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## **Cyprus: Prospects remain dim of political resolution to change situation of IDPs**

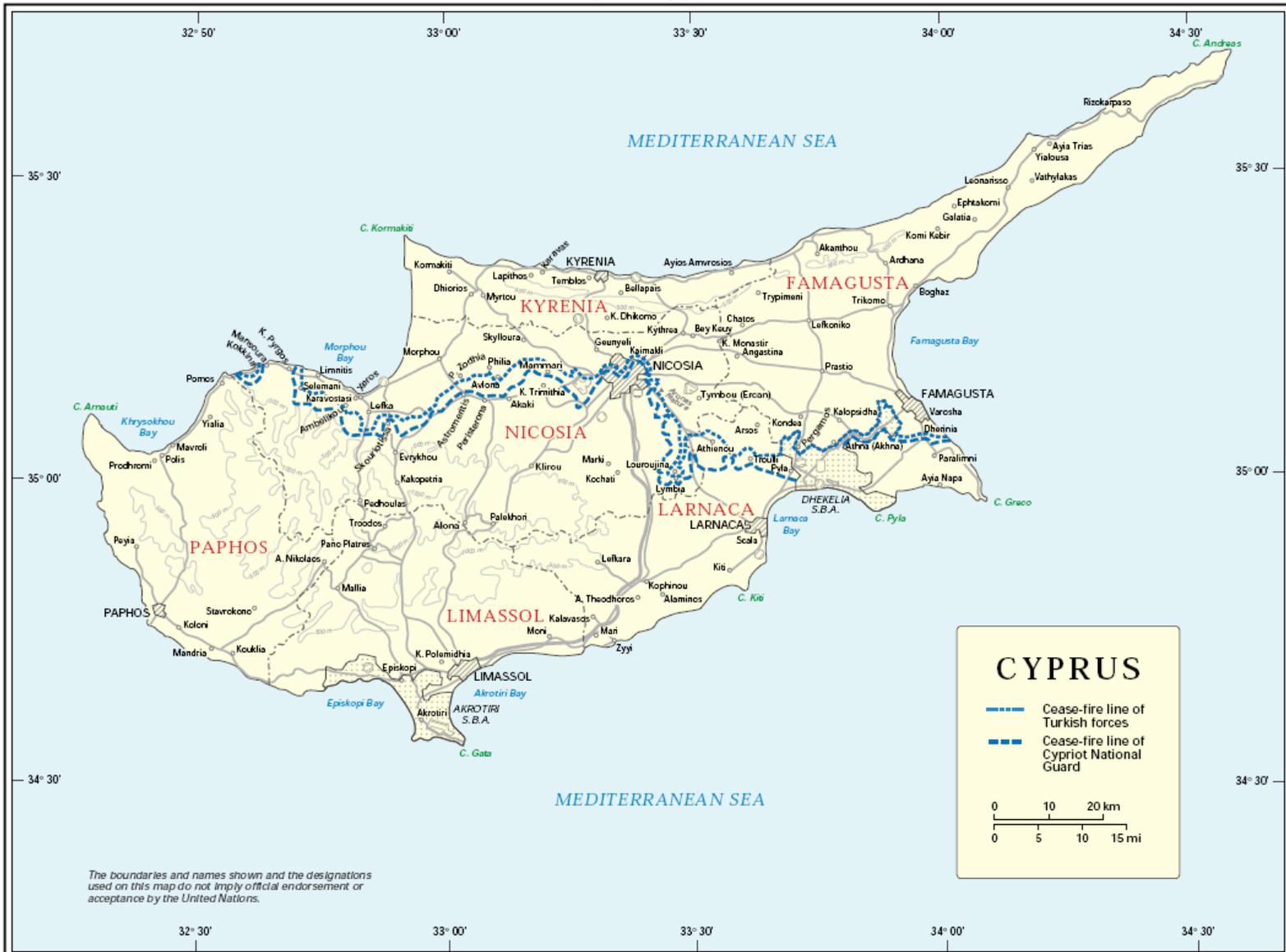
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*Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have been forcibly displaced by conflict and communal violence on the island. Greek Cypriots were displaced in 1974 by what they argue was an illegal Turkish military invasion and occupation, while Turkish Cypriots faced multiple rounds of displacement up to 1974 and believe the Turkish intervention liberated them from Greek Cypriot domination. In both cases, thousands of people were forced from their homes, suffered significant loss and needed large-scale assistance.*

*During the last wave of displacement in 1974, Greek Cypriots fled to the southern part of the Republic of Cyprus, while Turkish Cypriots took refuge in the north under what eventually was declared the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which only Turkey has recognised. In the absence of a peace agreement, the areas have remained divided ever since with the UN maintaining a buffer zone between them. While many Greek Cypriots still expect to be able to return and receive a remedy for lost property, most Turkish Cypriots consider their displacement to the north a permanent move and are more concerned with what will happen to the property they are currently living in should the division of the island end.*

