

2007 SENATE RESOLUTION 30

March 13, 2008 – Introduced by Senator KANAVAS. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

1 **Relating to:** urging the government of Turkey to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch
2 appropriate recognition, ecclesiastical succession, the right to train clergy of all
3 nationalities, and to respect the property rights and human rights of the
4 Ecumenical Patriarchate.

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

8 Whereas, the See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the
9 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy as primus
10 inter pares, meaning “first among equals,” in the community of Orthodox churches
11 worldwide; and

12 Whereas, in 1994, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with leaders of
13 the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and
14 Tolerance, which brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders

1 for an interfaith dialogue to help end the Balkan conflict and the ethnic conflict in
2 the Caucasus region; and

3 Whereas, in 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded Ecumenical
4 Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

5 Whereas, following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001,
6 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of international religious
7 leaders to produce the first joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the
8 9/11 attacks as “antireligious”; and

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

14 Whereas, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years,
15 numbers approximately 300 million members worldwide with more than 2 million
16 members in the United States; and

17 Whereas, since 1453, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
18 in Turkey has been a living testament to the religious coexistence of Christians and
19 Muslims; and

20 Whereas, this religious coexistence is in jeopardy because the Ecumenical
21 Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

22 Whereas, the government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to
23 hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish nationals, and from the
24 millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century and

1 due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish government, there
2 remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and

3 Whereas, the government of Turkey closed the Theological School on the island
4 of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow it to reopen, thus impeding training for
5 Orthodox Christian clergy; and

6 Whereas, the Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94 percent of the
7 Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a 42 percent tax, retroactive to
8 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the
9 Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

10 Whereas, the European Union, a group of nations with a common goal of
11 promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began accession negotiations with
12 Turkey on October 3, 2005; and

13 Whereas, the European Union defined membership criteria for accession at the
14 Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to achieve
15 certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy,
16 adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and protection of minorities and human
17 rights; and

18 Whereas, the Turkish government's current treatment of the Ecumenical
19 Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the
20 European Union; and

21 Whereas, Orthodox Christians in this state and throughout the United States
22 stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the continued actions of the Turkish
23 government; and

24 Whereas, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of St.
25 Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have been honored with a

1 patriarchal title, or “offikion,” by the Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding
2 service to the Orthodox Church, will send an American delegation to Turkey to meet
3 with Turkish government officials, as well as the United States Ambassador to the
4 Republic of Turkey, regarding the Turkish government’s treatment of the
5 Ecumenical Patriarchate; now, therefore, be it

6 ***Resolved by the senate, That*** the members of the senate urge the government
7 of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise,
8 cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, grant the Ecumenical
9 Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the
10 right to train clergy of all nationalities, and respect the property rights and human
11 rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and, be it further

12 ***Resolved, That*** the senate chief clerk shall transmit copies of this resolution
13 to the President of the United States, the United States Ambassador to the Republic
14 of Turkey, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to the
15 members of the Wisconsin congressional delegation.

16 (END)