

OTHER COUNTRIES AND REGIONS MONITORED: TURKEY

For the last several years Turkey has implemented a number of reforms to begin to rectify many of the longstanding restrictions on the country's diverse religious communities. These new policies and initiatives, which relate to returning expropriated minority properties, loosening the ban on headscarves, and issues related to textbook reforms and increased educational opportunities, among others, indicate that Turkey is moving in a positive direction with regard to religious freedom. In addition, a parliamentary commission is currently engaged in redrafting the national constitution, which many believe will support greater human rights, including religious freedom. The political and societal climate in Turkey over the last several years has also been more open to public debate on religious freedom matters. Nevertheless, the Turkish government's interpretation of secularism requires absolute state control over all aspects of religion in the public sphere. As a result, no religious community has full legal status, which limits their rights to own and maintain places of worship, train clergy, and offer religious education. Other concerns also remain, including societal discrimination and occasional violence against religious minorities, anti-Semitism in Turkish society and media, and Turkey's military presence in northern Cyprus.

USCIRF will continue to be vigilant in monitoring the religious freedom situation in Turkey. USCIRF continues to recommend that the U.S. government encourage the Turkish government to end its longstanding denial of full legal recognition for religious communities and permit religious minorities to train clergy in Turkey, including by reopening the Greek Orthodox Theological Seminary of Halki and returning the entire territory of the Mor Gabriel Syrian Orthodox monastery. With respect to northern Cyprus, the United States should urge the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot authorities to end all restrictions on the access, use, and restoration of places of worship and cemeteries for religious minorities.

THE CONSTITUTION AND SECULARISM IN TURKEY

Under the 1923 founding constitution, and reiterated in the current constitution drafted in 1982, the Republic of Turkey is a secular state. The constitution provides for freedom of belief, worship, and the private dissemination of religious ideas and prohibits discrimination on religious grounds. Nevertheless, longstanding government policies limit religious freedom for all religious groups, including limiting expressions of personal belief in the public sphere. Islam is subject to state control through the *Diyanet* (the Presidency of Religious Affairs), and religious minorities are subject to state control through the *Vakıflar* (the General Directorate for Foundations). The Turkish state also interferes continuously with religious communities' rights and ability to fully worship and practice their religious faith.

Since first being elected in 2002 the Justice and Development Party (known in Turkish as the AKP, or the AK Party), which favors Turkey's accession to the EU and the democratic integration of Islam into public life, has begun to reverse many of the longstanding impediments to religious freedom, including through constitutional reform.

Following its 2011 re-election, the AK Party pledged to replace Turkey's current constitution with a civilian constitution that, in the words of Prime Minister Erdoğan, would be "short, compact, open, focused on the individual, and committed to freedom." A parliamentary commission was established to collect information and recommendations from civil society, associations, foundations, and religious and minority representatives. It has heard from a vast range of individuals and groups, including the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, Alevi communities, and the Chief Rabbi of Turkey. The commission is currently drafting the document and it is expected to be completed by April 2013. If political consensus on the draft can be found, the Turkish parliament will vote to approve or reject it, otherwise it will be put to national referendum. Nevertheless, even after the adoption of a new constitution, Turkey will still have to rewrite the laws that regulate daily religious life in the country.

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RESTRICTIONS ON NON-MUSLIM MINORITIES

Turkey has a diverse but small (approximately 0.1 percent of the total population) non-Muslim minority population, one that is historically and culturally significant. The Turkish government does not maintain population statistics based on religious identity, but according to estimates by the State Department, in 2010, Turkey's non-Muslim religious minority population included: 65,000 Armenian Orthodox Christians; 23,000 Jews; 15,000 Syriac Christians; 10,000 Baha'is; 5,000 Yezidis; 3,300 Jehovah's Witnesses; 3,000 Protestant Christians; and 1,700 Greek Orthodox Christians, as well as small Georgian Orthodox, Bulgarian Orthodox, Maronite, Chaldean, Nestorian Assyrian, and Roman Catholic communities.

In the name of Turkish secularism, the government has long restricted religious minority communities' ability to own, maintain, and transfer both communal and individual property, to control internal governance, and to train clergy. However, the AK Party recently has begun to reverse many of these restrictive policies, actions which the minorities generally view as positive.

