

## **3Ds Initiative for Turkish Cypriots: Direct Travel, Direct Trade, Direct Contact**

Turkish Cypriots live under a state of stringent isolation. Despite their eagerness to establish connections and foster relationships with the global community, they are cut off from the rest of the world. This isolation is not of their choosing it is imposed upon them.

For decades, Turkish Cypriots have been promised an end to this international isolation — most notably as part of the 2004 UN Comprehensive Settlement Plan (commonly referred to as the "Annan Plan") Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly supported this UN-backed proposal and its historic referendum, demonstrating their commitment to peace and reconciliation. Most recently in 2017 when after rounds of talks an agreement yet again failed. Yet, despite their positive response and genuine efforts to reach a negotiated settlement, the promises remain unfulfilled and Turkish Cypriots' continued isolation requires urgent attention and action from the international community.

### **Ongoing isolation of the Turkish Cypriots**

#### **Shut out of Cultural and Tourism Opportunities**

- **2024:** Participation of the Turkish Cypriot London Tourism Office to the Matka tourism fair organized in Finland in January 2024 was prevented at the last minute due to Greek Cypriot pressure.

#### **Blacklisted on the International Stage**

- **2023:** İlkan Varol, Ombudsman of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), received an official invitation to speak at the panel themed “Human Rights in Global Crises” at the International Ombudsman Conference held in Rome. Her speech on “Human Rights Violations” on 22 September 2023 was canceled at the last minute, because of the obstructionist efforts of the Greek Cypriot delegation at the conference.

- **2023:** Following the decision by the Organization of Turkic States to grant the TRNC observer status, the European Union External Action Service criticized the decision. On 20 September 2023, the European Union went as far as threatening Central Asian states with “negative effects” if they ratify the accession of Turkish Cypriots as an observer to the Organisation of Turkic States.

#### **Restricted from Vital Global Health Partnerships**

- **2011:** Euro-Mediterranean Medical Informatics and Telemedicine (EMMIT) of Italy, which had decided to hold one of its conferences in North Cyprus, was forced to revoke its decision.

#### **Excluded from International Educational Exchange**

- **2024:** Most recently students from Colgate University in New York were prevented from crossing over to the North to get a first-hand experience of the situation on the island and learn the Turkish Cypriot perspectives. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had a teleconference with the students instead.

- **2011:** The academic protocol that exists between Girne American University’s College of Advanced technology in North Cyprus and its generic campus in India has been protested by the Greek Cypriot administration of South Cyprus.

- **2011:** Bangkok University of Thailand terminated the academic collaboration protocol with the Girne American University following a Greek Cypriot intervention.

- **2011:** Malaysian University Teknologi Mara (UTIM) was forced to drop out as a co-organizer of a conference on environment to be held in North Cyprus in 2011.

- **2010:** The Technology University in Limassol, South Cyprus, which hosted a photography and educational conference in November 2010 excluded the list of academicians who were to attend from Lefke Avrupa University, based in the North.

- Turkish Cypriot universities are blocked from cooperating with their counterparts around the world and Turkish Cypriot students are also barred from participating in Erasmus/Socrates programs.

#### **Deprived of Intimidation-free Trade & Commerce**

- The Greek Cypriot Administration has been continuing to blackmail certain flag states forcing them to issue circulars to hinder the entrance of the vessels carrying the flags of these states to TRNC seaports, by threatening them with legal consequences, even though there exist no embargos *vis-a-vis* TRNC seaports, which has also been confirmed by the European Commission on repeated occasions.

A case in point is the detaining of a Romanian captain for visiting the North ports with his vessels in 2021. The seafarers union had to intervene for his release.

*This material is distributed by Aquila Strategies, LLC on behalf of LB International Solutions, LLC (LBIS),  
which in turn represents other foreign principals.  
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.*

### **What can the U.S. Congress do?**

Oppose one-sided resolutions with inflammatory and misleading language.

Discovering or creating fresh perspectives to improve the livelihoods of Turkish Cypriots and easing the isolation of Turkish Cypriots. Particularly through these avenues, Congress could lead with a new vision to address this decades-long ordeal for Turkish Cypriots.

- **Engagement:** The U.S. Congress can engage with Turkish Cypriots directly, such as by sending delegations, holding hearings, or establishing parliamentary exchanges. This could help to build relationships and understanding.
- **Diplomatic Pressure:** The U.S. Congress can use its influence to encourage other countries to recognize Turkish Cypriots and to ease their own restrictions. This could involve passing resolutions, making public statements, or directly communicating with foreign governments or intergovernmental organizations.
- **Aid and Investment:** The U.S. Congress can authorize aid for or promote investment benefiting Turkish Cypriots. This could help to alleviate some of the economic impacts of isolation.

### **How would it benefit the U.S. in the region?**

The easing of Turkish Cypriots' isolation would have a massive impact on Turkish Cypriots as well as pave the way for addressing and securing U.S. interests in the region, such as:

- **Regional Stability:** The U.S. has a goal of advancing regional stability. Improved relations could potentially contribute to stability in the region by fostering dialogue and cooperation. Particularly considering the island's strategic location.
- **Security and Defense:** The U.S. aims to deepen its security and defense ties in the region. Improved relations with Turkish Cypriots could potentially enhance these ties and contribute to regional security.
- **Economic Opportunities:** The U.S. seeks to promote commercial and energy cooperation, as well as economic diversification. Stronger relations with Turkish Cypriots could potentially open new economic opportunities in these areas.
- **Combating Global Challenges:** The U.S. seeks to advance cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot community in combating global challenges such as terrorism, money-laundering, and trafficking in persons.

May 2024