*Peace talks have picked up momentum with new leadership on both sides, but compromise is still needed. A solution should consider the rights of all people affected by the Cyprus problem, and ultimately uphold the rights of as many people in both communities as possible. Politicians and members of working groups should consult international experts on property and return issues related to internal displacement, as well as with IDPs, prior to reaching an agreement. A solution will have more chance of long-term success if IDPs' interests are incorporated.*

# Map of Cyprus



*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

Map No. 4038 UNITED NATIONS  
October 1997 (Colour)

Department of Public Information  
Cartographic Section

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## Causes of displacement

### *1960s: Inter-communal violence*

A large-scale wave of inter-communal violence on the island of Cyprus preceded its independence from Britain. Greek Cypriots dissatisfied with British colonial rule founded the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston or EOKA) in 1955 to achieve enosis, the union of Cyprus with Greece. Turkish Cypriots countered by forming the Turkish Resistance Organisation (Türk Mukavemet Teskilati or TMT), an armed movement demanding taksim, partition of the island into Greek and Turkish zones. Turkish Cypriots comprised a minority with 18 per cent of the population, while Greek Cypriots constituted 80 per cent of the population. Hundreds of people from both communities were killed, and some 6,000 Turkish Cypriots were forcibly displaced from 1955 to 1958 (Denktash, 1982), half of whom never returned (Wellenreuther, 1993). Greek Cypriots were also displaced (Loizos, 1996). In 1960 Britain renounced sovereignty over Cyprus, and the independent Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was established.

The RoC constitution guaranteed Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot representation and power-sharing, prohibited enosis and taksim and gave Britain, Greece and Turkey the right to intervene to maintain constitutional order. In 1963, the Greek Cypriot leadership proposed a set of constitutional amendments dealing with power-sharing, which they argued would improve the functionality of the government. Turkish Cypriots feared that the amendments would end the bi-communal nature of RoC, restrict their rights and

lead to enosis. Turkey rejected the proposals and inter-ethnic conflict erupted, continuing into 1964.

While many people suffered from the violence, the majority of victims were Turkish Cypriots. Some 25,000 people, 25 per cent of the Turkish Cypriot community, fled their homes and sought refuge in nearby Turkish Cypriot areas (Patrick 1976; Denktash, 1982). A UN peacekeeping force (UNFICYP) was deployed in March 1964, but peace was not restored until August. By that time about 1,000 houses had been totally or partially destroyed, and 2,000 houses had been looted in over 100 mixed and Turkish Cypriot villages (UN, 1964; Ertekün, 1984). About half of the mixed villages on the island had been deserted and 42 armed Turkish Cypriot enclaves had been established (Patrick, 1976; Kyle, 1984; Kliot and Mansfeld, 1994). While the number of mixed villages had been progressively decreasing since 1955, the two communities were now largely separated (Volkan, 1979; Wellenruether, 1993).

Turkish Cypriots were confined to the enclaves until about 1967 (Volkan, 1979; Denktash, 1982; Attalides 1977; Patrick 1976). Turkish Cypriot government members never returned to their posts and instead formed a separate administrative body for their community, the Provisional Turkish Administration. It received aid from Turkey, some of which was used to build makeshift housing for the displaced. Although there was some passage and commerce between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot areas from 1964 to 1967, Turkish Cypriots were largely barred from moving out of the enclaves by militias of the TMT as well as by checks and searches by the Greek

Cypriot police, and their fear of violence, arrest or abduction (UN, 1964; Fosshagen, 1999). These restrictions combined with an embargo on “strategic materials” in the enclaves and a lack of access to essential public services and social benefits severely affected Turkish Cypriot IDPs’ access to livelihoods and adequate living conditions (UN, 1964; UN, 1967).

The situation improved in 1968 as the Greek Cypriots withdrew economic restrictions on the enclaves and allowed Turkish Cypriots to pass through Greek Cypriot areas to visit other enclaves. By 1970 about 1,300 Turkish Cypriot IDPs had returned to 19 mixed villages and five Turkish Cypriot villages (Volkan, 1979; Patrick, 1976). However, most Turkish Cypriots remained displaced in enclaves and it took a long time for them to overcome the trauma of their confinement (Volkan, 1979; Volkan, 1979).

*1974: Violence and displacement erupts again*

Although talks began in 1968, a peace agreement was never reached. In 1974, the Cyprus National Guard with the support of the Greek army launched a coup to overthrow the president of the RoC in pursuit of enosis. Invoking the right to intervene in the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey launched a military operation on the island, eventually taking control of almost 37 per cent of the northern part (ICG, 8 March 2006; Coufoudakis, 2006). Some 2,500 people were killed or went missing and about 210,000 people were displaced, including up to 162,000 Greek Cypriots (at least 30 per cent of the community) and up to 48,000 Turkish Cypriots (at least 40 per cent of the community) (GRC, 2007; Denktash,

1982). Much smaller numbers of Maronites, Armenians and Latins were also affected (Kyle, 1997).