Restrictions Relating to Property

For many years, successive Turkish governments expropriated properties from religious minority and Muslim communities, including schools, businesses, hospitals, orphanages, and cemeteries. Most of the confiscations occurred during three distinct periods of time: first, in 1936, with the passage of the Foundations Law; second, in 1971, when the Private University Law required that all private colleges (including theological schools) be affiliated with state-run-universities; and third, in 1974, when non-Muslim communities were forbidden from owning properties other than those registered in 1936. The government continues to retain the power to expropriate religious minority properties, although there have been no reports of property seizures since 2007.

Under the Foundations Law, only Armenian, Greek and Syriac Orthodox, Jewish, and Chaldean and Roman Catholic communities are permitted to form foundations, which can purchase, own, and sell property in accordance with appropriate zoning and safety rules. However, in recent years other religious groups, including Protestants and Roman Catholics, have been permitted to register foundations. Currently, there are 165 registered non-Muslim community foundations in Turkey. These foundations can administer property used for religious purposes or for revenue-generating activities, but they cannot conduct religious activity. In other words, the law provides legal identity to the foundation but continues to limit the religious community's ability to publicly practice their faith.

In 2008, the Foundations Law was amended to allow foundations to change their scope or purpose from that specified upon the original incorporation, permit the Armenian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, and Jewish communities to have one elected representative on the *Vakiflar*, and allow foundations to apply for the return of confiscated property still under Turkish state control. The 2008 amendments, however, did not solve fundamental problems of the Foundations Law. For example, there was no mechanism for foundations to apply for the return of property that had been sold to third parties or for compensation for irretrievable property. However, in August 2011, Prime Minister Erdoğan announced a new decree to improve on the 2008 amendments.

The 2011 decree created a process for the restitution of previously-expropriated foundation property that was surveyed and registered in 1936, and for which the foundation has a deed or title to the property. The decree allows for the restitution of property that was registered in 1936 but not specifically described in the official documentation (i.e. the registration could show four properties, but not explicitly say that a property was a church, hospital, school, etc.). The decree also permits foundations to receive financial compensation if their property was sold to a third party and cannot be retrieved.

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Between the passage of the 2008 amendment and August 2011, approximately 200 properties were reportedly returned to religious minority foundations of various denominations. Between the August 2011 decree and January 31, 2013, some 300 additional properties (worth an estimated 1.5 billion dollars) have been returned to minority foundations. Thousands of applications are still being considered, although some of these may be duplicate applications or different foundations applying for a single property.

In the last reporting period notable property returns include: 470 acres of forest land to the owner of the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary, the Aya Triada Monastery Foundation (January 2013); the Syriac Patriarchate's building in Istanbul, concluding a 25-year legal battle (July 2012); seven properties of nearly 6,000 hectares to the Christian-Bulgarian foundation, the first return to a group not viewed by the Turkish government as protected by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (June 2012); the Panagia Ayazma Square in Istanbul to the relevant Greek Orthodox Foundation (June 2012); several properties to the Armenian community, including a cemetery, an estate, and a clerical school (April 2012); and a five-acre estate in Istanbul to the Rum (Anatolian Greek) community (April 2012). Additionally, in the last reporting year the *Vakıflar* has agreed to pay market value for at least seven properties that had been sold to third parties.

The Turkish government also has begun reconstructing buildings in an Armenian cemetery in Malatya demolished in February 2012. Additionally, the government is funding restorations of the Jewish Synagogue in Edrine, the St. Nicholas Church in Cunda, the St. Marina Greek Orthodox Church on the Aegean island of Imvros (Gökçeada), and the Akdamar Armenian Church in Van.

Since 2008, there has been an ongoing dispute over the Turkish government's attempted seizure of some territory of the 1,600-year-old Mor Gabriel Monastery, the Syriac Patriarch's residence from 1160 to 1932. In July 2012, the Supreme Court of Appeals, the highest court in Turkey, ruled that the monastery is occupying state lands and the majority of the land should be given to the Turkish treasury.

The Syriac Orthodox Patriarch told USCIRF in February 2011 that his community's foundation owns only one church in Istanbul, which is inadequate to meet the community's needs. In October 2011, the community secured from the Turkish government the right to build a second church in Istanbul. However, construction has been delayed because the Catholic community claims that the site of the proposed church belongs to them.

