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FES CYPRUS NEWSLETTER

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Cyprus celebrates its 10th anniversary. To mark the occasion the FES newsletter has a new design and we hope you share our excitement over the new look. We hope that the pandemic will allow for an appropriate celebration later this year. In the meantime, we wish you good health and hope you enjoy our “new” newsletter.

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EVENTS in FEBRUARY:

Laona Foundation, UCLAN, Civil Society Advocates
**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)



EVENTS in MARCH:

No events planned so far

PODCASTS in FEBRUARY:

*Hrishab Sandilya, Sarah Morsheimer and Kyriaki Chatzi-
panagiotou (Project Phoenix)*
**Migration 2.0 Podcast - Episode 1: Survey on the
impact of COVID-19 on Migrants, Refugees and
Asylum Seekers in Cyprus**
(In English)



PODCASTS in MARCH:

*Hubert Faustmann, Julie A. Dilmaç, Özker Kocadal and
Orestis Tringides*
**Public Discourses of Hate Speech in Cyprus:
Awareness, Policies and Prevention**
(In English)

Hubert Faustmann, Sertac Sonan
Austerity
(In English)

Hubert Faustmann, Sertac Sonan
**Corruption perceptions in North Cyprus: 2019
Report**
(In English)

PUBLICATIONS in FEBRUARY:

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



PUBLICATIONS in MARCH:

*Constantinos Lycourgos, Apostolos Vlachogiannis, and
Artemis Yiordamli*
**Access to Justice of Environmental NGOs: A Com-
parative Perspective (EU, France, Cyprus),
2021 Study**
(In English, Greek)

Julie A. Dilmaç, Özker Kocadal and Orestis Tringides
**Public Discourses of Hate Speech in Cyprus:
Awareness, Policies and Prevention,
2021 Policy Brief**
(In English, German, Greek, Turkish)

Julie A. Dilmaç, Özker Kocadal and Orestis Tringides
**Public Discourses of Hate Speech in Cyprus:
Awareness, Policies and Prevention,
2021 Report**
(In English)

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CYPRUS PROBLEM

In January, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, announced that the informal five plus one-party meeting on the Cyprus problem is set to take place in the first week of March, possibly in Greentree, New York.

The representatives of the island's two communities, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots¹ and the three guarantors, Greece, Turkey, and the UK, had previously agreed to attend the meeting hosted by Guterres, to discuss the way forward on the Cyprus problem. Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom are expected to be represented at the summit at the level of foreign ministers. The EU might be present at the summit as an observer, through EU High Representative, Josep Borrell. The summit is expected to last for three days.

On January 11, the respective Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Ersin Tatar, held separate meetings with the UN secretary-general's special envoy, Jane Holl Lute, laying the groundwork for the informal five-party meeting.

On January 13, Anastasiades discussed developments on the Cyprus problem and the latest UN reports on UNFICYP and the Good Offices mission in Cyprus with the UN's special representative Elizabeth Spehar. Spehar also met with Tatar.

On January 18, Tatar referred to the bicomunal technical committees as "bilateral" in what is seen as another reference to his stated aim of seeking a two-state solution. The bicomunal technical committees were established in 2008 by the then leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the United Nations, to address issues that affect the day-to-day concerns of each community.

¹The 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

On January 25, Tatar spoke with Guterres by teleconference. Tatar told Guterres that any possible agreement in Cyprus should be based on the existing two states and sovereign equality. Tatar conveyed to Guterres that "A just, realistic and sustainable compromise must be based on sovereign equality and the cooperation of two states with equal international status". Guterres reportedly told Tatar that he confirmed the Turkish Cypriot side's position and that it would be discussed during the expected informal five plus one meeting with all sides in March.

On January 28, Guterres announced that he intends on convening the informal five plus one meeting (including the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, the three guarantors and the UN) in New York in early March. He said that although his mandate from the UN Security Council refers explicitly to a bizonal, bicomunal solution in Cyprus, this was not an impediment to the parties tabling the positions they will present. Guterres also stated that he would be ready to go to the Security Council if there was an agreement of the parties enlarging the scope of the negotiations, to be interpreted as a common agreement. The mandate since the very beginning of the Cyprus negotiations following the events of 1974 has been a a bizonal, bicomunal federation (BBF). However, after the last failed talks in 2017, the Turkish/Turkish Cypriot negotiating team has been pushing to discuss a two-state solution.

