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Reopening of Halki Seminary among issues brought up by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with US President Biden in Oval Office



The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, was received on Monday for a warm and cordial meeting at the Oval Office in the White House by US President Joe Biden.

According to reports citing Church sources, the meeting exceeded mere ceremonial contacts, as talks included enlarged delegations with the participation of senior White House and US State Department officials.

Among others, discussion touched on a shared sense of urgency caused by climate change.



His All-Holiness also thanked President Biden for his decisive response to the pandemic and for his readiness to support developing nations in securing Covid-19 vaccines for their populations.

Additionally, the Patriarchal delegation again underlined that the continued ban, by the Turkish government, for the independent operation of the Theological School of Halki is unacceptable.

The patriarchal mission requested that the issue of the Halki Seminary be upgraded politically by the US side.

Before arriving at the White House, His All Holiness was received at the State Department by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, with the latter saying that the reopening of the Halki Seminary is a priority for the Biden administration.

Afterwards, on his official Twitter account, Blinken noted that "…I was honored to meet His All-Holiness to discuss the US commitment to supporting global religious freedom. We value our partnership with the Orthodox Christian community worldwide and religious minorities in Turkey and the region."



On his part, the Archbishop of America, His Eminence Elpidophoros, who accompanied the Ecumenical Patriarch during his meetings, stated that he was "… Deeply grateful to President Joe Biden for our meeting in the Oval Office, where the Ecumenical Patriarch addressed the urgency of political leaders responding to the climate crisis, the distribution of Covid vaccines to developing nations, and the reopening of Halki Seminary."