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

February

Nayia Kamenou, Enver Ethemer,
Costa Gavrielides, Okan Bullici
***The LGBTI Movement in Cyprus
Activism, Law, and Change Across the Divide***
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



Nicos Trimikliniotis
***Cyprus as a New Refugee “Hotspot” in Europe?
Challenges for a Divided Country***
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



Hubert Faustmann, Gregoris Ioannou, Sertac Sonan
Cyprus, Trade Union Monitor [for 2018]
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)
<https://www.fes.de/internationale-politikanalyse/internationaler-gewerkschaftsdialog>



April

Hubert Faustmann, Gregoris Ioannou, Sertac Sonan
Cyprus, Trade Union Monitor [for 2019]
(In English, German)



May

Ömer Gökçekuş, Sertac Sonan
***Socio-Economic and Political Impact of Austerity Policies in North Cyprus:
A Brief Assessment***
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



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



Ömer Gökçekuş, Sertac Sonan
Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus: 2019 Report
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)

2. FES Cyprus Events

February

Wednesday, 19th February, 6.30 – 8.30 p.m.

German Embassy / University of Nicosia / FES

Launch

**The LGBTI Movement in Cyprus
Activism, Law and Change Across the Divide**

University of Nicosia, M-203 Conference
Room Millenium Building (-2 Basement),
Makedonitissi 46, Nicosia 2417, Cyprus

Open to the Public



Thursday, 20th February, 6.30 – 9.00 p.m.

FES

Launch

**Cyprus as a New Refugee “Hotspot” in Europe?
Challenges for a Divided Country**

Fulbright Center (in the UN Buffer-Zone)
Nicosia, Cyprus

Open to the Public



Friday, 21st February, 6.30 – 20.30 p.m.

German Embassy / University of Nicosia / FES

Launch

Presentation – in English and Turkish

**The LGBTI Movement in Cyprus
Activism, Law and Change Across the Divide**

Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce,
No:90, Bedrettin Demirel Caddesi, 99010,
Nicosia, Cyprus

Open to the Public



March

Friday, 27th March – Sunday, 29th March 2020

FES

Workshop

Meeting of Journalists

Home for Cooperation (in the UN Buffer-Zone)

Nicosia, Cyprus

Not open to the public



3. Cyprus Problem

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Cyprus and head of the UN peacekeeping force on the island (UNFICYP), Elizabeth Spehar, held separate meetings with the two leaders ahead of her visit to New York where she would brief the UN Security Council in the framework of the deliberations for the renewal of UNFICYP's mandate.

Later in the month, speaking with reporters after briefing the UN Security Council at UN headquarters, Spehar, called for a greater effort to bridge differences between the two communities. *"According to recent polls, there remains a strong desire for a comprehensive settlement in both communities. But at the same time, there's growing scepticism as to whether it's still possible,"* said Spehar. She praised the progress made during the meeting between UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, and the two leaders in Berlin last November. *"The Secretary-General has urged the leaders, the guarantor powers and other interested parties to make productive use of the coming period in order to concretely and convincingly demonstrate that upon a return to the negotiating table, this time it would indeed be different,"* she added.

On January 30, UNFICYP's resolution on Cyprus was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council (UNSC). The adoption came after intense behind-the-scenes deliberations initiated by the Greek Cypriot side, who disagreed with certain references in the draft. The resolution extending the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force until July 31, 2020, notes

in paragraph 6 that the Security Council "calls for the establishment of an effective mechanism for direct military contacts between the sides and the relevant involved parties, and urges UNFICYP, as facilitator through its liaison role, to submit proposals in this regard." The Greek Cypriot side reacted to the original version of this paragraph reportedly calling on the two sides to create a mechanism for direct contact between the two communities to resolve military and other matters, without the mediation of UNFICYP. The government had argued that such direct contact would have normalised relations and implied recognition of the north.

The TRNC¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the reference made in the latest UNSC resolution for cooperation between the two sides: *"As a result of the effective and proactive diplomacy carried out by our ministry, the call for cooperation between the sides which has made its way to all reports and resolutions since January 2019 has been further emphasized in detail in the UNSC's latest resolution"*. The Turkish MFA, on the other hand, criticized the resolution on the grounds that

¹ The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Mustafa Akinci 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).

the UN did not seek the consent of the TRNC. It also said that Turkey supported the idea of holding an informal five-party meeting to discuss all solution options at an appropriate date. The statement reminded that the end of tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean could only be possible if the Greek Cypriot side ceased its unilateral hydrocarbon activities and cooperated with the Turkish Cypriot side.

