

THE QUIET DEFLATION OF DEN XEHNO? CHANGES IN THE GREEK CYPRIOT COMMUNAL NARRATIVE ON THE MISSING PERSONS IN CYPRUS

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Abstract

Since 2004, there has been movement around the missing persons' issue. The most important set of events has been significant progress by the United Nations' (UN) Committee for Missing Persons (CMP) in locating and exhuming bodies buried in mass graves all over the island. The continual unearthing of remains is keeping the missing persons issue in the public consciousness in a very different way to what has become, over the years, its 'normal' presentation. In addition, there are a number of recent legal cases which may also be significant to the issue's changing public conceptualisation. This paper focuses its attention on the potential of the CMP's progress, the civil cases against the Republic of Cyprus, and the case of Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey to change the public persona of the missing persons issue in Greek-Cypriot society, and points out that any changes to the dynamics of the issue could also have significant impact on the Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the Cyprus problem as a whole.

Keywords: Missing Persons, Agnooumenoi, Public Perception of Conflict, Developments in Cyprus Conflict

Until recently, the bodies of approximately 2,000 people who went missing in the conflicts in Cyprus between 1963 and 1974 had still not been found. Of that number, 1,493 are Greek Cypriots who went missing as a result of the 1974 war, and 502 are Turkish Cypriots killed in inter-communal battles between 1963 and 1967, and during the 1974 war.¹ The missing people are important and heavily symbolised aspects of these conflicts for both communities. But, as many studies have shown, each community has created a different symbol of their missing people. This article will concentrate specifically on the Greek-Cypriot representation of the missing persons issue, focusing on identifying possible shifts in the way the issue is conceptualised in the Greek-Cypriot community since the Annan plan's² rejection in 2004. The problem of the missing persons touches on a number of tensions within Greek Cypriot society. It "raises issues of the allocation of responsibility and

culpability, and the tension between civic-political transparency and ethnic responsibility, but is also a means to talk about the past, present and future".³ It is this last point, the idea that the missing persons provide a vehicle for society to conceptualise and talk about the past and the future which has most relevance for this paper.

This paper begins from the following assumption about the importance of the missing persons issue for the Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the conflict. The missing persons issue has been demonstrated in a number of studies⁴ to be the purest representation of Greek-Cypriot righteousness and victimhood against the Turkish aggressor. It follows then that its continued existence is therefore critical. The symbol of the tormented woman (mother or wife) dressed in black and holding a photo of her missing loved one to a silent sky is the most powerful symbol of Greek-Cypriot suffering. When this symbol is taken away, or fractured, it also distorts the moral clarity of the greater struggle for victory in the ongoing Cyprus conflict. Equally, healing of the missing persons' trauma would weaken the humanitarian justification for perpetuating the struggle. Therefore, progress on the missing persons issue is hypothesised to have implications for the conflict's visage in Greek-Cypriot society; for its shape, presentation, and perpetuation.

Since 2004, there has been movement around the missing persons' issue. The most important set of events has been significant progress by the United Nations' (UN) Committee for Missing Persons (CMP) in locating and exhuming bodies buried in mass graves all over the island. This is cast against not a single case being resolved by the CMP between 1981 and 2004. Between 2004 and May 2008, 399 people have been exhumed and 84 buried. The continual unearthing of remains is keeping the missing persons issue in the public consciousness in a very different way to what has become, over the years, its 'normal' presentation. In addition, there are a number of recent legal cases which may also be significant to the issue's changing public conceptualisation. In 2002, the Greek-Cypriot families of Christofis Pashas and Charalambos Palmas began legal proceedings against the Republic of Cyprus government, for allegedly withholding information on the whereabouts of their missing loved ones. In 2008, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) delivered significant findings against the Republic of Turkey in the case of *Varnava a.o. v Turkey*⁵ regarding its responsibility to assist resolution of the missing persons issue in Cyprus, arousing renewed interest in the limited nature of the CMP's mandate in Cyprus. This paper focuses its attention on the potential of the CMP's progress, the civil cases against the Republic of Cyprus, and the case of *Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey* to change the public persona of the missing persons issue, and points out that any changes to the dynamics of the issue could also have significant impact on the Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the Cyprus problem as a whole.

Relationship between the ‘Agnooumenoi’ and the Cyprus Conflict

A number of researchers have established that the representation of the missing persons has a very important role in defining the Cyprus conflict for and by Cypriots.⁶ On both sides of the Cyprus divide, the issue of the missing persons, *οι αγνοούμενοι* (i agnooumenoi) and *Şehitler* is woven deeply into the post-conflict societal structures.⁷ In Greek-Cypriot society, the term ‘agnooumenoi’ (meaning ‘The Missing’) has come to be a collective term for the Greek Cypriots who went missing as a result of the 1974 Turkish incursion. In Turkish-Cypriot society, the term ‘Şehitler’ (meaning ‘Martyrs’) has come to be a collective term for Turkish Cypriots who went missing or were killed as a result of Greek-Cypriot attacks in the decade between 1964 and 1974.

In Greek-Cypriot society, the agnooumenoi⁸ provide a legitimated means of emphasising Turkish barbarism. In so doing, they also often serve to create a contrasting memory to the country’s post-conflict partition; that of peace and bi-communalism, which was disrupted by the brutal Turkish invasion.⁹ Because of their central role in the conflict’s conceptualisation, developments in the agnooumenoi issue have the potential to reshape the enduring Greek-Cypriot memory of the conflict, and therefore also may affect their perception of the conflict itself.

