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Regional Updates

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Regional Updates: Contents

Cyprus	3
Sources and further reading.	4
Egypt	5
Sources and further reading.	6
Israel-Palestine	7
Sources and further reading.	8

CYPRUS

BY DUYGU ALPAN

Cyprus peace negotiations, which have been on-going for almost 50 years, were revived with the Joint Declaration agreed upon on 11 February, 2014. The next direct peace talks within this framework were planned to take place on October 9. However, due to the latest developments on disputed natural gas exploration activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, negotiations between the two sides were suspended.



The Greek Cypriot side commenced exploratory drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean in Parcel 9, which is situated in its so-called Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In response to the commencement, the Turkish Cypriot side claiming co-ownership in the area declared that it would not accept any activities unilaterally carried out by the Greek Cypriots in that part and decided to send a seismic exploration ship to the Eastern Mediterranean in cooperation with Turkey. In this context, Turkey's Exploration Ship, Barbaros, was sent to the area to operate from October 20 to December 30.

Following the decision issued by Turkey on October 3, the Greek Cypriot leader Mr. Nicos Anastasiades unilaterally suspended the comprehensive peace negotiations with his Turkish Cypriot counterpart Mr. Derviş Eroğlu. The newly appointed UN Special Adviser on Cyprus, Mr. Espen Barth Eide, described the suspension as a "strong reaction" within the context and reality of the island.

Few days after the negotiations came to a deadlock, the Greek Cypriot side and Greece signed an agreement allowing joint search and rescue operations between the two countries. It was also announced that a trilateral meeting between the Greek Cypriot side, Greece and Egypt will be held in Cairo on November 9, as Greeks and the Greek Cypriots attribute importance to their maritime cooperation with Egypt.

The Greek Cypriot side adopted a package of eight measures against Turkey, which includes vetoing the opening of any new chapters in its accession course in the EU. Therefore, the forthcoming days will likely bring critical developments not only with regards to the peace process on the island but also concerning EU-Turkey relations.

Sources and Further Reading (click to access)

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[Oct. 7, 2014 - Greek Cypriots halt peace talks with Turk Cypriots over gas row](#)

[Oct. 9, 2014 - Güç gösterisi ile 'restleşme' arasında Kıbrıs'ın gazı kaçarken...](#)

[Oct. 9, 2014 - Kıbrıs'taki Statüko Tehlikeli](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - Eide: I sympathise but....](#)

[Oct. 14, 2014 - Greece, Cyprus Sign Important Sea Operations Pact](#)

[Oct. 14, 2014 - Kıbrıslı Türklerin de Hakkı Var](#)

[Oct. 21, 2014 - Cyprus unveils eight point plan to punish Turkey](#)

[Oct. 21, 2014 - Greece accuses Turkey of violating laws of the sea](#)

[Oct. 21, 2014 - Eroğlu: Hiç Yoktan Müzakere Masasını Terk Ettiler](#)

[Oct. 23, 2014 - UN chief optimistic about Cyprus settlement](#)

[Oct. 27, 2014 - Why do Greek Cypriots call Turkey the Aggressor?](#)

EGYPT

BY OMAR SHEIRA

During the final week of September, President Abdelfattah el-Sisi addressed the UN General Assembly in a speech outlining the current challenges facing Egypt. Stability, el-Sisi said, is the necessary prerequisite to stimulating the economy, strengthening civil society institutions, and building a system based on the rule of law. He especially stressed the importance of the on-going efforts to restore national security, whether in reference to civil unrest or militant groups.



On October 11, as universities marked the beginning of a new academic year, student protests erupted in 18 universities including Cairo, Ain-Shams, Mansoura, Damietta, and Al-Azhar universities, against the heightening security measures adopted by private security company, Falcon. The protests started peacefully and descended into violence, resulting in the arrest of hundreds of students, many of which are still imprisoned.

On October 24, 31 Egyptian troops were killed during two separate attacks, carried out by militants in North Sinai. In response, El-Sisi declared a state of emergency in the governorate—which will be effective for three months—and ordered the creation of a buffer zone on Egypt’s Gaza border. Since the ouster of former President Mohamed Morsi, Egyptian security forces have conducted a major security offensive against militant groups, located mainly in the Sinai region. According to Minister of Interior Mohamed Ibrahim, the military-led campaign has killed hundreds of militants in clashes and detained thousands, including those affiliated with the banned Muslim Brotherhood. Similarly, militant-led attacks, clashes, and roadside bombings continue to claim the lives of hundreds of Egyptian troops.

Pertaining to regional affairs, there were four important developments. First, Ibrahim confirmed that the Egyptian government will cement cooperation with its Libyan neighbor to improve border security, curb arms trafficking, and train Libya’s counter-terrorism security forces. Second, Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb vowed a non-interventionist policy in other Middle Eastern affairs, including airstrikes on Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. However, Mehleb added that if Egypt’s Arab Gulf allies requested its intervention, the country would be willing to discuss its role in ensuring regional security. Third, the Egyptian government decided not to renew its RO-RO transit-trade agreement with Turkey upon its expiration in April 2015, marking further deterioration of Egypt-Turkey relations. Fourth, the foreign ministers of Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus jointly delivered a statement urging Turkey to end its gas search in Cyprus, which is deemed illegal.

