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Turkish state directorate intent on reconverting historic early Byzantine-era Cathedral into mosque



Diplomatic circles in Turkey referred to a provocative decision by the country's Directorate General of Foundations to officially reconvert the historic Byzantine cathedral of the Hagia Sophia, in the ancient city of Nicaea, modern-day Iznik, back into a mosque.

In fact, the state-run agency announced that the historic building will immediately revert back into a mosque in time for the Muslim Kurban Bayramı, or Eid, holiday.

The Hagia Sophia is an early Byzantine-era church built by Justinian in the middle of 6th century. It was in this church that the landmark Second Council of Nicaea was held in the late eighth century.

The Cathedral was converted to a mosque after its conquest by the Ottomans in

1337, and operated as a Muslim place of worship until it was converted into a museum in 1935.