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1. New and Upcoming Publications/Podcasts (www.FEScyprus.org)

January



Sertac Sonan, Ebru Küçükşener, Enis Porat
Politics and Society in North Cyprus: A Survey Study, 2019 Report
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



Podcasts

Our podcasts can be found on all major Podcast providers under FES Cyprus Podcast: **Beyond the Divide** and in the new media section of our homepage at:

<< <https://www.fescyprus.org/media/>>>



Hrishab Sandilya and Sarah Morsheimer
(Project Phoenix)
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Cyprus. Exacerbating Systemic Faults
(In English)



Hubert Faustmann, Elias Ioakimoglou, Nicos Trimikliniotis
The Post-Pandemic Stimulus: Could a Minimum Wage Boost the Beleaguered Cypriot Economy?
(In English)

2. FES Cyprus Events

February

Laona Foundation, University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN), Civil Society Advocates Online Seminar

Το δικαίωμα προσφυγής Μη Κυβερνητικών Οργανώσεων και άλλων ομάδων πολιτών για προστασία του περιβάλλοντος: μία συγκριτική επισκόπηση του δικαίου της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης, Γαλλίας και Κύπρου.

Tuesday, February 16, 18.00-20.00

Registration via email:

lawacademy@uclancyprus.ac.cy

(In Greek)



3. Cyprus Problem

The UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Jane Holl Lute held separate meetings on December 1 with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Ersin Tatar, respectively.¹ Lute arrived on the island in late November to probe the prospect of an

¹ The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Ersin Tatar serves as President of the TRNC, the international community considers him the communal leader of the Turkish Cypriots. As the government of the Republic of Cyprus remains internationally recognised as the government of the whole of the island, the entire island is now considered to be a member of the European Union. However, the *acquis communautaire* is suspended in northern Cyprus pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).

informal five plus one-party meeting on the peace negotiations, including the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, the three guarantor powers of the Republic of Cyprus: Greece, Turkey and the UK as well as the UN.

Both Anastasiades and Tatar expressed their readiness to participate in an informal five plus one meeting to be convened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to discuss the way forward. Anastasiades affirmed that the resumption of the talks would begin from where they left off in Crans-Montana in 2017. Tatar, however clarified to Lute his position on a two-state solution which runs counter to the federal solution the two sides had agreed on in the past. The Turkish Cypriot leader and Turkey insist that a two-state solution ought to be put on the table, arguing that talks on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation have led nowhere. The Cyprus News Agency, citing information, reported that despite the different approaches, Lute seemed to be optimistic that after her round of contacts with all parties is completed and after she briefs Guterres, an informal meeting on Cyprus will be convened. Lute is expected to return to the island in the first half of January.

On December 2, Lute flew to Athens where she met with General Secretariat of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Themistoklis Demiris, who expressed Greece's readiness to participate in a five-party summit on Cyprus under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General. Lute also had contacts in London.

On December 16, Lute met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara as part of her task to probe the prospects of an

informal five party meeting. Following the meeting, Cavusoglu tweeted that the Turkish side promotes a two-state settlement based on equal sovereignty and that common ground should be reached for a new negotiation process, reiterating Turkey's and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar's position on a two-state solution. Cavusoglu said after the meeting that he had told Lute that the "*federation project is no longer sustainable*". The Turkish Cypriot 'This Country is Ours Platform,' the newly revived umbrella organization, which brings together left-leaning political parties and trade unions (please see also the Turkish Cypriots section) condemned Cavusoglu's remarks. The platform emphasized that the negotiation process must resume in line with the Guterres framework and based on the agreement reached by the two leaders during the trilateral meeting in Berlin in November 2019.

On December 27, President Anastasiades was prompted to repeat in a written announcement his position on the Cyprus problem in response to a comment by the Archbishop Chrysostomos, that Anastasiades had spoken to him of a two-state solution. Similar claims have been made by the Turkish side since the collapse of the last round of Cyprus talks in Crans-Montana in 2017. The President has repeatedly denied that the Greek Cypriot side was open to a two-state solution and argued that the Archbishop misunderstood what he had told him. AKEL's leader Andros Kyprianou accused Anastasiades of lying.

