

SCR6, As Adopted by Senate, March 19, 2009

Senator Pappageorge offered the following concurrent resolution:

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 6.

A concurrent resolution to urge the government of Turkey to cease all discrimination against the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Whereas, The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is the sacred See that presides in a spirit of brotherhood over a communion of the self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian world. The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy as "primus inter pares," meaning "first among equals" in the community of Orthodox churches worldwide; and

Whereas, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has a long record of bringing Christian, Muslim, and Jewish religious leaders together to denounce terrorism and promote peace, dialogue, and tolerance, including after the 9/11 attacks. For his leadership, he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1997; and

Whereas, The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members worldwide with more than 2 million members in the United States. Since 1453, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to the religious coexistence of Christians and Muslims. This religious coexistence is in jeopardy because the government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

Whereas, The government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish nationals. While there were once millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century, due to the continued policies of minority discrimination during this period by the Turkish government, there remain fewer than 3,000 of the Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and

Whereas, The government of Turkey has impeded training for Orthodox Christian clergy, confiscated nearly all of the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and has placed taxes on a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

Whereas, The European Union began accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005. The European Union defined membership criteria for accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to achieve certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and protection of minorities and human rights. The Turkish government's current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership in the European Union; and

Whereas, Orthodox Christians in Michigan and throughout the United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the continued actions of the Turkish government; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That we urge the government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise; cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities; and respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and the Michigan congressional delegation.