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## **Greece celebrates Independence Day, Feast of the Annunciation amid ongoing coronavirus pandemic**



Greece celebrates a double holiday today, as March 25 commemorates the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, and is also the historic date to commemorate the beginning of the Greek War of Independence in 1821.

The twin commemorations come amid an unprecedented viral epidemic that has placed entire continents on lockdown, with Greece included as well. Strict measures are in place around the east Mediterranean country for non-essential movement, meaning that parades and events annually held on the day have been suspended. Also, church services are conducted without worshippers.

Nevertheless, as in 1821, Orthodoxy today continues to be at the forefront of the flock's national aspirations.

Attending priests at the Athens Metropolitan Cathedral on Wednesday morning, immediately after the Divine Liturgy, sang the Greek national anthem in an empty, of worshippers, cathedral.

Church bells of Athens-area cathedrals also rang out in joy on Wednesday morning, upon instructions by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos.

During a solemn ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in front of Parliament in downtown Athens, new Greek President Katerina Sakellariopoulou laid a wreath before the monument. She was accompanied by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the parliament president, three opposition political leaders and the heads of the armed forces.

Mitsotakis marked the anniversary of the country's war of independence against our Ottoman rule by sending a message of unity and resilience in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

He stated that "...the enemy is now the pandemic and against it we will marshal our strength and unity...Only nations that are united can overcome difficulties. No social construct can stand without the foundation of health; and no citizen can be well if others around them are not well."

In Greece's extreme northeast on the border with Turkey, the Greek flag was raised during a poignant ceremony at the Kastanies frontier post, the very spot where over the past month thousands of third country nationals have tried to breach the border, and failed. Official Turkey has encouraged, facilitated and even forced thousands of people from various countries living in that country to illegally enter Greece, in a bid to abolish Greek and EU borders.