Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri ve Kamuoyu (Eflatun Yayınevi, 2009) 35

<sup>36</sup> Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, from Article 37 to 45

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, Turkey 2006-2010 Progress Reports (Brussels, 2006-2010)

though it shows a decreasing tendency) to become member of EU in society, but I cannot say the same things about religious freedom and minority rights reform implementations. People who have believed that these religious freedom and minority rights reforms will be good for themselves tried to use these reforms and the pressure of EU as an external force for their own sake. On the other hand, people who have been against of these reforms reacted very negatively not being implemented of such reforms. If we look deeper to the historical events in the Turkish history, then we can easily understand why most of the people stand against these reforms.

## **6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN TURKEY**

Historical events always become important for the countries to shape their future policies, actions and reaction. If we look at closer the reactions of people and political parties, we still follow the traces of the past events. Turkey is a country who faced very dramatic events in the past, especially before and after World War I. Capitulations and Treaty of Sevres terribly damaged the perspective of political actors and Turkish citizens to the minorities and different religious groups due to giving so many privileges to these groups.<sup>38</sup> So, before analyzing the reactions of political parties and public will about religious freedom and minority rights reforms called by European Union, it will be very useful to examine at the historical background of these two topics to understand the reactions of political actors and public better. Turkey's approach to minority rights, which refers to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne related to the religion and this concept still remains unchanged. So, historical backgrounds of these topics will be explained under the same concept not to damage the integrity.

### **6.1. MINORITIES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

The emergence of the minority rights in international arena depends on the birth of the concept of 'religious minorities' in 16<sup>th</sup> century with the Reform movement and at the end of the Holy Wars, they saw that the removal of the religious minorities was impossible and they

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<sup>38</sup> Prof. Dr. Gülnihal Bozkurt, Azınlık İmtiyazları – Kapitülasyonlardan Tek Hukuk Sistemine Geçiş (Atatürk Research Center Journal, Copy 40, Cover XIV, March 1998) 2

took these people under protection by the documents prepared by them.<sup>39</sup> Minorities are defined in judicial literature as small groups or minority groups differing from the majority of the community in a country or a state in as regards their language, religion, race, culture and etc. With a broader definition, it is possible to define it as the citizens who are not dominant in the population of the country, have different features in terms of ethnic, religion, language and tradition and desire to protect them and depend upon the state. The Ottoman Empire signed a debit agreement with the non-Muslims living in the lands which it conquered and the security of life and property of the non-Muslims who pay poll tax are secured by the empire. The principal minorities within the Ottoman Empire can be counted as Armenians, Georgians, Latins, Assyrians, Keldanis, Maronites, Copts and Rums who are subject to Catholic sect, Pavlikians, Selikams and Bogomils; Gregorians, Nesturians, Jacobean Assyrians, Melkits; Divine, Karais and Samiris Jews; Sabiis who are of Orthodox sect.<sup>40</sup> The social, judicial, political and administrative structure of Ottoman Empire has been shaped by faith-base called 'nation system' not by the basis of race. In the Ottoman Empire Period, the majority of the minorities based on the principal of 'Nation System' were forming the Rum, Armenian and Jewish communities. The religion of the Armenians and Rums who have minority status according to basis of nation are Christianity and the religion of Jews is Judaism. We should mention especially of something, it is a historical reality that the nations who were conquered and fell under another state's or culture's rule could not preserve their religion and national and cultural identity for a long time and were assimilated. Ottomans did not apply pressure or assimilation on different elements which fell under its hegemony. If there had been an opposite situation, there could not have left any other religion than Islam, any other language than Turkish and any other nation than Turks in the lands which were under Ottoman's rule over five centuries and this situation is not as a result of the state's failing or negligence, it is related to 'Zimmi Law' enforced consciously and commanded by the Islamic Law and is a result of the sentimentality which the state had.<sup>41</sup> The minorities obtained extensive rights in the subjects related to public order in congregational matters and in the subjects related to private law such as family, marriage,

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<sup>39</sup> Baskın Oran, Lozan'ın "Ayrıncılıkların Korunması" Bölümünü Yeniden Okurken (Journal of Ankara University, cover 49, 1994) 284

<sup>40</sup> Yavuz Ercan, Türkiye'de XV ve XVI Yy. Gayrimüslimlerin Hukuki İctimai ve İktisadi Durumu (Tarih ve Medeniyet, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2nd Edition, 2003) 1127

<sup>41</sup> Mehmet Deri, Osmanlı Devleti'nde Gayrimüslimler (Rumlar, Ermeniler Ve Yahudiler) (Niğde University Social Science Institute Master Thesis Research) 2

divorce, heritage matters and etc. In Ottoman administration and in the framework of the rights accorded to them by Islamic Law. It means that they had many rights and liberties which the Muslim people had. When Fatih Sultan Mehmet conquered Istanbul in 1453, gave the communities there the rights such as using their own language, being educated in their own language, living their religion and beliefs freely, living their own culture and traditions and continuing their historical existence in peace and safety.

The rights and liberties given to the minorities in the time of Fatih and the next sultans caused new regulations in the fields of policy, administration, law, economy, commerce and culture because of the state's falling from power in time and because the minorities did not find them sufficient as a result of the provocations of the Western Countries.<sup>42</sup> However, because these new regulations were as a result of the pressure of Western Countries, they were not only inadequate for preventing the state from dismemberment but also caused the Western Countries' interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire by using the minority rights as an excuse.<sup>43</sup>

## **6.2. THE RESCRIPT OF GÜLHANE AND EDICT OF REFORM**

'Nation System' has met a lot of needs then in respect of the experience of living together in Ottoman Empire, however particularly after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it has remained incapable because the steadiness in the Ottoman Empire was incorporated into the influence of mental and industrial developments in the west. When this incapability combined with the issue that how and in which way the Ottoman Empire would be shared which the Westerns called as the East problem, there appeared the Minorities Issue which was the shortest way to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottomans. Western countries endeavored to achieve their goals on the Ottoman Empire on the plea of protecting the people of their own sect and began to use non-Muslims in the country in line with their own interests and goals. It is necessary not to think that the Ottomans acted in a quiet and indifferent manner towards the said developments. However, it is almost impossible for a weak country in the political arena to gain a place in international relations. Ottoman Empire decided to review the situations of the citizens from the minorities by virtue of the external pressure and that was why the Rescript of Gülhane and Edict of Reform were born. At the same time, notice of

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 2-3

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 2-3

these reforms did not mean that everything was solved. There had been many problems during the implementation process. Neither non Muslims nor Muslims were ready to these changes and both sides had infelicities. By the Rescript of Gülhane, the minorities (non-Muslims) had the prerogatives in terms of law, taxing, military service and education and etc. and the situation of minorities went in their favor with the western pressure.<sup>44</sup> Muslim people reacted negatively towards this event and the most significant reason of this was that the people could not adapt to the sudden and unexpected reforms.<sup>45</sup> In the next years, the Western Countries did not find the reforms resulting from the Rescript of Gülhane sufficient and continued to apply pressure on the Ottoman Empire and as a consequence of this Edict of Reform was declared in 1839.<sup>46</sup> With this reform movement, they obtained new rights in the fields of basic rights and liberties, religious freedoms, education, civil service and the military service. This edict also met with reaction in the same way by the Muslim people due to the concessions made for the non-Muslims.<sup>47</sup> The nationalist movements which gained impetus in consequence of the French Revolution influenced the Ottoman Empire in a negative way beyond any doubt. In this case, the two groups who were trying to gain advantage the most were the Rums and Armenians and these two nations worked and fought against Ottoman Empire both in disintegration period and national struggle period (The age of Republic of Turkey).<sup>48</sup> The Ottoman Empire who lost in the World War I has been insisted on signing Armistice of Moudros and the lands of Ottomans have been shared by the Allied Powers.<sup>49</sup> Then, Sevres Treaty was signed on 10<sup>th</sup> of August, 1920 among Allied Powers and Ottoman Empire government which could not be brought into force because of ongoing Salvation War. This was commented as foreign forces showed their interest to split the country by using minorities and they moved according to. On the other hand, with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey fought against external powers and this war led us to the Lausanne Peace Conference. At the end of this complex situation, both sides came to an agreement and Lausanne Treaty was signed on 24<sup>th</sup> of July, 1923.

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<sup>44</sup> Önder Kaya, *Tanzimat'tan Lozan'a Azınlıklar* (Yeditepe Press, 2nd Edition, 2005) 70-7

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 78

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 82

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 101

<sup>48</sup> For more information; Önder Kaya, *Tanzimat'tan Lozan'a Azınlıklar* (Yeditepe Press, 2nd Edition, 2005) 135-144

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 144

### 6.3 RECENT SITUATION OF MINORITIES IN TURKEY

Minority issue has always been a problematic topic in Turkey. Even though minorities were welcomed during the Ottoman Empire, situation has changed after the collapse has begun for Ottoman Empire. It is told that minorities were used to split the Ottoman Empire and all the rights given to minorities were described as “privileges” like I mentioned earlier. Therefore, reflections of these situations were not welcomed very well after foundation of Republic of Turkey. Even today, both ethnic and religious minorities in Turkey face terrible events and discriminations both from public and state. Under the light of these historical facts, reform demands about religious freedom and minority rights by EU were not welcomed by Turkish political parties and citizens. It is not surprise that Turkish side reacts negatively to these reform implementations while they still remember what happened in the past.

Basic text about the minorities and minority rights in Republic of Turkey is Lausanne Peace Treaty<sup>50</sup> and there is no other specific rights provided to minorities in Turkey. According to Lausanne, only Greek, Armenian and Jewish people in Turkey are described as minority. Nevertheless, Lausanne provides some rights to the minorities in Turkey. On the other hand, it is not coincidence that minorities’ definition is limited with the religious criterion and minorities defined as non-Muslim. While Turkey was having concern for integrity and unity, foreign forces showed their interest by aiming to split the country.<sup>51</sup> Provided minority protection in the Lausanne Treaty was prepared properly according to two way protection of the period. According to this, real equality by providing some private rights for the minorities was intended to ensure without suffering any discrimination for minorities and recognition of equal rights and freedoms like all citizens as well as providing some specific rights to continue their own language, culture and traditions.<sup>52</sup>

Lausanne Treaty has a different significance by surviving nowadays. Even though it is not providing comprehensive protection for minorities, it provides sufficient protections.

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<sup>50</sup> Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, from Article 37 to 45

<sup>51</sup> Ülku Bilgin, *Azınlık Hakları ve Türkiye*, (Kitap Press, 1st Edition, 2007) 156

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 158

However, despite of treaty's provisions are superior norm for the domestic legislation, it is debatable that treaty provisions are performed correctly in daily life.<sup>53</sup>

However, Turkish constitutional order is "addressing" the minority problem without touching on this issue and there is no reference in the Constitution to the "minority" word and even to Lausanne minorities.<sup>54</sup> In addition, foreign policy of Turkey regarding international conventions is in an endeavor to ensure that legal protection would not be given any other minority than the non-Muslims.<sup>55</sup> In Turkey, the minorities which differ from the majority on the basis of ethnicity, sect and mother tongue are not recognized by the laws; the number of the people connected to various minority groups is not known because ***the state does not ask questions as regards their ethnic, religious and other origins in the population censuses and no scientific research exists regarding the number of the minorities in Turkey.***<sup>56</sup>

Caucasians who are wrongly considered as Circassians are formed by various Caucasia-rooted nations as follows: Abkhazians, Chechens, Daghestanis, Ossetians and various Turki communities and there are other minorities in Turkey such as the Kurds, the Laz, the Romany, the Armenians, Arabs (Alevi, Sunni and Christian), Bulgarians, Bosniacs, Pomaks and Albanians.<sup>57</sup> In addition to this, Alevis, Armenians, Assyrians, Caferis, Jews, reformist Christians, Rum Orthodox Christians and Yezidis are also religious minorities.<sup>58</sup>

In Turkey, minorities experience difficulties in regards to learn their own language, to name their children and the places where they live with the names of their own language, to be able to use minority languages to access to public services, freedom of religion, thought and conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, political participation and participation in the public life and property rights.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the legal statute in the country has been regulated to the detriment of both ethnic and religious minorities.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 162

<sup>54</sup> Minority Rights Group International, Bir eşitlik arayışı: Türkiye'de azınlıklar, (Minority Rights Group, September 2007) 12

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.13

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 13-6

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.13-6

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 17-33

Undoubtedly although there are mostly negativities, thanks to the EU harmonization packages and EU bills for reformation after 2005, some positive developments are happening. In this context, it can be advocated that the greatest success is the manner to create a field for various minority groups in which different identities should be recognized, the monopolistic concept of Turkish citizen should be reformulated and in which they can demand that the obstacles before freely enjoying the religious, political and cultural rights should be removed.<sup>60</sup>

However, although there are many minorities in Turkey, the general arguments are over Alevi and Kurds. The minority issue in both media and policy is always about Alevi and Kurds and developments relating other minorities scarcely occupy the political agenda. Although the news is made due to the EU visits regarding Christian minorities, other minorities barely occupy the agenda. In this context, religious and ethnic minorities which occupies the political agenda of the country the most shall be focused on and the reactions to these shall be included.