People living in the north and working in the south, who had been banned by the Turkish

Cypriot side from crossing between the two sides until December 26, were told on December 16 that they would be able to get to their workplaces but would have to stay in quarantine in the evenings. The announcement followed a protest for the second consecutive day by a group of workers, against new Covid-19 measures imposed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities including temporarily banning people from crossing between the two sides for work.

According to the mayor of Famagusta, Ismail Arter, 70,000 people have visited the newly opened part of the fenced-off town of Varosha between October 8 and December 8.

On 26th, the remains of fourteen Turkish Cypriot children who had been massacred by the Greek Cypriot paramilitary group EOKA B in August 1974 were buried. The children's remains had been found in a mass grave along with those of 75 adults and were matched through DNA through the work of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP). The victims were residents of the villages of Aloa (Atlilar), Sandalaris (Sandallar) and Maratha (Murataga).

4. Hydrocarbons

On December 10, the European Council agreed to prepare limited sanctions on Turkish individuals participating in Turkey's unauthorised drillings in the eastern Mediterranean, postponing any harsher steps until March, after member states disagreed on how to handle Ankara. President Anastasiades ex-

pressed his “absolute satisfaction” with the conclusions of the European Council and the fact that more names would be added to the list for restrictive measures. The EU was hesitant to target Turkey’s economy over the hydrocarbons dispute, as Germany, Italy and Spain pushed to give diplomacy more time. France, angered by Turkish foreign policy in Syria and Libya, has sought to push the EU to consider sectorial sanctions on Turkey’s economy, but did not have wide support. Lack of consensus by the EU leaders for harsher sanctions on Turkey dissatisfied opposition parties in Cyprus which expressed disappointment with the lack of substantive support by the EU.

The Natural Gas Public Company (DEFA) announced on December 21 that it has concluded the first phase of the tender process for the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). According to a press release, 19 interested suppliers were selected for the procedures concerning both the medium-term supply of the basic quantities with an LNG sales and purchase agreement contract, as well as for the procedure for future deliveries of LNG purchased on the spot market. DEFA noted that some of the strongest companies in the international LNG market are among those short-listed, adding that the strong competition for the supply contract confirms that the choice for the creation of the LNG floating terminal in the area of Vassiliko of Zygi is moving in the right direction.

On December 22, the Council of Ministers approved a bill ratifying the statute of an international organisation, the East Mediterranean

Gas Forum (EMGF). According to the Minister of Energy, Natasa Pilides, the aim of the EMGF is to ensure the optimal use of natural gas in the eastern Mediterranean region. Palestine, Egypt and Jordan have already ratified the law while Israel and Cyprus are expected to proceed very soon with the ratification by their Parliaments.

5. Greek Cypriots

Economic Developments

The Cyprus Asset Management Company’s (KEDIPES) expects a 25% drop in revenues at the end of 2020, compared to last year, the decline attributed to the slowdown due to the coronavirus situation. Presenting the entity’s balance sheet for the third quarter of 2020, KEDIPES board chairman, Lambros Papadopoulos, said revenues were down 17.5% compared to the corresponding quarter in 2019. KEDIPES is the residual entity following the acquisition of the stated owned Cyprus Cooperative Bank’s performing loan book by the Hellenic Bank.

The Central Bank of Cyprus (CBC) stated on December 23 that the rejection of the state budget for 2021 by the parliament was a negative development that jeopardises planning for dealing with the financial consequences of the pandemic. In its economic bulletin for December, the CBC encourages a consensual solution that, while not endangering the consolidation course of the Cypriot economy and banking system, takes into account the fact that both households and businesses, face

unprecedented financial difficulties as a result of the lockdown measures taken due to the pandemic. Regarding the course of GDP, the CBC noted that the introduction of new restrictive measures in mid-October and even stricter restrictions in November and December, is expected to prolong the recession. Pointing out that recovery depends directly on finding a solution to the impasse regarding the budget, the CBC noted that the recovery is expected to begin in 2021 due to the gradual increase in domestic and foreign demand, the boost expected to be given by EU funding, but also the support of the economy by the ECB's loose monetary policy. Passing the budget would have gone a long way toward helping the economy rebound after the recession this year, as the government grew its balance sheet by €742m compared to 2020. The 2021 budget featured €2.91bn in benefits and €1.1bn on healthcare, the largest such allocations ever made.

