



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

February 12, 2011

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

Dear Ambassador:

We write to you to express our concern that the policies of the Turkish government pose a substantial 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 (94) percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties have already been confiscated by the Turkish government.

Currently, the Turkish government mandates that all religious residents of the Patriarchate become Turkish citizens. These laws effectively doom the future of the Patriarchate as it denies nearly 300 million non-Turkish Christians from participating in the leadership of the Mother Church. Turkey itself has only about 2,500 remaining eligible Orthodox Christians, and they are a mostly elderly community.

This cannot stand.

Millions of Orthodox Christian Americans stand to lose their spiritual head, and all Christians will give up a crucial link to their history and forefathers, for it was here within the 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 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:

**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. We 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,



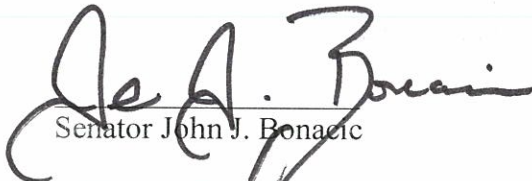
Dean G. Skelos
President Pro Tem



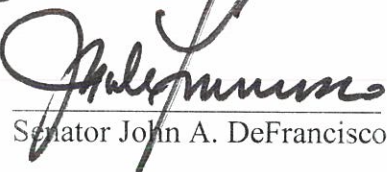
Senator James S. Alesi



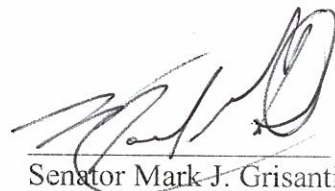
Senator Greg Ball



Senator John J. Bonacic



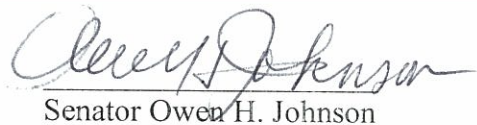
Senator John A. DeFrancisco



Senator Mark J. Grisanti



Senator Kemp Hannon



Senator Owen H. Johnson



Sen. Andrew Lanza

Hugh T. Farley
Senator Hugh T. Farley

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Senator John J. Flanagan

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Lee Zeldin
Senator Lee Zeldin

Signatories:

Senator John L. Sampson
Minority Leader

Senator Tony Avella

Senator Gustavo J. Rivera

Senator Eric L. Adams

Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr.

Senator Jose M. Serrano

Senator Carl Kruger

Senator Neil D. Breslin

Senator Kevin S. Parker

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senator Jose R. Peralta

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Senator Velmanette Montgomery

Senator Malcolm A. Smith

Senator Diane J. Savino

Senator David Carlucci

Senator Michael N. Gianaris

Senator Adriano Espaillat

Senator Martin Malave Dilan

Senator Liz Krueger

Senator Thomas K. Duane

Senator Timothy Kennedy

Senator Daniel Squadron

Senator Bill Perkins

Senator Shirley L. Huntley

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer

Senator Toby Ann Stavisky

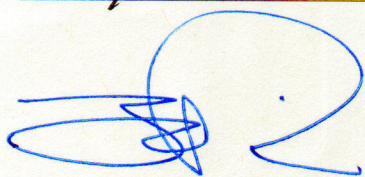
Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr.

Senator Jeffrey D. Klein

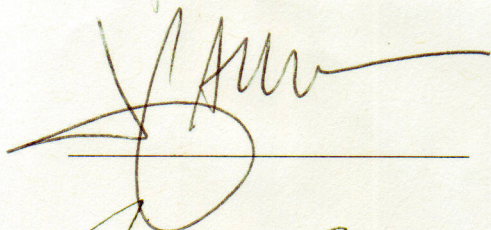
Senator David J. Valesky

Jolt Sayer

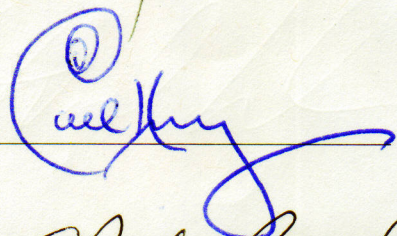
T. Cella



E. A. Aden



Jim M. Snow



Neil Breslin

Kerin Park

Michael Granieri



Madia M. Decker

Liz Kueger

Tom Duane

Timothy M. Kennedy



Bull Perkins

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