



Delegation of the Republic of Cyprus

WRITTEN CONTRIBUTION ON UNDERSTANDING THE PROPAGANDA THAT GREEK CYPRIOTS SUBJECT TURKISH CYPRIOTS TO "SANCTIONS, EMBARGOS AND ISOLATION"

The Government of Cyprus is committed to the island's reunification, which will bring an end to Turkish Cypriot "isolation". Isolation which is caused by the ongoing Turkish occupation of the northern part of the island and the presence of more than 40,000 Turkish troops. A new intense effort to solve the Cyprus problem began on 3 September, aimed at overcoming past deadlocks and achieving progress that will lead to the reunification of Cyprus under mutually agreed terms.

Since 2003, when the Turkish occupation army was forced to ease the restrictions on the movement of people across the island due to the impending accession of Cyprus to the EU, the Government of Cyprus methodically promotes contacts, trade and other services towards the Turkish Cypriots. Just to name a few: (a) Issuance of Cyprus Republic passports and ID cards to tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots which enable them to travel and work freely within the EU, (b) Opening of various crossing points across the Green Line which enabled million crossings of people since 2003, (c) employment of thousands of Turkish Cypriots in the government controlled areas, (d) provision of social benefits like free medical care, Social Insurance pensions etc.

Economic integration is an indispensable element of viable and sustainable reunification. To achieve economic integration, it is essential to create conditions of cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Such cooperation will result in the development of common interests and thus common efforts for their pursuit.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is committed to further enhancing economic cooperation between the members of the two communities. Any policy in this direction will undoubtedly bring about benefits to the people of Cyprus as a whole and will facilitate eventual economic integration and political reunification. On the other hand we firmly hold the view that the "direct trade" regulation as drafted, contravenes these aims.

During recent years the Government unilaterally and in cooperation with the Commission implemented numerous measures which greatly promoted the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot Community. This has facilitated the tripling of the per capita income of Turkish Cypriots in the last three years.

The proposals and unilateral measures put forward by the Government aim at increasing competitiveness of trade and enhancing commercial activities across the Green line. They create better opportunities for the movement of Turkish Cypriot goods in the Government controlled areas, to the rest of the EU and to third countries. The proposals support cooperation between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots entrepreneurs and promote the production of high value added goods. These proposals will boost investment, production, competitiveness and employment and provide ample benefits to all Cypriots.

It is important to set out the real situation as regards the various components alleged to equate to "isolations" of Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot complaints of purported "isolation," embargo, sanctions and blockade, allegedly imposed by the Republic of Cyprus on the Turkish Cypriots, in reality correspond to:

(i) Trading disadvantages because ports and airports in the occupied area are not internationally recognized due to their lawful closure by the Republic of Cyprus as a result of the military occupation by Turkey

- Following Turkey's invasion, the Republic of Cyprus declared the ports in the occupied areas as illegal points of entry and closed to international navigation. Turkey's subordinate local administration and the Turkish Army upgraded an RAF airfield at Tymbou (illegally renamed "Ercan") and constructed a military airport at Lefkoniko (illegally renamed "Gecitkale"). These airports are recognized neither by ICAO and other competent international organizations, nor by the Republic of Cyprus, which retains exclusive sovereignty over its occupied territory and the airspace over it, as confirmed by decisions of the ICAO General Assembly and Council in 1974, 1975 and 1977.

- Deprived of the exercise of effective control in the occupied area, the Government of Cyprus is not in a position to control and apply national and international law on the operations of ports and airports located there. The decisions on closure of ports and on non-accreditation of the airports have been maintained to avoid international responsibility for their unauthorized operation and consolidation of Turkey's occupation. A further factor has been the Government's unwillingness to facilitate the exploitation of properties owned by its displaced citizens.

- Not being a "state" recognized by the international community, the "TRNC" is not and cannot be a member of international organizations like ICAO, IMO, etc. Only the Republic of Cyprus, as an independent and internationally recognized state, can take the benefits (and responsibilities) as respects its territory under international air service agreements, and arrangements regulating air traffic in flight information regions, supervising safety standards etc. It is these benefits and the enhancement of the "TRNC's" political status that Turkey and Turkish Cypriots desire.

- Trade: Turkish Cypriots are in fact and in law able freely to engage in trade. The Republic of Cyprus has shown its willingness to fully cooperate in making necessary arrangements to render such trade feasible. The Turkish Cypriot leadership's insistence on being able to operate as if the "TRNC" were an independent state, has led to its unwillingness to cooperate and use Republic of Cyprus facilities.

