

# **THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM PARTICIPATES IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, IN CAIRO**

Between Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of October/3<sup>rd</sup> of November and 22<sup>nd</sup> of October/4<sup>th</sup> of November 2015, the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) convened in Cairo.

The Executive Committee is the institution that implements the decisions of the MECC.

The Middle East Council of Churches, founded in 1974, has as participants four Christian Churches or "Families", namely: the Greek Orthodox Church that comprises the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and the Church of Cyprus; the Pre-Chalcedonian Church (Armenians, Copts, Syrians); the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches.

The Executive Committee was hosted at St Mark Center (Cairo) of the Coptic Church. His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, represented the entire Orthodox Church as President. He was accompanied by the Elder Secretary-General Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina.

The Committee discussed such issues as the unchecked situation in the Middle East and the need for the MECC to protect the region's Christian Minorities, i.e. in Syria and Iraq.

The Committee also ratified the minutes of the decisions of the previous Executive Committee, that had convened at the Marriott Hotel near the Dead Sea, and listened to the report of the General Secretary on the sound administrative, financial and communication situation of the MECC, following a

crisis in its midst, as well as on the activities the Council has engaged in from the time of the previous Executive Committee to this day.

In his report, General Secretary f. Michel Jalakh made special reference to the help he had received from Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem and from the Office the Patriarchate had established in Amman, ran by Ms Wafa Gousous.

Committee members commented on the report with praises and some negative remarks and objections, to which the General Secretary tried to provide satisfactory answers to the best possible extent.

During the second meeting of the Executive Committee, on the afternoon of Tuesday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of October/3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2015, Patriarch Theophilos addressed participants in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/11/03/17836>

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Remarks on the general secretary's report continued until it was decided that priority should be placed on the decisions and actions the Council owes to take towards the dangerous situation in the countries of the Middle East, where the Christian hypostasis is threatened by extinction. It was correctly pointed out that without Christians in the Middle East there cannot be a Council of Churches in the Middle East, and that members need to seek and fight against the reasons that force Christians to flee the Middle East, namely: insecurity, economic poverty and destitute.

The Executive Committee also looked at the date of the next General Assembly which will convene in Amman, Jordan.

On the conclusion of deliberations, Patriarch Theophilos visited Patriarch Theodoros of the Coptic Church of Egypt. The two heads of Churches exchanged wishes and gifts: Patriarch Theophilos offered an icon of Theotokos, and Patriarch

Theodoros a cross of Coptic art.

**From the Secretariat-General**



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# **28            OCTOBER            1940            DAY CELEBRATED            AT            ST            SION PATRIARCHAL            SCHOOL**

On the afternoon of Thursday, the 16<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, the 28<sup>th</sup> of October national day was celebrated at the Patriarchal School of St Sion.

The modest ceremony was graced by the presence of H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Patriarch was accompanied by Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the President of the School Board, Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, His Excellency the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis, and Consul Vasileios Koinis. In attendance were members of the Greek Parish, Hagiotaphite Fathers, nuns and Greek pilgrims.

The celebrations included opening remarks by the Principal, Mr Demetrios Lykoudes, the panegyric of the day by f. Nikolaos Zervis, advisor to the Patriarch on matters of Education and former Principal, recitations of poems and prose pieces by students, music performances and video projections.

The poems and prose pieces were chosen by Mr Demetrios Lykoudes, whilst Mr Nikolaos Souliotis compiled and presented the audiovisual material.

Both the teachers' speeches and the students' performances were focused on the sufferings of the Greek people during the 1940-1944 German and Italian occupation, as well as on the heroic resistance of the Greeks that, by the help of God and Theotokos, resulted in the liberation of Greece and the preservation of its territorial integrity and Christian heritage.

On the conclusion of the ceremony, the Patriarch and the Consul-General praised the teachers and students for their performance and thanked them for arousing national pride amongst their souls for the country's glorious past which to this day marks the path of the Greek people towards the present and the future.

