



EDITOR'S NOTE

An EU member state in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa; this is Cyprus in a nutshell.

The monthly FES Cyprus Newsletter gives you a current overview of the domestic political situation and the external affairs of an island, which is far more than a divided country. Have a pleasant read!

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PODCASTS in MARCH:
No podcasts in March



PODCASTS in APRIL:
No podcasts in April

PUBLICATIONS in MARCH:
Omer Gokcekus and Sertac Sonan
**Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus -
2022 Report**
(In Turkish)



PUBLICATIONS in APRIL:
No publications in April

Vasiliki Triga and Nikandros Ioannidis
**The Cypriot Presidential Election of
2023 and its Aftermath -
Briefing**
(In English)

EVENTS in MARCH:
*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus, Omer Gokcekus and
Sertac Sonan*
**“Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus -
2022 Report” (in Turkish) for the
northern part of Cyprus”**
Date: 6th of March 2023
Time: 10:30 a.m. Nicosia
Location: Rüstem Bookshop, Nicosia



EVENTS in APRIL:
No events planned so far in April

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CYPRUS PROBLEM AND BICOMMUNAL RELATIONS

Following his election as the eighth President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Christodoulides spoke on February 15 over the phone with the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell. Christodoulides reportedly expressed his determination to resume talks for a Cyprus settlement. The two men agreed to meet in Brussels during the European Council meeting scheduled to take place in March 2023. Christodoulides also spoke on the phone with UN Special Representative in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, who expressed his readiness to facilitate a meeting between Christodoulides and Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar.¹

On February 21, Stewart held a separate meeting with Christodoulides. The newly elected President relayed to the UN official that a two-state solution was not up for discussion and that he is ready to immediately begin negotiations from the point at which they broke down in Crans Montana. On February 22, Stewart also met with Tatar. Tatar reiterated the Turkish side's position that negotiations on the Cyprus issue can only begin with the acceptance of the sovereign equality of the Turkish Cypriots.

On February 23, Christodoulides held an informal meeting with Tatar at UN Special Representative's residence, where they exchanged opinions on a number of issues including the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. On the Cyprus problem, Christodoulides relayed to Tatar that the current status quo cannot be the solution to the Cyprus problem,

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

while Tatar set the acceptance of sovereign equality as a prerequisite to start negotiations. Tatar also put forward a proposal for bicommunal cooperation on earthquake response in Cyprus. Christodoulides invited Tatar to have a social meeting together with their wives.

On February 10, speaking to the public news agency, Tatar reported that the Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades called him to express his condolences for the Turkish Cypriots who lost their lives in the earthquake in Turkey. Tatar added that he also conveyed his gratitude to Anastasiades for his message. According to the Cyprus Mail, Anastasiades posted on social media on February 12: "We reiterate our deep sadness for the loss of our 48 Turkish Cypriot compatriots, among them 24 children, and we express our condolences to the families of the victims, and the Turkish Cypriot community for the devastating loss they have endured". Meanwhile, flags at the Nicosia Municipality, University of Cyprus, and the House of Representatives flew at half-mast. "The President and members of the House of Representatives express their immense sorrow for the death of our Turkish Cypriot compatriots in the recent deadly earthquakes. There is shock and sorrow for the children's smiles that were extinguished in the ruins", a statement from the parliament said.

On February 10, Greek and Turkish Cypriot political parties called on Anastasiades and Tatar to send a joint rescue mission to the earthquake zone in Turkey, which claimed the lives of 49 Turkish Cypriots. An announcement was signed by Greek Cypriot parties DISY, AKEL, DEPA, EDI, and by Turkish Cypriot parties CTP, BKP, HP, KOSP, KSP, TDP, and YKP call-

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 the leaders to send a bicomunal rescue team to Turkey. Anastasiades announced that Cyprus would donate €0.5m in aid to the earthquake victims in both Turkey and Syria. A Cyprus-wide effort was set up to collect aid for the victims.

