

Turks turn Cathedral into Mosque

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The museum of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul will be turned into a functioning mosque. The initiative of the Turkish President Erdogan was supported by the Turkish State Council on July 9. This will be announced officially soon. This is largely done to raise the political rating of the Turkish president. Erdogan's initiative aims to rally the Turkish electorate around its Justice Party. Her ratings have been steadily falling lately. Against this background, Erdogan is again trying to strengthen nationalist sentiment in Turkish society. For many of its supporters, Hagia Sophia is a symbol of the conquest of Christian Constantinople by the Ottomans and an example of the superiority of Islam over Christianity.



Hagia Sophia is not only a symbol of Istanbul, but also the most popular tourist attraction in Turkey, as well as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The temple with a huge dome and interior decorated with ancient frescoes attracts millions of tourists every year. At the same time, Hagia Sophia has always remained not only an architectural masterpiece, but also a political symbol.

The monumental building was erected by order of the Byzantine emperor Justinian I in the sixth century AD. After the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans in 1453, Sultan Mehmed II turned a Christian church into a mosque. And in 1935, the founder of the modern Turkish state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, made a symbolic gesture and signed a decree according to which Hagia Sophia became a museum. „Modern Turkey is a secular country,” said Ataturk's slogan.

Erdogan's actions demonstrate that Turkey is actively starting to move towards a theocratic or clerical state, where religion plays a crucial role in determining the political agenda. In the internal and external arenas. Previously, discussions have been held in the country on turning the cathedral into a mosque, but the proponents of such a decision have never been so close to their goal.

Erdogan's initiative may strengthen his political position within the country, but threatens with new conflicts with European partners. Representatives of Greece and Cyprus have already spoken out against this initiative. It is unnecessary to recall what a complicated relationship is between Istanbul, Athens and Nicosia. The USA and Russia opposed this initiative. But the Turkish president, as always, goes his own way. Where it leads? Allah alone knows...

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