#### **6.4. ALEVIS IN TURKEY**

Shiism is a belief system of people which carries the holiness of Allah, Muhammed and Ali and does not leave from their justice, based on humanity, respectful to all religions and belief, no respecter of persons; provides the principle of watching hands, waist and tongue; let people live their own way and judge themselves by themselves; defends participatory, equitable, sharing idea; does not depend on puritan rules of religious law and reject them; interprets Islam according to itself except Sunni belief; aspires to create virtuous people; overcome the fear and slant to God; puts the manners and morality in the center of life, sublimes the human; perceive the religion as a belief instead of shape and style; compounds the religion with reason and faith integrity and implements all of these with the inspiration taken from Cem House.<sup>61</sup>

Alevi continued their existence in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Azerbaijan since ancient times. Alevi have approximately 20 million populations with Turk, Kurd, Zaza, Arabian, Roman and other ethnic identities and they generate almost one third

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 34

<sup>61</sup> Berlin Alevi Society web page, Alevi Öğretisi > Aleviliğin kısa tanımı



of the Turkey population. Alevi have different way of life from other part of society in Turkey with their belief and cultural life.

Concealing their belief, characterized as heterodoxy, under the Ottoman persecution of S'ism, the Alevi transmitted their belief system through esoteric knowledge, secret rituals and local kinship, and welcoming the foundation of Republic in Turkey because of its secular character, Alevi continued to live mainly in Anatolia around the cities in the banks of Kizilirmak, and kept their belief system, based on reverence for Ali (Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law), the recognition of the trinity consisting of Allah-Mohammed and Ali, and performance of religious ceremony, 'cem', led by dede- member of hereditary priestly caste- through ritual dances called Semah, reading poems and singing in places of worship called 'cemevi' (cem houses) in a hidden way until recent times.<sup>62</sup> But, the situation changed after 1960s with the urbanization process in Turkey and Alevi started to live in the poor neighborhoods of major cities. Alevism was rediscovered as an identity and organizational activities increased through associations such as Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultur and Promotion Assocations from 1960s to 1990s and secretion of Alevi identity diminished compared to past years because of the rising identity politics in Turkey.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Alevi organizations which created outside of Turkey created very huge pressure on Turkey's policies about Alevi and by the late 1980s, European Integration process revealed a new context for the reborn of Alevi movement and Turkey's effort to become EU member made the Alevi movement much more powerful with ties in Europe.<sup>64</sup>

## **6.5. KURDS IN TURKEY**

The Kurds, who are supposed to have 30 million populations and it is believed that they are the largest stateless group in the world.<sup>65</sup> A largely Sunni Muslim people with their own language and culture, most Kurds live in the generally contiguous areas of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Armenia and Syria – a mountainous region of southwest Asia generally known as Kurdistan

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<sup>62</sup> Policy Department External Policies, Religious Freedom in Turkey: Situation of Religious Minorities (European Parliament, Foreign Affairs 2008) 6

<sup>63</sup> Ibid 7

<sup>64</sup> Ibid 7

<sup>65</sup> Justin Huggler, The world's largest nation without a state seeks a new home in the West (The Independent, 2001)

("Land of the Kurds")<sup>66</sup>. Turkey is country which reserves the most crowded Kurdish population among Middle East countries. Roughly, 20 million Kurdish people live in Turkey. According to KONDA research institution's research which have it made by Milliyet News, %13,4 of the 50 thousand people described themselves as Kurd and by adding people under 18 years old, this rate raised to %15,68. When we adapt this statistic to the total population, this almost equals to 11.445 million Kurdish People.<sup>67</sup> In the report which was published by Democratic Society Party (now BDP), there are 15-20 million Kurds in Turkey, 12-15 million in Iran, 4,5-5 million in Iraq, 1,5-2 million in Syria; there are 0,5-1 million Kurds in Caucasus and Middle Asia countries, and there are 1,5-2 million Kurds in Europe immigrated with different reasons (in total more than 35 million).<sup>68</sup>

Kurdish people in Turkey have suffered due to decisions of state. In 1924, use of Kurdish language was forbidden in official sphere, including schools although protection of Kurds was guaranteed with the Treaty of Lausanne.<sup>69</sup> Up until now, there has been some major uprising since 1925. With the decisions of state, an uprising led by Sheikh Said occurred, but it was suppressed and results were brutal.<sup>70</sup> Another uprising occurred in Ararat in 1930 and the other one occurred in Dersim in 1938 and both of these uprisings also suppressed brutally.<sup>71</sup> There have been some positive developments after 1960 constitutional change. However, after 1980 military coup, new 1982 Turkish Constitution re-limited the liberal decisions of 1961 constitution. Villages were renamed with Turkish names and usage of Kurdish language was forbidden again. Since then, Turkish state and PKK fought each other, lasted 15 years and 37,000 people died.<sup>72</sup>

In later process, Kurdish people were subject to violence such as torture, arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment, electric shock treatment, rape and displacement of Kurdish people from their villages.<sup>73</sup> With the help of EU-Turkey relationships and pro-EU reforms, Turkey aimed to catch European standards on human rights, minority rights and democracy. Although nothing has clearly solved, there has been positive steps from both sides to end the conflict.

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<sup>66</sup>Who are the Kurds (Washington Post, 1999)

<sup>67</sup> Kürt Meselesini Yeniden Düşünmek (Konda Araştırma ve Danışmanlık, 2010) 19

<sup>68</sup> Demokratik Toplum Partisi Grup Başkanlığı, 2008

<sup>69</sup> Kerim Yıldız, The Kurds in Turkey EU Accession and Human Rights (Pluto Press London, 2005) 15.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 17

EU accession process of Turkey is an opportunity for Kurdish people to find a way out for their problems. It is for sure that, a political dialogue among Turkey and Kurds is an asset to solve the problem rather than armed conflict.

## **6.6. WHY ALEVIS AND KURDS REJECT BEING MINORITY IN TURKEY**

Both Alevis and Kurds are defined as a minority according to international standards while they reject the Turkishness upper identity. The situation can be described like this in theoretical ways but when we look at the practical ways, situation differs. Both state and these two groups have a common in one way: Both Kurds and Alevis are not minority. Kurds and Alevis in Turkey are counted as a minority according to internationally accepted four objective criteria which are; (1) to be citizen, (2) to be low in population, (3) Not to be dominant: In a sense, they were not the dominant side in the society. In contrast, they were dominated and precluded. Kurdish people have not named their children names in Kurdish language. To learn or to read their mother tongue has been prohibited. Alevis are humiliated and affronted as “Kızılbaş” (Redhead). They have just started to conduct their religious ceremony overtly, and (4) to be different: which the most important one.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the fifth and subjective criteria such groups cannot be defines as minority: If a group rejects being minority, they cannot be defined as a minority. But, the situation is different in this case. The reasons why Kurds and Alevis reject as being minority are that minorities are defined as a “rascally” in Turkey and they faced terrible discriminations.<sup>75</sup> Even today, minorities in Turkey are treated as second class citizen. In addition, according to B. Oran, these two groups reject being minority because they define themselves as a “founder element” and this feeling brings them into same position with Turks who see themselves as a “founder element” and All these groups define themselves as a “founder element” and embrace the Turkey.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Hakan Taşdemir and Murat Saraçlı, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye Perspektifinden Azınlık Hakları Sorunu (Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika Cover 2, No: 8 p.25-35 2007©) 26

<sup>75</sup> Baskın Oran “Azınlık Hakları Ve Kültürel Haklar Raporu”Nun Bütün Öyküsü (Birikim, no. 188 December 2004, p. 17-25) 12

<sup>76</sup> Baskın Oran, Kürtler ve Aleviler Azınlık mıdır? (Birgün News Corner Letter, 8 July, 2004)

When we look at all these processes, important developments were experienced regarding minorities (or about non-Muslims) and these developments were not welcomed well from high state officials and public both in Ottoman Empire and new founded Republic of Turkey. As a result, both public and state mostly met negatively reforms regarding these two issues and moved according to this. Thus, citizens and state have carried out these inerasable traces of history until today and this situation have reflected to the actions of them. One must keep mind that EU-Turkey relationships and EU's reform expectations about religious freedom and minority rights should be evaluated according to historical facts as well. As well as the discussing the decisions and attitudes of citizens and Republic of Turkey is another issue; we should know that all the decisions have been taken by state and citizens are related to these deep traces of history and should be evaluated according to it. Within this psychological trauma, these two reform expectations by EU were not welcomed in Turkey. Governments and other political actors shaped their politics according to these facts. As a matter of fact, government has not made a concrete working since 2005 and deficiencies still continue. Other political parties also did not support the reform expectations of EU regarding religious freedom and minority rights. Surely, there have been some positive steps but these progresses are not at satisfactory level as mentioned in the EU Commission Turkey Progress Reports. As part of religious freedom, US government's independent institution United States Independent Religious Freedom Committee (USIRFC) mentioned in the 2010 religious freedom report of Turkey that there has been some progress but these progress were not in the expected level and possible problems still continue. As stated in the report, "Minority religious groups also faced difficulties in freedom of worship, registration with the government, and the training of their followers and clergy. Although religious speech and persuasion was legal, some Muslims, Christians, and Baha'is faced restrictions and occasional harassment for alleged proselytizing or providing religious instruction to children."<sup>77</sup>

In addition, even though there are some positive steps, inconveniencies still continue about ethnic minorities as well. According to Human Rights Watch report, the government made some progress to improve the human rights of Kurds in Turkey.<sup>78</sup> Yet, at the same report, according to UN Human Rights Council's May evaluation which is done periodically, "Turkey argued that it was already implementing many of the recommendations made, but notably

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<sup>77</sup>Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor (International Religious Freedom Report 2010)

<sup>78</sup> Human Rights Watch (World Report 2011 Event of 2010) 479

refused those that would bring its definition of minorities in line with international law, or to wave its reservations to international law that upholds minority rights.”<sup>79</sup>

To have deeper knowledge about the topic, I will analyze the reactions of related political actors and citizens. To understand and evaluate the reactions of Turkey side better, keeping in mind the historical background of Turkey as mentioned above will give us much more definite ideas. Before that, it will be better to mention about the reports of EU commissions and discourses of EU officers about religious freedom and minorities for keeping the integrity of the topic.

## **7. EUROPEAN UNION REACTIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND MINORITY RIGHTS REFORMS IN TURKEY**

Candidate member countries to become a member of European Union need to fulfill the required criteria. After Turkey officially became candidate member, EU has demanded from Turkey to implement necessary political reforms and religious freedom and minority rights issues are some of these reforms. Due to main focus of this thesis are religious freedom and minority rights reforms, I will try to explore the reactions of European Union by analyzing Turkey progress reports from 2006 to 2010 and discourses of EU representatives and some groups in EU Parliament in this section.

