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An investigation into how Greek Cypriots throughout the Hellenic diaspora have been affected by the missing persons of Cyprus from the 1974 Turkish invasion

Abstract

The article aims to investigate how Greek Cypriots throughout the international community, and who have missing persons in their family from the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, have been affected for over more than three decades.

This globalised humanitarian issue of about 1,464 Greek Cypriot-and 494 Turkish Cypriot-missing persons – both military personnel and civilians, including women and children – is still an ongoing problem and is regarded as a very significant diplomatic Cypriot Hellenic issue. Following relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions, a Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) was established in 1981 to investigate the fate of the missing persons in Cyprus. The CMP officially began its program for exhumations and identification of the missing persons on 30 June 2005, which includes relying mainly on testimonies gathered over the years. By June 2012, the remains of 321 people from the 1974 Turkish invasion have been identified after exhumations in the Turkish occupied areas of Cyprus – 255 of these remains belong to Greek Cypriot and 66 to Turkish Cypriot missing persons (CMP 2012).

Introduction

This article is based on: (1) an analysis of interviewing relatives of missing persons who are now based in Australia, and (2) looking at surveys done on the CMP. The methodology in this research is based on autoethnology,

a form of qualitative research employed by sociologists that involves self-observation, which explores the researcher's personal experience and connects the interviewee's content with the wider cultural, political and social meanings and understandings (Ellis 2004: xix).

Interviews have revealed that these relatives are 'secondary victims'. Many families continue to suffer through the lack of support. The Republic of Cyprus had never taken the initiative to interview persons immediately affected by missing persons, nor to try and resolve their many issues, such as emotional well-being, or allowing them to offer personal accounts of when they last saw their loved ones. Persons interviewed said they have never even received any form of communication/correspondence from authorities from the Republic of Cyprus to assist in the investigations of missing persons. The Government of Cyprus had not even taken the initiative to acknowledge their suffering by assisting them in coping with such a huge burden in their lives by offering services such as psychological counselling for the violent loss of their loved ones.

First and foremost it should be explained why the number of missing persons varies in the various statistical data available. It must be clarified that authorities did not agree with the exact figure, however it is thought that the 'best figure available in 1974 was 1619 missing persons, which includes military personnel and civilians – women and children. This is 1503 males and 116 females. The official and formal figure however varies due to discrepancies and there are serious issues of reliability with respect to the precise figure. These discrepancies may be a result of inaccurate records being collated. One example of how the inaccuracies may have occurred and had possibly contributed to the discrepancies is from the 'official list of POWs' released by the International Committee of the Red Cross which included the names of 2115 POWs who were held captive in Turkey. From this list of 2115 persons, seven are still missing. Inaccuracies may be attributed to: many Greek Cypriots are known under different names; the Turkish authorities who generated the list did not have a good knowledge of the Greek language and had possibly made errors in the spelling of the names; those captured were not truthful when giving their details to their captors as there is anecdotal evidence stating that those who had a military background were executed. Another explanation is that the Cypriot Government subtracted 126 missing persons from their list

after confirmation from witnesses that these persons were killed, therefore generating the new updated number to the well-publicised figure of 1493.

The ICRC file on 'Declared prisoners of war not released' states that:

On 24 September 1974 the ICRC received a list of prisoners of war made by the Turkish Cypriot Police Authorities (Lefkosa Turk Emniyet Mudurlugu).

This list contains, 2.115 names of POWs. After the necessary cross-checking, the seven persons mentioned are still registered by the ICRC as missing. [There

is no POW registered or released under the said names according to the ICRC index cards; moreover, the relatives have confirmed that the above-mentioned

*are still missing]. The latest 'official' number of missing persons is 1464 Greek Cypriots and 494 Turkish Cypriots (http://www.kypros.org/Cyprus_Problem/agnouomenoi2.html, *Cyprus Mail*, 2012).*

Historical background

As a result of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, there has been the ongoing humanitarian issue of missing persons referring to about 1,464 Greek Cypriot missing persons and 495 cases of Turkish Cypriot missing persons – where both military personnel and civilians, including women and children, disappeared without trace for more than three decades. These victims were either captured by the invading Turkish armed forces during July and August of 1974, or disappeared after the cessation of hostilities in the areas under the control of the Turkish army.

