

Sadness in wake of devastating fire at Balukli hospital in Constantinople; efforts now to focus on restoration



Tremendous sadness was evident on Friday in the wake of a devastating fire, which erupted a day earlier, and ravaged a well-known elderly home and hospital operated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople for the ancient metropolis' remaining ethnic Greek community. At the same time, relief was expressed that no one was killed or injured during the blaze.

Television footage showed flames burning much of the top storey and roof of the Balukli complex in Constantinople.

In a solemn statement issued afterwards, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, underlined that:

“Our Diaspora received a big blow today. One of its most important charities, in which our elderly brothers found care and warmth, suffered considerable damage from a devastating fire. We praise God for the fact that we did not have any victims, and we thank the state and local authorities and fire brigade officials, the

workers in the nursing home and the nearby hospital, as well as all those who voluntarily helped. What matters is human life. Buildings, facilities, and material things can be restored. We feel pain for what happened, but we will overcome this ordeal as well.”

The emblematic hospital of Constantinople first opened in 1753.

In commenting on the devastating incident, the Archbishop of America, His Eminence Elpidophoros, also issued a statement on Thursday afternoon, underlining that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America is prepared to respond to this tragedy.

He added “...our Omogeneia will contribute in any way we can to mitigate the material damages that have been suffered, so that the Balıklı Greek Hospital can continue its mission, caring for the elderly and infirmed.”