### **7.1. PROGRESS REPORTS ABOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

#### **7.1.1. 2006 – 2010 PROGRESS REPORTS<sup>80</sup>**

When we look at the progress reports, EU mostly criticized the reactions of Turkey to religious freedom reform. From 2006 to 2010 many issues remained unsolved and limited developments were observed by European Commission. To give some examples of EU’s concerns about religious freedom:

Limitations continue about education of religious functionaries and work of the foreign religious functionaries. Preaching and broadcast of Department of Religious Affairs and local religious quarter can sometimes exhibit hostile attitudes against missionary activities. Some

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 483-4

<sup>80</sup> All the information was taken from European Commission Turkey Progress Reports from 2006 to 2010 unless otherwise specified.

attacks were recorded against non Muslim group's worships and religious functionaries. And Alevis face difficulties to open worships. Cem houses have not recognized as worship and can not get any money from formal institutions. Children of Alevis are forced to attend religious courses which is not recognized their own individuality.

Even though there has been some progress about adoption of the Law on foundations and the Government has started a dialogue with the Alevi and non-Muslim religious communities, the implementation of the Law and the resolution of the property-related issues regarding non-Muslim communities remains a huge problem. The environment as regards religious freedom has not been conducive to the full respect of this right in practice. A legal framework has not established yet in line with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). So, that all religious communities can function without meaningless limitations. No satisfying progress was reported on the major difficulties faced by the Alevis and non-Muslim religious communities.

EU pointed out that Turkey needs to make more efforts to create an atmosphere proper to full respect for freedom of religion in practice and to continue consistent initiatives targeted at improving dialogue with the various religious groups. As we can see from the reports, same concerns have remained unchanged and only little progress have made. Turkish government avoids the suggestions of European Union and people still suffer from government and public actions.

## **7.2. REACTIONS ABOUT MINORITY RIGHTS**

### **7.2.1. 2006 – 2010 PROGRESS REPORTS<sup>81</sup>**

EU commission also criticized the reactions of Turkey to the minority right reform. According to the progress reports, Turkey is not willing to implement minority rights reform called by European Union. To give some examples of EU's reactions about religious freedom:

EU has some concerns about minority issues such as freedom of religion. According to EU, attitude of Turkey on minority rights continues to be in the same way. Under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Turkish authorities suggest that minorities in Turkey form only from

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<sup>81</sup> All the information was taken from European Commission Turkey Progress Reports from 2006 to 2010 unless otherwise specified

non-Muslim religious communities. The minorities united by the authorities in practical terms with the Treaty of Lausanne are Jews, Armenians and Greeks. Nevertheless, there are other communities in Turkey which could be regarded as minorities considering the relating international and European standards.

Turkey's precondition towards the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as regards the rights of minorities which were challenged by several EU Member States on the grounds that they are not compatible with the objective and purpose of this Covenant, and its precondition to the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), as regards the right to education, are at stake. Moreover, Turkey has not signed the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Limited progress has been made in the area of education. The 2005 recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on school curricula and textbooks as well as on the functioning of minority schools continue to be acceptable. In order to take discriminatory language out of the textbooks, further endeavors should be made. The management of the minority schools involving the dual presidency is still a matter of concern. Two local TV channels in Diyarbakır and one radio in Şanlıurfa were allowed for broadcasting in Kurdish regarding cultural rights. Nonetheless, excluding films and music programmes, time restrictions are implemented. The Turkish Public Television (TRT) has continued broadcasting in five languages without excepting Kurdish. However, the duration and scope of TRT's national broadcasts in five languages is very restricted. No private broadcaster at national level has recourse to broadcast in languages other than Turkish since 2004 in which legislation was enacted. Children whose mother tongue is not Turkish cannot learn their mother tongue in the Turkish public schooling system, thus, private education institutions are required to ensure this. As for Kurdish all such courses were closed down in 2004. Thus, there is no chance to learn Kurdish today in the public or private schooling system. Moreover, no measures are taken to simplify access to public services for those who do not speak Turkish. As noted above, according to the Law on Political Parties, in political life, to use a language other than Turkish is unlawful. And the court case against the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) concerning a speech in Kurdish carries on. .

As a result, approach to minority rights remains limited in Turkey. Fully respect to language, culture and fundamental rights in line with European Standards has not provided yet. Turkey needs to spend more effort to improve tolerance to minorities and involve them into society. In addition, there has been some progress about cultural rights by some more liberalizing the usage of Kurdish in jails and both radio and TV broadcasts. Another TV channel started to 24 hours broadcast which has Arabic language besides TRT 6. Legal framework is open to discussion in usage of different languages than Turkish and practice is inconsistent.

To sup up, EU Commission states that there are some progresses but they are not in the expected level. It is very clear that commission reports show that European Union is not satisfied not being implemented of these two reforms by Turkey and EU demands further steps towards implement religious freedom and minority rights reforms.

## **8. REACTIONS OF EU REPRESENTATIVES AND OTHER GROUPS IN EU**

In addition to progress reports, other groups and some representatives in EU also declared their opinions about these reform implementations in Turkey. If we look at some examples of these discourses:

European Parliament Christian Democrat Group declared their expectations from Turkey to implement religious freedom reforms by saying that “Religious freedom must be provided in Turkey. Christians in Southeast Anatolia expect so many things from state” and European Parliament Socialist Group Richard Howitt also points out the necessity of religious freedom reform implementation in Turkey and AKEL-Takis Hadjigerorgiou declared his concerns and reform expectations about minorities.<sup>82</sup>

EU Parliament Rapporteur Ria Oomen-Ruijten also pointed out that there are some problems about implementing reforms and conflicts in politics and public obstruct the reform implementations and to the question of problems related to Kurdish people such as not being able to speak their own language; Ria Oomen-Ruijten answered as “More

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<sup>82</sup> Avrupa Parlamentosu'nda Türkiye raporu tartışıldı, (ABHaber News, March 2011)



democratic solution must be found for the Kurd problems under the democratic opening”.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Helene Flautre talked about Kurdish problem. Flautre wanted to be considered of citizenship rights again.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Cas-Granje pointed out that there are pressures on Kurdish newspapers and also stated that despite of improvements about human rights issues in Turkey, further steps need to be taken.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, the interview I had in Brussels with one of the representative of EU also says that Turkey had reasonable progress but after being candidate member and fulfilling Copenhagen criteria “sufficiently”, Turkey needs to implement more challenging and sensitive reforms such as freedom of religion and minority rights and these efforts need to be carried out in the future. In addition, she pointed out that “sufficiently” fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria should not stop Turkey rustling about political reforms. On the other hand, she mentioned some positive steps in freedom of religion like Halki orphanage was given back to patriarchate and given nationality to the Greek Orthodox clerks but also mentioned that these steps are not enough and more has to come.

About minority rights, she says that Turkey has started the “Kurdish Opening” but the process of implementation is questionable. She also added that Turkey is on the right direction but there are more to be done about it. In addition, she points out that promises given to Alevis should be implemented now or it will have to be done anyway in the future. About missionaries, she points out that attitude of civil society needs to change in Turkey. She also tells that these reforms actions should not only include government or political parties but also the public and for example citizens in Diyarbakir, Kars or Antalya should be informed about these reforms. She finally says that a necessary consensus should be provided between the political actors and everybody should participate in this process, because everybody will benefit from the membership of EU in the end.

To sum up, we can clearly notify that different groups in Parliament, Officers or Commission reports show that Turkey is not performing well in implementing religious freedom and minority rights reforms. They point out some positive steps but they do not think this will be enough to join union and Turkey must spend more efforts in these issues. It may not be easy

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<sup>83</sup> Helene Fleutre: Bazı ülkeler Türkiye'nin üyeliğini siyasi nedenlerle engelliyor, AP inisiyatif almalı (Turkey European Foundation News, October 2010)

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

for Turkey to get quick results but all the government, opposition parties, related political actors and public should provide a consensus to implement these reforms. Therefore, Turkey's membership process gain impetus and Turkey show its ambitious to become member of European Union.

## **9. REACTION OF TURKEY SIDE TO THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND MINORITY RIGHTS REFORMS**

Religious freedoms and minority rights reforms which EU demanded from Turkey have been commented in different ways both by public and politics. Generally, however, the repercussions of the events experienced in the past underlie the reactions of both public and political actors in Turkey. The use of both ethnic and religious minorities by the Westerners to divide the country both in the collapse period of the Ottoman Empire and in the years of foundation of the Republic has affected the attitude on minorities negatively. Regulations regarding minorities after the foundation of Republic of Turkey, therefore, have remained limited. Today, legal regulation on minorities is still Lausanne and according to this treaty just Rums, Jews and Armenians have the status of minorities. Having regard to these matters, demands of EU relating these two issues have been reacted antecedently negatively by Turkey. Turkish public and political parties considers generally that the EU will divide the country by abusing minorities and make Christianity spread all over Turkey. The aspect that EU creates artificial minority to create uproar in the country exists too in the given reactions. Notwithstanding that the examination of the reactions by the Turkish political parties and the public given in the light of historical trails is another subject, by considering the researches and discourses we can claim that the most important reason of negative reactions given by EU to the demands of the religious freedoms and minority rights reforms is the events experienced in the past.

### **9.1. PUBLIC WILL ABOUT MINORITY RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

Before going deeper explanation about the topic, I need to clarify one thing. This study will be the first scientific study about reflecting the reactions of public regarding religious freedom and minority reforms. There is no direct research about what public thinks about religious freedom and minority rights. We can see some statistics about general relationship

between EU and Turkey, but it is impossible to find related articles, books or magazines which show us what Turkish citizens think about these two reforms. So, I will attribute my findings according to past events such as reactions of Muslims to other religious groups and reactions of Turkish people to other minority groups in daily life, and the interviews I had. Moreover, I will use some statistics of Research Centers and some indirect scientific studies.

As we all know, public will is very important in the EU system. Citizens can be very effective in decision making process by influencing decision makers.<sup>86</sup> Within this concept, Turkish citizens play very critical role in implementing EU reforms, but this role is not always positive such as implementing religious freedom and minority rights reforms. As I mentioned earlier, people in Turkey support the membership of Turkey to the European Union despite of we see a clear decrease after 2004 spring.<sup>87</sup>

Reactions of Turkish citizens have changed according to concept of reforms. Lately, we saw that referenda results were positive to change some parts of constitution and EU side commented that Turkish citizens are positive to implement reforms.<sup>88</sup> However, situation is changing when is about implementing political reforms if they directly affect the daily life. It is also important that what we mean about affecting daily life. Different religious groups such as Alevi, Süryaniler, Ortodox; and minority groups such as Kurds will have definite rights such as practicing their religion and education in mother tongue if these two reforms are implemented. As I mentioned before, most of the citizens are strongly disagree implementing these reforms and giving rights to these groups. So, it is better to keep in mind that the reactions of Turkish people change according to topic about European Union.

No doubt, religious freedom and minority rights strongly affect the way of people's life in Turkey. People who will have more rights to practice their religion freedom freely and live their culture, language and etc. support these reform implementations. On the other hand, most of the citizens terribly stand against the implementations of these reforms due to different concerns. Some people think that European countries are trying to split the country and they are doing it via these political reform expectations and some people are afraid of

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<sup>86</sup> Reaction of Irish People about voting for Lizbon Treaty can be a good example of it.

<sup>87</sup> Oğuz Esen - Filiz Başkan, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye İlişkileri Beklentiler ve Kaygılar; Özgehan Şenyuva, Türkiye-Avrupa Birliği İlişkileri ve Kamuoyu (Eflatun Yayınevi, 2009) 35

<sup>88</sup> Dorian Jones, 'Referandum Sonucu Türkiye'nin Reform Yanlısı Olduğunu Gösterdi' (Voanews, 2010)

losing their Muslim religion.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, people are generally afraid of changing the situations of daily life in Turkey.