Over the next few years the southern part of the island became increasingly Greek Cypriot while the northern part became increasingly Turkish Cypriot. People who had not fled during the violence left their homes after leaders signed the 1975 Vienna III agreement, which allowed for voluntary and assisted movements of remaining Turkish Cypriots to the north and Greek Cypriots to the south, as well as assurances to all that their rights would be protected regardless of their residence. By the end of 1975, only 130 Turkish Cypriots remained in the south and 10,000 Greek Cypriots were left in the north (Hannay, 2005; Coufoudakis, 2006). The number of Greek Cypriots in the north gradually decreased to about 1,000 by 1981. According to the Greek Cypriot leadership, this was due to their “harassment, discrimination and oppression” by the Turkish Cypriot administration, though others have added that their movement may have been due to the realisation the stalemate may be long-lasting (GRC, 1999; Oberling, 1982).

There has since been no political settlement. Each community has been governed by a separate government and no body has represented both according to the power-sharing arrangement in the constitution. A UN-monitored buffer zone separates the south and the north, which are administered by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus (GRC) and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) respectively. The Turkish Cypriot administration in the north declared unilateral independence in 1983, establishing the TRNC. Only Turkey has

recognised the TRNC and it continues to provide economic and military support with between 25,000 and 43,000 troops from Turkey stationed in the north (ICG, 10 January 2008). Neither Cypriot administration views the other as legitimate: the GRC argues that the TRNC is an illegal entity unrecognised by the international community, while the TRNC considers the current composition of the GRC unconstitutional. Nevertheless, they continue to negotiate to reach a settlement to the conflict. In the meantime, IDPs have been unable to return to their homes and could cross to the other side only from 2003, almost 30 years after being displaced.

#### *Housing situation of IDPs from 1974*

The two administrations took control of vacated properties, but dealt with them differently. The GRC put all Turkish Cypriot property under the guardianship of the state to protect the properties and to satisfy the housing needs of Greek Cypriot IDPs. It allocated the right to use Turkish Cypriot properties free of charge to some 25,000 IDPs pending a political solution to the conflict, and took responsibility for the maintenance of these homes (IDMC interview, March 2009). TRNC authorities distributed vacated Greek Cypriot properties to Turkish Cypriot IDPs and other citizens, to whom they later awarded ownership. They attempted to provide IDPs with properties of similar value to those which they left behind, in return for renouncing their title to the latter property in favour of TRNC.

The humanitarian and interventionist approach of the GRC following the 1974 conflict was instrumental in rebuilding the shattered economy and providing

adequate housing conditions for IDPs (Zetter, 1986; Zetter, 1992). As many more people fled to the south than to the north, there was a shortage of housing for IDPs in the south. In response the GRC implemented housing programmes for IDPs who fled from the north, providing housing free of charge primarily in urban areas. This reactivated the construction sector and indirectly contributed to the growth of industry and commerce. Not having to build or finance the building of their own houses, IDPs were able to contribute their skills, labour and savings to other sectors of the urban economy. Thus, rather than being a strain on the economy of the south, the arrival of IDPs stimulated urban development (Zetter, 1992). In the process, they received housing of a standard similar to that of the non-displaced population.

The resettlement of Turkish Cypriot IDPs was highly organised with village communities preserved to the extent possible. Turkish Cypriot authorities had fewer displaced people to cope with and a larger inventory of Greek Cypriot property to use for their resettlement. Major construction efforts were not necessary and IDPs were resettled throughout the territory, mainly in the larger urban centres (Kliot and Mansfeld, 1994). Each displaced village was assigned an area in the north, and people who had been displaced in the 1960s were encouraged to return to their original homes if possible. The allocation of properties by the TRNC produced resentment among Turkish Cypriots since some IDPs felt they received less than they deserved, while others were given the right to acquire property even though they left no property in the south. Some IDPs believed their receipt of title deeds for Greek Cyp-

riot properties was fair since they had given up the titles to their property in the south, but some reported misgivings about occupying the home of someone who had been forced to leave it. Others argued that it was better for the house to be lived in than for it to remain uninhabited and deteriorate.

### **Current status and situation of IDPs and their descendants**

The GRC reports that there are currently about 200,000 Greek Cypriot IDPs, while the Turkish Cypriot administration states that there are no longer any IDPs on the island.

