



*End discrimination against Turkish Cypriots*

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# **Tolerance and non-Discrimination II – Combating Racism, Xenophobia & Discrimination**

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## Examples of racism & xenophobia 1

- Each year Embargoed! attends OSCE HDIM & highlights the racism, xenophobia discrimination Turkish Cypriots (TCs) regularly face. Sadly, this year is no different.
- In the past 12 months we have again seen a plethora of racist incidents, with little action from the Greek Cypriot authorities to combat them:
  - News of the **appointment of TC Kemal Zihni for the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in Brussels** generated a **barrage of racist comments** from GC media & politicians alike, including former Foreign Minister George Lillikas who felt Mr Zihni's ethnicity & degree from a TRNC university should exclude him from the job. Mr Zihni is the only TC among 700 Cypriots employed by the RoC for EU roles.
  - This summer, **Amnezya Bakery – a joint GC-TV venture in Pile – collapsed** when the GC municipality suddenly changed the terms of the bakery's utility bills to less favourable ones because a GC was involved. The TC partner claimed this was a deliberate effort to ensure such ventures do not succeed.
  - In April, **the Köprülü Hacı İbrahim Ağa Mosque in Limassol was firebombed**. It is regularly targeted, but the authorities say this is down to vandals not Islamophobes or racists.
  - In December 2011, **Cemre Maniga, the winner of Mr North Cyprus, was unable to compete in the Mr International in Thailand** with contestants from 40 other nations. The GC lobby forced competition organisers to cancel Mr Maniga's pass, stating 'only contestants representing Cyprus' should attend.
  - Turkish sports teams are regularly attacked in South Cyprus. Last December, the **Galatasaray women's volleyball team were targeted in a cup game against Apollon Limassol**, where GC supporters threw coins & bottles on to the pitch, then tried to attack players at the end of the match.





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## Examples of racism & xenophobia 2

- Those wishing to work with North Cyprus are targeted with hostile campaigns.
  - UK based **European Consortium for Political Research** selected the **Eastern Mediterranean University** to **host its 2011/12 winter courses** – a vital source of revenue for EMU & a new avenue for academic co-operation. Sadly, this was **cancelled** due to the vociferous GC lobby. While TCs lamented how another important educational & commercial opportunity was lost, GC media celebrated “the victory”.
  - In September 2011, an **intensive campaign by GCs forced Booking.com to remove all North Cyprus hotels** from their website, because labelled “stolen properties”. It prompted GC media headlines such as “*Hotel reservation firm Booking.com removed hotels at occupied Cyprus*”. It smacks of hypocrisy given Larnaca & Paphos airports are built on Turkish land, as are many hotels.
  - International artists such as Julio Iglesias, Jennifer Lopez & Tom Jones are bombarded by GCs to keep away from North Cyprus. The level of hate in communications is shocking for both recipients & TCs alike.
- The Greek Cypriot Diaspora is also party to this racism:
  - In London, **the Bloody Map** – a deeply offensive hate symbol – resurfaced in leaflets used by the National Federation of Greek Cypriots to promote their annual Trafalgar Square rally in July.
  - In Sydney, the sign for the Australian Friends of North Cyprus community centre was defaced with “**Cyprus is Greek not Turkish**”
- Few GCs stop to think the damage such actions cause ordinary Turkish Cypriots from emotional distress, to hardship from the discrimination, ultimately further polarising the two communities.





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## Is the word “Turk” so offensive?

- Those living in North Cyprus are primarily of Turkish ethnicity. Some choose to define themselves as Turkish Cypriots, others as Cypriots, others still as Cypriot Turks.
- The words “Turkish” or “North Cyprus” generates extremely hostile views among far too many Greek Cypriots (GCs).
  - From refusing to talk to you, to refusing to stock or buy ‘Turkish’ branded products, as Cirakli Confectioners found out when trying to distribute their famous *Cyprus Turkish Delight* to South Cyprus stores and were told to first remove the word “Turkish” from their packaging.
- These attitudes are of no surprise when influential Greek Cypriot commentators – politicians, Church leaders & the media – use language that demonises the Turkish side
  - 38 years have passed since the war of 1974, but North Cyprus is still referred to as “the occupied territories”, while Turkey is known as “the aggressor/invader”.
  - Those who have emigrated from Turkey are “settlers”; they & even their children born in Cyprus are seen as ‘alien people’ that must all be repatriated in the event of a solution. Normally such attitudes are typical of far right fascist parties; sadly they are reflective of mainstream Greek Cypriot views too.
  - Following last year’s munitions blast at a naval base in South Cyprus that claimed 13 lives & knocked out the country’s power supply, North Cyprus came to the rescue. Archbishop Chrysostomos II, head of the Greek Cypriot Church, said he would rather **“Get by with a lantern & flashlight than accept help from Turkish Cypriots.”**





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# ‘Mapping Cyprus’, while erasing out 450 years of Turkish history

- As part of its 2012 EU Presidency, the Greek Cypriot authorities sought to promote the island’s history & culture, producing a book & exhibition called ‘Mapping Cyprus’.
- Unbelievably, beyond two short negative mentions, 450 years of Turkish history was simply airbrushed out. Neither the book nor the exhibition included:
  - **Ottoman/Islamic art & architecture** – of which there is ample evidence across Cyprus, from Turkish baths to mosques, forts, *hans* (roadside inns for traders/travellers) & viaducts.
  - **Economic stimulus** – from bazaars to specific crafts & trades brought into Cyprus as part of the Sultan’ Selim IIs *firman* (edict) in 1571, to breeding silk & its own type of tulip for export.
  - **Ottoman weights & measures** – such as *Oka* (1.24 kg) are still commonly used across Cyprus.
  - **Culinary tastes** – enriching the Cypriot palate with recipes from across the Ottoman Empire.
  - **Religious freedom** – few Greek Cypriots seem to know it was the Ottomans who released Orthodox Christians from serfdom imposed by the Catholic Venetians, giving the Orthodox Church many rights & privileges including the right to collect taxes.
  - **Cultural impact** – from Turkish words as part of Greek surnames to Turkish Cypriot theatre & literature.
- It was also disappointing to see Elio Di Rupo, the Prime Minister of Belgium, endorse this revisionist view of Cyprus by adding commentary to the book.





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## Love Cyprus, Hate Racism

- Help the two sides in Cyprus reconcile and normalise relations; drop the language of fear & hate and replace it with that of peace & respect.
  - We can disagree on the nature of the Cyprus Conflict & optimum solutions, but the dialogue should always be dignified. Politicians, media, religious leaders & community leaders on both sides must set good examples. They must stop grandstanding & demonising 'the Other', & instead use respectful rhetoric.
  - All Cypriots must learn to embrace the island's full history & diversity, respecting other faiths & ethnicities, as befits a civilised, multi-cultural society. There is no room for comments or actions that are xenophobic in nature or intent. Nor must we remain silent on such incidents, but challenge strongly.
- Clamp down on those who commit hate crimes against Turks – show there is ZERO tolerance on racism.
  - To date, there have been ZERO prosecutions of those responsible for racist attacks on Turks in South Cyprus. We need to see firm action to change this, or we will conclude the GC authorities tolerate racism.
- If all of Cyprus is in the EU, those living north of the Green Line should not be discriminated against. The EU is guilty of this too!
  - The Cyprus conflict & lack of a solution cannot justify treating TCs as second class citizens.
  - Everyone in Cyprus deserves the same rights and opportunities, irrespective of where they live on the island or where they have come from.





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