**From the Secretariat-General**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2NMsymlTC8>



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# **FUNERAL SERVICE FOR THE LATE HAGIOTAPHITE ARCHIMANDRITE KELADION**

At 13:00 pm of Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, the funeral service was held for Archimandrite Keladion, Elder Kamarasis and member of the Holy and Sacred Synod.

The service was led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, with Hagiotaphite Primates and Hieromonks of the Central Monastery and other border monasteries co-officiating.

The Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis, attended the service along with monks and nuns of the Patriarchate, faithful from the Greek Parish and members of the Arabic-speaking flock from Jerusalem and other cities.

The eulogy was delivered by the Elder Secretary-General, His Eminence Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina. Archbishop Aristarchos talked of the life of the late Archimandrite, who had from a very young age chosen to serve the Lord, from his hometown in Corfu, Greece, before graduating from St Demetrius Patriarchal School and joining the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood. Archimandrite Keladion had served the Lord with dedication and self-denial, as hegoumen in Gethsemane, in Remle, in Kana, Galilee, then head of the Patriarchate's Central Cookery, Treasurer of the "Hieron Koinon", hegoumen at St Basil, Elder Kamarasis and member of the Holy and Sacred Synod. Throughout the whole of his life, the deceased had kept his humbleness, practicality, tranquillity and politeness, even declining a proposition to be elected to the ranks of Primate.

The body of our late brother was accompanied to his final rest at the Cemetery of the Holy Sion by Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, the Elder Chrysostomos and other Hagiotaphites.

May his memory be eternal.

**From the Secretariat-General**



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# ARCHIMANDRITE KELADION THE HAGIOTAPHITE DEPARTS THIS LIFE

Early on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, Archimandrite Keladion, Hagiotaphite and member of the Holy and Sacred Synod, passed away at his residence in the Patriarchate, following a four-month illness and hospitalization.

After receiving word of his death, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem performed a Trisagion for the repose of his soul at the monastic church of Sts Constantine and Helen, before the conclusion of the divine Liturgy.

The funeral of our late brother Keladion will take place tomorrow, Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> of October, at 13:00 pm, at the Church of Sts Constantine and Helen, with Patriarch Theophilos officiating. A eulogy to the deceased will be read during the funeral service, from which the followers of the Patriarchate's website will be informed of Archimandrite Keladion's dedicated service to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

May the Lord rest his soul in the land of the living with the righteous and the just.

**From the Secretariat-General**



# **PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART V)**

The representative of Pakistani youth then took the floor, to underline how unfortunate it is that countries in the Middle East, i.e. Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, are plagued by political unrest, with Israelis, Muslims and Christians alike being the victims. Islam, he said, is supportive of the peaceful coexistence amongst peoples and an International Organization must be established to solve the problem of violence committed in the name of religion.

Mr Olav Tviet, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches spoke next, pointing out that the role of the WCC is to try and bring fair peace in regions suffering from controversy, conflict and war. The WCC, he went on, was set from the start against a military intervention to Syria and in favour of a peaceful negotiation towards resolving the Palestinian question and creating two states in peace and safety.

At noon, Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens hosted the Heads of Churches and their attendants to lunch at the Intercontinental hotel.

Addresses continued with the Palestinian Ambassador to Greece. Mr M. Toubassi conveyed the greetings of the Palestinian people who, in his words, suffer the consequences of Israeli occupation, adding that Jordan supports the rights of the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank and that Palestine is the cradle of a rich pluralistic religious heritage. He concluded by saying that there is no need for walls; there's only need for safe borders to secure the coexistence between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The representative of Qatar spoke next, saying that his country has created the conditions for religious coexistence as advocated by the Islamic religion. Islam allows the freedom of religions, the right of property, learning and using one's mother tongue, he said, concluding that the Medina Constitution provides for special care for the poor, which applies to all true believers in Islam.

