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Reports quote unnamed US State Dept. official as reiterating Washington's support for Hagia Sophia's 'complex multi-religious history'



A US State Department official on Friday reiterated Washington's belief in the protection of "complex multi-religious history" of Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO World Heritage site and the foremost cathedral of eastern Christendom for nearly a millennium before being converted into a "conquest mosque" after Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453.

Greece's state-run news agency quoted an unnamed official as saying that Washington's position has not changed, and that the State Department continues to view the Hagia Sophia as a site of extraordinary significance, while supporting its preservation in a manner that respects this complex multi-religious history.

The statement came days the latest high-profile threat by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to reconvert the Hagia Sophia into a mosque. The Turkish president ordered members of his cabinet to explore the possibility transforming Haghia Sophia from a museum, its current status, back into a mosque.

The report also came a day after the publication of the US State Department's annual report on International Religious Freedom, which is particularly critical of

official Turkey’s treatment of religious minorities in that country.