

Turkish leadership irked over State. Dept. reference 'religious issues in Turkey'



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will be received by the Ecumenical Patriarch at the Patriarchate's Phanar-district seat, the US State Department said this week, while adding that talks will focus on "...religious issues in Turkey and the region and to promote our strong stance on religious freedom around the world."

The statement noted that Pompeo will also travel to France, Turkey, Georgia, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia between November 13 - 23. Nevertheless, the official US reference to religious freedom has apparently irked Turkey's political leadership.

A Turkish foreign ministry statement said the language used by the State Department was "completely inappropriate" while claiming that religious freedom

in Turkey is protected, before using catchphrases favored by the Islamist Erdogan government to deflect from human rights abuses in Turkey, such as “racism, Islamophobia and hate crimes.”

Other reports have Turkish leadership infuriated over the fact that Pompeo will not travel to Ankara, the country’s capital, ostensibly the reason why the Turkish foreign minister will not meet with the visiting US Secretary of State in the Bosphorus metropolis.