HYDROCARBONS

On February 22, the completion date for the construction of a jetty to facilitate a floating LNG storage and regasification unit (FSRU) was moved, once again, from July 2023 to October 2023, at an extra cost of €25m. Company representatives argued that the delays were down to the Covid lockdowns in China and, more recently in the past year, to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The announcement of the delay came after Anastasiades, on February 3, instructed government departments to do what they could to speed up the project for the import of LNG. The project has secured a €101m grant from the EU under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) financial instrument. The rest of the financing comes from the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The project has a total value of around €315m.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

Yields of the short-term domestic bonds issued by the Republic of Cyprus marked a new rise fueled by global tightening of monetary policy against the backdrop of rising inflation. According to a press release issued by the Public Debt Management Office of the Ministry of Finance (PDMO), during the 13 Week Treasury Bills Auction, carried out on February 20, bids for a total amount of €81.65m were submitted, out of which the total nominal value of accepted offers was €47.6m with a weighted average yield of 2.96%. Compared with the January auction,

weighted average yields rose by 26 basis points. Yields for the 13-week T-bills have embarked on a rising trajectory since June 2022. T-Bills are one of the short-term financing tools used by the Ministry of Finance for domestic investors, mainly banks.

The Bank of Cyprus on February 20, released its preliminary financial results for 2022, posting an after-tax profit of €71m for the entire year, marking a considerable increase over the €30m that had been generated during 2021.

Domestic Developments

The first round in the presidential elections took place on February 5. Nikos Christodoulides came in first with 32.04%, followed by Mavroyiannis with 29.63%, leaving Averof Neophytou third with 26.11%. ELAM's Christos Christou, came in fourth place with 6.04%. There were three independent candidates: Achilleas Demetriades with 2.04%, Constantinos Christofides with 1.59%, and Giorgos Colocassides who gathered 1.33%. A total of 404,403 people cast their vote, leaving 27.95% of voters abstaining.

The 14 presidential candidates were:

- **Andreas Mavroyiannis**, Independent, supported by opposition AKEL
- **Averof Neophytou**, President of DISY
- **Nicos Christodoulides**, Independent, supported by center parties DIPA, DIKO, Socialists EDEK and the Solidarity Movement.
- **Achilleas Demetriades**, Independent
- **Christos Christou**, President of far-right ELAM
- **George Colocassides**, Independent
- **Constantinos Christofides**, Independent
- **Loucas Stavrou**, President of the National Community Reconstruction Party
- **Andreas Efstathiou**, Independent
- **Julia Hovrina Komninou**, Chairwoman of the United Republican Party

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- **Charalambos Aristotelous**, Independent
- **Alexios Savvides**, Independent
- **Andronicos Zervides**, Independent
- **Celestina De Petro**, Independent

In the second round on February 12, Nikos Christodoulides was elected as the eighth President of the Republic, securing 204,867 (or 51.97%) of the votes and beating his rival Andreas Mavroyiannis who trailed close behind at 189,335 (or 48.03%). Mavroyiannis had secured the official backing of opposition AKEL, while Christodoulides had the support of the centre parties DIPA, DIKO, social democrats EDEK, and the Solidarity Movement. A fragmented DISY and far right ELAM advised their supporters to vote according to their conscience, which eventually tipped the balance in favour of Christodoulides.

On February 27, the newly elected President officially announced his new cabinet after lengthy speculation and horse-trading over who would be given top posts in his government. Eight men and three women were appointed ministers and three men and three women were appointed as deputy ministers. Out of the 25 appointees, 14 men and 11 women were appointed. These include:

- **Anna Procopiou**, Justice Minister: She is a social activist, political analyst and podcaster. She has no prior experience in government but has worked for the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.
- **Makis Keravnos**, Finance Minister: He formerly served as finance minister under Tassos Papadopoulos. He has a technocrat background and some of his positions include serving as a senior officer at the Human Resources Development Authority from 1983 to 2003, Labour Minister from 2003 to 2004, and non-executive member of the board of directors of the Central Bank of Cyprus since 2018.
- **Constantinos Ioannou**, Interior Minister: He is a

graduate of University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, UK. He has served on the boards of several companies and previously served as health minister in the Anastasiades government.

