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**The Greek Freedom Fighters of 1821**

**and their Status under International Law**

*The views expressed in this article are those of the author*

*and do not reflect the official policy or position*

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We are in 1821 in the Ottoman Empire, an empire which consisted of many nations under the Turkish yoke. Subject people, especially Greeks, were not pleased with the existing regime and for this reason many unlucky risings aiming to national independence, took place <sup>1</sup>. The final and successful uprising started that year. The Greek State symbolically celebrates it on 25 March, the same date that Orthodox celebrate Annunciation. The two celebrations share a common point for the Orthodox Greeks: the beginning of the rebellion betokened the freedom of the nation, and Annunciation announces the coming of Saver Christ.

The 1821 rebellion was clearly a national insurrection of the Greeks. Despite the fact that its moving spirits tried to raise many subject nations only the Greek nation finally responded. Rigas Fereos <sup>2</sup> verses in Thourios (war song) which had been sung for almost thirty years before the rebellion and set the fire that led to the 1821 explosion describe the situation : "Bulgarians and Albanians, Serbs and Greeks, islanders and inlanders with a common urge for freedom, lets take our swords." Another feature of the revolt was that it was an overall rebellion with no social elements. All Greeks, poor or rich, revolted. Especially at the sea the rebellion started from rich islands, such as Hydra and Spetses where their inhabitants lived in luxury, and islands which were enjoying great profits from the Ottoman state such as Chios, Samos and Symi. It is worth mentioning that the rich Greek ship-owners of the time, gladly offered their ships to the fight and headed the revolt as Admirals, although after the liberation they were totally destroyed financially <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The 1821 Rebellion didn't start at a favourable period. International circumstances were against such movements. The Great Forces were dominated by the spirit of the Holy Alliance which favoured the Ottoman Empire although it was not their member <sup>4</sup>. Some years before, the Vienna Congress (October 1814-June 1815) expressed perfectly the spirit of

the time. Metternich having the participants' tolerance at the conference, addressed Kapodistrias – the first governor of Greece – who was at that point representing Russia and told him:

"Europe doesn't know Greece! It recognises only the Ottoman

state, under the sway of which are the Greeks who

See in Context...

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The need for the Greek nation's independence of the Ottoman Empire, after centuries of subjugation, led to the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821. The movement was led by the Phanariotes, a group of Greek intellectuals and politicians who had been educated in the Ottoman Empire. They were inspired by the French Revolution and the American Revolution, and they sought to establish a constitutional monarchy in Greece. The war was a struggle for freedom and self-determination, and it ultimately led to the creation of the modern Greek state.

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