Following many United Nations General Assembly resolutions, the CMP, which operates under the UN, was established in 1981, but there were no actions taken despite these measures. In the summer of 1999, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, at its own initiative, began exhuming remains in two cemeteries in Nicosia. A number of persons killed during the Turkish invasion were buried as unknown soldiers in these two cemeteries – Lakatamia and Sts Constantine and Helen cemeteries - in Nicosia. The exhumations were carried out and completed by the non-governmental organisation Physicians for Human Rights. This resulted in the identity of thirty missing persons being established through the use of DNA fingerprinting techniques. Twelve out of the thirty instances involved cases of missing persons. The Turkish side decided to cooperate about eight years after a meeting on 31 July 1997, where the UN issued a media release stating that a meeting between Greek Cypriot President Glafkos Clerides and Turkish

Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş recognised the basic human rights of the families of the missing to be informed about the fate of their loved ones, and agreed to exchange information regarding burial sites and cooperate for the return of remains (Stylianou 2009: 168). The CMP officially began its program for exhumations and identification of the missing persons on 30 June 2005. By June 2009 the remains of 196 individuals have been identified from more than 600 exhumed - 145 of these remains belong to Greek Cypriot and 51 Turkish Cypriot missing persons (United Nation press release 1997).

Public perception on issue of missing persons

To put the issue of the CMP into context it is important to analyse a United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) survey. The office of the UN in Cyprus, specifically UNFICYP conducted an inter-communal survey of public opinion (UNFICYP 2007). This polling was conducted on 26 January to 19 February 2007. The total number of face-to-face interviews was as follows:

- 1000 participants were Greek Cypriot individuals
- 1000 participants were Turkish Cypriot individuals
- 350 individuals who reside inside the UN buffer zone also took part.

The specific questions directly related to the CMP. When asked 'How aware are you of the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP)?' more than half of the Greek-Cypriots said they were aware that such a committee existed, however only a very small number of Turkish Cypriots had any idea about the existence of this committee. In total, 93 per cent of Greek-Cypriots knew anything about a designated committee set aside for the exhumation and identification of missing persons. On the other hand only 78 per cent of Turkish Cypriots had any awareness of this committee.

When asked to what extent this committee was regarded as a positive or a negative initiative, only the Greek Cypriot participants agreed that it was a very positive step, while Turkish Cypriots were not that certain that it was such a good initiative. Overall 92 per cent of the Greek Cypriot participants agreed that it was a positive move in comparison to 74 per cent of Turkish Cypriots.

When informed about recent activities and developments of the CMP almost all Greek Cypriots (96 per cent) had knowledge of their achievements in their society, however only 66 per cent of Turkish Cypriots were aware of it. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that the majority of CMP

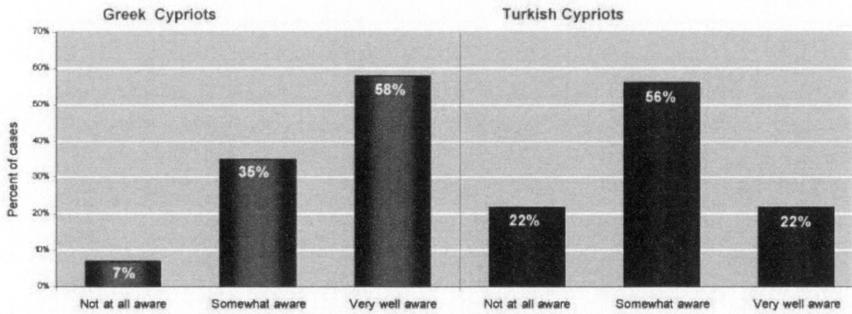


Figure 1: How aware are you of the Committee for Missing Persons (CMP)?

