



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2002/12  
17 August 2001

Original: ENGLISH

---

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Fifty-eighth session  
Item 11 (e) of the provisional agenda

**CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION  
OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE**

**Letter dated 24 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus  
to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the United Nations  
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

As a result of a deliberate policy methodically implemented by Turkey in the occupied areas of Cyprus, the cultural identity of the northern part of the island, which dates back to the seventh millennium BC, is in grave danger of being permanently and completely destroyed. Following the military invasion and occupation in 1974 of the northern part of Cyprus, Turkey and the subordinate regime it set up in the occupied areas began implementing a policy designed to Turkify the occupied part of the island and to destroy all traces of its predominantly Hellenic and Greek Orthodox cultural heritage.

In the context of this policy, of the 502 churches and 17 monasteries and other religious sites in the occupied areas, hundreds have been desecrated, converted into depots of the occupation army or even into stables. Moreover, icons and other sacred items, as well as objects of great archaeological value, have been illegally exported and sold abroad.

From the evidence obtained by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, including photographic material:

133 churches, monasteries and chapels have been desecrated;

77 churches have been converted into mosques;

18 are used as depots, dormitories or hospitals by the occupation forces;

13 are used as stockyards or hay barns;

One church has been converted into a hotel (the Church of Agia Anastasia in Lapithos);

One church has been rented to a British national and is used as a School of Fine Arts (the Church of Panagia Chrysotrimithiotissa in Trimithi).

A detailed list of administrative district and village of all churches, chapels and monasteries whose condition has been documented to date is given in the annex attached hereto.

The utter disrespect shown by Turkey for the cultural heritage of the part of Cyprus it occupies since 1974 and in particular for places of worship, churches and monasteries, is unacceptable and contrary to international law and morality. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus strongly condemns Turkey's deliberate attempt to destroy the cultural heritage of the occupied areas and calls upon the international community to pressure Turkey to put an end to this policy.

I should be very grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex\* could be circulated as a document of the Commission on Human Rights under item 11 (e) of the agenda of the fifty-eighth session.

(Signed): Alexandros VIKIS  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

---

\* Reproduced as received, in the language of submission only.