

113<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION

# H. RES. 188

Calling upon the Government of Turkey to facilitate the reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Theological School of Halki without condition or further delay.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 26, 2013

Mr. BILIRAKIS (for himself, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Ms. TITUS, Mr. GRIMM, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. PALLONE, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, and Mr. MICHAUD) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

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## RESOLUTION

Calling upon the Government of Turkey to facilitate the reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Theological School of Halki without condition or further delay.

Whereas the Ecumenical Patriarchate is an institution with a history spanning 17 centuries, serving as the center of the Orthodox Christian Church throughout the world;

Whereas Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is the spiritual leader of nearly 300,000,000 Orthodox Christians around the world and millions of Orthodox Christians in the United States;

Whereas the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the spiritual home of the world's oldest and second largest Christian church located in Istanbul, Turkey;

Whereas within the 2,000-year-old Sacred See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the New Testament was codified and the Nicene Creed was created;

Whereas the Ecumenical Patriarchate sits at the crossroads of East and West, offering a unique perspective on the religions and cultures of the world;

Whereas the disappearance of the See would mean the end of a crucial link between the Christian and the Muslim world since the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey is a living testimony of religious co-existence since 1453;

Whereas the title of Ecumenical Patriarch was formally accorded to the Archbishop of Constantinople by a synod convened in Constantinople during the 6th century;

Whereas since November 1991, His All Holiness, Bartholomew I, has served as Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch;

Whereas Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1997, in recognition of his outstanding and enduring contributions toward religious understanding and peace;

Whereas during the 110th Congress, 75 Senators and the overwhelming majority of members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives wrote to President George W. Bush and the Prime Minister of Turkey to express congressional concern, which continues today, regarding the absence of religious freedom for Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in the areas of

church-controlled Patriarchal succession, the confiscation of the vast majority of Patriarchal properties, recognition of the international Ecumenicity of the Patriarchate, and the reopening of the Theological School of Halki;

Whereas the Theological School of Halki, founded in 1844 and located outside Istanbul, Turkey, served as the principal seminary for the Ecumenical Patriarchate until its forcible closure by the Turkish authorities in 1971;

Whereas the alumni of this preeminent educational institution include numerous prominent Orthodox scholars, theologians, priests, bishops, and patriarchs, including Bartholomew I;

Whereas the Republic of Turkey has been a participating state of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) since signing the Helsinki Final Act in 1975;

Whereas in 1989, OSCE participating states adopted the Vienna Concluding Document, committing to respect the right of religious communities to provide “training of religious personnel in appropriate institutions”;

Whereas the continued closure of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s Theological School of Halki has been an ongoing issue of concern for the United States people and the United States Congress and has been repeatedly raised by members of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and by United States delegations to the OSCE’s annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting;

Whereas in his address to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on April 6, 2009, President Barack Obama said, “Freedom of religion and expression lead to a strong and

vibrant civil society that only strengthens the state, which is why steps like reopening Halki Seminary will send such an important signal inside Turkey and beyond.”;

Whereas in a welcomed development, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, met with the Ecumenical Patriarch on August 15, 2009, and, in an address to a wider gathering of minority religious leaders that day, concluded by stating, “We should not be of those who gather, talk, and disperse. A result should come out of this.”;

Whereas during his visit to the United States in November 2009, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I raised the issue of the continued closure of the Theological School of Halki with President Obama, congressional leaders, and others;

Whereas in a welcome development, for the first time since 1922, the Government of Turkey in August 2010 allowed the liturgical celebration by the Ecumenical Patriarch at the historic Sumela Monastery;

Whereas following a unanimous decision by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in 2010, ruling that Turkey return the former Greek Orphanage on Buyukada Island to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, on the eve of the feast day of St. Andrew observed on November 30, the Government of Turkey provided lawyers representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate with the formal property title for the confiscated building;

Whereas in March 2012, after bilateral meetings between the United States and Turkey in Seoul, Korea, President Barack Obama praised Prime Minister Erdogan’s efforts to protect religious minorities and announced, “I am

pleased to hear of his decision to reopen the Halki Seminary.”;

Whereas Turkey’s Council of Foundations returned 190 hectares of forestland to the Theological School of Halki in January 2013; and

Whereas Secretary of State John F. Kerry met with Turkish officials and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I during an April 2013 meeting and reiterated the United States position that the Halki Seminary should be reopened without further delay or conditions: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) welcomes past and future meetings between  
3       Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I;

5               (2) welcomes the positive gestures by the Government of Turkey, including allowing the liturgical  
6       celebration by the Ecumenical Patriarch at the historic Sumela Monastery and the return of the  
7       former Greek Orphanage on Buyukada Island to the  
8       Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the return of the 190  
9       hectares of forestland to the Greek Orthodox foundation listed as owner-of-record of the Theological  
10       School of Halki;

12               (3) urges the Government of Turkey to facilitate the reopening of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s

1 Theological School of Halki without condition or fur-  
2 ther delay; and

3 (4) urges the Government of Turkey to address  
4 other longstanding concerns relating to the Ecu-  
5 menical Patriarchate.

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