

WHEREAS, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly two thousand years, numbers approximately three million members worldwide with more than two million members in the United States; and

WHEREAS, since 1453, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to the religious co-existence of Christians and Muslims; and

WHEREAS, this religious co-existence is in jeopardy because the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

WHEREAS, the Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish nationals, and from the million of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the twentieth century and due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish government, there remain less the three thousand of the Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and

WHEREAS, the Government of Turkey closed the Theological School on the island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow it to reopen, thus impeding training for Orthodox Christian clergy; and

WHEREAS, the Turkish government has confiscated nearly ninety-four percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a forty-two percent tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

WHEREAS, the European Union, a group of nations with a common goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005; and

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

WHEREAS, the Turkish government's current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the European Union; and

WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this State and throughout the United States stand to lose their spiritual leaders because of the continued actions of the Turkish government; and

WHEREAS, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have been honored with a patriarchal title, or “*offikion*”, by the Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding service to the Orthodox Church, will send an American delegation to Turkey to meet with Turkish government officials, as well as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, regarding the Turkish government’s treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate:

THAT the South Carolina Senate, by this resolution, urge the Government of Turkey to:

- (1) uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise;
- (2) cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;
- (3) grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities; and
- (4) respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the President of the United States, the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to the members of the South Carolina Congressional Delegation.

In the Senate
Columbia, South Carolina
May 24, 2007

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution passed in the Senate.


Jeffrey S. Gossett
Clerk of the Senate