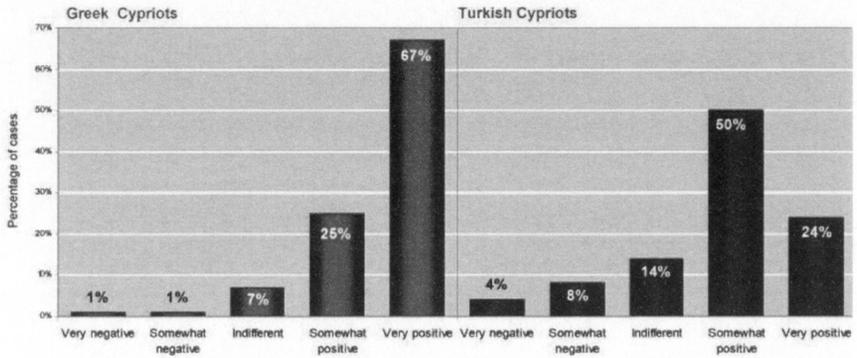


Figure 2: To what extent do you consider the CMP to be a positive or negative presence on the island?

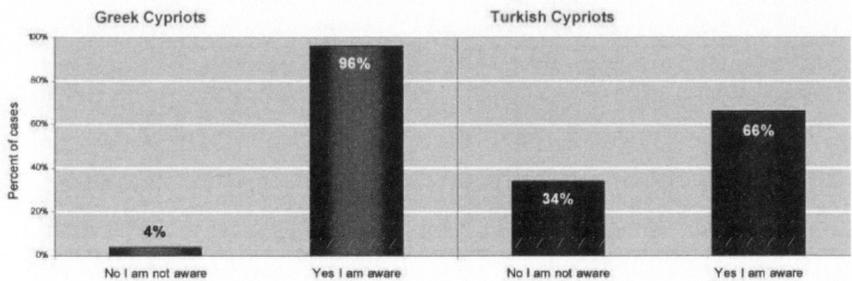


Figure 3: Are you aware that in recent months, the remains of a number of missing persons, both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot have been exhumed and identified?

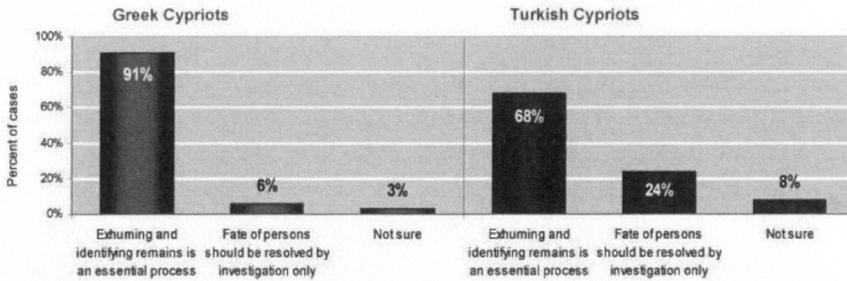


Figure 4: Which of these two statements are you more in agreement with?

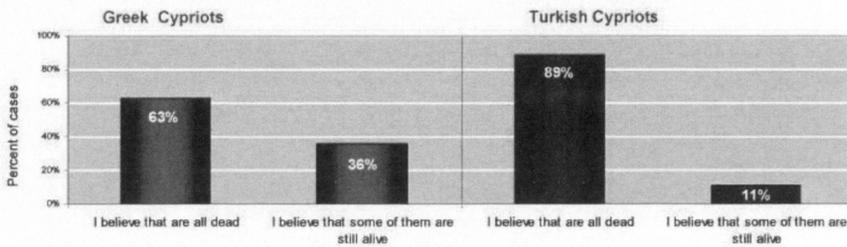


Figure 5: Do you believe that all the missing are dead, or that some of them are still alive somewhere?

anthropological exhumations and identifications of remains in mass graves is done in northern Cyprus, in the occupied territory, where the Turkish Cypriots reside, a significant amount, that is 34 per cent of Turkish Cypriots were not aware of the CMP activities. Only a very small handful of Greek Cypriots said they were not aware, with just 4 per cent of participants not knowing what work was being undertaken to find the missing persons.

