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USCIRF report: Examination of threats to religious sites in Turkey



A report on the threats to non-Muslim religious properties in Turkey was released on Monday by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) titled “Examination of Threats to Religious Sites in Turkey.”

The Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate pointed out, in an announcement on Sunday, that the findings are an indication of a wider political indifference towards the protection and property rights of the Orthodox Christian community as a non-Muslim minority.

The report notes that “the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne also provided protection and freedom of worship for the remaining non-Muslim communities,” but that this protection and freedom of worship has often been sharply curtailed, not infrequently through action against sacred Christian sites. The highest number of attacks on Greek Orthodox and other Orthodox churches took place in the Marmara region, where Istanbul is located, correlating to its higher concentration of non-Muslim populations.

Overall, despite the decrease in bombings and terrorist attacks in the last decade, incidents of vandalism, destruction of religious property through arson, treasure hunting and the lack of prosecution of such incidents have increasingly affected Greek Orthodox and other Orthodox communities in Turkey.

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