During a tour of various villages in the north, Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akinci stated that the Berlin trilateral meeting has yielded a new opportunity with regards to negotiations. The Turkish Cypriot leader expects after the elections in the north in April 2020 and the conclusion of the Brexit procedure, that all sides would contribute so that a five-party conference would take place, as per UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' announcement after the Berlin meeting.

Turkey blocked Cyprus' request to join the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva as an observer. Cyprus was one of many countries hoping to serve as observers at the 65-member organisation in Geneva. Turkey's representative said that in the past they have simply voiced displeasure in a letter at the end of each session but fell short of outright blocking Cyprus' participation. "*Turkey will not support this particular request this year,*" Ankara's representative said when Cyprus made its request. The Conference on Disarmament was first established in 1979 to negotiate arms controls and disarmament agreements. It meets every year on three separate occasions in Switzerland.

On January 11, the second Runite Nicosia marathon took place where runners from both sides of the divide ran between the southern and northern sides of the island, symbolically uniting it.

4. Hydrocarbons

On January 30, the Turkish Foreign Ministry called for a suspension of all offshore explorations and drilling activities in the south of the island until a peace settlement had been reached. The proposal warned that Turkey would press on with its maritime operations around the island should the Greek Cypriots refuse. The government dismissed the proposal on the grounds that it disregarded international law.

On January 29, Italy reiterated its full solidarity with Cyprus over Turkey's continued drilling activities inside the island's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). A joint statement issued by the Foreign Ministry of the RoC and Italy after a meeting in Rome between ministers Nicos Christodoulides and Luigi Di Maio, noted that the EEZ and continental shelf delimitations should be addressed through dialogue, with respect for international law. The statement came in response to Turkey dispatching a drillship, the Yavuz, to conduct operations off the southern coast of Cyprus, in block 8 of Cyprus' EEZ. Italy's ENI holds the drilling licence for block 8 along with France's TOTAL. The government condemned Turkey's latest drilling while President Anastasiades reportedly requested from German Chancellor Angela Merkel to convey a message to Turkish Presi-

dent, Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the immediate termination of Turkish activities in Cyprus' EEZ. Merkel met with Erdogan on January 31. The Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) will maintain its exploring and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, ensuring the rights of the Turkish Cypriots, Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said, in response to a joint statement by Italy and the Greek Cypriot government on the issue. *"We invite all EU members, Italy particularly, to abandon their attitudes that ignore the rights of Turkish Cypriots,"* the spokesperson added.

Earlier in the month Turkey had issued a marine advisory by which it reserved an area inside Cyprus' offshore block 8 for drilling operations. The advisory stated the Yavuz will be carrying out drilling from January 18 to May 24. The reserved area is located at the southeast corner of block 8, which the TRNC claims it falls within its own waters based on a continental shelf delimitation agreement signed with Turkey in 2011.

Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said that the Turkish government was evaluating its alternatives for the purchase of a third drilling vessel and added *"we are carrying out our activities with our own personnel, our own means, equipment and vessels. Thus we have gained important experience in the field"*.

On January 16, Cyprus and other six countries signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to formally establish the East Med Gas Forum (EMGF) as an international organisation. The ceremony took place in Cairo and was attended by the energy ministers of Cy-

prus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan and Palestine. The forum's stated aim is to develop the region's gas market. France asked to join the EMGF, and the United States requested permanent observer status once the forum formally comes into being. The MoU follows an agreement for the construction of the East Med natural gas pipeline signed between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, in Athens on January 2.

