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## **The Ecumenical Patriarchate regarding the death of historian Eusebio Leal Spengler, Cuban intellectual**



His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expresses the profound sorrow of the Mother Church of Constantinople upon the passing of Eusebio Leal Spengler, a prominent Cuban intellectual, who was the director of the restoration program of the historic centre of the old city of Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The ever-memorable Eusebio Leal, a close associate of President Fidel Castro Ruz, a distinguished historian and lover of Byzantine culture, made a decisive contribution to the construction of the Church of St. Nicholas in the old town of Havana. He himself visited the Holy Centre at the Phanar in the early 2000s to express to His All-Holiness the will of President Castro and the Cuban Government to erect a Byzantine-style Orthodox Church and offer it to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. For this purpose, the late Mr. Leal worked closely with H.E. Metropolitan Athenagoras of Mexico, also responsible for the pastoral care of the Orthodox faithful in Cuba, and had always shown great interest in the issues of the Mother Church. In January 2004, in a historic ceremony, then-President Castro, in the presence of a large crowd, symbolically handed over the key to the Holy Temple to the Ecumenical Patriarch, who consecrated it.

His All-Holiness, through H.E. Metropolitan Athenagoras of Mexico, expressed condolences on behalf of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the President, the Government and the family of the departed, but also to the people of Cuba.

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