

# Turkish Cypriots Want a Secure Future

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# Turkish Cypriots Want A Secure Future

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## **Summary**

Presidents Nikos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci paved the way to rekindle the resolution process which had gone amiss on the Island over the years. Despite their inherent different political ideologies, both men were convinced of the potency of settlement; as such they worked in preparation of their societies towards the resolution. The public opinion polls conducted on the Island captures an important detail; thus, a considerable majority of the Turkish Cypriot society is unready for the eventual settlement of the Cyprus question irrespective of their leaders' goodwill. There are two main issues essential for a concrete future resolution plan-'security and property'. Views on the protection of the bicommunality and other expectations are equally important alongside other issues that were mentioned by the Turkish Cypriots that we conducted interviews with. The concerns raised essentially focus on the security issue. The Turkish Cypriots' desire to live in security both politically and economically post-unification.

## Introduction

The aftermath of the Cyprus Elections in 2013 and 2015 respectively provided the platform for Presidents Nikos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci to rekindle the resolution process that had gone amiss on the Island over the years. Despite their inherent different political ideologies, both men were convinced of the potency of settlement; as such they worked in preparation of their societies towards the resolution. Press reports portray positive reflections of their progress in the negotiations. That notwithstanding, public opinion polls conducted on the Island captures a different purview; thus, a considerable majority of the Cypriot society are unready for the eventual settlement of the Cyprus question irrespective of their leaders goodwill. Numerous factors underpin these public opinion polls; whilst some are wary of far-fetched expectations, others are concerned about potentially losing what they have already obtained. The objective of this study is to share some of the views of Turkish Cypriots who hold the latter notion.

In-depth interviews on the settlement of the Cyprus issue were conducted between 19th of February and 3rd of March 2016 with 23 Turkish Cypriots of different political opinions from diverse social groups in Northern Cyprus. We tried to summarize the Turkish Cypriots' opinions on the resolution. Whilst the pages beneath will capture their views we should however note that regarding the resolution plan, two issues are central for almost everybody we conducted an interview with.

Two main issues significant for a concrete future resolution plan are 'security and property'. Regarding the security issue for instance, despite the fact of the borders being opened since 23 April 2003, the relative cooperation between the two sides and security threats have been limited to few incidents. Additionally, it is difficult to argue that Turkish Cypriots will live with Greek Cypriots without a guarantee of their security.

They are aware that all matters related to the property issue will affect them. They also recognize their need to make sacrifices in solving the conflict. However, they cannot predict the demands of such a sacrifice. Legitimate concerns over losing properties due to mapping arrangements and issues resulting from the property problem are common. Essentially, people who could be relocated want to see how this relocation will occur and how it would be financed.

Also, the need to protect the bicommunality and other expectations were mentioned by the Turkish Cypriots whom we interviewed. The concerns focus on two kinds of security issues. Turkish Cypriots' wish to be secure politically and economically and live in security post-unification. Even though it is painful for the Greek side to accept to grant

them political security, Turkey's backing of the Turkish Cypriots' security, is not a big issue that cannot be resolved.

A matter of prime concern in the 2016 conditions hinges largely on economic security. The people who will be relocated and who will lose their properties require a compensation system for their losses. Emphatically, their expectation is that a group of sponsors gather together to agree on an extensive road map which includes a list of who will get what, how and when. In similarity to 2004, it doesn't seem that the Turkish Cypriots will put their trust in the EU's appeal and the condominium regime mechanism.

We are very well aware that the political balance is changeable at any time and maybe the situation that we have captured is not reflecting the Turkish Cypriots' overall tendency. After the parliamentary elections held in 22nd of May in the Greek side, the negotiation process gained momentum. We have the belief that it is for their benefit that both sides take the expressions and the tendencies also written in this report into consideration and not to present an unacceptable plan in the referendum to the public. Apparently, the plan requires to be explained in details and the opportunities it carries should be emphasized on both sides.