- It must be emphasized that most of the trading disadvantages suffered in the past and the few residual disadvantages are caused by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership's political demands. The Republic of Cyprus has not denied benefits to Turkish Cypriots as such. Any disadvantages have been self-inflicted by the unilateral declaration of independence on 15 November 1983 and in later insisting on the trappings of a state. Thus, the European Court of Justice in its judgment of 5 July 1994 in the Anastasiou Case, ruled that, when citrus fruit and potatoes are imported from the occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus into the EU, national authorities of EU member states should not accept movement and phytosanitary certificates issued by authorities other than the competent authorities of the Republic of Cyprus.

- Turkish Cypriots have not been restricted in trading with the rest of the world either. They have used the unlawfully operating ports to export and import goods. Ports serving a tiny economy though, due to their limited volume of traffic, have higher transport costs and other charges. This can only be altered by an increase in trade volume that will be possible if Famagusta (including Varosha) begins to operate as a regional economic centre, integrating Greek and Turkish Cypriot economic activity.

- Tourism: Larnaca has capacity and good transport links to the occupied area. Travellers who wish to visit and stay there, and tour operators who wish to organize tourism there, are capable of doing so. However, persons who knowingly trespass on property (of displaced persons) expose themselves to the risk of civil actions

- Turkish Cypriot citizens of the Republic are eligible to obtain a passport for world travel and, if resident, an identity card and use the lawfully operating ports and airports of the Republic.

(ii) Inability of the “TRNC”, a legally invalid secessionist entity to enjoy membership in international and regional organizations, and thence absence of representation.

- The “TRNC”, being an illegal secessionist entity not recognized by the international community, cannot be a member of international or regional organizations and enjoy their benefits, including rights of representation. The way to achieve such benefits is through the reunification of the Republic of Cyprus, whereupon its Turkish Cypriot citizens will participate in its external representation.

(iii) Inability of Turkish Cypriot direct participation, under the “flag” of the “TRNC”, in international sporting and cultural activities.

- Turkish Cypriot alleged “isolation” in the field of sports is again self-inflicted. The Turkish Cypriot leadership and sporting bodies under their influence have persistently rejected offers by Greek Cypriot national teams for Turkish Cypriot participation and membership of relevant national governing bodies, demanding to participate in their own right, representing the “TRNC”; something that the constitutions of international sports organizations provide only for bodies of internationally recognized member states. For example FIFA and UEFA do not accept applications or participation of groups from non recognized states.

- Turkish Cypriot leadership has rejected offers of Turkish Cypriot participation in Republic of Cyprus cultural delegations maintaining that participation should be on behalf of the “TRNC”.

- The Government of Cyprus does not recognize unlawful educational and other institutions in the occupied area which have usurped the property of Greek Cypriots, and is reluctant to endorse such institutions’ qualifications, which have, not been educationally validated.

- Another area of controversy, for the reasons mentioned above, has been cooperation of foreign universities with unlawful Turkish Cypriot institutions of higher education. This is a very sensitive issue for the Government of Cyprus, since such activity aims primarily at enhancing the status of the “TRNC,” and not bona fide academic purposes.

(iv) Alleged denial of the benefits of EU and Cyprus Republic citizenship, accompanied by alleged discrimination against Turkish Cypriots.

- The Turkish Cypriot allegation that Turkish Cypriots are discriminated against has no foundation. All the rights of citizens are accorded on an equal basis to Turkish Cypriots, including free state health care, social welfare services and facilities, national insurance, state documentation, provision of education etc.

- With regard to the education of Turkish Cypriot children residing in the government controlled area and contrary to claims by the Turkish Cypriot teachers union, the Government of the Republic has consulted parents of Turkish Cypriot children, who are happy with current arrangements. The establishment of a Turkish school in Limassol remains under consideration, having due regard to parental wishes.

- Political rights: The Cyprus House of Representatives has reserved 24 seats for Turkish Cypriot political representatives, which will be filled when the Turkish Cypriot population as a whole returns to bi-communal Constitutional institutions. As an interim measure, to afford Turkish Cypriot residents in the government controlled area political representation, no parliamentary seats are currently ethnically characterized. Greek and Turkish Cypriots are eligible to vote and to be candidates for all parliamentary seats. They are equally eligible to vote and stand in EU elections.

- The welfare of Turkish Cypriots in the occupied area is a Government of Cyprus concern. The free medical care available is extensively used by Turkish Cypriots who cross in large numbers to the Government-controlled area for that purpose.

Conclusion

Turkish Cypriot complaints about “isolation,” combined with demands that Turkish Cypriots are provided with their own autonomous trading facilities and not be put in a position to have to use facilities of the Republic of Cyprus nonetheless show that the obtaining of economic benefits, is not their true objective. Decisions have long been overdue by the Turkish Cypriot political leadership to encourage full use of all facilities provided by the Republic of Cyprus and to cease making propagandistic claims about “isolation” to justify its current policy of politically upgrading the legally invalid “TRNC”.