

ARCHON ALERT

In Ominous Supreme Court Decision Turkey Criminalizes term *Ecumenical* and Reaffirms Asphyxiating Policies of Religious Oppression Archon Legal Committee Reviewing Details A Call to Arms for all Archons

All Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate should know that on June 26th, the Supreme Court of Turkey issued an ominous decision that reaffirmed state sponsored religious persecution that if left unchallenged, may represent the juridical justification for the government of Turkey to terminate the existence on Turkish soil of the Spiritual Center of world Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: The decision stated the following:

"As it can also be understood from the letter of Istanbul Governorate dated 6 December 1928 and numbered 1092, the persons who will participate and get elected in the religious and spiritual elections that will be held in the patriarchate, should be Turkish citizens and be employed in Turkey during the time of elections. This is a clear indication that the Patriarchate does not have the title "ecumenical". It is unquestionable that the Patriarch and the employees of the patriarchate are subject to the Turkish law as regards their activities and their titles; and that they will be subject to the provisions of the Turkish Penal codes where their actions constitute an offence under the framework of Turkish laws." (An English translation of the entire decision can be obtained at www.archons.org).

The Archon Legal committee is reviewing the details of this Supreme Court decision and contemplating potential juridical responses. The decision criminalizes the term *ecumenical*, confines the ministry of the Phanar to the local Greek Orthodox of Turkey, requires that the members of the synod who elect the Ecumenical Patriarch to be Turkish citizens and employed in Turkey and that the Ecumenical Patriarch himself to be a Turkish citizen.

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his "profound sorrow" regarding the Supreme Court decision as it applies to the title Ecumenical and the issue of primacy (the Ecumenical Patriarch being first among equals of all patriarchs of Orthodox churches). The actual case dealt with a Turkish Orthodox priest of Bulgarian origin, who the Holy Synod had removed from office, because of an "unfitting and inadequate behavior". In the decision, experts note, the Supreme Court technically came down on the side of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but at the same time used the judicial opportunity to legitimize the persecutorial policies of the government of Turkey.

According to AsiaNews, "The Supreme Court sentencing is an alarm bell given the precedents. In 1947 the same Court contested the right to property of minority religious foundations, as was set out by a 1933 ruling. That ruling legalized all of the properties bought to that date and allowed for the acquisition of new properties. With the 1947 sentence religious foundations were arbitrarily stripped of all property bought after 1933. (NT)"

The Archons of America express the outrage of all free peoples who regard religious freedom and human rights as God-given and inalienable. We call on the government of Turkey to abandon policies of religious persecution and oppression and call on Turkey to join democratic nations who respect human rights and ensure the dignity of humankind.



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