When more complicated and detailed questions were put to the participants, the Greek Cypriots believed that the exhuming and identifying the remains of the missing persons was a very significant thing, with 91 per cent agreeing with this. In comparison only 68 per cent of Turkish Cypriot participants believed that it was such a significant move. It is interesting to note that the Turkish Cypriot participants were more in agreement that the fate of the missing persons should be resolved by investigation only, with 24 per cent of participants having this belief. This is very different in comparison to the Greek Cypriot participants with only 6 per cent believing that fate of the missing persons should be resolved by investigation only without the need for the exhuming and identifying the remains of the missing persons.

One very critical question which has been debated for many years from both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides, and has been a hot topic in peace negotiations for more than three decades is whether participants believed that all the missing persons were dead, or that some of them are still alive.

The Turkish Cypriots were more confident that the missing persons were dead, with 89 per cent suggesting this, in comparison to 63 per cent of Greek Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots still have a somewhat strong belief that some of the missing persons are held captive and are alive, with 36 per cent believing this compared to 11 per cent of Turkish Cypriots.

In summary, this inter-communal survey of public opinion conducted by UNFICYP showed, to some extent, that the Greek Cypriots were more concerned and more aware of the issue of missing persons and the attempt to exhume and identify these persons. This may be so because there were far more Greek Cypriots missing than there were Turkish Cypriots. The Republic of Cyprus also has had the issue of the missing persons on their agenda throughout the entire duration of peace talks since the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Despite the majority of the exhumations taking place in the occupied northern Cyprus region, it is surprising that the Turkish Cypriots were unaware of the activities of the CMP. Perhaps this might also be the case because it is a regularly occurring topic in the Greek mass media and it is rarely discussed in the Turkish or Turkish Cypriot media.

How the missing persons of Cyprus has impacted on Hellenics all over the world

Research undertaken for this project tries to capture as much of the past so as to put into context as to how persons just disappeared during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus.

Australian victims

As part of the primary research, surviving relatives of the missing persons from the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, who now reside in Australia, were interviewed. This process is one of the significant aspects of auto-interviewing, which originated in oral history research. The value of this approach is that it 'helps to discover the "basic set of assumptions that gives meaning to one's thoughts ... the way things are, about what things are, about why things are"'. (Boufoy-Bastick 2004)

It is not the scope of this paper to give a detailed account of the methodology of autoethnological research, however the important aspect which needs to be relayed is that this doctoral dissertation evolved to this style of emerging qualitative research as the author has similar experiences to those who are research subjects on the issue of being relatives of the missing persons of Cyprus, so it seemed highly appropriate to implement this methodology.

Autoethnography is an emerging qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a societal phenomenon.

The intent of autoethnography is to acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural and to make room for non-traditional forms of inquiry and expression. (Wall 2006)

Capturing the oral history/recollections of these relatives through interviews is important as in this context it is used to:

Support historical material by interviewing people who can fill in the detail, enliven the work, and provide different perspectives; Provide an historical record when documentary sources do not exist. (Jenkins 1999: 7)

There are benefits from oral history interviews with relatives, as the information gathered is a 'representation of past and present history in a way that engages the participants and the audience in "living history"' (Jenkins 1999: 8). Oral history supplements other sources and when no other evidence is available it may be the only way of adding to our understanding of history (Robertson 2006: 4).

When written records are available, such as letters, diaries, newspaper cuttings, speeches or minutes, oral history is also used to critically examine or fill the gaps in that evidence. (Robertson 2006: 3)

Interviews were conducted with fifteen families in three Australian cities – Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide – as well as one in Cyprus. As four decades since the invasion are approaching, the task of find relatives living in the diaspora is difficult as individuals do not talk about the past as much as they would have previously. Nonetheless those relatives found living in Australia were able to recall events well to some extent, and express their concerns and experiences. Most recall that it has been a search without end to find their loved ones (interviews with relatives are discussed further on in this paper).

It was a surprise to many that someone was interested in shedding light on these issues and gathering a broad range of personal accounts of relatives to

understand this humanitarian issue after decades of not having any form of communication with anyone regarding missing persons. Many of the relatives of the 1,464 Greek Cypriot missing persons from the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus have never been interviewed – not even by authorities of their own country. It should be made very clear that the Republic of Cyprus has the issue of missing persons as an imperative one when it comes to placing issues on the agenda of peace talks. It does not take it seriously enough to approach victims of war. There has been no attempt to try and resolve their many issues, such as emotional well-being, personal accounts of when they last saw their loved ones and even the offer of counselling.

