

Turkish authorities busily concealing, removing all visible vestiges of Christianity at Hagia Sophia, ahead of Erdogan's celebration of conversion into mosque



Feverish preparations continue ahead of the first Muslim prayer, in decades, at the Hagia Sophia, set for Friday, two weeks after a shocking and impudent decision by authoritarian Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to convert the UNESCO World Heritage site into a mosque.

The now Islamist Turkish leader is scheduled to head a top Turkish government delegation at the prayer service, with the country's Minister of Religious Affairs, Ali Erbas will lead the prayer.

Currently, work crews are hanging massive curtains at the greatest of all Christian Orthodox basilicas, in order to conceal all of the glorious mosaics and frescoes at the Hagia Sophia, which for nearly a millennium served as the Patriarchal see for the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In a related development, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias earlier today

chaired a meeting on the Hagia Sophia matter, which official Athens has emphasized is not a bilateral issue, but one affecting the entire world's cultural heritage. Participants included Culture Minister Lina Mendoni and Greece's permanent representative to UNESCO, Amb. Maria Diamantopoulou.



Greek FM: Hagia Sophia belongs to all of humanity

In a statement after his meeting in Athens a day earlier with visiting German Foreign Minister Haiko Maas, Dendias underlined that "... Hagia Sophia belongs to all of humanity; actions by Greece aim to sensitize the international community."

Despite the stepped up international condemnation against the decision, in tandem with domestic criticism in the country, which bemoaned the fact that Erdogan's

Islamists overturned a landmark 1934 decree by modern Turkey's secular founder, Kemal Ataturk, works this week included the placement of some 4,000 square meters of turquoise oriental rugs at the monument, to allow for Muslim prayers.



Convening of Holy & Sacred Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

It's amid this continuing provocation by the Erdogan administration that the Holy and Sacred Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate convened today at the Theological School of Halki, chaired by Ecumenical Patriarch, His All Holiness Bartholomew I.









