

CZECH-SLOVAK CHURCH: SITUATION WITH AGIA SOPHIA FILLS ORTHODOX FAITHFUL WITH GRIEF



The Holy Synod of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia issued a statement on Monday regarding Turkey's lamentable decision to convert the Agia Sophia Cathedral into a mosque again, noting that the news has filled the Orthodox faithful of the Czech Republic and Slovakia with grief.

The whole world welcomed the gesture of good will of Kemal Ataturk who converted Agia Sophia from a mosque into a museum, while the whole world now laments President Erdoğan's callous overturning of this decision, the Synod emphasizes.

The Synodal statement, published on the official site of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, reads in full:

The recent decision of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to change the status of Agia Sophia—the Church of God's Wisdom in Constantinople (Istanbul)—has filled the believers of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia with grief. This church—one of the most famous buildings of the world, which in its eventful nearly-1,500-year history has served as a Christian basilica, a

Muslim mosque and finally a museum—is to become a mosque again after 86 years.

When the president of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk decided to transform Agia Sophia from a mosque to a museum in 1934, the whole world appreciated the welcoming gesture of the Turkish politician as a symbolic end to conflicts and the beginning of the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians.

The reaction of the representatives of Orthodox and other Christian churches, but also the UN, UNESCO and many other organizations and states to the decision of the current Turkish president only confirms how wise and prudent was the decision of his predecessor. We therefore pray to God for the current Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to reconsider his decision and for the status of Agia Sophia as a museum, as acceptable to believers as to secular society, to be maintained.

+ Rastislav

Archbishop of Prešov,

Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia,

President of the Holy Synod

orthochristian.com