

OPEN LETTER
FROM THE EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM,
ATHENS

To the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned employees of the National Archaeological Museum, were unexpectedly informed that, at a time when the museums remain closed due to the pandemic, the Minister of Culture and Sports has presented and intends to introduce to Parliament a bill by which the five largest public museums in Greece:

- the National Archaeological Museum
- the Byzantine and Christian Museum
- the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki
- the Museum of Byzantine Culture
- the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion

will cease to be **Special Regional Services of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and will be converted into Legal Entities governed by Public Law.**

Mr. Prime Minister, we hereby wish to state that at no stage in the drafting of this unknown bill were the employees of the National Archaeological Museum called upon to express their views on the improvement of its operation or its administrative structure.

The establishment of the National Archaeological Museum was one of the first concerns of the newly born Greek state. The Museum was originally founded in Aegina in 1829 and, a few years later, according to the first Archaeological Law of 1834, it officially became the "Central Public Museum", constituting one of the oldest public services of the Greek state, with a clear purpose **to protect, preserve and promote ancient Greek cultural heritage.** Its creation

contributed to the formation of the ideological identity of the Modern Greek state and its operation marked a brilliant course in its long, turbulent history.

Mr. Prime Minister, the National Archaeological Museum has so far functioned with the transparency and regulations that govern all state services and already implements what is advocated in the bill to be submitted, defending the protection of antiquities, maintaining the integrity of its archaeological collections, organizing or participating in numerous exhibitions in Greece and all over the world, advancing scientific research, carrying out co-financed projects and promoting Hellenic culture with events, successful extrovert activities, scientific lectures on its exhibits for the general public and educational programs that are free of charge for all citizens.

You yourself have honored us with your presence in the inauguration of successful exhibitions, planned after systematic scientific research and produced thanks to the hard work of all professional specialties of the Museum. Moreover, our Museum has accepted and profited in the best possible way from sponsorships by Institutes and companies (COSMOTE, HUBLLOT, ELPE, NBG, the Athens Medical Group, the Latsis Foundation, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, the Onassis Foundation, the AG Leventis Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Museum, to cite but a few).

On the other hand, Mr. Prime Minister, the operation in practice of the Legal Entities governed by Public Law in Greece includes both successful examples and dismal failures, such as the Archaeological Receipts Fund (TAP). Therefore, the choice of such an institutional change for the National Archaeological Museum is not automatically in its interest, especially when the model of state management has so far worked successfully in its case. We firmly believe that if sufficient human resources (with specialized technical, administrative and marketing staff) are ensured, the National Archaeological Museum can successfully meet the needs of society and the challenges of the 21st century.

In the many years of its history, the employees (archaeologists, conservators, engineers, chemists, administrators, accountants, security guards, cleaners, workmen) of the National Archaeological Museum have served and preserved the antiquities from numerous adventures, even at the risk of their lives, in particularly harsh times, such as during the Nazi occupation.

With this letter, we, the employees of the National Museum, wish to send the message in all directions that we will once again gather all our forces and stand for the protection and safety

of the ancient monuments and the integrity of the archeological collections, within the Archaeological Service, of which the Museum must continue to be an organic part. It goes without saying that our effort lies beyond any narrow political or ideological views, since the National Archaeological Museum is the Museum of us all.

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ATHANASOPOULOS PANAYOTIS, CONSERVATOR OF ANTIQUITIES

ATHANASOPOULOU SAPPHO, ARCHAEOLOGIST

ANTONOPOULOU SPYRIDOULA, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES

AVGOUSTAKIS GEORGIOS, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES

BIZREMIS KONSTANTINOS, ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE

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CHATZIPANAGIOTOU ALEXANDRA, ARCHAEOLOGIST

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IGNATIADOU DESPINA, ARCHAEOLOGIST

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KARAMARGIOU GEORGIA, CONSERVATOR OF ANTIQUITIES

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KATSOURANI KALLIOPI, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
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MAKRIPIDI VASSILIKI, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
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MANOUSSAKI GEORGIA, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
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MARSINOPOULOU DESPOINA, CONSERVATOR OF ANTIQUITIES
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RAPTI KONSTANTINA, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
ROUMELIOTI NECTARIA, ARTIST – PAINTER
SELEKOU MARIA, ARCHAEOLOGIST
SINOPOULOU AIKATERINI, ARCHAEOLOGIST
SOLINAREOU ZOE, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
SOTIRELLI ANNA, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
SOTIROPOULOS PANAYOTIS, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
SPACHI AGAPI, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
SPYROU KALLIOPI, GUARD OF ANTIQUITIES
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