

Hagia Sophia will open outside prayer time, says Turkey

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Tue, 2020-07-14 09:25

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Hagia Sophia could open to visitors outside prayer times and its Christian icons will remain, religious officials said on Tuesday, after a court ruling paved the way for it to become a mosque.

The sixth-century Istanbul landmark's museum status – in place since 1934 – was revoked on Friday and control was handed to the religious authority, Diyanet.

The decision sparked condemnation from Western governments, Russia and Christian leaders – Pope Francis saying he was “very distressed.”

Hagia Sophia spent almost 1,000 years as a cathedral before being converted into a mosque in 1453 and later a museum.

Diyanet said in a statement on Tuesday that Christian icons in Hagia Sophia were “not an obstacle to the validity of the prayers.”

“The icons should be curtained and shaded through appropriate means during prayer times,” it said.

“There is no obstacle from a religious perspective to Hagia Sophia Mosque being open to visitors outside prayer times.”

Hagia Sophia, a major tourist attraction, has been the scene of Islam-linked activities in recent years. In 2018, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recited a verse from Qur'an at the building.

Erdogan, who said the first Muslim prayers in Hagia Sophia would begin on July 24, has insisted the building will be open to all, including non-Muslims.



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[Hagia Sophia](#)

EU weighs up action against Turkey as relations take a double hit Pope Francis 'very distressed' over Turkey's Hagia Sophia conversion to mosque

[Several injured as Russo-Turkish patrol in Syria hits IED](#)

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Tue, 2020-07-14 09:42

MOSCOW: Three Russian and several Turkish soldiers were injured Tuesday in Syria's volatile Idlib province when a joint military patrol hit an improvised explosive device, the Russian defense ministry said. The device blew up at 8:50 local time (0550 GMT) as their convoy patrolled the M4 highway in the southern part of a de-escalation zone, a statement said.

A Russian and a Turkish armored vehicle were damaged, with three Russians “lightly injured,” it said. Several Turkish soldiers were also wounded. Russia and Turkey launched the patrols along the M4 in March following a cease-fire agreement aimed at stopping heavy fighting in and around Idlib, the last major bastion of anti-government forces in Syria’s civil war. Russia backs Syrian President Bashar Assad in the conflict and Turkey backs the opposition, but the two countries have agreed several deals to reduce hostilities.



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Syrian, Russian airstrikes in Idlib amount to war crimes, as do extremist attacks – UNIdlib turns into ‘ticking bomb’ amid Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham domination

[Egypt footballer gets harassed for sharing photo with his 3-year-old girl](#)

Mon, 2020-07-13 19:19

CAIRO: An Egyptian footballer has threatened to sue Instagram users who sent abusive messages this week over photos of himself and his three-year-old daughter.

The incident involving Amre Soulia, a player at Al-Ahly football club, has caused a storm on social media in Egypt after comments on his photos triggered widespread anger over harassment. The player publicly called out a number of people who had harassed him and his daughter by sharing screenshots of their comments that mainly targeted what the young girl was wearing – a black T-shirt and jeans. The player is seen holding his daughter's hand while she smiles back at him.



[View this post on Instagram](#)



my everything

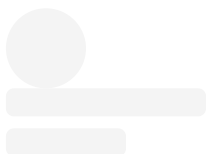
A post shared by [Amrelsoulia Official \(@amrelsoulia\)](#) on Jul 10, 2020 at 12:21pm PDT

“May God save her for you ... but I hope you make your daughter wear respectable clothes because you’re a respectful player,” one user wrote to Soulia.

Another user said: “Cover up your daughter, son, so that she grows to become one (who’s covered).”

Several other sexually-loaded remarks targeted the little girl, prompting the player to take legal action against them.

“All legal measures were taken and a lawsuit was filed against anyone who insulted me or any member of my family,” Soulia wrote on his social media account.



[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by [Amrelsoulia Official \(@amrelsoulia\)](#) on Jul 13, 2020 at 2:40am PDT

The incident is the latest in Egypt, where sexual assault and harassment are deep-seated problems.

Egyptian actor Sherif Mounir recently hit out at people who insulted his teenage daughters in a picture he shared of them on Instagram.



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Accusations of serial assault spark new #MeToo wave in Egypt

Morocco reimposes Tangiers lockdown after virus spike

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Mon, 2020-07-13 13:13

RABAT: Morocco on Monday announced a return to lockdown measures in the northern port city of Tangiers to smother a new outbreak of the novel coronavirus, weeks after easing nationwide restrictions.

The city of about a million inhabitants was locked down from Monday at noon local time, with public transport suspended, cafes and public spaces closed and movement restricted.

Residents are only allowed to leave their homes "in cases of extreme necessity," the Interior Ministry said in a statement, adding that "exceptional authorization from local authorities" would be required for movement within or beyond the city.

Authorities decided to reimpose the measures to "prevent the spread of the virus" after "new infection clusters" appeared, it said.

The northern city, within sight of the Spanish coast on a clear day, has a vast port and is a key economic hub linking Africa with Europe and beyond. Morocco had imposed strict nationwide lockdown measures after recording its first COVID-19 cases in March.

It began easing them in June and has since reopened cafes and restaurants, allowing domestic visitors to restart its vital tourism sector.

Its borders remain closed until further notice, except to Moroccans and residents abroad, who will be able to return from Tuesday onwards.

But despite masks being mandatory in public, new localized outbreaks of the disease have forced the shutdown of several cities.

An outbreak at a fish canning factory prompted authorities to lock down Safi, a town of 300,000 on the Atlantic coast, in early July.

The kingdom, with a population of 34 million, has recorded over 15,000 infections including 253 deaths.



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Morocco to start reopening borders after strict lockdown
Motorhomes come of age as Europe relaxes lockdowns

[UAE wants to see a return of Libya's oil production with safeguards: minister](#)

Mon, 2020-07-13 17:10

DUBAI: The UAE said on Monday it wants oil production to return in Libya with safeguards in place.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Anwar Gargash, said the Emirates and its partners want to see the return "as soon as possible" and the safeguards

are necessary “to prevent the proceeds fueling further conflict.”

The UAE, alongside its partners, wants to see a return to oil production in Libya as soon as possible, with safeguards in place to prevent the proceeds fuelling further conflict. We continue to work for an immediate ceasefire and return to a political process.

– أنور قرقاش (@AnwarGargash) [July 13, 2020](#)

The Libyan National Oil Corporation (NOC) said on Saturday that it would resume oil production and exports after a six-month shutdown, which cost the war-torn country billions in lost revenues.

Libya has been divided since 2015 between areas held by a government in Tripoli, backed by Turkey, and the Libyan National Army (LNA) in Benghazi, backed by the UAE, Russia and Egypt.

“We continue to work for an immediate cease-fire and return to a political process,” Gargash said in a tweet.



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Conflict-hit Libya to restart oil operations but with low output
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