

Russian Orthodox hierarch calls conversion of iconic Chora Church ‘terrible modern barbarism’



The deputy head of the external Church relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Arch-priest Nikolay Balashov, this week decried the conversion of the Chora Church in Turkey into a mosque, after photographs emerged online, showing mosaics and frescoes covered with curtains inside the historic Chora Church.

In a post on Facebook, the hierarch referred to the act as a “terrible modern barbarism” and one that will “make Orthodox Christians unhappy”.

“The existing strong evidence of what Constantinople once used to be, the Queen and Mother of all Cities, is now being ‘burnt’ before our eyes and being plunged into darkness. Anybody with two eyes can see that,” he added.

The statement comes prior to a postponement of a Muslim prayer scheduled for Friday at the converted Chora Church, which was announced on Thursday afternoon by Turkey's controversial and increasingly fundamentalist Directorate of Religious Affairs.

Turkish authorities claimed the postponement was due to the continuation of preparations, in other words, efforts to cover up Orthodox Christian mosaics and frescoes.

After the Hagia Sophia, the Islamist Erdoğan government announced that it would abolish the museum status of the Chora Church and convert it into a mosque.