Calls to the UN for information about the whereabouts of Greek Cypriots who had disappeared in 1974 began almost immediately. In 1981, the issue was handed over to an investigative commission called the Committee for Missing Persons. Both the issue and the organisation itself are highly political, and significantly politicised. The CMP’s powers are effectively weakened by both the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot administrations. The CMP’s mandate from the UN has been to establish the deaths of the missing, and has quite pointedly avoided examining the cause of those deaths.¹⁰ Until recently, neither side has welcomed the political consequences attached to exhumation of these remains, and the CMP has consequently been in a state of stalemate for twenty years. However, since late 2003 there has been significant impetus on the part of both leaderships to resolve the issue.¹¹

Sant Cassia has argued that there are three important social categories in Greek-Cypriot society which were created by, and therefore are inextricably linked to, the Turkish invasion: the refugees; the enclaved; and the missing people.¹² Those categorised as refugees are Greek Cypriots who were internally displaced as a result of the 1974 Turkish invasion, which was concentrated in the northern half of the country. The enclaved are Greek and Maronite Cypriots who were caught in particular areas of the 1974 war-zone, and who subsequently did not flee south. They have since become enclaved communities, based mostly in the north-eastern

villages in and surrounding Karpasia/Karpaz. They came to symbolise a living, and suffering, link for Greek Cypriots with the parts of Cyprus rendered inaccessible. One may also develop Sant Cassia's idea further, to argue that these three categories (the missing, the enclaved, and the refugees) together constitute the Greek-Cypriot face of the Cyprus conflict in a powerful prism of images.

While the Turkish-Cypriot leadership decisively declared all the Turkish-Cypriot missing to be dead, in the south, few of the Greek-Cypriot missing have been so declared. Instead, they remain missing and therefore possibly alive.¹³ Common wisdom holds that the fate of the agnooumenoi rests in the hands of Turkey, and more specifically in the hands of those who engineered and led the 1974 Turkish military incursion into Cyprus.¹⁴ Believing that Turkey holds the answers about the fates of Greek-Cypriot missing people, the Republic of Cyprus government and a number of lobby groups claiming to represent the families of the missing¹⁵ have used international platforms to pressure the Turkish government into releasing circumstantial details of their loved ones' disappearances.¹⁶ But Turkey does not respond to such petitions and requests for information, and much to the chagrin of the Republic of Cyprus, the CMP's mandate is limited to investigations within Cyprus; obtaining information from Turkish sources remains outside its jurisdiction.

The unresolved nature of the case has allowed numerous Greek-Cypriot governments to chastise Turkey in international forums, linking human rights and Turkish violence in Cyprus to a number of other Turkish human rights violations in Turkey and surrounding areas. Because of the issue's open-ended nature, a conclusion has been drawn in Greek-Cypriot society that while the conflict remains, there will be no answers about the fate of their agnooumenoi.¹⁷ The lingering air of unresolvability of the missing has also served the domestic function of reminding the public that the conflict is not over, and perpetuating the concept of Greek-Cypriot victimhood.¹⁸

Because of this belief, and because of the taboo surrounding the idea that the agnooumenoi might be dead, the missing persons have become "metaphors for return";¹⁹ strongly intertwined with the desire for return of the land taken in the 1974 invasion, for return to a time before the Turkish invasion and subsequent occupation of north Cyprus which caused such humiliation to Greek-Cypriot national pride.²⁰ The ethereal absence of bodies, and the nature of their disappearance, has come to mirror the 'missing' part of Cyprus, the fate of which also rests in Turkish hands. The absence of bodies represents a societal inability to mourn a gap which must be filled to be overcome.

The absence of bodies has also come to symbolise the conflict's unresolved nature. Hope for the return of the agnooumenoi represents the Greek-Cypriot hope for the eventual reunification of "a split land".²¹

“The campaign to keep the issue, and hence the agnooumeni, alive risks preventing healing and therapy, and channels aggression outwards towards the Turks. Such a sustained ... campaign may be due to the risk that a public acceptance of the probabilities of their deaths could symbolically represent an acknowledgement that the North has been lost forever.”²²

This opinion seems to be supported by recent statements made by previous Republic of Cyprus president Tassos Papadopoulos, who linked the fact that “nothing had really changed ‘on the ground’ in the past 30 years”²³ with “severe violations of fundamental human rights [which] still existed as a result of the invasion such as the unresolved problem of the missing persons...”.²⁴ The emphasis here is that nothing has changed; Turkey has still to answer for the missing in Cyprus as it has still to withdraw from the occupied territory. Similarly, in July 2004 relatives of the agnooumeni commemorated the 30-year anniversary of the Turkish incursion with a protest outside Ledra Palace checkpoint in divided Nicosia. The protest was organised by the Pancypriot Anti-occupation Movement, whose president²⁵ explicitly linked the idea of a Turkish withdrawal from occupied Cyprus with knowledge about the fate of the missing. He argued that Greek Cypriots who cross to the north (using the Ledra Palace checkpoint) “have conceded to being tourists in their own homeland”,²⁶ reminding them that “these mothers dressed in black have been waiting thirty years now for any positive information about their husbands, children and brothers, and we want to send the message that their human rights are cruelly being violated”.²⁷

The way the agnooumeni issue has been framed is also structurally supportive of the Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the Cyprus conflict’s history. Beyond the idea that the agnooumeni were captured by Turkish soldiers, there is little public discussion or acknowledgement of other, more problematic, explanations of how the missing disappeared. The work of recent researchers has shown that a considerable proportion of the Greek-Cypriot missing are thought to have been killed by Turkish-Cypriot paramilitaries or civilians.²⁸ But to place blame for Greek-Cypriot disappearances with Turkish Cypriots is to undermine the official Greek-Cypriot telling of Cypriot modern history, where Greek and Turkish Cypriots lived like brothers, whose tranquil lives and friendships were destroyed by the bloody and unnecessary Turkish invasion.²⁹ To admit that there were inter-communal killings is to run the risk of supporting the Turkish-Cypriot claim that their political independence is necessary because Greek and Turkish Cypriots cannot live peacefully together. In addition, an unknown number of Greek Cypriots were killed in intra-communal skirmishes during the Greek coup which triggered the subsequent Turkish military intervention.³⁰ However, none of these alternative narratives are given real voice.

