



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Written Ministerial Statement

XXX 2019

Cyprus: Civil litigation brought by 33 Cypriot nationals against Her Majesty's Government in connection with the Emergency Period in Cyprus, 1955-1959.

The Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Alan Duncan):

I would like to update Parliament on a legal settlement that the UK Government has reached concerning civil law claims arising from the Emergency Period in Cyprus from 1955-1959 ("the Emergency").

During the Emergency, Greek Cypriot paramilitaries fought an armed guerrilla campaign to try to bring to an end British rule in Cyprus and establish a union between Cyprus and Greece. As part of the response to this campaign, the Governor of Cyprus instituted emergency measures which included the deployment of UK military and police personnel.

In July 2015, 35 individuals (since reduced to 33) brought claims against the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Secretary of State for Defence regarding their treatment in detention during the Emergency.

The Government has now reached an agreement with the claimants, in full and final settlement of those claims. The UK Government has agreed to pay a settlement sum of £1,000,000 in damages with an amount in legal costs to be determined by the court in due course. The settlement does not constitute any admission of liability and is not a precedent in respect of any potential future claims against the Government. Indeed, the Government has maintained throughout proceedings that the passage of time means that it is now no longer possible to establish all of the facts with certainty. However, the Government has settled the case in order to draw a line under this litigation and to avoid the further escalation of costs, which would ultimately be borne by the taxpayer.

In reaching this settlement, the UK Government reaffirms its highest respect for the memory and sacrifice of British and Cypriot service personnel and employees of the Crown who gave their lives, who lost family members or loved ones, or whose lives suffered permanent disruption as a result of the Emergency.

The UK Government acknowledges the strongly held views of many Cypriots about the Emergency. It is a matter of regret for the UK Government that the transition of Cyprus from British administration to independence should have been preceded by five years of violence and loss of life, affecting all residents of the island.

We must not forget the past – and indeed we must learn from it. But it is most important to look to the future. Today, the bilateral relationship that the UK shares with Cyprus is one of friendship and close partnership; spanning a broad network of security, personal, business, administrative, cultural and educational ties. The Government reaffirms its commitment to

building a modern, forward-looking relationship between the UK and Cyprus, built on shared values of mutual respect and full equality.

LEGAL MINNOWS WIN £1M PAYOUT FOR VICTIMS OF CYPRUS TORTURE

EXCLUSIVE

DAVID KUCZORA
Special Correspondent

A BIRMINGHAM law firm has taken on the might of Her Majesty's Government – and won an out-of-court settlement of £1 million.

K J Conroy & Co, based in leafy St Paul's Square in the Jewellery Quarter, brought a class action on behalf of 33 elderly Greek Cypriots who claimed they were tortured and abused during the "Cyprus Emergency" of 1955-59.

As the firm comprises just two solicitors and one graduate historian, the case is being described as a "David and Goliath" action on the international legal circuit.

Kevin Conroy, the lead solicitor, said: "Claims such as these are usually conducted by large law firms with deep pockets.

"We spent many hours in research at the National Archives and other document repositories, including the archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva and the Cyprus State Archives."

The extraordinary tale of how such a local Birmingham law firm came to sue the government began in 2011, when a case was brought by Kenyan "Mau-Mau" veterans.

Kevin Conroy was in Cyprus when it was announced that thousands of classified top secret documents were to be released which could shine new light on similar allegations of torture during the Emergency.

He met with two victims whilst on the island – and was immediately taken aback by their story.

It was a labour of love, said Conroy, undertaken by a team fully knowing they might never see a penny for their efforts.

"I always believed in this case, as did the many other people who became involved," he said. "Everyone gave their time in the full knowledge that if the claim had failed, they would not be paid for their work."

He managed to convince the government to allow him access to the classified files before their official dis-



■ The team who won the case, from left, Peter Haynes QC, Kevin Conroy, Howard Shelley, Ruth Shelley and Michael Stephens. Opposite, Kevin Conroy with Androulla Yianni, daughter of one of the claimants, and Paul Constantinou, son of a claimant

closure into the public domain. This meant numerous visits to the secretive Hanslope Park, owned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, located near Milton Keynes.

