

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

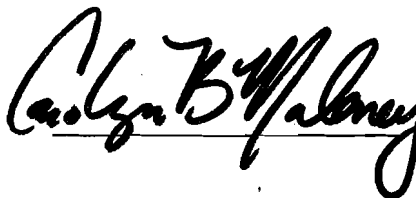
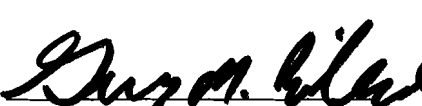

We are writing to urge you to meet with the Ecumenical Patriarchate when you visit Turkey in April.

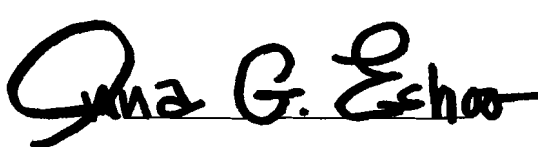

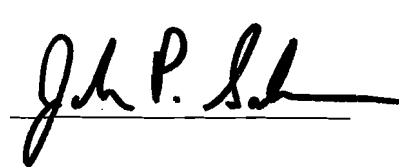
The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is the spiritual home of the world's oldest and second largest Christian Church. One of the world's preeminent spiritual leaders representing more than 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has worked for peace and reconciliation amongst all faiths. In 1997, Congress acted to bestow its highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, on Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

We are concerned that Turkey has yet to recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate's international status, has limited to Turkish nationals the candidates available to the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church for selection as the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and has failed to reopen the Theological School at Halki. We believe that your visit with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, as President Clinton's visit did during his presidency, would signal the ongoing commitment of the United States to religious freedom.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance to you in this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Bennett Julio Sanga Clare Robinson

Shelley Bentley Joe Brown

Loretta Sanchez

List of Signers:

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney

The Honorable Gus M. Bilirakis

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo

The Honorable Dina Titus

The Honorable John P. Sarbanes

The Honorable Scott Garrett

The Honorable Niki Tsongas

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

The Honorable Shelley Berkley

The Honorable Zack Space

The Honorable Loretta Sanchez