Instead, the agnooumenoi contribute to the Greek-Cypriot telling of history that centres on the tension between (Greek) Cyprus and Turkey. The past is a story of Turkish aggression and Cypriot (both Greek and Turkish) victimhood. While it has recently come to light that Greek-Cypriot authorities have known that a number of the agnooumenoi were dead and buried at a military cemetery in south Cyprus, they have continued to maintain the fiction that Turkey holds the only answers about the men's deaths; that the bodies are unrecoverable solely because of Turkish intransigence.

"Occupation of Cyprus by Turkey, her violation of the rights of the relatives to be united with their loved ones, heroism and sacrifice, loss and a whole complex of social emotions. When the [Greek Cypriot] authorities held onto information that some of the Missing were in fact buried in the Greek side, they were in effect maintaining not just a fiction, but still retaining their investment in the power of the Signifier (that there are people who are missing), and insinuating the fiction that everybody was still unrecoverable, because of 'Turkish intransigence'."³¹

The nuance is important here. While the Turkish army may well be the cause of death for the vast number of Greek-Cypriot agnooumenoi, the fact that these men are still being promoted as missing, fate unknown, is a fiction. The cases of Pashas and Palmas are so important exactly because they seek to decisively establish government culpability in the perpetuation of such a fiction.

To speak of the agnooumenoi is to legitimate and highlight pain suffered at the hands of Turkish barbarism, and to remember a time before the invasion, when families were united and the country was unified. Any change to the fate of the agnooumenoi, or to the lens through which their absence is viewed, therefore has the potential to damage the Greek-Cypriot perception of the past, upon which the community's imagining of the future is based. Any change in the situation, or the 'facts' upon which the situation is built, is likely to affect the representative Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the conflict.

It should be noted that while the way the CMP's progress has affected narratives in the north is not the focus of this study, the changing Turkish-Cypriot narrative regarding the missing people will also affect the Greek-Cypriot narrative, and vice versa. The response in the north to the exhumation has been markedly different, and much more vocal, to that in the south. There has been an open discussion in the Turkish-Cypriot community about whether the bones of their loved ones should be removed from their original burial places and re-buried in the north. Because many of the families of the Turkish-Cypriot missing people knew both that their loved ones were dead, and how they had died, the exhumation process re-awakened particularly painful events and memories that families had long fought to overcome. The effect of the CMP's work and the subsequent burials of the Şehitler

have therefore predominantly been to open old wounds.³² As a corollary, there has been an increase in the symbols of conflict. This difference between the meaning and interpretation attached by each community to the CMP's work, as well as the symbols of war and memories of the conflict that will be revived in each community by the exhumations and burials, will also affect the communal narrative in both societies. Each society's re-conceptualisation of the missing persons issue will necessarily affect the other.³³

Recent Developments in the Missing Persons Situation

As previously highlighted, there are a number of factors driving the resolution of the missing persons' issue. The cases of Pashas and Palmas in the Republic of Cyprus' domestic court, cases in the ECHR which have increased pressure on the Republic of Turkey to act on its human rights record, and internal grassroots pressure for action, have been catalytic factors in the CMP's recent progress. And as a result of both this progress and the events themselves, a change to the image of the agnooumenoi issue in south Cyprus is foreseen and explored in this article.

The CMP has recently made considerable progress, exhuming 399 bodies, and identifying and returning 84³⁴ to families for burial.³⁵ Approximately two-thirds have been Greek-Cypriot. In light of the Greek-Cypriot community's turn towards introspective self-protection in the post-Annan environment, it is interesting that these developments have only occurred in the wake of the failed 2004 peace proposal, though the Clerides government had made two attempts at resolving the situation in 1999 and 2001.³⁶

The CMP's project has been divided into four stages,³⁷ with phase IV ('Return of Remains') bearing the most significance for the families of the missing people. Although some progress was made by the CMP during the Annan plan's development, the beginning of phase IV was only announced in August 2006.³⁸ Significant preparatory work to launch this phase had, however, begun as early as 2004,³⁹ and the CMP's third member (the UN representative) was appointed in June 2006.⁴⁰

It is interesting to note that, despite its sensitivity, the issue of the missing persons in Cyprus has been the only aspect of the conflict to move significantly towards positive resolution since the Annan plan's 2004 rejection. In mid-2006 the third CMP member remarked on the committee's progress:

"The committee is still moving forward. And how come this is the only issue on the island that is moving forward is a good question, I don't know why. Because it could be stuck like the rest. But it is not. And ... [although] both sides have their own reasons to solve it ... for the time being we are surfing on this goodwill."⁴¹

His comment highlights that pressure to solve the missing persons issue is coming from a number of areas.⁴² Three reasons can be offered to explain why the political will exists to confront this controversial subject. In 2001, in the Fourth Inter-State Application of the Republic of Cyprus against the Republic of Turkey, the ECHR ruled that Turkey's failure to investigate the fate of Greek Cypriots who disappeared as a result of the 1974 war was a violation of Articles 2 and 5 of the Convention.⁴³ On 7 June 2005, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted an interim resolution regarding the 2001 ruling. The resolution stressed the need for Turkey to intensify its efforts to comply with the judgement's execution, and decided to supervise progress on the issue. As a result, Turkey has had to report regularly to the Committee on its progress. However, Turkey has also been able to use its progress on the issue to emphasise to Brussels its efforts to meet EU standards.⁴⁴ In other words, sufficient incentives have finally been created for Turkey to support progress on the missing persons' issue.