On Monday afternoon, on the conclusion of deliberations, a music concert was held on the initiative of Foreign Minister, Mr Kotzias. The concert featured Greek composer Thanos Mikroutsikos. Introducing the event, Mr Kotzias said that political conferences owe to include cultural events too, as religion, poetry and music have the power of voicing the unsaid.

After the concert, Mr Kotzias hosted guests to dinner at the Museum of the Acropolis, where Greek Prime Minister, Alexis Tsipras, made an address.

Deliberations continued on the following day, Tuesday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, with speakers from India, the United Arab Emirates, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Hungary, Metropolitan Soterios of Toronto, etc.

Mr Kotzias closed the conference by saying that foreign affairs and religion in the Middle East owe to work together for peace. Unrest in the region will become a threat for humanity as a whole, he added.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART IV)

His Beatitude Anastasios, Patriarch of Albania then spoke, suggesting there are two manners in which religious pluralism may be approached: that of the unconscious tolerance of people indifferent to it and that of sincere tolerance for purely religious reasons. The world, Patriarch Anastasios said, longs for the cultivation and establishment of world peace and for the prosperity of human beings. With the refugee problem becoming intensified, there is need for conscious religious education. Christians pray to God for peace, as humans have proven incapable of achieving it. Peace, he said, is linked to justice. In the absence of justice, poverty prevails and becomes a factor of violence by those who suffer. That is why peace must be sought along with justice. Egocentrism is the opposite of peace. Only the power of love can conquer love for power, Patriarch Anastasios concluded.

Sheikh Ali Hashemi then took the floor and said that Islam respects other religions, as proven by the Treaty of Umar, signed by Umar Khattab and Patriarch Sophronius, and the *Ahdname* signed by Mehmet II the Conqueror and Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios of Constantinople.

In the United Arab Emirates, he said, good neighbourly relations is of great importance for the life of human beings and that peaceful coexistence greatly contributes to the promotion of social peace, solidarity and love. He added that a law has been issued in the UAE that prohibits atrocities against other religions.

The representative of the United Nations' Secretary-General then spoke, pointing out that the Middle East had indeed been

a place of religious and cultural pluralism, and indicating the need for a religious dialogue and the cultivation of humanitarian education, so that men may be able to act on humanitarian values.

His Beatitude Demetrius, Archbishop of America then took the floor. He referred to the Middle East as a place plagued by fear, pain, expatriation, suspicions, exiles, chaos, destruction of monuments, genocides and, most importantly, the killing of memory that causes loss of identity. Archbishop Demetrius also referred to the work of the International Orthodox Christian Charities, an organization that has contributed 1.240.000 dollars for refugees and 500.000 dollars for other humanitarian causes. A dialogue amongst groups, societies and Churches, he said, will be the solution to this tragedy.

The representative of the Turkish Prime Minister then spoke. He pointed out that the Republic of Turkey is hosting today two million Syrian refugees and that, in the past few days, 70.000 refugees had arrived in Turkey. Turkey, he said, has so far spent six million dollars for refugees, as the country fights against terrorism and strives to put an end to terrorist attacks on behalf of Kurds too. He proposed tolerance and reconciliation for the prosperity of human beings. Religion, he said, must be ruled by humanitarian values. The religion of Islam talks of humanity's common roots. The Turkish representative also referred to the Pact of Umar that promoted tolerance against other religions – the Abyssinians, the Armenians, and Christians of all denominations. The Ottoman Empire, he said, has created an empire of peace. As for the statement made by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus, a great effort is required, the Turkish representative said, towards resolving this problem. Fascism must be fought and an alliance for civilization must take form within the United Nations. He closed by praising the Greek Foreign Ministry for inviting a total of 127 countries

to participate in the Conference.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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## **PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART III)**

Holland's Deputy Ambassador then took the floor, pointing out that the Conference highlights the importance of pluralistic cultural heritage, and also underlining the value of modesty. Modesty was proclaimed as a value by Hugo Grotius in 1645 Holland, who was imprisoned for his principles. The Deputy Ambassador said that Holland protests against terrorism imposed upon groups, minorities, women and children and causing division and total annihilation of humans and cultures. He closed by saying that the Middle East remains a region in conflagration, and appealing for an end to violence and the need for a political solution.