"We weren't even allowed to the toilet without supervision," said Conroy. "This was unprecedented access to files which had remained buried in a secure archive for over 60 years in some cases."

It took years of research on a forensic level – obtaining witness statements, eyewitness reports, medical records and much more – to bring the case to a stage where finally, in 2015, K J Conroy & Co could file in the High Court.

Conroy talks of the sheer avalanche of paperwork his team had to plough through. "We accumulated 83 lever-

arch files of relevant documents, all of which had to be catalogued. We had also identified many more relevant documents, still secret, that we would, had the claim continued, have needed to see. We took nearly 40 witness statements, which meant repeated visits to Cyprus."

But the case turned a corner in January 2018 when a preliminary legal issue was heard in front of Mr Justice Kerr of the Queen's Bench Division at the Royal Courts of Justice.

The government argued that the case should be tried on Cypriot law rather than British, an argument rejected by the High Court judge.

The issue became a political hot-potato, with Bambos Charalambous MP (Lab, Enfield Southgate) stepping up for the claimants

The back-bencher is Vice-Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Cyprus, as well as sitting on the Commons' justice Committee. He is also only the second ever MP of Greek Cypriot heritage.

One of his own constituents, Christos Constantinou, was a claimant in the case.

After meeting with K J Conroy & Co, he became convinced the cause deserved his support – and he became a passionate campaigner for justice for the Cyprus 33.

He flew to Cyprus to personally meet some of the other veterans who had struggled for independence and met with the British High Commissioner to place pressure on the government to settle the matter.

In November 2018 he said: "The gov-

ernment was well aware methods in Cyprus involved torture.

"Let's be clear, though – the vast majority of British forces serving in Cyprus during the Emergency were upstanding. This is absolutely not a witch-hunt against well-meaning squaddies facing very challenging circumstances.

"But there were a small number of soldiers who committed vile acts of brutality. It was torture, plain and simple. It seems that these actions were sanctioned and sponsored by the government of the day."

"The government now needs to settle the legal case currently progressing through the High Court as a matter of principle and draw a line under the atrocities that happened as part of Britain's Colonial past."

NEWS



■ A soldier on duty during the Cyprus Emergency

Mum's visit to site of murder

LOVED ones of a teenager murdered at a Coventry nightclub have laid flowers on the fourth anniversary of his death.

And for Daniel Kirkwood's mum it was the very first time - and also the last time - that she has visited the spot where her son died.

Pauline Darcy wanted to visit the former Society nightclub before it turns into a karaoke and e-gaming centre to ensure that people remember her son.

The doors at Society have remained closed ever since Daniel, 18, was brutally attacked and murdered in the early hours of March 15, 2015.

His killer, Tobiah Thompson, was given a life sentence at Warwick Crown Court and will serve a minimum of 32 years.

Four years after his murder on what was Mother's Day 2015, his mum, other family members and friends visited the site.

Pauline said: "This is where he died. We want people to remember."

"I don't want people to forget him or the people who have bought the place. I hope it's a safe place. I don't want anyone else to go through what we did."



The Royal Courts of Justice

The lobbying efforts in public and behind the scenes worked, as just before Christmas last year the government invited K J Conroy & Co to sit down to discuss settlement of the case. At the end of January, 2019, the government made their million-pound offer.

The situation seemed unreal to the solicitors from a small Brummie practice. As Kevin Conroy recalls: "I remember walking down Whitehall and thinking 'What on earth have we taken on here?'"

"I really think the government wouldn't have settled unless they thought they might lose the case."

"I always believed in this case as did the many other people who became involved. My faith in the clients and in the team I put together to assist the claimants has been vindicated."

And whilst the group of septuagenari-

ans and octogenarians have finally seen justice, for some of them the outcome didn't come soon enough.

"During the course of the litigation, four claimants died and another four lost mental capacity," said Conroy. "Most tragically, Andreas Voudaskas, 76, died just a few days before the announcement that his case had been settled."

"Mr Voudaskas had suffered a long battle with Parkinson's Disease and sadly passed before knowing he had been compensated, as the settlement was under a court injunction so we couldn't tell him."

So what next after such an epic legal battle?

Howard Shelley, another solicitor involved in the case, said: "This has been the most interesting and challenging case I have ever been involved in. I shall now have to return to doing 'ordinary' law."

CRAZY WORLD

✦ A HERD of goats turned up in a town centre after bad weather drove the animals from their hilly home. The wild herd of Kashmiri goats were spotted wandering through the streets of Llandudno, North Wales.

BOWENS Holidays 2019
 Courteous staff, great selection of hotels all half board and comfortable Mercedes Coaches

Holiday destinations
 Durations (1,2,3,4,5,6 & 7 night holidays)

England	Blackpool	Bognor Regis
Babbacombe	Bridlington	Canterbury
Bournemouth	Derbyshire	Durham
Chester	Exmouth	Guernsey, Herm & Jersey
Eastbourne	Isles of Scilly	Isles of Wight
Isle of Man	Fulkestone	Great Yarmouth
Iffracombe	Loce	Newcastle
Lake District	Norfolk	Northumbria
Newquay	Scarborough	Sidmouth
Paignton	St Ives	Suffolk Villages
Saint Agnes	Warner Holidays	Weston super mare
Torquay	Yorkshire	
Weymouth		
Scotland	Fort William	Hebrides Islands
Edinburgh	Isle of Bute	Isle of Skye
Isle of Arran	Loch Lomond	Enchanted Forest
Inverness	Shetland Islands	
Orkneys Islands		
Wales	Carmarthen	Llandudno
Barmouth	Tenby	
Snowdonia		
Ireland	Dublin	County Wicklow
Belfast		

A GREAT CHOICE OF HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVE BREAKS BOOK NOW

Request a brochure online
www.bowensholidays.com or call 0121 559 1237
 Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm

HOME COLLECTION SERVICE AVAILABLE



ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΙ ΑΓΩΝΙΣΤΩΝ ΕΟΚΑ 1955 - 1959

Προδρόμου 40, 2063 Στρόβολος
Τηλ.: 22423333, Fax: 22428899
ΛΕΥΚΩΣΙΑ

With this letter I would like to thank you for your great effort, support and struggle to contribute in the justification of EOKA Cypriots Fighters for Liberation, who filed a lawsuit in the UK's Royal Courts of Justice against British Government, concerning claims of torture and abuse of EOKA veterans fighters endured during struggle for independence from colonial rule between 1955 - 1959 EOKA insurgency.

As head of Eoka veterans' association, as well as of this battle with the legal system of UK, I assure you that money was never a motivation in the lawsuit, despite the fact that we are not rich and most of us have suffered economic damages as well as long-term of permanent psychological or physical problems. Although, as claimants we earned payment settlements, what is most important to us is the of moral satisfaction that we are justified for the brutal behavior we suffered during our struggle for liberation. The recognition of our human's rights it's the greatest compensation for EOKA fighters.

We expected that today's government of United Kingdom, would apologize to us and we were seeking for the government to address to us expressing how "SORRY" they feel for the torture, abuse and human's rights violation we suffered by British soldiers. Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Alan Duncan has failed to disclaim liability of crimes against us by the guilty ones, although he tried to deny liability in a diplomatic way.

I strongly believe, that payment settlements constitute admission of liability, for the tortured fighters. Our victory in the Courts of Law on British Ground, was perceived by the media, as recognition of the brutal behavior we suffered under the rule of British colony. Mr. Duncan, did not behave as worthy under the circumstances. A simple "SORRY" on behalf of the British government, would written his name in history.

Nevertheless, I would like to thank you and express my deep gratitude for the long-term and intensive effort that led to the final outcome.

Thasos Sofokleous

President of Association of EOKA