

Russian Orthodox Church concerned by fate of Byzantine mosaics in Istanbul's Hagia Sophia



“Hagia Sophia is a pan-Christian holy site,” Metropolitan Hilarion said

The preservation of Byzantine mosaics in Istanbul's Hagia Sophia will be brought into question if the historical monument, which is now a museum, is turned into a mosque, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion said.

Hagia Sophia is the former Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral built in AD 532-537 in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). It was turned into an Ottoman imperial mosque in 1453, after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, and is now a museum. The building, famous for its huge dome, is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

“If the decision [to turn the museum into a mosque] is made, it will cause huge grief among Orthodox Christians all over the world. Hagia Sophia is a pan-Christian holy site,” Metropolitan Hilarion said.

“Those mosaics were preserved by miracle, because plaster was put on them. They were discovered only recently. What will the fate of those mosaics be, if the building is once again turned into a mosque? Why does the Turkish government have no respect for the feelings of millions of Christians, millions of Orthodox believers?” the Russian cleric said.

Earlier CNN Turk reported that Turkey’s State Council discussed the matter on July 2, upon instructions from the country’s president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The debate lasted 17 minutes, and the decision is expected to be published within the next 15 days.

[Source](#)