

Turkey: Treasure hunters destroy historic Orthodox Christian church



Turkish treasure hunters have destroyed the historic 19th century Antyeri Camii Orthodox Church located near Samsun. Photos shows portions of the floor removed and gaping holes in the walls, as well as other types of damage. There is an unconfirmed rumor that the authorities may now restore the church for tourism.

The church was converted into a mosque following the forced population exchange of 1923, and it was used as an Islamic place of worship until the 1990s. The church was abandoned after a new mosque was built. Sadly, this is not the first time that this church was been plundered by treasure hunters.

Treasure hunting is a common pursuit in Turkey. They target areas known to have once housed large populations of Christians, thanks to a cultural belief that Christians are wealthy. Today, these areas are largely empty of Christians because of the Turkish genocide and subsequent forced population exchange with Greece. The churches whose congregations have disappeared are frequently plundered by treasure hunters, and neglected by the state. Little is done to hold the treasure hunters accountable and maintain these historic churches in quality condition. No work is done to help restore the Christian presence in these areas.

[Source](#)