



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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SEPTEMBER 22

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PODCASTS in OCTOBER:
No podcasts in October



PODCASTS in NOVEMBER:
No podcasts in November

PUBLICATIONS in OCTOBER:
*Ömer Gökçekuş ve Sertaç Sonan
Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Yolsuzluk Algısı
2021 Raporu
(in Turkish)*



PUBLICATIONS in NOVEMBER:
*Omer Gokcekus and Sertaç Sonan
Corruption Perceptions in North Cyprus
2021 Report
(in English)*

EVENTS in OCTOBER:
*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Kıbrıs
Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Yolsuzluk Algısı: 2021 Raporu
Tarih: 25 Ekim 2022 (Salı)
Saat: 09:00 - 10:30
Yer: Rüstem Kitabevi - Bahçe (Lefkoşa)
Raporun sunumu ve tartışma, Türkçe ve halka açık
olacaktır*



EVENTS in NOVEMBER:
*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus
Journalist Seminar
Date: 04. - 06. November
Location: Chateau Status
Not open to the Public*

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus
Grab a Cypriot Cup of Coffee with Gerald Knaus
„Cyprus, Germany & the Future of
European Refugee Policy“
Date: 27 October
Time: 10.00 a.m. Nicosia, 09.00 a.m. Berlin
via Zoom*

**Please register for the event by sending an Email
with your name to: office@fescyprus.org
until 26 October
Open to the Public**

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus
Launch: Corruption Perception
2021 Report
Date: 17 November
Time: tba
Location: Home For Cooperation
Open to the Public*

*Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Cyprus
Launch: Cypriot Youth in Crises
Date: 21 November
Time: tba
Location: tba
Open to the Public*

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CYPRUS PROBLEM

In September, the UN General Assembly took place in New York providing an opportunity for the main parties of the Cyprus problem to either separately meet with the UN General Secretary General (“UNSG”) or express their latest views via the floor of the General Assembly, on the prospects of resuming negotiations for a settlement of the Cyprus problem.

The month started with an exchange of views on confidence-building measures (“CBMs”) and a discussion of issues related to the work of the bi-communal technical committees. On September 8, an online meeting was held between the negotiators of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides, Menelaos Menelaou and Ergun Olgun, respectively. The discussion reportedly focused on reviewing the work of bi-communal technical committees.

On September 20, Turkey’s Miliyet newspaper, quoting diplomatic sources, claimed that the government of the Russian Federation has given its approval to direct flights from Russia to Ercan airport in the north. The first flight would reportedly take place on November 15. The government denied the reports.

On September 20, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressed the UN General Assesbly calling on the international community to stop imposing sanctions on the Turkish Cypriots and to eliminate all forms of embargo. Erdogan stated that there are two states and two different nations on the island, and this should be accepted by all. He noted that the key for a solution to Cyprus problem is to accept that the Turkish Cypriots have equal and sovereign

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

rights and that their international status is to be accepted.

On September 23, President Nicos Anastasiades also addressed the UN General Assembly. Anastasiades berated the UN for its lack of tangible action and influence as a global tool for peace, prosperity and territorial integrity. He also criticised Turkey for “systematically violating international law” not only when it comes to Cyprus but also other countries in the region. Anastasiades highlighted the realities in Cyprus and the ongoing division and occupation by Turkish forces and reiterated that when decisions or resolutions based on international law are not to be implemented or enforced, this could be perceived as fostering or even rewarding arbitrariness. He then went on to detail all the failed attempts during his administration to find a solution to the Cyprus problem and assured the room that the Greek Cypriot side would not give up its endeavor to reunite the two sides.

After meeting with President Nicos Anastasiades on September 23, UNSG Antonio Guterres agreed to send a deputy to Cyprus to help with ongoing efforts to jump-start the stalled negotiation process. As a result, on September 26, it was announced that Assistant UN Secretary General Rosemary Di Carlo, would be visiting Cyprus this autumn on a fact-finding mission on the instruction of Guterres. Turkey reportedly opposed the initiative.