This research has revealed that the issue of missing persons in warfare, with respect to the Cyprus invasion of 1974 is more than just a major humanitarian concern. Relatives and immediate families of missing persons suffer enormously from the uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones who have disappeared from armed conflicts. This paper cannot cover all issues arising from missing persons but will try and touch on significant social ramifications affecting relatives, so as to provide some context.

The issue is not just about finding mass graves and using the role of forensics in clarifying the humanitarian issue of the fate of missing persons, it is important to have a social understanding of the ramifications which it has in our community – not just the immediate community but also the international community as many relatives, who were made refugees, migrated to ‘safer’ countries such as Australia.

The personal interviews have revealed that the Republic of Cyprus had never taken the initiative to interview persons immediately affected by missing persons - mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters and wives. Wives and husbands were widowed, children were orphaned, mothers and fathers lost their children and sisters and brothers lost their siblings, but despite such tragedy no official has made any effort to contact or communicate with these victims or to update them on relevant recent information. From the perspective of social ramifications, it is a huge economic burden on a family especially if the main bread earner is the missing person.

A brief overview provides some detail of what was found to be issues for the relatives. The study asked relatives about their experiences with authorities and support services, if offered. One of the most critical areas of need identified by the families interviewed was the need for support, specific information and assistance with advice on searching (if possible) and

emotional support and counselling. Many had no idea where to seek support – was it the CMP who was available to offer information on investigations and searches for missing persons and regular updates on these investigations? Most said they were not satisfied with authorities, but did not want to elaborate and offer specific comments aside from making a general statement about satisfaction or dissatisfaction. They were afraid of ‘upsetting’ the government and of the possibility of not receiving any assistance as a form of punishment for being critical.

There was never an effective counselling support service for the families of missing persons. Perhaps counsellors from a range of specialised backgrounds could gather information to understand the phenomenon of missing persons and its effects on relatives. Both individual and group family counselling would have been appreciated from these victims of war.

Families initially feared their missing had been harmed or killed, and most said they experienced profound distress and trauma. Although there has been the passage of time, they still warrant the support and assistance that ‘victims of crime’ receive for a recent crime.

Many said that aside from a lack of support services and assistance from lobby/advocacy groups, there was an impact on their work/business, relationships, and emotional and economic impacts. What most were upset about was the lack of access of information which was/is being held by governments/humanitarian agencies about locating their loved ones – whether they were alive or dead. Remembering that more than 30 years have passed, finding remains and having a burial service was very significant for “closure” and moving on with their lives.

Lack of feedback on progress, and generally maintaining contacts were common complaints among those interviewed. There was no helpful information on investigations at all in the past 36 years. Several relatives said that a simple task such as receiving a telephone call by authorities would have acknowledged their “suffering and pain” and would reassure their families that something was happening, or someone was taking an interest. This alone would have had a big impact on their distress and experiences of feeling helpless. They feel that a government should appoint a specific department to dedicate its services to victims associated with missing persons.

All these issues may be a reflection on the “chaos” at the time of the war and how there was disorganisation and panic. There were about 200,000

refugees and housing them was seen as a priority at the time above all other issues. Once this was resolved the issue of missing persons should have been a priority.

In conclusion, relatives of missing persons experienced immense emotional distress and this impacted on their health, work and relationships and they felt they strongly needed support - both in helping find their loved ones, and in assistance to deal with the experience.

Areas requiring further attention include the government introducing strategies to address social impact on relatives of missing persons - community responses and government policy on addressing needs of those in the immediate family.

Failure to continue to keep the families informed about progress throughout the years of "investigations" was a big issue. While government officials are the main agency offering information, other organisations and families did not play a significant role, such as the non-government organisation (NGO), the International Red Cross.

