



General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 October 2020

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 44

Question of Cyprus

Letter dated 23 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 22 October 2020, addressed to you by Mehmet Dâna, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 23 October 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in response to the statement made by the representative of the Greek Cypriot administration at the Third Committee, on 6 October 2020, under agenda item 72 (b), entitled “Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, which blatantly distorts facts pertaining to Cyprus. Since the Greek Cypriot side has been politicizing even humanitarian issues for propaganda purposes at international platforms, where the Turkish Cypriot side is not present, I am compelled to respond in writing in order to set the record straight.

The Greek Cypriot side has been continuing to misinform the international community by portraying the Cyprus problem as one of “invasion” and “occupation”. None of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention of 1974 as “invasion” or “occupation”, as it was undertaken in accordance with the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, following the coup attempt organized by the military junta in Athens and its Greek Cypriot collaborators, aiming to annex the entire island to Greece (enosis) and total annihilation of Turkish Cypriot people. It should be underlined that the Cyprus problem commenced in 1963, not in 1974, when the Greek Cypriot side forcibly usurped the title of the partnership Republic of Cyprus and expelled their Turkish Cypriot partners from all State organs. During the years from 1963 to 1974, a period that the Greek Cypriot representative has conveniently chosen to ignore, the Greek Cypriots, aided and encouraged by Greece, took part in an ethnic cleansing campaign against Turkish Cypriots, known as the Akritas Plan, with the ultimate aim of achieving enosis. This large-scale violence and ensuing gross human rights violations necessitated that the Security Council deploy the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus in 1964 in order to stop the bloodshed and atrocities perpetrated against the Turkish Cypriot people. Given that there is a plethora of United Nations documents attesting to these crimes against humanity, the fact that there is no single reference to it by the Greek Cypriot representative is a testament to the fact that his remarks are not fact-based but another episode of the well-known Greek Cypriot propaganda machinery.

In a similar vein, contrary to the Greek Cypriot representative’s allegations, the issue of “displaced persons” dates back to 1963, when the Turkish Cypriots throughout the island had to flee their homes for fear of their lives in the face of the Greek Cypriot onslaught which lasted for 11 years. Though many Turkish Cypriots as well as Greek Cypriots were displaced in 1974 as a result of the Greek/Greek Cypriot coup d’état and its aftermath, the question of displaced persons was settled through the voluntary population exchange agreement reached between the two sides at the third round of talks held in Vienna in 1975. The agreement was implemented under the supervision of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and both the agreement as well as its implementation are well recorded in relevant United Nations documents ([S/11789](#) of 5 August 1975, [S/11789/Add.1](#) of 10 September 1975).

The Greek Cypriot representative, who attempts to portray himself as the champion of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms, ironically ignores the gravest human rights violation on the island, namely the unjust and inhuman isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people at the instigation of his own administration. This all-encompassing isolation ranges from denying the Turkish Cypriot people the right to representation in the international arena, including in cultural, academic and sports events; to preventing and restricting their travel abroad and their communication with the outside world; to curtailing trade relations with

other countries. I would like to take this opportunity to remind that the unjust isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people is the most important element poisoning the relations between the two sides and their peoples, thus undermining the prospects of a negotiated settlement on the island.

The allegation of the Greek Cypriot representative regarding “demographic engineering” in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is also unfounded and is yet another product of the Greek Cypriot side’s ongoing misinformation and defamation campaign. The procedure through which citizenship is acquired in Northern Cyprus is similar to that widely applied throughout the world. In relation to this, it should be noted that the Greek Cypriot administration has allowed the settlement of thousands of non-Greek Cypriots in Southern Cyprus, including from Greece, in accordance with its own domestic legislation. It should also be underlined that the Greek Cypriot administration is currently under thorough scrutiny by the European Union for its “investor citizenship scheme” that was put in place in 2013, under which a minimum €2 million (\$2.2 million) investment could buy a passport and visa-free travel throughout the European Union. These acquired “golden passports” through the scheme in question have raised concern that this scheme has been exploited as a way of money-laundering through offshore companies and providing a safe haven to fugitives within the European Union. In fact, it was recently revealed by an esteemed media outlet that prominent Greek Cypriot politicians are also involved in aiding and abetting convicted criminals to obtain European Union passports through the said scheme. As it is known, the Speaker of the Greek Cypriot House of Representatives, Demetris Syllouris, had to resign after a video appeared which showed that he was offering to facilitate a golden passport for a fictitious convicted felon. This led the European Commission to reiterate its serious concern about the so-called “investor citizenship scheme”. In this regard, the European Commission issued a statement on 13 October 2020 stating that the Commission “...watched in disbelief how high-level officials were trading European citizenship for financial gains. President [Ursula] von der Leyen was clear when saying that European values are not for sale. The Commission is currently looking into compliance with EU law of the Cypriot scheme in view of possible infringement proceedings.” In fact, on 20 October 2020, the European Commission announced that it would start “infringement procedures” (legal action) against Cyprus (the Greek Cypriot administration), stressing that selling citizenship “undermines the essence of EU citizenship”.

