

Pro-govt media in Turkey turn against Ecumenical Patriarch, as campaign to convert Hagia Sophia into mosque surges



Continued threats by the Erdogan administration in Turkey to reconvert the iconic Hagia Sophia into a mosque, the remaining and now exclusively pro-government media in the country stepped up attacks and provocations against Orthodoxy and its pre-eminent Church primates.

According to the Turkish mass daily Sabah, the status of the Hagia Sophia as mosque is “guaranteed”, as it claims.

Columnist Okan Müderrisoğlu appeared confident over a pending decision by Turkey’s Council of State, claiming that “...The decision will be very specific and will eliminate discussions on the matter.”

At the same time, other pro-government media outlets in Turkey, after targeting the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, turned their scope on the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew

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In particular, the Turkish newspaper Yeni Şafak resorted to baseless, and by extension, slanderous allegations.

The mass daily cited what it claimed was assistance by the Ecumenical Patriarch, the spiritual leader of the world's roughly 300 Orthodox Christians, as well as the CIA, towards exiled Turkish Islamic scholar and preacher Fethullah Gülen during a failed coup against Recep Tayyip Erdogan — back in July 2016.

The increasingly authoritarian Turkish president and his ruling AKP party have angrily and consistently charged that supporters of Gulen, known as Gulenists, were behind the 2016 coup d'état.

Tens of thousands of people in Turkey have been sacked from public sector jobs and the military over alleged ties to the Gulen movement, while thousands have been imprisoned.

In a related development, Cyprus' Democratic Party this week unveiled an initiative to collect online signatures against any proposed change in the status of eastern Christendom's greatest cathedrals.

The Hagia Sophia today is Turkey's most visited museum and a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The online petition is found on the Avaaz platform.