

## **Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop, Elias Aoudeh, presided Sunday over a memorial Mass service held at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George**



Beirut's Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop, Elias Aoudeh, presided Sunday over a memorial Mass service held at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George in Nejme Square, marking 15 years since the assassination of Martyr Gebran Tueni and his two companions.

In his sermon, Aoudeh eulogized the late Tueini, saying: "Fifteen years have passed since the assassination of the free word, represented by a man who loved his homeland to death, and did not want to see his country ruled by strangers, but wanted it liberal, independent, prosperous, and rich in its youth...Yet, nothing has changed since our lives are still filled with tragedies and sorrows, and private, narrow interests still take precedence over the nation's interest, and the citizen still suffers as we witness the silencing of voices calling for freedom and liberation from

every restriction.”

He added regretfully, “If Gebran Tueni were among us today, the sword of his word would have been hanging over everyone who brought our country to its bottom. We have reached the opposite of all that Gebran and his fellow intellectual comrades dreamed of and defended with their thought, pen, dialogue and logic, respecting the opinion and dignity of the other...The country has lost all the essentials of a decent life, and its youth have abandoned it and freedom has left it for a long time...”

Aoudeh criticized the irresponsibility of Lebanese politicians and officials, considering that the constitution has become dependent on narrow interests while the country loses its sovereignty, dignity of its people and flourishing economy.

“Years have passed and we have been living as strangers in our homeland, because of a bizarre culture that has infiltrated and settled among us, the culture of corruption and exploitation of the nation’s resources; the culture of hatred, intimidation and subjugation, instead of love and tolerance and dialogue based on the mutual exchange of thoughts and perspectives...We now have a culture of silencing free tongues and suppressing freedom of expression, starting with programmed campaigns, up to moral or physical assassination. This culture is still in force today, and those who adopt this approach are not tired of following it,” Aoudeh corroborated.

He concluded by praying to the Lord Almighty for guidance and protection, saying: “Our call today is to restore the pulse to the heart of freedom that is suffocating, and to keep the voice of truth aloud, no matter how difficult the circumstances surrounding us, for our God is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14: 6), and in Him alone lies our salvation!”

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