

ORGANISATION OF RELATIVES OF MISSING CYPRIOTS (UK)
ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ ΣΥΓΓΕΝΩΝ ΚΥΠΡΙΩΝ ΑΓΝΟΟΥΜΕΝΩΝ
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The Rt. Hon. Caroline Flint MP
Minister for Europe
House of Commons
London
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5th June 2009.

Dear Minister,

Many MPs received an identical letter from you after writing to the Foreign Secretary or to the Foreign Office regarding the problem of Missing Persons of Cyprus. We felt the need to respond to your letter because we believe that some of the statements made are inaccurate while others require further clarification. We hope to be able to discuss these points with you and/or FCO officials directly the soonest possible, considering also that we were reassured some time ago that such a meeting would be scheduled soon.

Firstly, in praising the work of the UN Committee for Missing Persons (CMP), you state that "*We welcome the significant progress they have made in their work, identifying the remains of around 500 Cypriots from both communities*". However, the fact is that the CMP's own report (available on their website) states: "*To date, 150 remains of individuals exhumed within the framework of the CMP project have been identified through this process*".

It is possible that the confusion is caused by the CMP statement that: "*To date, the remains of 530 individuals have been exhumed from different burial sites located across the island.*" But since Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials regularly meet with the CMP, they should be aware that not all the individuals exhumed are persons listed as missing. Some are known dead who fell during the Turkish invasion in July and August of 1974, and others are known victims of atrocities, such as the nineteen members of the Liasis family, including a two-year-old boy, who were brutally machine-gunned by advancing Turkish forces at their village of Palaikythro.

With regards to the comments made by Atilla Olgac, you state that "*I understand that an investigation has been launched by the Turkish Military. I would like to reassure you that we take these allegations seriously and our Embassy in Ankara is following developments closely*". One might infer from this that

the Turkish Military is co-operating in investigating atrocities carried out during their invasion of Cyprus or that they are working towards a solution of the Missing Persons problem. This cannot be further from the truth, as the Turkish Military, or successive governments for that matter, have not provided any information about the prisoners they had transported to Turkey and are still missing, or the soldiers or civilians they had rounded up in Cyprus and they are still missing. In addition, the Turkish authorities, military or civilian, have not even permitted the collection of the fallen from the fighting areas and as many of them are likely to still be listed as missing. In fact, not a single case of a missing person has been resolved as a result of so-called cooperation by the Turkish military 35 years after the fighting and the atrocities took place. This negative stance hinders even the work of the CMP, which admits that due to lack of credible information “*out of the many graves excavated ... only half yield any results (human remains)*”.

As for the atrocities carried out by the Turkish Military, eye-witness accounts speak of many and varied forms of brutality against innocent defenseless civilians and ex-Turkish Military personnel have repeatedly, over the years, confessed of receiving orders to “kill prisoners”.

You have mentioned that “*I discussed this issue with Turkish Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan when I visited Turkey in December*”. We are indeed very grateful for that but, at the same time, we would be very interested in knowing what his reply was and whether he undertook any relevant commitments. We are sure that you will appreciate our intense frustration as regards the stance of successive Turkish governments and the Turkish military, given the fact that over the years, many UK Government Ministers and FCO officials raised, and continue to do so, to our knowledge, this humanitarian issue in meetings with them, without the slightest positive response from Ankara.

This is not, incidentally, a valued judgment. You state categorically in your letters that “*Turkey is obliged to abide by judgments (by ECHR) in cases to which it is a party*”, judgments which Turkey continues to entirely ignore, for eight years now, despite the repeated reproach it receives when this issue is discussed at the Council of Europe. In light of this intransigence, we would very much like to know what concrete steps and actions the UK Government is taking, or may be contemplating to take, in order to get Turkey to abide by the ECHR decisions.

Finally, we appreciate the keen interest you display regarding this issue and we would very much look forward to be given the opportunity to further discuss with you these points.

Yours sincerely,

N. Neokleous
President.

cc. MPs: T. Villiers, A. Love, B. Spink, J. Ryan, D. Burrowes, L. Featherstone.