Accordingly, these findings should be taken into consideration by the international community as they are the 3rd most crucial party to this issue. One should be aware that a resolution plan may not work if there is no strong financial support. It should also be noted that some parts of the island do not support this plan. Moreover, It is obvious that the pressure made on Turkey or President Mustafa Akinci or the promised reward on the EU membership won't address the problems of all the people who will say yes to the agreement.

We have categorized this work into five main topics. The first part gives an insight to the Turkish Cypriots' thoughts on the security issues. Their economic concerns for the future are shared in the second part. The third part includes the issues regarding the European Union and the harmonization process. The fourth part shares Turkish Cypriots' views on the bizonality and the bicomunality while the last part emphasizes the general course of the negotiations.

## 1. The Security Issue And Turkey's Guarantee

Despite the differences in political opinions and the diversity in perspectives, the security issue continues to be a common concern of different societal factions in Cyprus. The Cypriots that we talked to still couldn't forget the past tragic events. They believe that Turkey will ensure their security. On the other hand, almost all of them accept the fact that Turkey's guarantorship and the existence of the Turkish military in the island is perceived as a threat by the Greek Cypriots.

One of the participants in the study, K01, who is the media adviser of a right wing political party, sees the guarantee of Turkey as an indispensable factor. For him, the biggest concern of Turkish Cypriots is security. The participant who touched upon the events of 1963, expresses that the British are also a guarantee power but they have not intervened in the island, and adds "it is possible to see that Turkey's guarantee is an indispensable matter of fact for the Turkish Cypriot community". And he is also open to the idea that this guarantee should be only for the Turkish community.

K07 who is the executive manager of a company, sees Turkey's guarantorship essential for their security. He indicates that he would vote yes only if this condition is ensured. During the interview, another participant, K12 who is a businessman gives an account of the past tragic events and also his own experiences saying that the security issue is the most difficult problem to solve. He sums up his views on this matter with the following words:

*"We cannot feel secure without the guarantorship of Turkey. But the Greek side states that they don't want this guarantorship referring to the 1974 intervention. In case of reaching an agreement on the other issues, I believe that Britain, Turkey and Greece will come up with a new formula for the security of the island. I think it is inconvenient that the Greeks appoint NATO as the guarantor of the island. Because there is the chain of command in the military and in a possible conflict, a general of a troop of NATO who is not Turkish can delay the intervention of Turkey here."*

Another participant who places emphasis on security is the retired Ambassador K14. He puts emphasis on the importance of this matter for the Greek side, and says that both sides are in fear of engulfment. However, he adds that it should not be forgotten that the Greeks were the ones who disturbed the balance in the past. During the conversation the participant spoke also about Cyprus's geopolitical importance and asked, "would Turkey give up the right and status that the Guarantee Agreement provides in face of the developments in the Eastern Mediterranean?"

K14 continues his words about the security issue as following:

*“Our security is essential, and I think this includes the economic and social balances. This topic goes beyond Cyprus. I question whether Turkey’s silence about this issue is related to diplomatic flexibility. But it sure creates concerns among Turkish Cypriots. Also, it should be specified clearly that Turkey’s intervention in the island occurred after 11 years, and that Turkey’s guarantee should not trouble the other side as long as they do not have a bad intention.”*

K17 who owns a factory in Güzelyurt (Morphou) indicates that the existence of Turkish troops on the island is very important and inarguable matter. Moreover, he adds that the insistence of the Greeks and Turkey about the security issue will make the settlement hard to achieve. K11 who is the chief editor of a newspaper in Nicosia, says that the security issue can be solved by the guarantor countries Turkey, Greece and Britain. He also adds that both sides have extreme ends, but these don’t voice the majority of the people.

There were also more moderate voices regarding the security issue. However, as we indicated above, this matter was brought as a concern by almost everyone, despite the differences in tone. For instance, the left-oriented newspaper employee K02, who indicates that he is uncertain about Turkey’s guarantee; adding that while the Greeks see Turkey’s guarantee as their death, the Turks will not feel safe without such an agreement. However, at the same time, he questions the logic of a EU member state (Cyprus) being guaranteed by a non-member state (Turkey). While expressing that such a situation would create different political consequences, he thinks that no security problem would occur after a settlement.

