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August 27, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
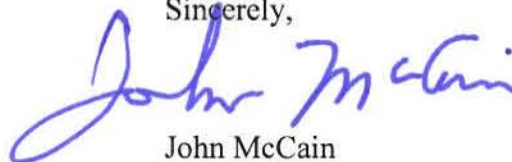Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express concern regarding the current situation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, located in Istanbul, Turkey. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, the spiritual home to more than 250 million Orthodox Christians living and worshiping throughout the world, stands as a stirring testament to the power of faith in the global community.

Many have spoken out in recent years over actions of the government of Turkey against the Ecumenical Patriarchate, including its decision not to recognize the ecumenical status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and its refusal to reopen the Halki Seminary. I too share many of these concerns and believe that the United States must stand in favor of basic religious rights and freedoms.

The United States and Turkey share an important strategic partnership based on many shared interests and principles. It is important that allies speak candidly not only on issues of agreement, but also on areas of concern. In discussions with the Turkish government, the United States must voice our strong support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and continue our unequivocal advocacy for the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights, religious liberty, and social justice.

As Americans, I know we share a deep respect for the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and for the Greek Orthodox community worldwide. It is in our interest to work collectively with the Turkish government and our European allies to pursue a course of action that will protect the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and prevent a religious tragedy.

Sincerely,

John McCain
United States Senator