

“Why have New York City officials undermined our First Amendment rights by showing preference for one religion over another? St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, the only house of worship crushed by the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11, has yet to be rebuilt. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has been ready, willing, and able to re-erect its beloved church but has been met with persistent roadblocks by New York City officials who have thus far prevented reconstruction of the church.

These obstructions are particularly disconcerting in light of the fact that construction of Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf’s mosque near the hallowed ground where thousands of innocent Americans perished has been fast-tracked. Not only have Port Authority officials expedited permitting of the Ground Zero mosque, but the mosque is free of any architectural and engineering restrictions that are still imposed on the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church.

I simply ask that New York City authorities exercise common sense while employing the basic tenets of our U.S. Constitution. The government should cooperate with St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and its rebuilding process. It’s not only the right thing to do, it’s the constitutional thing to do.”

*The second-generation son of Greek immigrants, Bilirakis is Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, a member of the International Religious Freedom Caucus, and sits on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.*

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