On the other hand, for K03 who owns a real estate agency, the guarantee issue is not more of an issue. He hopes that the order would change and the domestic problems would decrease after reaching an agreement. Likewise, K21- a civil society activist indicates that there is no concrete security concern for the youth and that it is limited to few incidents by nationalists they face when they cross to the South.

## 2. Property, Land and Population Exchange

Another topic that created concerns among Turkish Cypriots and was accentuated widely by the participants during the interviews, is the property issue together with other related issues. The property issue is one of the most complicated issues of the resolution process, with both its economic security and social dimensions. According to our observations, the property issue is very important to the extent that it could affect Turkish Cypriots' approach to the settlement plan, and in this context, Turkish Cypriots will stay distant to a solution unless their future is guaranteed.

Turkish Cypriots are aware that some land concessions and population relocations in the agreement are inevitable to a certain degree. However, they want a solution that would not create any injustices, and would secure the social and economic fiber they established throughout the years.

Although topics such as population and land exchange are different from individual property rights and are related to the structure of the federal state to be established; they are also crucial for Turkish Cypriots at the individual level. Beyond the possibility of loss of land, property, jobs, or social fabric that could occur by the exchanges between the two founder states, the uncertainty regarding these issues is what concerns Turkish Cypriots the most. For this reason, they hope for an agreement that would secure their future, and will not create new injustices.

A participant who works for a local newspaper in TRNC, K02, explains his thoughts about this issue as follows:

*"In my opinion, the property issue is the most important problem preventing any solution. After Turkey's intervention in 1974, the Greek properties in the North that were seized by Turks, were assigned to other people. In order to solve this problem, I believe that we should come up with creative solutions and the agreement should take into guarantee that none of the parts will damage the agreement. Relocation is inevitable. I think it is very important if the condition of the relocation will be determined beforehand for the people who are going to be relocated. The people will be eager to vote yes if a sense of belonging to a place is secured for their children and future generations. Some parts of the Turkish Cypriots are already aware that they will have to relocate."*

K03 who is a realtor also believes that the most challenging question to be solved is the property issue. The unpredictability on the future of the Greek properties in TRNC caused the values of Turkish properties to increase which eventually led to an instability

in the real estate sector. In case there is a solution to the problem, the compensation should be paid by the state in the name of the Turkish side and the people should help the government with paying the compensation, he says, “the exchange of place and population will occur in the future, but if this exchange doesn’t occur, the agreement will still be implemented.” He adds that Turkish Cypriots have accepted the relocation and gives an example: A person who dies in Morphou is buried in Nicosia instead of Morphou.

K05 who is a taxi driver adds his voice to the property issue as the biggest problem. The participant presumes that in case of a referendum, the yes vote would be up to 40% in the Turkish side. He also says that in 2004, the Turkish side was in a condition to say yes to every kind of agreement, however they do not perceive things the same presently. Because they acknowledge that if an agreement is achieved, they will lose their properties.

Another participant emphasizes that the negotiations are not going well for him. K07, a manager in an institution says that he is sure that in spite of the positive attitudes, the two parties will be in conflict with each other when it comes to the property issue. He adds that there are so many rumors regarding the solution of the property issue and this situation creates confusion for the Cypriots. In order to convince the Cypriots to say yes in the referendum, this confusion should be cleared first. He says he approaches the relocation in a positive manner but adds that the people should be free in choosing wherever they will be relocated.

A business owner in Nicosia, K08, also thinks that the property issue is very important and he explains that he said yes to the Annan Plan in the referendum because he wanted this problem to be resolved. He expresses his despair with these words “The properties that the Greeks are requiring are the most habitable places and for this reason, I don’t think it will be easy to reach an agreement on this issue”.

