

CYPRUS 1974-2023

STILL OCCUPIED STILL DIVIDED

In July 1974, Turkey invaded the Republic of Cyprus in violation of the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of international law. Beyond the immense human suffering and the great material losses, the dire consequences of the invasion and subsequent illegal military occupation by Turkey are still felt today:

- For 49 consecutive years Cyprus and its people remain forcibly and artificially divided.
- Over 36% of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Cyprus is still under illegal military occupation by Turkey, with the presence of dozens of thousands of heavily armed Turkish troops rendering the occupied area of Cyprus one of the most densely militarised areas in the world.
- 200.000 Greek Cypriots, over a third of the 1974 total population, who were forcibly expelled from the northern part of Cyprus, where they constituted about 70% of the population, are still deprived of the right to return to their homes and properties.
- More than 750 persons, civilians and soldiers, are still missing, while the Turkish side refuses to cooperate fully in ascertaining their fate.
- Less than 400 Greek Cypriots and Maronites, out of 20.000 at the end of August 1974, remain enclaved in their still-occupied villages, living under conditions of oppression and deprivation.
- The demographic structure and balance of Cyprus has been altered due to the illegal mass transfer of settlers from Turkey to the occupied areas, as well as the emigration of thousands of Turkish Cypriots from the island after the Turkish invasion. As a result, Turkish Cypriots are now vastly outnumbered by troops and settlers from Turkey, thus constituting the minority in the occupied areas.
- The usurpation of Greek Cypriot properties continues through the illegal construction on Greek Cypriot land and the illegal sale of property owned by Greek Cypriots, who were forcibly expelled from their homes.
- Priceless religious and archaeological treasures – part of the world's cultural heritage – are still in danger, while many churches, monuments, cemeteries and archaeological sites



have been destroyed, desecrated or vandalized. Many monuments in the occupied part of Cyprus have been targeted for deliberate destruction and more than 60.000 cultural objects have been smuggled and illegally sold abroad. More than 550 churches and monasteries have been looted, destroyed or desecrated and more than 20.000 icons, sacred vessels, gospels and other objects have disappeared. Churches have been turned into mosques, museums, places of entertainment, hotels, army barracks, storages and even barns and their invaluable icons and frescoes were removed and illegally sold abroad.

A series of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as resolutions adopted by numerous other international organizations, reflect the universal condemnation of Turkey's invasion and all subsequent acts of aggression against the Republic of Cyprus. The resolutions demand, inter alia, the withdrawal of foreign troops, the return of refugees to their homes in safety and the ascertainment of the fate of missing persons. Moreover, they call for the respect of the human rights of all Cypriots as well as for respect to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus.

In its Judgment on the 4th Interstate Application of Cyprus v. Turkey on May 10th, 2001, the European Court of Human Rights found Turkey guilty of continuous violations

of human rights in Cyprus. The said Judgment is reinforced by the Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of May 12th, 2014, whereby the Court held that Turkey was to pay Cyprus €30 million in respect of the non-pecuniary damage suffered by the relatives of the missing persons, and €60 million in respect of the non-pecuniary damage suffered by the enclaved Greek-Cypriots residents of the Karpas peninsula.

A new round of negotiations, aiming at a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, was initiated in September 2013. As all previous ones, it had been conducted under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission. On 11 February 2014, the leaders of the two communities adopted a joint declaration which, inter alia, reaffirmed the basis of a settlement, namely a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the High Level Agreements. It also reaffirmed that any settlement should ensure the common future of all Cypriots within the EU.

From May 2015 to June 2017, negotiations proceeded intensively and significant progress was reached on an important number of issues. Regrettably, the International Conference on Cyprus, which was mainly focused on security and guarantees post-settlement, at Crans Montana, Switzerland (28 June – 07 July 2017), concluded without result, due to Turkey's insistence on maintaining the right to unilaterally intervene in Cyprus, retaining an anachronistic system of guarantees and permanently maintaining troops on Cyprus after the settlement.

The Informal Geneva Conference, which convened on 27-29 April 2021, aimed at finding common ground for the resumption of substantive talks toward achieving a solution, within the framework of the UN Security Council resolutions, the High Level agreements and occasional convergences between the two sides. However, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, in defiance of UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, demanded that any negotiation should have as a prerequisite the recognition of the Turkish Cypriot community's sovereign rights, with the ultimate aim of reaching an agreement based on two separate states. This demand, is not only against international law and the terms of the Secretary General's mandate, but also clearly contrary to the will of the Cypriot people.

In addition, Turkey proceeded with the creation of new faits accomplis in the occupied areas of Cyprus, announcing further illegal actions in Varosha, a fenced-off area of Famagusta. These actions that contravened clear UN Security Council resolutions prohibiting a change to Varosha's status quo were again condemned by a Security Council Presidential Declaration issued on 23 July 2021, which called for the immediate reversal of all illegal actions and for full respect of the relevant UN resolutions including the transfer of Varosha to the administration of the United Nations. The latest provocations by Turkey negatively impact efforts by the UN Secretary General and the international community to create conditions conducive to the resumption of meaningful negotiations.