Waiting and not knowing what happened, was commonly identified as the single most difficult part of the whole experience by families in the missing person study. The need for practical advice and information to assist families in searching was one of the issues most commonly identified by these families. A useful strategy is to establish mechanisms and provide resources that empower as well as support families in their search efforts, in collaboration with authorities and other agencies offering action.

Families are the "secondary victims" of missing persons in warfare and it is important that attention is devoted to their needs so that the impacts on the "existing" family unit can at least be softened. Many families suffer through the lack of support for their needs. Action is needed to be taken if it is to reduce the traumas. This is an area that needs to be addressed by the entire international community - families, friends, government departments, NGOs, policy makers, medical practitioners and media - who need to take responsibility as a community for addressing this humanitarian issue of missing persons in warfare. Moreover, to add a personal perspective to the issue of missing persons, this paper will specifically look at four families who have been tormented over the decades with respect to their missing family members. To demonstrate the broad casting of individuals in the Hellenic diaspora, this paper will look at four families - one based in

Adelaide, South Australia; one family residing in Nicosia, Cyprus, but visiting South Australia; one family from Melbourne, Victoria and another from Sydney, New South Wales.

The grandson of 80-year-old Kiriakoulla (Koullou) Shenga Andy Kontou (residing in Adelaide, South Australia) offered an insight into being a relative of a missing person – in this case his interpretation of historical information is based on the personal experiences of his mother and of his grandmother's neighbour from the village of Peristeronopiya, also known as Piyi, located north of Famagusta. According to the information he was provided, his grandmother, Mrs Shenga, was shot and buried in front of her home. Her name was removed from the list of missing persons.

In Mr Kontou's words:

What I know from a lady called 'Beba' who's name escapes me. This lady told me the story as it was told to her by the man that noted all the happenings after the Turkish army came to my yiayia's village.

At the time of the second attack by the Turkish army, around 15th August, they entered into the village and all the inhabitants left with any possessions they could carry.

Whilst all were eager to leave, fearing for their lives my yiayia opted to stay. There were many old folks that thought the same as my yiayia and stayed behind. One of these old folks was named Andreas Katsivilis 'Katsi' who was, I am told, a 60 year old unmarried educated man. What happened from then on I am not sure but the story has it that 'Kats' stayed at the village undercover from the Turkish army for over six month's.

When the Turkish army had occupied the village they proceeded to shoot at the old folks on sight and leaving the body's lay where they were shot. What then happened, to me is rather astonishing, this man Katsis would pick up these bodies and bury them, undercover from the Turks. He apparently continued to do this until there were no more old folk's left alive, at which point he gave himself up to the Turkish Cypriot police six months after the occupation of the village. He was then sent to the Greek side of the island.

My yiayia was shot and killed as she peered through the door of her house around the 17th-18th August and lay at the spot she was killed for two days before Katsi could bury her, which he did outside her home in a storm water ditch. As far as we all know she still lay's there until today. (Kontou 8 September 2009 interview,

15 May 2009 email, 8 September 2009 email

The second interview is by the daughter of missing person Yiannos Costantis Vlachou who was from the mixed Greek-Cypriot, Turkish-Cypriot village of Komi Kebir, Rizokarpasos. He was married with one daughter, Giorgoulla, and two grandchildren. According to his friends, the last place he was seen was at Kantars Castle near Kyrenia on 22 August 1974 (Christofis 2009) however this is not consistent with where he was found in a mass grave in his village of Komi Kebir

Angelique Chrisafis, journalist for the Guardian, a United Kingdom newspaper, explains how her uncle became a missing person:

When the shooting did start, he helped pack his sister and his ageing mother into the back of a neighbour's van and saw them off. Relatives tried to get a message to him via the Red Cross telling him to leave but he shrugged it off. "These were family men, innocent men, they had never done anything to anyone. They stayed because they thought they were safe," his grandson Andis says. Turkish Cypriot neighbours had assured them they would be safe. Anyone in the area who had anything to feel guilty about had long since moved off when the Turkish troops approached. (Chrisafis 2008)

In this very detailed article Ms Chrisafis explains how her uncle was found in a mass grave and describes the information relayed to the family from authorities

