

## **A Resolution Relative to the Theological School at Halki**

Whereas, the Theological School at Halki, located on the island known as Heybeliada in the Republic of Turkey, was preceded by the Monastery of the Trinity and was characterized as a “stadium of wisdom” because of its library and those drawn to study on its premises; and

Whereas, the monastery was rebuilt and rededicated on September 23, 1844 as an Orthodox School of Theology which has nurtured educators and scholars from around the world for 127 years and served the needs of the international academic community while infusing Orthodox Christianity with learned men of enlightenment; and

Whereas, the Theological School of Halki, titled officially as a Seminary, was closed in 1971 by Turkish authorities pursuant to a law requiring higher education and military training to be controlled by the Turkish state; and

Whereas, Turkish law further requires that the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, the successor to Saint Andrew, as well as all clergy, faculty and students of the Theological School of Halki, be citizens of Turkey, and this requirement greatly obstructs the prosperity of Orthodox Christianity; and

Whereas, prior to its closure, the Theological School of Halki was the only educational institution for Orthodox Christian leadership in Turkey; and

Whereas, strict limitations imposed by the Turkish government are effectively prohibiting access to the school’s library, a collection of some of the most rare and precious works in the world; and

Whereas, these limitations are thus preventing meaningful scholarly research; and

Whereas, the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey, where the canonical structure of the Christian Orthodox church was established, is the spiritual center for more than 300,000,000 Orthodox Christians worldwide, including approximately 5,000,000 Orthodox Christians in the United States and 150,000 Orthodox Christians in the Commonwealth; and

Whereas, the discriminatory closure of the Theological School of Halki has deprived the Ecumenical Patriarchate of all adequate means to educate its clergy, and ultimately deprived the Orthodox Christian Hierarchy of selecting its next Ecumenical Patriarch, the leader of all Orthodox Christians worldwide; and

Whereas, this discriminatory act has come to symbolize repression of religious freedom to all Christians, Jews and those of other non-Muslim religions in Turkey; and

Whereas, the government of Turkey has limited to Turkish nationals the candidates available to the Holy Synod for selection as the Ecumenical Patriarchate and

has refused to reopen the Theological School at Halki, thus impeding training for the church's clergy, theologians, and philosophers; and

Whereas, freedom of religion is a right which contributed significantly to the establishment and growth of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and is central to the ideals of the Commonwealth's citizens;

Resolved, that the Great and General Court hereby memorializes the President of the United States, the Congress of the United States, and the United States Department of State to take all necessary actions to:

- 1) Cause Turkey to continue to demonstrate a willingness to adopt and uphold international standard for the protection of human rights;
- 2) Cause Turkey to eliminate all forms of discrimination in accordance with the ideals associated with the European Union, its member states, and all liberal democracies, particularly those based on race or religion, and immediately –
  - a. grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition and ecclesiastic succession;
  - b. grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate the right to train clergy of all nationalities; and
  - c. respect the property and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and
- 3) Cause Turkey to pledge to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise.