



# **TURKISH** **COALITION** *of* **AMERICA**

*Fostering Understanding of Turkish American Issues Through Public Education*

**Annual Report**  
**2009**

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# Executive Summary

## The Turkish Coalition of America

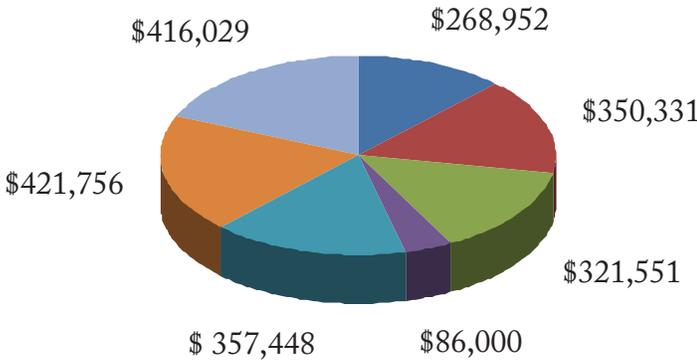
The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) was founded in 2007 as an educational, charitable organization and works to:

- Foster friendship, understanding and cooperation between the United States and Turkey
- Expand Turkish American outreach to American public and private entities
- Promote and advance the interests of the Turkish American community and Turks
- Protect the character and ensure a realistic portrayal of Turkey and Turkish Americans in the media and the arts
- Identify and recognize the achievements of Turkish Americans in academia, arts, business, education, government, public service and science.

The Turkish Coalition of America invested **\$2,222,067** from January-December 2009 to pursue its mission and programs. This represents a nearly four fold increase from the resources allocated by the TCA to its mission in 2007 (**\$ 542,600**) and a nearly 20 percent increase over 2008, when TCA's budget stood at **\$ 1,713,800**.

The programs and efforts of TCA in 2009 focused on the following areas:

- Public Education
- Youth and Education
- Cross-Cultural Exchanges
- Civic Engagement
- Congressional Outreach
- Legal Defense
- Administrative



**2009 to date: \$2,222,067**

# Educating the Public

TCA contributes to the accurate portrayal of Turkish Americans and Turkey through a proactive media strategy. Year around, TCA's professional team monitors American media and engages with journalists through face-to-face meetings and by providing background information and fact sheets on current issues. TCA officers and experts regularly publish opinion articles and respond to biased reporting on issues of concern to Turkish Americans. **TCA Issue Papers** are regularly sent to members of Congress and opinion leaders and provide information and analysis about current issues related to Turkey.



The TCA website is a constantly updated educational resource on issues concerning Turkish Americans and US-Turkey relations. The website received nearly 200,000 visitors from 85 countries.

It offers a media archive on issues related to Turkey, an extensive compilation of reference material, talking points, and a comprehensive resource and reading list on Turkey. Public and university libraries are offered these resources by TCA for free. In April 2009, at the time of the introduction of another congressional Armenian resolution, TCA completed a research project and launched a **reference website on the Armenian issue**. The website provides a listing of reputable international scholars who challenge the one-side Armenian narrative on this tragic history and/or dispute the Armenian allegation of genocide. The website extensively quotes and references their work, providing the public direct access to the vast volume of scholarship that is rarely known and acknowledged.

In May 2009, TCA launched its **You Tube channel**. Videos produced for the TCA You Tube channel offer analysis by TCA's and other scholars on current issues, as well as coverage on TCA events and have received over **19,500 viewings**.

As a result of its outreach to the media, TCA has become the most mentioned Turkish American organization in the US media, and has quickly become the go-to reference for reporters, who are writing on issues relating to US – Turkey relations and the Turkish American community. TCA received over **550 mentions** in newspaper articles in the last year including being quoted in the **Associated Press, Reuters, McClatchy Newspapers, the Washington Post, the Washington Times, Politico, National Journal, Congressional Quarterly, Roll Call, the Hill Newspaper, the LA Times, the Guardian (UK)**, and many other papers throughout the US, Turkey and the world. TCA has been featured on a number of different blogs and online media, including the widely read **Huffington Post**, and other prominent online media publications. TCA's President, G. Lincoln McCurdy has been featured on a call-in show on US-Turkey relations on **C-SPAN** and **Voice of America** has covered 3 different TCA events in the last year.

