

Hagia Sophia: The Reversion

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1500-year-old building first served as a church during Byzantine age, later converted into a mosque by the Ottoman Empire, Hagia Sophia had been used as a museum. On July 10, 2020, President of Turkey Mr. Erdogan announced its reversion to a mosque, which was greeted both positively and negatively. That said, let us take a closer look at the situation retrospectively.

Hagia Sophia was built as a Christian cathedral of Constantinople between 532 and 537 and served as a Greek Orthodox Cathedral until early 1200, when it was converted into a Roman Catholic Cathedral by the Fourth Crusaders. In 1261, with the return of the Byzantine Empire, Hagia Sophia was restored into a Greek Orthodox Cathedral once again. After the Fall of Constantinople, the church was converted into a mosque by Ottomans and served until 1935, when it was secularised into a museum. Throughout history, as can be understood, Hagia Sophia has great importance to various religious societies from all around the world. In 1985, given its historical importance, Hagia Sophia was added to the UNESCO World Heritage site.

Reactions from all around the globe

In July 2020, Hagia Sophia was reverted into a mosque by a presidential decree. While the decision was welcomed by the religious Muslim population of Turkey, it faced a great deal of criticism from the Turkish secularists and the Christian society.

UNESCO shared a statement, deeply regretting the decision of the Turkish authorities made without prior notice, and asked Turkey to open a dialogue without delay, stating that the lack of negotiation was regrettable. However, it was later announced that reverting Hagia Sophia into a mosque would not affect its status on the World Heritage site by the presidential spokesperson.

Despite the countless amount of criticism and condemnation issued by the World Council of Churches, Pope Francis, Bartholomew I of Constantinople, and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow; sanctioning threats coming from Greece and Cyprus, Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque on July 10, 2020, disregarding almost every external reaction regarding the decision.

According to the announcement made by the President Erdogan and Turkish authorities, the justification behind the reversion was to sustain the legacy of Mehmed the Conqueror, who

was the ruler of the Ottoman Empire at the time that ordered Hagia Sophia to be converted into a mosque after the Fall of Constantinople.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the decision has already been made and Hagia Sophia is now officially a mosque. Although the decision has received quite a few negative responses and raised global concerns, we do not know what the future holds. Hopefully, the mosque status of Hagia Sophia benefits the peoples of every religion.

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