

Day of the Disappeared

By Katherine Pollard

A Cypriot NGO has urged the government to ratify a convention for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance.

The Cyprus NGO Truth Now wrote to Justice Minister Ionas Nicolaou urging him to take the matter forward so that the convention can be ratified before the end of 2013.

The call coincided with the International Day of the Disappeared that is celebrated every year on August 30.

The International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) yesterday called on all states to sign and ratify the convention, to recognise the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disap-

CYPRUS NGO LOOKS TO GOVERNMENT TO ACCEDE TO ANTI-DISAPPEARANCE CONVENTION

pearances and to ensure full implementation.

"The ratification of the convention would constitute a symbolic act towards the Cypriot community and especially the relatives of missing persons.

"It would also show the international community the Republic of Cyprus' commitment to protect human rights," Truth Now said in its letter to Nicolaou.

According to Truth Now, seven years have passed since Cyprus signed the convention, but it has yet to be ratified by the House of Representatives.

"This period is considered inexcusably long considering its short

length and the right its content protects," it added.

According to the ICAED, the urgency of the adoption of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances speaks of 53,986 outstanding cases from 84 countries since its inception in February 1980.

"More than three years since the entry into force of the anti-disappearance Convention, enforced disappearance cases of the past remain unresolved and we still witness the occurrence of new cases.

"There are only 40 states that have acceded to the Convention and only 16 of them have fully recognised the competence of the UN Committee on



Monitoring political corruption

By Nicole Zeniou

Citizens Alliance head Yiorgos Lillikas has backed calls from Transparency Now for changes to the law on political party finances saying they were essential if parties are to regain the trust of citizens. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with the NGO, Lillikas said the 2012 law needed to be revised in line with the Council of Europe's Anti-Corruption Group's (GRECO) recommendations. "This issue is particularly important for our country, as we are all experiencing an unprecedented situation in Cyprus, where scandals with the involvement of politicians and parties are coming to the surface on a daily basis," he said. This hurts democracy and has led to the loss of trust in citizens towards parties but also towards politics.

"If we want to win citizens' trust back and achieve active involvement of citizens in politics then we should not only adopt GRECO recommendations but also move another step forward," he said.

To this end, Citizens Alliance would submit proposals in parliament so that the state monitors the finances of parties and of politicians.

"Only through this way can we regain credibility of institutions, politicians, parties and in general of political life in our country," he explained. President of Transparency Now Eric Soukioroglou said that the aim of the meeting was to discuss the organisation's position on transparency and particularly GRECO's recommendations against political corruption in relation to the 2012 legislation on political parties, that needed to be revised.

Soukioroglou expressed satisfaction with the Citizens Alliance position and said that he hoped the other political parties would support the amendments so that the GRECO recommendations will be adopted as soon as possible.

OUTGOING CMP MEMBER CALLS FOR ACTION ON MISSING

Exhumations in military zone 'a must'

By Demetra Molyva

The Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) is ready to go ahead with exhumations in three military areas if the Turkish army gives the green light, outgoing Greek Cypriot member Aristos Aristotelous said yesterday.

Aristotelous (photo) said committee members had agreed to apply for a permit to exhume the remains of missing persons in specific military zones in 2013.

"We agreed to submit this request to the Turkish authorities as an official request of the CMP and it has been publicly announced before the Political Freedoms Committee of the European Parliament," Aristotelous said.

"We are expecting the response from the other side," he added expressing the hope that progress will be made shortly.

His view is that the CMP should

be protected as it is the only tool of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides to investigate the fate of the missing.

"The CMP has to have everyone's support without party interference and vested interests," Aristotelous said.

Since 2006, the remains of 950 missing persons have been found of the total of 2,001 missing persons (1,508 Greek Cypriots and 493 Turkish Cypriots).

A total of 419 persons have so far been identified and the number will rise to 470 by the end of the year.

According to Aristotelous, it is necessary to strengthen the information sector in investigating the fate of the missing, with failure to renew the contracts of two researchers having caused major difficulties in the committee's task.

Aristotelous appealed to authorities to complete the agreement for the services offered by the Cyprus

Institute of Neurology and Genetics (CNG) so that relations are restored between the two parties.

"I take the opportunity to express the wish for the right conditions to be created so that the genetic analysis, which is now carried out abroad, returns to Cyprus," Aristotelous said.

His view is that the demand to access Turkish army archives should be thought out more carefully with targeted actions in order to be effective.

Exhumations in military zones have a 50% success rate compared to 35% in "political zones," he said, noting that exhumations in military zones should be a top priority for the CMP.

Aristotelous called for comprehensive common planning on the basis of a study to meet the committee's targets and strategy in order to assist it in completing its "holy mission".

