

**Resolution**  
**of the Department of History and Archaeology of the National and Kapodistrian**  
**University of Athens**  
**on Hagia Sophia of Istanbul**

The Department of History and Archaeology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the recent decision of the Turkish state to restore Hagia Sophia in Istanbul as a mosque, reversing, after 86 years, its museum status. This decree is in direct conflict with all international principles for the protection of monuments of cultural heritage as it aims at distorting the historical identity of this splendid monument which contains more than any other the history and culture of Byzantium.

This retrograde decision by the Turkish state is the latest step in a series of destructive interventions that have taken place in Byzantine monuments in Turkey (e.g. Hagia Sophia in Trabzon, Hagia Sophia at İznik, Hagia Sophia in Vize, Katholike church in Enez et al.) and will have, inevitably, significant negative implications for the protection and integrity of Hagia Sophia. The interventions required to support the new religious function of the monument (like covering its floors, concealing Christian symbols, hiding mosaic representations, removing exhibits, adding furnishings and facilities to meet the needs of prayer etc), as well as the transfer of management from the Turkish Archaeological Service to the religious authorities of Turkey, expose Hagia Sophia to a permanent risk of deterioration and damage.

Turning historical monuments into tools serving political purposes at the cost of their integrity, and curtailing the possibility of all people to have access to them on an equal footing is considered utterly unacceptable in our times. We add our voice to the protests of the international community, in the hope that the decision of July 10, 2020 will be but a brief parenthesis in the history of Hagia Sophia and that the monument will be restored to its proper status as museum.

Athens, 17 July 2020