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**CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE
QUESTION OF: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

**Letter dated 16 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative
of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the
High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to bring to your attention certain attempts on the part of the illegal regime in the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus aiming at curbing the freedom of expression there. Two Turkish Cypriot journalists, Mr. Sener Levent, the editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Afrika*, and Mr. Meduch Ener, a political columnist for the same newspaper, were sentenced to six months' imprisonment and were fined 5 billion Turkish lira (the equivalent of 30,000 euros) for allegedly publishing an insult against Turkey, the Turkish occupation army and against Mr. Rauf Denktash, the so-called President of the pseudo-state set up and supported by the Turkish occupation army and the settlers from mainland Turkey. The alleged libel was contained in an article published in the paper *Avrupa*, as *Afrika* was then called, on 29 July 1999.

The imprisonment of the two journalists who demanded an end to the occupation and the reunification of Cyprus is the latest in a long series of continuing and escalating attempts on the part of the illegal Denktash regime and the Turkish occupation army to silence *Afrika* and to curb the freedom of the press in Turkish-occupied Cyprus. Mr. Levent and his newspaper as well as other journalists have been subjected to bomb attacks, continuous threats, persecution and confiscation of their printing equipment by the illegal regime and the occupation army. Mr. Levent had been arrested before together with members of his staff, but local and international protests forced their release. On other occasions, the paper's equipment was confiscated and its premises were bombed and set on fire. About 400 similar "libel" cases are pending against Mr. Levent and other Turkish Cypriot journalists who refuse to be silenced by the illegal regime and the Turkish occupation army.

Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat, the leader of the Republican Turkish Party, and Mr. Hussein Angolemli, the leader of the Communal Liberation Party in occupied Cyprus, have denounced the jailing of the two journalists as an attempt to muzzle the freedom of the press. The Union of Cyprus Journalists (UCJ) expressed solidarity and support to the Turkish Cypriot journalists thus persecuted and condemned the imprisonment of Mr. Levent and Mr. Ener as a fascist attempt by the dictatorial Denktash and regime to muzzle and smother the free and anti-occupation voice of *Afrika*. Moreover, the Cyprus National Organization for the Protection of Human Rights joined the Union of Cyprus Journalists, the Association of Newspaper Publishers, the Cyprus Bar Association and UNESCO Cyprus to condemn the persecution of the journalists and to demand the immediate release of the two journalists who should be allowed to “exercise their inalienable right to free expression”.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus would very much appreciate your personal intervention and that of the Office of the High Commissioner in ensuring the immediate release of Mr. Levent and Mr. Ener and freedom of expression in the Turkish occupied part of Cyprus.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as an official document of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 11 (c) entitled “Civil and political rights, including the question of freedom of expression”.

(Signed): Alexandros VIKIS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