According to figures published by the Cyprus Statistical Service, Cyprus' tourism sector saw revenue plunge by 85.1% in the first 10 months of 2020 due to the pandemic. For the period January to October 2020, revenue from tourism is estimated at only €376.3m compared to the €2.5bn in the corresponding period of 2019. Revenue from tourism in October 2020 reached €77.4m less than a third of the €299.4m generated in the corresponding month of 2019. Tourist arrivals saw a 94.7% decrease last month compared to November 2019. Cyprus saw 8,952 tourists in November 2020 compared with 169,392 in November 2019. For the period of January to November arrivals of tourists totalled 621,927

compared with 3,866,447 in the corresponding period of 2019, recording a decrease of 83.9%.

Domestic Developments

In December, the COVID-19 cases dramatically increased from 10,565 to 22,651. The number of deaths attributed to the virus rose from 49 to 125 making December the deadliest month since the outbreak of the pandemic. In a bid to further curb the spread of the coronavirus and following a surge in cases, the health ministry on December 29 issued a new decree forbidding people to be in any house other than their own with the exception of New Year's Eve. Strict measures had also been introduced on December 9 with the closing of food and entertainment establishments, shopping malls and churches. The restrictions are in force until January 10. A surge in the number of admissions of patients with Covid-19 is putting pressure on public hospitals that are currently dealing with the highest number of cases since the beginning of the pandemic. By month's end 160 people were being treated in hospitals, 46 of whom in serious condition. Meanwhile the first vaccinations with the Pfizer mRNA vaccines began in Cyprus on December 27, a day after the arrival of the first batch of the specific vaccine to the island.

On December 17, Parliament rejected the 2021 budget by 29 votes against to 24 in favour, primarily because junior opposition DIKO, who in previous years had voted in favour, broke ranks. DIKO vetoed the budget due to the fact that the government refused

to hand over to the auditor-general files concerning the now-defunct citizenship by investment scheme. Also voting against were AKEL, EDEK, the Greens, the Citizens' Alliance and independent MP Anna Theologou. Voting in favour were ruling DISY, Solidarity, the Democratic Cooperation, and ELAM. The government launched a round of consultations with smaller political parties in an attempt to avert a major crisis in the middle of the pandemic and pledged to consider proposed amendments. This was the first time since 1960 that the state budget was rejected.

The findings of the three-member panel, which probed certain cases between 2008 and 2018 relating to the island's citizenship by investment programme were released on December 29. The so-called Kalogirou report, named after the head of the securities and exchange commission who led the probe, documented a litany of shortcomings concerning background checks on people applying for the citizenship by investment programme and weak spots that enabled apparently highly suspicious and sometimes outright fraudulent activities to go undetected. According to the report, the process was severely flawed from the interior ministry, which until recently did little more than rubberstamp applications filed by promoters, all the way to the banks. Regarding the role of the banking system, the report identifies loopholes which could be exploited by applicants to conceal the source of origin of their funds. In the majority of cases the applicants appeared to have paid over 200% of the true market value of the investment.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

Negotiations between the Hellenic bank's trade unions on the renewal of the collective agreement reached a deadlock. The collective agreement expired in December 2018. 1,100 employees of the former Cooperative Bank were recently integrated into the Hellenic bank's workforce as part of the acquisition of the "good portfolio" of the former Cooperative bank. However, since then, the terms of employment of these new employees are not uniform with the rest of their colleagues. The associations of SEK and PEO, representing most of the former employees of the Cooperative bank have clashed with the of Hellenic Bank's employees' trade union, as they consider that ETYK (Pancyprian Bank Workers' Trade Union) tolerates the existence of inequalities between employees in the same workspace for two and a half years. In other words, the guarantee of the annual increase, the percentage of the contribution to the welfare fund, the days of annual leave and sickness are not in line with what currently applies to existing Hellenic Bank employees. The Bank's management stated in a circular, until the renewal of the collective agreement was achieved *"to grant retroactive increases for 2019 and 2020 to all permanent staff"*.

