



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by Ambassador Andreas D. Mavroyiannis, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus to the Third Committee of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly

New York, 6 October 2020

Madame Chairperson,

Let me start by congratulating you on your election and assure you of my delegation's full support.

My delegation fully subscribes to the statement of the European Union and as such, my remarks are confined to specific national concerns regarding the violations of individual and collective human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cypriots that stem from the invasion and ongoing occupation of part of Cyprus by Turkey. In 1974 and thereafter, Turkey has committed and continues to perpetrate well-documented massive human rights violations in Cyprus. We have been raising these violations repeatedly for the past 46 years and will continue to do so until they have been redressed; human rights violations cannot be normalized because they have been taking place for a long time.

Firstly, I want to remind the Committee that a third of Greek Cypriots were **displaced** as a result of Turkey's armed aggression and continue to be denied the right to return to their places of origin. These displaced persons were also dispossessed of their properties. In addition to their **property rights** being violated, these forcibly displaced persons witness, from a distance and are unable to put an end to, the rampant unlawful exploitation, development, and use of their properties by others.

Secondly, I want to remind the Committee of the **demographic engineering** that Turkey has been perpetrating in the areas of Cyprus that it occupies. Since 1974, thousands of Turkish settlers have been transferred to Cyprus as part of a methodical and deliberate plan to alter the demographic composition of the island, change its historical character, and prejudice the settlement of the Cyprus problem. This is a war crime under International Humanitarian Law.

Thirdly, I want to recall the daily violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms suffered by **enclaved** Greek-Cypriots and Maronites who continue to live under occupation.

Their number has dwindled from more than 20 thousand to a few hundred in the space of 40 years as a result of persistent harassment, intimidation, and the discriminatory treatment they have to endure on the basis of their “ethnic origin, race and religion”. Their rights to privacy and family life, education, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and property rights, are constantly violated. In this context, my government urges Turkey to reverse its actions with regard to the **opening of the area of Varosha**, fenced and exclusively controlled by the Turkish army since 1974, despite the calls by the Security Council to return it to its lawful inhabitants under UN auspices. Such a negative development, which is unfortunately happening as I speak, and I would like to strongly denounce it, is in violation of the relevant UNSC resolutions and will only result in the creation of another *fait accompli* on the ground, of immeasurable proportions.

Fourthly, more than half of the remains of a total of 2001 **missing persons** are yet to be found or identified and returned to their families. We reiterate our request to states in possession of any information on this purely humanitarian issue to share it, in order to help us establish the fate and whereabouts of combatants and civilians who are still missing. We also call on Turkey once again to provide to the Committee on Missing Persons relevant information from its archives, including on the deliberate relocation of remains, as well as unimpeded access to all areas for excavations and exhumations to take place. This would greatly contribute to the facilitation and acceleration of the work of the bi-communal Committee of Missing Persons (CMP), which so far resulted in the identification of only over 900 Greek and Turkish Cypriot missing persons.

Fifthly, the rich **cultural, archaeological and religious heritage** in occupied Cyprus has been looted, vandalized and destroyed since 1974 and the fate of many historical treasures is still unknown. Indicative of Turkey’s disregard of cultural and religious values, is the recent compromise of the status of Ayia Sophia (Hagia Sophia), in Istanbul, one of the most significant World Heritage Sites and a legendary symbol of the interaction between civilizations and coexistence of cultures. The violation of the sanctity of this inheritance of mankind is reprehensible and cannot stand.

Madame Chairperson,

The above violations do not, by any means, constitute an exhaustive list. In fact, the armed conflict itself and the status quo it has created, have affected the rights and freedoms of every single Cypriot. This is why it is absolutely imperative for us to ensure that a settlement of the Cyprus problem will provide for the highest standards of human rights protection and will enable us to redress violations, as there can be no sustainable peace without justice. Notwithstanding the ongoing occupation and the resulting non-exercise of effective control by the Cyprus Government in parts of Cyprus’ territory, we will continue to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, in line with European and international standards, irrespective of their ethnic origin, race, gender, civil or family status, religion, sexual orientation, age, or disability. We aspire to soon be able to do that in a reunited country.

Thank you