

25-06-2026 Return of personal belongings of four Greek victims of Nazi camps to their families, within the framework of the international campaign #StolenMemory of the Arolsen Archives



On Thursday, June 25, 2026, an event was held at the “Yiannos Kranidiotis” Auditorium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to return the personal belongings of four Greek victims of Nazi concentration and forced labor camps to their families, within the framework of the international campaign **#StolenMemory** of the Arolsen Archives.

The Arolsen Archives, which preserve the archival material of Nazi concentration and forced labor camps, constitute the largest institution for documentation of Nazi crimes worldwide. They possess over 30 million documents that form valuable resource for historical research, documentation and education of younger generations. Since 2018, they have been carrying out the international campaign **#StolenMemory**, with the aim of tracing the families of victims of Nazi persecution and returning the personal belongings that were taken from them during their imprisonment in concentration and forced labor camps.

In Greece, the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs, in cooperation with the Diplomatic and Historical Archives Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has created an innovative and pioneering educational program in which secondary schools have taken on the task of tracing the families of the victims.

At the event held on June 25, the Prime Minister was represented by the Secretary General for Religious Affairs, Mr. Georgios Kalantzis. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was represented by the Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism and for the Protection of Holocaust Remembrance, Ambassador Chrysoula Aleiferi. His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens and All Greece was represented by the Most Reverend Archimandrite Father Amfilochios Diamantidis. The Acting Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Ms. Theresia-Paraskevi Angelatou, the Director of the Arolsen Archives, Mr. Moritz Wein, as well as representatives of the government, the educational community and the families of the victims also attended the event.

During the opening addresses, the importance of the cooperation between the two Ministries and the Arolsen Archives in restoring historical memory was highlighted, as was the crucial role of the educational community in implementing the program.

A highlight of the event was the return of personal belongings of four Greek victims of Nazi concentration and forced labor camps to their families, which were located through research conducted by student groups participating in the educational program **#StolenMemory** of the Arolsen Archives.

The Evening Vocational High School of Evosmos, Thessaloniki, located the family of Evangelos Kerasiotis. His personal belonging, a watch, was handed over by the Secretary General for Religious Affairs, Mr. Georgios Kalantzis, to Kaiti Kerasoti, the wife of the victim's brother.

The 2nd General High School of Koropi, Attica, located Dimitrios Vacharelis, the nephew of Dimitrios Vafeiadis. The personal belongings of Dimitrios Vafeiadis, a wallet with coins, a ring, and a pocket watch with its chain, were handed over to Dimitrios Vacharelis by Mr. Moritz Wein, Director of the Arolsen Archives.

The 7th Middle School of Nea Ionia, Attica, located the family of Georgios Sagmatopoulos. His personal belonging, a watch, was handed over by Mr. Georgios Polydorakis, the Director of the Service of Diplomatic and Historical Archives and expert Ambassador-Counselor A', to Panagiota Galani, the granddaughter of the victim's sister.

The 1st General High School of Hymettus located the family of Nikolaos Fasouliotis. His personal belongings, a bracelet and a small brooch, were handed over by Ms. Vasiliki Keramida, Director of the Office of the Secretary General for Religious Affairs, to his daughter, Konstantia Tsioptsi.

Mr. Moritz Wein, Director of the Arolsen Archives, also gave each of the four families copies of the original documents regarding their relatives, which are kept in the Arolsen Archives.

The event concluded with the presentation of the original song "Come Forth..." with lyrics and music composed by Konstantinos Karamperopoulos, music teacher and supervising teacher of the **#StolenMemory** student group of the 7th Middle School of Nea Ionia, Attica. The song was created as part of the educational program and is dedicated to the memory of the victims of Nazi persecution, highlighting the creative way in which students and teachers approached the preservation of historical memory.

During the 2024–2025 and 2025–2026 school years, the following secondary schools participated in the implementation of the Arolsen Archives' **#StolenMemory** educational program: 1st General High School of Panorama (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Thessaloniki), General High School of Aspropyrgos (Directorate of Secondary Education of Western Attica), Evening Vocational High School of Evosmos (Directorate of Secondary Education of Western Thessaloniki), "Othisi" Private High School (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Attica), Avlona General High School (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Attica), Neochori Middle School (Directorate of Secondary Education of Arta), Arsakeio High School of Thessaloniki (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Thessaloniki), 7th Middle School of Nea Ionia (Directorate of Secondary Education of Athens B'), 4th Middle School of Keratsini (Directorate of Secondary Education of Piraeus), Athens College Middle School (Directorate of Secondary Education of Athens B'), 2nd General High School of Koropi (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Attica), Sikinos Middle School with High School Classes (Directorate of Secondary Education of the Cyclades), 10th General

High School of Thessaloniki (Directorate of Secondary Education of Eastern Thessaloniki), 1st General High School of Hymettus (Directorate of Secondary Education of Athens A'), General High School of Panagia Diasellou (Directorate of Secondary Education of Arta), Middle School of Panagia Diasellou (Directorate of Secondary Education of Arta), Evosmos General High School for Intercultural Education (Directorate of Secondary Education of Western Thessaloniki), and Louros General High School (Directorate of Secondary Education of Preveza).

The students and teachers of these schools actively participated in the program, enriching their historical knowledge, cultivating skills in historical research and critical thinking, and creating original projects that highlighted the importance of preserving historical memory and bringing to light the personal stories of the victims of Nazi persecution.

The event marked the successful completion of the Arolsen Archives' **#StolenMemory** initiative in Greece and is of particular interest, as the Greek case is distinguished by two unique features on an international level.

First, this is the only case worldwide to date in which the participation of the school community in the process of tracing the families of victims of Nazism was incorporated into a centrally planned government initiative, realized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports. Similar initiatives have occasionally been undertaken by individual schools in other countries from time to time, such as in Poland, but none has been part of a national program designed and implemented by central government authorities.

Second, Greece has become the first country to have successfully located the families of all its citizens whose personal belongings were kept in the Arolsen Archives, thereby completing a process of tracing families and restoring historical memory that holds special symbolic and humanitarian significance.

Photographs: Socrates Baltagiannis



