

# **AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2583:** **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN TURKEY**

*Offered by Ranking Member Howard L. Berman*

## **SUMMARY:**

This amendment responds to the ongoing problem of religious discrimination in Turkey, including limitations on freedom of worship, confiscation of church and communal properties, and restrictions on the right of Christian communities to preserve, repair, and reconstruct their churches and other properties as they see fit.

## **THIS AMENDMENT WOULD:**

This amendment calls on the Secretary of State to urge the government of Turkey to end all forms of religious discrimination; ensure freedom of worship, as well as the right of Christian communities to provide religious education and train their clergy as they see fit; return all property confiscated from Christian churches and communal organizations; and allow Christian church and lay owners of church properties to preserve, reconstruct, and repair those properties as they see fit.

## **WHY THIS AMENDMENT IS NECESSARY:**

- Turkey must end all discrimination against Christian minorities.
- Some Christian groups, such as Evangelicals, are not allowed to establish churches, because they do not belong to a religion recognized by the Turkish government.
- Christian groups are not allowed to train clergy in Turkey.
- In many cases, such as that of the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, the government insists that religious leaders be Turkish citizens – a serious problem in light of the diminishing population of Christian communities.
- A considerable amount of religious property has been confiscated in Turkey over the years, often with the excuse that it has fallen into disuse because of depopulation; this property must be returned.
- Armenian Orthodox Christians are among those who have suffered the greatest amount of loss due to confiscation that amounts to state theft in Turkey.

## **ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THIS AMENDMENT:**

- Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)
- American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA)
- American Hellenic Institute (AHI)
- Armenian Assembly of America
- American Hellenic Council