On December 10, the Association of Professional Artists, affirmed the difficult phase that the arts and culture are going through in Cyprus in a letter delivered to the Parliament. The letter included requests for its support. According to it, nine months after the pandemic began, artists are in complete despair, with some working occasionally and others

being unemployed since March, resulting even in survival problems. The trade union recommended the granting of a direct allowance to all artists and taking immediate measures to engage and employ artists through sponsored performances. Funds traditionally given to municipalities and communities, were usually utilized to conduct concerts by Greek artists. According to the letter, these should be used to organize more Cypriot productions and to employ Cypriot artists. Among other things, the Cyprus Association of Professional Artists requests interventions from the Ministry, regarding civil employees who allegedly work illegally as artists and deprive professionals of their salary.

On December 15, the Minister for Labour chaired a wide-ranging meeting of stakeholders examining various labour issues. Regarding the controversial issue of the 13th salary, the Minister of Labour responded to employers who raise the issue of non-payment or a reduced 13th salary, by reciting the Industrial Relations Code, according to which, the 13th salary is a right of workers and added that the State will not subsidize it. She clarified, however, that businesses facing a real problem will be able to refer to the Industrial Relations Department of the Ministry of Labour, to reach an agreement, with the cooperation of the trade unions, on how they can settle to pay the 13th salary.

On December 18, the Association of Branded Food Chains in Cyprus called on the government to review the measures to support workers with direct payment of an allowance especially for the periods 13 to 30 November

in Limassol and Paphos and from 1-31 December in all provinces. Moreover, they requested for closing hours to be 9:00 pm instead of 7:00 pm. They argued that support should be granted when sales are reduced by 40% rather than 80%, as currently in place, as this would help employers maintain jobs. They also point out that wage coverage should be proportional while people who do not work at all due to COVID 19 measures by the Ministry of Health should be fully compensated. They are also calling for legislation that will reduce shop rental rates.

On December 22, the Cyprus Collective Agreement for seafarers employed on ships flying the Cypriot flag, together with the two Cyprus Maritime Trade Unions, was renewed and will last for the next two years (1 January 2021 – 31 December 2022).

The trade unions of the hotel industry denounced the refusal of employers to pay the 13th salary, despite the agreement and suggestions of the Minister of Labour, as stipulated by the Law on the Protection of Wages. Thus, they called on the Ministry and the Minister of Labour herself to intervene and enforce the agreements. They also called on the employees not to accept any agreement, to resist pressure and blackmail and to inform their trade unions of any problems they are facing related to the issue.

A two-hour strike by workers at the three ground service companies at Larnaca Airport, Swissport, LGS and S&L Airport Services, was suspended. The problem arose because the three companies informed the trade unions that they would not pay the 13th salary of

their employees in full, claiming that during the period when the employees were not working due to the lack of flights caused by the pandemic, they were included in the plans announced by the government to support workers and businesses. However, after the call of the Minister of Labour, a General Assembly of employees was held, during which it was decided that the two-hour strike should be suspended. Instead, a meeting of all parties involved was arranged in order to negotiate and come up with a solution.

6. Turkish Cypriots

Economic Developments

On December 30, the Ministry of Finance borrowed 75.5 million TL from the domestic market, bringing the total amount of debt received in 2020 to 334 million TL (€37.1 million). This was the sixth time this year that the Ministry resorted to banks for credit through the Government Domestic Borrowing Bill (DIBS) auctions opened by the Central Bank of the TRNC. The interest rate was the highest level of 2020 with 20.02%. The lowest level was in June with 9.66%.

Meanwhile, on December 28, the Finance Minister Dursun Oguz announced that the Turkish government transferred 100 million TL (€11.1 million) as a contribution to the Fund for Supporting the Employment of Domestic Workforce. The Fund has been used to support the private sector during the pandemic.

Based on data from KTEZO (Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Shopkeepers and Artisans), the Turkish Cypriot daily Kibris reported that more than 10,000 businesses suspended their operations during the lockdown period, and nearly 1,500 businesses closed permanently. The newspaper also reported that the pandemic wiped out 73% of tourist arrivals; according to the Tourism Planning Department, between January and September, the number of arrivals through air and seaports had fallen by 942,300 compared with last year's figures.

Speaking to Turkish Cypriot weekly Cyprus Today, the founding rector of Girne American University, said that as a result of the diplomatic efforts of the Republic of Cyprus the following countries have agreed to no longer recognize graduate diplomas from universities in the north: Jordan, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates. This is a serious blow for the Turkish Cypriot economy, which mainly relies on the higher education and tourism sectors. Meanwhile, the owners of student dormitories issued a stark warning that the sector had hit rock bottom. It is said that many of the dorm operators were on the brink of bankruptcy and that there was a need to attract thousands of foreign university students back to the island in the next three months. According to the Ministry of Education as of the end of November, only 43% of the foreign students were on the island, the majority preferring to stay in their countries and continuing their education online.

Relations with Turkey

On December 23, the new Prime Minister Ersan Saner visited Ankara where he met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Vice-President Fuat Oktay. His coalition partners, the Deputy Prime Minister Erhan Arikli (YDP) and the Minister of Tourism Fikri Ataoglu (DP) accompanied Saner during his meeting with the Turkish President. The meeting was closed to the press and no statement was issued after the meeting. Following the meeting between Oktay and Saner, a joint press conference was held. Among other things, Oktay touched upon the issue of Varosha and said that they would continue to discuss the future phases with the TRNC government. Oktay also promised an 800m TL (€85.7) support package.

Speaking at Ercan Airport upon his arrival, Saner said that his delegation discussed various infrastructure projects to be financed by Turkey including the construction of a new 500-bed hospital in Nicosia as well as ongoing highway projects; Turkey will also fund the e-government infrastructure of the TRNC. Saner also said that Turkey would provide 500,000 Covid-19 vaccines to be used for the vaccination of at least 65% of TRNC citizens. *"We also agreed on maintaining the claim of our rightful stance for the registration of hellim (halloumi cheese) against the Greek Cypriot efforts to register it [as a product of Protected Designation of Origin with the European Commission]. ... Turkey ... will send 5 thousand breeding sheep and goats to the TRNC in 2021"* Saner added.

Three cases have been filed against, the editor of Turkish Cypriot daily Avrupa, Sener Levent, in Ankara Penal Court for insulting (Turkish President) Erdogan. The cases have been relayed to the Nicosia District Court. Levent was summoned to the court to testify but Levent refused and said: 'I reject the allegations.

Reportedly the TRNC assumed the cost of repairing the water pipeline (900 million TL, €95 million TL), which delivers water from Turkey to Cyprus.

Domestic Politics

On December 3, the leader of the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) Tufan Erhurman who had been appointed by President Ersin Tatar on November 21st to form the government handed back the mandate to Tatar after his efforts to form a 4-party coalition with the People's Party (HP), Democratic Party (DP) and Social Democratic Party (TDP) failed. A day later, after consulting with party leaders, Tatar, for the second time, gave the mandate to the acting leader of the National Unity Party (UBP) Ersan Saner. The following day, the leaders of UBP (19 MPs), DP (3 MPs) and YDP (2 MPs) announced that they agreed on forming a minority coalition government, which would be supported by three MPs who had a day earlier resigned from HP. The coalition partners also agreed to call early elections in October 2021. The cabinet has been announced as follows:

- Prime Minister: Ersan Saner (UBP)

- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economy and Energy: Erhan Arikli (YDP)
- Minister of Foreign Affairs: Tahsin Ertugruloglu (UBP, not a member of parliament)
- Minister of Interior: Kutlu Evren (UBP)
- Minister of Finance: Dursun Oğuz (UBP)
- Minister of National Education and Culture: Olgun Amcaoglu (UBP)
- Minister of Public Works and Communication: Unal Ustel (UBP)
- Minister of Labour and Social Security: Koral Cagman (DP)
- Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources: Nazim Cavusoglu (UBP)
- Minister for Tourism and Environment: Fikri Ataoglu (DP)
- Minister of Health: Ali Pilli (UBP)

The only minister who keeps his seat in the new cabinet is Ali Pilli. Faiz Sucuoglu and Hasan Tacoy, who competed for the UBP leadership (please see also the following paragraph), were left out of the cabinet. The former Minister of Finance, Olgun Amcaoglu, who had worked as a bureaucrat at the Ministry for many years, has been appointed as the Minister of Education, while the former Minister of Agriculture Dursun Oguz has become the Minister of Finance. Tahsin Ertugruloglu, who had once said he would take up arms and head to the mountains to wage a guerrilla resistance should the TRNC be dissolved, has now been appointed as Foreign Minister. Koral Cagman (DP), who had earlier said he would never vote for a coalition which involved YDP, became the Minister of Labour.