The grave was dug up in September 2006, the bones analysed and finally given back to us in March 2008 [...] We now know that he was found in a mass grave with 12 people in it, six from Komi Kepir and six from neighbouring Eftakomi, my grandfather's village. Yiannos was lying seventh in the line with one arm above his head. Three of the others had their hands tied. All had bullet wounds and bullets were found dotted separately around the grave - we don't know if they came out of the bodies as they decomposed. The men, aged from their 40s to their 60s, were farmers as well as the coffee-shop owner from Komi Kebir. Some had land, as Yiannos did, others didn't. There didn't seem to be a link between people chosen to die. The grave was on the edge of fields beyond our village, a quiet spot in view of a tiny old Byzantine church. It wasn't far from the fields Yiannos had tilled himself. It was near a big bush - a quirk I later learned was a common pattern, the killers often chose a marker, such as a wall or a tree.

It took three days for the UN to dig the grave and recover the bones, then they covered it up and moved on. None of the locals approached to watch. The grave was 12 metres long by two metres wide and less than one-metre deep. Its uniform

shape meant it was dug by a bulldozer, by someone with farm machinery. That and the perfect numbers would suggest that it was systematic: 12 men picked out and driven off to be killed, the grave prepared. Clockwork “ethnic cleansing” before the term was coined.

[...] The men had bullets to the head. But some also had bullet wounds to their torsos.

Ms Chrisafis, explains how finding her uncle’s remains in 2008 after 34 years, had helped her family – but it also raised painful new questions about the fate of those still considered missing persons (Chrisafis 2008) Her article reveals her family’s torment over more than three decades of not knowing the fate of three family members. Only Yiannos Vlachou has been found so far, she quotes:

[...] the UN had dug up his bones from a mass grave. Laid out beside him were a few relics preserved by the dry Cyprus soil: two buttons, pieces of his shoes and socks, a belt buckle and his small pocket-knife for cutting fruit. My cousin, Andis, picked up his skull and cradled it, tracing his fingers around the bullet holes. “One shot to the back of the head, one bullet into the temple which exited the cheek,” he surmised.

Three generations of our men disappeared after they were rounded up into the village coffee shop: Yiannos, my great-uncle, was 61, Pavlos, my uncle, was 42; and Solon, my cousin, was 17

Yiannos’s daughter Giorgoull. Ssaid: “We’re lucky to have found him, because others haven’t [...] I have cried a lot, but I have carried this all these years and now finally it’s the end”.

Questions asked by families include who gave the tip-off of where mass graves are?

Who was the person who told the UN where to dig? Who after all this time finally led the authorities to the hidden grave? There was a story going round that some time after the 1974 killings, a 10-year-old boy had been out in fields with his father and had come across some strange raised earth. His father had come to look and had returned with a tractor to try and dig there to see what it was. He dug below the surface but not deep enough. The boy, now in his 40s, had possibly now come forward to point out the spot. Some were sceptical about this tale. Whoever gives information can do so anonymously and without recrimination. Some wondered if the killers themselves had pointed it out. (Chrisafis 2008

The importance of having missing persons found is reiterated in Ms Chrisafis article when she describes the emotions involved of not knowing the whereabouts of loved ones. She writes (Chrisafis 2008):

Without the remains there is a torturous limbo, an inescapable hope that somewhere they are still alive. Bones, bodies, any trace at all, are mythic things for the families of the disappeared. You yearn for them and dread them. The chance of a proper funeral means closure. But with it comes the nagging questions and imagined last moments. Did he know his killers? Did he die quickly? Did he suffer? Was he made to dig his own grave?