According to official Turkish governmental records there are more than 380 places of worship for non-Muslim religious minority communities in Turkey. Nevertheless, the Turkish government still controls access and use of various religious sites such as the Greek Orthodox Sümela Orthodox Monastery in Trabzon, the 1,000-year-old Akdamar Armenian Orthodox church on Lake Van, and the Syriac Mor Petrus and Mor Paulus Church in the eastern province of Adiyaman. In recent years the Turkish government has permitted the religious communities to access these religious sites for specific religious observances.

Restrictions on Training of Clergy and Internal Governance

While the Turkish government continues to insist that only Turkish citizens be members of the Greek Orthodox Church's Holy Synod, thereby interfering in the church's internal structures, it has made exceptions and granted citizenship to foreign nationals so they may be members of the Holy Synod, which determines the line of succession of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch. In 2004, the government did not block the Ecumenical Patriarch's appointment of six non-citizen metropolitans to participate rotationally on the Holy Synod and in the last two years 21 foreign nationals have been granted Turkish citizenship so they too could be members.

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Unfortunately, the Greek Orthodox Theological School of Halki on the island of Heybeli, the only Greek Orthodox educational institution in Turkey for training its religious leadership, remains closed after 42 years. In late February 2012, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister stated publicly that no law prohibited the re-opening of Halki and that the government would support such a move. The government offered to reopen Halki as part of the national university system, which would have put it within the jurisdiction of the Turkish Higher Education Board (YÖK). Reportedly, however, the Ecumenical Patriarch wants Halki to be under the purview of the Ministry of Education and be given legal vocational school status, which is the status it had prior to its closure in 1971.

The Turkish state also closed other minority communities' seminaries in the past, denying these communities the right to train clergy. The Armenian Orthodox community, which is Turkey's largest non-Muslim religious minority, lacks a seminary in the country to educate its clerics and today has only 26 priests to minister to an estimated population of 65,000.

RESTRICTIONS ON ALEVIS AND MUSLIMS

Alevis

Alevis comprise 15 to 25 percent of the population, or as many as 25 million people. Alevi beliefs and practices are a source of debate both inside the Alevi community and within Islam. Although the Turkish government and many Alevi view them as heterodox Muslims, many Sunni Muslims do not accept that definition and consider them non-Muslims. Some Alevi identify as Shi'i Muslim, while others reject Islam and view themselves as a unique culture.

Over the past several years, the Turkish government has held regular workshops with the Alevi community to discuss their concerns. However, since the Alevi community has varying views on its relation to Islam, ascertaining its collective goals is difficult. For example, some Alevi wish to have closer ties to the *Diyanet*, while others have indicated publically that the *Diyanet* should be abolished.

Alevis worship in "gathering places" (*cemevi*), which the Turkish government does not consider legal houses of worship, effectively meaning they cannot receive the legal and financial benefits associated with such status. The government's position was upheld by the Supreme Court of Appeals in July 2012. The same month, the Turkish parliament rejected a request that a *cemevi* be opened within the parliamentary grounds for the same reason. In 2012, the Alevi Cem Foundation filed a case with the European Court of Human Rights seeking legal recognition of *cemevis* as houses of worship.

The inherited title of Alevi leaders is Dede (elder) for men or Ana for women, but the Alevis are not entitled to official or legal recognition of that title under a 1925 law.

Muslims

The *Diyanet* controls the religious structures of the majority Sunni Muslim community, which reports directly to the Prime Minister. The *Diyanet*, which is funded from the national budget, officially allows only the practice of Sunni Islam.

The *Diyanet* oversees 85,000 Hanafi Sunni community mosques and pays imams' salaries. Most mosques are owned by the *Diyanet* foundation, which is legally independent of the *Diyanet*. Mosques also are owned by local communities or individuals, and 22 mosques are owned by the Turkish army. Every province has its own self-appointed official mufti, although he is an employee of the *Diyanet*. Since 2007, each of Turkey's 81,000 imams can write their own sermons, indicating greater official

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openness towards the country's Sunni Muslim majority. However, the President of the *Diyanet* told USCIRF in February 2011 that it continues to disseminate suggested themes for sermons.

Other Muslim groups independent of the *Diyanet* technically are banned under Turkish law, but generally are able to function. Sufi brotherhoods and other Muslim social orders (*tarikats*) and lodges (*cemaats*) officially have been banned since 1925; nevertheless, unofficially they remain active and widespread. The Caferis, Turkey's main Shi'i Muslim community, comprised largely of Azeris and Iranians in eastern Turkey and in Istanbul, are permitted to build and operate mosques and appoint imams.

