

## **Russian Orthodox Church against attempts of changing the status of St. Sophia in Istanbul**



The Russian Orthodox Church official hopes that current museum status of St. Sophia Cathedral won't be changed and the church won't be turned in a mosque again.

On May 29, when the anniversary of Constantinople fall is celebrated, the Koran was read in St. Sophia. A week after, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan asked the central committee of the governing Justice and Development Party to consider a possibility of turning St. Sophia in a mosque.

"Any attempts to change the museum status of St. Sophia Cathedral will lead to changing and violating fragile inter-confessional balances, existing today," head of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion said on air *Church and the World* program on *Rossiya-24*.

He added that he would like to hope that this church would remain a museum with

open access and such incidents would not provoke interreligious tensions.

The St. Sophia Cathedral was given a museum status in 1934 by first Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. It has been included in UNESCO world heritage list in 1985. “This church is a symbol of Byzantium and a symbol of Orthodoxy for millions of Christians all around the world, especially for Orthodox believers,” the metropolitan stressed.

[Source](#)