



*July 17, 2020*

## **The Reflections of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians; on the Decision of the Turkish Authorities to turn the Hagia Sophia Cathedral-Museum into a Mosque**

At the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, we learned with regret about the decision made by the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on July 10, to turn the Hagia Sophia, which holds the highest value to the Orthodox Churches and entire Christian world, into a mosque. Contrary to appeals from various Christian organizations, Christian church leaders and political leaders, the Turkish government has taken a unilateral and reprehensible decision, violating the rights of national religious minorities in Turkey.

We note with regret that the calls and concerns of millions of Christians were ignored, despite even the fact that the Hagia Sophia is included in the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church and the Armenian people, as a people who survived the Genocide in Ottoman Turkey, share the pain and anxiety of our Orthodox brothers and sisters.

The Armenian Church, which lost thousands of churches and religious and cultural values during the Armenian Genocide, condemns the decision of the Turkish government, which greatly harms the process of understanding and dialogue of religions based on political interests, while calling for its reconsideration and return to the principle of peaceful prayer coexistence of different religious communities.

During the upsurge of history and political changes, St. Sophia Cathedral has acquired a different religious, cultural and political significance in addition to its purely historical and cultural value, becoming a symbol of cooperation and unity of mankind, not the clash of civilizations.

With our prayers we support our beloved brother, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, and our sisters and brothers of the Orthodox Church in this difficult situation created by this unilateral decision.

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