

2007 -- S 0895

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2007

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SENATE RESOLUTION

URGING TURKEY TO RESPECT THE RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS OF THE  
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

Introduced By: Senators Raptakis, Paiva-Weed, McBurney, Gallo, and Metts

Date Introduced: March 27, 2007

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1           WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and religious  
2 freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Greek Orthodox Christian Church which  
3 is a minority religion in Turkey; and

4           WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has confiscated most of the properties of the  
5 Ecumenical Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent retroactive tax on the Balukli Hospital which  
6 is run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

7           WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available for  
8 selection as the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Turkish nationals and reneged on its agreement to  
9 reopen to the Theological School at Halki, thus impeding training for the clergy; and

10           WHEREAS, The Theological School of Halki is the only educational institution for  
11 Orthodox Christianity in Turkey. It was closed in 1971 by Turkish authorities under a law  
12 requiring that higher education in religion and minority training be controlled by the state; and

13           WHEREAS, The United States Congress passed a resolution expressing that the  
14 Orthodox Theological School of Halki in the Republic of Turkey must be reopened in order to  
15 promote religious freedom; and

16           WHEREAS, Turkey should restore Hagia Sophia, which has been turned into a museum,  
17 to its original purpose as a church; and

18           WHEREAS, The European Union, a group of nations with a common goal of promoting  
19 the peace and the well-being of its peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October

1 3, 2005; and

2 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for accession to the  
3 European Union at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to  
4 have achieved certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy,  
5 adherence to the rule of law, and respect for the protection of minorities and human rights; and

6 WHEREAS, Under the terms of the draft European Union Constitution, current and  
7 prospective member nations should have the goal of eliminating discrimination based on any  
8 grounds, such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or  
9 belief, political or any opinion, national minority membership, property, birth, disability, age, or  
10 sexual orientation; and

11 WHEREAS, Turkey's current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent  
12 with the membership conditions and goals of the European Union; now, therefore be it

13 RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
14 hereby urges Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,  
15 and urges the European Union to deny Turkey membership in the European Union until Turkey  
16 changes its policies regarding the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and he hereby is authorized and directed to  
18 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to the Rhode Island Congressional Delegation.

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