

Anglo-Turkish Society / Royal Anthropological Institute lecture, 24th March 2017

Speaker: Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman

Time: 6 for 6.30pm

Venue: Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy St, Fitzrovia, London W1T 5BT

Title: **The Turks of Western Thrace in Greece since the Treaty of Lausanne**

The Turks of Western Thrace are one of the few remaining Turkish communities in the Balkans and are the only minority community officially recognised by the Greek state as a 'Muslim minority'. They formally became a minority in the Greek territories with the ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The number of their population is estimated to be between 120,000 – 140,000 and they are located in the region of Western Thrace, in the north-eastern part of Greece.

Being an 'old' and 'historical' community, the Muslim-Turkish minority holds group-based minority rights provided by international treaties which were signed and ratified by Greece throughout 19th and 20th centuries, including the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, in addition to their citizenships rights. Therefore, for the Turkish-Muslim minority in Greece, practising their minority rights has a long history, but the implementation of these rights has been controversial since 1923, but particularly throughout the last four decades. Regardless of the governments' political perspectives, the Turkish-Muslim community have for many years been victims of systematic discriminations and oppression. Following its EU membership, it took Greece one decade to announce the equal treatment of minority members before the law. Despite some positive observable changes concerning citizenship rights, the issue regarding the application of minority rights is still far from expectations.

In this talk, Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman will try to explain how and why such discriminative policies were applied and how they have been justified. Not only the relationships between the minority community and the governments but also between the minority and the majority communities will be the main focus of this talk.



Gathering of the Iskece Turkish Association.

Booking essential: <https://sebahattin-abdurrahman-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk>

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Sebahattin Abdurrahman was born in Komotini (Gümülcine) where he completed his primary school education before moving to Turkey for higher education. Following his graduation from the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Ankara, he served in the Greek army as part of the compulsory citizenship duty. Three years later he settled in London, registered for a MA in International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS and then followed with a PhD at the same school receiving his PhD in 2012. He also worked as a Post-Doc research fellow at SOAS focusing on the political representation of minorities in the Balkans. Sebahattin Abdurrahman has many publications on the issues related to minority rights in the Balkans, including minority educational rights which was his PhD topic.

In addition to his academic work, as an activist, Dr Abdurrahman undertook a number of organisational works, including becoming the Chairman of Association of Western Thrace Turks in the UK and a member of the Executive Board Member of Federation of Western Thrace Tusk in Europe. Both as an academic and activist, he has attended numerous meeting organised by the European Parliament, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe about the situation of Western Thrace Turks in Greece.