



Joint Statement
His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos
His Excellency Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone on Hagia Sophia

The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco mourn together as we witnessed the venerable Hagia Sophia converted to a mosque and opened for Islamic prayer on July 24, 2020. This egregious decision continues to be lamented throughout the world. In our mourning, we pray that this does not become the harbinger of future acts in Turkey that place religious minorities at risk.

Since the announcement that Hagia Sophia would be converted to a mosque, the world has spoken unequivocally against this action. Religious leaders and groups, such as Pope Francis, the World Council of Churches, the Islamic Society of North America and others have spoken against this action. Governments across the world continue to voice their opposition, including the recent United States House of Representatives Resolution 7608. We are grateful for all these voices of support and ask that all members of our communities continue to press that Hagia Sophia's status as a museum be restored so that all people may experience the splendor of this treasure of the world.

Hagia Sophia has been open and accessible to all for over eight decades and needs to be restored as a museum and remain as a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. By blatantly disregarding this decision, the Republic of Turkey is not only violating an agreement but they are denying the universal value of Hagia Sophia for future generations.

Hagia Sophia will always be the greatest cathedral in all Christendom. The Great Church, as it is called, is an architectural and engineering masterpiece, and most especially an important part of our heritage as Christians. What took place within the Great Church affected the entire Christian world. After its conversion as a mosque in 1453 after the fall of Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia influenced all mosques built after.

We continue to be united in prayer that this decision may still be reversed. We pray that the integrity of the Byzantine and Christian treasures of the church will not be sullied. Until such time, we will fervently raise our voices for religious tolerance and against religious persecution and beseech the Lord for the protection of Hagia Sophia.


Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone
Archbishop of San Francisco


Metropolitan Gerasimos
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco

July 31, 2020