
HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 4003

State of Washington

61st Legislature

2009 Regular Session

By Representative Wallace

1 TO THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, AND
2 TO HILLARY CLINTON, UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE, AND TO EACH
3 MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
5 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully
6 represent and petition as follows:

7 WHEREAS, The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey,
8 is the Sacred See that presides in a spirit of brotherhood over a
9 communion of self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian World;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is
12 the two hundred sixty-ninth in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew
13 and holds titular primacy as primus inter pares, meaning "first among
14 equals," in the community of Orthodox churches worldwide; and

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

1 WHEREAS, In 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded
2 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

3 WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September
4 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of
5 international religious leaders to produce the first joint statement
6 with Muslim leaders that condemned the September 11th attacks as
7 "antireligious"; and

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

14 WHEREAS, The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly two
15 thousand years, numbers approximately three hundred million members
16 worldwide with more than two million members in the United States; and

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

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

23 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates
24 available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish
25 nationals, and from the millions of Orthodox Christians living in
26 Turkey at the turn of the twentieth century and due to the continued
27 policies during this period by the Turkish government, there remain
28 less than three thousand of the Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in
29 Turkey today; and

30 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey closed the Theological School on
31 the Island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow it to reopen, thus
32 impeding training for Orthodox Christian clergy; and

33 WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly ninety-four
34 percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a
35 forty-two percent tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital
36 and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical
37 Patriarchate; and

1 WHEREAS, The European Union, a group of nations with a common goal
2 of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began accession
3 negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005; and

4 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for
5 accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating
6 candidate countries to achieve certain levels of reform, including
7 stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the rule
8 of law, and respect for and protection of minorities and human rights;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, The Turkish government's current treatment of the
11 Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions
12 and goals of the European Union; and

13 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this state and throughout the
14 United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the
15 continued actions of the Turkish government; and

16 WHEREAS, The Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of
17 St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have been honored
18 with a patriarchal title, or "offikion," by the Ecumenical Patriarch
19 for their outstanding service to the Orthodox Church, will send an
20 American delegation to Turkey to meet with Turkish government
21 officials, as well as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of
22 Turkey, regarding the Turkish government's treatment of the Ecumenical
23 Patriarchate;

24 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the
25 Government of Turkey:

26 (1) Uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without
27 compromise;

28 (2) Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;

29 (3) Grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international
30 recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train clergy of
31 all nationalities; and

32 (4) Respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical
33 Patriarchate.

34 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
35 transmitted to the Honorable Barack Obama, President of the United
36 States, Hillary Clinton, United States Secretary of State, and each

1 member of Congress from the State of Washington.

--- END ---