- **Constantinos Kombos**, Foreign Minister: He is a law graduate and was a member of the Cyprus negotiating team, participating in all stages and levels of the Cyprus problem negotiation process.
- **Michalis Georgallas**, Defense Minister: He was a member of the National Council from 2012 to 2017 and MP of the Solidarity Movement for Famagusta from 2016 to 2021. During his time in parliament, he was deputy chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.
- **Dr Athena Michaelidou**, Education Minister: She has a degree in education and a PhD in educational research and evaluation. She was deputy director general of the education ministry and deputy director general of the newly created deputy ministry for culture.
- **Alexis Vafiades**, Transport Minister: He has been an architect since 1988.
- **Giorgos Papanastasiou**, Energy Minister: He is a mechanical engineer who worked in the energy industry in Europe, gaining a wide range of experiences in oil and gas. He had also served as general manager and CEO of VTTV, where he led a team which is currently operating in Vasiliko.
- **Petros Xenophontos**, Agriculture Minister: He is a technocrat with experience in the finance ministry.
- **Yiannis Panayiotou**, Labour Minister: He has worked in the finance ministry and in the House of Representatives as a research associate where he was responsible for studying government budgets and analysing the economic, social and political impacts of legislative work.
- **Popi Kanari**, Health Minister: She previously was chairwoman of the National Anti-Doping Group in Cyprus. Kanari is the president of the





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Karaiskakio Foundation, of which she has been a member since 1999.

- **Marina Hadjimanoli**, Deputy Minister of Shipping: She is a lawyer who has served as a municipal councilor in Limassol and she was also a founding member of the Limassol Youth Chamber of Commerce. During the presidential election campaign, she was director of Christodoulides' political office.
- **Costas Koumis**, Deputy Minister of Tourism: He previously worked at the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO). Since July 2021, he has been a member of the Public Service Commission and he was also behind the podcast "Tourism in Focus".
- **Philippos Hadjizacharias**, Deputy Minister of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy: He is a founding partner of PHS & Partners, based in Larnaca, and he holds a degree in accounting.
- **Marilena Evangelou**, Deputy Minister of Welfare: She is an experienced reporter, editor and news presenter. She was the spokesperson for Christodoulides' campaign.
- **Michalis Hadjiyiannis**, Deputy Minister of Culture: He is a singer, performer and friend of the new President.
- **Constantinos Letymbiotis**, Government Spokesman: He was a municipal officer in Paphos from 2016 to 2022 and the head of DISY's youth branch in Paphos from 2015 to 2017. He resigned from DISY to join Christodoulides' campaign.
- **Doxa Komodromou**, Deputy Government Spokesperson: She served as the Press Spokesperson and Head of the Office of Planning and Implementation of Official Ceremonies at the Rectorate of the Higher Academic Institution.
- **Charalambos Charalambous**, Director of the President's Office: He was another senior campaign staffer and is married to the sister of the First Lady, Philippa Karsera.
- **Irene Piki**, Deputy Minister to the President:

She is a career technocrat who has held positions in the private sector as well as in the civil service.

- **Victor Papadopoulos**, Director of the Press Office of the President of the Republic: He is a former deputy government spokesman.
- **Marilena Raouna**, Director of the President's Diplomatic Office: She has a degree in law and previously worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a special advisor.
- **Penelope Papavasiliou**, Secretary to the Council of Ministers: She is a career technocrat with experience in the Cyprus Public Administration, the European Commission and the Finance Ministry.
- **Maria Panayiotou**, Environment Commissioner: She previously served as EDEK's spokesperson.
- **Josie Christodoulou**, Gender Equality Commissioner: She is an expert on issues relating to women's rights and gender equality, and she was a close associate of Christodoulides during his stint as foreign minister.

The newly elected president has been mostly criticized for not holding his pre-election pledges to have a 50-50 representation of men and women in his cabinet and that no former ministers would be part of his cabinet. The two ministers in question are Makis Keravnos, formerly a finance minister and now at the same post, and Constantinos Ioannou, who served as health minister in the previous government and now holds the interior ministry portfolio. The president is also criticized over his appointment of pop singer Michalis Hadjiyiannis to Junior Minister of Culture and for appointing a relative.

On the same day as the cabinet positions were announced, Eleni Theocharous resigned from her post as leader of the Solidarity Movement party. Theocharous who had backed Christodoulides in the campaign was reportedly disappointed with the new president for not consulting with her on the appointments.

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On February 28, Christodoulides was sworn in as President of the Republic. Before that, Christodoulides has worked for the Republic for over 20 years as a diplomat and, during Anastasiades' presidency, as government spokesman and foreign minister. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science and economics, and in Byzantine and Modern Greek studies, from Queens College, City University of New York; a master's degree in political science from New York University and another in diplomatic studies from the University of Malta at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies; and a doctorate from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration of the University of Athens.

