

SAMPLE

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESOLUTION FOR STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

Subject: A Religious Freedom Resolution by (name of entity passing resolution) regarding the crisis threatening the existence of the spiritual head of our fellow citizens who are Orthodox Christians -- the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Background

1. His Eminence Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington; Holocaust survivor Rabbi Arthur Schneier, President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; Dr. Robert Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ; His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Chairman of SCOBA; and Dr. Anthony Limberakis, the National Commander of the Order of St. Andrew, presented testimony in the U.S. House of Representatives before the Helsinki Commission on March 15, 2005 expressing their grave concern about Turkey's withholding of religious and human rights to the point of elimination of the spiritual head of Orthodox Christians in America, who are among the 250 million around the world -- Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.
2. The spiritual head of Orthodox Christians residing in our (State, City, Town and Village), Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Istanbul, Turkey, is the 269th direct successor of the Apostle Andrew. Our fellow citizens of Orthodox Christian faith are members of the second largest church in the largest religion in the world.
3. All Christians in our (State, City, Town and Village), in America and around the world stand to lose this nearly 2,000-year-old Sacred See where the text of the New Testament was codified, the canonical structure of the Christian Church was established, and the Nicene Creed was written and first pronounced.
4. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America, the spiritual leader of our fellow citizens of Orthodox Christian Faith, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, gathered international religious leaders and produced the first condemnation of the attacks as "anti-religious" that included Muslim leaders.
5. The individual importance to America of our fellow Orthodox Christian citizens' spiritual head, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, is reflected in the record number of Congressional cosponsors who bestowed on him America's highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal – an award first given to George Washington and also to Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II.

Action

The (name of entity enacting resolution) approves the following Resolution:

1. Millions of Orthodox Christian Americans stand to lose their spiritual head and all Christians in America will lose a crucial link to their sacred history, holy texts and religious forefathers because the Turkish government refuses to uphold and safeguard religious freedom and human rights without compromise.
2. Turkish Prime Ministers insist that any new spiritual head of Orthodox Christian Americans (selected by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate) must be approved or disapproved by him or her and that the government of Turkey refuses to reopen the Seminary it forcibly closed in 1971, thus, impeding the training of clergy.
3. The dissolution of the spiritual head of our Orthodox Christian citizens in the coming decades is essentially inevitable if Turkey continues its imposed policy demanding that only Turkish Orthodox Christians can become Ecumenical Patriarch, which violates and interferes in the Church's historic and holy right of apostolic succession for the past 2,000 years. Because of incessant forms of discrimination, the once large eligible community of Turkish citizens of the Orthodox Faith has declined to only 2,500, and they are mostly elderly.
4. In recent years, the Turkish government has, in violation of the inalienable rights of all peoples, confiscated seventy-five percent of the properties of the spiritual head of our fellow Americans who are Orthodox Christians.
5. The disappearance of this Sacred See would also mean the end of a crucial link between Christians and the Muslim world. At a time when individuals hostile to the United States are attempting to create conflict between Christians and Muslims, the 1,700 years continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey is a living testimony of religious co-existence since 1453.
6. Help Turkey understand the close ties of millions of American citizens to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the importance we attach to its welfare. 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, thus creating a religious tragedy of historic magnitude.