While, on the Turkish side, it is difficult to ascertain whether resolving the missing persons' cases have been impeded by the then-Denktaş 'TRNC' government or the Turkish authorities themselves (or both parties), the state in the north is categorised under international law as a 'subordinate power' to the Turkish Republic. The European Court of Human Rights has therefore placed legal responsibility for the continuing silence regarding particular missing persons cases (Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey is the most recent example) with the Turkish government, rather than with the 'TRNC' authorities.

Turkey's need to comply with certain EU standards and decisions in order to keep on its accession path has therefore had a positive impact on the missing persons issue by its increased co-operation. Its willingness to co-operate has also had a subtle effect on the agnooumenoi's public persona; it has been more difficult for the Republic of Cyprus government to blame lack of CMP progress on Turkish intransigence if that intransigence has been diluted.

The second reason comes from grassroots pressure, and affects both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot elite attitudes to the issue. After the checkpoints opened in 2003,⁴⁵ Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot relatives of missing persons began crossing to the other side, desperately conducting private investigations into the fate of their missing loved ones. Lawyer for the Pashas family, Achilleas Demetriades, highlighted how such behaviour has pressured both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot administrations to act:

"I also think that because people can go across [between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot 'sides'] now it has expedited the matter. I mean, people have been going around looking for bones. This is outrageous! It's crazy that in

2005, in 2006, in 2007, families are actually digging on their own, looking for bones. But it is happening. And since it is happening it means the demand is there, and I think ... [that both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities] had a problem restraining it ..."⁴⁶

Additional pressure has come from the work of Turkish- and Greek-Cypriot journalists Sevgül Uludağ and Andreas Paraschos, and Greek-Cypriot filmmaker Tony Angastiniotis, publicising and gathering information on a number of individual cases of missing people. Uludağ's many articles in the Turkish-Cypriot daily *Yenidüzen* culminated in the publication of her 2005 book *Oysters with the Missing Pearls*, outlining the stories surrounding hundreds of the missing people from both communities. Her work has increased awareness of the reality of the events which led to so many disappearances and murders. In addition, in 2005, Tony Angastiniotis made a documentary about Greek-Cypriot mass murders of Turkish Cypriots in the villages of Muratağa (Maratha), Sandallar (Sandallaris), and Atlılar (Aloa) in July 1974. Angastiniotis' documentary was designed to break the popular notion that Greek Cypriots were the only victims of murders in the 1974 period, and therefore to dent the Greek-Cypriot monologue about who was to blame for the division of Cyprus.⁴⁷ While the documentary received international critical acclaim, it has reached a very limited Greek-Cypriot audience. However, each voice has added to the growing public awareness that the missing persons issue is not as mono-tonal as originally portrayed.

Paraschos has also been important in uncovering Greek-Cypriot government myths about the agnoomenoi. Since 1975, a number of missing persons' widows have been claiming that their husbands were not missing, but had been killed in action and their bodies buried by Greek soldiers in a military cemetery in Lakatamia, in the Greek-Cypriot-controlled part of Cyprus. However, successive governments had denied this claim. In 1995, Paraschos began publicly pushing the Republic of Cyprus government to exhume the bodies of 'soldiers and unknown civilians' that lay in the Lakatamia cemetery. His voice lent strength to the pleas of Androulla Palma and Maroulla Shamishi, wives of agnoomenoi who had come to believe that their husbands had been killed during the war and buried in the Lakadamia cemetery before being identified,⁴⁸ and by 1999 the government began (but then stopped) exhumations of the graves. When, in 2002, the Republic of Cyprus government finally agreed to exhume the relevant plots in the Lakatamia cemetery, the bodies of 46 men on the missing persons list were positively identified.

Included in this group were two particular men, Christofis Pashas and Charalambos Palmas. Shortly after, the families of Pashas and Palmas launched separate cases against the Republic of Cyprus in the state's Civil Court alleging a breach of human rights and negligence. An adviser to the Greek-Cypriot CMP

member supported the claims of the men's families that in 1974 "almost all of 70 war dead interred in unmarked graves at a cemetery in the Nicosia suburb of Lakatamia had documents buried with them that could have confirmed their identity."⁴⁹ The families claim that, had state authorities been more diligent in carrying out a proper investigation, the fates of Pashas, Palmas, and 44 other men listed as agnooumeonoi would have been known, and their families spared decades of unnecessary suffering.

The cases are of particular importance to the Greek-Cypriot portrayal of the agnooumenoi. The Palmas family "claims that the government deliberately misinformed them about Charalambos' fate, instead building up the cult of the missing for political currency abroad ... demanding £1 million in compensation for a generation of what they term psychological trauma and inhuman treatment at the hands of the Republic."⁵⁰ The state's "defence rests on the premise that lack of progress in resolving the drawn-out humanitarian issue was owed primarily to the Turkish side's refusal to cooperate."⁵¹ If the families win their case, the state's argument that Turkey is to blame for the issue's continuation will be significantly damaged. This possibility, and the threat of more such embarrassing cases may have contributed to steeling the Greek-Cypriot elite's will to finally confronting the agnooumenoi issue.

