



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: We cannot remain indifferent to such sad facts**

*Metropolitan Hilarion gave a comment to RIA Novosti news agency about the decision taken by the Turkish authorities on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 to return the mosque status to one more former Orthodox church – the Church of the Saviour in Chora (Kariye Mosque).*

“Today the mass media have spread the news about the conversion into a mosque of yet another Orthodox church in the territory of Turkey – the Church of the Saviour in Chora that has been functioning as a museum since 1945.

“Just like Hagia Sophia, the Church of Christ the Saviour in the Fields from the ensemble of the monastery in Chora has the status of UNESCO world heritage site. It has preserved its original form better than other Byzantine churches in Istanbul. The church’s splendid mosaics and frescoes are outstanding examples of the Palaiologan Renaissance in the Byzantine art. Obviously, they will also be unavailable for viewing, just like it was done with mosaics of Hagia Sophia, despite the assurances of the Turkish authorities that they would be available to visitors at any time except the hours of Muslim prayer.

“It is sorrowful to see how emphatically the current leadership of Turkey disregards the religious feelings of Christians all over the world. It is difficult to justify such disregard by reasonable arguments. It is unlikely that trampling on the priceless Byzantine cultural heritage can be advantageous to the Turkish state. And such steps will surely not help maintain the international reputation of Turkey or strengthen interfaith accord in this country.

“The Russian culture and history are linked by bonds of succession with the glorious past of the Eastern Roman Empire, and therefore, we cannot remain indifferent to such sad facts.”

*DECR Communication Service*