



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE DISAPPEARED 30.08.15

PRESS RELEASE

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

Within this context, it is active in promoting the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (“Convention for the Missing Persons”), as well as the creation of a Truth Commission, which will proceed to investigate the circumstances of disappearance of the missing persons as well as their fate.

On the occasion of the International Day of the Disappeared, Truth Now seeks to comment on certain current issues, as it considers these anniversaries to be days of reflection.

**1. Tomb – Noratlas.**

Recent newspapers have made it known that the Government has finally proceeded with exhumations at the Tomb in Makedonitissa, where the **Noratlas** aeroplane was buried, having been shot down by friendly fire in July 1974. According to testimonies, in the fuselage of the aeroplane as well as the area where soil had been gathered up, there were bodies which were not removed and which were covered and buried together with the plane’s fuselage.

TRUTH NOW congratulates the Government on this excavation, which should have happened long ago in order to satisfy the relatives’ right to the truth, and awaits the developments in relation to the phase of locating the remains and their return to their relatives with the respect and honor they deserve.

**Truth Now NGO**

The Chanteclair House · 2 Sophoulis Street · 9th (Top) Floor · 1096 Nicosia · Cyprus  
Postal Address: P O Box 21645 · 1511 Nicosia · Tel: +357 22676060 · Fax: +00357 22676061 · Email: [info@ldlaw.com.cy](mailto:info@ldlaw.com.cy)



In addition, it invites the Government to conduct an effective investigation that will provide answers to the questions surrounding the circumstances of the tragic event and its subsequent handling, as well as the delay in the said excavation and investigation.

It is worth noting that in 2007 relatives of the missing persons on Noratlas from Greece had applied to the European Court of Human Rights, in relation to the treatment of the dead of Noratlas, the burial of some of the dead at the Lakatamia Cemetery, the exhumations that took place in 1979-1981 and the identification and return of the remains.

Related to the above issue is the existence and 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 which appear to have been poured with chemicals to such an extent that the ability to collect DNA and to identify the remains is doubtful. The investigation on the matter is still pending, while it is urgent.

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

TRUTH NOW is following the developments regarding the ratification of the International Convention for the Missing Persons, which although the Republic of Cyprus has signed since 2007, it has not yet ratified, in order to apply and be fully bound by it. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been authorised to proceed with the preparation of the ratification bill in cooperation with the Attorney General. It has been said by the Minister of Foreign Affairs that the said Convention contains complex provisions that require significant amendments as well as legal adjustments that will incur a financial burden.

TRUTH NOW has asked for further information and clarifications by the competent Minister of Foreign Affairs in relation to the delay in submitting the ratification bill but also the said adjustments that are promoted as well as the financial burden that is mentioned and awaits with great interest the reply from the Minister.

## **3. Exhumations at Trahonas**

Information recently came to light concerning the 12<sup>th</sup> exhumation in relation to around 40-50 Greek Cypriot Missing Persons that according to Turkish Cypriot sources were buried in a mass grave in Trahonas, which unfortunately

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was unsuccessful. This fact reveals, among others, once again the problem of ineffective collection of information by the Commission of Missing Persons (CMP).

The case of Trahonas confirms the need for an upgrade of the CMP and/or the amendment of its terms of reference in order to secure accurate collection of information and effective investigation throughout Cyprus.

The dissatisfaction that has been evident lately regarding the effectiveness of the CMP renders the discussion for the creation of a Truth Committee imperative, in order to proceed with a comprehensive and effective investigation on the matter of missing persons throughout the whole territory of the Republic of Cyprus, without any political controversies and hidden agendas.

This initiative constitutes our obligation towards individuals and society as well as a necessary step towards restoration of the historical truth in an effort to lay the foundations for peace.

28 August 2015

More information available at:

Achilleas Demetriades      [achilleas@ldlaw.com.cy](mailto:achilleas@ldlaw.com.cy)      Tel: 22676060

Natasa Iacovou              [natasa@ldlaw.com.cy](mailto:natasa@ldlaw.com.cy)              Tel: 22676060

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