



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Ambassador Namik Tan
Embassy of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

January 2011

Dear Ambassador Tan:

We write to you to express our deep concern that the policies of the Turkish government pose a serious threat to the future of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual home of the world's second largest Christian Church.

The Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul is the spiritual head of approximately 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and the 269th direct descendant of the Apostle Andrew. Nearly ninety-four percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties have already been confiscated by the Turkish government.

Turkish laws and policies restrict who may be elected Ecumenical Patriarch to Turkish citizens. This threatens the Ecumenical Patriarchate with extinction in the coming years, as Turkey has only about 2,500 remaining eligible Orthodox Christians, and they are mostly elderly. This cannot stand. Any of the nearly 300 million non-Turkish Orthodox Christians should be able to become Ecumenical Patriarch.

Millions of Orthodox Christian Americans—including those in New York—stand to lose their spiritual head, and all Christians will give up a crucial link to their history and forefathers, for it was within this 2,000 year old Sacred See that the text of the New Testament was codified, the canonical structure of the Christian Church was established, and the Nicene Creed was created.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's individual importance to America is reflected in the record number of Congressional cosponsors who bestowed on him our country's highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal.

During the past several years, numerous representatives of the United States government have urged Turkey to discontinue its policies which threaten the continued existence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Presidents George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, George W. Bush and the current President, Barack Obama, have all called on Turkey to re-open a crucial seminary, Halki Theological School, which the government

closed in 1971. This was the only Orthodox Christian theological school in the country for the training of its clergy.

Thirty-eight (38) religious freedom resolutions and letters in support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate have been adopted in thirty-two (32) legislatures in the United States, urging the Turkish government to do essentially four things:

***Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;**

***Grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train its clergy;**

***Respect the Ecumenical Patriarchate's property rights; and**

***Re-open the Halki Theological School.**

We, the undersigned support these requests and share their concern for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and respectfully request that you communicate these concerns to the leaders of the Turkish government urging them to discontinue those policies which threaten the future existence of the Patriarchate.

Sincerely,

Aravella Simotas, 36th AD

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 David J. O'Sullivan
 Geraldine
 Michael Stas
 Louis R. Spaccaro
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Nicole Malliotakis, 61st AD

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Robert H. Hylor

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