



General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 October 2021

Original: English

Seventy-sixth session

Agenda item 44

Question of Cyprus**Letter dated 21 October 2021 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 21 October 2021 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 21 October 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing in response to the statements made by the representatives of Greece as well as the Greek Cypriot administration to the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Third Committee) at the General Assembly, on 30 September 2021, which once again blatantly distorted facts pertaining to Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot side and Greece have long been exploiting the absence of the Turkish Cypriot side at international platforms to mislead the international community and to divert the attention from the sole responsibility of Greece and the Greek Cypriot side for the creation as well as the continuation of the Cyprus problem. Therefore, I am compelled to respond in writing in order to set the record straight.

The Greek and Greek Cypriot representatives have long been misinforming the international community by portraying the Cyprus problem as one of “occupation”. As a matter of fact, none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish presence in the island as “occupation”, as it is in accordance with the 1960 international Cyprus treaties. Let us not forget, guarantor Turkey had to intervene after 11 years of Turkish Cypriot ordeal at the hands of the Greek Cypriots which culminated in 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 1960 Republic of Cyprus partnership and expelled the Turkish Cypriot partner from all State organs. During the years from 1963 to 1974, a period that the Greek and Greek Cypriot representatives have 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 to the island 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 in the said statements is a testament to the fact that these remarks are not fact-based, but another episode of the well-known Greek Cypriot propaganda machinery.

In a similar vein, contrary to the 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 exchange of populations 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 and Greek Cypriot representatives, who attempt to portray themselves as the champions of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms, ironically ignore the gravest human rights violation on the island, namely the unjust and inhuman isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people at the instigation of the Greek Cypriot 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 emphasize 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 regarding Turkey altering the “demographic character” and “demographic composition” of the island is also totally unfounded and is yet another product of the Greek Cypriot side’s ongoing disinformation and defamation campaign. The procedure through which citizenship is acquired in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is on a par with the standards widely applied throughout the world. In this regard, 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 was also subjected to 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. The scheme in question granting “golden passports” 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 revealed by an esteemed media outlet that prominent Greek Cypriot politicians, who later had to resign, were also involved in aiding and abetting convicted criminals to obtain European Union passports through the said scheme. Subsequently, 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.”

With regard to the comments 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 29 September 2021, 6,935 applications have been lodged with the Commission, 1,227 of which have been concluded through friendly settlements and 34 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 remedy, including compensation. By invoking the “Custodianship Law” in South Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot administration effectively prevents remedies for property rights such as restitution, exchange or compensation for Turkish Cypriots.

Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot administration aims to exploit the Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus for political propaganda purposes by referring to them as the “enclaved”. The Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in our country 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 interviewee replied “Enclaved? We are not enclaved!” (*Politis* newspaper, 10 October 2017). Furthermore, the Greek Cypriots and Maronites who have chosen to reside in our territory in accordance with the 1975

voluntary exchange of populations agreement enjoy all rights and freedoms granted to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus citizens, including freedom of movement, religion, expression and education. I also wish to underline that the term “enclaved” was first coined by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, 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.

In relation to the comments about the fenced-off area of Maraş (Varosha) made by the Greek and Greek Cypriot representatives, one must not overlook the fact that, over the course of many decades, Maraş has become a major symbol of the status quo in Cyprus, and it is an undeniable fact that leaving Maraş closed in its current condition is in the interest of no one. It should be noted, in this regard, that the fenced-off area of Maraş is part of the territory of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where our Government has sole jurisdiction and authority. The work that is under way in this area, as well as the steps planned for the future, are in line with international law and are without prejudice to private property rights. This is a humanitarian act that will provide economic benefits to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots and create a unique area where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, as well as other foreign nationals, can work together for mutual benefit. Creating such an example of a cooperative relationship will also be conducive to the efforts aimed at finding a freely negotiated and mutually acceptable agreement on the island.

With regard to the statements made in relation to the issue of missing persons, I would like to reiterate that the Turkish Cypriot side is doing its utmost on this humanitarian issue, which affects both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots alike, by assisting and contributing to the work of the Committee on Missing Persons so that the latter can successfully deliver on its mandate. Despite the humanitarian stance of the Turkish Cypriot side, the sole aim of the Greek Cypriot side, alas, is to politicize this humanitarian issue for political propaganda purposes 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 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 investigations into the cases of 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 of 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 which the Committee on Missing Persons asks for according to its workplan. In this regard, in April 2021, access to five 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 disinformation 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 documents 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 to 1964.

With regard to the allegations in relation to cultural and religious heritage in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, I would like to emphasize that the Turkish Cypriot side, despite its meagre resources, protects and preserves the cultural and religious heritage 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 and religious heritage in its territory, irrespective of its origin, the Turkish Cypriot side has also been actively engaging in and contributing to the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, which stands as an outstanding example of what the two sides may accomplish through cooperation for the good of the two peoples.

On the other hand, the Greek and Greek Cypriot representatives conveniently turn 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. Field studies conducted by our experts and the information gathered from Turkish Cypriots visiting South Cyprus have indicated that there are more than 130 mosques in South Cyprus, a significant number of which 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 and Greek Cypriot representatives 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 in Cyprus, as also called upon by you in your report of 9 July 2021 ([S/2021/635](#)), which was approved by Security Council resolution [2587 \(2021\)](#).

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 could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44.

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