June 28, 2010

The Honorable Namik Tan
Ambassador, Turkish Embassy
2525 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Tan:

We, the following state Senators from the state of North Carolina, are writing you to express our profound concern that the policies of the Turkish government pose a grave threat to the future of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual home of the world’s second largest Christian Church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul is the spiritual head of approximately 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide and the 269th direct descendant of the Apostle Andrew.

Nearly ninety-four percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s properties have already been confiscated by the Turkish government. Last year the European Court of Human Rights, in a unanimous 7-0 decision, condemned the Turkish government’s illegal taking of the Patriarchal Orphanage. The Turkish government, which is a signatory to the treaty creating this Court, has so far not complied with the Court’s ruling.

In addition, the Patriarchate’s extinction in the coming years is essentially inevitable if Turkey continues its policy of prohibiting all 300 million non-Turkish Orthodox Christians from becoming Ecumenical Patriarch. Turkey itself has only about 2,500 remaining eligible Orthodox Christians, and they are a mostly elderly community.

Millions of Orthodox Christian Americans, including those in North Carolina, stand to lose their spiritual head, and all Christians will give up a crucial link to their history and forefathers. Within the 2,000 year old Sacred See, the text of the New Testament was codified, the canonical structure of the Christian Church was established, and the Nicene Creed was created.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s individual importance to America is reflected in the record number of Congressional cosponsors who bestowed on him our country’s highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, an award also given to George Washington, Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul II.

During the past several years, numerous representatives of the United States government have urged Turkey to discontinue these policies which threaten the continued existence of
the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Presidents George Herbert Walker Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and the current president, Barrack Obama, have called on Turkey to re-open the Halki Theological School, which the government closed in 1971. This was the only Orthodox Christian theological school in the country for the training of its Priests.

In addition, 28 Religious Freedom resolutions in support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate have already been adopted in 24 state legislatures, urging the Turkish government to discontinue these practices.

In order to add our support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the 28 other state legislative bodies that have done so to date, we have written you to urge the Government of Turkey to:

(1) Reopen the Halki Theological School;
(2) Respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;
(3) Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and
(4) Grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train its clergy.

Sincerely,

Bob Rucho
Senator Bob Rucho

David Rouzer
Senator David Rouzer

Andrew Brock
Senator Andrew Brock

Jerry Tillman
Senator Jerry Tillman

Richard Y. Stevens
Senator Richard Y. Stevens

Harris Blake
Senator Harris D. Blake

James S. Forrester
Senator James S. Forrester

Austin Allran
Senator Austin M. Allran

Fletcher L. Hartsell, Jr.
Senator Fletcher L. Hartsell, Jr.

Jean R. Preston
Senator Jean R. Preston

Harry Brown
Senator Harry Brown

Neal Hunt
Senator Neal Hunt
The Honorable Namik Tan
Ambassador, Turkish Embassy

Eddie Goodall
Senator W. Edward Goodall
Senator Tom Apodaca
Senator Philip E. Berger
Senator Don East
Senator Charles W. Albertson
Senator Marc Basnight
Senator Dan Blue
Senator Daniel G. Cloftfelter
Senator Don Davis
Senator Katie G. Dorsett
Senator Linda Garrou

-3-

June 28, 2010

Senator Peter Samuel Brunstetter
Senator Stan Bingham
Senator Jim Jacumin
Senator Debbie Clary
Senator Bob Atwater
Senator Doug Berger
Senator Julia Bosman
Senator Charlie Smith Dannelly
Senator Margaret Higsmith-Dickson
Senator Tony Foriest
Senator Steve Goss
The Honorable Namik Tan
Ambassador, Turkish Embassy

Senator Malcolm Graham

Senator Clark Jenkins

Senator Eleanor Kinnaird

Senator Martin L. Nesbitt, Jr.

Senator Joe Sam Queen

Senator John Snow

Senator Josh Stein

Senator Don Vaughan

cc: President Barrack Obama
North Carolina Congressional Delegation

June 28, 2010

Senator David W. Hoyle

Senator Ed Jones

Senator Floyd B. McKissick, Jr.

Senator William R. Purcell

Senator Larry Shaw

Senator R. C. Sete, Jr.

Senator A. B. Swindell

Senator Michael P. Walters