TCA also supported Turkish American media outlets. TCA provided funding and produced a 5-series pilot TV program titled **"It's a New World,"** featuring news and analysis from a Turkish American perspective, for **Best TV**, a satellite broadcast channel geared toward the Turkish American community. **Turk of America** magazine received TCA funding to publish a special issue on Turkish Sephardic heritage, which was widely distributed to Jewish American organizations and to all members of Congress. TCA also has become an advertisement sponsor of **TurkishNY**, a Turkish American online news portal. TCA also sponsored subscriptions of **Cornucopia** magazine, a widely acclaimed magazine on Turkish art and culture, to congressional offices and university libraries.

# Investing in Youth and Education

*Realizing that Turkish Americans excel in all walks of life, but are often missing from the American civic and political life, TCA has instituted two signature youth programs.*

## TCA Summer Internship Program

The TCA Summer Internship Program offers Turkish American college and graduate students the opportunity to work in congressional offices or select governmental and non-governmental organizations based in our nation's capital. This program is designed to enhance the participation of young Turkish Americans in political life and contribute to the preparation of future Turkish American political leaders.

In partnership with TUSIAD-US, in 2009, this program sponsored 18 interns of Turkish descent hailing from top universities including Tufts, Columbia, Cornell, and Ohio State. These young ambassadors for the community, in the tradition of their predecessors, left a positive impression of Turkish Americans on the Hill. Congresswomen Virginia Foxx (NC), Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX), and Jean Schmidt (OH) each personally provided glowing reviews of their summer interns. Congressman Alcee Hastings' (FL) office invited its TUSIAD-TCA intern to stay on through the Fall.

A total of 34 Turkish American students have been given the opportunity to intern in Washington, DC through this collaborative program between TCA and TUSIAD-US since 2007. Starting in 2010, TCA will assume sole sponsorship of the Washington Summer Internship Program. Based on

the backgrounds and past performance of internship program alumni, TCA has high expectations for its 2010 class of interns. The goal of TCA is to ensure the placement of a record high of 20 Turkish American interns on Capitol Hill during the summer 2010 session.



Turkish American interns Erim Canligil, Yenal Kucuker and Elif Selin Cila with House Minority Leader John Boehner on Capitol Hill, July 10, Washington, DC.



2009 Capitol Hill Summer Interns pose with heads of TCA & TUSIAD-US, while proudly displaying their Certificates of Appreciation.

# Investing in Youth and Education

## TCAdvance Scholarship Program

The **TCAdvance Scholarship Program** offers a \$ **5000** annually renewable scholarship to Turkish American students who aspire to a career in public service, public relations or media. Awarded to graduating high school seniors, college and graduate students, the TCAdvance Scholarship aims to recognize the academic achievements and leadership role of young Turkish Americans and to cultivate a new generation of leaders in our community.

In 2009, TCA received its highest number of applications yet, rendering its newly renamed TCAdvance Scholarship program increasingly competitive. 2009 recipients included a Congressional staff member as well as Capitol Hill interns in addition to the usual pool of talented Turkish Americans who have made TCA's scholarship program a success.

## TCA Fellowships

In 2009 TCA awarded several grants, some original and some a continuation of grants offered in prior years, to promising scholars and researchers whose work the TCA finds particularly intriguing.

This year's grants total nearly \$ **50,000**. One grant will conclude with a publication by the Woodrow Wilson Center of a paper concerning the politics of education reform in Turkey. In that academic vein, another TCA grant provided subvention toward the publication of a second volume in a series of books concerning Ataturk's education reforms.

TCA 2007, 2008 and 2009 Awardees.

Since the program's inception in 2007, TCA has granted scholarships to 36 Turkish Americans, who possess impressive credentials. In its first year, TCA scholarship program attracted honor students from the nation's leading universities including Columbia, Georgetown, UCLA and Wellesley. In 2008 and 2009, TCA continued to attract a growing number of qualified candidates as its scholarship program for Turkish Americans gained prestige across the nation. 2008 scholarship recipients came from such schools as UC Berkeley, Johns Hopkins, Tufts and University of Michigan, representing a diverse range of interests and talent.

TCA is also providing a fellowship to support a scholar's research into the archives of the missionary organizations active in the late Ottoman Empire. And, a TCA grantee is conducting research into the status of individuals accused of crimes against Turkish Americans and Turkish officials who have drawn the ire of anti-Turkish violent groups. Finally, a TCA grant will support the publication of an updated DVD version of "**Who are the Turks,**" a curriculum guide about Turkey and Turks geared specifically toward educators.