Meanwhile, during his meeting with Guterres on September 24, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar¹, among other relayed to the UNSG that a new formal process on the Cyprus problem can only take place

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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on the basis of equal sovereignty. Tatar underlined that it was the right of Turkish Cypriots to have their “equal and sovereign state” recognised by the international community, as requested from Erdogan during his speech at the General Assembly floor. Tatar added that in order to realise this right of theirs, the north would resolutely continue their actions with “motherland Turkey”. He also asked Guterres for the immediate lifting of the “inhumane embargoes”, as noted, and for the UNSG to take initiatives in this direction. The Turkish Cypriot leader said there was hardly any common ground for negotiations and that the Cyprus issue should now go to the UN Security Council, if the UN also finds that there no common ground. In separate statements to Turkish-speaking journalists after the meeting in New York, Tatar said he relayed to Guterres there could no longer be a federal solution in Cyprus and the UN must move on to negotiations for a two-state solution. He stated that there should be cooperation between the two sides on issues such as hydrocarbons, solar energy, sharing of water resources, demining, and preventing irregular migration.

On September 28, speaking in a televised interview with broadcaster CNN Turk, Erdogan stated that Turkey will reinforce its military presence in the north after the United States lifted defense trade restrictions, imposed on Cyprus since 1987. Erdogan stated that he would reinforce the already 40,000 troops stationed on the island with land, naval and aerial weapons, ammunition and vehicles. The U.S. State Department had announced on September 16, that Secretary of State Antony Blinken had lifted defense trade restrictions for Cyprus, for the fiscal year 2023. The lifting of the US arms embargo was described as a historic moment domestically. The foreign ministry said the decision was the “result of the fulfilment of all the conditions set by the legislation Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy

²The Cyprus Forum is an annual independent conference aiming to be a catalyst for discussions and debates on key

Partnership Act established by the American Congress in 2019”.

Speaking to the Cyprus Forum² on September 29, UN Special Representative in Cyprus, Colin Stewart, stated that the scenario of a mutually agreed solution to the Cyprus problem is fading and would not be available much longer. Stewart stated that there is currently a political impasse with regards to the Cyprus problem and that the positions of the two sides are far apart as they cannot even agree on what settlement talks would be about, let alone the conditions for returning to the table. He went on to say that greater dependence of the north on Turkey, especially economically, means less interdependence between the two sides of the island, adding that interdependence is the “glue that can hold the island together”. Stewart also noted that the economic stress in the north and growing economic divide between the two sides of the island also breeds resentment and lack of trust between them. Stewart stated that nothing brings people together more quickly and more strongly than economic interest and that expanding trade and business links and ensuring the infrastructure to support them, was the surest way to rehabilitate confidence in a settlement. In terms of economic initiatives, Stewart said the UN was working on to expand trade through the Green Line Regulation, removing obstacles to cross-border banking, addressing insurance problems and easing congestion at the crossing points. The two sides, through the joint technical committees were also trying to find common ground on migration and environmental issues.

On September 30, Turkish newspaper Milliyet reported that Turkey is preparing to take the Cyprus problem to the UN General Assembly, to remove the obstacles of recognition in the breakaway state in the north. The paper reported that should it not pass

policy issues in Cyprus and in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region.

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at the Security Council, a resolution by the General Assembly would exert pressure in favour of recognising the north. The framework of the strategy for recognising the north was drawn up at the regular meeting of the National Security Council in July 2022.

According to a poll conducted by the Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS) in September 2022, 85% of Turkish Cypriots support the resumption of the negotiations for the solution of the Cyprus problem. 37.8% of the respondents stated that they agreed with the statement 'I support the new position of the Turkish Cypriot side regarding the Cyprus Problem', while 47.4% said that they did not support the new position.

Three of the presidential candidates Averof Neophytou, Andreas Mavroyiannis, and Nikos Christodoulides held a debate at Cyprus Forum mainly focused on their views of the Cyprus problem. All agreed that the unification of the island was the only way forward to lasting peace. They also agreed that the trust of the Turkish Cypriots needs to be won back, and that more should have been done to invest in the Turkish Cypriot community.

DISY candidate Averof Neophytou, under the slogan 'With a Cyprus solution, Cyprus in NATO' said that he wants the reunification of Cyprus, within the clear agreed framework that exists in the resolutions and decisions of the UN Security Council. He added that once one entity, one sovereignty, one citizenship, one international personality and once autonomy to the two entities is ensured, then a strong state in Europe is safeguarded. He repeated that gas is the key to unlocking the Cyprus resolution process and reiterated that neither Erdogan nor the current Turkish Cypriot leadership will ever achieve a two-state solution.

Christodoulides said that after 1974, the government of the Republic should have invested in the Turkish Cypriots specifically those living in the Turkish Cypriot community who are in favour of a bizonal, bicomunal federation solution. Christodoulides said that the EU offers all the safeguards, not only for security and guarantees, but also for the functioning of the state and for the rights of every citizen in Cyprus, noting that Turkish Cypriots are also victims of the invasion. He stressed that the EU should take a leading role in resolving the Cyprus problem, without straying from the framework of the UN basis for a solution.

