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The transformation of churches into mosques in Turkey

Written question No. 751 to the Committee of Ministers

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The venerated Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was converted into a mosque in the year 1453 following the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Empire.

In the year 1934, Hagia Sophia became a neutrally faith-based museum, where millions of visitors could admire superb mosaics portraying Christian scenes.

In July 2020, the Turkish Government decided to “re-Islamise” Hagia Sophia. And in August 2020 the monastery of Saint-Sauveur-in-Chora – which was also successively a church, a mosque and then a museum – was turned into a mosque.

The summer of 2020 saw many international reactions against the Islamisation of Hagia Sophia and the Islamist policies of President Erdoğan. These policies are in several respects incompatible with the rule of law and values upheld by the Council of Europe. To date, however, the Committee of Ministers has not stated an opinion on the matter.

Mr Christiansson

To ask the Committee of Ministers:

Does the Committee of Ministers intend to react in any way to the transformation of churches into mosques in Turkey, and in particular that of Hagia Sophia?