On February 22, the central committee of centrist party DIKO announced that it will hold leadership elections in June 2023 in which the current leader Nicholas Papadopoulos will run again.

Meanwhile DISY, which has been left in turmoil and heavily divided after the elections, held elections on March 11. The present party leader, Averof Neophytou, who was knocked out from the first round of the elections, was set to run to continue as party leader, along with MP Demetris Demetriou and deputy party leader Harris Georgiades. However, both Georgiades and Neophytou announced they were withdrawing from the race after the House president, Annita Demetriou, announced she was running, leaving her and Demetris Demetriou as the two candidates competing for the party's leadership.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On February 1, the trade unions called on the Minister of Labour to avoid hasty actions on the controversial issue of the strategy to employ workers from third countries, a few days before the end of his term. SEK, PEO and DEOK, in letters to the Minister of Labour, shortly before the presentation of the Ministry's report, emphasized that there was not enough time for social dialogue and that none of their posi-

tions and suggestions were adopted in the document sent to them. In its letter, SEK stated that there had been no social dialogue on this issue, as the competent ministry had planned to do and therefore "what has been planned is extremely deficient". Among other things, SEK pointed out that employment of a foreign workforce is an extremely critical issue that concerns and affects the entire labour market. In the letter from PEO, it was emphasized that it is obvious that "what is being attempted is the expansion of the possibility of employers to use cheap foreign labour, which expands deregulation and further reduces the scope of collective labour agreements". Lastly, DEOK did not accept the arrangements included in the new strategy because, firstly, "the condition of sufficient social dialogue was not met"; secondly, "the positions of the trade unions whose aim is to ensure the equal treatment of all workers through the collective contracts"; and thirdly, because "the uncontrolled employment of workers from third countries is strengthened, resulting in the further deregulation of the labour market".

On February 6, workers of the Kition Ocean Port company, which manages Larnaca Port and Marina went on strike. The trade unions published a statement saying that "while a procedure is pending with the Department of Labour Relations and the conclusion of a Collective Labour Agreement (CBA) based on the Industrial Relations Code", the Kition Ocean Port company at Larnaca Port does not agree to continue negotiations and has instead proceeded to lay off workers "ignoring and circumventing both the Industrial Relations Code and legislation protecting trade union freedoms". The workers are reacting collectively to protect their rights, the right to organize, and collective agreement bargaining. The statement added that "the Director of the Department of Labour Relations, after being informed about the labour unrest that occurred at Larnaca Port and in compliance with the Industrial Relations Code, called on the employer to revoke the dismiss-





als (without revoking the rights arising from the Termination Employment Law) and the trade unions to immediately withdraw any strike measures”.

The two sides were called to a mediation meeting at the office of the Director of the Department of Labour Relations on Tuesday, February 7. The employees’ side immediately responded with an email that leaned positively to the suspension of the strike measures and its presence at the meeting, given that the employer side would also revoke the layoffs. However, according to a subsequent announcement by the trade unions, “the company never responded to the Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour and until now has not revoked the layoffs”. The unions report that as a result of this attitude, the Cypriot economy and society have become hostages of the company, since the workers remain out of work and the ships and goods are captives of the company “with incalculable financial losses and soon with a lack of basic products from the market”. The workers appealed for support from all workers, traders, breeders, farmers, and transporters whose livelihoods come from and are connected to the port to react in all possible ways to the Kition Ocean Port company to force it to respect the institutions and laws of the Republic of Cyprus. Finally, on February 9, the workers ended their strike, and those who had been dismissed returned to their jobs. In a statement, the trade unions said, “Following a proposal submitted by the Director of the Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour, the striking workers at Larnaca Port of the Kition Ocean Port company have returned to work [...] along with the two workers who were dismissed from the company”. It is expected that “all labour issues will be agreed in the context of the discussions of the conclusion of the Collective Agreement. These discussions are to be held under the auspices of the Labour Relations Department of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

