HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 67

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 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.

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 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 worldwide; 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 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 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
percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed
a 42 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 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 "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 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That the members of this body 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

H. C. R. No. 67
08/HR07/R1985
PAGE 3 (GT\RS)
(4) Respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished 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 Capitol Press Corps.