



# General Assembly

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**Question of Cyprus****Letter dated 5 December 2019 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 3 December 2019, addressed to you by the Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, İsmet Korukoğlu (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 41.

(Signed) Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu  
Permanent Representative



## **Annex to the letter dated 5 December 2019 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 plenary meeting of the Third Committee, on 18 October 2019, under agenda item 70 (b) (Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms), which contains false allegations against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey. Since the Greek Cypriot side has been politicizing even highly sensitive humanitarian issues for false 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, portraying the Cyprus problem as one of “invasion” and “occupation”. None of the Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention of 1974 as an “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 and for the total annihilation of Turkish Cypriot people. It should be underlined that the Cyprus problem commenced in 1963 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, and not in 1974, when the Turkish Peace Intervention took place. 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* (annexation of the island to Greece). It was in fact this large-scale violence which necessitated the Security Council deploying the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964 in order to stop the bloodshed and atrocities perpetrated against the Turkish Cypriot people.

In a similar vein, contrary to the Greek Cypriot representative’s allegations, the issue of “displaced persons” dates to 1963, when the Turkish Cypriot population was rendered homeless, as they had to flee for their lives over and over because of the Greek Cypriot onslaught 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 UNFICYP, and both the Agreement as well as its implementation are well recorded in relevant United Nations documents ([S/11789](#) of 5 August 1975 and [S/11789/Add.1](#) of 10 September 1975).

The Greek Cypriot representative seems “interested” in addressing violations of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms, while ironically ignoring the gravest human rights violation on the island, namely, the unjust and inhuman isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people instigated by his own administration. The 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 and to curtailing trade relations with other countries. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate 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 preventing 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 a product of the Greek Cypriot side’s ongoing campaign of propaganda. 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 Cypriot immigrants in Southern Cyprus, including from Greece, in accordance with its own domestic legislation. Moreover, the Greek Cypriot administration is under thorough scrutiny by the European Union and the United States for its “citizenship for investment” scheme that was put in place in 2013, under which a minimum 2 million euro (\$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 opened the door to large sums of money-laundering through offshore companies and increased criminal activities within Europe, along with aiding a number of fugitives.

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 those 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 Court. As of November 2019, 6,619 Greek Cypriot applications had been lodged with the Commission and 1,169 of them had been concluded through friendly settlements and 33 through a formal hearing.

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, due to the “Custodianship Law” in South Cyprus. Under the “Custodianship Law” in South Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot administration acts as the “Custodian” of Turkish Cypriot properties, preventing their restitution, exchange or compensation to Turkish Cypriots. Two eminent examples are the very land where the Larnaca and Paphos Airports in South Cyprus are built, on which Turkish Cypriot owners have property claims.

As regards the claims of “enclaved”, the Greek Cypriot administration, unfortunately, uses the Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in North Cyprus as an instrument for their political expediency 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 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 the 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 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 mass basis, has freedom of access to places of worship, regardless of their religious belief.

Moreover, although people residing abroad, including in South Cyprus, are free to carry out their religious beliefs within their own borders, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus upholds a policy of additionally enabling them to come and practise their religious beliefs in North Cyprus to the greatest extent possible. 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. The number of mass religious services conducted by persons not residing within the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which have been facilitated by the Turkish Cypriot side, have increased each year, as also acknowledged in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on UNFICYP, dated 10 July 2019 (S/2019/562). The number of approved religious services conducted in the religious sites in North Cyprus already reached 134 for the period from 1 January to 30 November 2019.

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 8 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 those eight mosques, 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 the North, 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 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 the other people. Similarly, some teacher appointments were not approved by our relevant authorities due to racial slurs and offensive language used by the teachers in question. However, the Greek Cypriot administration attempts to politicize the issue of few teachers and books that are not approved, as if this is done in a vacuum.

On the other hand, in spite of the official recommendation by the then Secretary-General and the acceptance by the Greek Cypriot authorities to follow his

recommendation stated in his report 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.

I also deem it necessary to underline the fact that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has already revised its school books, adding elements promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship. In comparison, the Greek Cypriot side has been refusing to revise the school books used in Greek Cypriot schools, which still contain racist and chauvinist elements in South Cyprus.

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 in Cyprus so that it 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 the issue of missing persons by bringing it before international platforms, including the United Nations, rather than to engage positively in the work of the Committee.

With a view to supporting the work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot side established an Archive Committee in 2016, which is comprised 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 in Cyprus regarding the location of missing persons. In this connection, access was given to the Turkish Cypriot member’s office to check the aerial photos dated 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 in Cyprus 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 Office of the Attorney-General. Furthermore, upon finding evidence of potential burial places, the Turkish Cypriot side accommodates the access of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus 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 that the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus 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 will be done according to the excavation planning of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. It should be also noted that both the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey continue to support the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus 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 in Cyprus 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, which 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 of how the two sides may accomplish a lot through cooperation for the good of the two peoples. During 2019, efforts have been made regarding the restoration work of Panagia Church in Paşaköy/Ashia and the Church of Ayios Artemios in Gaziköy/Afania, which are to be completed very soon.

On the other hand, the Greek Cypriot representative turns a blind eye to the unfortunate 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, of more than 130 mosques in South Cyprus, 32 have been left to collapse, while the majority of the remaining ones are in extremely poor condition. Furthermore, all the movable cultural objects from these monuments, namely, hundreds of Holy Koran manuscripts, prayer rugs, Holy Koran reading desks and pieces of Islamic iconography, have been destroyed or looted.

Against this background, it is clear that the defamatory remarks of the Greek Cypriot representative towards the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey are not corroborated by legal and historical facts pertaining to the island. Thus, instead of levelling unfounded accusations against the Turkish Cypriot side, which only creates an environment of mistrust and hostility between the two peoples of the island, the Greek Cypriot side should make more efforts to create an atmosphere conducive for cooperation between the two sides, as also called upon by the Secretary-General in his report of 10 July 2019 ([S/2019/562](#)), welcomed by the Security Council in its resolution [2483 \(2019\)](#).

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 41.

(Signed) İsmet **Korukoğlu**  
Representative  
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus