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**ECUMENICAL FEDERATION OF CONSTANTINOPOLITANS**

**Urgent Remedy Measures are needed for the Revival of the Greek-Orthodox  
Community of Istanbul including prevention of hate publications**

The case of autochthonous Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul, together with the Communities of the two Aegean islands of Gökçeada (Imbros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos) belonging to Turkey, is a typical case of ethnic as well as religious minority which was subjected to severe violations in its human and minority rights throughout the whole of the twentieth century. As a consequence of these violations, the Community has decreased from 125.000 members today to almost 2.000 which is about 2% of the population that would have existed if their rights were respected by the state of Republic of Turkey.

The legal status of these minority communities was established and placed under the protection of the International Treaty of Lausanne (24/7/1923). Even though the Treaty enabled the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, nevertheless the minority has experienced extensive violations of their human and religious rights during the period 1923-2003. The most severe violations towards the ethnic minority were: (a) the mobilization to work battalions of 18-45 aged minority men in 1941, (b) the “welfare tax” of 1942-44 aiming the economic destruction of minorities, (c) the massive scale Pogrom of the 6-7 September 1955 in Istanbul, one of the most severe massive scale violence in post War Europe, (d) the forced deportation of members of the Greek Community of Istanbul holding the Etablis status according to Lausanne Treaty.

Furthermore, the anti-minority state measures were strengthened after the Coup de Etat of 1960 by the establishment of the “Special Minority Commission (Azinkiklar Taali Komisyonu)” with superseding powers of all executive, legislative and judicial authorities and whose members were primarily selected from the state security services until 2004. All the above violations happened, despite the fact that the Republic of Turkey endorsed the European Convention of Human Rights as early as 1954.

Even though after the year 2004 the discriminatory measures had been alleviated considerably, there are still pending problems such as the return of the minority welfare foundation’s real estate properties. The latter were confiscated during the 1970’s on a massive scale. A serious problem, that has aroused the last four years, is the suspension of the elections at the minority welfare foundations. This eliminates any corrective measures taken after the year 2004.

It is very clear that if this Community is to survive a generous program of repatriation will be needed, especially amongst the younger members of the expatriated Greek-

Orthodox Community. The EFC during the last five years has submitted to the Government of Turkey specific proposals to make possible the repatriation and hence contribute to the revitalization of the Community. Moreover in order to achieve this, hate publications which occurred in the past on extensive scale, should be avoided. A more recent example of serious hate publications is the one aimed at the Ecumenical Patriarchate as an institution and the Patriarch as a person. The allegations in these articles about a supposed involvement of Patriarch Bartholomew in the attempt of seizure of power in Turkey at 15 July 2016, is a totally condemnable fact.

We have the conviction that the Turkish Government will refute the above publications and will take the appropriate measures for the Ecumenical Patriarchate to continue uninterrupted its mission towards mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a world divided from suffering due to conflicts of any nature.

In conclusion, considering the severe depletion of the population of the Community because of the above-mentioned anti-minority measures, it is imperative that the Government of Republic of Turkey should expedite the proposed remedy and reparation measures towards the Greek-Orthodox Community of Istanbul. This requires a careful review and implementation of the proposals submitted by the EFC to the authorities of the Republic of Turkey, and a speeding up of the process to achieve concrete results.

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