In a written statement, Akinci criticized the [January 2] agreement and said *"the geographical realities make it impossible to exclude Turkish Cypriots and Turkey from the energy equation in the Eastern Mediterranean. As I have repeatedly stated we need to find ways of using energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean for mutual benefit as well as achieving peace and stability,"* he said. Akinci added that the most logical approach to achieving this would be to solve the Cyprus problem. *"It has become evident once again that a solution to the Cyprus problem has become a necessity not just for Cyprus but for the region as well".* The TRNC Foreign Ministry has described the agreement as the latest hostile and provocative attempt to exclude the Turkish Cypriot people and Turkey from the energy equation in the region. As for the EMGF, Turkish Foreign Ministry has criticized the joint statement issued by Greece, France, Egypt and the Greek Cypriot government concerning the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Turkey and Libya. Stressing that Turkey has a say in the region and projects taking part in the Eastern Mediterranean, the statement continued, *"if the purpose of this forum was really cooperation, of*

course, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots would be invited to the forum as well, ... we would like to stress once again that we are prepared to cooperate with all countries, with the exception of the Greek Cypriot administration, to transform the Eastern Mediterranean into an area of cooperation and not conflict."

Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriot Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Kudret Ozersay said that the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East had seriously upgraded the importance of the TRNC. "*The TRNC has started to become a regional actor without having to wait for a comprehensive solution. Its moves and positions are watched closely.*" Ozersay added that even though the latest developments carried the risk of disrupting regional peace and stability, it also brought with it various opportunities.

5. Greek Cypriots

Economic Developments

On January 16, MPs agreed to invite Central Bank (CB) Governor, Constantinos Herodotou, before the House watchdog committee to inform them about a list of non-performing loans (NPLs) held by Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs). The confidential document was first delivered to House President, Demetris Syllouris, by former CB Governor, Chrystalla Giorghadji in April of 2019 just before she stepped down.

On January 15, the cabinet approved the health minister's proposal to provide €70m in

guarantees to allow private hospitals to join GESY, the National Health Scheme. The guarantees covering financial costs if the plan goes awry were among the terms demanded by the private hospitals' association (PASIN). The association agreed to an MoU as a basis for negotiations between each of its members, clinics and hospitals and the Health Insurance Organisation (HIO), the state body tasked with overseeing GESY.

Domestic Developments

According to a presidential announcement, Anastasiades and Akinci are expected to meet on February 3 at Ledra Palace with the bicomunal technical committee on health to discuss the best ways of cooperation to tackle the Coronavirus (CoV).

Anastasiades held a meeting with opposition AKEL leader, Andros Kyprianou at the Presidential Palace on January 30. AKEL has recently stepped up its criticism of the government's foreign policy, and its alleged failure to tackle corruption. The meeting was the first in a series of meetings, Anastasiades plans to have with party leaders.

Former Finance Minister, Harris Georgiades, was named deputy chairman of the ruling DISY party. Georgiades, who served as Finance Minister from February 2013 to December 2019, will take over the role after the recent resignation of MEP, Lefteris Christoforou. Georgiades had announced his intention to step down in March 2019, shortly after a special committee blamed him for the

collapse of the Cyprus Cooperative Bank. A ballot will be held in early February to fill the two vacated positions of party deputy leaders. The two posts were vacated following the resignation of Stella Kyriakidou due to her appointment as European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, and Nicos Nouris who was made Interior Minister in a recent cabinet reshuffle.

Women's Rights activists from both Cyprus and Israel have described the case of the British teenager to overturn a conviction that she lied about being gang-raped on the island as "a critical moment" for women's rights. Ten days after the 19-year-old received a suspended four-month sentence for the offence of fomenting public mischief, her lawyers filed an appeal against the conviction before the country's supreme court. Social media erupted with calls for a boycott of Cyprus as a holiday destination affirming it was not safe for women. The young woman is now back in the UK after receiving the suspended jail term. Justice Abroad said she did not get a fair trial and the conviction "breaches" her rights. Michael Polak, director of the legal support group, criticised her treatment and that of her representatives and witness as being in "clear contrast" to the prosecution and its witnesses. He said the conviction breached Cypriot law and flouted the country's international obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and as a member of the European Union.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On January 8 employees of "Zenon" Larnaca Buses went on strike, due to the delayed payment of December 2019 wages, as well as the delay in the payment of contributions to the Employee Benefit Fund. In a statement, the Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK), the Pan-cyprian Federation of Labor (PEO), and the Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus (DE-OK) trade unions said that "*The Zenon Buses company in Larnaca has not paid their employees' salaries so far. According to the Law, every employer is obliged to pay the salaries of employees at the end of each month. At the same time, it [the company] retains cuts in the various Employee Funds (Provident, Welfare, Health, Subscriptions) from April 2019*". They also mentioned that "*employees have shown tremendous patience and understanding over the years about the problems with the company's fleet, multiple mechanical problems and working in difficult weather conditions, i.e. buses without heating in winter and without air conditioning in summer*". However, a meeting took place between the Minister of Transport and Communications, Yiannis Karoussos, and the management of the company. The Minister said "[...]the aim is to regulate the issue of payroll and the payment of other benefits and rights before the expiry of existing contracts".