With regard to the comments made by the Greek Cypriot representative about the issue of property, it should be noted that, unlike the Greek Cypriot side, which does not provide an effective remedy mechanism for Turkish Cypriot properties in South Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot side recognizes and respects the right to property, including of Greek Cypriots, who left properties in North Cyprus. Accordingly, the Turkish Cypriot side has established an effective domestic remedy mechanism, namely the Immovable Property Commission, as recognized by the European Court of Human Rights to settle the claims of Greek Cypriots in accordance with the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights. As of 13 October 2020, 6,740 applications have been lodged with the Commission and 1,213 of them have been concluded through friendly settlements and 33 through formal hearings. On the other hand, Turkish Cypriots who had to abandon their properties in South Cyprus are still unable to claim any sort of effective remedy, including compensation. Under the “Custodianship Law” in South Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot administration acts as the “Custodian” of Turkish Cypriot properties, preventing remedies such as restitution, exchange or compensation for Turkish Cypriots.

Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot administration aims to exploit the Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in North Cyprus for political propaganda purposes by referring to them as the “enclaved”. The Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in North

Cyprus themselves deny the claim that they are “enclaved”, as was voiced in an interview conducted with the Greek Cypriot residents in Karpaz. When a reporter mentioned that the purpose of his visit was to see the “enclaved people” in the region, the subjects replied “Enclaved? We are not enclaved!” (*Politis* newspaper, 10 October 2017). Furthermore, the Greek Cypriots and Maronites who have chosen to reside in Northern Cyprus, in accordance with the 1975 voluntary population exchange agreement, enjoy all rights and freedoms granted to all Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus citizens, including freedom of movement, religion, expression, education, etc. I also wish to remind the Greek Cypriot representative that the term “enclaved” was first coined by the then United Nations Secretary-General to describe the plight of the Turkish Cypriots between 1963 and 1974, who had been forced by the Greek Cypriots to live in small pockets scattered around the island, comprising a mere 3 per cent of the territory of Cyprus.

With regard to freedom of religion, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus attaches utmost importance to the protection of religious freedom and provides an environment where people can practise their religion freely, according to the principles enshrined in its Constitution, particularly in article 23, in line with article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Everyone residing in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, whether on an individual or collective basis, has freedom of access to places of worship regardless of their religious belief. Moreover, although people residing abroad, including in South Cyprus, can carry out their religious beliefs within their own borders, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus upholds a policy of enabling them to come and practise their religious beliefs in North Cyprus. In this connection, the Turkish Cypriot side facilitates the requests of the Greek Cypriots and Maronites coming from South Cyprus to conduct mass religious services at some religiously significant churches and monasteries.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot administration’s restrictions on freedom of religion and belief as well as access to religious sites in South Cyprus continue unabated. As opposed to 77 churches in North Cyprus, there are only eight mosques that are open for worship on the Greek Cypriot side, albeit during museum hours, which is not enough to fulfil the requirements of the Islamic faith. Moreover, of these eight, two do not even have the ablution/bathroom facilities in order to perform the ablution ritual prior to prayer required by the Islamic faith. Many Muslim places of worship in South Cyprus continue to be locked up at all times with no known procedures for applying for individual or collective access and/or religious pilgrimages, as was also stated by the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennouna, in her preliminary conclusions and observations at the end of her visit to Cyprus on 6 June 2016.

Contrary to the Greek Cypriot representative’s allegations, the Turkish Cypriot side has always followed a positive approach towards the educational needs of the Greek Cypriots residing in North Cyprus, and in line with this understanding, in addition to the existing primary school which has been functioning in Karpaz for over three decades, a secondary school was opened in September 2004 for the Greek Cypriot students residing in that area. Greek Cypriot children in these schools are educated by Greek Cypriot teachers in line with the same curriculum applied in South Cyprus. In fact, the Greek Cypriot teachers are appointed by the relevant Greek Cypriot authorities and textbooks are also provided by the Greek Cypriot administration. However, some of the said textbooks sent to Greek Cypriot schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus include inappropriate content, archaic propaganda, as well as offensive, chauvinistic and racist language against Turkish Cypriots and Turks, such as referring to them as “barbaric”. Such inappropriate content can be harmful to the development of young children and negatively affect the perceptions of future generations towards other people. Similarly, some teacher

appointments proposed by the Greek Cypriot administration overlook the racial slurs and offensive language used by the teachers in question. It is unfortunate that the Greek Cypriot administration attempts to politicize this issue as well. I also deem it necessary to underline the fact that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has already revised its schoolbooks, adding elements promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship. In comparison, the Greek Cypriot side has been refusing to revise the schoolbooks used in Greek Cypriot schools which still contain racist and chauvinist elements. Moreover, in spite of the official recommendation by the then United Nations Secretary-General and the acceptance by the Greek Cypriot authorities to follow his recommendation stated in the report of the then Secretary-General dated 7 June 1996 (S/1996/411), the Greek Cypriot side still refuses to fulfil its long-overdue commitment and obligation to open a Turkish primary school in Limassol that would meet the educational needs of the Turkish Cypriot children living in Southern Cyprus and enable them to be taught in their mother tongue.