Arguably, there is positive correlation between discourses of political parties and the public will. So, discourses of political parties influence the will of public and vice versa in positive or negative way about EU reforms. If we think that, political parties or governments take into account the will of public to continue their leading role in politics. Therefore, they closely follow what people think and shape their both foreign and internal politics according to. It is also important to bear in mind that populist political party publicities are very common in Turkish political life. So, discourses of political parties can vary according to agenda.

To sum up, it is not surprise that both public and political will in Turkey stand against about implementing these two reforms.

## **9.2. REACTIONS OF PUBLIC**

Turkish citizens also evaluate the minority rights deficient like the missing description about minorities of Turkish state. Actually, when the general description is wrong about minorities, it is not surprise the negative approach of citizens to the both religious and ethnic minorities.

### **9.2.1. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REACTIONS**

A delegation of senior officials from various ministries visited the religious leaders of non-Muslim groups in June. On 19<sup>th</sup> of June, Ministry of Interior published a circular about religious freedom of non-Muslim citizens. In the circular, they are considered to be an increase in individual crimes against non-Muslim countries and their places of worship.<sup>90</sup>

According to the government researches, 99 % of population is Muslim and majority of Muslims is Sunni and academicians stated that there are 15-20 million Alevi in Turkey.<sup>91</sup>

There are also several other religious groups. According to USA's independent institution **USIRFC**, "While exact membership figures are not available, these religious groups include approximately 500,000 Shiite Caferis; 60,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians; 23,000 Jews;

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<sup>89</sup> Radikalizm ve Aşırıçılık Araştırması (Cumhuriyet News, 2009)

<sup>90</sup> European Commission, (Turkey 2007 Progress Report, Brussels, 2007) 16

<sup>91</sup> Policy Department External Policies, Religious Freedom in Turkey: Situation of Religious Minorities (European Parliament, Foreign Affairs 2008) 1

20,000 Syrian Orthodox (Syriac) Christians; 10,000 Baha'is; 5,000 Yezidis; 3,600 Jehovah's Witnesses; 3,500 members of various other Protestant sects; and up to 2,500 Greek Orthodox Christians.”<sup>92</sup>

When we look at the history, we can see that non-Muslim religious groups faced so much pressure from public. One of the biggest attacks against non-Muslim groups was experienced in 6th and 7th September in 1955. Mainly in İstanbul and İzmir, there has been lynch attempts and pour actions against non-Muslim citizens, many non-Muslim citizens injured and some of them died and material damages were in huge dimensions during the two days.<sup>93</sup> In addition, these events continuously happened during last few years.

When we look at the cases about Protestants, Samsun Agape Church leader Orhan Pıçaklar received many threats on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2007, 5 young people attacked to the Zirve Press which publish Christian books and Press workers Necati Aydın, Uğur Yüksel and Tilman Geske were brutally murdered by cutting their throats on 18<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007 and Branch of İstanbul Protestant Church in Eskisehir was attacked by Molotov Cocktails on 20<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007.<sup>94</sup> Offenders of some of these attackers were not found and cases related to these issues still remain to be solved in the courts. In addition, in the 2010 Rights Violations Report, many cases were indicated about hate crimes, problems related to places of worship, the right to propagate religion, mandatory religious class, the problem of training religious leaders, legal entity/ right to organize, obligatory discrimination of belief and discrimination.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, Assyrians also received some attacks. In 2009, nephew of Mor Gabriel Piorı Metropolitan Bishop Timetheos Samuel Aktaş and Midyat Assyrian Cultur Club President Yuhanna Aktaş were attacked by sticks.<sup>96</sup> Mor Yakup Church in Nusaybin and Mor Barsawme Church in Mardin belongs to Assyrians were attacked twice in two months and a person who

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<sup>92</sup> Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor (International Religious Freedom Report 2010)

<sup>93</sup> For detailed information please check; Rifat N. Bali, 6-7 Eylül 1955 Olayları (Tanıklar – Hatıralar), (Libra Press, 2010)

<sup>94</sup> For more examples please visit; <http://www.habervesaire.com/haber/196/>

<sup>95</sup> Association of Protestant Churches Committee for Religious Freedom and Legal Affairs, Report on Human Right Violations of 2010 (Association of Protestant Churches, 2011)

<sup>96</sup> Süleyman İş, Süryani Başkana Sopalı Saldırı (Stargazete News, December 2009)

opened a Turkish flag and threatened the Assyrians with a hammer during the religious ceremony.<sup>97</sup>

Armenian people also faced terrible violent events in recent years. In 2007, Agos Newspaper Chief Hrant Dink was murdered. The interesting part of this murder is that police and gendarme did not provide any protection although they received information about being killed of H. Dink.<sup>98</sup> Even police and gendarme forces took photos with the murderer.<sup>99</sup> Case of this hearing have not solved yet. Furthermore, Istanbul Greek Ortodox cemetery in Gökçeada was attacked in 2010.<sup>100</sup>

Alevis also have government's share from the exclusionist politics. Prime Minister's comments against Alevis mentioned in the press release of Alevi Institute and added that "Therefore, we urge the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to stop and rescind his and his party's other members' anti-Alevi campaign and deliver a public apology for his discriminatory remarks."<sup>101</sup> Within the "Combating Anti-Discrimination and movement for Equality" project which was funded by European Instrument For Democracy and Human Rights (DIHAA) and conducted with the cooperation of Alevi Culture Institutions and Middle East Technical University Department of Sociology, several interviews revealed the discrimination against Alevis within "Alevis and Discrimination Research".

Discrimination in daily life, education, school, reaching public services, military service and places of worships were explained by Alevis during the interviews. When we look at the people's sayings, one told that assimilation is being done by giving compulsory Sunni belief based religious class and building mosques to the Alevi villages.<sup>102</sup> Another Alevi citizen mentioned that compulsory religious class must be removed and one does not want his/her child to attend Sunni belief based religious class.<sup>103</sup> Yet, another person claim that all the mosques in Turkey take advantage of state subsidies and Cem Houses cannot take

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<sup>97</sup> Süryanilere İkinci Saldırı, (Birgün News, August 2010)

<sup>98</sup> Hrant Dink'i ölüme götüren ihmaller zinciri, (NTV News, January 2010)

<sup>99</sup> AKP: Hrant Dink ölümü hak etti, (Emek dünyası News, August 2010)

<sup>100</sup> Gaye Sönmez, Türkiye Gökçeada'da Rum Ortodoks Mezarlığına Yapılan Saldırısı Kınadı (Yakın Dünya News, November 2010)

<sup>101</sup> Declaration To Condemn The Turkish Prime Minister's Remarks About The Alevi Minority

<sup>102</sup> Aykan Erdemir, Cahit Korkmaz, Halil Karaçalı, Muharrem Erdem, Theresa Weitzhofer, Umut Beşpınar, Türkiye'de Alevi Olmak (Alevi Kültür Dernekleri , 2010) 106

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 112

advantage of these subsidies which creates discrimination.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, one of the interviews I had with a representative of Hacı Bektaş Veli Institutions Headquarters, representative mentioned that they receive hundreds of telephone calls regarding discrimination against Alevi. He also pointed out that they receive many threats due to defending the rights of Alevi. In addition, he said that these discriminations are being done by the hands of government. At the same time, he acknowledges that Alevi in Turkey do not have any life quarantine and Alevi receive death threats by Sunni people in daily life.

As we can see from this broad picture, living as a non-Muslim or not being Sunni in Turkey is a problematic issue while they face terrible attacks by Sunni Muslim people even today. Sunni Muslim people do not show toleration to other religious groups and they do not want to live together with people from other religious groups. In this direction, "Radicalism and Extremis" Research which is implemented by Bahçeşehir University and British Foreign Ministry in 2009 showed that how Sunni Muslim people perceive the other religions and atheists. According to research, % 75 of Sunni Muslims do not want atheists, % 32 of Muslims do not want people who do not fast, % 65 of Muslims do not want people who does not have any religious belief, % 52 of Muslim do not want Christian and % 64 of Muslims do not want Jewish people as their neighbor.<sup>105</sup>

So, it is not difficult to make an assumption that people in Turkey are against of religious freedom reforms called by EU. Sunni Muslim people in Turkey see other religious groups as a threat themselves and they try to suppress them whenever possible (by force or illegally). In addition, they asses the EU reforms as a threat for their country. They believe that EU wants to split the country as they tried to do it after World War I.

All in all, despite of there is no clear data about what public thinks about these two reforms, some researches show that people are against of European Union and EU reforms with different concerns. %81 of people think that EU wants to spread Christianity in Turkey, %76 of them think that EU tries to split Turkey and %80 of people think that EU tries to split and weaken Islam.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 238

<sup>105</sup> Radikalizm ve Aşırıılık Araştırması (Cumhuriyet News, 2009)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Although these facts are not directly connected to the reactions of religious freedom called by EU, we can assess that there is no general public consensus about this reform. Sunni Muslim people are not tolerated to the other religious groups and giving rights to other religious groups to live their religion freely cannot be allowed according to them. Under these circumstances, we can definitely say that there is no public will to implement religious freedom reform called by European Union.

### **9.2.2. REACTIONS ABOUT MINORITY REFORMS**

Minority rights may be the most problematic issue in Turkey. As I mentioned before, definition of minorities still remains unchanged since the Treaty of Lausanne. Only non Muslim groups; Jewish, Armenian and Greeks are recognized as minority in Turkey and other minorities are ignored. Nonetheless, most of the minority rights discussions in Turkey have been over the Kurdish people. Sometimes, Roma people participate to discussions but they do not take an important role on the agenda. Other minorities either do not call themselves as minority such as Lazes or they are ignored.

There are several minorities in Turkey but Kurds are the most crowded minority in Turkey with its almost 20 million population. Due to having armed conflict with PKK<sup>107</sup>, toleration for Kurdish people is very low in Turkey. Therefore, there is a struggle among Turkish and Kurdish people in public level. However, unlike other religious groups, there is not so much direct conflict among Turkish and Kurdish people in Turkey except terrorism. Only sometimes nationalist university students fight Kurdish people or people who defend Kurdish people's rights and vice versa.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, some of the Turkish; especially nationalist people are strongly against of being described of Kurdish people as minority. They do not want Kurdish people to have education in mother tongue, name Kurdish names for their children, etc. Mainly, some of the Turkish people are against of giving minority rights to Kurdish people. On the other hand, Turkish citizens are surprisingly giving positive feedbacks to the Kurdish opening<sup>109</sup> which has been on the agenda since 2009.

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<sup>107</sup> PKK is recognized as a terrorist organization by Turkey and EU, but some of the Kurdish people see them as a "freedom fighters".

<sup>108</sup> See the following links; Uludağ Üniversitesi'nde Sağ-Sol Kavgası (Politik Akademi News, May 2011) <http://www.politikakademi.org/2011/05/uludag-universitesinde-sag-sol-kavgasi/>

<sup>109</sup> Kurdish opening is a process to solve the problems concerning Kurdish people. Visit <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2009/11/07/iste-kurt-acilimi.html> to have more information about Kurdish Opening.



A&G's research on Kurdish opening showed us the ideas of citizens about it. The survey was done in Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Diyarbakır, İçel, İstanbul, İzmir, Kayseri, Malatya, Manisa, and Trabzon, face to face interviews were done by 260 people and %45.6 of participants said yes to the Kurdish opening.<sup>110</sup> According to another Kurdish opening research which is done by the cooperation of Politics, Economy, and Society Researches Foundation (SETA) and Pollmark Research Institute, %55 of the citizens see the Kurdish problems as a significant for Turkey and majority of the citizens approve the Kurdish opening of government (% 43 positive, % 39 negative).<sup>111</sup>

On the other hand, various families of martyrs<sup>112</sup> Association Presidents and Administrators made a press release in Bingöl and declared their disapproval of the Kurdish opening and President Ziya Sözen told in his speech that "We reunited here to react the Kurdish opening which is opened to discussion in public opinion. All these villages have the traces of blood spilled by PKK terrorist organization and these events continue to occur. Before ending this conflict and stop the spill of blood, talking about peace and democracy only works for increase the pain of families of martyrs. This Kurdish opening will cause a disintegration and polarization in society"<sup>113</sup>. İstanbul Mother of martyrs Association President Pakize Akbaba also stated that "If there is something to talk or solved, you should first talk with the families of martyrs. However, as far as I see, you are insistent to make this Kurdish opening. You cannot make it because we owe the Republic of Turkey. Our sons were killed by PKK terrorist organization and we wept".<sup>114</sup> As we can see from the perspectives of families of martyrs, they do not approve such opening which will give more freedom and rights to Kurdish people in Turkey. So, the problem seems more complicated than it appears.

As we see, most of the Turkish citizens do not welcome the religious freedom and minority rights reforms. They clearly see the demands of EU as a threat to their country and they are afraid, because they think their country will be separated by the Christian world (European Union). So, do Turkish citizens right to worry about their country or is there something else?

When EU says "minority", it means that people can be classified as minority must have the same rights as majority of the society does. In other words, when Sunni people's mosques

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<sup>110</sup> A&G Research Institute, Kurdish Opening Survey 1 and 2 (25-6 August 2009)

<sup>111</sup> SETA&Pollmark, Türkiye'nin Kürt Sorunu Algısı (SETA&Pollmark Publisher, September 2009)

<sup>112</sup> Who lost their children in PKK attacks.

<sup>113</sup> Abduldakir Kantarcıoğlu, Şehir ailelerinden Kürt Açılımına tepki (İhlas News Agency News, August 2009)

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

have government subsidies, other places of worship belong to other religious group also must benefit from subsidies of government. Both Turkish and other minority languages should be able to take elective language courses in schools.

EU demands from Turkey to give more rights to minorities and minorities should really be same with majorities. However, minorities in Turkey are seen as non-Muslim and disruptive element. We still see the traces of “nation system” which is established by Ottoman since 1454. Related articles about minorities in Lausanne also designated according to this idea. Due to western countries used the non-Muslims to separate the Ottoman; they are still seen as disruptive element in Turkey. It is not easy for many people who think in that way to understand the demands and reforms of EU.

## **10. REACTIONS OF POLITICAL ACTORS IN TURKEY**

In this part, the EU discourses of political parties will be analyzed in order to exhibit the attitudes of political parties on the EU membership of Turkey which have a significant impact on Turkish political life. Instead of the discourses of all political parties, the approaches of AKP, CHP, MHP and BDP will form the basis for this analyze. In order to be able to analyze the discourses of AKP on EU reforms, the discourses of the party leader and the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, of Ali Babacan, who was the chief negotiator until 2009, and of Egemen Bağış, of Abdullah Gül, who was the foreign affairs minister from 2005 until today, and of Ahmet Davutoğlu and of the other party members, of the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits of the party have been examined. And to comprehend the reactions of CHP to EU reforms, the speeches of Deniz Baykal and Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu – period leaders – and the discourses of party members, the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits have been taken into account. Moreover, in order to measure the reactions of MHP to EU reforms, the discourses of Devlet Bahçeli and party members, of the party program and 2007 and 2011 election affidavits, and Turkey and Politics magazine, which is published by Research and Development Centre belonging to the party and which is published every two months, and the reports prepared by R&D Centre have been examined. The attitudes of BDP, consisting of the gathered independent candidates because the threshold is 10%, on EU reforms have been analyzed through discourses of party members, 2011 election affidavit, party programs and regulations.

The relations of Turkey with European Union have been, undoubtedly, always on the agenda of the parties in Turkey. The approaches of parties take shape not only according to the origins of their own but also sometimes by populist approaches. Although a nationalist party as MHP always argues against EU membership, they have positively addressed to the relations with EU for the sake of balances and interests in internal politics. On the contrary, a party as CHP which leans towards the relations with EU has acted upon the agenda by reprehending various reforms as minority rights in EU membership process in order to criticize the policies of current government and to receive votes. In spite of the fact that current government, AKP, argues that they completely support the EU membership and are prepared for the membership and act upon this, everybody has noticed that they made gradually less effort after 2005. In the same way, it is also a known fact that they are reluctant to implement reforms as regards religious freedoms and minorities. It is obvious that minority party BDP leans towards the implementation of minority reform whose implementation by EU is desired as soon as possible. Although there are other political parties in the country, because they appear on media in no way and they have scarcely any statements regarding these issues, the point of views and attitudes of AKP, CHP, MHP and BDP which are shaping the agenda have been examined.

So, there are four political parties which represent country in the parliament and they are actively involved in shaping country's political life. Justice and Development Party is Government Party and CHP, MHP and BDP are three opposition parties in the parliament. All these actors have their own perspectives to the minority rights reforms and religious freedom reforms and each actor shapes their politics according to their current position, political or historical background, agenda of the country and vote concern.

### **10.1. PEACE AND DEMOCRACY PARTY (BDP)<sup>115</sup>**

BDP was founded in 2008. After the closure decision of Democratic Society Party by the decision of constitutional court in December 2009, 20 parliamentarians and 98 mayors from DTP joined to BDP.

BDP defines itself as a left leaning mass party that perceives libertarian, egalitarian, peaceful, pluralist and multi-cultural society as richness. It adopts democratic-local and horizontal

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<sup>115</sup> All the information is taken from the official web page of BDP

style of politics in place of centralist and hierarchical politics; rejecting all forms of discrimination and racism. BDP sees the liberation of the humankind in the establishment of the free, democratic and ecological society. Peace and Democracy Party conducts a political struggle aware of the urgency of establishing social peace in the country and emphasizing the necessity of an effort to restructure the legal, administrative, political, social, economic and cultural arenas through comprehensive democratic reforms. In this sense, it stands as the organization for struggle of all social segments regardless of ethnicity, class and gender which live on their labor including women, the youth and different belief groups. BDP undertakes comprehensive effort oriented toward the implementation of urgent reforms for the effectuation of local democracy and conducts scientific research and discussion to this and. The party is a determined supporter of the EU membership process of Turkey from the same perspective. Peace and Democracy Party , which sees the EU not solely as a community of states, but also community of people; makes considerable attempts for active involvement in the negotiation process in order to watch closely the implementation of reforms for compliance with the EU process and to ensure that the process serves the widest interests of society. BDP, while regarding the creation of libertarian and democratic society as its fundamental principle; declares, in conformity with this principle that the Turkish Republic has been established by the Turkish and Kurdish people and all other ethnic groups and that the roots of fraternity between people lies in the depths of history. Hence, Peace and Democracy Party perceives the solution to the Kurdish Problem and the peaceful future of people in the establishment of the Democratic Republic and in the principle of "**free co-existence in the common homeland**". In this context, the party is a staunch supporter in all platforms, of organized civil society, a social structure within which people can build their own identities and of the making of a new constitution in conformity with universal law; one that promotes a peaceful, libertarian, egalitarian, and participatory society. The predication of the relationship between the state and religion upon the principle of democratic and libertarian secularism through which the state assumes a neutral role towards all religions which are allowed to freely express themselves is attributed primary importance by the party. BDP strives for the provision of the right to education in mother tongue for everyone without discrimination and for the establishment of a democratic conception concerning the press, intellectual reflections, culture and arts.

### **10.1.1. REACTION TO MINORITY REFORMS**

BDP can be defined as a minority party and it is for sure that their first goal is to defend the rights of Kurdish citizens in Turkey according to Party Program.

In the party program, BDP aims generally at multiculturalism, keeping the differences alive, making all citizens express themselves freely, develop their culture, speak their mother tongue and develop it, educated in their own mother tongue and benefit from visual, auditory and printed media; and aims at making the idea of “Republic of Turkey Citizenship” which shall include all ethnic, cultural, belief and gender differences adopted instead of the understanding of a single race, single language, single religion, single culture and male-dominant society; furthermore, it has had expressions regarding that the Constitution and laws, such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be made suitable for the international contract provisions to which Turkey is a party contracts which are not signed or approved yet should be signed and approved, and the drawbacks which are in the signed and approved contracts and limiting human rights and liberties should be removed.<sup>116</sup> And under the title of the program named “Democratic and Peaceful Settlement for the Kurdish Problem”, Kurdish problems and settlements regarding this are included. The report pointing out that the Kurds as a minority could not benefit from the rights which they should according to EU reports, has drawn attention to the solutions of the Kurdish problem. In this context, in the program, there are expressions like the existence and identity of Kurds shall be recognized on every level and guaranteed constitutionally, necessary regulations shall be made for legal right equality, constitutional guarantee shall be ensured for their language and cultural rights, there shall be no restrictions on radio, TV and the press, the broadcasts in Kurdish or other languages shall carry out their activities in the same way and with the same legal rules applied to Turkish radio and TV, the same legal rules and procedures shall be applied to cultural activities.<sup>117</sup> It, moreover, undertakes that the Kurdish shall be used as education and training language, the inequalities and discriminations relating human rights shall be removed, every kind of violation shall be precisely eliminated, the human rights violations, persecutions and unsolved murders shall be investigated and offenders shall be judged.<sup>118</sup> Briefly stated, BDP has articulated in the party program that they would make

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<sup>116</sup> BDP Official Web page, About Us

<sup>117</sup> BDP Party Program, a. Kürt Sorununa Demokratik ve Barışçı Çözüm Yolu

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

decisions about Kurds and endeavour for this. Apart from these, BDP has stated that the relations shall be developed on the basis of cooperation and solidarity with EU and they supports the EU membership process of Turkey in the sense of democratization and shall deal with the harmonization process of national law about EU norms as a primary duty.<sup>119</sup>

As it is clearly understood from this program, BDP supports the requirement of minority reform by EU because it serves well to internal politics of party. They clearly stated this by their supporting EU as I suggested above.

In addition, in Article 3 of Party regulation, there is a statement as follows: “BDP, who see the EU process not only as a community of states but also as a community of nations, defends this process pertinaciously. BDP takes steps which will ensure active participation in the negotiation process with the intention that this will serve society’s interests as a follower of the implementation of reforms and regulations required by EU process.”<sup>120</sup> and this statement shows us how BDP supports the EU minority reform.

Selahattin Demirtaş, BDP deputy, noted in an interview, by criticizing the attitudes of EU and AKP, that they have a favorable opinion about reforms but the relations with EU are bad. Moreover, he also defended that the government was reluctant about EU reforms, that AKP tried to make an agreement without making necessary regulations and EU was already seeking a pretext.<sup>121</sup>

Another deputy of BDP, Gülten Kışanak, stated by criticizing the government that the government did not implement the reforms which are required by EU membership process and on the contrary it blocks the rights and liberties with the laws enacted in 2005-2006.<sup>122</sup>

Moreover, in the Political Attitude Document On Democratization of Turkey and Settlement of the Kurdish Problem published by BDP, about the privileges granted by EU countries for the minorities to be able to speak their own mother tongue, at the same time it has also criticized that Turkey did not maintain an attitude on this subject and in addition to this, although Turkey as a candidate of EU is one of the council countries which signed the European charter of local autonomy first and approved it in the parliament first, it has

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<sup>119</sup> BDP Party Program, 3. Bölge ve Dünya Siyasetimiz

<sup>120</sup> BDP Party Constitution

<sup>121</sup> Demirtaş ve Kışanak’tan dış politikaya kırık not (Milliyet News, February 2011)

<sup>122</sup> Eda Han, BDP: Ana dilimizi konuşmak istiyoruz (Haber Newspaper News, February 2010)

emphasized the fact that Turkey is the only country who is chary of the article of freedom of association in European charter of local autonomy.<sup>123</sup>

### **10.1.2. REACTIONS TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

While BDP is actively involved in EU reforms concerning minority rights, they are not really interested in religious freedom reforms. However, they have some indirect discourses about freedom of religious. In the 2011 Election Bulletin, BDP mention that they will remove all the obstacles blocking for every person to enjoy a life regarding religious freedom.<sup>124</sup>

Co-chairman of BDP, Selahattin Demirtaş, has stated that they are on side of making a package within the scope of “freedom of religion, conscience and belief” and demanded a package which will provide the solutions not only for the scarf issue but also for “the removal of compulsory religion lesson and subject of djemevis” which Alevis demanded within the scope of freedom of belief and for minority problems and even for problems of Assyrians and Keldanis.<sup>125</sup>

While BDP, by its basis, is supporting the EU reforms regarding minority rights unconditionally, they are also criticizing the inadequate acts of EU and AKP government in this sense. Despite this, they are using EU as a pressure tool for the Turkish government by saying that the positive steps will be supported. Undoubtedly, BDP is acting within their interests by mentioning their demand for EU reforms both in the election bulletin and their internal and foreign politics. Moreover, they are noting that as a country, the steps, even if they are indirect, should be taken about religious freedoms and they are appealing to the government to work through about this issue. Consequently, we can state that BDP is supporting these two EU reforms to be implemented in Turkey and is ready for doing any requirements in this sense.