²COLA is the compensation for the salary decrease caused

On February 7, 20 and 22, workers in hotel units in Paphos went on a spontaneous strike outside their workplaces demanding payment of the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA)² and implementation of the signed collective agreement. In his statements, the District Secretary of the PEO Hotel Employees Branch, Nikos Savvides, stated that “half of Paphos hoteliers do not implement the agreement reached last October to grant wage increases to workers in the industry”, and he added that “the unions support the mobilization of workers”. He reiterated that, from January 1, employers had to pay half of COLA to the workers, but some were refusing to do so. He also said that they breached an agreement to pay raises to workers. Some hoteliers, he continued, break the collective agreement by not granting a 13th salary and paying some employees €900 a month even after ten years of service. According to the opinion of the Legal Service, “clearly, the salary of the hotel employee must include an indexation allowance and an increase of 1.5%, which was agreed upon for the renewal of the collective agreement until December 31, 2023”. He called on the competent ministry to ensure that the employer’s side will respect the agreements that have been signed and emphasized the opinion of the Legal Service. At the same time, he complained that hotelier associations are urging hoteliers not to grant workers what they are entitled to, such as yearly increases, COLA, etc. He mentioned that there are 10 hotels in Paphos where the collective agreements are not applied, clarifying that employees and trade unions will continue their struggle until COLA is paid and agreements are complied with. He also emphasized that employers choose to hire people from third countries in order to exploit them in terms of work hours and wages.

On February 13, the trade unions submitted their requests to the Ministry of Labour regarding the working conditions and the rights of workers employed by electronic delivery platforms. The un-

by inflation. It is paid in addition to one’s normal salary.

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ions requested that the sectoral contract be for two years (January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2025) and that it should concern all employees in every position as food distributors and office staff. They requested that the hiring salary should be €1,100 for the drivers and €1,300 for office staff. All wages would be subject to VAT, and a 2.5% increase was requested from January 1, 2024 and a further 2.5% in 2025. Working hours should be set at 38 hours per week for a five-day work week. Anyone who works beyond the hours specified by the contract will be paid 1½ times their normal rate on weekdays and 2 times their normal rate on holidays and Sundays. In addition, the trade unions requested that the monetary compensation that food distributors previously received for their deliveries be reinstated. This is the main reason behind the recent multi-day strike by Wolt employees. Also, they requested to have a provident fund and a welfare fund. They requested that the provident fund start from June 1, 2024, with a contribution of 2% from both the employer and the employee. They proposed that the welfare relief and incentive fund start from January 1, 2024 and the employers to contribute 1% of their gross salary, with 0.5% remaining in the local welfare fund and the other 0.5% going to the central welfare fund of the trade unions. With regard to any equipment the delivery drivers use and their means of transportation, the trade unions argued that the employers should provide them. Today these costs are borne entirely by the employees. They must buy their uniforms at a cost of around €100 and their motorbikes or any other means needed for distribution (e.g., bicycles). The Mediation Service of the Ministry of Labour undertook the process to discuss the draft requests with each side and to conclude an agreement in the sector.

On February 17, the trade unions sent joint letters to the directors of the departments of Labour and Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour regarding inspections of the working and living conditions

of workers from third countries and the work permit system. On the occasion of the news about the extreme victimization of workers from third countries in a cattle breeding unit in Dasaki Achnas, the Trade Union Movement returned for the umpteenth time to this issue, stressing that there must be imperative checks on the working and living conditions of workers in workplaces. Controls must be carried out on a permanent basis, in order for employers to implement the obligations they undertake. Finally, they pointed out that the Ministry does not convene the Advisory Committee in which the applications for granting work permits to workers from third countries would be discussed. Nor does it inform, despite its assurances, the trade unions about the licenses it grants. According to trade unions, this process is problematic and does not help to solve problems. Regarding the incident that came to light in the last few days, trade unions reported that 14 Indian workers were forced to work in conditions resembling slavery on a livestock farm. Following a tip-off, an operation led by the Human Trafficking Bureau was carried out on February 8, and the tip proved to be valid after the workers were identified with obvious signs of victimization and exploitation. The workers revealed that their employer brutally exploited them by forcing them to work seven days a week from morning to night without rest, withholding wages, and allegedly withholding their passports.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

Inflation continued to hit the north of Cyprus hard. According to the Statistical Institute, the consumer price index was 84.88% higher in February 2023, compared to February 2022. Consumer prices had risen by 4.65% in February alone.

According to the tourism statistics released by the Ministry of Tourism, the occupancy rate at hotels

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and other touristic facilities reached 42.7% in 2022, whereas the figure for 2021 was 26.8%. The number of overnight stays went up by 189% compared to 2021, reaching 3.75 million. The number of tourist arrivals via air and seaports also went up by 156% to 1.42 million. There has also been a remarkable rise in the number of arrivals via crossing points: the number of entries made by foreigners (including Greek Cypriots) went up from 1.5 million in 2021 to 4.7 million in 2022.

