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PRELATE'S RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR RICCIARDONE'S STATEMENT ON CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN TURKEY

Ambassador Francis Ricciardone, President Obama's "recess" appointee to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, has, very regrettably, made a patently incorrect and deeply painful claim that "most of the Christian churches functioning [on the territory of present-day Turkey] prior to 1915 are still operating as churches."

Whether unintentional and out of ignorance or premeditated and deliberate, this blatantly false assertion by the representative of the United States to the Republic of Turkey is absolutely unacceptable.

Rather than unapologetically affirming the truth and - in the best of the American tradition - defending religious freedom against all threats, Ambassador Ricciardone's statement simply serves to advance the Turkish government's campaign to deny the Armenian Genocide.

The presence of an Ambassador in Ankara who is unaware of or uninterested in the truth and the consequences of the Ottoman and Republican Turkish government's genocide of Armenians, Assyrians, Syriacs, Greeks and other Christians materially undermines U.S. interests, compromises American values, and weakens international efforts to defend religious freedom for peoples of all faiths. Sadly, but unmistakably, with this hateful and hurtful statement, Ambassador Ricciardone has demonstrated that he is not the right candidate to effectively and responsibly represent the United States in Turkey.

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