

Press Release

The Secretary General for Religious Affairs in his letter (Ref 2692/22-12-2014) asked Erudite Mufti of Komotini, Erudite Mufti of Xanthi, and Erudite locum tenens of the Muftiate of Didymoticho five questions, requesting a “wise reply in accordance with the Holy Quran and the Sacred Islamic Law (Sharia)”, as provided for in Article 5 of Law 1920/1991.

It has taken two years of thorough study, communication and exchange of opinions between the Erudit Muftis and leading religious institutions of the Islamic world to establish the reply.

The reply to the aforementioned five questions jointly drawn up by Erudite Mufti of Komotini, Erudite Mufti of Xanthi, and Erudite locum tenens of the Muftiate of Didymoticho, indicates that the Hellenic State respects the religious freedom of the Muslim minority in Thrace, as required by the Constitution (Article 13) and international treaties. The reply also indicates that the respect for religious freedom demonstrated by our country is in accordance with the way that Islam –through legal opinions (fatwas) by Muslim jurists and scholars – perceives its relations with states, such as Greece, whose Head is non-Muslim and where Muslims do not represent the majority of the population.

The questions and replies jointly drawn up by Erudite Mufti of Komotini, Erudite Mufti of Xanthi, and Erudite locum tenens of the Muftiate of Didymoticho are as follows:

Question 1: Is the writing (translation) and reading of the Holy Quran in a language other than Arabic allowed?

Answer to Question 1: On October 10, 2007, the Muftiate of Egypt published the following text (no. 489) on this subject: Transliterating the Holy Quran in an alphabet other than the original is allowed provided that certain rules are taken in compliance and adequate measures are taken, although there is always the possibility of alteration in the pronunciation of a verse. These rules of transliterating and vocalizing the Arabic language in another language must be mentioned in the preface of the Quran and not separately. The transliteration of the Holy Quran may be carried out exclusively by a specialized committee whose members have a perfect knowledge of both languages in order to check to what extent the rules of transliteration and vocalization convey the concepts of the Holy Quran.

Question 2: Is teaching the interpretation and the concepts of the Holy Quran in a language other than Arabic allowed?

Answer to Question 2: The interpretation and teaching of the concepts of the Holy Quran in any language is allowed because this is the only way to understand and to convey the message of the Holy Quran to humanity. However, literal translation of the Holy Quran in any language is impossible and this is one of the miracles of the Holy Quran as well as proof that it is the Word of Allah.

Question 3: Is the appointment of a Mufti by a State whose Head is non-Muslim allowed?

Answer to Question 3: There is no restriction as to who has a right to appoint a Mufti provided that specific conditions are fulfilled, such as competence, ethos and necessary knowledge on Islam and on the application of Sharia.

On the matter of the appointment of a Mufti the Muslim jurists and scholars of Sharia did not establish as a condition that the person appointing him is a Muslim, and their position on this matter is neutral.

The appointment of a Mufti by the Head of the Hellenic Republic, who is non-Muslim, is in accordance with Islam and this cannot be questioned or be a problem provided that he qualifies as competent for the position of Mufti as agreed and decided by Muslim scholars of Islam of Greek citizenship and by the State.

Question 4: Is a Mufti appointed by a State whose Head is non- Muslim allowed to appoint Imams?

Answer to Question 4: If the appointment of the Mufti is lawful and in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Answer to Question 3, the Mufti has the right to appoint Imams, hatips, muezzins in Mosques as well as Quran teachers in Mosques and in after-school Quran study classes.

Question 5: Is a Mufti, an Imam or an Islamic religion teacher (Quran teacher) allowed to receive a salary by a State whose Head is non-Muslim?

Answer to Question 5: As long as the conditions laid down in Answers to Questions 3 and 4 have been complied with, and the State provides that they will be employed as public servants, meaning that they will be paid by the State, there is no impediment to that. A State - with a non-Muslim Head - which with due respect to equal rights among religious communities recognizes and pays the salaries of Muftis, Imams and Quran teachers who support Islam and serve the faithful people of Allah, is to be praised.