Following Guterres' statement that if both sides had a common view there could be changes to this mandate, Anastasiades noted on January 29 that there was no question of him consenting to a change to the terms of the mandate regarding the solution of the Cyprus problem.

On January 30, the mandate for the UN Peacekeep-

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).

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ing Force in Cyprus was unanimously renewed until July 31 2021 by the UN Security Council. The Security Council reaffirmed a bizonal, bicomunal federation as the basis for a solution and expressed its full support for the Secretary-General's Good Offices mission and to the existing body of work in relation to the negotiations, including the Secretary-General's efforts to convene an informal five plus the UN meeting, in the hopes that the formal peace negotiations will resume.

On February 2, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is expected to visit the north for consultations with the Turkish Cypriot leadership ahead of the five-party summit on the Cyprus problem. Earlier in the month, the new Turkish Cypriot Foreign Minister Tahsin Ertugruloglu visited Ankara upon his Turkish counterpart's invitation. Speaking at a press conference following the meeting, Cavusoglu said that the 5+1 informal meeting was important in terms of determining what will be negotiated now that all efforts for a federal settlement had been exhausted. He said that both Turkey and the TRNC's stance in support of a two-state solution were clear. Cavusoglu also said that a two-state solution had been voiced on numerous occasions by the Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and the Archbishop Chrisostomos. Ertugruloglu said that the 5+1 conference should not be perceived as the beginning of a new negotiations process but rather as an opportunity to see whether an understanding exists between the two sides to negotiate a new solution model. Ertugruloglu was also received by the Turkish President Erdogan and Defense Minister Hulusi Akar during his visit to Ankara.

On January 18, the first batch (1,080 doses) of COVID-19 vaccines provided by the EU for Cyprus and reserved for the northern part of the island was delivered. "A second batch will be sent within a month", Cenk Soydan, the co-chair of the bicomunal technical committee on health under the auspices of the UN, said. "This is a positive development, building on the ongoing exchange of information of this Techni-

cal Committee, and signalling a welcome increase in cooperation between the two sides in their efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic in Cyprus, for the benefits of both communities," a UN Cyprus tweet said. Earlier, Tatar had attracted criticism by saying that unless the vaccines were delivered directly by the EU and not through the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), the Turkish Cypriot side would not accept them but then made a U-turn.

As of January 1, Tarik Muftuzade has been appointed as the new Turkish Cypriot member of the Committee for Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) to replace Gulden Plumer Kucuk. Muftuzade who retired from the TRNC Foreign Ministry had also served as TRNC Representative to London, Presidential Special Advisor for Political Affairs (2002-2004) and Presidential Special Advisor for Diplomacy (2005-2010).

HYDROCARBONS

On January 12, Energy Minister Natasa Pilides, stated that licensed energy companies in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) remain committed to their programme despite the abandonment of many projects worldwide due to the consequences of the pandemic. Pilides briefed the House energy committee on her ministry's plans on hydrocarbons exploration, the continuation of Cyprus' drilling programme and the comprehensive planning for natural gas, as well as the actions of the Cyprus Hydrocarbons Company. Pilides told reporters after the meeting that activities in Cyprus EEZ are planned for the second half of 2021.

On January 25, exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey started after a five-year hiatus marked by grievances over their rival claims to Mediterranean waters. The talks follow Turkey's decision to stop its search for gas in disputed waters which had caused tensions with Greece and Cyprus and a cooling of rhetoric around Ankara's wider disputes with the EU.

A video conference entitled Energy Cooperation

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and Exploring the Opportunities and Advantages of EastMed Gas Pipeline', was organized by Israeli energy minister Dr Yuval Steinitz and his counterparts from Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Serbia and Cyprus on January 29. The six ministers said the pipeline was a viable option for increasing the security of the gas supply for southeastern and central Europe. They noted that enhancing the security of natural gas supply to Europe could be secured through alternative supply sources and routes. They agreed to hold another meeting in the near future.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

On January 9, the government announced additional support schemes for businesses and the self-employed affected by the latest Covid measures, including grants, payroll subsidies, loan repayment suspension, rent holidays and tax breaks.