Sources and Further Reading (click to access)

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[Oct. 9, 2014 - Libyan minister of interior says Egypt to train police forces](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - Egyptian army kills 21 “terrorists”: army spokesman](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - IMF chief Lagarde ‘very impressed’ by Egypt’s economic reforms](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - Egypt’s campuses brace for new semester, Islamists vow ‘intense’ protests](#)

[Oct. 13, 2014 - Egypt to receive \\$5bn in loans from UAE and Saudi Arabia: Source](#)

[Oct. 13, 2014 - Police forces to secure university campuses: Interior ministry](#)

[Oct. 13, 2014 - What you don’t know about “Falcon” in Egyptian universities](#)

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[Oct. 21, 2014 - Egypt sentences to death seven suspected members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis](#)

[Oct. 21, 2014 - PM Mahlab: Islamic State members may have entered Egypt](#)

[Oct. 21, 2014 - ISIL prompts renewed U.S.-Egypt ties; Apaches shipped to Egypt](#)

[Oct. 23, 2014 - Bomb explodes near Cairo University](#)

[Oct. 24, 2014 - State of Emergency declared in parts of North Sinai](#)

[Oct. 27, 2014 - Ro-ro agreement not to be renewed](#)

[Oct. 28, 2014 - North Sinai residents near Rafah border begin evacuation](#)

[Oct. 29, 2014 - Greece, Egypt, Cyprus urge Turkey to quit gas search off island](#)

ISRAEL-PALESTINE

BY MUHAMMED AMMASH

The end of September and the beginning of October of 2014 was a scene to many important developments in Israel and Palestine after a violent summer that caused the death of more than two thousand people in the war on the Gaza Strip. More than 2,100 Palestinians along with 66 Israeli soldiers were killed between 8 July and 27 August during Israel's Operation Protective Edge offensive. According to the UN, the vast majority of Palestinian deaths were civilians.



After reaching a ceasefire through several attempts, Hamas and Fatah began negotiations in Cairo and agreed on a unity government to take control of Gaza with the aim of easing the blockade and opening the way for the reconstruction of Gaza after the war.

During the last week of September, the UN General Assembly 69th session witnessed the intense speeches of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Abbas claimed that Israel has perpetrated genocide in Gaza and called for a comprehensive strategy to end Israeli 'state terrorism'. He also called the UN Security Council to pass a resolution setting a three-year deadline to end Israeli occupation.

Netanyahu's speech focused on Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East by referring to ISIL's acts in the region and comparing it to Hamas. While he also dedicated part of his speech on Iran's nuclear plans, he invited Arab states to participate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

During Netanyahu's meeting with US President Barack Obama, Israeli non-profit Peace Now published a statement addressing the approval of a new settlement expansion in Jerusalem. While the EU and the US condemned the action, Netanyahu stated that he denies agreeing to the 1967 based borders with Palestinians.

After the meetings in the UN, Sweden became the first major European country to recognize the State of Palestine, emphasizing that the conflict with Israel can be solved only with a two-state solution in accordance with international law. The action was condemned by Israel, and US State Department Spokesperson called the decision 'premature', referring to the need to first resolve final status issues. This was followed by the symbolic and non-binding majority vote of British MPs calling for the recognition of Palestine as an official state.

The end of the month came with the escalation of violent conflict in the West Bank. An Israeli baby was killed when a Palestinian man drove his car into a crowd. Subsequently, East Jerusalem and the

West Bank witnessed clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, which resulted in many wounded and arrested by Israel. The shooting incident of a right-wing Jew campaigning for Jewish prayer rights further heightened tensions, leading to the killing of a Palestinian suspect by Israeli forces. Following this rapid escalation, Israel decided to close Jerusalem's Holy Sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque. This act inspired many condemnations and was therefore, reversed one day later.

Sources and Further Reading (click to access)

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[Sept. 25, 2014 - Text of Fatah-Hamas agreement](#)

[Sept. 25, 2014 - Ashrawi: It's Time for UK, European Countries to Recognize Palestine](#)

[Sept. 26, 2014 - Abbas at UNGA: Israel perpetrated genocide in Gaza, we won't forget](#)

[Sept. 29, 2014 - Transcript of Benjamin Netanyahu's address to the UN General Assembly](#)

[Oct. 1, 2014 - Netanyahu to Obama: Arab states can have role in Palestinian-Israeli peace](#)

[Oct. 3, 2014 - EU condemns Israeli plans to build beyond Green Line](#)

[Oct. 9, 2014 - After Years of Hamas Control, Gaza Is Scene of Palestinian Cabinet Meeting](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - Having to Rebuild Gaza, Again](#)

[Oct. 10, 2014 - UK MPs Vote to Recognize Palestine as Official State](#)

[Oct. 14, 2014 - British vote brings Palestinians one step closer to statehood](#)

[Oct. 16, 2014 - Has Israel accepted the Palestinian unity government?](#)

[Oct. 19, 2014 - Gaza Plan 'Relieves Israel of Responsibility'](#)

[Oct. 29, 2014 - Netanyahu insists he is 'under attack for defending Israel'](#)

[Oct. 30, 2014 - Jerusalem holy site closure 'declaration of war' – Abbas](#)



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GPoT Center was founded with the aim to support reconciliation and non-violent solutions to international as well as domestic issues through dialogue. Our mission is to contribute to stability, democratization and peace through organizing multitrack diplomacy meetings, conducting innovative and independent research, and encouraging informed debates in the media on key issues affecting Turkey and the world.

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