The article also expresses disappointment with authorities not allowing families to know the fate of their loved ones. The CMP mandate does not allow an investigation of how each missing person died. Only remains are to be retrieved and returned to families for burial. This frustration is expressed in the Guardian article:

Several of the experts leading the digs have worked in Bosnia. But a key difference is that in Bosnia when mass graves were opened, evidence was collected for an international war crimes tribunal. In Cyprus, the process is limited to handing back the bones. The committee does not try to find out how the person died, what happened or who did it. There is no justice or truth process, as yet. In fact, the committee's decades-old mandate is so narrow that the UN would perhaps not agree to it now. The bones are simply given to families and the graves are closed up again in silence. We are left aching to piece together the truth of what happened. But we have to be our own detectives, trying to map out the story from fragments of memories and the scant details from the bones. One humanitarian official warned me gently: "Bones don't speak much. They have very limited things to say, little information, they are not bodies in a crime scene. The only secret files are in the heads of the people who did it." (Chrisafis 2008)

The UN member of the CMP Christophe Girod explained (Chrisafis 2008) *People are getting older and they want to speak before they die" [...]* *When people see that graves are dug, that you can speak and nothing happens to you, it prompts more to come forward. When we exhume, neighbours often say, "You're digging here but you should also dig over there." We've found several sites that way*

He felt some people giving information could be perpetrators, but they never said so. "Everybody is a witness. Everybody was behind the tree. Nobody was behind the gun.

Greek Cypriot refugee Panayiota Alexandrou from Vasilia, Kyrenia still remembers the last day she saw her brother, Lefteris Efstathiou, sister-in-law Erpinia and nephew Christakis very vividly. Lefteris was from a family of six children, four boys and two daughters. Mrs Alexandrou, who now resides in Melbourne, Victoria, says that although she and her second eldest brother along with their respective families escaped the first Turkish invasion by temporarily moving to the southern part of the island, on 16 August her brother, 33-year-old Lefteris and his wife Erpinia, 34, decided to go to Morphou, a major town in the Nicosia District, to collect their newly purchased tractor and bring it back with them. They were concerned that it might be damaged and they had just borrowed money to purchase significant farming equipment. What was meant to be a quick trip to retrieve their possessions led to a family's demise. The couple took their 7-year-old son Christakis with them for what was to be a day trip, but he too is now on the list of missing persons. Only their infant baby daughter Anastasia survived. The then 27 day old baby was left behind with her grandmother (Alexandrou 20 January 2010 interview).

Another example of how the issue of the Cypriot missing persons has changed the lives of many in the Hellenic Diaspora, is the family tragedy of Athinoula Panteli, of Asha in the Famagusta District of the occupied territories of Cyprus. Now residing in Sydney, New South Wales, Mrs Panteli's father was one of 86 missing from the village of Asha – the village with the most missing persons from 1974. In brief, Mrs Panteli says the reason her village of Asha has the most missing persons is because there were many Turkish troops arriving on foot and they ambushed most of the people. A civilian and with his family at the time of the Turkish troops arriving at his village, Mrs Panteli's father Thavith (David) Constantinou Foti was just 46 years old. Mrs Panteli, who was 20 years old at the time recalls that the Turkish troops rounded everyone in the village square and separated the women and children from the men. They tied her father's hands in two places – below his elbows and below his wrists. As they were loading him with other men onto trucks he yelled out to her and said: «Ἡ σφαίρα δέν πονάει» meaning “The bullet does not hurt”. The ladies were kept hostage at a house in the village and were beaten and raped by troops before any assistance arrived 12 days later. That day was the last day Mrs Panteli saw her father and to this day she has not been briefed on any details. DNA samples were given to

the CMP in the late 1990s by her father's brother Andonis Foti, who is now deceased and his son Yianos, however no remains have been recovered and identified as yet (Pantelli 27 February 2010, 9 August 2012 interviews)

Even as far away from the homeland as Australia is, the issue of the missing persons of Cyprus is a very painful and personal issue for families in the Hellenic Diaspora. Many have taken active parts in lobbying within their communities so this Cypriot humanitarian issue is on the agenda for many governments to assist, but it has not been too fruitful for this issue remains nearly four decades on.

Conclusion

The topic of missing persons in Cyprus has been an issue for almost four decades and it is still high on the agenda of discussion between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot leaders. The personal experiences of the relatives of the missing persons 'bring additional knowledge' to the issue which can be synthesized with government, non-government and international reports, archival material and previous research. The use of the research methodology of autoethnography is the appropriate qualitative research style to extrapolate an understanding of this sociological and international humanitarian issue.

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