On January 12, the European Commission announced that it had approved, under EU member state aid rules, an €86.6m Cypriot scheme to support companies active in the tourism sector (including organisers of package travel, hotel businesses, and car rental companies) affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

Speaking at InvestCyprus's 5th Cyprus International Investors Summit held on January 28, Cyprus' Finance Minister, Constantinos Petrides, announced that the island's economy should rebound with 4.5% growth, while unemployment should decline from the current 8%. According to the Minister, unemployment is expected to start declining in 2021 to reach 7% for the year. Public debt is at 120% of GDP, up from 95% in 2019. The government aims to place public debt on a declining trend as of 2021 onwards, expecting public debt to decline to around 98% of GDP by 2023.

On January 21, the House passed the revised state budget for 2021, with 29 votes for and 26 against,

unlocking hundreds in millions earmarked for coronavirus relief to businesses and households. The votes in favour came from ruling DISY (18 seats), EDEK (three seats), the Citizens Alliance (one seat), Solidarity (two seats), ELAM (two seats) and the Cooperation of Democratic Forces (three seats). AKEL, DIKO, the Greens and independent MP Anna Theologou voted against. The revised 2021 budget, considered crucial to deal with the economic fallout from the coronavirus situation, provides for €7.16 bn in expenditures. Projected revenues are estimated at €6.48 bn. The budget bill had been defeated after junior opposition DIKO rejected it, on the grounds that the government was refusing to provide access to the Audit Office to files with information relating to the controversial citizenship by investment scheme. The President welcomed the approval of the 2021 state budget.

Domestic Developments

In January, the COVID-19 cases increased from 22,651 to 30,876. The number of deaths attributed to the virus rose from 125 to 199 making January 2021 the second deadliest month on record. Following the improvement of the county's epidemiological picture the government decided to loosen the lockdown, in place since January 10, allowing the opening of the retail sector, hairdressers, beauticians and primary schools, and amending regulations that had prohibited house gatherings allowing up to two people to visit, effective from February 1.

On January 15, the President took a swipe at the journalists' union over the way it defended journalist and former Kathimerini newspaper director Andreas Paraschos, who had written that Anastasiades had made millions from the citizenship through an investment scheme and had allocated profits to a bank in the Seychelles. On January 10 Paraschos suggested in his column that Anastasiades chose to deliberately sabotage the peace negotiations in 2017, due to the citizenship by investment programme, described as the goose that laid the golden

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egg. He alleged that Anastasiades had confided to Greece's prime minister at the time, Alexis Tsipras, that the programme fetched his law firm €300m a year, which he transferred to the Seychelles on private flights. On January 14, Anastasiades called on Paraschos to substantiate the report. The newspaper's publishers wrote to Anastasiades admitting it was a mistake to publish allegations without substantiation. Paraschos, who said the letter of apology was written without him knowing, resigned, after he censored the publishers for not backing him. In a letter to the head of the union, Giorgos Frangos, Anastasiades described the publication as "fabricated and completely false rumour."

On January 25, the socio-political platform Poreia Allagis (Change of Course) was launched in collaboration with the Green Party. The platform is open to citizens, organisations and movements wishing to work towards restoring purity, meritocracy and dignity in the political landscape.

On January 26, while testifying in an inquiry regarding the citizenship by investment programme Archbishop Chrysostomos caused a stir after he appeared to refer to himself and Anastasiades as thieves. "President, you need to look at the economy, but we must all stop stealing, and I include myself" he was quoted as saying. The prelate went on television later in the day to explain that that was not what he meant. The investigative committee is looking into the passport scandal. Its findings will be forwarded to the attorney-general.

On January 29, Anastasiades addressed the public on the matter of corruption and to announce anti-corruption measures. The government and Anastasiades personally have been under fire over his alleged involvement in the controversial and now defunct citizenship by investment programme, in the aftermath of the Al Jazeera documentary which exposed the programme. In his televised address to the public, Anastasiades acknowledged flaws in the programme, but said that the scheme had been deliberately inflated and weaponised in a bid to attack

him personally. Anastasiades spoke of a false picture around the passport scheme, for which he blamed fake news and rumour mongering on social media. The president lambasted his political adversaries for irresponsibly blowing the weaknesses in the passport scheme out of all proportion. He also accused them of hypocrisy, saying they had never said a word about the scheme before, even though its provisions were well known. Opposition parties including AKEL and DIKO went on the counterattack arguing that Anastasiades' claims that he was a victim of a smear attack over the passport scheme were a desperate attempt to shift the blame elsewhere. AKEL stated that never before has corruption reached such unprecedented levels as under the Anastasiades' DISY government. AKEL also stressed that Anastasiades refused to talk about his family's law firm and companies which have become rich from the government's decisions and about the hundreds of citizenship applications submitted by offices linked to members of the government. DIKO President Nicolas Papadopoulos accused the president of opting for a monologue to blame others and deny his own and his government's responsibilities for the biggest scandal of the Republic of Cyprus. The DIKO chairman also called on Anastasiades to answer questions such as how many times had he gone to the Seychelles via private jet and if, either the person who gave him this gift or his family, received preferential treatment from the government in return.

