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Hagia Sophia again used for major Muslim prayer service, led by state-appointed top imam



Thousands of Muslims took part in a group prayer on Thursday, led by Turkey's supreme imam Ali Erbaş, at the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople – the first time that a so-called Bayram festival was celebrated there after a shocking decision by Islamist Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to reconvert the greatest of all basilicas of eastern Christendom into a mosque.
Bayram is a Turkish word for a festival or celebration, which in this case denoted the Muslim Eid-ul-Fitr holiday.

The latest insult for Christians around the world, especially Orthodox faithful, came hours after the latest condemnation by the US State Department over the Hagia Sophia's conversion, as detailed in the 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom.

Erbas, a high-ranking civil servant-cum-imam, arrived holding a a sword, a symbol of conquest by the Ottoman Turks. The speaker of Turkey's national assembly,

Mustafa Şentop, was also present at the Muslim prayer service.

Hagia Sophia served as a museum for 87 years until it was insolently reconverted into a mosque by Erdogan last July.