Three issues remain open in the banking sector for 2020, which are likely to bring about a new labour crisis if no compromise is found:

- 1) the renewal of the collective agreements between of Hellenic Bank and Alpha Bank with the Cyprus Union of Bank Employees

(ETYK). The contracts expired on 31 December 2018 and the agreement for 2019-2021 is still pending.

2) the constant demand of banks to make institutional changes to the remuneration and promotion system, which is opposed by ETYK. According to ETYK banks are trying to promote an evaluation and promotion system based on the performance and productivity of each employee. According to the trade unions, this will lead to the creation of two employee categories. Those who are considered as good employees by the management and those who are not.

3) the contractual obligation of banks, whose members are organized in the ETYK, to contribute 3% to the health fund of their staff. Banks are contributing to both systems after the implementation of the General Healthcare System (GESY). On March 2020, employers' contributions for GESY will rise to 2.9% and banks will be required to bear these additional costs.

On January 9, the PEO Trade Union expressed its delight about the issuance of the minimum wage decree in 19 jobs in the Hotel Industry by the Minister of Labour. The decree is part of the renewing Collective Agreement on working conditions in hotels, signed on 18 December 2019. The trade union stated that the decree and the agreement will help to protect workers' rights more effectively and to fight against unfair competition between businesses. From 1 January 2020 the Minimum Wage Ordinance in the Hotel Industry of 2020 is in force and includes a chart for both the minimum and hourly wages for 19 occu-

pational categories. Salaries include the annual surcharge and automatic indexing (ATA) in addition to the basic salary. The monthly salaries for the occupations on the chart concern work of 38 hours a week, five days a week. On the decree, it is also mentioned that salaries for existing staff in the hotel industry should be adjusted accordingly if they are lower.

On January 10, the Government forwarded a harmonizing bill to Parliament for the compulsory payment of a Provident Fund to all employees of companies who offer such funds. If the company does not offer a Provident Fund, it is therefore not necessary to offer one. This provision has sparked employers' negative reactions. The trade unions considered this legislation as very important because it ensured the enhancement of retirement benefits and at the same time strengthened the supervision of the funds. However, the government has backed down on provisions of the bill that it drafted and submitted to the Parliament for Provident Funds, following reactions from employers' organization. The main changes made to the redrafted bill are:

- Deletion of provision for compulsory payment of welfare funds to as many companies as possible.
- Added reservation that transfer to another welfare fund or pension plan should be allowed if the legislative framework already exists.
- Those who have applied to the Provident Fund Officer by January 15th for the dismantling of Provident Funds will be accepted. From 15 January onwards no application for dissolution will be accepted.

Representatives of the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (OEB), the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and insurance companies have welcomed the amendments, while representatives of the trade unions SEK, PEO and DEOK disagree, as they consider the amendments changing the main rationale of the bill. That is, they point out, the provision for compulsory welfare fund erasure where there is a welfare fund and the handing of the right to insurance companies to manage their own pension plans. A legal obligation is in place for the Republic of Cyprus government to harmonize national legislation with the relevant European Union legislation about pension and welfare funds. The bill was due to come into force in January 2019, but the government tabled the bill in mid-November 2019 and requested an extension until 11 February 2020 from the EU, which was granted.

On January 10, the Pancyprian Public Employees Trade Union (PASYDY), the Organization of Greek High School Teachers of Cyprus (OELMEK), the Pancyprian Organization of Greek Elementary School Teachers (POED), the Cyprus Technical Education Officers Organization (OLTEK) and the Cyprus Police Association (SAK) held a joint meeting on the issue of pensions. Their proposal is to introduce a new pension plan for public sector workers while calling for a dialogue with the Ministry of Finance to discuss for a new pension plan. However, the five organizations, decided not to have a strike but agreed that they would not accept unilateral decisions and called for dialogue with the Public Administration.