Following Anastasiades televised address the government announced a series of measures designed to fight corruption, which are based on the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. The measures were presented by Anastasiades and Justice Minister, Emily Yiolitis. Yiolitis went through a list of actions the government had implemented to help fight corruption, including a number of bills submitted, and still pending, in parliament. Yiolitis emphasized that awareness and education will be addressed in the fight against corruption. The government also plans to set up a national integrity service that will

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be authorised to carry out real-time audit on politicians' and politically exposed persons' asset declarations. There is also a proposal to set up a commission to handle the recruitment and promotions of staff in local authorities and semi-governmental organisations. Yiolitis also announced the creation of a corruption fighting unit under the attorney-general, and drafting a code of ethics for all state officials. It was also decided to publish state documents relating to tenders, as well as the findings or probe reports into corruption cases. The minister will also set up a council to act as a watch dog in order to monitor corruption.

On January 29, the Georghadji list containing details of the non-performing loans of politically exposed persons (PEP) was published on the parliament's website. The list was part of the minutes of House plenum's session, dated January 28, when the publication of the list was approved with 47 votes in favour and one against. The list had been submitted by former Central Bank governor Chrystalla Georghadji to then-House President Demetris Syllouris back in April 2019. Over the past two years, the debate over the publication of the list has caused a multitude of controversies including threats of lawsuits from certain MPs.

Labour Relations and Trade Union

On January 13, the Council of Ministers reaffirmed the Government's intention to launch a social dialogue regarding the implementation of the national minimum wage when certain conditions are met, namely when the unemployment rate falls around 5%. However, the PEO trade union expressed its strong disagreement and required "a legal framework to enforce the application of collective agreements where they are freely concluded between trade unions and employers' associations, as well as the creation of mechanisms to introduce minimum wages wherever there are no collective employment contracts".

On January 14, the trade unions in a letter to the

Minister of Labour, requested her intervention in the renewal of the Collective Labour Agreement in Agriculture / Livestock sector that is pending. They argued that the effort made by the Department of Labor Relations in 2019 did not pay off. The Guilds ask the Minister of Labour to convene a meeting as soon as possible to discuss these issues. As they point out in their letter, the Advisory Committee on applications for work permits by workers from third countries is not functional and the trade unions have not received any information on this in recent years. At the same time, they stressed that there is a lack of inspections in the workplaces and residences of workers in the Agriculture/Livestock sector and reminded the Minister of their previous proposal to create committees consisting of members of all the relevant stakeholders to carry out such inspections. On January 20, the Association of Turkish Cypriot Workers in areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus sent a letter to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Cyprus, denouncing the decisions of the TRNC government which, under the pretext of the pandemic, prohibits them from going to the Republic to work. They also note that the matter was referred by them to the judicial system of TRNC, which took a decision in favour of the unhindered movement of workers to and from the Republic of Cyprus, but the political authorities in the north still do not allow them to do so. This group of workers requests the assistance of the UN SG Special Representative in Cyprus to convey their concerns to the international community. They are also asking for help from the Republic of Cyprus and the EU (as their citizens) to help them stop this unfair treatment they face.

The trade unions in the port of Limassol are open to the possibility to go on strike in case the company "DP World Limassol Ltd" does not implement the Collective Agreements and in the case procedures governing the employment relations from the employer's side are not respected. Specifically, on January 26, the Guilds sent a letter to the compa-

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ny expressing their surprise and disappointment at the fact that the company does not intend to revise, as it ought from January 1, 2021, certain bonuses agreed upon in the Collective Agreement, by interpreting the Agreement as it suits the company, according to the workers. The trade unions reminded the company of the meetings that took place and the conclusion of an agreement in 2019 when the Collective Agreement was renewed, which, however, is currently violated by the employer.

