



ΠΑΝΕΛΛΗΝΙΑ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ ΓΟΝΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΓΕΝΩΝ
ΑΔΗΛΩΤΩΝ ΑΙΧΜΑΛΩΤΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΝΟΟΥΜΕΝΩΝ ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗΣ ΤΡΑΓΩΔΙΑΣ
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PANHELLENIC COMMITTEE OF PARENTS AND RELATIVES
OF UNDECLARED PRISONERS AND MISSING PERSONS OF THE CYPRUS TRAGEDY
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London July 6 / 2011

GREETING

We would like to thank you for having us here.

The Missing People issue is still to this day the most tragic aspect of the Cypriot problem.

The "**right to the truth**" for both the families and the missing people themselves, a right which has been acknowledged internationally, still remains unfulfilled.

The Committee Missing Person (C.M.P.), founded in 1981, literally started operating in 2004-but practically in 2006-has as an aim to determine the fate of these missing people in Cyprus, regardless of their nationality, by offering good services in this direction without executive powers.

The effectiveness of any effort made to resolve such issues of human criteria, demands the co-operation of many countries involved.

Until this day, the attitude, mainly of the Turkish governments, does not satisfy and does not help the correct operation of C.M.P.

Unfortunately, the passing of time creates problems and risks, our dilatation project requires

- A political and human will of the countries involved
- The direct and substantial cooperation of the Turkish government
- The reinforcing and co-ordination of any dilatation mechanism, as well as its planning based on specific time schedules.
- The gathering, recording and guarantee of testimonies (the witnesses are now 37 years older).

With all the above, it is certain that the **Right to the Truth** will be satisfied and the Truth will lead unhindered to the reconciliation of the parties in question.

We are here to ask for your help and we hope that the British Government will respond and contribute substantially to the resolution of this human drama, which has been torturing and burdening the families of the Missing People for so many years.

We, once again, thank you for the invitation.

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Speech of Mr. G. Economides at the Meeting of the House of Commons (London 6th July 2011)

**Mr. Chairman,
Dear friends,**

We would like to express our warmest and sincere thanks and congratulations of our President and the members of our committee to the British all party parliamentary group for Cyprus and the Organisation of the Relatives of Missing Cypriots UK, who organized this important meeting. Special thanks we extend to the Chairmen of the two Committees David Burrowes MP and Nick Neokleous for their kind willingness to preside over this gathering.

We hope and pray, that today's event will significantly contribute to the promotion and progress of the purely humanitarian problem of the missing persons in Cyprus.

At first, please allow me to introduce the two-member delegation of our Organisation attending this meeting. My colleague and General Secretary of our Organisation Nicos Serghides who's brother, a young man 20-years old is missing since 1974. I, George Economides, come from the occupied town of Kyrenia and both my parents, my father Porfyrios Economides and my mother Pagona Economides as well as my sister Xenia have been missing since the 20th of July 1974, the first day of the Turkish invasion in Cyprus.

Since then, for the last 37 years we have been trying to find out what happened to our beloved ones, as well as the hundreds of other missing Cypriots. Please note that when I say missing persons of Cyprus, I refer to all the missing in Cyprus, both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Our Organization, is an NGO, where all the members are first-degree relatives to missing persons. Consequently we can experience and understand better than anybody else the pain and the agony for the missing father, the missing child, the brother, the husband. An awful and torturing experience which is always and everywhere the same, nasty and distressing. Which has no nationality, religion or colour.

We gathered here today, not to blame anybody. We are here because we believe that we all have the binding obligation to help and contribute, to the best of our ability to the relief of the pain which thousands of relatives of the missing persons are experiencing. To join our strength and actions towards the restoration of the basic Human Rights of these people. To extend and consolidate our solitariness to their lawful and justified right to have a clear and final answer as to what happened to their loved ones. To move in a concerted effort in order to bring about an end to the human drama and the humiliating treatment. And the problem as such to be faced by all concerned in the right humanitarian framework, in order to have fruitful and positive results. Unfortunately until recently the issue of the missing persons in Cyprus was inadequately and wrongly developed. The already long delays were added to further delays and so on and so forth. This was mainly due to external constraints. And the price for these omissions was undoubtedly loaded to the human suffering of all the relatives of the missing.

