

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 5

P1

8lr3507

By: **Delegate Sophocleus**

Rules suspended

Introduced and read first time: March 14, 2008

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Turkish Treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Ecumenical**
3 **Patriarch of the Orthodox Christian Church**

4 FOR the purpose of urging the government of the Republic of Turkey to uphold and
5 safeguard certain rights, cease certain discrimination, grant the Ecumenical
6 Patriarch of the Orthodox Christian Church appropriate recognition,
7 ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train certain clergy, and respect certain
8 human and property rights; providing that a copy of this resolution be
9 forwarded by the Department of Legislative Services to certain individuals; and
10 generally relating to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Christian
11 Church.

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

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

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

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

26 WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September
27 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of international



1 religious leaders to produce the first joint statement with Muslim leaders that
2 condemned the 9/11 attacks as “antireligious”; and

3 WHEREAS, In October 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with Christian,
4 Jewish, and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to
5 further promote peace and stability in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region, and
6 Central Asia through religious leaders’ interfaith dialogue, understanding, and action;
7 and

8 WHEREAS, The Orthodox Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers
9 approximately 300 million members worldwide with more than 2 million members in
10 the United States; and

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

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

16 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to
17 hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish nationals, and from the
18 millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century and
19 due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish government, there
20 remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical Patriarch’s flock left in Turkey today; and

21 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey closed the Theological School on the
22 island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow it to reopen, thus impeding training
23 for Orthodox Christian clergy; and

24 WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94% of the
25 Ecumenical Patriarchate’s properties and has placed a 42% tax, retroactive to 1999, on
26 the Balouki Hospital and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical
27 Patriarchate; and

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

31 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for accession at
32 the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to achieve
33 certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy,
34 adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and protection of minorities and human
35 rights; and

36 WHEREAS, The Turkish government’s current treatment of the Ecumenical
37 Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the
38 European Union; and

1 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this State and throughout the United
2 States stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the continued actions of the
3 Turkish government; now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That members
5 of the General Assembly urge the Government of Turkey to:

6 (1) uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without
7 compromise;

8 (2) cease its discrimination against the Ecumenical Patriarch;

9 (3) grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international
10 recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities;
11 and

12 (4) respect the human rights and property rights of the Ecumenical
13 Patriarch; and be it further

14 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
15 Legislative Services to President George W. Bush, The White House, Washington,
16 D. C. 20500; the Honorable Ross Wilson, United States Ambassador to the Republic of
17 Turkey, American Embassy Ankara, 110 Ataturk Boulevard, Kavaklidere, 06100
18 Ankara, Turkey; the Honorable Nabi Sensoy, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to
19 the United States, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 2525 Massachusetts Avenue
20 N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008; and to the Maryland Congressional Delegation:
21 Senators Barbara A. Mikulski and Benjamin L. Cardin, Senate Office Building,
22 Washington, D.C. 20510; and Representatives Wayne T. Gilchrest, C. A. Dutch
23 Ruppertsberger III, John P. Sarbanes, Albert R. Wynn, Steny Hamilton Hoyer, Roscoe
24 G. Bartlett, Elijah E. Cummings, and Christopher Van Hollen, Jr., House Office
25 Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.