

## **Turkey: Media says chapel of 18th-century monastery has collapsed due to frequent excavations by treasure hunters**



Turkish media says that the only surviving part of the 18th century Ai Dimitri Monastery, the chapel, has collapsed because of frequent excavations by treasure hunters. There had been heavy rains in the area recently, but for several years treasure hunters had dug around the foundation, weakening the structure.

Turkey has a rich Christian history, but the presence of Christians was largely eliminated during the state-sponsored genocide in the early 1900s. Their churches were left in ruins, confiscated by the state, and/or turned into mosques, cultural centers, etc. The authorities also restrict access to these historic churches for the remaining Christian community to use as a place of worship.

During the genocide, a common misperception amongst society (which persists to this day) is that the Christian community had wealth. Thus abandoned sites associated with Christianity are often targeted by treasure hunters. There are mechanisms in place allowing the state to prosecute these treasure hunters. However, such prosecutions rarely happen and rhetoric used by political figures

appears to validate social perceptions about Christians that lead to treasure hunting and other types of challenges.

— [persecution.org](https://persecution.org)