RESTRICTIONS AFFECTING ALL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Education

There have been two longstanding religious freedom issues for religious minorities relating to education: first, the inability of minority communities to educate their youth in schools that are in line with their religious beliefs; and second, derogatory comments about and/or misrepresentations of religious groups and their historical legacies in school textbooks.

The constitution makes religious and moral instruction compulsory in public primary and secondary schools, with a curriculum established by the Ministry of National Education's Department of Religious Instruction. Since 2010 the course, which had primarily focused on Islam, has expanded to include all religions and atheism. Non-Muslim children can be exempted, though in the past there have been reports of societal discrimination against children who are excused from the classes.

Additionally, after complaints by religious minority communities, the Ministry of Education has made an effort to revise textbooks so as not to portray them in a negative light.

In February 2011, the Acting Armenian Patriarch told USCIRF that the Turkish government does not allow some 12,000 school-age children of Armenian migrant workers to attend Armenian minority schools in Turkey. Beginning in September 2011, some of these children were permitted to attend Armenian schools. In March 2012 the Ministry of Education put forth new regulations allowing non-citizen residents to attend minority schools as "visiting students", as well as allowing minority students to attend any minority school they choose. Previously minority students could only attend their own minority affiliated school. However, the new regulations are reported to be confusing, and they place quotas on opening schools and caps on the number of students that can attend.

In December 2011, the YÖK ended the use of different grading scales for university entrance exams, a practice that had disadvantaged graduates of Muslim vocational schools applying for non-religious university programs.

Religious Dress

Due to its interpretation of secularism, the government has long banned religious dress, including the wearing of headscarves, in state buildings, including public and private universities, the parliament, courts, and schools. Under Turkish law, only the titular head of any religious group may wear religious garb in public facilities.

In the past, women who wore headscarves, and their advocates, have been expelled from universities and have lost public sector jobs. However, in recent years, new policies have loosened headscarf restrictions. In October 2010, the YÖK reportedly issued a directive that universities could not expel women for wearing headscarves, and in July 2011, the Council of State upheld the circular. In November 2012, it

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was announced that beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, female students will be allowed to wear headscarves, if they so choose, in schools providing religious education, including secondary, primary, Imam Hatip schools and universities. In January 2013, Turkey's Council of State revoked the ban on female lawyers wearing headscarves while working; this not only applies to courtrooms, but to all offices related to the judicial process.

VIOLENCE AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

In recent years, there have been several high profile attacks against religious minorities. The Turkish government has taken action against individuals believed to be linked to the alleged "Ergenekon" conspiracy to overthrow the AKP government. Individuals associated with the alleged Ergenekon conspiracy have been implicated in the 2006 murder in Trabzon of a Catholic priest, Father Andrea Santoro; the 2007 murders of three Protestant employees of the Zirve Publishing House in Malatya; the 2007 murder of Hrant Dink, a prominent ethnic Armenian journalist; and the 2010 assassination of Bishop Luigi Padovese, the Vicar Apostolic of Anatolia. In the case of Father Santoro, Oğuzhan Akdin was convicted in October 2006 and is serving 18 years, 10 months for premeditated murder. In 2011 and 2012, two individuals, Ogun Samast and Yasin Hayal, were convicted for their involvement in the assassination of Dink. However, 19 other suspects were acquitted. In January 2013, a Turkish court sentenced Murat Altun to 15 years in prison for the murder of Bishop Padovese. The pace of the court case for the Malatya murders has been incredibly slow. As of January 2013, 9 individuals are on trial, which has been fraught with procedural delays.

In the last two years there have been no major incidents of anti-Semitism against houses of worship, properties, or people. However, isolated incidents of harassment and intimidation were reported, including anti-Semitic language in the media. Representatives of the Jewish community in Istanbul told USCIRF in February 2011 that their situation in Turkey is better than that of Jews in other majority Muslim countries. Jews in Turkey are able to worship freely, and their synagogues generally receive government protection when needed. The community also has a representation foundation and owns and operates its own schools, hospitals, two elderly persons' homes, and welfare institutions, as well as a newspaper. However, there has been a steady use of anti-Semitic views and expression in Turkey in recent years. Prime Minister Erdoğan's comments, made shortly after the reporting period, referring to Zionism as a "crime against humanity," along with anti-Semitism, fascism, and Islamophobia may exacerbate this trend and raises serious questions about contemporary forms of anti-Semitism.

