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*TURKISH CYPRIOT ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN*

In armed conflicts everywhere women and children are not mere "collateral casualties", but remain deliberate targets. They are often victims of sexual assault, rape, sex slavery, trafficking, forced prostitution, torture, abduction, etc. The remote history of Cyprus is no exception to this. The greatest victims of the 1963-64 and 1974 tragic events in Cyprus were mostly women and children. Therefore, there is a clear need for women to play a positive role in peace-building and conflict resolution, and efforts must continue to ensure that the gender dimension is built into these processes.

But women must be empowered socially and economically in order to play that role. Women should not be treated merely as victims of conflict, but must be treated as resourceful actors in all areas of peace building, negotiations, and conflict management. Countries often do not provide women and young persons with the opportunities to participate in peace agreements, negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction and ignore issues that affect women and children such as lack of basic services, education, shelter, food security, gender justice, and reconciliation.

In order to ensure that women play their rightful role in conflict resolution, the two sides in Cyprus should sit down and develop an integrated approach which involves men, women, and young persons of both sides in Cyprus in order to promote a culture of peace, resolve conflicts and increase women's representation at all levels of peace building processes. Women must be provided with the necessary spaces for their voices to be heard and their contributions must be acknowledged. Having said that, I believe it is important to acknowledge the fact that women and youth were the driving force of the democratic changes in North Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot 'yes' vote of the referendum for the Annan Peace Plan. They were at the forefront of the peace fires and the pro-peace demonstrations that brought about a democratic change in the northern part of the island. Mobilisation of Turkish Cypriot women has influenced the changes in the north towards European values and mobilisation of all Cypriot women can influence a more comprehensive change in the whole island towards a political solution. We no longer want to see crying Cypriot mothers with the pictures of their missing sons in their hands. Instead, we want to see mothers with peace plans in their hands. Women are not warlords... They are in fact peacemakers, and the floor should be theirs to prove that this is the case.

The challenge we face is how do we hold the two sides in Cyprus and the UN accountable in a way that combines the strength of different approaches? For this, we need the help of the international community. We have to keep engaging and combining the call for change through support and collaboration with insiders and outsiders...

The UNSCR 1325 is an international law obligation and the important thing is to find ways to make the resolution meaningful. It is a tool to give our work added force and impact, not a replacement for that work. It is all in UN language but we can change that and translate it directly into our everyday languages...

The Security Council Resolution 1325 specifically urges the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf. Hence, I would like to use this opportunity to make a call to the UNSG to use his authority to appoint a woman as a Special Envoy to Cyprus in order to restart the peace negotiations as soon as possible.

**Deniz Birinci**  
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**OSCE Meeting, Warsaw**