To facilitate the provision of assistance to people displaced by the conflict, the GRC formulated criteria for the issuance of “Refugee Identity Cards” which gave access to a number of benefits. The status is still important in 2009. According to the RoC Civil Registry and Migration Department, 200,457 people hold the Refugee Identity Card, including over 27,000 children and 34,000 elderly people. Some 146,000 of them were themselves displaced in 1974 (GRC, March 2009).

According to the Turkish Cypriot authorities, internal displacement ended in 1975 with the Vienna III agreement, when residents were given the option to move with assistance or remain where they were with protection guarantees (TRNC, 18 October 2007). As such, the TRNC does not grant displaced status or benefits to IDPs. Turkish Cypriots in the north who were displaced in 1974 and their descendants reportedly numbered between 90,000 and 100,000 in 2008 (US DOS, 25 February 2009).

Some 2,000 Turkish Cypriots have returned to the south, while others cross the buffer zone daily to work. This figure includes an estimated 700 Roma people (CoE, 27 October 2006). They have been issued identification cards, passports and medical care cards, although reportedly with difficulty in some cases. Roma people in particular have encountered widespread prejudice and disadvantages, including in their treatment by the government (Freedom House, 2 July 2008). The UN helps Turkish Cypriots get this documentation as well as housing, welfare services, medical care, employment and education (UN, 4 June 2007).

Although it is an official language of the RoC, information in Turkish to enable Turkish Cypriots to access and exercise their rights is reportedly limited (ECRI, 2006; TCHRF, 25 October 2007). Turkish Cypriot residents in the south have no school in their own language as provided for by the Constitution, even in areas where they are numerous, though some children do receive Turkish lessons from Turkish Cypriot teachers at school (UN, 28 November 2008; TCHRF, 25 October 2007). The GRC committed to establish a Turkish-language primary school in Limassol in 2005, but there have been no developments since the Supreme Court of the Republic of Cyprus rejected the lawsuit filed by the Cyprus Turkish Teachers Trade Union on the issue.

No returns of Greek Cypriots to the north have been reported. Since 2003, IDPs have been able to cross to the north, but have been unable to return and live in their homes or to take up residence except as foreigners. Attitudes towards crossing to the north have varied (Hadji-pavlou, 2007). Some have crossed to visit

friends or places they miss, while others have not been able to face doing so. Some have not crossed because they believe it is humiliating to show their passport to go to what they believe is another part of their country, but insist they will return without having seen the changes that have taken place in their villages of origin.

People who were displaced report no considerable difference between their situation and those of their neighbours who were not displaced. IDPs on both sides appear to share with the non-displaced population living conditions of a fairly high standard. However, interviews with displaced Greek Cypriots revealed several differences. These included lack of solvency due to the loss of their property in the north, better treatment by government, worse treatment by business clientele, and the loss of community networks. Many reported continuing nostalgia for the places they left behind and a wish to return.

The GRC has continued to provide housing free of charge to holders of the Refugee Identity Card since 1974, housing about 97,000 families primarily in urban areas (GRC, 2009). These families were given the right to use and bequeath these homes, but ownership rested with the government. In 2006, the GRC decided to issue title deeds to residents of this housing and some 15,000 families are due to receive title deeds by the end of 2009 (IDMC interview, March 2009). Families living in Turkish Cypriot homes or properties built on Turkish Cypriot land will not be eligible; they will instead receive a plot of government land in the district they currently live in. This is because under GRC law, dispossessed Turkish Cyp-

riots continue to be regarded as the owners of their properties and are in principle entitled to recover property lost as a result of the conflict. Although Greek Cypriots living in Turkish Cypriot homes have security of tenure and can bequeath their rights over these homes, they feel their tenure is uncertain due to reports of Turkish Cypriots returning and Greek Cypriots being told to move out.

#### *Access to benefits of descendants of IDPs in the south*

Despite recent legislative amendments by the GRC, the situation of descendants of those originally displaced is uneven. Descendants of men with “displaced person” status are entitled to the Refugee Identity Card and associated benefits, but descendants of women with the same status are entitled only to a Certificate by Descent, which does not give them access to the benefits related to the Refugee Identity Card. The government has stated that it will consider the issue of qualification for financial benefits (GRC, 7 October 2008), but as of mid-2009, descendants could not apply for housing assistance such as a financial grant, a land plot, a housing unit or a rent subsidy.

The GRC’s various justifications for this differential treatment suggest that its desire to perpetuate territorial claims outweigh its intentions to provide benefits equitably. It has argued that the state could not afford to assist all IDPs and had to prioritise. When the policy was decided it was normal for a father to be responsible for providing for his family, and families in which the father had lost work and property through displacement were often in greater need of support. It

also argued that if children of displaced women were also given the status, the entire population would eventually have the status (IDMC interview, March 2009). Conversely, it is clear that if no children were granted the status, the displaced population would die out, obviating political claims to the territory in the north. The current practice maintains a divided society, with a significant minority accessing the benefits of the Refugee Identity Card (IDMC interview, March 2009; Ege, 2008). Furthermore, giving the status to some children highlights the loss families continue to incur, and maintains the population of displaced municipalities in a proportion that does not distort electoral registers (IDMC interview, March 2009).

