

# **MEDIA AND PRESS FREEDOM IN NORTH CYPRUS**

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Distinguished organizers and guests,

I have brought you sincere love and regards from Cyprus, the beautiful but problematic island of Mediterranean. The word Cyprus is thought together with disagreement since 1960s. Since 1964, in other words, for 43 years, in Cyprus where the UN Peace Forces are present, there is also a life other than intercommunal disagreement. Primarily there are two different communities living in the island of Cyprus: One is the Greek Cypriot Community, the other is the Turkish Cypriot Community... The common state established in 1960 does not last, a war experience and then a separate life starts... This is the current picture in Cyprus...

Certainly this picture reflects on all the aspects of life of both communities and, for sure also reflects on the media known as the “fourth force” and shapes it.

In this meeting which is held under the main topic Human Rights, I believe that it is necessary to brief you about the media in North Cyprus where the Turkish Cypriots live.

In North Cyprus where around 250 thousand people live, 12 Turkish and 3 English, a total of 15 daily newspapers are published. Besides many weekly and monthly magazines and newspapers that are trilingual (Turkish-Greek-English) are published as well. Then again, other than the official radio and TV, around 20 private radio stations and 8 private TVs broadcast. Also there are news agencies and websites.

Why have I felt the need to provide this information?

The reason is that an internationally isolated community lives in North Cyprus and the international public opinion receives wrong information about this community. Even with the brief information I provided with giving numbers, it is clear that a free media, one of the most important pillars of democracy, exists in North Cyprus. By saying free media, I do not say that the media in North Cyprus serves within democratic rules in its full sense. On the contrary there are problems in many subjects and the CTJU and other civil society organizations struggle to overcome the obstacles in front of the freedom of press and expression. In this context I am glad to express that, many positive steps have been taken in the recent years with regards to the freedom of press in North Cyprus. Journalists are no longer judged in military courts, press cards are no longer issued by the state but by the civil society organizations, editorial independence now has a legal base with the Press-Labour Law, the articles stipulating restrictions in the freedom of expression in the Criminal Code are constrained.

Other than these, I would like to take your attention to the issue of discrimination that is applied by the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member state since 2004 that represents the Greek Cypriot Community living in South Cyprus only however pretending to represent the whole of the island because of international political reasons.

Republic of Cyprus, other than being a member of the EU, a member of the Council of Europe and OSCE, prevents the “right to have access to information” which is an important element of press freedom. It prevents the journalists who come to North Cyprus, even the journalists who live in North Cyprus from crossing to South Cyprus and gathering information. It contravenes to the freedom of press by not allowing journalists who bear International Press Cards, even journalists who are directors of International Press Organizations to cross the South Cyprus. This practice is against all international rules including the Green Line Regulation adopted by the European Council in 2004.

I would like the human rights organizations to carefully monitor this situation and that all related organizations including the Council of Europe react to this situation in order to stop the violation of right that is faced.

Thank you.

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