According to the Turkish Cypriot weekly Cyprus Today, the government has decreed that the title deed transfer fee for the purchase of immovable property by non-TRNC and non-Turkish citizens increase from 6% to 12% of the full purchase price. A 50% discount for first-time buyers has also been scrapped. Half of the extra revenue is envisaged to go to the Tax Department to be used by the Immoveable Property Commission (IPC), the body set up in 2006 to pay compensation to Greek Cypriots who had to abandon their properties in the northern part of Cyprus in 1974. To date the IPC has paid nearly £370 million to more than 1,300 applicants as compensation, with nearly 6,000 other applications still waiting to be concluded. One third of the extra revenue will go to the Tax Department's Housing Division to help those "in need of housing" to become homeowners. The remaining one sixth will be transferred to the Ministry of Finance to go into a fund to help the victims of the earthquakes that hit southern Turkey on February 6.

Relations with Turkey

In an official ceremony held in Ankara on February 2, Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay said, "We do not want to say the [word] Northern [of the TRNC] anymore", and referred to the northern part of Cyprus as the "Turkish Cypriot State" in his speech. Later in the month, Turkish Cypriot President Ersin Tatar and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu, on different occasions, referred to the issue

and said that the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" should be replaced with "Turkish Republic of Cyprus". "The name of the state in the south is the Republic of Cyprus. They never called themselves the 'southern state'. For there to be equality, we need to be the Turkish Republic of Cyprus ... Why should we confine ourselves to the north, not claiming rights in the 200-mile exclusive economic zone beyond Limassol?" Tatar said on a TV programme.

On February 5, a Turkish Cypriot teacher was denied entry into Turkey and was treated as a "non-admissible person". Hasan Küdenler was travelling to Turkey as part of a high school volleyball team for the semi-finals of a championship to be held in Gaziantep. The Turkish Cypriot secondary teachers' union (KTÖEOS) announced its support for Küdenler. The union said in a written statement that "the ban on entry to Turkey, which has been enforced to Turkish Cypriot citizens for a while, is part of the policies of pressure, intimidation and silencing on our society".

On February 13, over 40 civil society organizations formed the "Cyprus Turkish Solidarity Platform", and signed a protocol with the Prime Minister's office for the construction of 1,000 container homes for the earthquake survivors in Turkey.

On February 21, the Minister of Labour and Social Security Hasan Taçoy said that around one thousand earthquake victims from Turkey arrived in Cyprus in the previous week. They were issued "humanitarian residence permit" and registered with the Social Services Department. Taçoy noted that most of these people were residents in the past or have family members in north Cyprus. "We can only provide humanitarian aid", he said, adding that the government could not provide accommodation, residence, salary or jobs. He also added that the government was preparing a legal change so that those who have a "humanitarian residence permit" (which is a type of tourist visa), can work without a preliminary work





permit, which is required for regular migrant workers.

Domestic Developments

According to the government, 49 Turkish Cypriots lost their lives in the devastating earthquake which hit Turkey on February 6. Of the victims, 35 were junior high school pupils, their teachers and parents staying at Isias Hotel in Adiyaman to take part in a volleyball tournament. Reportedly, the hotel building did not conform with building standards and collapsed instantly. The Turkish ambassador in Nicosia, Metin Feyzioğlu announced that the government had applied for a criminal investigation to be opened into the owners of the Isias Hotel. Later in the month, the owners of the hotel were arrested. A group of Turkish Cypriots led by families of the victims started a campaign on Twitter under the hashtag “let the killers of Isias be arrested and tried”. The campaigners pledged to continue until all those responsible are brought to justice.

