



November 16, 2011

The Honorable Don Young  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska  
Native Affairs  
1337 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dan Boren  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska  
Native Affairs  
186 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Young and Ranking Member Boren:

As the national president of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), the largest and oldest grassroots membership-based association for American citizens of Greek heritage and Philhellenes, I thank you for the opportunity to submit for the public record the association's position on H.R.2362, the Indian Tribal Trade and Investment Demonstration Project Act of 2011 as you consider it for mark-up. Specifically, AHEPA wishes to raise areas of concern that shed light on 1) Turkish threats to U.S. commercial interests 2) Turkey's mistreatment of minority communities, and 3) Turkish entities already in the United States. AHEPA strongly contends that these three areas of concern are quite germane to the legislation because they demonstrate Turkish attitude toward U.S. commercial interests and behavior toward minority communities and reflect the existing track record of Turkish entities in the United States. Therefore, they must be taken into serious consideration by the subcommittee before it acts upon H.R.2362.

### **Turkey's Threats to U.S. Commercial Interests**

Turkey's threats to U.S. firm Noble Energy, which is lawfully conducting oil and gas exploration off the coast of Cyprus, in Cyprus's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the eastern Mediterranean, have drawn the attention of the Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs. In a statement issued September 22, 2011, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen cautioned Turkey on its decision to escalate tensions by increasing its military presence in the eastern Mediterranean. She stated, *"Turkey's decision to escalate tensions by increasing its military presence in the Mediterranean poses a clear threat to U.S. citizens and interests in the region."* Noble Energy is based in Houston, Texas.

Moreover, Turkey has threatened to blacklist international companies willing to work on this particular exploration project off the coast of Cyprus. This would include any U.S. companies. Therefore, why would the United States Congress facilitate the unique opportunity for private entities from Turkey to engage in trade and financial investment with Indian tribal economies regardless of which entity benefits?

In addition to Turkey's threats to Noble Energy, and in essence, U.S. citizens, it has also threatened U.S. allies Israel and Cyprus, the two countries working in collaboration with Noble Energy to explore the Levant Basin for oil and gas resources. The right of the Republic of the Republic of Cyprus to explore for natural resources in its exclusive economic zone, including with the assistance of U.S. companies, has been stated by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech before the American-Turkish Council on October 31, 2011.

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### **Turkey's Mistreatment of Minority Communities**

The subcommittee must take into consideration that the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission established by the U.S. Congress, has placed Turkey on its "Watch List" for three consecutive years (2009 – 2011). According to the Commission, the Watch List provides advance warning of negative trends that could develop into severe violations of religious freedom.

To excerpt from the USCIRF's 2011 Annual Report:

*"The Turkish government continues to impose serious limitations on freedom of religion or belief, thereby threatening the continued vitality and survival of minority religious communities in Turkey... Also concerning is the rise in anti-Semitism in Turkish society and media. Additionally, Turkey's military control over northern Cyprus supports a web of arbitrary regulations implemented by the local Turkish Cypriot authorities, which results in serious limitations on religious freedom."*

To further demonstrate the sense of the House's leaders on foreign policy, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs overwhelmingly passed an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Bill, H.R., 2583, that called upon Turkey to honor its international obligations to return stolen Christian churches, stop religious discrimination, and fully respect the rights of Christians to practice their faith in freedom. The amendment passed the full committee with overwhelming bipartisan support, 43 to 1.

### **Turkish Entities under Investigation in U.S.**

Finally, mainstream U.S. media outlets have reported on the growth of Turkish charter schools in America, as many as 120 of them, founded by the teachings of Fethullah Gulen (also known as The Gulen Movement), and how the schools have come under federal investigation for how they are administered.

*The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on March 20, 2011, "But federal agencies - including the FBI and the Departments of Labor and Education - are investigating whether some charter school employees are kicking back part of their salaries to a Muslim movement founded by Gulen known as Hizmet, or Service, according to knowledgeable sources."<sup>1</sup>

In addition the *New York Times* in a June 6, 2011 article raised the same concerns about how the schools spend taxpayer money, "And it raises questions about whether, ultimately, the schools are using taxpayer dollars to benefit the Gulen movement — by giving business to Gulen followers, or through financial arrangements with local foundations that promote Gulen teachings and Turkish culture." The article also reports on federal investigations about abuse of a visa program to bring in expatriate employees.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "U.S. charter school network with Turkish Link draws federal attention," by Martha Woodall and Claudio Gatti, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 2011. [http://articles.philly.com/2011-03-20/news/29148147\\_1\\_gulen-schools-gulen-followers-charter-schools](http://articles.philly.com/2011-03-20/news/29148147_1_gulen-schools-gulen-followers-charter-schools).

<sup>2</sup> "Charter Schools Tied to Turkey Grow in Texas," by Stephanie Saul, *New York Times*, June 6, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/07/education/07charter.html?pagewanted=all>



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In closing, we raise the following questions for consideration by the subcommittee. What is the vetting process that has allowed Turkish entities to receive access to Indian nations? Were entities from other countries considered for this opportunity or able to express their desire to do so? If not, why?

We also for the record note a concern with Turkey's foreign policy direction and history that conflicts with the best interests of the United States, including: the aforementioned belligerent posture toward Israel, its blockade of Armenia, its vote against a UN resolution to impose sanctions against Iran with regard to that country's nuclear weapons program, its 37-year illegal invasion and subsequent illegal occupation of the Republic of Cyprus, a member of the European Union; and its continued violations of Greece's sovereignty in the Aegean Sea, a staunch NATO ally.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit the association's statement for the public record on H.R.2362.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Grossomanides  
National President