Mavroyiannis also spoke of the need to regain the trust of the majority of Turkish Cypriots and said that diplomatic manipulations were not enough to re-start efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem. He stated that organic conditions of peace through cooperation, especially among youth is needed. He stressed that an Office for Turkish Cypriot Affairs should be created immediately, and that Greek Cypriots need to make full use of the EU.

Grant applications for the translation of literary works by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are now being accepted by the island's deputy ministry of culture. According to a statement, the cultural services department aiming at deeper mutual understanding between the two communities of Cyprus through literature, have included in their budget since 2010 a provision for the operation of a grant scheme for the translation of works by renowned Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot writers from Greek into Turkish and from Turkish into Greek. The Plan will be implemented during the period 2022-2025.

HYDROCARBONS

On September 19, Energy Ministers of Cyprus and Israel, Natasa Pilides and Karine Elharrar respective-





ly, released a joint statement following their meeting, stating a swift settlement to the dispute over the Aphrodite gas reservoir, amid rumours that Israel was considering a Cypriot buyout of the natural gas on the Israeli side of the prospect. The dispute derives from the claim of the owners of the Yishai gas licence, on the Israeli side of the Israel/Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone (“EEZ”) boundary line, that the Aphrodite gas deposit extends into Yishai. In 2010, Israel and Cyprus signed an agreement delimiting the border between their respective maritime areas. Years of talks between the companies on either side regarding the mode of sharing did not progress, at which point the governments stepped in. US based Chevron Corp, along with partners Shell Plc and Israel’s Newmed Energy LP, owns drilling rights in the Aphrodite offshore field, and plans to drill a new well in early 2023. The drill will confirm how much gas is in the field, which has been estimated at 124 billion cubic meters. The Aphrodite gas reservoir was first discovered in 2011 and remains untapped.

GREEK CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

On September 22, the Central Bank of Cyprus (CBC) stated that the Cypriot economy’s primary macro-economic figures for the years 2022-2024 are favourable according to its projected medium-term forecasts, released this month. According to the CBC, despite the war in Ukraine and the subsequent international sanctions imposed on Russia, the Cypriot economy recorded a significant growth of 6% in the first half of 2022, with the consequences of the war expected to be more pronounced in the second half of this year and 2023. In particular, the significant increase in energy prices is expected to reduce the purchasing power of household incomes, which, in combination with the increase in interest rates, will result in a negative impact on domestic demand, despite the utilisation of the savings accumulated

due to the pandemic. Regarding the rate of economic growth for 2022, the CBC reported that this is expected to rise to 5.5%, as in the previous year, with the increase in GDP expected to derive primarily from domestic demand, including investments and private consumption, but also the faster than expected recovery of the tourism industry. The upward revision of 2.8% in 2022 compared to the June 2022 forecasts, is mainly due to the better-than-expected course of economic activities in the tourism sector. In 2023 and 2024, GDP growth is expected to rise to 2.5% and 3.1% respectively, with the downward revision, compared to previous forecasts, being attributed to the unfavourable outlook in the external environment, including the negative effects of the looming protracted Russian-Ukrainian war, as well as some medium-term effects, mainly in the professional services sector. Unemployment is expected to fall to 6.7% in 2022, from 7.5% in 2021, a slight downward revision of 0.2 percentage points from the June forecast 2022. In terms of inflation, which refers to the Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), the CBC reported that this is expected to increase significantly in 2022, rising to 8.4% from 2.3% in 2021. It is expected that it will remain at levels above or close to 9% in the remaining months of this year. As in the previous forecasts, a gradual normalisation of inflationary pressures has been forecasted for 2023 and 2024, with inflation reaching 3.9% and 2.1%, respectively.

On September 27, private equity firm Lone Star, in a statement issued to the London Stock Exchange, announced that will not submit a revised offer for the acquisition of the Bank of Cyprus. The Bank of Cyprus’ board of directors had unanimously and unequivocally rejected three unsolicited, conditional, non-binding proposals by the U.S. private equity firm, with the last proposal offering €1.51 per share for the bank.





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Speaking at a conference organised by Deloitte, Finance Minister Constantinos Petrides said on September 28 that 2023 will be difficult for the economy amidst inflation, high energy prices and deglobalization. Regarding the Cypriot economy, he highlighted the growth rate of 6% in the first half of the year, which exceeded forecasts, as well as other indicators showing the potential and resilience of the economy.