In 2005, internally displaced Greek Cypriot women formed an NGO, Movement of Refugees and Displaced Mothers, to put pressure on the GRC to eliminate this discrimination. According to the Movement, there are over 51,000 children of internally displaced mothers who are not entitled to the benefits linked to the Refugee Identity Card (Cyprus Mail, 19 May 2009). In 2006, the GRC's anti-discrimination body reported that the policy was clearly discriminatory and recommended that it be rectified. Two UN committees also ordered the GRC to rectify this discrimination. In 2007, the Ministry of the Interior accepted the finding but amended the law in a way that only partially addressed the discrimination. Some internally displaced mothers have applied to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) after the Supreme Court in the GRC found that it did not have jurisdiction to examine the substance of their allegations (Cyprus Mail, 19 May 2009).

### *Court rulings on property*

Despite the absence of a political settlement, IDPs on both sides have made legal claims against properties they fled or were dispossessed of. Greek Cypriots have applied to the ECtHR, courts of the GRC and the Immovable Property Commission in TRNC. Greek Cypriot applicants have insisted that assertion of their property rights is not an act of revenge against Turkish Cypriots, but rather a declaration of their deprivation (IDMC interview, March 2009). In *Loizidou v. Turkey* and subsequent cases, the ECtHR confirmed the dispossessed applicant was still the legal owner of the property and ordered the government of Turkey to pay compensation for a violation of the applicant's right to property (CoE, 18 December 1996; CoE, 7 December 2006; CoE, 22 April 2008). Some Greek Cypriots are also reportedly suing their government for losses because it did not protect them and their property during the conflict and afterwards. The prevailing view of EU courts that individual compensation and exchanges through existing mechanisms are legal has weakened the case for a bi-communal settlement (ICG, 23 June 2008).

The ECtHR ordered the government of Turkey to establish a remedy for those dispossessed of property in northern Cyprus from 1963 onwards, and in 2006 the TRNC established the Immovable Property Commission to this end. As of May 2009, 390 people had applied to the Commission and it had issued 59 decisions, awarding mainly compensation but also a combination of restitution and compensation or exchange and compensation (TRNC, 6 May 2009). The Commission has reported that the GRC has attempted to

undermine its work by failing to cooperate when needed and discouraging people from applying: GRC authorities have not implemented decisions awarding exchange, have disclosed the names of applicants and dismissed a member of the property working group in the current political negotiations who had applied to the Commission (IDMC interview, March 2009).

The ECtHR will reportedly rule on the effectiveness of the remedies offered by the Commission in 2009. Critics have claimed that the amount of compensation is far below the value of the property and decisions for restitution employ a policy of ethnic discrimination since Greek Cypriots awarded such a remedy can only take up physical residence at the property after a settlement. Supporters say that, although it cannot solve the property issue on the island, the Commission is a positive step since it accepts the need to recognise Greek Cypriot property rights, it has decided cases faster than the ECtHR and provides hope for a solution (TCHRF, 2009).

Turkish Cypriots have also sought a remedy for their lost property. About 50 applications have been filed with the GRC courts and some have gone further to the ECtHR (Turkish Daily News, 4 January 2007; IDMC interview, March 2009). In 2006, one Turkish Cypriot won the right to return to his property in the south through a friendly settlement. The property had been allocated to displaced Greek Cypriots, who were given alternative accommodation. All other challenges by Turkish Cypriot owners for restitution and compensation have been rejected by the GRC courts on the basis that the Guardianship Law of 1991 does not provide for restora-

tion of their rights to property until a settlement of the Cyprus problem is agreed (TCHRF, 13 January 2009; IDMC interview, March 2009).

Turkish Cypriots face obstacles to filing applications at the courts in the south. Turkish Cypriot lawyers can only practice in the south if they completed their traineeship and bar exam there. Applicants are therefore largely confined to using Greek Cypriot lawyers, which poses difficulties in terms of language and interests. Finally, some Turkish Cypriots do not feel entitled to the land they left in the south since they renounced their rights to it in order to receive property in the north. As a result, there is a certain stigma attached to applying to the courts in the south for this property.

