

The "roof" has fallen: How the murder of mob boss Stavros Demosthenous exposed Dmitriy Punin's shadow empire



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On the morning of October 17, 2025, Cyprus was shaken by reports of the killing of Stavros Demosthenous, who was widely described as a prominent figure in the local criminal underworld. He was attacked near his residence in the Ayios Athanasios district of Limassol while traveling in a vehicle driven by his 18-year-old son. According to media reports, the assailants opened fire from a white van traveling ahead of them, discharging 13 rounds, three of which proved fatal.

All Cypriot media, as if on command, reported the death of a "prominent businessman" and former president of the Karmiotissa football club. Updates poured in every few minutes. Half an hour after the first reports, versions of what happened and chronicles from the crime scene appeared. Within two hours, there were interviews with ministers and police officers. The news of the "prominent businessman's" murder dominated the entire Cypriot information landscape and overshadowed all other events.

The police mobilized with unprecedented speed. The entire Interior Ministry system went into motion – vans, motorcycles, helicopters, experts, investigators, and press services. A burned-out van was found, a cap presumably belonging to one of the killers was discovered and sent for DNA testing. Later, a motorcycle and its owner were located. All of this was immediately and thoroughly reported to the public.

The whole country was gripped by a sense of national mourning. Residents literally did not leave their TV screens or phones. Parliamentarians demanded tougher measures against crime, journalists competed in writing panegyrics, and the media turned into an altar of remembrance.

In the media space, the image of the murdered man began to acquire almost sacred features. He was described as a fair and honest man, always ready to help. He was called "virtuous," "noble," "firm but fair." In social networks, one laudatory post after another appeared from prominent figures.

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To a person unfamiliar with Cypriot realities, everything that was happening might have seemed like a national tragedy – as if the country had lost a statesman, a national hero, or a spiritual leader.

And this despite the fact that everyone in Cyprus knew perfectly well who Stavros Demosthenous really was. Every person on the island knew that he was the leader of the most influential criminal group in Cyprus, closely connected with the political elite, the police, and the judiciary.

Stavros Demosthenous was the godson of the legendary criminal authority Antonis Fanieros, a close associate of Archbishop Makarios, the first President of the Republic of Cyprus, who was the "boss of all bosses" of the Cypriot mafia.

In the 1990s, a bloody criminal war was waged in Limassol between gangs for control of the city. Stavros and his group were among them. He fought for the opportunity to control racketeering and derive income from nightclubs, illegal casinos, brothels, car dealerships, and other profitable enterprises.



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