The Cyprus Investment Funds Association (CIFA) on September 28 held an event focusing on the latest developments in Cyprus' investment funds sector, spearheaded by the association's president and board of directors. The association stressed that Cyprus has the potential and capacity to become a regional investment funds hub, particularly for hubs that wish to take advantage of the investment opportunities in both Europe, the wider Eastern Mediterranean region, as well as the Middle East. According to the latest data from the Cyprus Securities and Exchange Commission (CySEC) Cyprus' total Assets Under Management (AuM) have risen from €6.3bn in 2018 to €11.1bn in the first quarter of 2022.

On September 29, the House passed a bill extending to the end of February 2023, the period for reduced consumption tax on fuel, in a move that will ease some of the pressure on households and businesses from the rising cost of living. The tax on petrol is reduced by 7 cents a liter, by 8.3 cents a liter on diesel and by 6.4 cents a liter on heating fuel.

Domestic Developments

In September, the Covid 19-cases increased from 576,278 to 587,994 cases³. The number of deaths attributed to the virus since March 2020 rose from 1,168 to 1,182. An increase in the positivity rate of coronavirus infections among students was registered after the start of the new school year.

³The government no longer publishes daily Coronavirus cases or deaths. Instead, it publishes figures on cases and

The four independent presidential candidates Marios Eliades, Achilleas Demetriades, Christodoulos Protopapas and Constantinos Christofides, held a meeting on September 28 to discuss the possibility of forging a possible alliance that might garner enough support to push them into the second round of the February 2023 elections. It is understood that a poll will be carried out gauging the popularity of each of these candidates, a benchmark indicating which candidate would be the best to front a possible four-way coalition. The four independents seem to converge on several issues: Western-educated, support an open economy, embrace the values of liberal democracy, seek to end corruption and a federal settlement of the Cyprus problem.

On September 28, independent candidate for the 2023 presidential elections Achilleas Demetriades presented his key proposals putting fighting corruption and the need for more transparency at the top of his agenda. To remedy the problem of corruption Demetriades proposed a 'Positive Behaviour' modelled on the Pissarides-Panayiotidis-Syrimi proposal, which prevent conflict of interest by applying GRECO rules, a code of conduct that binds both the president and his ministers, the resignation of ministers from party offices and transparency in party finances. He also suggested separating the responsibilities of the Attorney General, one being the legal advisor and the other the public prosecutor. Demetriades also proposed a radical shake-up of the system for appointing independent officials and advocated e-governance that would reduce bureaucracy. He also proposed an index of implementation of laws with annual reports to Parliament for more efficient administration, the introduction of horizontal voting, starting with the 2024 municipal elections, a Citizens' Assembly for important political priorities of state, as well as the adoption of a strict framework for respecting citizens' privacy and prevent-

deaths on a weekly basis. These figures represent the latest published figures of the month, up until September 30.

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ing surveillance. Lastly, the independent candidate proposed the abolition of “absurd” privileges including tax-free vehicles, and an end to limousines as a transport of officials.

In an interview with Politis newspaper, Manolis Kyriacou a former member of the DIKO party, said that Presidential candidate Nicos Christodoulides had personally asked him to set up fake social media accounts tasked with ad hominem attacks on politicians and journalists in order to push his candidacy.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On September 2, the Minister of Labor sent an invitation to employers’ organizations and trade unions that are taking part in the Labor Advisory Body to consider any labor issues they consider important, in order for those issues to be part of the social dialogue. One of the important issues that will concern the body is the Price Index Adjustment stipend. The employers will likely bring forth their claim for the abolition of the stipend, in accordance with a previous decision of their collective bodies. The trade unions will likely claim its full reinstatement and return to all employees, whose wages are eligible. From 2018, based on the framework agreement, the 50% of the Price Index Adjustment stipend is paid once a year, provided that during the second and third quarter of the previous year, there was a positive sign of economic growth. This agreement had expired in December 2020. Its validity was extended for another year, due to the negative effects caused by the COVID19 crisis on the economy, and it was renewed in 2021 as the pandemic had not been lifted. The problems in the economy were extended due to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis, resulting in inflation soaring to unprecedented levels. The trade union movement demands restoration of wages, due to the unprecedented price increase in basic goods and emphasizes that the Price Index Adjustment stipend was established through collective struggles and as such it will not be subject to negotiation. The

other issues that are estimated to concern the Body are the reform of the pension system, the regulation of teleworking and the review of the strategy for employment of workers from third countries.