On February 14, the government passed a statutory decree which introduced salary cuts between 1% and 5% from everyone’s salary for 12 months to go towards the construction of an indoor sports hall in Famagusta to be named after the children from the Gazimagusa (Famagusta) Turk Maarif College’s volleyball team who died in Adiyaman, education scholarships for orphaned children, transportation costs of rescue teams and delivery of humanitarian supplies, the construction of 1,000 container homes for earthquake survivors in Turkey, and the purchase of equipment for the Civil Defence Organisation to use in the event of natural disasters. The decree drew harsh criticism among the public. The young businessmen association (GIAD) said, “Any step that will necessarily reduce the income of the people, will harm our economy and this will reduce the ability to help”. The head of one of the main trade unions, Kamu-Sen, Metin Atan also said that donating is an act of free will and people should act voluntarily, not

by government decree. “We have doubts that the cuts to be made in line with our previous experiences will go to the right address”, he added. Later in the month, 14 trade unions of various sectors applied to the Constitutional Court for the cancellation of the statutory decree. One day after the application was filed, the government retracted the decree.

On February 16, the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) prepared an 11-point package of proposals to manage the effects of a possible earthquake. The proposals include carefully studying the conditions of public buildings such as schools and hospitals, tightening inspections and building codes at construction sites, reinforcing technical infrastructure and hiring more experts in the field. The package also pointed to the need to prepare plans for a possible influx of survivors to the country in order to manage the country’s resources effectively and efficiently. The proposals also include the formation of two parliamentary committees which will be tasked with following up on the ongoing legal processes in Turkey as well as reporting on the use of public funds and planning of services. The other proposals include ensuring that donations collected in the TRNC are delivered to the right addresses, halting the construction of the new presidential complex and rechanneling those construction funds to meet the needs of earthquake survivors in Turkey.

On February 21, in its first session of parliament after the earthquake in Turkey, the government and the opposition unanimously agreed to form three ad hoc committees: One of the committees was tasked to follow the legal processes related to the Turkish Cypriot earthquake victims in Turkey, the second one will deal with the drafting of new legislation on natural disasters and earthquakes, while the third one will focus on the financial and administrative measures to be taken regarding the earthquake victims.

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On February 21, the Minister of Health, İzlem Gürçağ Altuğra, admitted that there was a serious medicine shortage across the country, but she said that this was a global problem. Reportedly, there is a serious shortage in Turkey too, which is the main supplier of pharmaceuticals in the TRNC. In a speech in parliament, Altuğra also said that she called for a meeting of the bi-communal technical committee on health to discuss the matter.

On February 22, the level of preparedness for a possible earthquake and the condition of school buildings topped the parliamentary agenda. Addressing the assembly, the Minister of Education, Nazim Çavuşoğlu, shared information on the steps that will be taken at schools. He stated that priority of the earthquake assessment committee, established under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's office, would be to complete within 15 days risk assessments of schools. "We will do whatever is necessary in the light of the reports. We want to renovate and strengthen our school buildings and if needed build new schools. We are all responsible for creating financing for such projects should the need arise", said Çavuşoğlu. The same day, the Namik Kemal High School (Famagusta) Parents' Association announced that they would not send their children to school until the expert teams that the Ministry of Education was to assign completed their investigation of the school and prepared an Earthquake Safety Report. Later in the week, classrooms at four schools were thus deemed unsafe and evacuated over earthquake safety fears.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

According to the monthly report of the Union of Turkish Cypriot Public Servants (KTAMS), the poverty limit for a family of four was 11,932 TL (€583) as of January 31. The net minimum wage in the TRNC is 11,800 TL.

According to a report in Cyprus Today, Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEOS) chairperson, Ozan Elmalı, said that urgent checks should be carried out in eight high schools across the country. Primary Teachers' Union (KTOS) secretary general, Burak Mavis, said that only 3% of primary schools have "earthquake feasibility reports, ... [and therefore] it is impossible to reach a definite conclusion on whether the schools are earthquake-resistant or not". He pointed out that "the visible problems are striking at" around 15 primary schools, adding that his union has "for years been questioning school safety" by sharing photographs and reports with the public and calling on schools to be reinforced against natural disasters. "We didn't wait for a major disaster to protect our schools", he added. He also said that 80% of primary schools were built before 1974, 7% were built between 1974 and 1999, 9% were built after 1999, and 4% were built in the last five years.





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Yiannis Charalambous has been a Research Assistant for FES Cyprus contributing to the writing of the monthly FES Cyprus Newsletter since July 2012. Yiannis obtained a Bachelor's degree in Turkish Studies from the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and an MA in International Relations and European Studies from the University of Nicosia. The subject of his dissertation focused on evaluating the catalyst effect in resolving the Cyprus problem, by comparing the factors of EU membership and the discovery of hydrocarbons. Yiannis speaks Greek, English and Turkish.

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