In late 2012 and early 2013, the Armenian Orthodox community reported increased fears of violence after three Armenians were murdered. In one case, in late December 2012 an 84-year-old woman was found murdered in her home with a cross carved into her chest. Turkish local police promptly launched investigations into the three cases, but it is not known if any arrests have been made connected to any of these incidents.

ISSUES IN THE NORTHERN PART OF CYPRUS

Since the 1974 invasion, Turkey has maintained a significant military presence in northern Cyprus, and currently approximately 35,000 to 40,000 military troops occupy the area. Turkey also provides an estimated US \$6 to 8 billion annually to subsidize the economy of the area. Regarding the degree of autonomy of the local Turkish Cypriot authorities vis-à-vis Turkey, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has held that Turkey as an occupying power is responsible for its actions and those of its "subordinate local administration" in the northern part of Cyprus. However, since 2010 the ECtHR has directed claimants in cases involving properties, including religious properties, to exhaust the "domestic remedies" available through Turkish Cypriot "authorities." USCIRF visited the northern part of Cyprus in February 2011.

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USCIRF identified three main religious-freedom issues in the northern part of Cyprus: 1) the inability of Orthodox Christians, other religious communities, and clergy to access and hold services at their places of worship and cemeteries in the north, particularly those in Turkish military bases and zones; 2) the disrepair of churches and cemeteries and issues relating to the preservation of religious heritage, such as iconography, mosaics, and other religious symbols; and 3) the lack of schools and opportunities for young people in the north, which has led to an exodus of Greek Cypriots and other religious minorities.

Religious minority communities living in the northern part of Cyprus and displaced persons now living in the areas controlled by the government of the Republic of Cyprus are restricted from accessing houses of worship and cemeteries in the north. However, in the last few years the Turkish military has made rare exceptions on particularly important religious festivals and holidays.

In areas not directly under the control of the Turkish military, there is greater access to religious sites, but restrictions exist. In February 2011, after USCIRF's visit the Turkish Cypriot "authorities" changed their policy regarding applications for permission to access some religious sites and hold services. The policy now allows Greek Orthodox Cypriots to hold services on any day and at any time in churches already in use in their areas of residence. For religious services in churches or monasteries that are not already in use, or for services administered by a priest other than the two priests already serving the northern part of Cyprus, or for services that displaced Greek Cypriots plan to attend, permission must be requested 10 working days prior to the service, down from the previous requirement of 30 days. Lastly, when displaced Cypriots apply for religious services through UN peacekeepers, the advance application requirement is also to be reduced from 30 days to 10 working days. In the current reporting period, the majority of applications submitted by individuals residing in the government-controlled areas of the Republic of Cyprus and in the northern part of Cyprus were approved. Most of the applications that were denied were for access to churches or cemeteries located within Turkish military bases or zones. In addition, the Bishop of Karpasia was again denied permission to perform religious services in northern Cyprus on several occasions.

The government of the Republic of Cyprus and religious leaders there have reported that approximately 500 monasteries, churches and cemeteries in northern Cyprus have been purposely desecrated, are in ruins due to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot authorities' negligence, or are being used for non-religious purposes such as storage or community halls.

In January 2013, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage and the United Nations Development Programme Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF) announced a multi-donor partnership agreement for the restoration of the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas. USCIRF visited the site in February 2011. Two protocols were signed between UNDP-PFF, the Church of Cyprus, and the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

Given the political and economic situation of the divided island and the small size of the minority populations, there are few economic or educational opportunities for minority youth. For example, while the northern part of Cyprus has both public and private primary and secondary schools, the religious minority population does not have enough schools or teachers to educate its own youth in its religious principles outside of the established public school system. Additionally, local authorities control religious education and teaching. This allows local authorities to censor textbooks that contain religious content. Further, as a result of the existing political situation, all textbooks meant for the northern part of Cyprus must be submitted to the UN starting in June of each year for delivery to the schools.