On September 6, the Union of Bank Employees of Cyprus reached an agreement with the management of the Cyprus Banks Association, for the renewal of the collective agreement for the staff of the Association for the years 2019 – 2022. According to an announcement, the content of the agreement, which is like the content of the respective agreements signed by the association with local banks, is acceptable and balanced, leaving both sides satisfied. Based on the new agreement, the two sides reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the Industrial Relations Code and pledge to strictly adhere to it.

On September 20, in a statement, the trade unions collectively stated that the decision of the Labor Disputes Court has once again vindicated teachers who work under a service purchase regime in the afternoon and evening educational programs of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. According to their announcement, after the decision of the Administrative Court dated October 8, 2020, a judgment was issued on 20 September 2022 by the Labor Disputes Court. It recognizes that the two teachers who were converted in 2013 from being employees of the ministry to a service purchase regime, offered their services to Music Schools under conditions and circumstances that infer with the existence of an employer-employee relationship. This decision vindicates all teachers and trade unions who have been fighting since 2013 to abolish the regime of purchase of services in the Afternoon and Evening Educational Programs and call on the Government to immediately implement the decision for all teachers and working in such programs.

On September 27, the members of the Cyprus Hotels Association (PASYXE) unanimously accepted

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the mediation proposal of the labor relations department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to extend the duration of the existing collective agreement until December 2023. The collective agreement with hotels was renewed in December 2019, following the mediation proposal of late Zeta Emilianidou and expires in December 2022. However, the trade union movement intends to accept a mediation proposal of the Labor Relations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to extend the collective agreement in the hotel industry for one more year, only with the granting of a wage increase of 1.5% for 2023, plus the increase foreseen in contracts of 2022. The mediation proposal arose from the fact that several hotel units were forced during the pandemic crisis of 2020 and 2021, either to suspend their operations, or to operate at low capacity.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

Economic Developments

According to the Statistical Institute, the consumer price index was 120.3% higher in September 2022 compared to September 2021. The consumer prices had risen by 3.1% in September alone while the inflation rate in the first nine months of the year was 75.6%.

The January-August 2022 tourism statistics indicated a significant improvement in the tourism sector compared to the previous two years. However, the figures were still below the 2019 level. The number of passengers arriving in Turkish Cypriot air and sea-ports in 2021 was only 173,315 due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although the number of arrivals so far this year has reached 816,408, this is still 26% lower than the same period of 2019 (the year before the pandemic began). Turkish nationals made up 738,933 of the passengers arriving; those coming from England was 24,385; Iran 19,534; Germany 16,389 and Russia 16,101. There was also a 476%

increase in the entrances to northern Cyprus from land i.e. crossing points, in the period of January-August 2022; entries reached 3,047,349. The number of crossings by Greek Cypriots was also on the rise; the figure has reached 1,882,474, an increase of 426% compared to 2021. This was triggered both by the lifting of the restrictions and the excessive depreciation of the Turkish Lira against foreign currencies. There is also a rise of cross border retail shopping from the south to the north. Furthermore, it is estimated that the total number of overnight stays in tourist accommodation facilities from January-August 2022 was 2.4 million, up 391.8% compared to the previous year. The number of overnight stays in the same period was 488,031 in 2021; 715,115 in 2020 and 2,886,323 in 2019.

According to the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, the Green Line trade (transit of goods from northern part of the island to the southern part) is expected to reach €12 million at the end of this year. This is the highest amount achieved since the Green Line Regulation came into force in 2004. While the total figure was €6.1 million in entire 2021, the volume of trade was already €6 million in the first six months of 2022. The chamber officials said that the sales will reach double digits because of several factors, and the most obvious one being the depreciation of the Turkish lira. The` disruption of the global supply chain after the pandemic and the increase in freight charges, as well as some improvements made in the implementation of the regulation, helped Turkish Cypriot firms to become an alternative supplier for their Greek Cypriot counterparts.

According to a poll conducted by the Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies (CMIRS), 91.1% of Turkish Cypriots are worried about not maintaining their standards of living. 60.2% of the participants stated that their economic situation has become worse in the last 12 months, while 35.8% said that it has remained the same, and only 2.2% said it has improved.