Support from the Greek-Cypriot authorities is therefore the final factor explaining the CMP's productivity. Perhaps as a result of the above elements, the Republic of Cyprus authorities have in the post-Annan period been offering quiet but consistent high-level support for the CMP's work. This perspective is supported by CMP third member Christophe Girod, who recently reaffirmed that "politically the support is still here, from both communities. From both leaderships. And so far so good in terms of political will to move forward."⁵²

The support of Greek-Cypriot political elites is important; they play a central role in shaping the agnooumenoi issue, and how it is publicly perceived. Therefore, if they stop publicly blaming the Turkish government for perpetuation of the agnooumenoi issue, and at the same time move towards solving the issue, this has a number of consequences for the Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of both the agnooumenoi issue and the broader Cyprus conflict. Any changes in elite rhetoric directly affect the 'retelling' of the agnooumenoi story in the public sphere, and also has flow-on effects for how the Cyprus conflict is 'lived' in public.

Consequences of these Developments on the Public Persona of 'The Agnooumenoi'

Progress in each of these areas will have a number of consequences, and there will certainly be a cumulative effect on the public face of the agnooumenoi monolith.

Regardless, the cases of Pashas and Palmas, the investigative work of journalists, the continual return of remains to families, as well as a quietening in the government rhetoric against Turkey's role in the missing persons issue have already begun to re-shape the issue. The cases of Pashas and Palmas, as well as the work of Uludağ and Paraschos have encouraged an embryonic debate that has begun to question long-held beliefs about the missing persons issue, and consequently, about how to understand the Cyprus conflict. But, at the same time, the debate is very tentative. This hesitancy has been highlighted by Stefanos Evripidou in a recent news article:

“People are still afraid to talk of the dead or of the massacres perpetrated. There is fear that talk will open a Pandora's Box of blood, violence and revenge. What happened in the 1960s? What happened in 1974? Apart from the invading army, what crimes did Cypriots commit that have gone unpunished? These questions remain unanswered. Among Greek Cypriots, any talk of illegal killings is hidden behind great acts of heroism ...”⁵³

It is clear that while the topic cannot but be affected by the recent developments outlined in this paper, it is an area heavy with inertia.

The case which most clearly reinforces the traditional role of the agnooumenoi in the Cyprus conflict is that of Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey in the ECHR. In January 2008, the court found Turkey guilty of continuing to violate articles 2, 3, and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.⁵⁴ The court's comments on the violations of articles 2 and 5 can be considered strongly supportive of Greek-Cypriot claims that Turkey must be made to explain the fate of the agnooumenoi, and that the CMP's mandate is insufficient. Article 2 addresses the right to life, “concerning Turkey's failure to conduct an effective investigation into the whereabouts and fate of nine of the applicants, who disappeared in life-threatening circumstances”.⁵⁵ Article 5 protects the right to liberty and security, and the court reiterates its comment on Turkey's failure to conduct an effective investigation into the fate of the nine men, “concerning whom there was an arguable claim that they had been deprived of their liberty at the time of their disappearance”.⁵⁶ How the Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey decision will be used in the Greek-Cypriot political arena, and whether it will be used to push for an expansion of the CMP's mandate towards Turkish co-operation, will be telling of the domestic political climate in Cyprus regarding elite attitudes towards both the resolution of the missing persons issue and of the broader Cyprus conflict.

The case, which reasserts the (very real) victimhood of Greek Cypriots, may also have the effect of soothing an image which, I have argued, is being quietly re-shaped by the recent developments outlined above. There is also the possibility that, should the civil court find in favour of Pashas and Palmas, the ECHR's findings against Turkey in Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey may mute any public backlash against the government. The government may also be able to use the ECHR findings to defend

its position that the main impediment to resolution of the agnooumenoi issue has been the Turkish government's refusal to co-operate.

The cases of Pashas and Palmas hold the most interesting possibilities for the future of the agnooumenoi's persona in the Greek-Cypriot imagining. The cases mark two of the few public rebellions against the official imagery by Greek Cypriots who personify part of the struggle against the Turkish occupation. They are particularly brave moves, made in a daunting political climate, where opposition to government policies on any topics related to the Cyprus conflict have been perceived as borderline treason. Discourse analysis on the Pashas case shows a muted, or bewildered, domestic public reaction to the family's accusations.⁵⁷ However, the court's decisions about both cases (a ruling on the Pashas case is due this year) have the potential to open a debate on the (mis)use of the agnooumenoi in the diplomatic war against Turkey. Should the court find the state guilty of negligence, the public reaction will be interesting. Should the court's findings support the state's claims, the cases are likely to progress to the ECHR, lending them more importance.

The 2008 election to power of historically pro-reconciliation party AKEL in the Republic of Cyprus has created a unique possibility regarding the consequences and impact of these cases. It may be that the new AKEL majority government would seek to use any decisions in favour of the plaintiffs as an opportunity to break with the past. Distancing itself from previous government policies on the missing peoples may be an effective means of underlining its desire to make progress on the general issue of reunification. If the court finds against the government, the election of AKEL to the presidency may also serve to soften, or decrease the likelihood of, any public backlash against the government on such a sensitive topic.

But the factor with the most potential to influence Greek-Cypriot conceptualisation of the agnooumenoi issue must be the CMP's continuous unearthing and returning of remains. There are many levels on which the committee's work is important. At the primary level, bodies are constantly being found, and funerals are being regularly held for victims of the conflict. This means that the issue's departure from the decades-long status quo is continuously in the public consciousness, no matter how cautiously the re-burials are being reported.

