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Erdogan promises boost in human rights; religious institutions still prevented from electing board members



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's much-hyped pledges on Tuesday to boost human rights in the country, amid a crescendo of international condemnation over the recent period of his regime's authoritarian rule, include a promise to revise the current framework governing non-Muslim religious charities and institutions in the country.

Such institutions, known as Vakufs in Turkish, have been prevented from holding elections to select board of director members since 2013 - the latest in decades-old state discrimination against non-Muslim and even non-Sunni groups in Turkey.

Currently, members of the now tiny ethnic Greek community in Constantinople as well as the islands of Imvros and Tenedos continue to face bureaucratic hurdles in terms of inheritance rights and in managing charitable institutions' assets and properties.

In a bid to ameliorate the image of his regime – Turkey now ranks as the 32nd least-free country on Freedom House's index of 100 nations – Erdogan invited to Ankara and met with religious minorities' Primates, including the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I.