# Investing in Youth and Education

## TCA-University of Utah Academic Program

The Turkish Coalition of America provided a multi-year major grant to the University of Utah in 2009 to establish a new academic program on "*The Origins of Modern Ethnic Cleansing: The Collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Nation States in the Balkans and Caucasus.*" This novel program will advance scholarship on a critical period in a region that continues to make headlines, in part due to the turbulent forces unleashed in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. The program will explore the shaping of modern Turkish identity through scholarly work, conferences, community participation, and support for new research, much of which will focus on a series of traumatic formative events including crises in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the loss of major territories, and forced migration that presaged the establishment of the Turkish Republic.



The program's director is **Professor Hakan Yavuz**. The Program's Partnership Board is composed of **Dr. Sukru Elekdag**, Member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly and former Ambassador to the United States, **Rifat Hisarciklioglu**, President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, **Professor Yusuf Sarinay**, Director of the State Archives of Turkey, **Professor Norman Stone**, Historian and Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University, and **Alev Alatli**, journalist and writer.

# Building Bridges

## Scholarships and Educational Exchanges

TCA's commitment to establishing cross-cultural bridges with American minority communities in the United States manifests itself in scholarship and exchange programs.

100 scholarships per year to Armenian American college students, who wish to study in Turkey or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

TCA has also invested in creating academic bridges between **Turkish universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and other Minority Serving Institutions**. In 2008 and 2009, TCA has organized and sponsored two academic tours for educators from these institutions to Turkey. TCA also organized a lecture tour on Turkish foreign policy by **Ambassador (Ret.) Faruk Logoglu**, former Turkish Ambassador to the United States and former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, that visited five historically black colleges in the United States.

In early 2009, TCA organized and co-sponsored a study tour of Turkish college administrators and educators to meet with administrators, educators and community leaders from various minority groups in the United States. Most recently, the "*Native American Lecture Tour of Turkey*" began on November 1, 2009 and concluded on November 22, 2009 after bringing educators from Mandan, Hopi, Pueblo and Mohawk tribes to 12 universities in four cities in Turkey. The tour culminated in a two-day Native American Conference at Hacettepe University to explore topics of cultural survival through literature and the arts.

These educational tours have laid the foundation for long-term exchanges between Turkish and US universities. Specifically, they have resulted in full tuition scholarships for the Spring and Fall 2010 semesters offered by **Bahcesehir University** to two **Native American** and two **African American students** and **10 comprehensive (tuition, room, stipend) scholarships for Native American students per semester offered by the Istanbul Technical University**. The TCA initiative also resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between



Congressman Michael McMahon (D-NY-13th) and Lincoln McCurdy witness MOU signing by Dr. Burak Kuntay of Bahcesehir and Mr. Michael Hester of UN-CFSP.

The leading program in this area is the TCA Study Abroad in Turkey Scholarship for Minority Students. This program offers up to **100 scholarships per year** for **African American, Hispanic American and Native American college students** who are accepted to a study abroad program in Turkey or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In 2009, **21 scholarships** have been awarded, bringing the total to **26 scholarships** provided since the program's inception in 2008.

In support of the ongoing diplomatic and political dialogue between Turkey and Armenia, TCA has announced in September 2009 that it will grant up to

# Building Bridges

Bahcesehir University and the United Negro College Fund Special Programs and institutional talks on student and faculty exchanges between Turkish universities and Howard University, Winston Salem State University, Northern Arizona University, Institute of American Indian Arts and the South Dakota State University.

## Heritage Partnerships

To highlight the historical heritage and contemporary bonds of friendship of the Turkish people with its kin and neighbors, TCA has established special partnerships with the **Bosniak** and **Macedonian** communities in the United States. TCA has pledged to provide multi-year grants to **the Bosniak American Advisory Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BAACBH)** and **the United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD)**. The TCA grants are designed as matching donations, up to **\$ 100,000** annually to match private donations collected by these two groups. The TCA funds have been designated to support the organizational capacity of these national Bosniak and Macedonian organizations and support their efforts to establish their communities' voices in Washington, DC.

In 2009, TCA provided **\$50,000** to BAACBH and **\$78,166** to UMD. TCA's support has enabled BAACBH and UMD to hire professional staff, significantly strengthening their organizational structure, provides a strong momentum resulting in increased donations from their respective communities, and has strengthened the friendly bonds between the Bosnian, Macedonian and Turkish American communities.