At another level, the return of bodies has been fraught with a quiet tension. Before the CMP began returning remains to families in 2007, its representatives privately feared that relatives, finding evidence that their loved ones were summarily executed, would seek retributive justice.⁵⁸ While conveying understanding of the need for justice, the lack of trust and understanding between the communities was highlighted. The members feared that post-referendum

tension might be further exacerbated by inter-communal accusations of war crimes and mass murders.⁵⁹ When the members were interviewed again in late 2007 and early 2008, they were asked about the overwhelming public silence which has surrounded the return of remains in both communities. They replied that:

“When we returned the first bodies last summer, we expected that one side or the other would publish a photo of a skull with a bullet, because there are some skulls like that, summary executions ... we were expecting the pictures to be published on the front page of the newspaper, you know, saying ‘look at what the other side has done to us’, but it hasn’t been the case, which has been surprising. Politically surprising because it shows maturity and also awareness that they might affect the process, and what about the other families [who] will suffer [if the process is halted] ...”⁶⁰

The lack of strong media response to the recent burials⁶¹ supports the CMP member’s comments, and seems to reflect the recent, quiet, political support for resolution of the issue. Some central actors believe the quiet surrounding the missing persons issue is advantageous. Journalist Uludağ supports the topic’s muted treatment in the public media.

“If we start a discussion about murderers at this very moment, we will most probably be damaging the work of the Cyprus Missing Persons Committee as well as our work as journalists to locate mass graves. We are still trying to locate mass graves ... going after the murderers at this moment might turn out to be ‘sensational work for some media’ that will not serve either finding mass graves or reconciliation”.⁶²

However, while the CMP’s mandate remains so limited, there is the very real possibility that some of the agnooumenoi’s families will seek retributive justice elsewhere. Within Cyprus, there is no means for people to learn how their loved ones died, or at whose hand, and the ECHR is becoming increasingly attractive as an option. But while the Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey decision has emphasised the CMP’s limitations, few will be able to seek retributive justice in Strasbourg; cases are time-barred, which means that a relative must apply to the court within six months of receiving the bones or else their case cannot be accepted.

While the debate is currently very cautious, there is room to expect more dynamism on the subject in the future. The limitations outlined above have the potential to mobilise the families of the missing, which could channel enough public pressure to begin calls for domestic remedies such as truth commissions and the like. In addition, the new government may be more willing to explore such options, especially given that a number of AKEL supporters and members were killed during intra-communal battles both before and during the Turkish invasion. This means

that AKEL may have more motivation than previous governments to deconstruct the rhetoric which uses the agnooumenoi to ensure continued domestic support for continued struggle against the Turkish invasion.

Broader Implications for the Cyprus Conflict

This paper has highlighted three events (the recent sustained progress of the CMP; the cases of Pashas and Palmas in the Republic of Cyprus' civil courts; and the case of Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey in the ECHR) and has pointed out an as-yet unacknowledged fact: that each of these events will impact on the future of the agnooumenoi persona in Greek-Cypriot society. If we are to agree with Sant Cassia's idea that the agnooumenoi provide a vehicle for Greek-Cypriot society to conceptualise and talk about the past and the future,⁶³ then we must acknowledge that these events have the capacity to deeply impact Greek-Cypriot society. However, the fact that these events are still developing has required this paper to be largely exploratory and therefore unavoidably speculative. As the CMP's work moves more deeply into the public consciousness, the cases of Pashas and Palmas are decided, and the implications of Varnavas a.o. v. Turkey are clearer, their impact will be more fully understood, and more easily measurable.

The study's initial prediction is that the events explored above have begun to crack the mono-tonal, monolithic façade of the missing persons' issue. It was further hypothesised at the beginning of this study that because of the issue's importance in the Greek-Cypriot imagining of the Cyprus conflict, any fracture to this façade will have to be construed as a threat to the public persona of the Cyprus conflict more broadly, and therefore that any Republic of Cyprus government which seeks to preserve the (domestic and international) image of the Cyprus conflict will also seek to paper over any fractures which arise in the missing persons issue.

However, quite interestingly, the second part of this prediction seems so far not to be the case. This may signal that the implications of these events are still being processed by the Greek-Cypriot authorities. However, it may also signal a quiet turn in both the official and societal conceptualisation of the agnooumenoi's role in the broader Cyprus conflict. If the enduring quiet continues alongside resolution of the missing persons' issue, perhaps one may conclude that the agnooumenoi are no longer required to represent the Cyprus conflict in quite the same way. In any case, these events have destabilised the essentialised image of the agnooumenoi and their relationship with the Cyprus conflict.