In 2004 Cypriots voted in a referendum on the Annan Plan, a UN proposal to end the Cyprus dispute. The plan proposed a bi-zonal bi-communal federation with the reduction of Turkish Cypriot-administered territory from around 37 per cent to around 29 per cent of the island. Properties within the territorial adjustment area were to be reinstated to dispossessed owners. Outside these areas there would be limited restitution of Greek Cypriot property based on agreed criteria assessed by a Property Board. Both groups had serious concerns, but saw the plan as a viable compromise. However, whereas 65 per cent of Turkish Cypriots approved the Plan, 76 per cent of Greek Cypriots rejected it. Property provisions were an important factor that contributed to the outcome. Turkish Cypriots feared that the current de facto division of the island could be reversed given the recent ECtHR judgments and saw the plan as the better option. Greek Cypriots considered the property provisions in violation

of international law and European standards as they infringe on what they believe is their absolute right of return and restitution. Greek Cypriots also knew that they would be accepted into the EU regardless of their vote (Gürel and Ozersay, 2007).

### **Different perspectives on the conflicts and on displacement**

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots view the motives and impact of the conflicts differently. Greek Cypriots have interpreted Turkish Cypriot actions in the 1960s as a planned rebellion to establish the necessary basis for partition of the island (Kyle, 1997). Turkish Cypriot leaders have argued that the proposed constitutional amendments were part of a Greek Cypriot plan to unite Cyprus with Greece (Patrick 1976; Volkan, 1979). Greek Cypriots have also argued that Turkish Cypriot civil servants withdrew from their posts, but Turkish Cypriots have said that they left Greek Cypriot areas to ensure their personal safety (Denktash, 1982). According to Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriot leaders not only forced Greek Cypriots out of the enclaves, but also forced Turkish Cypriots into them (Patrick, 1976). Turkish Cypriot leaders have denied this and have said that people from both communities fled in an unorganised fashion out of fear as the two sides slid into armed conflict (Patrick, 1976; TESEV, 2005; Stephens, 1966). However, these official perspectives are not shared by all members of the respective communities as some people have criticised the actions of their own leaders.

The two sides also offer different perspectives on the 1974 conflict. Most displaced Greek Cypriots still very much

identify themselves as IDPs and consider that they were forcibly displaced by Turkish military forces that used the coup against a democratically elected government of Cyprus as a pretext to justify the illegal invasion and occupation of the island (GRC, 2007). To Greek Cypriot IDPs, the partition of the island is illegal, impermanent, and an element of Turkey's expansionist agenda. In contrast, many Turkish Cypriots view the arrival of Turkish troops in 1974 as a legitimate peace operation that liberated them from oppression of the Greek Cypriots and saved the island from enosis. Most believe that Greek Cypriots provoked Turkey's response with the coup, and that the Turkish troops present are keeping the peace rather than occupying the island (Gürel and Ozersay, 2007). For many Turkish Cypriots, the status quo is satisfactory because it enables them to enjoy security and political independence. As such, those who fled their homes up to 1974 do not now identify themselves as displaced.

Another difference of views concerns the nature of their forced displacement. Greek Cypriots reported that they had to flee with little notice, coordination or support, whereas the movement of Turkish Cypriots was more organised and gradual, giving them time to settle their affairs (Loizos, 1981). Turkish Cypriots communities were displaced together, but Greek Cypriots were not; Greek Cypriots had at first to live rough or in tents while Turkish Cypriots were able to take over equipped houses. Turkish Cypriots interviewed by IDMC acknowledged that transport was organised for some of them, but explained that many fled at short notice, and sometimes in secret, with only a few belongings. Furthermore,

they found houses unfurnished or looted. They agreed that most had settled in the north and were not thinking of returning because of strained relations with Greek Cypriots and the ill treatment they had endured prior to their displacement (IDMC interview, March 2009; Loizos, 1981).

Displaced Greek Cypriots dwelled on and articulated their loss more strongly than displaced Turkish Cypriots. The latter mentioned such losses as disappeared and killed relatives, their family home, their village, their sense of continuity and way of life, and their access to places they had lived in. Greek Cypriots have perpetuated memories of the place they left behind in paintings, maps and photos hanging in offices and homes, community associations, sports clubs and coffee shops, while Turkish Cypriots have named sports clubs and coffee shops after their places of origin.

Meanwhile, children's levels of interest in their parents' displacement and places of origin vary. While some Greek Cypriot teenagers have little interest in their families' places of origin and are not primarily concerned with being displaced (Ege, 2008), other children of displaced Greek Cypriots identify strongly with places their parents fled from and display a strong "refugee consciousness" (Hadjiyanni, 2002). Children who IDMC interviewed on both sides of the buffer zone felt at home at their current residence. Although curious about their parents' or grandparents' history, they generally felt little attachment to their ancestral home. Teenagers in the south considered that the difference between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots was greater than between the displaced and non-displaced.

School teachers in the south also reported that children of IDPs are not aware of any IDP distinction, despite the fact that school lists continue to have symbols beside the names of children of IDPs. Younger Turkish Cypriots feel little attachment to the south and view it as a foreign country. Turkish Cypriot youth who have travelled to the south nevertheless feel constrained by their limited prospects in the north and are eager for a political settlement.