On January 14, the Parliamentary Committee of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the trade unions reached an agreement of the bill on the Single Labour Inspectorate. The purpose of this bill is to enact legislation establishing a single audit service for the more efficient operation of the Inspection and Control Services for the Implementation of the Provisions of Certain Legislations. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance is responsible for the legislations at hand. An agreement was reached by differentiating the number of fines for breaches of law by employers. That is, the administrative fine will now be €250 instead of €500 and will be doubled in the case of a second offense. Also, if there is a delay in the payment of the administrative fine, there will be a fine surcharge of €50 per day, with a ceiling equal to double the original penalty or the original administrative fine, while in the previous bill there was no ceiling. The bill was tabled in Parliament for a resolution. This legislation will start to apply five months after its publication, allowing a transitional period for the employers' compliance and information. It is recalled that the bill was tabled in Parliament in 2017 and although discussed several times in the relevant Parliamentary Committee so far it has not been voted on. However, on 11 December 2019, the Parliament decided on the dedication of a budget for the establishment and operation of the Single Inspection Service. The decision had prompted strong reactions from PEO, SEK and DEOK unions, which in their announcements complained that the Democratic Rally (DISY), the Democratic Party (DIKO), the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK), 'Solidarity' and the National Popular

Front (ELAM) were acting against workers' rights.

On January 27, the workers of Famagusta District Transport Organisation (OSEA) were on strike due to the agreement of the Ministry of Transport with another consortium on the issue of public transport in Famagusta District. On behalf of the OSEA workers Mr. Varnavas said: "*we are on a strike to convey the message that we are present, and we support the legal disputes between OSEA and the Ministry of Transport. Our main demand is for the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Labour to secure our rights for the next ten years. In addition, we are asking for information on how the company operates and whether the information regarding the company's fleet reduction is valid*". However, as a sign of goodwill, the OSEA bus drivers returned to their posts, while on January 29 they were again outside the Administrative Court in Nicosia, which will consider the OSEA appeal against the new consortium.

5. Turkish Cypriots

Economic Developments

According to the Statistics Department's 2019 Household Labour Survey, the unemployment rate in 2019 was 6.3 percent, down from 6.9 percent in 2018. Youth unemployment, in the 15-24 age bracket, has also decreased from 22 percent in 2018 to 19.4 percent in 2019. The district with the highest unemployment rate was Morphou with 10.3 percent while Kyrenia was the one with the lowest with 3.5 percent.

Women made up only 35.5 percent of the total employment rate.

Based on the Greek Cypriot daily Politics' report, Turkish Cypriot daily Haberci wrote that the use of south Cyprus-issued credit cards in the northern part of the island has increased by 122 percent in the last two years, from €9.5 million in 2017 to 15 million in 2018 and 21.1 million in 2019. Greek Cypriots' credit card expenditures in Turkey also went up from €3.4 million in 2017 to 5.8 million in 2019. The Turkish Cypriots' credit card payments in the south, on the other hand, declined by 31.9 percent in 2018 (€17.7 million) compared to 2017 (25.6 million), and then went up in 2019 by 6.5 percent (18.8 million). Since the opening of the crossing points in 2003, the Turkish Cypriots' credit card expenditures in the south reached €270.7 million, while the Greek Cypriots' credit card payments in the north reached 177.4 million. Due to the devaluation of the Turkish Lira, relative prices have become cheaper in the north; particularly cheaper fuel prices have been attracting Greek Cypriot motorists.

Haberci also reported that according to data provided by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, the trade across the Green Line reached €4.5 million in the January-October 2019 period; the highest in the last 8 years. The Green Line trade has increased by 11 percent in the January-October 2019 period.

Relations with Turkey

The pipeline which runs 80km across the sea transporting fresh water from Turkey to the TRNC has snapped because of a “technical fault”. Sabotage has been ruled out as the cause of damage. Officials announced that there was enough water stored in the reservoir in Kyrenia, which is fed by the pipeline. The repair works are expected to take a few months.

Prime Minister Ersin Tatar and Deputy Prime Minister Kudret Ozersay carried out a one-day visit to Turkey where they met with Fuat Oktay and Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Turkish Exporters Assembly (TIM) and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Industry. In line with the agreement, the TIM will be opening an office in the TRNC. The TIM established in 1993 is an umbrella organization of exporting firms and associations. The agreement signed will allow firms registered under the Chamber of Industry to benefit from the experience, knowledge and opportunities provided by TIM and help promoting Turkish Cypriot exports.