The representative of the Vatican spoke next, underlying that the Rome Conference and the Pope himself support the institution of the family. "We have lived" he said "the Arab spring". The Rome Conference sends a message of good will for coexistence and action. The implementation of democracy is not merely a choice, it is also a struggle for democratic institutions and our society needs to be trained in democracy. The Middle East requires an interreligious dialogue. Religious fanaticism is the cause of many problems. The Ecumenical Patriarchate organized a Conference on the diversity of cultures, whilst Pope Benedict spoke in favour of a common human citizenship.

Patriarch Aram of the Armenians of Cilicia then took the floor, pointing out that the Middle East is a cradle of pluralistic civilisation, and as such it has been preserved through the practice of democracy. True democracy increases minorities and builds an optimistic future in the Middle East, whereas sectarianism destroys minorities. Christians and Muslims alike owe to work together for equality, justice and freedom in the Middle East.

Rabbi David Rosen spoke next, underlying that the role of religion is of great significance for justice and peace in Israel and the Middle East, as indicated by the fact that there are two hundred religious organizations in Israel. He also referred to the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land (CRIHL), established years ago, and closed his address by saying that, for the countries of the Middle East, Greece is a bridge of mediation for peace.

His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Cyprus, then took the floor, emphasizing the fact that religious pluralism was developed in the Middle East and that Greece had contributed to it by cultivating democracy. He also underlined that no people has the right to impose itself upon another people, speaking from experience, as Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots used to live together in Cyprus, until the moment Rauf Denktash unlawfully proclaimed the establishment of a so-called independent Turkish state in 1983. Turkey's invasion in the Northern part of Cyprus, in 1974, has caused several afflictions to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, said Archbishop Chrysostomos, adding that the only solution to the Cyprus question would be the liberation of the island's Northern part from the Turkish troops, and peaceful religious coexistence amongst Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. This dream has been lost, said the Archbishop. The "Arab spring" has not produced any significant changes; instead, it has caused confusion. Europe stood by and watched, instead of supporting the peoples of the Middle East. The great powers,

according to the Archbishop of Cyprus, owe to fight against extremism. Only then will peace prevail in the Middle East.

The Most Reverend Hilarion, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, spoke next, of the importance of the Conference for sending a message of peace in the Middle East and beyond, whilst also referring to the contribution of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. The “spring” in Iraq, Lebanon and other Arab countries has caused deaths and destruction of monuments. Two hierarchs of the Orthodox Church are still missing. The Russian Church makes efforts to protect and support Christians in the Middle East, where the Churches are members of the Body of Christ and we ought to stand by them as, according to the Apostle Paul, we are all members of the Body of Christ and *if one member suffers, everyone suffers with them.*

**From the Secretariat-General**

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## **PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART II)**

His Beatitude Theodore, Patriarch of Alexandria, then took the floor, congratulating the Greek Foreign Minister for organizing the Conference. The Church, said Patriarch Theodore, was founded two thousand years ago in order to find man; this had been the fruit of the Church's ecumenical spirit. Today, the Church proclaims the supranational message of Christianity which, albeit self-evident, has been reduced to an inaccessible endeavour. Religion has unfortunately become a factor of division and discord, instead of agreement and coexistence. Politics should not be religionized and

religion should not be politicized, Patriarch Theodore said. Jesus Christ has not only taught tolerance, but above all He taught love, even for one's enemy, citing the example of the Samaritan man who proved that the concept of "neighbour" is not confined to our compatriots but transcends this limit to include any man of any religion, race, language or nationality. Europe owes to provide help to the Middle East and the African continent, the continent of the future. The Patriarch of Alexandria closed with the words of the Blessed Augustine, that faith is to believe what you can't see and the reward is to see what you believed in.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem spoke next in English, see link:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/10/19/17559>