### **Outlook for a resolution to the conflict and displacement**

#### *Ongoing negotiations*

UN-facilitated peace efforts were renewed in 2008 after the election of a new administration in the RoC. Unlike previous leaders, new president Dimitris Christofias stated that a settlement would include the establishment of a Turkish Cypriot administration, that not all Greek Cypriot IDPs would be able to return to their homes and that some Turkish immigrants who had moved to the north could stay (ICG, 24 June 2008). The Orthodox Church has also recently begun to acknowledge the pain and suffering of Turkish Cypriots (Hadjipavlou, 2007).

For its part, in contrast to past delegations, the Turkish Cypriot delegation to the peace negotiations is now actively engaging on matters of international and European law. Both negotiating parties favour the establishment of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, but interpret this concept differently (PRIO, 2006). They will also have to compromise on issues of security, territory and property (CoE, 12 September 2008). Despite fundamental disagreements between the sides, there is

widespread optimism among external parties that a deal is achievable (Government of the United Kingdom, 6 February 2009; CoE, 12 September 2008; UN, 28 November 2008; Open Democracy, 16 July 2008).

The two sides have come together and made progress on the issue of missing relatives. 1,493 Greek Cypriots and 502 Turkish Cypriots have been reported as missing by both communities to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP, 2009). These people went missing during the inter-communal fighting of the 1960s as well as from July 1974 onwards. The Committee's team of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists had by mid-2009 exhumed the remains of 530 bodies, 161 of which have been identified and returned to their families (CMP, June 2009). Relatives have called for investigations into the cause of death and reparations, and there are several cases before the courts of the GRC and the ECtHR (TCHRF, 30 September 2008; CoE, 10 January 2008; CoE, 10 May 2001). While cooperation between the two communities has been positive, the issue is far from closed and continues to strain relations (Sant Cassia, 2005).

#### *Prospects of a solution to displacement*

Despite these positive signs, the negotiating politicians have done little to prepare displaced communities for a solution. The preferences and priorities of people who lost or gained property regarding the resolution of property claims have not been identified, even though that would boost the peace process and encourage greater support for any compromise proposed (Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008). Some Greek

Cypriots are not open to compromise, arguing they should be able to enjoy their right to property and freedom of establishment and movement like other European Union citizens. Similarly, Greek Cypriot public school curriculums have done little to prepare young people for a bi-zonal bi-communal state (Philippou and Varnava, 2008), although their support would be necessary to implement a peace agreement.

The effectiveness of any consultation on possible solutions to the displacement situation would depend on the availability of practical information such as the number of IDPs who could return, the cost of the proposed solution and plans for financing it. Some of this has been established through NGO research, which could be disseminated and explained. For example, a recent study based on four possible scenarios estimated that a solution would cost an average of €7.2 billion (\$10 billion) for new housing, infrastructure and repairs and about €15 billion (\$21 billion) for property compensation. However, the study concluded that all Cypriots would stand to benefit from the resulting boom in construction jobs and improvement in the economy (PRIO, 2 February 2009).

The public on both sides are pessimistic about the current peace process. After decades of failed negotiations, recent polls showed that only a minority of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots expressed a clear hope for a positive outcome (Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008; UN, 24 April 2007). Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots reported in interviews with IDMC in 2009 that they followed the negotiations but saw little prospect of a solution. They

believed that the leaders could not be trusted and that parties profiting from the current situation were preventing a solution. Some (mainly Turkish Cypriots) favour the status quo while others (mainly Greek Cypriots) would prefer a bi-zonal bi-communal federal arrangement (IDMC interview, March 2009). Turkish Cypriots also believe that a bi-zonal federation will only work once their community is regarded as a legitimate entity and a potential equal partner in a federal Cyprus (Gürel and Ozersay, 2007; ICG, 23 June 2008). However, equality is not acceptable to some Greek Cypriots since they comprise 80 per cent of the population, though they are prepared for all Cypriots to enjoy the same individual rights.

Mistrust runs deep on both sides. Greek Cypriots are suspicious of the role and intentions of the government of Turkey (Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008), while Turkish Cypriots believe the Orthodox Church has undue influence on the Greek Cypriot leadership (Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008; CoE, 1 October 2008; CoE, 9 July 2008). Some Greek Cypriot IDPs resent the fact that some Turkish Cypriots live in their homes in the north and benefit from work opportunities and social benefits in the south. At the other end of the spectrum, a few people from each community have taken up residence on the other side or sent their children to study or work on the other side to make the point that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can live together in peace. While ongoing confidence-building measures are helpful, there is a need for concrete mechanisms that encourage dialogue and restore trust (Hadjipavlou, 2007; CoE, 1 October 2008; Centre for

European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008).

