

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 29, 2006

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our deep concern that policies of the Turkish government pose a grave threat to the future of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual home of the world's second largest Christian Church. The Ecumenical Patriarch in Istanbul, Turkey is the spiritual head of 250 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and the 269th direct successor of the Apostle Andrew. Only stronger American and European Union support for the religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarchate can prevent a religious tragedy of historic magnitude.

Seventy-five percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties have already been confiscated by the Turkish government. Beyond this, the Patriarchate's dissolution in the coming decades is essentially inevitable if Turkey continues its policy of prohibiting all 250 million non-Turkish Orthodox Christians from becoming Ecumenical Patriarch. Turkey itself only has 2,500 remaining eligible Orthodox Christians and they are a mostly elderly community.

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. Within the 2,000-year-old Sacred See the text of the New Testament was codified, the canonical structure of the Christian church was established, and the Nicene Creed was created.

The disappearance of the See would also mean the end of a crucial link between Christians and the Muslim world. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered international religious leaders and produced the first condemnation of the attacks as "anti-religious" that included Muslim leaders. At a time when individuals hostile to the United States are attempting to create conflict between Christians and Muslims, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey is a living testimony of religious co-existence since 1453.

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 – an award also given to George Washington, Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul II.

Please help Turkey understand America's close ties to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the importance we attach to its welfare. In doing so, we hope you can help Turkey realize our strong desire that the Ecumenical Patriarchate be accorded the religious freedom it deserves and persuade the Turkish government to abandon policies that will lead to the disappearance of this Sacred See.

Sincerely,

George Allen

Joe Biden

Olympia Snowe

Paul S. Sarbanes

Blanche L. Lincoln

Craig Thomas

Ron Wyden

Mike Crogo

Robert F. Bennett

ASusan Collins

Rick Santorum

Dick Durbin

Dekki Stenow

Chuck Grassley

Ed Johnson

Pat Roberts

Daniel K. Akaka

Barbara Boxer

Herb Kohl

Pete Domenici

Norm Coleman

Byron Dorgan

Bill Martin

Tom Vilsack

Robert Menendez

Jay Byrnes

Robert A. Minkoff

John Conroy

Kent Conrad

George V. Voinovich

David Vitter

Mary L. Landi

E. Benjamin Johnson

Bill Nelson

Ken Salazar

P. L. Chafee

Tom F. Kelly

Michael B. Enzi

Chris Dodd

Patrick Leahy

Chuck HABER

John Zsarnar

Patty Murray

Mark Dayton

John E. Sununu

Mike DeWine

APB

Fredy M

Jack Gregg

~~Jefferson~~

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Eric Boyl

Jim Laube

Carl Linn

Frank R. Lautenberg

Harry Reid

Chuck Schumer

Max Baucus

Dianne Feinstein

Neville Feighel

Jon Kyl

John Reed

Shays

Maria Cantwell

Barack Obama

Jeff Blauer

Tom Harkin

Ed Kennedy

Elizabeth Dale

Arlin Jett

Mark Pryor

Sam Brownback

Chris

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Sincerely,

U.S. Senators Signing (73 of the 100)

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI) | 26. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) | 51. Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE) |
| 2. *Sen. George Allen (R-VA) | 27. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) | 52. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) |
| 3. Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT) | 28. Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) | 53. Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) |
| 4. Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN) | 29. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) | 54. Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) |
| 5. Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT) | 30. Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) | 55. Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI) |
| 6. *Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE) | 31. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) | 56. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) |
| 7. Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) | 32. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) | 57. Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) |
| 8. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) | 33. Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) | 58. Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) |
| 9. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-KS) | 34. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) | 59. Sen. Ken Salazar (D-CO) |
| 10. Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) | 35. Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) | 60. Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA) |
| 11. Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) | 36. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) | 61. *Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) |
| 12. Sen. Thomas Carper (D-DE) | 37. Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) | 62. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) |
| 13. Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) | 38. Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) | 63. Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL) |
| 14. Sen. Hilary Clinton (D-NY) | 39. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) | 64. Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) |
| 15. Sen. Norm Coleman (R-MN) | 40. Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-WI) | 65. *Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) |
| 16. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) | 41. Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA) | 66. Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) |
| 17. Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) | 42. Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) | 67. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) |
| 18. Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) | 43. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) | 68. Sen. John Sununu (R-NH) |
| 19. Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) | 44. Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) | 69. Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY) |
| 20. Sen. Mark Dayton (D-MN) | 45. Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) | 70. Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) |
| 21. Sen. Mike DeWine (R-OH) | 46. Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) | 71. Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH) |
| 22. Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT) | 47. Sen. Mel Martinez (R-FL) | 72. Sen. John Warner (R-VA) |
| 23. Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) | 48. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) | 73. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) |
| 24. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM) | 49. Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) | |
| 25. Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND) | 50. Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) | |

* = letter originator