## Humanitarian Partnerships

### Ambulance Donation to Mexican Red Cross

Mexico endured one of its worst national disasters in November of 2007 when the state of Tabasco was hit by a hurricane, causing massive flooding and the destruction of tens of thousands of homes and schools, as well as the state's crops. The flooding left over a million people homeless, an estimated one-third of the victims were children. In hopes of a more immediate recovery in future cases of need, **two ambulances have been donated to the Mexican Red Cross** by the Turkish Coalition of America as a gesture of friendship. This gift from Turkish Americans to the people of Tabasco, Mexico is a way of showing solidarity to victims of natural disasters, of which Turkey also has



Congressman Reyes and Congressman Ortiz receiving the symbolic keys to the ambulances at a ceremony on Capitol Hill. tragically suffered.

The two ambulances, worth \$ 100,000, were delivered to the Mexican Red Cross by TCA in February 2009. The ceremony coincided with the launch for the Mexican Red Cross's 2009 fundraising drive under the auspices of **Mexico's First Lady Margarita Zavala Calderón**, who received and thanked the TCA delegation, which included the Vice President of the

# Building Bridges

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. TCA and the Mexican Red Cross dedicated the two ambulances to two US Members of Congress: **Congressman Solomon Ortiz** and **Congressman Sylvester Reyes**, who are deans of the Hispanic Caucus and members of the Turkish Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, to bring together the people of Mexico, Turkey and the United States.



Lincoln McCurdy, President of TCA; with Ambulance donated by TCA in Tabasco, Mexico.

## Chaldean Iraqi Refugees Grant

In an effort to alleviate the suffering of thousands of Iraq's war torn and displaced Chaldean refugees in Turkey, the Turkish Coalition of America pledged a \$ **100,000** humanitarian grant to the **Chaldean Federation of America (CFA)**. The humanitarian aid program will be administered by the **Turkish Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac Humanitarian Organization (KASDER)** under the coordination of CFA and TCA and is designed to provide humanitarian aid, particularly food and medicine, and supplement the Turkish government's assistance program to address the most pressing needs of the thousands of



Joseph Kassab, Executive Director of Chaldean Federation of America (CFA), Michael George, Chair of CFA, Congressman Gary Peters, Monsignor Francois Yakan, Lincoln McCurdy and Nurten Ural, Honorary Consul General of Turkey and Past President of Assembly of Turkish American Associations.

# In the Community

## Supporting Turkish American Civic Engagement

Since its foundation, the Turkish Coalition of America has been working in collaboration with nationwide Turkish American organizations to enhance civic engagement of Turkish Americans.

For a second year, TCA has awarded two major grants, in the amount of \$ **100,000** each, to the **Assembly of Turkish American Associations** and the **Federation of Turkish American Associations** to underwrite their grassroots programs for 2009-2010. These grants are designed to build grassroots engagement capacity of ATAA and FTAA, enabling the two organizations to hire a designated staff person and to underwrite programs focusing on enhancing Turkish American participation in civic and political life.

TCA has also provided event sponsorships and grants totaling over \$ **25,000** in 2009 to other Turkish American organizations in pursuit of common goals. These included the **Pittsburgh Turkish American Association** for a pilot project to survey the Turkish American community, the **Istanbul University Alumni Association US**, **Paxturcica** and the **Azerbaijan Society of America** and underwrote a variety of cultural and educational programs and events.

## TCA Ahiska Turks Assistance Grant

The Turkish Coalition of America established a grant in the amount \$ **10,000** for Turkish American organizations to establish a special outreach and assistance program for the Ahiska Turkish community, who are new refugees in the United States. A persecuted Turkish ethnic people, Ahiska Turks became "heimatlos" in the countries in which they had lived for generations. Nearly 15,000 Ahiska Turks have been granted refugee status and settled in the United States in over 70 cities, with populations that range from 15 to 200 families.

Two Turkish American organizations applied and received this grant in 2009. With assistance from TCA, the **Turkish American Association of North Texas** and the **Association of Turkish Americans in Southern California San Diego** chapter provide support to nearly 70 Ahiska families in their region. The services provided range from moving Ahiska families into safe housing, furnishings and computers, health insurances and medical services to providing language assistance and other social services support to the families.

# Defending Turkish American Rights



The Turkish American Legal Defense Fund (TALDF) was created in 2009 as the legal arm of the Turkish Coalition of America. The primary mission of TALDF is to protect and defend the constitutional rights of free speech, expression and assembly of Turkish Americans. A critical first step, which the TALDF entitled “**Project One**,” consists of educating Turkish Americans regarding their constitutionally guaranteed rights;

and, providing them legal advice. TALDF’s ultimate aim is to encourage Turkish Americans to participate in American civil society and political processes without fear, intimidation, bigotry, prejudice, or discrimination.