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Relations with Turkey

Towards the end of the month, a demonstration was held to protest the beginning of the construction of a “kulliye”, a government complex in north Nicosia. The complex will include a presidential palace, a parliament building, a mosque and a recreational park, and will cost around 2.5 billion TL (€140 million euros). The project will be fully financed by Turkey. “Spending this kind of money for an Islamic complex in the middle of one of the worst financial crises facing Turkish Cypriots is seen as disrespectful and a waste by many ... for many Turkish Cypriots, [it] also symbolizes Turkey’s mounting control and intervention in the northern part of Cyprus,” journalist, Esra Aygin cited in the Cyprus Mail. Aygin also reported that “besides being costly and unfamiliar, the controversial construction would be on Greek Cypriot owned property in Ayios Dhometios is also illegal since there has not been any kind of attempt in procuring a building permit”. During the demonstration, some of the protesters went beyond the police belt and barbed wires to stop the bulldozers tearing down trees and preparing the land for the construction. Two protesters were later arrested and then released pending the outcome of a trial in which they will be charged with “resistance to police”.

Domestic Developments

On September 11, Unal Ustel has become the new leader of the National Unity Party (UBP) after running unopposed at an “extraordinary” party congress. Ustel, who has earlier become Prime Minister in the three-party coalition government led by the UBP, became the party’s chairman following the resignation of Faiz Sucuoglu. Sucuoglu was elected as the party leader in November 2021. Indeed, an earlier leadership race in the UBP in November 2020, which Sucuoglu was poised to win, was cancelled days before the second round. In the first round of the aborted election, Sucuoglu finished top with nearly 40% of the vote, while Ustel was the last among the five candidates with less than 9% support.

In the November 2021 UBP leadership election, which Sucuoglu won in the first round by securing a majority, Ustel was not even a candidate. After leading the UBP to a general election victory in January this year, Sucuoglu suddenly found himself isolated within his party, reportedly due to pressure coming from Ankara. As a result, President Ersin Tatar invited Ustel to form a new government in May though Sucuoglu remained as UBP leader. Eventually, in early September Sucuoglu decided to step down, saying that the “dual-headed” leadership of the party had become unworkable.

On September 7, the Constitutional Court annulled the legislation passed by the government which postponed local elections for November. According to the TRNC Constitution, local elections take place every four years. The last local government elections were in June 2018, meaning that elections this year should have taken place by June 26. The three-party coalition government delayed the elections to carry out “reforms” that would see the number of municipalities reduced. The main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) referred the matter to the Constitutional Court, which struck down the law for violating Article 119 of the Constitution. The judgement means that the November 27 date for local elections has been annulled. Later in the month, the senior coalition partner UBP and the main opposition CTP reached a consensus to hold the local elections on December 25.

On September 16, Chief Justice, Narin Ferdi Sefik held a press conference to mark the start of the 2022-2023 judicial year. Noting that the share of the TRNC budget allocated to the judiciary is only 0.48%, the Chief Justice said, “I will not make comparisons with other countries, but this figure needs to be increased.” Sefik touched upon the courts’ needs including new judges and new court buildings. The Chief Justice said that while there has been a 6% decrease in civil cases compared to last year,





the number of criminal cases has risen by approximately 26% over the same period, adding that “it is concerning that the highest number of cases” are for drugs-related offences. The second most common criminal cases are for forging official documents, she said. The Chief Justice also pointed out a drastic rise in the corruption cases: she said that the number of corruption cases was 1 in 2019, 18 in 2020 and 21 in 2021.

On September 18, Fikri Ataoglu, the leader of the coalition partner Democratic Party (DP) got re-elected as the party leader. 2,135 out of 7,470 party members cast their votes at the Congress. Fikri Ataoglu received 1,586 of votes while his rival, Ali Tunctasli received 522 votes.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

On September 12, the members of the Union of Turkish Cypriot Public Servants (KTAMS) and Cyprus Turkish Public Officials Trade Union (Kamu-Sen) stormed and occupied the meeting room of the Public Service Commission to protest the Commission’s chairperson’s decision to exclude the unions’ representatives from the interviews to be held for the recruitment of new prison guards. The police arrested the unionists including the two leaders and released them after taking their statements. After their release, the two union leaders argued that the method used for the last 17 years in the oral competition exams was changed by the chairperson and said that he would go down in history as a commission chairperson who had the union presidents and executives arrested because they wanted transparency.

The Union of Turkish Cypriot Public Servants (KTAMS) announced that as of August 31, the hunger line for a family of four is 9,675 TL (€535) and the minimum wage is 1,075 TL (€59) below it.





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