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Subject: An urgent message concerning Hagia Sophia in Istanbul

ICOMOS Hellenic feels obliged to insist, in principle, on the preservation of the historical integrity of monuments and on the absolute need to keep them outside political practices. Thus, it also feels obliged, in particular, to criticize the recent religious and political exploitation of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul Turkey, in a way extrinsic to its initial historical identity.

It is in this context that the members of the ICOMOS Hellenic would like to denounce the festivities that took place on 29th of May 2020, in Hagia Sophia; festivities that may be associated to a number of recent analogous activities with clear nationalistic orientation.

It is normal for similar practices to attempt a biased interpretation of history; a biased interpretation that may even reach the material or at least the symbolic 'destruction' of the monumental ensembles. There is no need to remark that the international community has already experienced, recently, an augmented aggressiveness against historic monuments, the extensive devastation in the Iraqi inland being a characteristic example. Semiotic 'deconstruction', destructive intervention in the symbolic order, seems to be in comparison less harmful to the monuments; however, it could be described as the first stage of collision, which is frequently followed by the severe final alteration of their material structure.

In the case of Hagia Sophia, we may prevent both material and symbolic violence and we may keep the monument at the present state of its trans-cultural and trans-national valuable identity.

On behalf of I.C.O.M.O.S. Hellenic National Committee

The President

Dr. Athanasios Nakasis



The Secretary General

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