

CS/HM 191

2010

## 1 House Memorial

2 A memorial to the Congress of the United States, urging  
3 Congress to encourage the Government of Turkey to grant  
4 the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international  
5 recognition, ecclesiastical succession, and the right to  
6 train clergy of all nationalities and to respect the  
7 property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical  
8 Patriarchate.  
9

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

14 WHEREAS, the See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch  
15 Bartholomew, who is the 269th in direct succession to the  
16 Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy as primus inter pares,  
17 meaning "first among equals," in the community of Orthodox  
18 churches worldwide, and

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

25 WHEREAS, in 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded  
26 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew the Congressional Gold Medal,  
27 and

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28 WHEREAS, following the terrorist attacks on our nation on  
29 September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a  
30 group of international religious leaders to produce the first  
31 joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned those attacks  
32 as "antireligious," and

33 WHEREAS, in November 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along  
34 with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the  
35 Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace  
36 and stability in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region, and  
37 Central Asia via religious leaders' interfaith dialogue,  
38 understanding, and action, and

39 WHEREAS, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for  
40 nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members  
41 worldwide, with more than 2 million members in the United  
42 States, and

43 WHEREAS, since 1453, the continuing presence of the  
44 Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to  
45 the religious coexistence of Christians and Muslims, and

46 WHEREAS, this religious coexistence is in jeopardy because  
47 the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by  
48 the Turkish government, and

49 WHEREAS, the Government of Turkey has limited the  
50 candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch  
51 to only Turkish nationals; and, out of the millions of Orthodox  
52 Christians who were living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th  
53 century, there remain as a result of the policies of the Turkish  
54 government during this period fewer than 3,000 of the Ecumenical  
55 Patriarch's flock left in that country today, and

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

60 WHEREAS, the Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94  
61 percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has  
62 placed a 42 percent tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli  
63 Hospital and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the  
64 Ecumenical Patriarchate, and

65 WHEREAS, the European Union, a group of nations with a  
66 common goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its  
67 peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3,  
68 2005, and

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

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

78 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this state and throughout  
79 the United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because  
80 of the continued actions of the Turkish government, and

81 WHEREAS, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the  
82 Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have  
83 been honored with a patriarchal title, or "offikion," by the

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84 Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding service to the  
 85 Orthodox Church, participated in a Religious Freedom Mission to  
 86 the European Union in pursuit of human rights and religious  
 87 freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarch from January 26 to February  
 88 7, 2010, NOW, THEREFORE

89  
 90 Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

91  
 92 That the Congress of the United States is urged to  
 93 encourage the Government of Turkey to:

94 (1) Uphold and safeguard religious and human rights  
 95 without compromise.

96 (2) Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical  
 97 Patriarchate.

98 (3) Grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate  
 99 international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the  
 100 right to train clergy of all nationalities.

101 (4) Respect the property rights and human rights of the  
 102 Ecumenical Patriarchate.

103 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
 104 dispatched to the President of the United States, to the  
 105 President of the United States Senate, to the Speaker of the  
 106 United States House of Representatives, and to each member of  
 107 the Florida delegation to the United States Congress.