Mr Kotzias thanked the Patriarch of Alexandria for indicating that for the fruits of peace, justice and prosperity to become ripe, tolerance is not enough; respect and love for the fellow man are also required.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mr Sameh Shoukry, then took the floor. Mr Shoukry referred to the collaboration between Greece and Egypt, and the friendship between the two peoples, before pointing out that the intensified crisis in the Middle East has caused insecurity, which in its turn has led to crimes committed by religious dogmatists, extreme groups proclaiming intolerance and hatred. Muslims, Mr Shoukry said, have fallen victims of dogmatists too. Religious pluralism in the Middle East must be proclaimed. The Al-Azhar Mosque proclaims that any attempt to impose one religion over another should be penalized. Suppressing a religion and oppressing a people are factors that yield violence. In closing, the Minister said that he considers the Conference the starting point for a joint approach against violent situations in the Middle East.

Patriarch John of Antioch spoke next, pointing out that

according to the Acts of the Apostles, Antioch was where the first disciples of Christ were called “Christians”. The See of the Patriarchate of Antioch lies a few kilometres away from where deathly shells are fired. He added that the Arab Spring has destroyed centuries-long Churches and mosques and cultural monuments. In Antioch and across the whole of Syria, he said, churches and mosques stand side by side. The immigration of the Syrians is not the solution to the problem. “We do not consider ourselves subservient, nor a minority”, said Patriarch John, and went on to appeal for the liberation of two Hierarchs abducted three years ago. In closing, the Patriarch referred to the coexistence of Christians and Muslims in Antioch that should guide the rest of us towards a harmonious coexistence in the future. We appeal for love, he said, and for you to allow our people to go on living in their ancestral homes.

In response to the speech of the Patriarch of Antioch, Mr Kotzias declared his support to the sufferings of the Syrian people.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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## **PROGRESS OF DELIBERATIONS AT GREEK FOREIGN MINISTRY’S PEACE CONFERENCE (PART I)**

The deliberations of the Foreign Ministry’s Conference on Peace began on Monday, the 6<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> of October 2015. The President of the Hellenic Republic Mr Prokopis Pavlopoulos,

opened the Conference by stressing that it takes place at a crucial time, because of unprecedented incidents of violence in the Middle East, the cradle and origins of cultural diversity, now turned into a volcano of violence threatening to erupt at any time.

“The Greek-Hellenistic civilisation and Orthodoxy”, Mr Pavlopoulos said, “have contributed to the cultural heritage of the Middle East, and this is why the Middle East should become once more a cradle of coexistence between religions and peoples. Therefore, this Conference organized by the Greek Foreign Ministry marks a momentous time. The quintessence of your mission as clerics is enclosed in the Gospel, particularly in Matthew, Chapter 5, stating that *blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*. With this in mind, I piously urge you, as religious leaders, to teach us tolerance and love. Your mission encloses two factors, man and peace. The Cavern and the Manger in Bethlehem that received our Lord Jesus Christ Incarnate cannot be converted into a volcanic Middle East in the throes of conflagration”.

The Greek President went on to extend thanks to all participants, especially the “pioneer of green civilisation”, as he called the Ecumenical Patriarch, and the Foreign Minister, Mr Kotzias.