On January 29, trade unions in the wider public sector have set a timetable for the government to solve the pension problems that have been affecting thousands of state service workers for ten years. According to their announcement, the trade unions unanimously reiterate their common position that all uninsured state employees (permanent employees, employees of indefinite duration, contract/temporary teachers, special police officers and employees of the Security Corps) must be retroactively included in the state occupational pension plan and consider this arrangement to be the most feasible, rational and fair solution. The Organisations called on employers to submit concrete proposals for a definitive resolution of this long-term issue by 10 February 2021. They announced that they will meet again on 11 February 2021 to assess the situation and take the necessary decisions accordingly.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

In an effort to take the spread of Covid-19 under control, on January 17, the government imposed a partial curfew from 10pm to 5am. The cabinet also decided to defer the cost of living adjustment (10.65%) on salaries of the public sector employees and pensioners for the months of January, February and March. Pensioners and public sector workers who earn less than 5,000TL as well as the recipients of social benefits will be exempt. "The money to be

saved will be used to support the private sector" the Prime Minister Saner said. Saner stressed that the money would be paid back later in the year. Meanwhile, the government has introduced a new regulation so that contacts of Covid-19 cases who are up to date with their social security contributions can receive support payments for the period they are in quarantine.

According to data provided by the Statistical Institute, unemployment hit 10.1% in 2020; it was 6.3% a year earlier. The total number of jobless has soared from 9,317 in 2019 to 14,950 in 2020. Youth unemployment also rose from 19.4% to 29.3%. As in the past, statistics also showed a large gap in labor force participation rates of men and women. While the labour force participation rate for male stood at 62.6%, the female rate was just 37.9%. The unemployment rate for men was 9%, and 12% for women. Results also showed that 30.6% of the working population is employed in the public sector; it was 25.7% a year earlier.

On January 28, the parliament approved the budget of 10.21 bn. TL (€1.14 bn.) projected for the 2021 Fiscal Year.

Relations with Turkey

On January 14, Turkey sent 20,000 doses of Sino-vac, the Chinese-developed Covid-19 vaccine, to the TRNC. Ali Pilli, the Minister of Health, said that the first ones to get vaccinated would be the health professionals; people aged 65 and over, will be next in line. Thanking President Erdogan and his Turkish counterpart for their support, Pilli said that they planned to vaccinate the entire TRNC population by the end of February or the beginning of March. The first doses have started to be administered the next day. President Ersin Tatar, Prime Minister Ersan Saner and Pilli were the first to receive the vaccine. The second batch (20,000) arrived on January 28.

On January 26, Pilli said that the pandemic hospital in Nicosia, which had been built by Turkey and inaugurated before the presidential election in October

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(and then once more during Erdogan's visit to the island in November) has started treating patients with COVID-19.

On January 22, the chief prosecutor's office in Ankara has filed a case against Turkish Cypriot journalist and writer Ayseminden Akin who currently lives in Cyprus. Akin, who announced the case via social media, said that she was being charged by the prosecutor's office in Ankara following a complaint filed by the Turkish Foreign Ministry. She said that she had been summoned by the court in Ankara to testify. Reportedly, Turkish government has been mounting pressure in recent months on its nationals living in the north, some like Akin with dual citizenship, as well as Turkish Cypriots, in an attempt to silence its critics.

Domestic Developments

On January 18, the National Unity Party (UBP) MP (Trikomo) Onder Sennaroglu has been elected as the new Speaker of Parliament. Sennaroglu who ran unopposed was elected with 26 votes. Republican Turkish Party (CTP) MP (Morphou) Armagan Candan who also ran unopposed was elected as deputy parliamentary speaker. Earlier in the month, Resmiye Canaltay (UBP, Famagusta MP) who had been originally picked as the candidate of the UBP for the post (and the daughter of former TRNC President and ex-UBP leader, Dervis Eroglu), failed to secure the necessary support from the parliament in earlier rounds of voting causing a 'great upset' for the UBP, the biggest party in Parliament.

