



# TASOULA HADJITOFI

## FROM REFUGEE TO ICON HUNTER



*A refugee's quest to reclaim her nation's stolen heritage*

**Tasoula Hadjitofi** will discuss her experiences of war and injustice; her ongoing campaign to preserve cultural heritage worldwide and her tireless work to combat art trafficking.

### SUPPORTING SPEAKERS

**Professor Mark Altaweel** Reader in Near East Archaeology at University College London.

**Dr Ara Sarafian** Historian specialising on late Ottoman and modern Armenian history. Director of the Gomidas Institute in London.

Admission free • The event will be in English • Discussion and Q&A  
Tasoula's book *The Icon Hunter* will be available for sale



**Wednesday 19 July 2017 • 7.30pm**

### Theatro Technis

26 Crowndale Road, London NW1 1TT

☯ Nearest tube Mornington Crescent

**RSVP** 020 8888 2556 or [admin@lobbyforcyprus.org](mailto:admin@lobbyforcyprus.org)

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*A refugee's quest to reclaim her nation's stolen heritage*

**Tasoula Hadjitofi** will discuss her experiences of war and injustice; her ongoing campaign to preserve cultural heritage worldwide and her tireless work to combat art trafficking.

In 1974 Tasoula Hadjitofi and her family were forced to flee their home in Famagusta, Cyprus during the Turkish invasion. As a refugee living in the Netherlands, Tasoula devoted her life to infiltrating and exposing the shady underworld of art traffickers. It all began when a corrupt art dealer contact her about an icon of Saint Andreas, and since that moment more than twenty years ago, Tasoula has fought for the repatriation of looted antiquities to their rightful owners in war torn countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, as well as her homeland of Cyprus.

Tasoula will tell her remarkable story of her life as an "icon hunter," and give an account of how hundreds of religious sites were destroyed and looted during and after the Turkish invasion and occupation in Cyprus; and how many of those stolen artefacts came to be sold on the international black market.

She will discuss her memoir, *The Icon Hunter*, a powerful chronicle of art trafficking and the impact it has on those whose lives are torn apart in conflict zones. She describes her book as "my gift to my country, Cyprus, my gift to 65 million refugees worldwide."

Tasoula is the founder of Walk of Truth, a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to raise awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage in conflict areas. As a 'Culture Crime Watcher', Tasoula engages the public in protecting cultural heritage as a currency of peace. She hopes that Walk of Truth and her book will empower and connect every refugee around the world who wishes to use the lessons learned from Cyprus for their own country.

## SUPPORTING SPEAKERS

**Professor Mark Altaweel** is a Reader in Near East Archaeology at University College London, UCL. He has been involved in a variety of research projects in the Middle East and has experience in investigating looted antiquities from the region. His work includes the social history and presenting the importance of the ancient Near East in shaping world history and culture. He has been extensively interviewed about recent events in Syria and Iraq.

**Dr Ara Sarafian** is a historian specialising on late Ottoman and modern Armenian history. He is the director of the Gomidas Institute in London. In recent years he has worked as an academic activist with Turkish civil society organisations, professional bodies, and municipalities to stop the destruction of Turkey's diverse cultural heritage, build bridges between communities, and reintegrate the history of Armenians into its broader regional context.

## CHAIR

**Nick Kounoupas**, specialist lawyer in intellectual property, fraud, cultural property and international justice law. Nick was the UK lawyer for the Church of Cyprus, tasked with recovering and repatriating mosaics and icons stolen from churches and monasteries in the occupied area of Cyprus.

- Admission free
- Discussion and Q&A
- The event will be in English
- *The Icon Hunter* book will be available for sale

*The seminar is part of Cyprus Week at Theatro Technis, which will mark 43 years since the Turkish invasion and occupation of the northern area of the Republic of Cyprus.*

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