“ [...] It is for this reason that I wish today to repeat before you my pledge that my top priority will be the solution of the Cyprus problem within the agreed framework, in order that our country can at last become a reunified, free, contemporary, European state, a common land of prosperity and security for all its legal citizens, without discrimination.

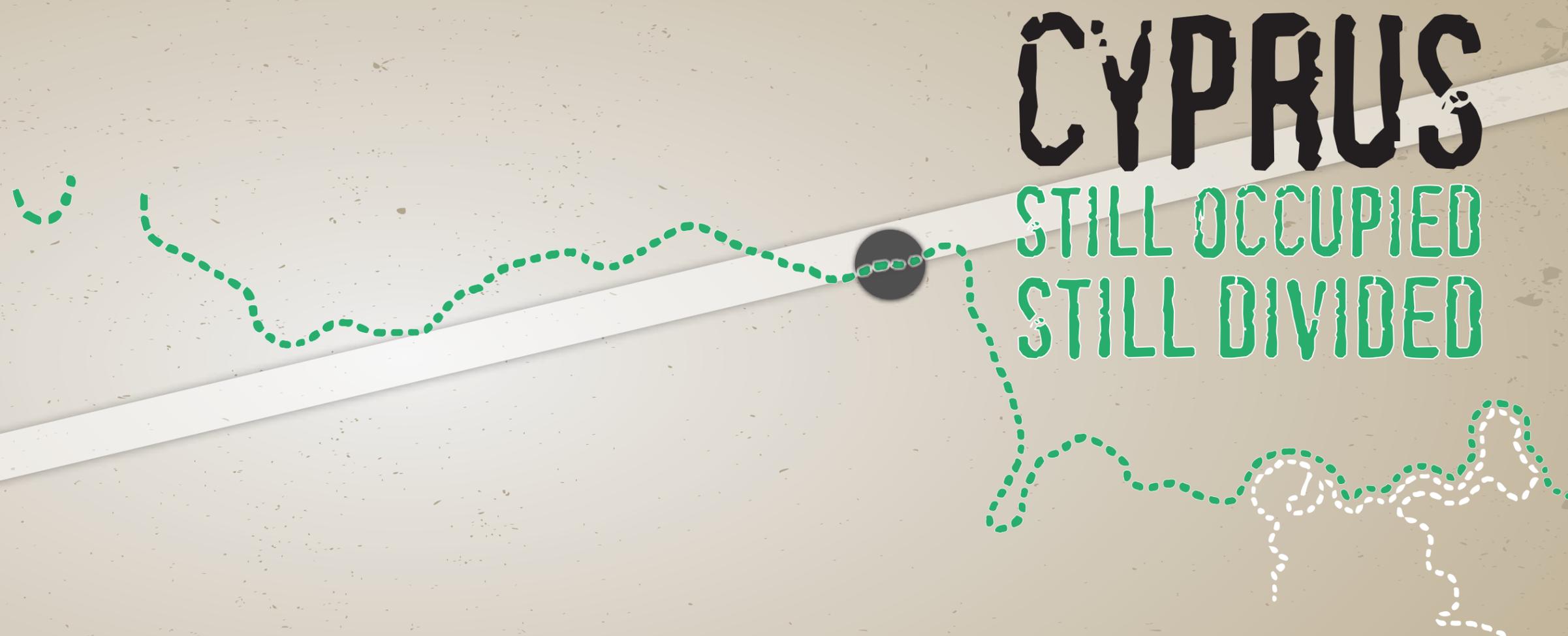
Naturally, I have no illusions. I am aware that all my predecessors, whose names I recall with respect, gave the same pledge: The first President, Archbishop Makarios, Spyros Kyprianou, George Vasiliou, Glafcos Clerides, Tassos Papadopoulos, Demetris Christofias, and the outgoing President, Nicos Anastasiades. They all left the Presidency without achieving the sincere dream of freedom and reunification for our country, despite their heartfelt desire to achieve this goal.

The reason for the failure to achieve reunification was that the demands of the Turkish side went beyond our own limits and beyond the limits that democracy and human rights impose on every modern democratic country and its citizens. Despite the compromises made over the years by our side. Even after the historic compromise of the acceptance of a Bizonal Bicomunal federation, Turkish maximalism has not permitted any effort to bear fruit in a way that would safeguard the interests of all the legal citizens of the island and no one else. Of course, this does not mean that our side never made any mistakes or omissions.

If a solution is found for the Cyprus problem, the Cyprus Republic will be able to evolve into our common home within the great European family. This is the solution we envision.

Finally, I would like to make special reference to the overseas Cypriots, with whom I have been blessed to have worked closely, and to assure them of my sincere desire to tighten our bonds further. [...]”

Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus
Excerpt from speech before the House of Representatives
February 2023



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