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US pressure on official Turkey over failure to allow reopening of Halki Seminary



US State spokesperson Ned Price on Thursday again urged the government of Turkey to reopen the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Seminary, thereby allowing the institution to train Orthodox clergy, according to a statement posted on Twitter.

A more comprehensive US State Department statement was attached to the tweet, reading:

“Today marks 50 years since the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled that all institutions of higher education must either nationalize or close, resulting in the closure of the Theological School of Halki, a seminary of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Halki Seminary had operated for 127 years, and its closing deprived the Ecumenical Patriarchate of a training school for Orthodox clergy in Turkey, it’s home for 1,690 years. Since Halki’s closure, those wishing to become Orthodox clergy have been forced to go abroad for their training.

“The United States continues to urge the Turkish government to respect the right to freedom of religion or belief as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allow the reopening of the Halki Seminary. Moreover, we call upon the government of Turkey to allow all religious groups to again train their clergy within the country.”

> Fifty years ago Turkey’s nationalization of higher education caused the Halki Seminary to close. We continue to urge the government of Turkey to respect the universal human right of religious freedom and allow Halki Seminary to freely train Orthodox clergy.https://t.co/QaJvVj6Yie
>
> — Ned Price (@StateDeptSpox) July 29, 2021

In a later reaction to the stern American response, the Archbishop of America, His Eminence Elpidophoros, expressed his thanks to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for Washington’s position on the matter and its statement, aimed at official Turkey.

His Eminence noted that “…we thank Secretary Blinken for the State Department’s statement, urging the Turkish government to reopen Halki, an essential decision for Turkey’s readiness to protect religious freedom and human rights.”

Today, 50 years after the closure of the Theological School of Halki, we thank @SecBlinken for @StateDept's statement urging the Turkish government to reopen Halki, an essential decision for Turkey's readiness to protect religious freedom and human rights https://t.co/RDdZ7PCIK3

— Elpidophoros (@Elpidophoros) July 29, 2021