MISSION REPORT
of the LIBE delegation to Cyprus
from 19 to 21 December 2012
1. Composition of the delegation

The LIBE Delegation to Cyprus from 19 to 21 December 2012 was led by Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D), Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs - and was composed of:

**Members**
Renate SOMMER, EPP-DE
Cecilia WIKSTRÖM, ALDE-SV
Simon BUSUTTIL, EPP-MT
Salvador SEDÓ I ALABART, EPP-ES

**Accompanying Members**
Antigoni PAPADOPOULOU, S&D-CY
Kyriacos TRIANTAPHYLIDES, GUE-CY

**Political Groups Staff**
Andris PETERSONS, EPP
Shane Murphy, S&D
Valérie GLATIGNY, ALDE
Rob VERREYCKEN, NI

**DG INTE**
*Interpreters (EL-EN-DE)*
Panayotis MOUZOURAKIS (Team leader)
Nicolas MAVROCORDOPOULOS
Kenneth COLGAN
Susan Jennifer FEARNSIDE
Monika WELLING
Astrid KNOKE-JEREMIAH

**Technical support staff**
Pascal GODART

**DG IPOL Staff (LIBE Secretariat)**
Amparo RUEDA BUESO, Administrator
Nessa CULLIMORE, Assistant

**DG COMMUNICATION Staff (EP office in Nicosia)**
Kalliopi THOMA

2. Background and objectives

In its Resolution of 18 June 2008, the European Parliament requested the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to follow-up the issue of missing persons in Cyprus and to take all possible steps to convince all parties concerned to contribute sincerely and actively to the endeavours in the investigation into the fate of each and every missing person.
In this context, the objective of the delegation was to gather information concerning the latest developments in the work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the bi-communal investigative body established under the auspices of the United Nations to look into cases of persons reported missing during the events of 1963-64 and 1974.

The delegation aimed at assessing the progress made in the identification tasks and analyzing the perspectives for the future, including the estimated time-frame to recover all or the majority of those missing, the level of cooperation of the involved authorities and the funding of the project.

3. Meetings and visits

The delegation arrived in Cyprus on Wednesday, 19 December 2012; the activities of the delegation took place on Thursday 20 December 2012 from 9.00 to 21.00.

The first meeting of the delegation was held in the premises of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) within the buffer zone where Members had the possibility to exchange views with Mr. Włodek Cibor, Senior Adviser, on the situation of Cyprus and the implications of the division of the island from the point of view on the United Nations.

The senior adviser gave a presentation to the Members of the delegation on the background, mandate and current tasks of the UNFICYP, one of the longest-running UN Peacekeeping missions which was set up in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island and bring about a return to normal conditions. Mr. Cibor described the four pillars on which the work of the Mission is founded: the military, UN Police (UNPOL), the Civil Affairs Section and Administration, which supports all activities, he underlined that part of UNFICYP’s mission is to maintain a stable environment and de-escalate the military presence along the buffer zone in order to enable a just and lasting political solution.

One of the main topics for discussion was one of the tasks of the Civil Affairs Section of the UNFICYP, namely the humanitarian assistance to the enclaved Greek Cypriot community in the Karpas peninsula in the north of the island, (there are estimated to be around 330 Greek Cypriots living in this area). The Members raised the issue of the need for the respect of the right to education, health, and freedom of religion for the people in this community which is rendered complicated by the "authorities" in the north of the island.

Subsequent topics raised by Members were the role of the UN during the events in 1974, the volume of Turkish troops in the north, the settlement of Turkish nationals (which clearly affects the demography in the north of the island) and the perspectives for the future of the UN Mission in terms of their presence in the area. The senior adviser emphasized that the future of the UNFICYP is in the hands of Cyprus.

---

1 Buffer zone: an area between the forward cease-fire line of the Turkish forces and that of the Cyprus National Guard which is under UNFICYP responsibility since 1974. Also called the "Green line", it extends approximately 180 kilometers across the island, separating the area under the control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the part of Cyprus controlled by Turkey.

The second meeting of the morning took place at the Anthropological Laboratory of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) also located within the buffer zone. The delegation held an exchange of views with Ms. Gülden Plümer Küçük, Turkish Cypriot Member of the CPM, Mr. Xenophon Kallis, Assistant to the Greek Cypriot Member of the CMP and Mr. Oleg Y. Egorov, Officer in Charge, Office of the Third Member of the CMP.

