Rhodes tragedy that claimed three Limerick lives recalled

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THE 1972 Greek fire in which three Limerick women were killed has been officially commemorated in Rhodes, Greece.

Mayor of Limerick City and County Council, Cllr Kieran O’Hanlon was in Greece for the unveiling of a monument in memory of the three Limerick women who lost their lives, including Therese O’Shaughnessy, Mary Allen and Josephine Dardhan from Limerick city.

The event, on September 23, signalled the first time in 44 years that the tragedy has been officially recognised by the Greek authorities.

It was very dignified, and we felt it was what the girls deserved, because their lives were so short," said Therese’s nephew Padraig Power.

Mr Power has tirelessly campaigned for three years for an official acknowledgement of the tragedy.

"It far exceeded our expectations, because they put up a big monument there, and there was a huge cross-section of Greek society in attendance," he said.

"We were just overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone over there, and how the Rhodes mayor embraced us and acknowledged what had happened.

"It was a big deal for her as well, as he met some resistance. They hadn’t wanted to acknowledge it before, as it was such a blot on their history," Mr Power explained.

Thirty other people from Greece, Sweden and Denmark were also killed in the blaze. Ambassadors from Sweden and Denmark joined the Irish Ambassador to Greece, Noel Kilkenny, at the event.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras also sent a representative to the occasion.

"At the time, communications were difficult. For a tragic thing to happen at home is one thing, but to be abroad is unimaginable," said Mayor O’Hanlon.

"I am honoured as mayor to be able to remember those people, on behalf of the people of Limerick."