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SENATOR PAUL TSONGAS

Remarks to the Senate

June 20, 1979

Mr. President, we are fortunate today to be offered words of prayer from a great spiritual leader. Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, has served wisely and compassionately in that high position for the past 20 years. He has aided Americans unselfishly since coming to the United States 40 years ago.

Over the decades, Archbishop Iakovos has kept a commitment to Christian vitality and unity. He has paid particular attention to young people in his travels throughout the Americas. He has figured prominently in the ecumenical movement among Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox Churches.

In 1959, the Archbishop was received by Pope John XXIII at the Vatican as a special emissary of Patriarch Athenagoras. He was the first Greek Orthodox Archbishop to visit a Roman Catholic Pontiff in more than four centuries. Five years later he accompanied Patriarch Athenagoras on his historic journey to Jerusalem, where Patriarch Athenagoras met with Pope Paul VI.

In that same year, 1964, Archbishop Iakovos dedicated himself and his Church to the quest for equal rights in the United States. He marched from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He later told a reporter, "The Selma march with children and people of different colors, walking toward the Kingdom ... was the highest moment of my last ten years." The Archbishop also gave vigorous support for passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965.

This honored leader of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Americas has spoken out against suffering and injustice throughout the world. He has strongly protested the United Nations resolution of 1975 equating Zionism with racism. He has been a leader in efforts to assist Greek Cypriot refugees from the Turkish military invasion and occupation of Cyprus in 1974.

Archbishop Iakovos came to the United States from Turkey 40 years ago to find religious freedom. He was ordained to the priesthood in my hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts in 1940. He testified to his commitment to our people by becoming an American citizen in 1950. Throughout his life, he has devoted himself to the dictates of Christian faith in a divisive, troubled world.

His relentless dedication has been recognized by countless awards. In the single year of 1970, for example, he was named "Clergyman of the Year" by Religious Heritage of America, and "Man of Conscience" by the interfaith Appeal of Conscience Foundation. That same year, he was also honored by the President as a "Distinguished American in Voluntary Service." I hope Archbishop Iakovos has many more years of dedicated service to Americans and all citizens of the world.

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