The discussion was centred on the last developments in the work of the CMP in the exhumation, identification and return of the remains of the persons reported missing during the tragic events of 1963-64 and 1974. Ms. Küçük emphasized that the CMP is the only institutionalized bi-communal project in Cyprus and that it has taken important efforts from the two communities to build the trust to carry out this humanitarian labour.

Reference was also made to the constraints under which the arduous work of the CMP is carried out; time being a very important aspect. Mr. Kallis explained that exhumations are carried out on the basis of testimonies from witnesses who are getting older and sometimes are not able to provide accurate information or who are passing away before they have the possibility to share their information. The topography of the island has also changed furthermore some burial sites have been interfered with and remains removed. He also mentioned that the identification rate is decreasing and that the question of how to speed up identification should be addressed urgently.

Mr. Kallis further emphasized the need to proceed to exhumations on the basis of the accuracy of the information and mentioned that others, apart from Cyprus and the CMP, are in a position to provide more information which could help the CMP better execute its humanitarian mandate.

Budget constraints were also raised; the CMP representatives agreed that an increase in funding would favour the progress of the project.

The question of access to Turkish military areas in the northern part of Cyprus in order to carry out exhumations was extensively discussed, as this is perceived as a major obstacle for the location of remains. Mr Egorov pointed out that the CMP had asked for access to sites in such military areas to proceed with exhumations on 19 occasions and permission was granted on each occasion, albeit with restrictions.

Some Members claimed that the investigations are not helped by Turkey declaring new military areas and that there is a need for unfettered access of the CMP to all the many other military areas where according to credible information there exist large burial sites of missing persons.

The Members raised several other questions such as the existence of a clear time-line for exhumations, the expectations in percentage of identifications and the estimated duration of the project.

The three members of the CMP underlined that in this respect mistakes cannot be made in the identification and return of remains to the families. To date, as reminded by Ms. Küçük, approximately 900 sets of remains have been exhumed (45% of the declared missing), a realistic forecast would be that 65% of the missing would be found and identified.

The meeting was followed by a visit to the CMP Anthropological Laboratory which is operational since 2006. The Members of the delegation had the opportunity to see the
anthropologists at work (a bi-communal team of nine Cypriot anthropologists) and learn about their working methods for the analysis of exhumed remains before bone samples are sent to the genetics laboratory.

The next activity in the programme of the delegation was the visit to an exhumation site in order to see the work of the archaeologists from the CMP. The exhumation site was located in the village of Mora, in the northern part of Cyprus, in the vicinity of Nicosia, near Tymvou airport. This is one of the eight sites on the island where the CMP carries out excavations. The archaeologists' team leader explained to the delegation that the aim of their work was to reach the bottom of a well to retrieve the remains of two Greek Cypriots who reportedly have been dumped there. The excavation had reached a depth of 10.7 metres and had been extremely complex due to the fact that the well had been covered, was not visible and also due to the presence of water.

After the visit to the exhumation site the delegation returned to Nicosia to meet the members of the parliamentary committee responsible for the missing persons - the Committee on Refugees-Enclaved-Missing-Adversely Affected Persons at the House of Representatives.

Ms. Skevi Koukouma Koutra, Committee Chairwoman, defined the issue of the missing persons as the saddest issue in the history of Cyprus and underlined that the expectations of the families of the missing are very high and it is important to be able to ensure quality results.

The question of the time and budgetary constraints in the work of the CMP was mentioned by Ms. Koukouma Koutra as well as the need to access sites in the military areas in the north of Cyprus. In this respect the involvement of international and European bodies was considered instrumental and the clear message sent by the European Parliament in its Declaration of 9 June 2011 was acknowledged. On their side the Members of the delegation emphasised the European nature of the Cyprus problem.

The issue of obtaining access to the archives of the Turkish army was also put forward by the Members of the Cypriot Parliament in the context of the humanitarian task of the recovery and identification of remains. The Members of the Committee also emphasized the importance of raising awareness on the issue (the establishment of 29 October as national Day of the Missing in 2010 was mentioned) and of exerting pressure on Turkey at a European and international level.

Afterwards the delegation was received by Ms. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the government departments competent for the issue of missing persons.

During the exchange of views with the Members of the delegation, Minister Kozakou-Marcoullis underlined the pure humanitarian nature of the recovery of the missing, made the point that relatives of missing persons are entitled to all information on what happened to their loved ones, and addressed the question of the need of access to the military areas in the north of Cyprus, (it was pointed out that military areas cover up to 60% of the territory) where reportedly Greek Cypriots are buried in mass graves.

