



## **International Day of the Disappeared 30.8.2014**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Truth Now (<http://www.truthnowcyprus.org/index.php/en/>) is a non-governmental organization, founded in 2007 with its primary purpose being the promotion of the ascertainment of the fate of all the missing persons in Cyprus from 1963 to 1974. Furthermore, the organisation seeks to put some pressure for the investigation and disclosure of the facts and the truth for the said period relating to the issue of the missing. This organisation believes that the truth constitutes a legal and moral obligation towards the families of the missing as well as towards the society as a whole.

Within the context of this aim, the organisation lobbies for the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances (“Convention for the Missing Persons”) as well as the establishment of a Truth Commission which will investigate the circumstances of the disappearance along with the fate of the missing persons. On the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared, it has organised a press conference to discuss the following matters:

#### **1. Convention for the Missing Persons**

It is indeed a paradox that the Republic of Cyprus, while it has signed the said Convention in 2007 (6.2.2007), it has nonetheless not proceeded with the ratification of same, despite all the indications that it would do so. TRUTH NOW invites the Government to immediately proceed with the submission of a Ratification Bill to the House of Representatives so as to be voted upon the soonest possible.

#### **2. Constantinou and Elenis Cemetery**

TRUTH NOW congratulates the Republic of Cyprus for having proceeded, last Easter, with the exhumation of remains from graves where a number of dead had been buried after the coup d’etat and had the marking “Unknown” on them. It is truly remarkable that 40 years after the tragic events the Republic of Cyprus has finally managed to proceed with these exhumations, without of course having any official explain the reason behind this delay. It is also worth noting that two more than expected human remains were found and identified, thus helping two more families that had no information about the fate of their relatives.

**Truth Now NGO Ltd**

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### **3. Tomb Noratlas**

It is well known that a Noratlas plane had been buried at the Tomb of Makedonitissa, after it was shot down by friendly fire in July 1974, along with some of the heroic commandos that were on board. Photographs that, among other, were published in a local daily newspaper on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2014, confirm this matter. According to the information received by TRUTH NOW, the Government will be proceeding with the exhumation. It is thus worth congratulating as this should have taken place, a long time ago so as to satisfy the right to truth of the relatives. It is worth noting that since 2007, families of the missing persons on Noratlas from Greece, have applied to the European Court of Human Rights, in relation to the treatment of the dead of Noratlas, the burial of some at the Lakatamia Cemetery, the exhumations that took place in 1979 – 1981 and the identification and return of the remains. It appears that under the weight of this pressure, the Government finally will proceed with this effective investigation.

### **4. Research on chemicals**

Another relevant matter is the storage of the remains that had been exhumed from, among other, the Lakatamia Cemetery and had been placed in an ossuary at the Tomb of Makedonitissa. It appears that the 'irresponsible persons in charge' had been pouring chemicals on them over the years, to such an extent that the ability of DNA collection and identification of the person concerned had been destroyed. In this respect, an investigation should be made as well as an extra effort for the identification of these remains, because this concealment and behaviour is, to say the least, unacceptable.

### **5. 4<sup>th</sup> Interstate Application of Cyprus v. Turkey before the ECtHR**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Interstate Application is of outstanding importance as well as for the issue of the missing persons. As part of the judgment for just satisfaction issued on 12.5.14 €30 million had been awarded as compensation for 1456 families of Greek- Cypriot missing persons. This roughly amounts to €20, 000 per family. TRUTH NOW is of the opinion that the Republic of Cyprus could finally take on the initiative of leading with actions on this humanitarian subject. The Republic could declare, without accepting responsibility, that such compensation will also be given to the 500 families of Turkish-Cypriot missing persons that have not received any kind of compensation yet.



If the Government take this brave decision, it should set as a condition for the payment of these amounts, that Turkey will fulfil its obligations under the judgment on the 4<sup>th</sup> Interstate Application before the European Court of Human Rights as well as in the cases of individual applications concerning other missing as well as the violation of property rights.

## 6. A Truth Commission

TRUTH NOW proposes the creation of a Truth Commission, highlighting the need, which the President of the Republic himself has acknowledged in recent statements, for receiving more information. It is obvious that the de facto immunity that had been granted in 1990, (from the then Attorney General to anyone that would give information to the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP) established under the aegis of the United Nations (UN), as long as this information, would potentially incriminate them, with the aim of effective collection of information) is not adequate. It should be institutionalised so that people could trust the procedure and give information without being afraid of any criminal or civil proceedings against them.

Furthermore, the Terms of Reference of the aforementioned Committee for Missing Persons should be amended so as to enable an effective investigation throughout the whole territory of Cyprus, and for the families to be finally able to receive information about their loved ones.

Unfortunately this is an urgent matter, 50 or even 40 years are too many. Many parents have already passed away. Everyone should contribute towards the ascertainment of the fate of all the missing persons in Cyprus. The families have the right to truth and the State has an obligation to reveal it.

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More information available at:

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