

the anti-corruption protests in cities around Russia on Sunday.

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In the 1930s, Soviet authorities transformed the imperial cathedral into a museum of atheism. The Russian Orthodox Church wants to re-consecrate it as an active church.

The Church promises to welcome all, including the cathedral's 3.5 million annual visitors, but some opponents worry it may restrict entry to Orthodox believers. Others question how the Church will fund repairs if it eliminates museum fees.

"The [Communists'] destruction of churches and massacre of believers has become a terrible chapter of national disunity," Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, said last month. "The return of these churches can become a symbol of harmony and mutual forgiveness."

The City Legislative Assembly must now decide whether to approve the referendum. St. Petersburg has not held a referendum since 1991.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/03/28/referendum-proposed-over-st-isaacs-cathedral-a57562>