The institutional response at European Union level to the issue of the missing was raised by the Members and the Minister clarified that the EU Council of Ministers is dealing with the
Cyprus issue from the perspective of Turkey's accession to the EU - this led to an exchange of views with Ms Kozakou-Marcoullis on the implications of the accession of Turkey to the EU.

The Members of the delegation raised some points on the institutional involvement of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in regards to the issue of missing persons; the Minister agreed that the main emphasis should be put in the humanitarian and fundamental rights-related nature of the question and the political use of such a sensitive issue should be avoided.

The subsequent meeting with the Presidential Commissioner, Mr. George Iacovou, gave the Members of the delegation the possibility of further discussing the work carried out by the Committee on Missing Persons and the question of access to the military zones under the control of Turkey.

Mr. Iacovou referred to the declining success rate in the exhumations and pointed out that at the start of this process, one in two locations searched had provided some success, whereas in the last two years, only one in three excavations has lead to the finding of remains. He also mentioned the problem created by the interference of the Turkish Army with burial sites.

The Presidential Commissioner also shared with the delegation the delicate issue of the expectations of the relatives; in the great majority of the occasions it is not possible to reconstruct a significant part of a skeleton and the families are presented with fragments of bones, to their disappointment. On the other hand, relatives would also like to know the details of the full picture on the whereabouts and cause of death.

Mr. Iacovou stated that the Turkish army has not been willing to provide any military records from the relevant time. He then gave a broad perspective of the negotiations in the framework of the United Nations to find a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem.

The last block of meetings scheduled for the day took place in the Home for Cooperation which is situated in the buffer zone in Nicosia. The delegation met with relatives of missing persons both from the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities which allowed Members to gain an insight into the anguish and grief of the families of those missing.

Firstly, the delegation listened to the testimonies of Mr. Huseyin Akansoy and Mr. Petros Souppouris, Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot respectively, who are part of the bi-communal initiative "Relatives of Missing Persons and Victims of the Events of 1963-1974" and had been awarded the European Citizen's Price 2012 by the European Parliament.

Mr. Souppouris and Mr. Akansoy, who both lost many relatives in 1974, underlined the fact that the pain is the same for the families of the missing in both communities. They explained that for the last six years they have been working together to show that reconciliation is possible focusing in a special manner in the younger generations.

Immediately afterwards, the delegation had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Nicos Theodosiou and two representatives of the Organization of Relatives of Undeclared Prisoners and Missing Persons. Mr Theodosiou underlined once more that the pain felt by families is equal regardless of the community they belong to. He also mentioned the worries of many relatives concerning the need to speed up the exhumations. Reference was also made to the
problem of access to the military areas in the north of the island.

The delegation listened to the dramatic testimonies of the two gentlemen who lost very close relatives. One of them, at a very early age, lost his father.

The final meeting of the day was held with two representatives of the relatives of missing persons from the Turkish Cypriot community accompanied by Ms Ziliha Uluboy.

The relatives of the Turkish Cypriot missing also made reference to the urgent need to accelerate the pace of exhumations and identifications and the budgetary needs of the CMP project. They pointed out that identifications of Turkish Cypriot missing are significantly inferior to those of Greek Cypriots and expressed their disappointment for the lack of results of the excavation in the south. The question of criminal responsibility for the acts committed in the 1963-1974 period was also raised.

The relatives shared with the delegation their tragic memories from 1963.

The Members expressed their interest on the actual cooperation between the authorities in the two sides of Cyprus and the access to specific areas in the north and the south.

On Friday 21 December, the members of the delegation flew back to their respective constituencies.

4. Conclusions

The meetings and visits allowed the Members of the delegation to gain an insight into the issue of missing persons in Cyprus and of the constraints on the work of the CMP.

The delegation acknowledges that the position expressed by the European Parliament in its Declaration of 9 June 2011 remains valid as it fully endorsed the work of the CMP and recognised its post-conflict role in promoting truth, remembrance and reconciliation in Cyprus; it called on the European Commission to continue to allocate sufficient resources to the CMP to enable it to fulfil its important mandate and called on the Governments of Turkey and Cyprus to continue to support the CMP’s work, to redouble efforts to account for those individuals still listed as missing and to ensure that all information that could facilitate the mission of the CMP is made freely available to them.

To the same direction, the delegation calls for immediate and unrestricted access of the CMP to all military areas in the northern part of Cyprus. The delegation also underlines that the right to know the fate of missing relatives is a fundamental right of the families concerned and must be guaranteed.

The delegation reaffirms that the humanitarian issue of the missing persons in Cyprus is a standalone issue and must not be linked or influenced by any other political considerations.