The Turkish Cypriot Minister of Education, Nazim Cavusoglu visited Ankara to meet the Turkish Vice President, his Turkish counterpart, and the President of the Council of Higher Education.

Domestic Developments

The Higher Electoral Commission announced the date for the forthcoming presidential election as April 26. In January, three new nominations have been announced (see below). Serdar Denktas, who had earlier expressed his willingness to be a candidate, decided not to run. Incumbent Mustafa Akinci has yet to announce his decision, but is widely expected to seek a second term.

Prime Minister, Ersin Tatar, has been confirmed as the National Unity Party's (UBP) presidential candidate after the party assembly gave its unanimous backing to his election bid. Tatar had ruled out running for president earlier but then changed his mind because of the pressure coming from his party. Regarding the Cyprus problem, Tatar said, “all alternatives” to a federal solution, including two separate states, should be “on the table” and the UN should declare *“our international status if a conclusion cannot be reached in this process”*. If the Greek Cypriots want an agreement with us, they have to accept the continuation of Turkey's active and effective guarantee, he said. *“If a solution is going to occur, it has to be based on sovereign equality.”* Turkish Cypriot should remain as the *“majority in terms of population and property in their own sovereign territory,”* Tatar added.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Kudret Ozersay also announced his candidacy. Ozersay said that he would be stepping down as the People's Party's (HP) leader because of his decision to run as an independent. Yenal Senin, the party's secretary general will be serving as the HP's interim leader while Jale

Refik Rogers (Kyrenia MP) will assume the role of secretary general. Later in the month, the HP has announced it would be supporting Ozersay in the presidential election because the party assembly shared his views “*on the Cyprus problem, his proactive stance in foreign policy and his relations with Turkey*”.

The Rebirth Party (YDP), which has two seats in the parliament nominated the party leader and Famagusta MP Erhan Arikli as the party’s presidential candidate. The main support base of the party is made up of Turkish migrants.

The Republican Turkish Party (CTP) leader Tufan Erhurman had announced his candidacy in December. Social Democratic Party (TDP) leader Cemal Ozyigit said that his party would be giving full support to Akinci should he decide to run for a second term.

According to the Turkish Cypriot weekly Cyprus Today, the Attorney General’s Office has ordered a “comprehensive investigation” into claims of corruption regarding a prosecutor, several officers at the highest levels of the police, an army officer, and a number of civilians. The claims were made by a fake Facebook account, which published information claiming to show that senior officials in “critical posts” received bribes. Police officers believe that the account belonged to a police officer who was “treated unfairly” or who was “passed over for promotion”. The disclosures came ahead of the appointment of a new Police Chief and Deputy Police Chiefs.

On January 15, people took to the streets of Nicosia to protest against the state of the TRNC’s roads and recent hike in road tax.

They called on the government to “take action” or face further demonstrations. An estimated 1,000 people took part in the demonstration, which was organized via Facebook (the Facebook group titled *Yol Yoksa Seyrusefer da Yok* [No Road, No Road Tax] has more than 40,000 members). A second protest took place on January 27, which attracted even a bigger crowd, according to the organizers.

The government has given the Immoveable Property Commission (IPC) a cash boost of 100 million TL – but the money will only be enough to settle around a tenth of outstanding compensation claims from Greek Cypriots. The amount was set aside in the TRNC’s 2020 budget, but the IPC said it needed an extra 650 million TL.

Thirty-three Syrian refugees “left to die” aboard a boat off Limnitis (Yesilirmak) before they were rescued by the TRNC Coastguard have been deported to Turkey.

Foreign Relations

Foreign Minister Ozersay held a series of contacts in London. Speaking to the public news agency before departing for London, Ozersay said among other things “*it is possible for Turkish Cypriots to re-establish trade relations with the UK which they had years ago once the UK exits the EU. I think there are some opportunities before us.*”

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

Teachers' Union officials affirmed the issues in the public education in the TRNC. *"Due to the country's population growth, there are up to 55 pupils in each class at almost every school and that number is on the rise every day,"* the Secretary General of the Secondary School Teachers' union said while a board member of Primary School Teachers' union said that children of immigrants and those with special needs suffered the most through the country's "failed" education system. *"In order to resolve all the problems, serious investment needs to be made,"* he added.

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