

Turkey Threatens to Convert Iconic Hagia Sophia Into Mosque

Hagia Sophia—Istanbul's former sixth-century Greek Orthodox cathedral and architectural wonder of the world—could soon become a mosque.

A Turkish court is expected to decide on July 2 if the iconic Byzantine-era structure will become a place for Muslim worship at the behest of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Built in A.D. 537, the cathedral served as the seat of the archbishop of Constantinople until 1453, when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Empire under Mehmet the Conqueror. The Turkish sultan ordered the church to be converted into a mosque and the cathedral's Christian features were destroyed or covered and replaced with Islamic emblems.

The Hagia Sophia remained a mosque until 1935, when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the first Turkish president and the founder of modern Turkey, secularized the structure, transforming it into a museum and prohibited the complex from being used as a place of worship.

Erdogan has long desired to change the status of the complex and make it a new center for Islamic worship in Turkey. In March, he celebrated the 567th anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul with an Islamic prayer dedicated to Mehmet the Conqueror. However, Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and a change in status must be approved by the World Heritage Committee.

Mustafa Destici, leader of the Grand Unity Party (BBP), told reporters that Hagia Sophia "is a symbol of conquest."

[Click here to read the rest of this story from our content](#)

partners at CBN News. {eo}