

Embargoed! Speech to the Review Conference 2010, Warsaw,
30 September - 08 October 2010
Working Session 7: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

From the outset of our written intervention we are outlining the recommendations we believe will help tackle intolerance and discrimination, thus helping to boost dignity and respect between our people. Embargoed! is again extremely honoured and privileged to address this very important gathering of OSCE members and respected fellow NGO's.

- Acts of intolerance and racism do need to be challenged when highlighted. If there are case studies of positive behaviours these should be disseminated accordingly to encourage more of the same.
- We call on the OSCE to set up a TRNC contact group, similar to what has already been set up in the EU. Unlike the EU TRNC contact group, OSCE states with a likely conflict shall not have a role within this group. The purpose of this group will be to monitor much more how relations are being managed and to identify any ills at a very early stage thus hopefully preventing unnecessary escalations.
- Finally, it is not clear to NGOs what powers the OSCE group has at its disposal. As an NGO we have continued to raise what we believe are genuinely serious issues year after year and we are alarmed that there is not much evidence that anything is being done to address these issues.

Please offer clarification on this point. I am sure it will be a point of interest for many NGOs.

Getting back to our group, Embargoed! is a multi-ethnic human rights group based in London campaigning to bring an end to the unjust isolation faced by Turkish Cypriots living in North Cyprus.

Embargoed! is again extremely honoured and privileged to address this very important gathering of OSCE members and respected fellow NGO's. Since we last we were here some 12 months ago Cyprus has been in the spotlight on a fairly regular basis – particularly since the election in the North of the new president, Dervis Eroglu. We wish both President's Christofias and Eroglu every success in their efforts to reach a long lasting solution, acceptable to both sides.

Embargoed! addresses the HDIM meeting today to highlight the continuing racism and xenophobia inflicted on Turkish Cypriots as a result of aggressive Greek Cypriot nationalism.

Last year we said conditions were akin to Apartheid – the isolation and unjust embargoes mean this is still clear and real to witness today. People living, working or studying in North Cyprus are cut off from the rest of the world. They are unable:

- To trade freely;
- To have their democratically elected leaders participate in political forums, even in an observational capacity at the European Parliament;
- To participate in sporting, social and cultural events;
- And to travel and communicate directly with the rest of the world.

Following the Turkish Cypriots' brave "Yes" vote for the 2004 Annan Plan referenda, Turkish Cypriots were promised their international isolation would end by many countries, some of which are represented around this table today. It is regrettable that to date not one single embargo has been lifted or eased.

Xenophobia and racism are not problems exclusively directed at Turkish Cypriots. However, seldom has the world turned a completely blind eye to the attempted legitimisation of embargoes, intolerance and discrimination against an entire people. The failure of the Greek Cypriot administration to be objective is very real and continues to polarise attitudes in a negative manner.

The EU and other international States continue to ignore the ongoing discrimination and intolerance practiced by the Republic of Cyprus against Turkish Cypriots. By allowing this to continue, the violation of Turkish Cypriots' basic Human rights has been prolonged, leading to a situation where discrimination and intolerance are allowed to go unchecked.

The OSCE should address the constant diplomatic bullying that the Greek Cypriot authorities employ to undermine Turkish Cypriot rights. This only serves to fuel racism in Cyprus and deepen the divide between the two peoples.

Embargoed! could cite many examples, but for the sake of brevity we have chosen to only list three;

Firstly, in April, two Turkish Cypriots were physically attacked when 200 APOEL F.C fans encircled and mobbed their car within 10 seconds. This attack was prompted when they were identified as being Turkish Cypriot.

Secondly, racist groups created by Greek Cypriots on global networking sites such as Facebook, are striking examples of hate crimes committed against Turkish Cypriots on the internet. These groups include those such as "Turks get out of Cyprus" and "Kill the Turks". New hate groups are surfacing all the time. The Metropolitan Police Service in London are currently investigating an alleged race hate crime where members of a particular group displayed Nazi paraphernalia.

Thirdly, the recent ill-thought US congress resolution 1631 which pressures the government of Turkey to do more to protect cultural and religious sites- in what is referred to the occupied North- fails to mention the 200 or so Mosques and Islamic cemeteries that have been vandalised or destroyed in South Cyprus.

The deterioration of Greek Cypriot religious sites is not only due to a lack of resources in the North but also to, on occasion, a refusal by the Greek Cypriot administration to allow international bodies through to the North to aid with the preservation of these sites. Discrimination of this nature is particularly unhelpful at a time when the two people on the Island are trying to reconcile their differences.

We want to share with you a little known fact. Embargoed! regularly meets with the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) back in London – as one of the ‘guarantor’ countries, the UK is keen to maintain constructive links with both Cypriot peoples. We discussed the issue of desecrated religious sites on both sides of Cyprus and proposed that the EU financially assist a project in which restoration work could be carried out on both sides of the green line. The British FCO were very supportive of this proposal. Unfortunately, when we visited the AKEL representative in London he failed to even consider our suggestion. AKEL is the same political party that President Christofias hails from.

These actions and many, many more are a clear indication of the Greek Cypriot administration’s ongoing intention to erase the Turkish Cypriot identity. Sadly, for Turkish Cypriots enduring racism and intolerance both inside and outside Cyprus is the norm.

Embargoed! calls upon the HDIM to make the xenophobia and discrimination issues highlighted in this submission a serious focus of its future activities. Furthermore, we request the use of this platform to develop a binding charter where equality is valued.

Thank you.