

Top stories in 2008



Cyprus funds Missing Persons project

The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) has expressed sincere gratitude to Cyprus for its latest donation of €150,000.

According to a statement, the renewed donation will enable the CMP to pursue its project on the exhumation, identification and return of remains of missing persons. It is intended to cover unforeseen expenses incurred at the end of 2008.

The CMP is aiming to locate, exhume, identify and return as many remains as possible in order to bring an end to the uncertainty which has affected so many families for so many years.

To date, the remains of over 466 individuals have been exhumed while 110 have been identified and returned to the families concerned. Additional missing persons will be identified and their remains returned to their families early in the coming year.

Following the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, a Committee on Missing Persons was set up in the early 1980s to deal with this humanitarian issue.

Hundreds of Greek Cypriots have been missing since 1974. Turkish Cypriots have been missing since the early 1960s, when intercommunal fighting broke out.

Here are some of the stories that included Greece and Cyprus in the last year. While this is not of course a full list (just a small snippet) here are some big stories that were mentioned.

Greece Rioting -

Probably the top story that brought Greece to the spotlight in 2008 was the least favorable. December saw the world focus its attention on Athens and several cities in Greece as protesters and anarchists rampaged through streets causing extensive property damage just as the Christmas shopping season hit its peak.

Archbishop Christodoulos Passes -

Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens and all of Greece, passed away in January of 2008 after a long battle with cancer. He was attributed with trying to re energize the youth in getting involved with the church.

Immigration, immigration -

Many of Greece's islands were in the news periodically throughout the summer as throngs of immigrants tried to reach Greece's shores from various parts of the world. 2008 looks to be a record year in the number of immigrants who were intercepted trying to reach Greece. (And who knows



how many made the journey.)

Bye bye Olympic -

After bidding processes, and efforts by the government to save the ailing airline; Olympic will cease to exist in 2009 as Greece's National carrier. Aegean Airlines has continued expanding internationally on the other hand, continuing to replace Olympic's former routes. So long Olympic.

Cyprus talks restarted -

In what many are seeing as a last effort to unite the island, members of the Turkish community of the island and the Greek recog-

nized government of the south have begun dialogues and talks to reunify the island. Will there finally be peace in 2009?

FYROM name game -

Greece's neighbor to the north was a thorn politically throughout much of 2008 as threats, propaganda and name calling was common between the governments of Greece and FYROM. FYROM became furious with Greece after it was blocked from entering the EU in April.

Shipping domination continues -

The Greek shipping industry continued to grow in size in 2008 and was going for a very profitable year before the economic crisis hit. We will see what is in store for 2009.

Greek bank growth abroad -

Acquisitions and mergers was a top story also in the Greek financial industry in the early part of 2008 as Greek banks continued to expand their presence throughout the Balkans, Turkey and Egypt.

What happened to Greek sports? -

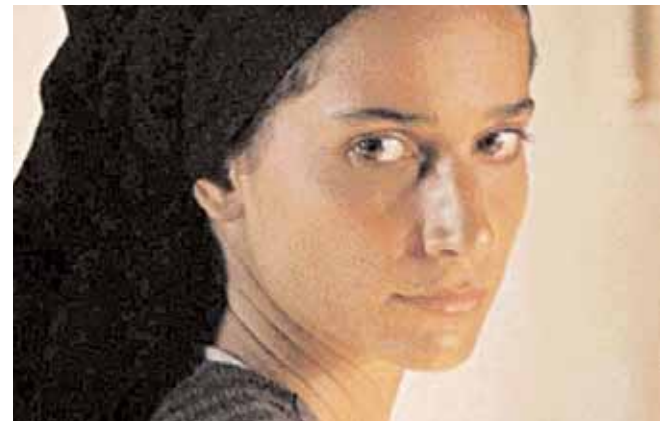
A weak performance by Greece in the Euro 2008 Soccer Championship was only a precursor to what was to happen in Greek international sports for the year. Doping scandals with very prominent athletes hurt the image of several Greek teams and athletes, including several at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

We can only imagine what 2009 will have in store! Happy New Year Everyone and be safe!!

Well Kept Secrets - Athanassia

In a nutshell: A young girl is ostracised from her small island community in Greece and forced to start a new life in the States

SET on the small island of Nisyros and in the city of New York, this ambitious love story attempts to bridge the gap between two very different periods in a smooth co-production that sets new standards for Greek filmmaking. Athanassia is a creature of few words with a penchant for blending into the background. She doesn't oppose her destiny. She chooses to accept life for what it is and react accordingly, without weighing the consequences.



Living in near-primitive conditions on an isolated island, she ends up falling in love with her sister's husband, even bearing his illegitimate child. As young Athanassia, wonderful Marina Kalogirou makes it easy to believe that this act of adultery holds no malice on her part and doesn't even mean she loves her sister any less. She is simply unable to resist the forces at work. Unfortunately, the rest of the community doesn't see it that way and Athanassia soon ends up desolate and alone, banished to a cave near the seafront, which in her condition would mean certain death. Fast-forward to the future and a very different Athanassia awaits. Married to an American photographer, she now has a life of her own, but the pain has yet to subside. Her relationship with her daughter Angela is proof that the past lives on through our children and tensions are never far from the surface. Unable to change her own history, she tries to control her daughter and silently disapproves of everything she does.

Greek-Canadian actress Stravroula Logothetis, as the older Athanassia, does a fantastic job working her character's past into her facial features, with the pain mirrored in her eyes rather than her actions or words.

The missing link between past and present is Angela, who eventually decides to track down her real father. And that's where the film's greatest weakness lies. Once she decides to go back, we suddenly realise Athanassia's past is only 30 years removed from her present and it becomes increasingly difficult to accept two such different lives have been led by the same person. Director Panos Karkanevatos wisely resorts to beautiful silences to fill in the gaps, but Well Kept Secrets - Athanassia still lacks a touch of inspiration that would take it to the next level and make the whole thing believable.

Education up for debate first

Education will be the first political battleground of 2009, after Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis yesterday asked for a debate on the state of schooling in Greece to be organized in Parliament.

Karamanlis wrote to Parliament Speaker Dimitris Sioufas yesterday to ask for time to be set aside this month for the debate. "The issue of education in all its aspects and at all its levels, especially with respect to the tertiary sector, is a paramount issue that needs to be discussed so that all the parties can take up their positions," he said.

Following the repeated protests in December after the shooting of Alexis Grigoropoulos, students have already planned the first public rally of 2009 to take place on Friday and Karamanlis knows education will again be a key issue.

Education has been an area where the government has clashed with PASOK and the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in particular and, as suggested by the prime minister's letter, Karamanlis feels that he can expose the weaknesses in their arguments in a parliamentary debate.