Recently we have sensed some optimism. I would dare to say that there have been positive steps to the right direction which encouraged the

CMP, a three member investigatory body under the auspices of UN, to resume its operations. The members of the CMP are a Greek-Cypriot representative, a Turkish -Cypriot representative and the third member is the representative of the UN Secretary General.

I want to re emphasize that this development is considered by us the relatives of the missing persons, as a positive landmark in view of the negative course of events up to that time. But definitely it cannot be taken as the solution or an end to the problem. And even worse, the over estimation of the present situation does not at all guarantee the right course of developments in the future. Virtually the fundamental nature of the problem will remain the same for reasons we shall explain in further down.

Once again we want to point out that we have great respect for the activities of the CMP and we express our appreciation to all the people involved . We reiterate our trust and full support to this Committee. However all these arguments are not enough to bring about the tangible results which we ought to experience.

Unless there is sincere and genuine co operation of all the interested parties, particularly of those who can effectively help the CMP in the fulfillment of its objectives, we are afraid that in the near future we shall be in a deadlock situation. Already in the last few months the outcome of the Committee's work is considered very poor. Mr. Christophe Girod, the representative of the UN Secretary General, the Third member of the CMP, has said that the period of successes for the CMP, belongs to the past, evidently implying that the current developments are much below our expectations.

It is widely known that the CMP, during the last 6 years of its operations, has covered less than the 1/3 of the total number of cases of missing persons which have been submitted to it. According to the information available to the Committee and under the most optimistic prospects from now on, it is expected that another 200 - 300 of the missing, at the maximum will be discovered. On the basis of these data we run the severe risk that most of the missing persons in Cyprus will remain missing for ever.

The main problem and, of course not the only one, is the lack of the necessary co operation. At this juncture it must be stressed that the co operation with the official Turkish authorities is far from everybody's expectations. Despite the fact that Turkey has adopted some gestures, she has not shown the required spirit of effective and sincere co operation. To be more specific, we refer to the attitude of Turkey not to allow free access of the CMP in many areas in the occupied part of Cyprus, claiming that there are military zones. And also the unquestionable refusal of the Turkish Government to allow access to areas in the mainland of Turkey, where missing persons were located for the last time. Moreover, Turkey has not been convinced to release to the CMP the evidence and information concerning missing persons she has in her possession.

This situation confines the work of the CMP to a small number of exhumations, excluding THE EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION which is basically provided by the respective decision of the European Court of Human Rights.

The failure of Turkey on these two very important and virtual matters dislocates the main task of the CMP and threatens its existence. The UN Secretary General in his report to the Security Council dated 26th of

November 2010 refers « ... During the reporting period, the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus was able to conduct only a limited number of exhumations in the military areas in the north.» Also the rapporteur on Turkey to the European Parliament Ria Oomen EMP refers in her report of 14th February on this year, « Encourages Turkey to intensify its support for the Committee of Missing Persons in Cyprus, in particular by facilitating its access to military zones and archives and to take all other appropriate action, in accordance with the findings of the European Court of Human Rights, and the humanitarian issue of the missing persons».

The same points are raised by the British Minister for Europe David Lindington in his letter dated 8th March 2011 to Theresa Villers MP. He mentions the following: «The British High Commission in Nicosia will continue to lobby the authorities in the so - called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, likewise, HQ Officials in London and the British Embassy in Ankara will also do what they can to stress the importance of Turkey continuing to open up additional areas for the CMP to work in.»

