

NEWS REPORT

Date:	16 September 2011
Expert:	Athanasios Theodoridis
Title:	The construction of an official mosque as a major step for ending discrimination and promoting a diverse society in the capital city of Greece
Country:	Greece
Context	
Issue at stake:	Practicing Muslim religion according to its rules without being discriminated against
Ground of discrimination:	Religion/belief
Source:	Legislation
Field:	Exercise of the right to freedom of religion
Legislative provisions:	<u>Law 4014/2011</u> Published in Government's Gazette on 21 September 2011 (No of Issue: 209).

Content:

Law / political development: On 7 September 2011 a draft law on the designation of a suitable location for the construction of a mosque in the Eleonas district in downtown Athens was passed in the Greek Parliament with an extended majority vote. The mosque, which will not feature minarets, is to be housed on a plot of land formerly belonging to the navy, west of central Athens. However, the prospect of a mosque in Athens was vehemently opposed by nationalist groups, which launched numerous attacks against groups of Muslims in recent months, especially in central Athens, where their vast majority lives. Due to this strong controversy, a special process of nominal ballot took place in the Parliament at the request of opposition extreme right wing "Popular Orthodox Rally" (LA.O.S.). Present in the vote were 214 MPs, with 16 MPs (from the LA.O.S party) voting against, while in favour were a total of 198 MPs – ruling Pasok, main opposition New Democracy (ND), the Communist Party (KKE), Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and independent MPs. The construction of the mosque will be based on Law 3512/2006 which prescribes the establishment of a legal body of private law under the name "Administering Committee of Islamic Mosque of Athens" which work will be the management of the mosque. According to Law 3512/2006, the operation costs of the mosque will be covered by funding from the Ministry of Education but also from endowments, donations and every kind of offers of natural persons or legal entities.

Content of the law: Article 29 of the new law is the only one referring to the issue of the mosque and it establishes in detail all the town planning provisions that would allow the conformity of its construction with the overall environmental legislation of Greece, especially since the Eleonas district is regarded as a city park with areas of common use. The Law also repeats the content of Article 3 of the previous Law 3512/06 establishing the mosque and regulating the issue of its administration. Pursuant to the law, the Greek State will be competent for the administration of the mosque. The 7 committee members will be composed of a general director of religions from the Ministry of Education, a general director from the Ministry of Finances, two representatives of the City of Athens, a consultant that will be assigned by the Athens Academy and two representatives of the Muslim community living in Attica (broad agglomeration of Athens). At the mosque, there will be an imama who will be nominated by the Minister of Education with a two year contract. His duties will be "limited in the responsibility for the internal operation of the mosque".

Internet link source and additional information:

<http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/UserFiles/bcc26661-143b-4f2d-8916-0e0e66ba4c50/p-areta-pap.pdf>

<http://equalsociety.com/el/2011/09/07/%CF%88%CE%B7%CF%86%CE%AF%CE%B6%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7-%CE%B7-%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AD%CE%B3%CE%B5%CF%81%CF%83%CE%B7-%CF%84%CE%B6%CE%B1%CE%BC/>