## **10.2. NATIONALIST MOVEMENT PARTY**

The party, which was named “CMKP”<sup>126</sup> until 1969 and claimed its place in Turkish history, was named MHP by a decision made in 1969. The basis for MHP propagandas is represented

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<sup>123</sup>Türkiye'nin Demokratikleşmesi Ve Kürt Sorununda Çözümüne Dair Siyasi Tutum Belgesi

<sup>124</sup>BDP 2011 Election Charter

<sup>125</sup>İnanç özgürlüğü kapsamında bir paket hazırlanmalı (Zaman News, October 2010)

<sup>126</sup>**Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi** 16 Ekim 1958'de [Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi](#) ile [Türkiye Köylü Partisi](#)'nin birleşmesiyle kurulan siyasi parti.

by six arrows ideology which has revolutionary characteristics of Kemalism and Nine Lights which has traditional-conservative characteristics grounding on Turkish Nationalism shaped by Islam. And Nine Lights are the main principles of idealism introduced as **National Doctrine Nine Lights** by Alparslan Türkeş. These principles have been classified as nationalism, moralism, scientism, socialism, idealism, ruralism, liberty and personalism, developmentism and populism and industrism and technicalism. Nationalism was the most important one in these Nine Lights. MHP defended an anti-capitalist anti-communist nationalist policy in which idealism reached to peak. MHP achieved its greatest success by receiving 18% vote in the parliamentary elections in 18 April 1999.

### **10.2.1. REACTIONS OF NATIONALIST MOVEMENT PARTY**

A profound reform process began, in the name of democratization, in 1999 Helsinki Summit with the candidate status given to Turkey. In this context, the only concrete step taken by MHP on the way to EU, is the three harmonization packages made for meeting the political criteria of EU between 2002 and 2004 and with the coalition government. In the next years, reactions of MHP to EU reforms have changed and pursue an anti-reformist policy. In the documents published by MHP and in the discourses of Devlet Bahçeli, demands of reform about religious freedoms and minority rights have been explicitly criticized and they have reacted to them negatively. I will bring the attitude of MHP to light by looking through the reports published by MHP and discourses one by one beginning from 2005.

### **10.2.2. THE YEAR 2006 REPORT REVIEW**

MHP has reprehended the progress report published by EU in 2006 and touched on demands of reform about minority rights and religious freedom. The expectations of EU with demands and impositions have been interpreted under two titles as negative detection and expectation of EU about Turkey.

In the part of Minority Rights in report published, the statement as an obsession of EU on forcefully creating a Muslim national minority in Turkey is drawing attention. Furthermore, the reforms which EU demanded to be implemented by Turkey<sup>127</sup> are highlighted. In the part of freedom of religion and worship, in the same way, the reforms

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<sup>127</sup> Please check EU Commission 2006 Progress Report



which EU demanded from Turkey to be implemented have been included and the steps taken by AKP in this sense have been reprehended. That is, the report has involved a statement as “To accept the imposition for AKP government who sacrificed Turkish national interests to get a good grade from EU is seen as a deferred ransom installment.”<sup>128</sup> In addition to this, in the time of AKP government, to allow the Metropolitan Bishop who cannot become a Turkish citizen to become a member of Sen Sinod which is the board of directors of Fener Rum Patriarch in the history of Republic has been described as AKP’s keeping up with the games of EU. Furthermore, it accuses AKP government which is seen as loyal applicator of EU scenarios regarding religious minorities of not being able to see these facts and continuing their negligence march.

### **10.2.3. 2007 ELECTION AFFIDAVIT**

In the 2007 Election Affidavit, as a reaction to all reforms expected by EU from Turkey, the following statement appeared: “a disappointment story full of blackmails, impositions, preconditions, unjustified requests and pressures.”<sup>129</sup>

### **10.2.4. 13 NOVEMBER 2009 PARLIAMENT SPEECH AS REGARDS KURDISH OPENING <sup>130</sup>**

The leader of MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, emphasized explicitly that they are against the minority reform in his speech on Kurdish initiative in 13 November 2009. Throughout the speech, he has defended that people living on the territories Republic of Turkey do not have different identities and every individual should be evaluated as Turkish nation. Moreover, with the expression of “minority desired to be created”<sup>131</sup> with the initiative, there was and can not be any minorities.

He also notes that they can not accept the rights given under the name of minority rights and any other language than Turkish can not be used in official institutions. In this respect, EU is seen as a disruptive power and it is implied that EU has a demolition imitative on

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<sup>128</sup> Nationalist Movement Party R&D Center 2006, Progress Report and Strategy Paper 2006 ( October 2006) 4

<sup>129</sup> Nationalist Movement Party Election Statement 2007, (July 2007) 119

<sup>130</sup> Nationalist Movement Party, Açılımın Karanlığında Türkiye (November 2009, Ankara)

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 19

Turkey. Generally Bahçeli states that all citizens in the country are Turkish nation and thinks that artificially created minorities and reactions of EU will divide the country.

Devlet Bahçeli has again put his negative reaction to minority reforms forward, in his writings sent by him to the organizations, by using such statements as “ Clearance of the nation-state and unitary structure, de-identification of our nation, artificially created minorities and the process seeking for devastation of a millennial fellowship embodies the dangers on a lasting level.”<sup>132</sup>

### **10.2.5 LAST TWO YEARS OF AKP**

In the same way, in this declaration published by MHP, they gave negative reactions to the reforms regarding minorities and demanded by EU. In these reactions, MHP, who is pushing both AKP government and EU, has enunciated that they have negative reactions to the minority reform, religious freedoms, relations with EU and the government by noting that “The desire of EU, whose intent to delay Turkey with a virtual negotiation process in which the full membership is not the ultimate goal is clearly understood, to use this process to forcefully create a national minority has continued as the submissiveness of AKP whose forcing a series of lists focused on “The Kurdish Problem” down the government’s throat has been accustomed.”<sup>133</sup> And then they show their reactions to the reforms relating religious freedoms by mentioning argumentatively such expressions that the status of “ecumenic” for Fener Rum Patriarch has been accepted and the existence of Muslim national minorities in Turkey has been admitted.<sup>134</sup>

### **10.2.6. DESTRUCTION PROJECT OF “POLITIZATION PROCESS OF SEPARATIST TERROR”**

In this declaration including the developments in 2009, the hypercriticisms both to AKP government and EU due to the expected reforms continued similarly. Kurdish initiative has been again defined as a way to destruction in EU-AKP partnership <sup>135</sup> and EU’s demand for minority and religious freedoms reforms to be implemented has been interpreted as an

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<sup>132</sup> Devlet Bahçeli, Nationalist Movement Party, Türkiye Gündemi ve Genelgeler 2 (November 2008) 73

<sup>133</sup> Nationalist Movement Party, Yıkım Sürecinde AKP’nin son 2 yılı ( 5 September 2007 – 5 September 2009), (September 2009, Ankara) 11

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 12

<sup>135</sup> Devlet Bahçeli, Nationalist Movement Party, Bölücü Terörün Siyasallaşma Süreci YIKIM PROJESİ (October 2009) 16

effort to divide Turkey<sup>136</sup> and as an abuse and defamation.<sup>137</sup> And for the effort of EU to divide Turkey, they have exemplified the reopening of Halki Seminary.<sup>138</sup>

### **10.2.7. EU REPORTS OF MHP (2009, 2010,2010)**

In EU reports published by MHP Research, Development and Evaluation Centre, the negative reactions to the reforms regarding minority and religious freedoms demanded by EU have carried on.

In the 2009 report, MHP, again, has argued that the idea of EU about forcefully creating a national minority in Turkey is at the heart of the assignment of “Apart from the minorities involving in Treaty of Lausanne in Turkey, it is emphasized that there are other communities which should be regarded as minorities.”<sup>139</sup>

In the part of religion freedom of EU reports, they have explained the Alevis’ being defined as a minority, the existence of demands by long lists relating non-Muslim citizens, the opening of Halki Seminary in Turkey, the permission given to Fener Rum Patriarch to use the “ecumenical” adjective and Turkey’s not interfering in the elections of church administration by arguing that the EU entrapped the country and have interpreted the steps of the government, which we can define as positive, as falling into this trap.<sup>140</sup>

In a general expression, in the report such statements regarding religious freedoms and minority reforms as “The European Union is besotted with forcefully creating a national minority in Turkey. EU policies, which have made us expose the disintegration in ethnic basis, have not been backward in coming forward and talked about denominational differences.”<sup>141</sup> included.

In the report published in **March, 2010**; MHP has interpreted the expectation of reforms as the recognition of Ecumenical Patriarchate and opening of seminary as the

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 91-92

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 42

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 43

<sup>139</sup> Nationalist Movement Party R&D Center, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye (February 2009) 3

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 4

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. 8

resurrection of Sevres in the same way that the historical facts and Sevres trauma influenced the reactions of the community to these reforms in the past.<sup>142</sup>

In addition to this, they highlighted that the expectation of Turkey's having a new minority definition other than the one in Treaty of Lausanne should not be existed, Alevi and Kurd citizens of ours are the fundamental elements of the country, an the evaluations as regards ecumenism and seminary should be made within the framework of Treaty of Lausanne.<sup>143</sup> MHP has interpreted the statement of Hayati Yazıcı, who is the secretary of state and is drawing attention to that the missionaries in the country do not do their duties and who is saying "If the foundation has a religious goal, of course it will work for this goal." as "They granted the Crusades a visa."<sup>144</sup>

And in the report of December, 2010 published lastly, the heavy criticisms in 2009 about these two reforms have continued. All the reports of EU in this respect are interpreted as EU authorities' interrogating Treaty Establishing the Republic of Turkey and Lausanne for the declarations, chapter that could not be opened and lasting criteria and the government's consent to this.<sup>145</sup>

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli criticized the reform expactations in many statements of his made to the media by using expressions similar to the above. And at the same time, he has criticized the government because they took positive steps about minorities and religious freedoms in the last elections and used these reforms as electioneering. MHP leader has even equated the EU to a terrorist organization by saying in his reaction to 2008 report that "It is clearly a fact that the demands and impositions of EU about minority rights match up with the political action plan and ethnic separatism agenda of PKK."<sup>146</sup> Devlet Bahçeli has interpreted the Foreign Affairs Minister's finding the important points about minority rights and religious freedoms in the EU report in 2008 positive as disgraceful.<sup>147</sup> And in another speech of his, Bahçeli has accused the government of being in total submissiveness to pressures and suggestions from inside and outside because of the responses to the reform

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 31

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 31

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 33

<sup>145</sup> Nationalist Movement Party R&D Center, Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye (December 2010) 40

<sup>146</sup> Bahçeli: Ab'nin İlerleme Raporu Hayal Kırıklığı (Haberler News, November 2008)

<sup>147</sup> Bahçeli, Obama Alkışına Kızdı (Benguturk News, February 2011)

expectations of EU and of trying to weaken the all resistance and security mechanisms of our national and governmental life.

