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Turkey's Erdogan threatens to hold Muslim prayer service on Fri. at Haghia Sophia, on dour anniversary of Constantinople's sacking by Ottomans



Official Turkey dramatically heightened its provocations against Christianity, and especially Orthodoxy, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself on Thursday evening announcing that excerpts from the koran and a Muslim prayer service will be held the next day at the Hagia Sophia Cathedral, which more nearly a millennia was the greatest of all cathedrals in Christendom and the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Erdogan, who has stepped up his Islamist-fueled rhetoric over the recent period, amid an economic downturn in the country, repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and adventurism outside the country's borders, made the announcement to coincide with Friday's dour anniversary of the sack of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans.

A few thousand defenders of the imperial city of the Eastern Roman Empire, the "Vassileuossa", was overwhelmed by hordes of Muslim Ottoman soldiers and their vassals after a lengthy siege.

Erdogan made the statement in announcing an easing on coronavirus-related restrictions in his country.

The decision to read out excerpts of Islam's holy book and hold a prayer service came after days of confusion, with state authorities first scheduling an outdoor Friday prayer service in the well-known commons between the Haghia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, only to change plans and move the "presidential prayer" to the Fatih mosque.

The Haghia Sophia was converted into a museum in 1936 and today is an emblematic World Heritage Monument. However, extremist voices have multiplied in Turkey over recent years to demand that it be re-converted into a mosque.