

## **Erdogan again refers to prospect of reconverting Hagia Sophia into a mosque**



Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan this week again ominously declared that his government wants to “...reconvert the Hagia Sophia into a mosque”.

The inflammatory statement comes in the wake of a same-day article by the pro-government daily “Yeni Safak”, which claimed that a 1945 decision by the then Inonu government – to turn the iconic Church of the Holy Savior of Chora into a museum – would be ruled unconstitutional by Turkey’s high court. The early 12th century Church of the Holy Savior of Chora, part of an eponymous monastic complex during the Byzantine era, was converted into a mosque roughly a half century after Constantinople was conquered by the Muslim Ottomans.

According to the mass daily, the increasingly authoritarian Erdogan administration will now decide the fate of the Chora Church, namely, whether it remains a museum or will be reconverted into a mosque.

Repercussions from the pending high court ruling and possible executive branch decision have a direct bearing on the fate of the Hagia Sophia, the pre-eminent cathedral in Christendom for a millennium, before being converted into a mosque

by the Ottomans.

A Muslim religious foundation still claims ownership of the Church of the Holy Savior, known as Kariye Camii during the Ottoman era and in modern-day Turkey, and also claims that its charter prevents the use of a mosque for any other purpose than as a Muslim place of worship, even if the property passes into the ownership of the state.

Of course, no mention or reference was made by Turkish officials regarding the possible return of the monument to the Orthodox Church as a place of Christian worship.