

Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC)

A Non-Profit Organization Registered in the US

with □ 37,000 Hellenes as members and

36 Hellenic associations in the US and abroad

December 25, 2007

The following press release condemns the latest irrational act of violence against the Greek minority in Turkey. We appeal to US media outlets and to US government officials to turn their attention to the plight of Turkey's Greek Orthodox minority. The assault against the editor of a Greek newspaper proves yet again that the government of Turkey and its nationalist military which exerts undue influence on domestic affairs is intent on driving out the surviving remnants of the Turkey's Greek minority. We are in no way surprised by the ongoing policies of repression and discrimination that are perpetrated by the Turkish government against the Greek minority and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate. Turkish repression has been ongoing throughout the twentieth century -- from the Genocidal policies of the Young Turks and their successor Mustafa Kemal up to the present day. We are however, shocked and dismayed by the indifference of the western world, of governments and media alike, to the appalling mistreatment of Turkey's religious and ethnic minorities. We recall with great sadness that the infamous pogroms of September 6, 1955 -- which succeeded in destroying the Greek presence in Constantinople and the islands of Imbros and Tenedos, occurred during a time when an international conference had taken place in Turkey. As such, the offensive against the Greek minority in Turkey occurred in the open, with the international community fully aware of the violations of human rights and religious freedoms taking place. Despite present-day abuses and atrocities, Turkey continues to be treated as a respected member of the international community, and its European Candidacy appears untroubled by its continued assault on its Greek and Christian populations. Just last July, both the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch and the Armenian Patriarch were targeted in an assassination attempt by retired military officers. And despite international pleas to re-open it, the Greek Orthodox theological Seminary of Halki remains closed, thus ensuring the complete extinction of the Patriarchate if not reopened. (Future Patriarchs must have been schooled there.) We believe that it is not too late for the governments of America and the European Union, for the media, and for various human rights groups to intervene on behalf of the Greek minority and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. We likewise believe that the human rights question in Turkey is inseparable from the issue of human rights in the territories of Cyprus which Turkish troops have been occupying since 1974. The experiences of the Western world with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes throughout the twentieth century should have left a legacy of protecting minority populations. Rather, it appears that mythical strategic considerations (as in the case of Turkey) have condemned minority populations in Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus to a permanent state of misery. We appeal for support on the part of the civilized world to put an end to the mistreatment of Greeks in Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus, and for the application of the same standards to

Turkey as to other violators of individual rights and freedoms.
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