



**The Rev. The Hon. Fred Nile MLC** ED., L.Th.,

Member of the Legislative Council  
Deputy Chair, Privileges Committee  
Parliamentary Leader, Christian Democratic Party  
Parliament House, Macquarie Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000  
Telephone: (02) 9230 2478 Facsimile: (02) 9230 2098  
Email: [f.nile@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:f.nile@parliament.nsw.gov.au)



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Rev. Nile Supports Persecuted Christians in Turkey**

**For immediate circulation**

Yesterday, the Rev Fred Nile MLC of the Christian Democratic Party noted the woeful treatment of Christians in Turkey during a debate in the Legislative Council. An extract from that speech is reproduced from the Parliamentary *Hansard* below:

#### **TURKISH CHRISTIANS**

**Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (15:22):** I update the House on the persecution of Christians in Turkey. Many of my constituents trace their ancestral heritage to Turkey and its surrounding region, so this is a matter close to my heart. In recent years a great deal of suffering has been visited upon Christians in this area—whether in Armenia, in the chaos-ravaged parts of northern Iraq and Syria or in Turkey itself. The oldest Christian communities in the world have undergone a period of annihilation and this process seems to have accelerated in recent decades.

Despite recent political upheavals, Turkey is a relatively stable country with a strong man as head of State—President Erdogan. It is a democracy perhaps in name only. It also seems to have a policy that deliberately marginalises the local Christians and persecutes expressions of Christianity in the country. The case of Pastor Michael Feulner of Yalova Lighthouse Church is a recent example. Paster Feulner is a German national who came to Turkey to help with the reconstruction effort after the 1999 Izmit earthquake. He and his family settled in Turkey and since

2003 he has been the pastor of the Yalova Lighthouse Church. Recently he was taken to court to contest a "security designation" and a deportation order which, if his defence does not succeed, will see him banned from Turkey. On 11 February the pastor and his legal defence team were afforded 10 minutes to present their case before three judges. Neither the judges themselves nor the immigration officials offered any response to his pleadings.

It is unclear what the allegations were in relation to Pastor Feulner being an alleged threat to the nation's internal security. However, it is not unusual that the simple advocacy of Christian faith is regularly treated as a risk to the Turkish regime and its increasingly Islamist policies. A judgement is expected within three months and no appeal will be permitted. According to the organisation known as Middle East Concern, 70 foreign Christian activists have been similarly deported from Turkey on charges that they are a threat to the country's national security. This is deeply concerning given that Turkey is a member of NATO and has been trying to gain entrance into the European Union for many years. The tradition of Kemal Ataturk, who is still regarded as the Father of the modern Turkish State, has always been oriented towards the West and its values.

Rev Nile makes the following additional comments:

- "What we have been witnessing in recent years under the Presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been a reversal of this tradition."
- "I fear that this will result in damage not only to the Christians of the region, but to Turkey's own image abroad."
- "I pray that the leaders of the Turkish state realise that the future would be far more fruitful for all their citizens, whether they are Muslim or Christian, if everybody's religious beliefs are respected."
- "Religious tolerance is a mark of a truly civilised community."
- "I know that my constituents will continue to pray that turkey reorients itself back to the community of civilised nations and stops persecuting its Christian religious minority."

**Media inquiries:**

**Rev. Hon. Fred Nile MLC (02) 9230 2478**