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US State Dept. report on religious freedoms around the world scathing in description of conditions in Turkey



This year's report by the US State Department on religious freedoms around the world is again scathing over official Turkey's treatment of religious minorities in that predominately Muslim country.

According to the report, the Turkish government continues to restrict the rights of non-Muslim religious minorities, especially those not recognized by the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.
Nevertheless, the report argues that even the three recognized religious communities, namely, Greek Orthodox Christians, Jews and Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians, are systematically discriminated against.

The report states "…religious minorities again face reported difficulties in opening or operating places of worship, resolving property disputes, and challenges in obtaining legal compensation for property that has been expropriated by the

government”.

The State Department report again reiterated that senior US officials, including the Secretary of State, continued to urge Ankara to allow the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople’s Halki

Seminary to reopen, while adding, in reference to the Turkish side,

“…The government has continued to provide training to Sunni Muslim clerics while continuing to restrict the training of clerics from other religious groups… The government has continued to provide funding for public, private, and religious schools that teach Islam. It did not do so for the minority schools of the communities recognized by the Treaty of Lausanne…Minority religious communities have financed all their other expenses through private donations.”

Additionally, the US State Department portrays the 2020 decision of Islamist Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to reconvert the Hagia Sophia and the Chora Church into mosques, citing the heightened concerns over this shocking development by the US administration.

Finally, the report notes that the Turkish government continues to deny the ecumenical, or universal character of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the spiritual center of the world’s more than 300 million Orthodox Christians.

The same report, concentrating on 2020, reiterates that freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed in Greece, where Orthodoxy is also the “prevailing religion” of the land.