

“Turkey should be proud of the Ecumenical Patriarchate”

ISHR: End discrimination against the Christian minority

Upon the occasion of Bartholomew I's 25th anniversary in office as the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) in Frankfurt am Main has called upon the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to officially distance himself from rumors about the high spiritual dignitary's alleged closeness to the July 15 putschists. Edgar Lamm, chairman of the ISHR, emphasized that “Turkey should be proud to have the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarch in its country. Instead, it denies him official state recognition as a legal entity and hinders his work.”



The IGFM is appealing to Erdogan to end discrimination against the Christian minority and to recognize the Patriarchate and its bodies as legal entities, for example with the option of acquiring property. Especially against the background of domestic political conflicts and international criticism for actions against minorities, a sign on the day of Bartholomew I's 25th anniversary in office would be a gesture with special symbolic power. Turkey should also move to respect the historical title of Ecumenical Patriarch, whose current holder is the 270th successor of the Apostle Andrew.

The religious freedom of Greek Orthodox Christians is perpetually violated by restrictions on training young priests. The internationally known theological seminary on the Prince Island Chalki in the Sea of Marmara has been closed since 1971; its reopening, already promised several times, would be a sign of good will in dealing with the shrinking Christian minority. In addition, the return of expropriated real estates, or at least compensation, would be a good opportunity to show that Christianity belongs to Turkey.

Appendix

Congratulations on your 25th anniversary in office

Your Holiness,

Twenty-five years ago, after your selection on October 22, 1991, you were appointed to your high office as Ecumenical Patriarch on November 2, 1991. The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), represented by the International Council and the Board of the German Section, congratulates you, Your Holiness, from the bottom of its heart and with deep gratitude.

From a difficult position, you have stood up for peace and human rights, for the protection of the creation, and for freedom of conscience.



Before a parliamentary commission in February 2012, you openly called for rights and equal treatment of Christians in Turkey, for freedom of religion and for the fulfillment of promises made in this regard. On Lesbos in April this year, together with Pope Francis and Archbishop Jerome, you commemorated the victims of forced displacement, flight, and violence. The International Society for Human Rights thanks you, Your Holiness, and encourages you to continue resolutely along this path.

Respectfully,

Edgar Lamm, Chairman of the ISHR

Bishop Prof. Dr. mult. Thomas Schirmmacher, President of the International Council of the ISHR