

Ankara irked over Biden statement calling on Turkey to reverse Hagia Sophia decision; cease provocations against Greece



Intense political reactions erupted in predominately Muslim Turkey this week after Democratic presidential nominee and former US vice-president Joe Biden called on the Trump administration to press that country's leadership to stop its threats against Greece.

In a statement to the National Herald newspaper, Biden also underlined that Turkey needs to reverse a decision that converted the iconic Hagia Sophia into a mosque, rather the monument should revert to its status as a museum — while "...ensuring equal access for all, including the Orthodox faithful."

In a related development, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

continued its initiatives over the issue of the Hagia Sophia, the greatest of all basilicas of eastern Christendom and the seat of Orthodoxy for nearly a millennia, until converted by the Ottoman Turks into a so-called "imperial mosque".

The initiatives come ahead of an UNESCO general assembly, given that the Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO world heritage site – a designation now directly threatened by the shocking decision last July by Turkey's Islamist president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to convert the cathedral from a museum into a mosque.

No date has yet been announced for the general assembly.

Within this framework, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, this received week received Mounir Bouchenaki, a special adviser to the UNESCO Director General and incumbent director of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage.

The meeting was held at the Holy Monastery of Balukli ,with discussions directly focusing on the shocking conversion of both the Hagia Sophia and the Chora church.