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**DISSENT BY COMMISSIONERS ELLIOTT ABRAMS, ROBERT P. GEORGE,
MARY ANN GLENDON, AND M. ZUHDI JASSER:**

1-After three years on USCIRF's "watch list" (now Tier 2) without significant improvement, Turkey was designated a "country of particular concern" (CPC) in USCIRF's 2012 report. That designation was supported by findings of "systematic and egregious limitations on the freedom of religion or belief that affect all religious communities in Turkey, and particularly threaten the country's non-Muslim religious minorities." It was accompanied by several specific recommendations. This year, with negligible change in the circumstances condemned in previous reports and with USCIRF's recommendations largely ignored, USCIRF has promoted Turkey to the status of a country merely to be monitored.

2-Although the CPC designation by a divided Commission in 2012 was understandable in view of Turkey's intransigence, we believe it was an error to place Turkey among the world's worst violators of religious freedom. But this year's designation has erred in the opposite direction. We believe that Turkey should continue to be designated as a Tier 2 (formerly "watch list") country and therefore we dissent from the Turkey section of the 2013 report.

3-Since the 2013 report itself does not reveal significant improvements in the conditions that led to placing Turkey on the watch list in 2009, 2010 and 2011, and listing it as a CPC in 2012, we are at a loss to understand how Turkey can be described as "moving in a positive direction." In fact, the report paints a dismal picture of persistent religious freedom violations in Turkey and in the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus.

*The Turkish government, in the name of secularism, continues to impose burdensome regulations and to deny full legal recognition to religious minorities. These restrictions, including policies that deny non-Muslim communities the rights to train clergy, offer religious education, and own and maintain places of worship, threaten the very survival of minority religious communities in Turkey.

*The Turkish government also continues to severely restrict the religious freedoms of Muslims, especially those who do not belong to the Sunni majority. As the 2013 report reveals, Turkey's *Diyanet* (Religious Affairs Department) tightly controls all the mosques of the Sunni majority community and does not legally recognize the existence of any other form or interpretation of Islam beyond the state-sponsored interpretation of Hanafi Islam. These serious denials of religious freedom are currently being challenged in the European Court of Human Rights.

*The Turkish government's strict control of religion in the public sphere continues to restrict religious freedom and freedom of expression, especially for non-Muslim religious minority communities.

*Social discrimination and sporadic violence against religious minorities continue to be major concerns. As the 2013 report notes, this situation has worsened rather than improved over the past year, with a steady rise in anti-Semitism. Moreover, the Turkish Prime Minister's recent comments equating Zionism with fascism, so-called "Islamophobia" and crimes against humanity has raised serious questions about official sanction or encouragement for contemporary forms of anti-Semitism.

*Under Turkish occupation, nearly every trace of the once flourishing Christian communities in the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus has been eliminated. Turkish-controlled local officials have imposed regulations that continue to restrict the religious activities of the few non-Muslims still living in northern Cyprus, and to severely limit access to northern religious sites by Christians displaced from their homes in the north and who now live in areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus. In 2010, House Resolution 1631 called on USCIRF to "investigate and make recommendations on violations of religious

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freedom in the areas of northern Cyprus under control of the Turkish military." In 2012, USCIRF called on the Turkish government and the Turkish-controlled authorities in the northern part of Cyprus to end all restrictions on the access, use, and restoration of places of worship and cemeteries for religious minorities, and cease the ongoing desecration of religious sites. But to no avail.

4-For these reasons, we believe that Turkey has not shown nearly enough improvement in addressing religious freedom violations over the past year to justify its promotion to the status of a country that is merely being monitored. We also deplore its studious disregard of recommendations that USCIRF made last year and the years before. A few positive steps here and there, and a few vague promises, do not suffice.

We respectfully dissent.

DISSENT BY COMMISSIONERS WILLIAM J. SHAW AND AZIZAH AL-HIBRI:
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We strongly object to the inclusion of Northern Cyprus in the chapter report on Turkey. Northern Cyprus is not an official territorial or governmental part of Turkey.

We also strongly object to an examination of religious freedom issues in only one part of the island of Cyprus—the Northern part—when there is a clear historical contextual connect with conditions of religious freedom in the Southern part of the island. Both Northern and Southern religious freedom concerns are more rooted in historical political developments between the South and North regions than in real religious tensions between peoples. Conclusions arrived at through a decision to examine only part of the evidence does not carry the weight of fairness and of justice.