In 2009, the Turkish Coalition of America provided TALDF with **\$352,300** in funding to pursue its mission.

## In Congress

### Giving Voice to Turkish Americans

The Turkish Coalition of America amplifies the voice of Turkish Americans through monitoring legislation that concerns the community and enabling Turkish Americans to use the **TCA Action Alert Center** to send their views to their members of Congress. The TCA Action Alert Center has also been provided free of charge to other Turkish American organizations, as well as partners of TCA.



Congressman Wexler(D-FL/19th) signed copies of his new book "FIRE-BREATHING LIBERAL: How I Learned to Survive (and Thrive) in the Contact Sport of Congress" at the TCA booksigning event on July 14, 2009.

TCA also regularly provides analyses and opinions on issues important to Turkish Americans to members of Congress and their staff through **TCA Issue Papers** sent via fax and e-mail bulletins, countering the persistent, long-standing anti-Turkish lobby efforts and agenda by other ethnic

groups in the United States. Since the founding of TCA, a total of **81** TCA Issue Papers, covering important issue related to Turkey and US-Turkey relations have been published.

### Supporting the Turkish Caucus

TCA has made it a prime objective for the Turkish American community to increase of membership in the Congressional Caucus on US-Turkish Relations and Turkish Americans. The unpublished membership of the Turkish Caucus was made public by TCA in 2007 and the Caucus' membership has increased by nearly 50 percent in two years to a record number of **104**.

TCA has engaged member of the Turkish Caucus in new and creative ways. TCA has sponsored numerous events relating to the mission of the Turkish Caucus, facilitated the participation of Turkish Caucus members in Turkish American events, promoted the work of its individual members and has integrated TCA programs, such as its minority scholarships and cultural programs with the members own constituent services.

TCA has also been a major sponsor of the **Congressional Study Group on Turkey**, established by the **United States Association of Former Members of Congress**. The TCA sponsorship of **\$204,500** from 2007-2009 for the Congressional Study Group on Turkey has supported annual meetings between American and Turkish

## In Congress

legislators, Capitol Hill luncheons and lectures highlighting US-Turkish, as well as congressional delegation visits to Turkey by US legislators and their staff.

### Congressional Delegations to Turkey

In May 2009, TCA hosted its inaugural Congressional delegation to Turkey. **Congresswoman Jean Schmidt (R-OH)** took part in this trip along with senior staffers from the offices of **Congresspersons Christopher Murphy (D-CT), John Larson (D-CT), and Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-MI)** and Congresswoman Schmidt's Chief of Staff.



Wreath laid upon final resting place of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by Congresswoman Jean Schmidt

**(R-KY), Christopher Carney (D-PA), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Alan Grayson (D-FL), and John Lewis (D-GA).**

The delegations followed a busy itinerary split between Ankara and Istanbul, meeting with government officials, civil society representatives, academicians, journalists and representatives of Turkish religious minorities. Added by TCA as a must-see stop to congressional itineraries, the delegations also visited **Patara**, capital of the ancient Lycian Federation, whose representational form of government inspired the founding fathers and was adopted into the United States Constitution.

In the aftermaths of these trips, **Congressman Christopher Murphy** and **Congressman Christopher Carney** became members of the Congressional Caucus on US-Turkey Relations and Turkish Americans.

Both tours were solely supported by the Turkish Coalition of America at a total expense of **\$ 112,730**.

In August 2009, TCA sponsored its second delegation to Turkey for **10 senior staffers** representing the offices of **Congresspersons Robert Wexler (D-FL), Ed Whitfield**

# Administrative

TCA's work is undertaken by a professional team, interns and volunteers from offices in Boston and Washington, DC with representation in Istanbul, Los Angeles and Detroit. The TCA Istanbul Branch office is currently being established.

## Message from the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Turkey

*"On behalf of the membership of the Congressional Caucus on Turkey in the U.S. House of Representatives, we wish to extend our congratulations and best wishes to the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA). We are pleased that a new organization has been established to foster greater understanding of issues impacting the Turkish American community through public education both in Washington and across the nation. We look forward to working with TCA, and believe that with their support and participation members of Congress will be more effective in addressing the concerns of the Turkish American community in addition to promoting stronger US-Turkish relations."*



Congresswoman Kay Granger  
*Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Turkey*



Congressman Robert Wexler  
*Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Turkey*



Congressman Ed Whitfield  
*Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Turkey*

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