News

Interior of Cordoba cathedral

The interior of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Cordoba, Spain, a former mosque and UNESCO World Heritage Site, is seen in a file photo. Firefighters saved the historic cathedral Aug. 8, 2025, after flames and smoke were seen billowing from the iconic church. (OSV News/Reuters/Marcelo del Pozo)



by OSV News

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August 9, 2025

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Firefighters saved the historic cathedral in Cordoba, Spain, Aug. 8, after flames and smoke were seen billowing from the iconic mosque-turned-church.

According to media reports, the blaze began about 9 p.m. local time but was quickly contained by three fire crews. The cause is under investigation, although several news outlets have reported that a mechanical sweeping machine initially caught fire inside the cathedral.

Speaking to local media, Bishop Demetrio Fernández, bishop emeritus of Cordoba, praised the firefighters' efforts and said, "I want to reassure everyone that the fire is under control."

While comparison has been made to the 2019 fire that devastated Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, Cordoba's Mayor José María Bellido said on television that "the monument is saved."

"There will be damage, but it will not be a catastrophe," he said, speaking to local media alongside the bishop. He said the full extent of the damage would be surveyed in the morning.

UNESCO declared the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption a World Heritage Site in 1984, and the designation has since been extended to the rest of Cordoba's historic center for its impressive eighth-century Moorish architecture.

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The cathedral was built as the city's Great Mosque on what may have been the site of an earlier basilica. It was converted to a cathedral in the 13th century under St. Ferdinand III, king of Castile, who toppled Cordoba's Moorish rule in 1236 during the Spanish Reconquista and brought the city under Castilian control. Because it was a former mosque, the cathedral is commonly called the "Mezquita," Spanish for "mosque."

Abd al-Rahman I, founder of the Islamic Emirate of Cordoba, ordered the building's construction around 785. Later additions made it one of the largest mosques in the Islamic world. After it was converted into a cathedral, the building underwent Renaissance-era renovations, but efforts have since been taken to restore its Moorish elements.

Despite its status as a church today, the building is still considered a major monument in the Western Muslim world. It receives about 2 million visitors annually. Efforts are underway to reopen the cathedral at its normal time Aug. 9.