We are here to ask for your real and practical help to encourage Turkey, and whoever holds evidence and information to contribute in a workable way to the success of the mission of the CMP. We are here to emphasise that we base most of our hopes on the government of The United Kingdom which in principle and theoretically is in line with our targets, in practice however its involvement does not contribute to overcome the difficulties which CMP faces today. To be more specific, we refer to the UK stand in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which supervises for many years now, the degree of compliance of Turkey to the decisions of The European Court on the issue of the

missing persons in Cyprus. The U.K confines its role simply to declare its support to the work of the CMP, instead of asking from Turkey to take concrete measures, for the improvement of the situation and to secure an effective investigation. We underline the fact that the efforts aiming for the discussion of the issue by the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe did not succeed, so that the issue was not discussed for the last one and the half years. The attitude of the UK was not only neutral, but the strong impression is that it discouraged the discussion.

We convey to you, together with the respect and appreciation of the relatives of our missing, their agony and strong request to exercise your maximum influence and persuasion to the British Government to be more positive and productive on this purely humanitarian problem and to play her role actively and positively, as a leading country in the field on Human Rights.

Honourable Members of Parliament, dear Friends, on behalf of the Organisation of Relatives of Missing Cypriots in the UK, I would like to thank you for your participation in today's meeting and your interest on the issue of the Missing Persons of Cyprus.

Mr Chairman, we are very grateful to you and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Cyprus for this unique opportunity to address you in the House of Commons.

As an Organisation, we have been campaigning for some thirty years in this country. We have collected and presented many thousands of signatures to petitions, wrote hundreds of letters and have visited the FCO many times, presenting our case.

In our campaign we have always had the support of a number of special friends in Parliament. Some now retired, many others are now members of the APPG for Cyprus. We are extremely grateful to them all. They took the matter further either by writing to the Prime Minister, seeing the Minister of State of the time or writing to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

However, we cannot say that over the years we have been entirely content with UKG responses and I expect, neither are our supporters. We have always felt that there is something more that our UK government can do, given its obligations to this matter, its influence in the world stage and the special relationship it has with Turkey. Especially as four of the missing are holders of British Passports and hundreds of British citizens are Relatives.

It has become apparent to us that Government Officials, although sympathetic to our just cause, do their utmost not to upset the special UK-Turkey relationship. In our opinion, diplomatic relations would not be affected if the UK Government becomes more pro-active in this issue of our human rights.

Following the reactivation of the UN's Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and the ensuing results, the UK chose very conveniently to give much higher priority to the work of the CMP, ignoring the European Court of Human Rights call on Turkey to proceed with the much-awaited effective investigations.

We have now the situation of the EU and other countries including the UK, collectively spending millions supporting the vital work of the CMP, only for most funds to be ineffectively used searching for information that only Turkey can provide. The CMP's last report, for example, shows that of the 530 Burial sites visited and opened, less than half contain any human remains.

We would like to see the UK Government taking the lead in pressing Turkey to carry out its own investigations. Alternatively, to allow the CMP or the Committee of Ministers access to battlefield and other military official reports and permission to search in all areas in the occupied part of Cyprus. More importantly provide an account for missing persons transferred to Turkey.

Currently the UK holds the chair of the DH meetings – that is Committee of Ministers/Human Rights of the Council of Europe. This is the best time to exert pressure so that the issue of the missing comes back on the agenda for discussion and examination.

We fear that if nothing is done now towards Turkey's compliance with ECHR judgment, while the CMP is still operational, it will be too late to do anything later.

Given that the ECHR has concluded that Turkey is violating Article 3 of the Convention, which the UK is party to, by subjecting the relatives of the missing, to inhuman and degrading treatment by not informing them about the fate of their loved ones, we believe that our British government has a legal as well as moral obligation to act to put an end to the violation of our human rights....

The UK could also encourage Turkey within the context of its EU accession negotiations. Observance of international human rights law is a pre-requisite for a country wishing to become a full member of the Union. Turkey's compliance with the ECHR judgement would bring benefits to her by removing one of the obstacles towards the EU and to the UK who is so keen to see her joining.

Mr Chairman we are very pleased with the latest initiatives of the APPG for Cyprus, especially the idea of having a specialist subgroup, on this matter. We look forward to working with you and the sub-committee for the good of all concerned, primarily the Missing and their Relatives of both communities.

Thank you once more.