Notes

1. While there are also Greek Cypriots who went missing in 1963/4, they are not included in the Republic of Cyprus' official missing persons list.
2. The Annan plan was a federal and consociational blueprint for the government of Cyprus completed in March 2004 under the auspices of the UN and put to the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot people in separate referendums on 25 April 2004. It was designed to reunify the country prior to the admission of Cyprus to the European Union, which was to occur on 1 May 2004. The plan was rejected in the 2004 referendum by a 76 per cent majority of the Greek-Cypriot population; and approved by a majority of 65 per cent of the Turkish-Cypriot population. Without the approval of a majority of both ethnic groups the plan could not be adopted.
3. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*. New York, Berghahn Books, p. 22.
4. See footnote 6.
5. ECHR application no's. 16064/90, 16065/90, 16066/90, 16068/90, 16069/90, 16070/90, 16071/90, 16072/90, and 16073/90.
6. For the strongest of these, see Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*; Sant Cassia, P. (2006) 'Guarding Each Other's Dead, Mourning One's Own: The Problem of Missing Persons and Missing Past in Cyprus', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 111-128; Papadakis, Y. (2005) *Echoes from the Dead Zone*, London, IB Tauris; Roussou, M. (1986) 'War in Cyprus: Patriarchy and the Penelope Myth', in Ridd, R., and Callway, H. (eds.), *Caught Up in Conflict. Women's Responses to Political Strife*, Basingstoke, Macmillan; Loizos, P. (1981) *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Δρουσιώτης Μ. (2000) *1619 Ενοχές, Τα Λάθη τα Ψέματα και οι Σκοπιμότητες*, Λευκωσία, Εκδόσεις Διαφάνεια [Drousiotis, M. (2000) *1619 Sins*, Nicosia, Diaphania Press].
7. While families of the missing people have been used by politicians for political gain, it is not the purpose of this work to explain the web of relationships, networks, interests and psychologies which have contributed to building the missing persons juggernaut. Sant Cassia has produced a magisterial work on the topic in his recent book, *Bodies of Evidence* (cited above).
8. The two terms 'missing persons' and 'agnooumenoi' each hold different meanings in this paper. The term 'agnooumenoi' is used in this paper to represent Greek-Cypriot missing persons, and to the Greek-Cypriot articulation of the missing persons' issue, while the term 'missing persons' is used to refer to the missing persons issue, or the people, as an inclusive whole.
9. Bryant, R. (2004) *Imagining the Modern, the Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*, London, IB Tauris and Co., p. 243.
10. Interestingly, then-Attorney General of the Republic of Cyprus Michalis Triantafyllides made a formal decision to override the state's legal obligation, upon the discovery of human bones, to undertake a criminal investigation. The policy implemented was

designed to encourage people to come forward with information about deaths related to 1974 in exchange for immunity from prosecution. This decision supports both the general attitude regarding discovery of the missing people in Cyprus, and the CMP's mandate, of focusing purely on discovery of the fate of the missing people.

11. Yakinthou, C. (2007) 'Between Scylla and Charybdis: Cyprus and the Problem of Engineering Political Settlements for Divided Societies', University of Western Australia, Unpublished PhD manuscript, p. 170.
12. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, p. 71.
13. This has created a number of complications. Because the Greek-Cypriot missing people have not been declared dead, their estates are not inheritable by law but protected by a custodian, and in order to re-marry, the widows of missing persons have had to divorce their missing husbands first. Effectively, the lives of their families have been frozen in time.
14. Bryant, R. (2004) *Imagining the Modern, the Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*, pp. 241-243.
15. Especially the 'Pancyprian Committee of the Relatives of the Missing Persons', and the 'Organisation of Relatives of Missing Cypriots'.
16. See for example [<http://kypros.org/CyprusPan/cyprus/missing.html>]; [<http://www.missing-cy.org>] and [<http://agrino.org/humrights/>].
17. In the broader context of the Cyprus conflict, other court cases, especially those relating to Greek and Turkish property in the European Court of Human Rights and in the Republic of Cyprus' domestic courts, as well as progress being made on the Turkish-Cypriot property commission will also play a role in the public perception of the missing people. However, the impact these and other cases will have on the missing persons issue is necessarily outside of this paper's field of examination. This is an under-explored area which is developing quite quickly. A further article exploring the broader relationship between the property issue and developments in the missing persons' persona in both Cypriot communities would be useful. In addition, an article exploring both Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot reactions to the CMP's progress and related court cases, as well as the way that the changing narratives in both communities are interrelated is being planned by the author.
18. Old wounds are opened from time to time, bringing with them a bitter reminder to Greek Cypriots of their victimhood, and the danger that still emanates from Turkey. In 2007, for example, a story was circulated by a Greek-Cypriot journalist based in the United States that there was evidence to support an old claim that a young boy listed as injured in 1974 was taken to Adana, Turkey after treatment in Cyprus. It was speculated that the boy was raised, unknowingly, as a Turk. Hopes of the boy's family were raised and then dashed when nothing came of the assertion, but it was enough to rekindle Greek-Cypriot public anxiety about the conflict. Shortly after, a similar story arose from a Greek-Cypriot mother who had heard that her missing son might have been raised by a Turkish-Cypriot woman whose husband was a Turkish army officer. For further details see Elias Hazou, 'I Know my Son is Alive', *Cyprus Mail*, 20 March 2007; Alexia Saoulli, 'Clerides: Denktas Never Told Me the Child was Dead', *Cyprus Mail*, 7 March 2007.

19. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, p. 79.
20. For the relationship between the Turkish occupation and Greek national pride, see Papadakis, Y. (2003) 'Nation, Narrative and Commemoration: Political Ritual in Divided Cyprus', *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 253-270, and Papadakis, Y. 'Nationalist Imaginings of War in Cyprus', [<http://www.cyprus-conflict.net/Papadakis%20-%20nationalism.htm>], accessed 16 December 2007.
21. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, p. 81.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
23. Jean Christou, 'Invasion and Occupation still Core Issues', *Cyprus Mail*, 24 September 2004.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Aris Hadjipanayiotou.
26. 'Still Mourning After 30 Years', *Cyprus Mail*, 20 July 2004.
27. *Ibid.*
28. See especially Uludağ, S. (2006) 'Oysters with the Missing Pearls, Nicosia, Bilban and IKME, and Andreas Paraskos' articles in Greek-language *Politis* newspaper.
29. For a summary of Greek-Cypriot historiography, see Papadakis, Y. (1995) 'The Politics of Memory and Forgetting' (Chapter from doctoral dissertation), [<http://www.cyprus-conflict.net/papadakis-diss%20-pt2.htm>], accessed 12 February 2008.
30. The idea that any Greek Cypriot on the official missing persons' list could have been killed during the coup is a significant taboo in Greek-Cypriot society. In part, this is due to the shame that surrounds the coup – which precipitated the Turkish invasion and occupation of Cyprus – and the idea that Greek Cypriots were killing each other, as well as strong unwillingness to persecute those involved in the coup. But it is also a taboo subject because in the face of Greek-Cypriot calls for information about the agnooumenoi, Turkish-Cypriot officials have frequently claimed that most of the agnooumenoi were not killed by Turks but by Greeks. To acknowledge this idea, then, is to give credit to the Turkish argument, and therefore also discredit their own calls for information from the Turkish government about the fate of the agnooumenoi; it is to play into the enemy's hands. For further analysis and support, see Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, esp. pp. 72-73.
31. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, p. 220.
32. Kudret Özersay's letter to Sevgül Uludağ in Turkish-language *YeniDüzen* newspaper highlights the painful process that surrounds the exhumations for families of 'missing' loved ones. In the letter, he outlines his reasons for not wanting the CMP to exhume his father and uncles, who were killed near their village of Alaminos. See [http://www.stwing.upenn.edu/~durduran/hamambocu/authors/svg/svg7_12_2004.html], accessed 4 May 2008.

33. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for this insight and for the comments upon which this paragraph has been built.
34. As of April 2008.
35. Christophe Girod, CMP third member. Interview with author, 8 January 2008.
36. In 1999 and again in 2001 the Clerides government began unilateral exhumations of Turkish-Cypriot mass graves. See 'Cyprus to Dig up Graves in Check on Missing People', Reuters News, 17 August 1998; 'Republic of Cyprus: Kassolides – Exhumation Process May End the Drama of the Families of Missing', M2 Presswire, 4 June 1999; 'Cyprus Exhumations End, Identification to Start', Reuters News, 12 July 1999; 'Cyprus May Open Turkish Cypriot Graves for Checks', Reuters News, 21 June 2001. However, they stopped when the Turkish-Cypriot administration did not reciprocate the gesture.
37. Phase I: Archaeological Phase
Phase II: Anthropological Phase
Phase III: Genetic Phase
Phase IV: Return of Remains
38. See [www.cmp-cyprus.org].
39. The CMP reconvened on 30 August 2004 after five years of inactivity.
40. Christophe Girod. The CMP is composed of three members: one Greek Cypriot, one Turkish Cypriot, and one UN representative, who is called the 'third member', but who acts unofficially as the committee head.
41. Christophe Girod, CMP third member. Interview with author, 11 October 2006.
42. See figures 1 and 2, appendix 1.
43. ECHR decision, 10 May 2001. Application no. 25781/94.
44. Confidential interview with UN diplomat based in Cyprus.
45. Restrictions on freedom of movement between north and south Cyprus were partially lifted by the 2003 unilateral decision by then-president of the internationally unrecognised 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)', Rauf Denktaş, to open two checkpoints, allowing Turkish and Greek Cypriots to cross to the other side for the first time since 1975.
46. Achilleas Demetriades. Interview with author, 21 December 2007.
47. Private correspondence with author, January 2008.
48. For a deeper study of the Shamishi and Palma cases, see Sant Cassia, P. (2005) *Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus*, and Sant Cassia, P., 'Recognition and Emotion: Exhumations of Missing Persons in Cyprus' in Papadakis et. al., (2006) *Divided Cyprus: Modernity, History and an Island in Conflict*, Indiana, Indiana University Press.
49. 'State "neglected duty" to Look into Missing Evidence', *The Cyprus Weekly*, 7-13 July 2006.
50. 'Family Demands Compensation for Trauma over Missing Person', *Cyprus Mail*, 15 July 2001.
51. 'State "neglected duty" to Look into Missing Evidence', *The Cyprus Weekly*, 7-13 July 2006.

52. Christophe Girod, CMP third member. Interview with author, January 2008.
53. Stefanos Evripidou, 'Burying our Sins along with our Sons', Cyprus Mail, 10 February 2008.
54. On 28 March 2008 Turkey applied for a referral to the Grand Chamber of the ECHR. If Turkey is successful, the case will essentially be re-tried. If not, the judgement will become final.
55. ECHR Press Release issued by the Registrar of chamber judgement in Varnavas a.o. v Turkey.
56. Ibid.
57. Analysis conducted of Greek-language newspapers Politis, and Phileleftheros, as well as English-language daily Cyprus Mail in the period 2005-2008.
58. In confidential interviews with author, October and November 2006.
59. Ibid.
60. In confidential interviews with the author, December 2007 and January 2008.
61. Stories such as the following are representative of the way that burials of the agnooumenoi are treated in the Greek-Cypriot press: 'Mass Graves in North to be Exhumed in Search for Missing', Cyprus Mail, 23 December 2004; Simon Bahcheli, 'Digging in the Wrong Place?', Cyprus Mail, 12 January 2005; Jean Christou, 'We Dumped them in the Well', Cyprus Mail, 14 January 2005; Simon Bahcheli and Michele Kambas, 'Cyprus Families Grieve Missing Loved Ones at Last', Reuters News, 8 July 2007.
62. Sevgül Uludağ, comment in electronic forum 'Reunification in Cyprus Starts with Truth and Reconciliation', in blogged discussion 'Top Lawyer Calls for Truth Commission'. [www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=22758546720&topic=4274], accessed 20 February 2008.
63. Sant Cassia, P. (2005) Bodies of Evidence: Burial, Memory and the Recovery of Missing Persons in Cyprus, p. 22.