July 10, 2020

The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon

1535 Longworth HOB

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mrs. Scanlon,

As a member of a devout community of Greek Orthodox Christians, I was profoundly disturbed by the recent decision of the Turkish government which seeks to turn the Hagia Sophia Church in Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey) into a mosque. For the past century, the Church of Hagia Sophia has been a symbol of cooperation and dialogue between various faith traditions and it has served as a symbol of hope that people can peacefully coexist regardless of their religion.

The goal to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque has been prompted by Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who continually assaults the Christian minority of Turkey through divisive policies which have stripped Christians of their religious freedoms. This is the latest and most visible act in a series of reprehensible acts which have brought about the persecution of Christians in Turkey. President Erdogan’s initiative is just another in a long history of injustices perpetrated by the Turkish government over the last century which has seen the genocide of about 2 million people, the forcible exile of about 1.5 million Greeks, the illegal invasion of Cyprus, the illegal confiscation of property, and the continued persecution of the spiritual center of the Orthodox world, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

I urge you to publicly condemn these disgraceful actions and this latest shameful action of the Turkish government. Furthermore, I ask that you intervene to whatever extent you can in helping to ensure that this persecution ends, that justice prevails, and that Hagia Sophia is returned to its rightful state as an Orthodox Christian Church.

It is my hope that you will speak out against this atrocity and that you will defend people who have been deprived of their religious freedom and cultural heritage.

Sincerely,