

## **AHEPA Strongly Condemns Turkish President's Conversion of Hagia Sophia into a Mosque**



Supreme President George G. Horiates has issued the following statement:

AHEPA condemns in strongest terms the action taken today by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who formally changed the status of Hagia Sophia to a mosque following a Turkish court's decision that paved the way for him to do so.

It is unfortunate and a disappointment that Hagia Sophia has fallen victim to Turkey's domestic politics. Today's action also is an indictment of Turkey's judicial system following Erdogan's purges and the diminished role and influence of Turkey's secular community in Turkish society under the tyranny of the Erdogan regime.

We appreciate the swift response from UNESCO. We call on the international community to hold Turkey accountable to the international bodies and conventions to which it is a signatory that stipulates Turkey's responsibilities to preserve its rich cultural and religious heritage.

Hagia Sophia is the fifth instance of a former Byzantine church named “Hagia Sophia” to have been converted to a mosque during the past decade in Turkey, according to The Economist.

Hagia Sophia is a gift to all humankind. Its value is universal and it must be preserved as such.

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