

Metropolitan Ioannis of Zambia: “In times of war, children and women are the ones who suffer the most”



On 18 May 2025, His Eminence Metropolitan Ioannis of Zambia and Mozambique organised an event at his residence in Lusaka to commemorate the genocide of the Pontian Greeks of Asia Minor.

Zambians, Greeks, and Cypriots participated to commemorate this day of memory.

Metropolitan Ioannis celebrated this day following the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa's recognition years ago, when the hierarchs agreed to commemorate the genocide of the Pontian Greeks in Asia Minor annually, at Metropolitan Ioannis's proposal. The Pontian Greeks were targeted based on their Christian beliefs.

His Eminence stated, "Therefore, we ask God to grant us peace so that we may never experience this kind of persecution again." On the same day, there was a procession with flags, including the Pontian flag, to the memorial pillar, where a Trisagion service was held for all those who were persecuted.

This was followed by the laying of wreaths by the former president of the Hellenic Association in Zambia, Mr. Evangelos Tattis; the Greek school teacher, Ms. Rania Tsirigoti; and two sisters from the youth of the Holy Metropolis, who represented the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Greeks of Africa. After that, there were speeches, followed by lunch.

Find below the speech of Metropolitan Ioannis of Zambia and Mozambique

My Spiritual children, today we are here to remember and pay our heartfelt tributes to those who lost their lives, who were killed, persecuted in Pontus, Asia Minor (Turkey).

This is known as the Pontian Greek Genocide, which happened when the old Ottoman Empire collapsed and the modern Turkish State was formed. We are talking about Hundreds of thousands of Pontian Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians who were massacred based on their Christian beliefs. As the Holy Synod of our Patriarchate recognised that annually we commemorate this Genocide, we are here also to pray to God and request that we stay together in freedom, no matter what one believes.

God wants all to stay in freedom with one another. There's no way that one can say "God blesses you when you kill your neighbour who does not share the same belief with you." What kind of god is that? That God doesn't exist and we don't want him. We know God loves all people and gave us freedom, and He respects that freedom He gave us.

As we gather here with our candles in our hands, praying for those who were persecuted in the Genocide of Pontus, Greeks, Armenians, and Assyrians, we also remember the genocide here in Africa that happened in Rwanda and Burundi, and we extend our prayers that peace may prevail in this world.

In times of war, children, women are the ones who suffer the most. It's not the super-power countries that suffer, but the vulnerable and innocent people.

As we read in the Bible, Psalm 29:11, the Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace. What kind of peace? Peace of respecting our neighbour's rights and freedom, by allowing them to exist in the same space we are, not to destroy one another on the basis of our strength. Let's allow peace in the world and stop wars that make people suffer.



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