The former Minister of Tourism, Unal Ustel who had been sacked following a scandal in summer, came back as the Minister of Transportation. The fact that the entire cabinet is made up of men also attracted criticism.

On December 7, 11 left leaning trade unions and 6 political parties (including the main opposition CTP and TDP) announced the revival of the 'This Country is Ours Platform'. The platform which had played a key role in mobilizing the Turkish Cypriot community during the Annan Plan process in 2004, announced the principles on which it was reviving itself. The platform said it rejected all forms of interference in the Turkish Cypriots' political will and added it would continue to defend the Turkish Cypriot community's right to exercise its political will freely. It also noted that it would continue to wage a struggle to protect the Turkish Cypriots' cultural values and identity, as well as preserving its democratic and secular nature. The platform said it would continue to work towards achieving an independent, united federal Cyprus while rejecting all attempts to partition the island or its annexation with another country. Finally, the platform noted it also rejected any measure that would result in economic dependence, and it would fight for an economic structure that would take production as its basis.

On December 20th, the UBP finally completed its extraordinary congress, and elected Ersan Saner unopposed as its new chairperson. The UBP had cancelled the second round of its congress in November after the two leading candidates who would compete in the run-off (Faiz Sucuoglu and Hasan Tacoy) had with-

drawn from the race amid speculations that Ankara opposed Sucuoglu who was poised to win the second round. Sucuoglu later commented that he had been left with no choice but to withdraw to maintain the party's unity.

The parliamentary group of the UBP, selected Resmiye Canaltay (the daughter of former President and UBP chairman Dervis Eroglu) as the party's candidate for the speaker of parliament; current deputy speaker of the parliament Zorlu Tore and Morphou MP Mentis Gunduz were other potential candidates; Tore protested.

MPs of the newly formed coalition government walked out of the plenary session to block a vote on a motion filed by TDP to launch an inquiry into allegations of meddling by Turkey in the recent presidential election. Prime Minister Ersan Saner, addressing the plenary, asked the opposition to postpone the vote; claiming that it was not the first time such speculations made, Saner proposed that an inquiry be held on all past elections, not just the last presidential election. The proposal was rejected by the opposition. The CTP leader Tufan Erhurman for his part said that a 10-month election government could not investigate 26 years of election interference.

The former Minister of Interior, Aysegul Baybars (HP) announced that during her stint 7,683 TRNC citizenship had been granted between February 2018 and November 2020, and added that there were about 3,000 applicants whose paperwork has been completed. When the spouses and children of the new citizens who automatically receive citizenship are factored in, the number goes up to 8,000.

After a rise in locally transmitted cases, in the second half of December, the Higher Committee for Infectious Diseases gradually increased restrictions and eventually imposed a partial lockdown. The Health Minister Ali Pilli had to self-isolate after coming into contact with the chief doctor of the Nicosia Public hospital who tested positive. In mid-December, the committee banned crossings to the south (students and those receiving medical treatment were held exempt) and suspended entry without quarantine while extending the quarantine period for those entering the TRNC from seven to 10 days. According to the new measures, taverns, bars, clubs and similar entertainment venues (but not casinos) would be closed between December 15 and 25 while cafes and restaurants could remain open (until 10 pm) provided that they comply with all protocols, including not more than six people on each table. New year's celebrations and entertainment in restaurants and hotels were also banned. Later in the month, face-to-face education at all schools was suspended until January 18.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

The Trade Union Platform, an umbrella organization of the left-leaning trade unions, filed a case at the Administrative Court to annul a decree signed by Ersin Tatar. It was revealed that Tatar had signed a decree as Prime Minister recruiting 16 of his supporters as temporary workers a few days after he had sworn as the President.

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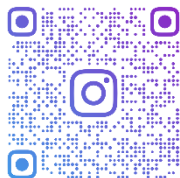
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