

# Time to pay up on Missing

By Annie Charalambous

**Non-governmental organisation** Truth Now yesterday challenged the government to take on the initiative of leading with actions on the humanitarian issue of missing persons in Cyprus.

To mark tomorrow's International Day of the Disappeared, human rights legal expert Achilleas Demetriades told a press conference on behalf of the NGO that Nicosia could take a bold step to achieve a breakthrough.



The government could declare - without accepting responsibility - to pay compensation to the 500 families of Turkish Cypriot missing persons, he explained.

"If the Government takes 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 4th Interstate Application before the European Court of Human Rights," Demetriades said. "As well as in the cases of individual applications concerning other missing as well as the violation of property rights," he added.

Under the 4th Interstate Application's judgment for just satisfaction which was issued last May, €30 million had been awarded as compensation for 1456 families of Greek Cypriot missing persons. This roughly amounts to €20,000 per family. But Turkey would also have to pay €60 million for the property of the Greek Cypriot enclaved and additional amounts up to €50 million awarded in other individual applications against it before the Strasbourg court. "The point is not to corner Turkey, the point is to bring out the fact that whether you count 50 or 40 years for your missing persons is too much and a solution to this humanitarian issue must be given," Demetriades said.

"This way, the Republic of Cyprus assumes its responsibility for 500 missing Turkish Cypriot citizens of the Republic and Turkey is held to account for its internationally established obligations." Demetriades argued that the proposed initiative could also be the stepping stone to a Truth Commission.

Truth Now has been lobbying for the ratification of the international convention for the protection of persons from enforced disappearance which Cyprus has signed. But it has so far failed to ratify.