Many Greek Cypriot IDPs insist on their right to return even though they are integrated at their current residence (Zetter, 1999). In interviews with IDMC, most Greek Cypriot IDPs stated they would return despite the unknowns. However, a few explained that they had come to realise that going back was a dream. The place they had known had become unrecognisable and their homes were now the homes of others. Others would not return because of the fear they experienced when they fled, because they preferred to receive compensation or because they did not want to uproot their children. Without a settlement, it is still not clear what return would mean in terms of security, property and community.

Few displaced Turkish Cypriots in the north plan to return. They feel safe, secure and settled, there is no community to return to, their village is unrecognisable, and return would mean uprooting their children. While some have gone back to their original village out of curiosity or crossed frequently to visit Greek Cypriot friends, others have not gone back and express annoyance towards those who do. In interviews with IDMC only one Turkish Cypriot reported an intention to return in the event of a settlement; he had agreed with the Greek Cypriot living in his house in the south that he would return, because he felt uneasy living on land which belonged to a displaced Greek Cypriot. Turkish Cypriots generally seem to be more preoccupied with what would happen to their current living arrangement in the event of a settlement rather than repossessing property they left behind.

*Prospects of effective property solutions*

One outstanding problem is the lack of any mutually recognised remedy for lost property, which appears to only be achievable within the framework of a broader political settlement. Nor are there commonly agreed figures for property ownership. Greek Cypriots estimate that in 1974 they owned 79 per cent of all privately owned land in the north, while the Turkish Cypriots estimate this at 64 per cent. Similarly, Turkish Cypriots estimate they owned 22 per cent in the south in 1974, while Greek Cypriots state it was 14 per cent (PRIO, 2006). These figures are not hugely different, but an internationally monitored Cyprus-wide census to assess the current use and condition of all properties affected by the conflict has been recommended as a foundation for further negotiations (Centre for European Policy Studies, 29 October 2008).

Several factors complicate the property situation. Between 32,000 and 35,000 Turkish immigrants figure among Turkish Cypriot citizens and many of them have lived on the island for a generation or more (PRIO, 2005). The Council of Europe contends the number is much higher, from 100,000 to 115,000 people, but this figure has been contested (CoE, 2003). They were brought from Turkey from 1974 to build and support the economy, and they were later allocated unoccupied Greek Cypriot properties, as TRNC authorities did not want to discriminate between citizens (IDMC interview, March 2009). To Greek Cypriots, these are illegal immigrants who were settled by an occupying power in their homes in contravention of international humanitarian law. Meanwhile some in-

igenous Turkish Cypriots consider them an integral part of their community while others view them as culturally different and resent their presence on the island (PRIO, 2005).

Properties left behind continue to be unprotected against appropriation, destruction and development. Turkish Cypriots have reported uncompensated expropriation of properties in the south for infrastructure as well as IDP housing estates, industrial parks, parking lots, parks and football stadiums (TCHRF, 2007). Some 30 Turkish Cypriot villages in the south have also reportedly been completely destroyed (TRNC, 7 Jan 2008). Houses in the north have also reportedly been demolished without the consent of the displaced Greek Cypriot owners (UN, 2 June 2008; GRC, 2007), though Turkish Cypriot authorities maintain that prior to demolition the appropriate authorities have given due notice to the owners, heirs or relatives. A construction boom on Greek Cypriot land in the north and the repeated sale of properties left behind by IDPs (UN, 4 June 2007; ICG, 8 March 2006) have also complicated the search for a comprehensive settlement (UN, 4 June 2007; ICG, 23 June 2008).

The property working group in current negotiations has agreed that the rights of all original owners should be recognised and the dispossessed should be given the option of restitution, compensation or exchange. Greek Cypriots insist the original owner should be able to choose what happens to their property and that recognition of the right to repossess, return and take up residence is essential. Turkish Cypriots recognise individual property rights but do not consider them absolute. They argue that property resti-

tution cannot be based on individual preferences since it is incompatible with their aim to maintain security through a bi-zonal solution. They therefore insist on a ceiling on restitution compatible with a separate federated state where they make up a majority and are thus protected from Greek Cypriot domination.

A property solution must reconcile the legitimate interests and rights of owners with those of current users. These users are protected under international human rights law against unlawful forced evictions, unreasonable relocation, homelessness, and other violations of their human rights. Greek Cypriots recognise that current occupants should reside in adequate conditions until alternative accommodation is found (Politis, 8 March 2009). However the eviction and subsequent return to Turkey of people who have lived in the north for most or all of their life may infringe on their right to private life since their ties with TRNC are stronger than with Turkey (Ronen, 2009).

*Note: This is a summary of the IDMC's Internal Displacement profile. The full profile is available online [here](#).*

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## **About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre**

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people. In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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