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Hagia Sophia, which is the symbolic structure of the conquest of Istanbul, is a historical building brought to the status of a museum with the decree of the Council of Ministers dated 24 November 1934 and numbered 7/1589 as signed by Atatürk, taking into consideration its architectural value and historical importance. Thanks to all the restorations made over the years, the artistic value of Hagia Sophia is one of the most important cultural heritages of the world. It is our responsibility to preserve such a precious building, historically and artistically, as well as the pride that we feel towards the fact that it stays as the cradle and crossroads of civilizations in our country.

As we all know, “opening Hagia Sophia to worship” has been a topic that was constantly brought to the agenda for political vote interests of the Turkish rightist parties for long years. In the recent past, President Erdoğan also made a public announcement with the most understandable words to the effect that bringing this issue to the agenda was unnecessary, irrational, and that it had no justification within international politics and diplomacy.

Unfortunately, this issue, which was brought to our country’s daily polemics again with the force of other politicians, turned into a “sovereignty” issue in a manner that we could not understand. Following the parliamentary debates, the State Council’s (Danıştay-in Turkey) decision regarding this issue was “opening Hagia Sophia to worship”, and it created a sadness among the public that values our universal cultural riches alongside the whole world. Another feature that increases the historical value of this magnificent architectural work is that some columns, doors and stones used in its construction were brought from buildings and temples older than itself. Therefore, it stands in a very meaningful spot as a world cultural heritage location. Included in UNESCO's World Heritage List, Hagia Sophia should preserve its museum status as long as the world exists, as a symbol of brother/sisterhood between countries and religions!

Given the fact that Turkey possesses countless mosques built in classical-traditional and modern style we can clearly see that it is not a question regarding the number of worship points needed! What is more important than the functionality of the Hagia Sophia, which must be in a position beyond political interests, above all kinds of ideological separation and polemics, is the fact that it represents an irreplaceable legacy of world cultural heritage.

It’s not possible to understand nor to digest the renouncement of a wonderful step i.e. turning Hagia Sophia into a museum open to humanity, which was taken 86 years ago by our great leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who had instilled a modern, bias-free, tolerant, pluralistic, humanist democracy to our country and society.

As for the Council of State, with an unlawful decision (due to the fact that the plaintiff does not have the capacity to file a lawsuit, the 60 day period regarding the maximum time span over the case has passed -yes, because the elapsed time is 86 years!- Definite decisions had been taken by the state Council about the same case in the previous years) the fact that they dared to change the decision of Atatürk and the Council of Ministers that had placed Hagia Sophia to a museum status, will not be included in the golden pages of our Republic and our history of justice. To show as justification that the Sultan had given his property as a mosque due to the conquest is an incomprehensible approach that rejects the course of history and its results and assumes that the foundation of the Republic and the great revolution have never happened. To question and to harm Atatürk through such political reasons that in fact serve nobody, shouldn't be the duty of any institution belonging to the Republic. If some of them, as seen in the mass-media, dare to use this decision of the Council of State as an original starting point and excuse to question and reverse the revolutionary decisions of the founding force of the Republic, they will have to be faced with the noble citizens of Atatürk and the Republic itself.

The fact that the main opposition party remained almost silent and quasi-unresponsive to this serious issue showed that they could not get into the depth of the issue in terms of Atatürk's Revolutionary principles, the Lausanne treaty and Republican law of state.

After all, we can say that it would have been a much proper action for Turkey to protect and save such a universal value which was gained for our lands by the conquest of Fatih Sultan Mehmet and passed onto us by Atatürk with all its due responsibilities as a world-renowned museum. In our country where respect and tolerance for different religions are mentioned at every opportunity, Hagia Sophia, which is one of the symbols of the Christian and Orthodox world, where it is possible to worship as a mosque for 86 years already and where the prayer is read 5 times daily, this new status will cause the loss of museum quality and also the loss of this unequalled attraction point of international tourism in this way, while on the other hand actions against us in different parts of the world have already started to happen. It is our greatest wish that Turkey should return from this mistake as soon as possible, and we believe that this is the attitude that fits the historical perspective of the Great Turkish nation full of tolerance and peace.

We respectfully announce to our nation and the world public opinion.

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