

This press release is a response to a court decision in Turkey, and is to be distributed to American and European diplomatic officials including the US embassies in Athens and Ankara, and human rights organizations.

Hellenic Electronic Center
with 37,000 Hellenes and 34 Hellenic Organizations
as Associated Members in the US and abroad www.greece.org The following
press statement is intended to absolutely and unequivocally condemn the decision of a Turkish
court to strike the word "Ecumenical" from the title of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of
Constantinople. The decision to bring this debate before a Turkish court not only constitutes a
violation of religious freedom and minority rights but also further harassment of the Ecumenical
Patriarchate and Turkey's Greek minority by the Turkish government.

The unacceptable and undemocratic interference of the Turkish Courts in the internal affairs of
the Ecumenical Patriarchate demonstrates the Turkish political establishment's lack of
remorse for the violent upheavals of the past, resulting in the virtual disappearance of the
Greek community from Constantinople, Imbros, and Tenedos. It is evident that the Turkish
government remains dedicated to the spirit of hatred manifested during the notorious evening
of September 6, 1955.

The refusal of the Turkish government to acknowledge the "Ecumenical" status of the
Patriarchate in the Phanar violates the Canons of the Eastern Orthodox Church which in the
sixth century granted the status of supreme ruler of the Orthodox Church to the Archbishop of
Constantinople. The continued harassment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the midst of a
violent campaign by the notorious Grey Wolves and other Turkish extremist groups to harm his
holiness Bartholomaios I-- between 1993 and 2004 there were five arson and bomb attacks
directed against the Ecumenical Patriarchate -- can only be perceived as a show of
encouragement and support by the Turkish government for the actions of these terrorist
organizations.

Manifestations of extremism and hatred for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Turkey's
Christian minorities persist, despite the Papal visit to Turkey last December. The Papal visit
demonstrated that the title and functions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate are universally
recognized and absolute. Further evidence of Turkey's defiant attitude resides in the steadfast
refusal to open the Halki School of Theology, thereby imperilling the very future of the

Ecumenical Patriarchate as it limits the pool from which successors may be drawn, in the continued seizure of Church property, as well as denial of the right to maintain Church properties. Continued violations of minority rights in Turkey legitimately call into question Turkey's readiness to join the European Union, and raise the issue of the possibility of imposing sanctions against Ankara in light of the conspicuous crackdown on religious freedom and minority rights.

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