Mr Kotzias then took the floor and went on to refer to the coexistence of cultures in the Middle East through the ages, which should also be the case today, in order to put an end to the destruction of human lives and ancient cultural monuments. He spoke of the collaboration between Churches in the Middle East as examples of peace and said that human rights must be protected. The Minister added that the establishment of an Observatory and a solution to the Palestinian question that secures the safety of the state of Israel and of the Palestinians is a priority. He suggested that the forced movement of people must be punished. Greece promotes a



multidimensional policy, the political solution of the Cyprus question and the political solution of the refugee problem. It supports a solution to the Cyprus problem that includes the withdrawal of the occupying army and the coexistence of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, Greece promotes a policy of peace, justice, prosperity and coexistence. The Minister went on to add that Orthodox saints, in their holiness, defended man and the human dignity. Greece asks for a solution to the refugee problem in collaboration with the Balkan countries and other countries of the European Union. He warmly thanked Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens for the help offered to refugees by the Archbishopric of Athens and the Church of Greece, adding that in terms of geography and culture, Greece is a bridge between three continents. "Our message is the coexistence of different attitudes, convictions and religious faiths. We are taught by tradition. We promote the establishment of an international Observatory to prevent and combat crimes committed against man and civilisations".

His Holiness Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarchate, then spoke, stressing that the Ecumenical Patriarchate has respected religious diversity, freedom and the fact that three monotheistic religions have developed in the Middle East. "Religion", His Holiness said, "was never an obstacle to human coexistence. In order to overcome obstacles, we need to discover the value of peace, which comes from a revision of diversity. Certain extremist groups promote the distortion of Islam through murdering human beings and destroying century-long monuments. We recommend an interreligious dialogue. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has, years ago, initiated an interreligious dialogue with Judaism and Islam. We support interreligious dialogue as a means of fighting against crimes committed in the name of religion. We recommend the continuance of actions for the protection of the natural environment and of religion. We recommend the intensification of the workings of the Middle East Council of Churches. Unfortunately, in our days, thousands of human beings of all

religions are being persecuted and expatriated from the Middle East”.

Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens took the floor next, to underline the imperative need to show our support to refugees, in accordance not only to the principles of the Gospel, but also in line with the principles of humanity. The Middle East remains a bleeding wound. The tragedy of the refugees has spread across the Mediterranean and the whole of Europe. He then pointed out that refugees are created by us and then led as sheep to the slaughter.

Archbishop Ieronymos was followed by the Cypriot Foreign Minister, Mr Kasoulides, who stressed that the Republic of Cyprus and the Middle East had always been a cradle of religions and cultures and that there is a great need to project the cultural uniqueness of the Middle East and the significance of the three monotheistic religions in the region. “There are”, Mr Kasoulides said, “units of extremists, which we denounce. Fanaticism belongs to human nature, not religion. Daes have no limits, as they seek the destruction of monuments and the genocide of peoples. Cultural relics are being traded. Thousands of cultural and religious relics have been stolen and traded abroad, as was the case against the Republic of Cyprus after 1974. The cost for the return of such relics should not be borne by their owners, but by auction houses and buyers. We must establish an International Judicial Body to deal with such cases. There is also the problem of the return of Cypriot refugees to their ancestral homes in the Northern part of Cyprus”.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# THE PRESIDENT OF GEORGIA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, the 6<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, His Excellency the President of Georgia, Mr Giorgi Margvelasvili, visited the Patriarchate. He was accompanied by his esteemed wife, the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel and associates of his.

The President and his distinguished retinue were welcomed at David's Gate by the Patriarchal Commissioner, the Most Reverend Isychios, Metropolitan of Kapitolias, Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia, the Assistant Dragoman, Archimandrite Bartholomew and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Walking through the Christian street, President Margvelasvili arrived at the Church of the Resurrection where he was guided by the Sacristan, Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, before venerating at the Holy Apokathelosis, the Angel's stone, the Life-giving Sepulcher, the Katholikon and the Horrendous Golgotha.

He then proceeded to the Sacristan's Office, where he venerated the Holy Cross and the relics in the Holy Sacristy. There, the Sacristan and f. Nikolaos offered the President an icon of Panaghia Jerusalemite for protection and blessing.

President Margvelasvili thanked the Metropolitan of Kapitolias for the warm welcome and tour along the holy sites that have been treaded by the feet of the Lord, and left to carry on his schedule in the Holy Land.

**From the Secretariat-General**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ip8uQRRxw7E>



