



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly
Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of
Cyprus, Ms. Gabriella Michaelidou, in the Third Committee
Agenda Item 71-Promotion and Protection of Human Rights**

New York, 17 October 2023

Mr. Chair,

Cyprus fully aligns to the statement delivered by the European Union. Allow me to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All States have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil human rights as set in the UN conventions. No justification can be used as a pretext for the violation of human rights.

On the eve of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, our world is far from being ideal.

Cyprus is compelled to take the floor for the 49th consecutive year, to raise the continuous violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms stemming from Türkiye's invasion and ongoing illegal occupation of the 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. In no way human right violations can be normalized, just because they have been in place for a long time. My delegation will continue to raise the issue until human rights and fundamental freedoms of Cypriots have been redressed. Respect for international law, human rights law and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, is not in the discretion of any Member State.

Mr. Chair,

The Turkish armed forces have since 1974 forcibly expelled approximately 170,000 Greek Cypriots from their ancestral homes. The displaced Greek Cypriots are to this

day prevented from returning to their homes and to peacefully enjoy their properties, witnessing the systematic and unlawful exploitation, development and use of their properties by others. This is part of a deliberate and expanding plan promoted by Türkiye , to “turkify” the occupied part of Cyprus.

Türkiye needs to immediately stop the continuing unlawful exploitation of Greek Cypriot owned land in the occupied part of Cyprus, including the sale of the property to Turkish settlers and interests, as well as to foreigners. It should be reminded that, according to the United Nations Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons (the Pinheiro principles)

“all refugees and displaced persons have the right to have restored to them any housing, land or property of which they were arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived..”.

At the same time, Türkiye has implemented a systematic policy of settlement of the occupied part of Cyprus with the mass transfer of settlers from Türkiye, aiming in *changing the demographic composition and alter the population balance on the island*. This policy -a war crime under International Humanitarian Law - aims to eliminate the historic character of the island and prejudice the settlement of the Cyprus problem.

I want also to recall the daily violations of human rights of enclaved Greek Cypriots and Maronites living under Turkish occupation. Enclaved persons have now been reduced to a few hundred in the occupied part, as a result of oppression and discriminatory treatment on the basis of their ethnic origin, race and religion. They are deprived, among other rights, of their right to religion and their right to education, including through the unacceptable censorship of textbooks, arbitrary rejection of appointed educators, restriction to access and constant monitoring.

Destruction of cultural heritage is another part of Türkiye’s concerted effort to change the character and history of the area under its occupation. The rich heritage of Cyprus has been looted, vandalized and destroyed since 1974, including the looting and desecration of more than 520 Orthodox, Armenian and Maronite churches in the occupied areas. Cyprus recalls that intentional destruction of cultural heritage is well

settled as a violation of international and international humanitarian law, and a war crime actionable under the Rome Statute.

Almost 50 years after the Turkish invasion, the fate of around 50% of the missing persons in Cyprus, both soldiers and civilians, including seniors, women, and children, is still unknown to this day. Once again, we call on Türkiye to provide the Committee on Missing Persons with all relevant information, especially from her military archives, including information on the deliberate relocation of remains. Türkiye needs to ensure that the Committee of Missing Persons has immediate and unhindered access to all military areas in the occupied part of Cyprus.

Mr. Chair,

Recalling all previous Security Council Resolutions and Presidential Statements on Varosha, in its Resolution 2674/2023 the Security Council expressed deep regret regarding the continuation of unilateral actions in Varosha and the disregard of the call for immediate reversal of actions. Regrettably, Türkiye continues in the same course of action, in full defiance of relevant Security Council Resolutions and Presidential Statements, undermining all efforts to resume the negotiations and reach a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on the agreed basis of Bizonal Bicomunal federation, as prescribed in the Security Council Resolutions.

Mr. Chair,

The above violations are only a number of the many human right violations stemming from Türkiye's invasion and the ongoing illegal occupation of Cyprus. The status quo affects the rights and freedoms of all Cypriots, and therefore, is imperative to ensure that a settlement will provide for full conformity with individual human rights standards.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus will continue to protect and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots irrespective of their ethnic origin, race, gender, civil or family status, religion, sexual orientation, age, or disability.

It is our sincere hope that this will be soon the reality in a reunified country.

Thank you.