It is very clear that MHP regards the expectations of EU relating minority rights and religious freedoms reforms as a threat to the country and criticize the EU on the grounds that they are aiming at divide and demolish Turkey. At the same time, MHP is pushing the government which is sometimes taking positive steps for this reform demand both in media and in their written declarations and their parliament speeches. Additionally, they are using the existing situation as an election material by noting that EU is requiring these reforms to divide and demolish the country and by reprehending the relations of AKP with EU. Undoubtedly, when we examine the basis of the party, it cannot be surprising that MHP is confronting the religious freedoms and minority reforms. Put aside arguing if it is right or not, it is extremely normal by politics' nature that MHP is criticising these kind of reforms to make up to their own party basis and using these as election materials. In short, MHP is suggesting their negative opinions about religious freedoms and minority reforms demanded by EU more clearly than other parties and MHP is shaping their acts in this sense according to this.

## **11. REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY<sup>148</sup>**

CHP was established under the leadership of Great Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by the name of "People's Faction" before 9 September 1923. In 1924, its name changed to "Republican People's Faction and then in 1935 to "Republican People's Party."

CHP is the party which gained national independence, established the Republic, abolished the sultanate and caliphate and ensured National Unity under the leadership of its founder and first general president Atatürk. It has formulized the Republic of Turkey by the reforms implemented in social spheres such as law and education. It has pioneered the development of national industry and economy. Despite all the opportunities of one party system, it has continued to be the pioneer also in the democratization process of Turkey by ensuring the transition to a multi-party system after the World War II.

It also led the institutionalization of opposition in a democratic regime by the opposition task taken on in 1950s. Within this scope, it has striven to make the changes regarding the

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<sup>148</sup> All the information is taken from CHP official web page, CHP History

institutionalization of the parliamentary democratic regime and to develop basic rights and freedoms. CHP has positioned itself in “left-of-centre” in political spectrum by opening into the left with the maturation of social classes within the framework of dynamics such as immigration, urbanization and industrialization emerging as the reflections of the modernization process in Turkey in 1960s. In 1970s, CHP, who defines its ideology as the concept of “democratic left”, has aimed at the system change by social reforms offered by it. In this process, CHP has turned from “state party” into “people’s party” and from “system party” into “party of change.

Generally, CHP pursue their policies in line with the party program consisting of Republicanism, Secularism, Nationalism, Statism, Populism and Revolutionism representing the six arrows existing in their flag.

CHP has come into power many times in history of the republic and maintained to be the single party in power in the process of transition to a multi-party system and it is the party which has been in power for the longest time. And after AKP came into power, CHP has found a place in the parliamentary as the opposition party.

### **11.1. REACTIONS OF REPUBLICAN PEOPLE’S PARTY**

CHP is evaluating the Turkey-EU relations in the party program as “CHP is supporting the full membership of Turkey to EU from the beginning. The goal of Turkey of full membership to EU is a social change project which is a natural extension of the modernization revolution and modernization vision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Our condition in relations with EU is a full membership which is on equal footing, respecting the formation values of our Republic and honorable. CHP does not accept any other choice than this.”<sup>149</sup> Moreover, they state that they shall accept the adaptation of Turkey to the conditions, accepted and adapted by all the members, and Copenhagen and Maastricht criteria and Turkey’s adopting EU law.<sup>150</sup> On the other hand, although CHP is confronting that the arbitrary conditions incompatible with Treaty of Lausanne are tried to be accepted by Turkey in EU membership process, they also has stated that they are supporting resulting a reform process, compatible with the EU

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<sup>149</sup> CHP Programı, Çağdaş Türkiye İçin Değişim, p. 124

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 124

legislation and the implementations of other countries and serving for Turkey's interests, by accelerating it.<sup>151</sup>

The reactions and acts of CHP after 2005, however, to the EU membership which is supported by oral and written means, tell us the total opposite of this. After 2005, CHP has come into prominence by their opposition to EU membership and EU reforms. CHP, who is supporting first reform packages, gradually reached the position of a party preventing EU reforms. They continued this mostly by the annulment application to the Constitutional Court and in the last 5 years, most of the applications going to the Constitutional Court were the ones directly related to the EU reforms and CHP had always the statist and doubted democratic attitudes on subject like minority rights.<sup>152</sup>

CHP have stated that the facility for raising reverends<sup>153</sup> and full accession to cultural minority rights<sup>154</sup> will be ensured for the minorities, and in the field of Human Rights, the problems deriving not only from the laws but also from the implementation will be solved and the minority rights deriving from International agreements will be preserved but the efforts for creating new minorities in society will be challenged.<sup>155</sup> In addition to this, they are pointing out that religious freedoms will be respected without excluding the sects and the Department of Religious Affairs will be restructured in such a way that Alevi can be represented.<sup>156</sup>

And when we examine the Centre Director's Reports published by CHP from December 2007 to 2010 we see parallel thoughts to the party program. The sentence in the December, 2007 report of EU as "Turkey must think of the necessity that some of the Turkish citizens should have private rights on the basis of language, religion and race" has been criticized by claiming that it is a model of juristism.<sup>157</sup> General President of the period, Baykal, has stated in this respect that, "They are trying to create a minority, an artificial minority in Turkey. They say to Alevi 'You are the minority'. They say the same thing to the Kurds. Both Alevi

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 125

<sup>152</sup> Temel İskit, CHP'nin AB Açılımı (AB Haber News, February 2009)

<sup>153</sup> CHP Programı, Çağdaş Türkiye İçin Değişim, p. 298

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 46

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 20

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. 19

<sup>157</sup> CHP Central Boards of Director, Work Report (December2007) 161

and Kurds are the equal citizens of this society. Neither of them is minorities In the same way, CHP general president reacted to the amendment of the Prime Minister planned in the Constitution in December,2008 about minorities as “It is breaching to make the minority creation in our Constitution possible.”<sup>158</sup>

In the report of July, 2008, CHP’s attitude regarding minorities has been displayed by the expression of “discrimination of minority-majority is not made”<sup>159</sup> one more time and it is obvious that they are against the EU reforms in this respect.

In the report of August, 2009, Önder Sav has noted that Lausanne is desired to be reviewed again and the reform demands of EU about minorities cannot be accepted.<sup>160</sup>

In the report of October, 2009, criticisms regarding Kurdish Initiative expressed and it is implied that they will not make concessions to issues as education in mother tongue, ethnic origins and these kinds of acts will split the country.<sup>161</sup>

CHP leader Baykal, moreover, in his other interviews and speeches, has impeached AKP for religious freedoms and minorities reforms desired to be implemented in line with the EU demands. In a speech of his in 2006, he has said that “Let us not give the ones who want to create minorities by stating ‘lower identity, upper identity, he is not one of us’ opportunity.”<sup>162</sup> Again, in the same way, in a speech of his in 2009 in Malatya, he has remarked that “There is no minorities, we are all equal” and about the “Democratic Initiative” works he has said that “They would not let the public to be smashed, the country to be frauded and the state to be divided.”<sup>163</sup>

When we examine the election affidavit of CHP in 2011, we see that they do not mention about the political reforms, accordingly religious freedoms and minorities, in the part of relations with EU and these are not on their agenda. In the last years, it is definitely not surprising to face with this kind of outcome as a result of CHP’s confronting EU reform demands in order to criticize the government.

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<sup>158</sup> CHP Central Boards of Director, Work Report (December 2008) 28

<sup>159</sup> CHP Central Boards of Director, Work Report (July 2008) 39

<sup>160</sup> CHP Central Boards of Director, Work Report (August 2009) 134

<sup>161</sup> CHP Central Boards of Director, Work Report (October 2009) 71-2

<sup>162</sup> Yapay azınlık yaratılmaya çalışılıyor! CHP Lideri Deniz Baykal, Başbakan Erdoğan'a ağır konuştu! (Hurriyetport News, 2010)

<sup>163</sup> Azınlık yok, hepimiz eşitiz (Skyturk News, October 2009)



Consequently, it is an undeniable fact that CHP supported EU in the past and even now is still supporting the EU membership. However, the indicator of the real idea of CHP is the inconsistencies between discourses and behaviors and to often criticize the reform packages of the government by the populist approaches to make up to a part in the EU membership process and to resort to the judgment to annul these packages. We see that CHP is using especially these minority rights and religious freedoms reforms for their own interests not by supporting them but by preventing. In the last election period, CHP leader Kılıçdaroglu's demands like autonomy which he offered for the Kurds<sup>164</sup> are composed of the electioneering and are not sincere. As the main opposition party, CHP, has repeated that Lausanne should be taken into consideration about the issue of minority rights and religious freedoms and by stating that EU reforms are against the Lausanne, thus, these reforms should not be implemented and Lausanne should be preserved. To sum up, CHP, has showed their attitudes clearly on these two reforms and done their best to make them not implemented and in this respect has not avoided criticizing the government and the ones on reforms' side for their own interests.

## **12. JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY<sup>165</sup>**

Justice and Development Party (AKP or AK Party) is a Turkish Party which was founded by Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

After the so-called post-modern coup of 1997, divided the Milli Görüş (National View) line initiated by former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan into two which were traditionalists and reformists. Abdullah Gül, the current president, was one of the prominent figures of reformists, who garnered a total of 521 out of 1,195 votes in a congress held in August 2000 by the now-defunct Virtue Party (FP). The disbandment of the FP in 2001 on the grounds of being a hotbed of anti-secular activities paved the path for the establishment of a new party, the AK Party. The AK Party was founded on Aug. 14, 2001 under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The AK Party participated in the elections without the leadership of Erdoğan, who was convicted of "provoking hatred" and encouraging Islamist extremism in 1998 and banned from politics. The party gained around 34 percent of votes and sent 363 deputies to Parliament. A government founded by Abdullah Gül received a vote

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<sup>164</sup> Kılıçdaroglu Kürtlere Özerklik vaat etti (Haberpolitik News, May 2011)

<sup>165</sup> All the information is taken from Todayszaman News Webpage

of confidence on Nov. 28. Relevant constitutional amendments were carried out after the AK Party was swept to power in 2002, and Erdoğan was eligible to run in parliamentary elections held in March 2003. He was then elected prime minister and founded the 59th government. In 2007's elections, AK Party had 47 percent of votes in parliamentary elections and sent 340 deputies to Parliament. The 60th government founded by Erdoğan received a vote of confidence on Sept. 5. In 2011, last elections in Turkey were resulted with the victory of the AK Party and they had 49.95 percent of votes and sent 326 deputies to Parliament.

### **12.1. REACTIONS OF JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY**

AKP government paid more attention to the EU membership process in comparison to former governments and tried to take necessary steps decidedly. Turkey's EU integration process which has taken more than half age resulted with starting full membership negotiations on October 3, 2005 and EU-Turkey relations has moved into another direction during the AKP government.

### **12.2. GOVERNMENT'S PERSPECTIVE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

During AKP's first years of government, AKP showed concrete indicators by taking positive steps regarding EU reforms. Reform reactions of ABGS after 2005 are the most concrete indicators of these steps. AKP assess the EU membership process as integration and also a reconstruction process which will increase the political, social and legal standards of country.<sup>166</sup> In AKP's 2007 election declaration, AKP referred to basic rights and freedoms at EU membership process and defended that "Political power and bureaucratic structures cannot interfere to be used of basic rights and freedoms in democratic regimes; basic rights and freedoms which are protected with the international agreements should be implemented correctly in daily life".<sup>167</sup> In addition, AKP stated that discussions about religious, gender, ethnic discrimination and sect are result of rights and freedom deficiencies and they aimed to promote an understanding of the state which based on human rights by moving the Turkey democracy to the universal level.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> AKP 2007 Election Declaration 163

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 10

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 10

In this direction, one of the first actions of AK Party for the EU process was to establish the Reform Monitoring Group on 10 September, 2003. The aim of establishing such a group was to monitor the EU harmonizing reform implementations.