On January 27, the highest number of daily Covid-19 cases since the pandemic had started in March 2020, has been recorded: 52 cases, 42 of which were locally transmitted, were reported, bringing the total number of Covid-19 patients being treated at the newly completed pandemic hospital in Nicosia and isolation hotels to 321. The numbers came on the first day of a partial lockdown in Kyrenia and Nicosia where the highest number of local cases have been seen recently. Despite the lockdown, it was observed that traffic in both cities was busy mainly be-

cause many sectors had been granted an exception from the bans and because of confusion over which sectors were allowed to operate. There were also reports that the police were unable to enforce the lockdown effectively. Many also complained that the authorities failed to respond on time to their SMS for permission to leave their homes. Doctors warned that the health services dealing with Covid-19 were on the brink of collapse due to the alarming rise in cases. Dr. Ozlem Gurkut, the head of the Turkish Cypriot Doctors' Association said that they were alarmed by the number of young patients who were experiencing serious symptoms despite not having any pre-existing health conditions. By January 31, there were 432 Covid-19 patients receiving treatment.

Six NGOs criticised the Police Department for awarding an officer, who shot and injured an undocumented migrant, with a citation without carrying out an investigation into the incident. Issuing a joint statement, the NGOs argued the absence of an investigation only served to reinforce a culture of vigilantism and set a bad example for the future. The NGOs harshly criticised the police officer's arbitrary and excessive use of force. The joint statement was signed by the Turkish Cypriot Bar Association's Human Rights' Committee, Turkish Cypriot Human Rights Foundation, Queer Cyprus Association, Refugee Rights Association, Civil Society Initiative and Third Community Forum. The incident had taken place in Yayla (Syrianochori) on July 9 last year.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

Agreement could not be reached between the representatives of the government, employers and employees in determining a new minimum wage in January though the commission in charge of setting the minimum wage met several times in the month. Basin-Sen (Turkish Cypriot Press Workers' Union) announced that it has filed a defamation lawsuit against the Turkish Cypriot President, Ersin Tatar accusing him of publicly bullying and shaming Turk-

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ish Cypriot journalist and co-founder of the bicomunal organisation UniteCyprusNow (UCN), Esra Aygin. Tatar had called Aygin “cheap and undignified” and told her to keep quiet in a tweet after she had criticized him for his initial remarks that the EU, and not the Greek Cypriot administration, should deliver the Covid-19 vaccines to the north.

She had called on Tatar not to politically exploit an issue which concerned the public’s health and to act with the responsibility required of a leader and head of state. Ali Kismir, head of the trade union said that Basin-Sen would continue its struggle against any act or threat directed against the freedom of press and expression. Following Tatar’s remarks, the journalist has also received death threats and has been subject to extensive bullying, sexism, and discrimination in the media by Tatar supporters.

At the end of the month, Turkish Cypriot workers who live in the north and work in the south held their second protest against what they called “unjust” Covid-19 restrictions. Under the current rules laid down by the Turkish Cypriot government, workers returning from the south must go into quarantine. However, those whose jobs are in the mixed village of Pyla and the British bases, or who work for the UN and EU, are exempt from quarantine on the condition that they provide a negative PCR test result every three days. Around 1,400 Turkish Cypriot workers are affected by the quarantine requirement, which effectively means they cannot go to work.

Members of the Cyprus Turkish Public Workers’ Union (Kamu-Sen) and the Cyprus Turkish Civil Servants’ Union (KTAMS) held a three-hour “warning strike” to protest the “increasing workload” at Famagusta State Hospital, a “lack of staff” and long shifts. The protests by KTAMS and Kamu-Sen will continue ‘unless a sufficient number of staff are recruited’ it was reported. KTAMS chair, Guven Bengihan, said “hundreds of people were recruited to the public sector during last year’s presidential election campaign period. However, here we are protesting shortage of staff. [The Health] Minister does not

care [about] health workers. We say, send us staff. What is not to be understood?”. The lack of health care workers continues to be an issue during the ongoing pandemic.

40 newly qualified nurses who have recently passed their recruitment examination should start work as soon as possible the Cyprus Turkish Nurses and Midwives’ Union (KTHES) said in a statement on January 19. The KTHES congratulated those who passed their tests, but added that number was “insufficient”. The statement said that 76 positions remain unfilled, and that more staff should be recruited as soon as possible. “All politicians have said that there is a need to recruit 250 to 300 nurses ... at the moment, hospitals and health centres are under the burden of long shifts. Therefore, those who passed the [nurse] exams should start working as soon as possible so that the health sector can breathe easy” the statement said.

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Layout:
Stadtformat Einig & Kazmierczak GbR

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