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Russian Orthodox Church Synod calls on global community to keep special status of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul



The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has called on the Turkish authorities to keep the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia and encouraged the global community to help preserve the special status of this church.

“We hope that the Turkish authorities will make the necessary efforts to preserve the priceless Christian mosaics, which miraculously survived, and to provide access to them to Christian pilgrims. Expressing hopes for further preservation and strengthening of mutual respect and mutual understanding between believers of various world religions, we are calling on the global community to help all it can with maintaining the special status of the Hagia Sophia, which has paramount significance to all Christians,” the Synod said in a statement issued on Friday.

The Holy Synod said it deeply regrets the decision made by the state administration of Turkey to deprive the Hagia Sophia of its status as a museum and

give it to a Muslim community for religious use.

“This decision was made without regard for the requests and the clearly stated positions of the heads of hierarchs of Orthodox Local Churches, representatives of foreign states, numerous international public and human rights organizations, and clergymen of various confessions and religious traditions. It affects the religious sentiments of millions of Christians worldwide, which can upset interreligious balance and mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims not only in Turkey, but also in other places,” the statement said.

The administration of the Russian Orthodox Church believes that “this decision made by the Turkish authorities causes special pain in a situation when Christianity is a persecuted religion in many places on the planet, when Christians continue leaving the countries of the Middle East.” The Synod said the Hagia Sophia was built in honor of Christ the Savior, and “it remains a church in the minds of millions of Christians,” and it has a special historical and spiritual significance to the Orthodox Church.

Members of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church are “especially saddened” by the fact that “the Orthodox world is divided now when it is faced with such a sad event for the Orthodox Church, which is a direct consequence of the anti-canonical legalization of the division in Ukraine and which reduced our capabilities to jointly counter new spiritual threats and civilizational challenges.”

“Now that Christianophobia and the pressure of secular society on the Church are increasing, unity is needed more than before,” the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church said, calling on brotherly local churches to work together to resolve the crisis.

[Source](#)