

Hellenic Electronic Center (HEC)

A Non-Profit Organization Registered in the US

**Representing 35,000 Hellenes and
34 Hellenic associations in the US and abroad February 19, 2007**

The following
conveys

letter

in the strongest possible terms our
shock and concern regarding
news

reports that the lives of the Orthodox
Ecumenical Patriarch
Bartholomaios I

,
and the Armenian

Patriarch of Constantinople Catholicos Mesrob II Mutafian are threatened. In the aftermath of
the

assassination of the brave Armenian Journalist Hrant Dinck, and in the greater context of the
history

of political and ethnic violence that destroyed the Greek Orthodox presence in the city of
Constantinople, we respectfully request

that the governments of

Western democracies use

maximum diplomatic, political, and economic means to intensify pressure on Turkey, and to
insist

that Ankara fulfill all international obligations as they pertain to the rights of religious minorities,
and

to bestow full recognition on the Republic of Cyprus

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Between 1994 and 2004, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was bombed on four occasions.

The Turkish

government

has steadfastly

refused

to comply with the demands of the United States and the European Union

that the Patriarchal School of Theology known as Halki

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be reopened. Turkish officials are fully cognizant that the closure of the Halki school since 1971
imperils the Patriarchy, as it is only from

graduates of this theological Seminary that future Patriarchs may be drawn.

The destruction in Turkish occupied Cyprus of 500 Churches belonging to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, and the reduction of the number of Christians living under Turkish military rule in occupied Cyprus from some 13,000 at the end of 1974 to fewer than 500 today- due to attrition by death or forced abandonment of their homes and properties

, furthers our anxiety over the eventual fate of Christians under Turkish rule.

We believe that Turkish expansionism and ethnic cleansing in Cyprus, and the appalling violence that continues to be directed against Christian minorities in Turkey are inseparable, and request that human rights abuses in both Turkey and Turkish-occupied Cyprus be taken seriously, and appropriate sanctions against Turkey be considered.

The Greek Orthodox and Armenian minorities in Turkey today are very small, as a result of the physical extermination of these populations that once resided throughout Anatolia. It is disturbing that Turkey continues to deny the Genocide of Christian Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks between 1908 and 1922. Moreover, Ankara's ongoing Genocide denial is responsible for arousing and maintaining the climate of hatred and fear against Christian minorities in Turkey today. With great sadness, we recall the murder in 2006 of the Roman Catholic Priest, Father Santoro in the region of Trebizond, a land that saw the horrific mass killings of countless Christians during the Christian Genocide.

Over the last several years, the Turkish government has continued to bear down on the Greek Orthodox minority despite the fact that it has been reduced to a mere 2,000 individuals. The climate of terror directed against the Ecumenical Patriarchate is facilitated by Ankara's fallacious claim that the Patriarch is not "Ecumenical

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We draw your attention to the great democracies collective silence

during past Turkish horrors such as the notorious anti-Greek pogroms of 1955 which resulted in the killings, beatings, and rape of Greek and Armenian Christians in Turkey, as well as the destruction of churches and other religious edifices of great spiritual and historic value, and seek to prevent a recurrence of both the silence and the atrocities.

We believe the continued threats against the Ecumenical and Armenian Patriarchs are entirely unacceptable. The climate of hatred and fear now rampant in Turkey, violates the European spirit

, and contravenes all moral and democratic principles. We fear the worst for the fates of the Patriarchs and the last remaining Christians in Turkey, as well as for the struggling democratic Republic of Cyprus unless democratic powers raise their voices in protest to the new terror that is being supported by the Turkish Republic.

Thank You

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Athens, 15.02.2007 - The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew became number one target for Turkish nationalists, reports Kathimerini newspaper quoting one of the U.S. strategic centers. The same information is furnished by Milliyet Turkish newspaper in the article titled "Patriarchs under threat of death." The NTV says that Istanbul's Armenian Patriarch Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan's life is also in danger, reports Yerkir online.

According to Kathimerini, Western diplomats, who are very carefully watching what is happening in Turkey

at this time, are intensely concerned about the security for Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and also for the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul Mesrob II Mutafyan. According to their assessments, part of the Turkish deep state has turned self-determining over the past two years and is operating beyond control. "These people, most of whom are retired officers from the

army and the security forces, have in their mind a paranoid image of Turkey

being partitioned. They believe they are functioning under revolutionary conditions and that they are constantly justified in giving order for assassinations," commented an experienced US analyst, who added, "It is clear that there is a plan to assassinate the Representatives of various minorities."

Already, in recent weeks, the Turkish security forces have received much disquieting information regarding a possible assassination attempt against the Armenian Patriarch, who outraged nationalist circles with his New Year's speech, in which he dared to refer to the genocide of the Armenians, which is traditionally a taboo subject in Turkey. The Turkish services have taken additional security measures for the Armenian religious leader. Western sources, who are well informed on what is happening in Turkey

, consider that, despite all this, the number one target for the nationalist circles is the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Phanar, the administrative centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate more generally. "The hatred these circles harbor for the Patriarchate runs very deep, indeed it is exacerbated by the importance the White House

attributes to the Phanar, as also the European governments do," commented a Western diplomat, adding "they are perfectly well aware that an action against the Phanar would create enormous problems for Turkey's international relations and possibly even for their aim."

Washington has on occasions, through informal channels, conveyed to Ankara its concerns over security for the world leader of Christian Orthodoxy and has asked that additional measures be taken for his protection. US officials, who study carefully everything happening in Turkey

, express the opinion that the security forces are exceptionally infiltrated by the "long arm" of the deep state, as was evident by the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. "The foot dragging by the intelligence gathering services in the Istanbul

police and also -- even more so -- the photo of policemen with the murderer amongst them as a hero, show that there are obscure links," stress western officials, who expressed their certainty that the Erdogan administration has lost control.

The same officials pointed out that "when we talk of a threat against the Patriarch, we are not referring to the Gray Wolves and their constant, loud demonstrations against him. We are talking of paramilitary nuclei which cunningly use young people as assassins. This is what happened with Dink, the same with the Catholic priest Andoro in Trebizond. In order for anyone to reach from the young assassin to the head, one must past through three or four links, who are careful to eliminate any of their traces. These are hard core, well organized gangs, covered up by high ranking officers in the security services," Kathimerini reports.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is the world leader of Orthodox Christians. His authority and prestige derives from the times of the Eastern Roman Empire, whose capital was Constantinople, the New Rome, a city founded by St. Constantine the Great, the first Roman

Emperor to allow the free worship of Christians, until then persecuted by the Roman state authorities. Archbishop Mesrob Mutafyan is one of the three major Armenian patriarchs. The Greek and Armenian Patriarchs were once the leaders of Turkey's thriving and populous Christian minorities of Greeks and Armenians respectively. But their number diminished to almost extinction as a result of a deliberate Ottoman and Turkish state policy to wipe out Turkey of its Christian minorities. It has thus been estimated that in the years marking the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the emergence of the Turkish state more than 3.5 million Armenian, Greek and Assyrian Christians were massacred by the regimes of the Young Turks and of Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in what has been called the Christian Holocaust and seen as the predecessor to the Jewish Holocaust.

To this day Turkey ostensibly denies the genocide of its Christian minorities, despite calls from the European Union and the governments of France and Greece that the recognition of these genocides is an indispensable moral condition for Turkish eventual accession to the EU club.