### **12.3. REFORM MONITORING GROUP<sup>169</sup>**

After Turkey sufficiently fulfilled the Copenhagen Criteria, government decided to found the Reform Monitoring Group (hereafter will be RIG) in September 2003 to take new steps and continue political reforms during the EU full membership process. RIG is arranged with the contributions of Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, chief negotiator government minister and coordinated by ABGS. General secretariat of RIG is performed by the ABGS. Main duty area of the RIG is to follow the implementations of political reforms during the EU process. Within this framework; RIG aims to follow and inducement the implementation of the detailed legislation reforms about fundamental rights and freedoms, democracy, rule of law and human rights issues.

As we all know, prior condition to start negotiations with European Union is Copenhagen Political Criteria which includes democracy, rule of law and human rights issues constitute the priority agenda of the RIG. In addition, RIG keep track the implementations of EU reforms and follows the progresses in this regard in its meetings. Main subjects of the meetings are the quick implementation of EU reforms and contributions of these reforms to the development of society and EU process.

### **12.4. OTHER REFORM STUDIES OF GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF EU AFFAIRS**

According to ABGS, Turkey who implemented political reforms (which could not implemented since 40 years) in last 10 years with speed of EU negotiations have become more free, democratic, consistent, transparent and with the new reform packages constitution and legal changes applied Turkey to EU standards in many areas from freedom of speech, press and organization freedom to minority, women and children rights.<sup>170</sup> It is for

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<sup>169</sup> All the information was taken from Department of Foreign Affairs and European Union, AB Uyum Çalışmaları – Reform İzleme Grubu Çalışmaları – Genel Bilgi

<sup>170</sup> ABGS, AB Üyesi Bir Türkiye (Secretariat General for EU Affairs, Ankara) 4

sure ABGS implemented many reforms which has not done until today, but these reforms remained limited and also remained missing about religious freedom and minority rights. Thus, needed legal changes have not implemented in this respect and all the steps taken have been fling about these issues. Hesitant to act to implement religious freedom reform is a indicator that AKP moves according to its dynamics because of AKP have strong conservative base and not to draw attention of this group. Moreover, situation is not different about minority reforms which draw attention of majority of society. Like other political parties, AKP also evaluate the EU reforms according to its internal dynamics and respond arbitrary. Therefore, constant critics of EU Commission about religious freedom and minority rights have continued after negotiation process as well. In this direction, when we analyze the reform studies after 2005, we can clearly see that religious freedom and minority reforms are little if any. Furthermore, there is no directly related reform concerning minority and religious freedom in the “Political Reforms in Turkey” paper which was published by ABGS. As a matter of fact, parallel to the international developments, there is observable reducing in EU-Turkey relations and relationship has reached to the showdown dimension in some periods.

In 2007, a senior officer of EU told that “EU-Turkey relations are not in the same level compared to last year. EU-Turkey relations disinclined”<sup>171</sup> and in 2011, member of the EU Enlargement Stefan Füle stated that “...there are many question marks whether EU-Turkey relationship will be like a passionate tango or poker with full of bluffs...”<sup>172</sup> Interruption of EU-Turkey relations affected the reform implementations in Turkey. With the disinclining of relations, government who are not willing to implement religious freedom and minority right reforms threw background out of focus more these reform implementations. However, there has been slightly improvement in religious freedom and minority issues in Turkey.

As mentioned in the EU progress reports, there has been some progress about religious freedom in Turkey such as giving back to the Greek orphanage to Patriarch of Fener, perform a ritual of “Ecumenical” Patriarch Bartholomew at Sumela Monastery after nearly ninety years later on 15<sup>th</sup> of August, having meeting with non-Muslim groups leaders of Minister of

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<sup>171</sup>“Türkiye-AB ilişkileri zayıfladı” tartışması (AB Haber News, February 2007)

<sup>172</sup> Füle: "AB'yi seçime kurban etmeyin" (CNNTurk News, May 2011)

State for EU Affairs, ABGS and related ministries, being arranged of first religious rite on the island in Lake Van Akdemir Surp Armenian Church of Holy Cross since 1915.<sup>173</sup>

Receiving an award of Egemen Bağış on religious freedom shows us that steps were taken are on the right way although further efforts are needed in the future. In his one speech, Egemen Bağış pointed out that problems faced in the past are being overcome slowly by saying “Speaking about freedom of religion Turkey faced some difficult times whatever the reasons might be. In our secular constitutional system, religious and spiritual communities practice their beliefs on the basis of the equality of citizens and on the principle of the freedom of religion. Nevertheless, there had been times where some shortcomings occurred in the implementation of these laws. However, Turkey is changing with great pace and becoming a more liberal and open society.”<sup>174</sup> As Mine Yıldırım<sup>175</sup> stated about religious freedom, “Members of all religions as well as unbelievers encounter problems related to freedom of religion or belief in Turkey and a comprehensive strategy addressing all of these problems needs to be formulated with participation of all belief communities.”<sup>176</sup>

There have been also some progresses about minority rights, cultural rights and protection of minorities. Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTUK) removed all the obstacles in broadcasting in Kurdish and other languages for public and private TV channels. 14 radio station and TV channel were permitted to broadcast in Kurdish and Arabic, a Kurdish theater play was showed in Diyarbakır Municipality Theater. In June, Minister of State for EU Affairs invited all EU ambassadors to the Kurdish literature activity which was organized at Bahçesaray Village in Van and first Kurdish and Assyrian language departments were founded at University of Mardin Artuklu and master students were started to be accepted to these departments.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Kurdish opening is also another step of government about minority issues. Even though opening has no clear result, there are future hopes that Kurdish people can name their children and villages in Kurdish, Kurdish broadcasts can be completely

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<sup>173</sup> European Commission, Turkey 2010 Progress Report (Brussels, 2010) 22

<sup>174</sup> New Europe, Religious Freedom, Egemen Bağış, Seeking the “Circle of Justice” (Daire-i Adliye) (A New Europe Special Edition, November 2010) 8

<sup>175</sup> Researcher at AAbö Akademi, Institute for Human Rights and Member of the Committee on Religious Freedom and Legal Affairs of the Association of Protestant Churches (Turkey)

<sup>176</sup> New Europe, Religious Freedom, Mine Yıldırım, Substantial change is necessary (A New Europe Special Edition, November 2010) 15

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Turkey 2010 Progress Report (Brussels, 2010) 32

free. As stated in the RIG's 2010 February meeting, these implemented reforms, arrangements made, steps taken are done to meet the EU criteria.<sup>178</sup>

As we see, reform implementations are not sufficient despite of we see some progress about them. When we both consider negative and positive developments, negative ones are more than positive ones and further efforts for Turkish government are needed about implementing EU reforms.

One of the representatives of Protestants pointed out that EU reforms mostly focused on property problems, but all these pressures from EU are welcomed by Protestants. He also stated that although legal obstacles were removed, practical obstacles remains such as law enforcements' beyond the intention audits to the Protestant Institutions and public attacks to the churches or protestants. About the evaluation of EU reforms from the public side, he said that due to being many nationalists in Turkey, these reform calls are seen negative and people think that EU will separate Turkey with the help of these Reforms. In addition, due to having these kinds of problems, Protestants have sincerity concern about the implementation of these reforms. He also think that these kind of problems must be solved with the internal Dynamics despite of EU's pressure has positive sides. All in all, representatives of Protestants are not fully satisfied because of implementation problems and sincerity concerns. In the Legal and Social Problems of Protestants in Turkey 2010 report, it is also stated that "Freedom of thought, religion and belief should be ensured in Turkey in a manner compatible with the standards of international law. To this end the rights articulated in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18, the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 9 (to which Turkey is signatory) and the 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (which Turkey accepted), should be promoted and treated as a priority among democratization objectives and The government should genuinely implement the principle of impartiality and the value of maintaining a stance that is equally distant from all philosophical thoughts, religions and beliefs."<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Reform Monitoring Group Meeting 19 (February, 2010) 6

<sup>179</sup> Association Of Protestant Churches Committee For Religious Freedom And Legal Affairs, "A Threat" or Under Threat? Legal and Social Problems of Protestants in Turkey, 2010 (Istanbul, September 2010) 45

Yet, a representative from Hacı Bektaş Veli Culture and Tourism Associations Headquarter stated that Alevis stayed out coverage area of state during Ottoman and lived independent but with modern state, Alevis forced to recognize the laws of state. He also pointed out that Alevis were murdered by the Sunni Muslims and state's pressure tools and EU just held aloof by not using its sanction power like embargo. In addition, both EU and AKP are not candid to heal the situations of Alevis and studies of Alevis such as joint programmes among EU and Alevis were averted by the National Agency. Moreover, he also said that EU should force Turkey to replace mosques which were built by the tax of Alevis to Cem Houses and if EU makes Turkey pay compensation because of behaving cruelly against Alevis, then they would believe the sincerity of EU. Representative also added that they support the EU membership regarding change of existing laws. However, he acknowledged that problems must be solved with the internal dynamics of country rather than external dynamics.

No doubt, Assyrians, Armenians, Jewish and other religious minorities have same kind of difficulties. Even though they had some rights through EU reforms, religious groups are not satisfied the current situation due to problems in practices and frigid attitude of state.

Ethnic minority groups also stated many times that they are not satisfied of government's attitude and implementation process of EU reforms.

Consequently, not being solved of problems stated in the EU progress reports are still thought provoking although there has been some progress about religious freedom and minorities. No one expect that these problems will be solved in a short period of time but when we look at the process, Turkey are not enthusiastic to make changes about religious freedom and minority issue. Of course, decisions of government do not enough to solve all these problems. Government needs to take support of citizens and other political actors. AKP must take the first step while they are the governing party since 2005. Unfortunately, AKP are not willing to take necessary steps and extend the reform implementation process.

### **13. CONCLUSION**

We can see clearly that both citizens and political parties including government have doubts to implement religious freedom and minorities reforms called by EU. Even there have been some improvements about reforms, political parties do not care so much with EU reforms

when they do not have interests. BDP which can be defined as a Kurdish party support the implementation of minority rights reforms with their discourses. On the other hand, they indirectly mention that they support the religious freedom reform. Nationalist party MHP strongly stand against the implementations of these two reforms while they think that EU tries to split the country by demanding minority rights and religious freedom reforms. Republican People's Party also stands against implementation of these two reforms. They also think that EU tries to create minorities in Turkey which does not exist and CHP wants Lausanne Treaty unchanged. They also have vote concerns and they are trying to block the government's reform efforts despite of being limited. As governing party AKP, they might seem to willing to implement EU reforms but in fact they have concerns to implement religious freedom and minority right reforms. AKP can be described as a Muslim party and they do not want to lose the votes of Muslim people by changing the situations of non-Muslim religious groups. In addition to these, history itself also affects the actions of political parties in Turkey. Due to having conflict with non-Muslim and ethnic minorities in the past, political parties shape their policies according to these traces of the history. When we look at the reactions of public, they have concerns about implementations of these reforms. Like political parties, they are also affected from historical events and they faced very dramatic events in the past, especially before and after World War I. Capitulations and Treaty of Sevres terribly damaged the perspective of political actors and Turkish citizens to the minorities and different religious groups. Therefore, their reactions to these reforms called by EU were not welcomed by the majority of the country.

Within this context, EU reacted negatively to the implementations of religious freedom and minority rights reforms in Turkey. EU Commission, parliament members, some groups openly stated that Turkey needs to put further efforts to implement these reforms.



## 14. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABGS	Ministry for EU Affairs <sup>180</sup>
AKP	Justice and Development Party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
DIHAA	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
DTP	Democratic Society Party
ECHR	European Court Of Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FP	Virtue Party
HAK-PAR	Rights and Freedoms Party
HCNM	High Commissioner on National Minorities
ICCPR	UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECC	Organization for European Cooperation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
R&D	Research and Development
RIG	Reform Monitoring Group

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<sup>180</sup> Secretariat General became Ministry after 2011 elections

SETA	Politics, Economy, and Society Researches Foundation
TRT	The Turkish Public Television
UN	United Nations
USIRFC	United States Independent Religious Freedom Committee

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