In relation to the comments about the fenced area of Maraş (Varosha) made by the Greek Cypriot representative, I would like to clarify, once again, that the steps taken by our Government respect the right to possession of former inhabitants and do not in any way violate relevant United Nations resolutions, as changing the status of this area from a military to a civilian one will enable the realization of the right to possession of former inhabitants as envisaged by the Security Council resolutions. However, with the fear that these steps will end the unacceptable status quo, which acts as a “comfort zone” for the Greek Cypriot side, the Greek Cypriot leadership is doing its utmost to demonize decisions taken with regard to the fenced area of Maraş.

With regard to the statement made by the Greek Cypriot representative in relation to the issue of “missing persons”, I would like to reiterate that the Turkish Cypriot side does its utmost on this humanitarian issue affecting both sides to assist and contribute to the work of the Committee on Missing Persons so that the Committee successfully delivers its mandate. Despite the humanitarian stance of the Turkish Cypriot side, the sole aim of the Greek Cypriot side unfortunately is to politicize this humanitarian issue by bringing it before international platforms, including the United Nations, rather than to engage positively in the work of the Committee on Missing Persons.

With a view to supporting the work of the Committee on Missing Persons, the Turkish Cypriot side established an Archive Committee in 2016, which is composed of military authorities, police authorities, experts from the Ministry of Health and National Archives as well as other relevant units of the Government, to examine the relevant archives for the information requested by the Committee on Missing Persons regarding the location of missing persons. In this connection, access was given to the Turkish Cypriot member’s office to check the aerial photos dating from 1974. The Turkish Cypriot side has also established an investigation unit under the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus presidency to examine all relevant archives in order to gather information requested by the Committee on Missing Persons regarding the potential locations of missing persons, as well as the Missing Persons Unit, which conducts criminal investigation into the cases of the identified Greek Cypriot missing persons under the supervision of the constitutionally independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Attorney General’s Office. Furthermore, upon finding evidence on potential burial places, the Turkish Cypriot side accommodates the access of the Committee on Missing Persons to any area throughout the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, be it by interrupting the construction of a major road or giving access to those military areas the Committee on Missing Persons asks for according to its workplan. In this regard, in June 2019, access to 30 additional suspected burial sites in military areas in North Cyprus was granted where the excavations are done according to the excavation planning of the Committee on Missing Persons. It should

be also noted that both the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey continue to support the Committee on Missing Persons financially.

Busy with spreading misinformation about the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey, the Greek Cypriot side is yet to give any response to the call of the Committee on Missing Persons to search its military or police reports, logbooks, medical reports or any other document that may include information about potential burial sites or remains belonging to missing persons. None of the criminal investigations conducted into the deaths of Turkish Cypriot missing persons resulted in the identification of the perpetrators or the prosecution of those identified. Moreover, to this day, the Greek Cypriot side has failed to reciprocate in terms of facilitating access to all military areas as well as the archives of the Greek Cypriot police who was involved first-hand in the mass atrocities against Turkish Cypriots, particularly during 1963–1964.

With regard to the allegations in relation to the cultural heritage in North Cyprus, I would like to emphasize that the Turkish Cypriot side, despite its meagre resources, protects and preserves the cultural heritage of the island of Cyprus, emanating from the diverse and rich cultures as well as civilizations, which have populated the island throughout history. In addition to its own efforts for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in North Cyprus, irrespective of its origin, the Turkish Cypriot side has also been actively engaging and contributing constructively to the works of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, which stands as an outstanding example that the two sides may accomplish a lot through cooperation for the good of the two peoples.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot representative turns a blind eye to the dire condition of Turkish-Islamic cultural heritage in South Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot administration, since 1963, has been pursuing a policy of eradicating all traces of the Turkish-Islamic heritage of Cyprus. During the period from 1963 to 1974, mosques, shrines and other holy sites in Turkish villages all around the island were destroyed by the Greek Cypriots. More recently, field studies conducted by our experts and the information gathered from Turkish Cypriots visiting South Cyprus have indicated that out of more than 130 mosques in South Cyprus, 32 of them have been left to collapse while the majority of the remaining are in extremely poor condition. Furthermore, all the movable cultural objects from these monuments, namely hundreds of manuscript Holy Qur'ans, prayer rugs, Holy Qur'an reading desks and pieces of Islamic iconography have been destroyed or looted.

Against this background, it is clear that the misleading remarks of the Greek Cypriot representative are not corroborated by legal and historical facts pertaining to the island. Thus, instead of levelling unfounded accusations, which only creates an environment of mistrust and hostility between the two peoples of the island, the Greek Cypriot side should make more effort to create an atmosphere conducive to cooperation between the two sides as also called upon by you, in your report of 10 July 2020 (S/2020/682), which was approved by Security Council resolution [2537 \(2020\)](#).

Availing myself of the present opportunity, I would like to also remind the Greek Cypriot administration that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Turkey.

I would be grateful if the present letter were circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44.

(Signed) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus