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Cultural Heritage, Human Rights, and Community Sustainability: Turkey's Weaponization of Cultural Heritage Against the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Community.

On Sunday, November 10, 2024, at 3:00 pm, Hellenic Link-Midwest will present Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou in a talk titled: "*Cultural Heritage, Human Rights, and Community Sustainability: Turkey's Weaponization of Cultural Heritage Against the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Community.*" The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). This lecture is supported by the Hellenic Foundation, Chicago.

The twin events of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the centennial of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey provide an opportune, urgent moment for considering the application of a universal human rights framework to cultural heritage protections, most especially with regard to the sustainability of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodoxy community of Turkey (EPGOCT). Although a broad range of international human rights instruments has been developed to address the original deficits in the UDHR regarding the linkages between cultural heritage protection and the sustainability of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minority populations, the Turkish state has architected a cultural heritage policy towards the EPGOCT that functions as a multi-purpose weapon—appropriation, expropriation, erasure, destruction—deployed towards the goal of national homogenization and unsustainability of the EPGOCT. This talk will introduce the linkages between university human rights, cultural heritage rights, and minority communities as a framework for analyzing Turkey's use of cultural heritage policy towards the EPGOCT over the past century. I explore Turkey's "Hagia Sophia fetish" as part of the broader set of tools targeting the tangible and intangible heritage of the EPGOCT, and I suggest that the case of the EPGOCT is paradigmatic and consequential for understanding the vulnerability of the country's other minority communities. I close with some suggestions for efficacious action that combines the work of diplomats, heritage experts, and human rights practitioners, that improves the agency of the EPGOCT, towards improved outcomes in this case and comparative cases.

Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou is Visiting Professor in the International Studies Program at Boston College, and an affiliated faculty member of the Islamic Civilizations and Societies Program as well as the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. Her research interests and policy work focus on the intersections of geopolitics, religion, and human rights, with particular focus on the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Prodromou served a diplomatic appointment on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (2004-2012), and she was a member of the U.S. Secretary of State's Religion & Foreign Policy Working Group (2011-2015). She is co-editor of two volumes, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity and American Higher Education: Theological, Historical, and Contemporary Reflections*, and *Thinking through Faith: Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*, and multiple book chapters, and is widely published in academic journals such as *Journal of World Christianity*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Orbis*, and *Survival*.

She sits on the editorial board of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* and *The Journal of World Christianity*, and Co-Chairs the Orthodoxy, Politics, and International Relations Group of the International Orthodox Theological Association. Her policy and practitioner appointments include the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center (Non-Resident Senior Fellow), Religions for Peace (Co-President), and the Freedom of Religion or Belief Women's Alliance (Alliance Advisor). She was a member of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Holy and Great Council at Crete in 2016.

Her current research focuses on two areas: religious geopolitics and typologies of power, with a case study of Russian influence-building through religious soft and sharp power; and, the effects of cultural heritage policy on institutional religious freedom and religious pluralism, with comparative case studies from the Near East.

Prodromou has taught at The Fletcher School at Tufts University, where she was the founding faculty director of the Initiative on Religion, Law, and Diplomacy; at Boston University; Princeton University; and, as an invited flying faculty member, at the College of Europe (Natolin campus). She earned a Ph.D. and an S.M. in political science from MIT, an M.A.L.D. from The Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a B.A. in history and international relations from Tufts University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude.

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