Offered by Representatives Sandra M. Pihos-Elizabeth Coulson-Elaine Nekritz-
Michael P. McAuliffe-Harry Osterman

Urging the Government of Turkey to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch
appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastical succession, and the
right to train clergy of all nationalities and to respect the property
rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and for other
purposes.

WHEREAS. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is
the Sacred See that presides in a spirit of brotherhood over a communion of
self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian world; and

WHEREAS. The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the
269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy
as primus inter pares, meaning "first among equals," in the community of
Orthodox churches world-wide; and

WHEREAS. In 1994, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with leaders
of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, cosponsored the Conference on Peace
and Tolerance, which brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim
religious leaders for an interfaith dialogue to help end the Balkan conflict
and the ethnic conflict in the Caucasus region; and

WHEREAS. In 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded Ecumenical
Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

WHEREAS. Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11,
2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of international
religious leaders to produce the first joint statement with Muslim leaders
that condemned the 9/11 attacks as "antireligious"; and

WHEREAS. In October 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with
Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the Conference on Peace
and Tolerance II to further promote peace and stability in southeastern
Europe, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia via religious leaders’
interfaith dialogue, understanding, and action; and

WHEREAS. The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000
years, numbers approximately 300,000,000 members world-wide with more than
2,000,000 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
coexistence of Christians and Muslims; and

WHEREAS. This religious coexistence 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 millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the
20th century and due to the continued policies during this period by the
Turkish government, there remain less than 3,000 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 94% of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a 42% 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 leader 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 "offikon", 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; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that the members of this House 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; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized and directed to transmit appropriate copies of this resolution 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 Illinois Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by the House of Representatives on October 4, 2007.

Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House

Mark Mahoney, Clerk of the House