



New Year's Wishes

We have entered 2018 and the highly sensitive humanitarian problem of missing persons continues to affect a long list of countries around the world, including Cyprus.

In a recent post by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), nearly 500,000 people have been identified as missing in 11 conflicts.¹ In addition, according to the statistics of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP), only 856 missing persons have so far been identified, from a total of 2,002 Greek and Turkish Cypriots, registered as missing from 1963 onwards.² The road towards the healing of the wounds of the relatives of the missing and of every society affected by ongoing and past conflicts is, without doubt, long.

2018 marks the 11th year since the establishment of our organisation. We remain determined to support all efforts in the quest of establishing the truth regarding the fate of the missing as an individual as well as a collective right.

For this reason, we would like to reiterate our call to the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) to take all the necessary measures for the ascertainment of the truth and restoration of justice as well as to provide guarantees of non repetition of similar events and mistakes.

We repeat our call:

- a) for all parties involved to take all necessary measures to effectively respond to this humanitarian issue,
- b) for the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which the RoC signed in 2007, but has not yet ratified; ensuring to everyone effective protection of the Right to Truth, as codified therein. A right which not only encompasses the right of the relatives of the missing persons to be informed on the circumstances of the disappearance of their loved ones and the progress and result of the investigation and the fate of any missing person, but also the duty of the society to remember, through the maintenance and secure of accessible archives,
- c) for the creation of a Truth Commission in Cyprus, by way of upgrading the existing CMP after amending its Terms of Reference, or otherwise, so as to ensure effective investigation for the missing persons,

¹ 'Missing Persons - How big is the problem? Some Facts', ICRC blog Israel – Golan – West Bank – Gaza, 02/08/2017 <http://blogs.icrc.org/ilot/2017/08/02/missing-persons-big-problem/>

² Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus Homepage, <http://www.cmp-cyprus.org/>

- d) for the RoC to proceed at long last with the effective investigation and ascertainment of the truth in relation to the collection of the dead that took place on 17.08.1974, during an agreed ceasefire, in the Ayios Pavlos area in Nicosia, and their burial at Lakatamia Cemetery, amongst whom many of our missing persons were included. This failure by the RoC to proceed with the necessary actions has led the matter before the ECtHR.³

Nevertheless, TRUTH NOW would also like to congratulate the RoC for the recent exhumation of the remains of the dead after the bombing of the Athalassa Psychiatric Hospital in 1974 as well as of the dead of the "Phaethon" in 1964.

We would also like to applaud the decisions taken by the CMP for the creation of a database and an accessible system, as well as their recent campaign calling the public for more and accurate information that could lead to burial sites and the identification of more of our missing persons. We join our voices to this respect.

Our hope and wish for 2018 is to witness more positive developments, political will and determination concerning the revelation of the truth around the fate of the missing persons and the healing of our wounds, and we encourage a wider social dialogue in this sphere.

It is our shared responsibility to support all efforts in this regard and pursue the establishment of the truth in a transparent and fair society.

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³ See *Vassiliou and Others v Cyprus*, Application no. 58699/15, [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"fulltext":\["Vassiliou"\],"itemid":\["001-179480"\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{)