K15, who is a director of an association in Nicosia agrees that the property and the territory issues are the most important topics and these would have a major effect on people to say yes in a future referendum. Touching on the Annan Plan, he says that there isn’t the same positive attitude of 2003 on the Turkish side and adds that the people want to protect their remaining properties.

A former Prime Minister of TRNC who is still active in politics, K10, mentions the approach of the Greeks to the solution of the property:

*“On the issue of property, I regard the Greeks’ unwillingness to leave the three main topics regarding the property issue, bartering, returning and recompensing to the initiative of the property owner as the justification for their refusal. I think it is a good development that the Greeks accepted the joint commission after the European Court of Justice’s decision that*

*said the current utilizer has rights as much as the property owner on the mentioned properties.”*

An investor and a businessman K12, says he is not against a return of the Turkish territories to the Greeks accordingly with a possible agreement. However, he highlights the important economic benefits that the resolution would bring:

*“.. In this way, the Turkish side that is not recognized by the international community will be able to develop. The energy resources found by the Greeks can be only sold to Europe via Turkey. Using the 1500km stretch between Israel and Greece would be extremely difficult and expensive. Therefore, it would be advantageous to sign the peace agreement with the Turkish side.”*

K13, who is the head of an association, adds that the property issue concerns the judiciary also and this problem can be solved with the help of international law. Per this reason, the process can take a lot of time. K13 says “the property issue will be solved with bartering, returning and recompensing alternatives with a property commission being established to accept the applications.” This commission will consist of independent members and according to him, most of the problems can be solved with the compensation alternative.

K13 expresses his views on the compensation options and relocations with these words:

*“I think funds will be allocated for the compensations and this fund can be procured by the grants of the countries who source this fund or by investments from other countries. Besides this funding can be provided also by the economic gains fueled by the unification of the island. It is ambiguous who will be relocated and this situation causes speculations. The people panic because of this and to eliminate this panic, the conditions for the territory arrangements should be shared with the people.”*

K17, who is a businessman in Morphou, a city that was subjected to territory and population exchange in the Annan Plan, says that in terms of negotiations, the most important issue is the property. In comparison to the Annan Plan, he believes that there would be no vote for giving the territories in the referendum if held today. The reason being that the Turkish Cypriots understood that, what was promised to them in 2004 wasn't reflecting in reality. He says that the negotiation process should be reflected to the people, so they can give a conscious assessment vote aiding the problem to be solved much more easily.

K17 says on the relocation that if there is going to be a territory exchange, this should be voted on only by those who will be affected. The participant expresses his worries on the

population exchange and says that he doesn't want to go through the same difficulties again as he did in the previous population exchange. He emphasizes that the Cypriots who think they were deceived will definitely vote "no" in a possible referendum.

In Morphou, K18, one of the teachers that we talked to stated that when it is time to discuss the property issue during the negotiations, there would be a standstill. The reasons behind this are; the people who migrated from Turkey and owned properties in Cyprus are selling these properties back to Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, himself inclusive. He owns properties situated on the Greek territory and as such worries because of the ambiguity as to who the compensation will be paid to in a possible resolution.

### 3. European Union And The Harmonization Process

An equally significant topic that came up during our meetings is the European Union. The aftermath of the 2004 referendum saw the European Union accepting Cyprus into its membership; however, this alienated most Turkish Cypriots irrespective of the fact that they voted in the affirmative in the referendum. Pursuant to this, Cyprus dispute became part of the EU as well.

Issues regarding the European Union can be classified into three. The leading is that of guarantees. Some participants expressed their opinions on several issues including security and guarantee by Turkey whilst others questioned whether the new state of Cyprus, which is set to be incorporated into the EU, will enjoy being guaranteed by the non-EU member Turkey should there be a resolution. An equally non-negotiable issue to some related to the differences between the two sides of Cyprus as EU policies and *acquis* had already been applied in the South since 2004. The third issue concerned the EU's role in the resolution process on the island alongside meeting the financial needs post-resolution.

On the issue of guarantee, a speaker, K02, a journalist in a local newspaper opined that it might create different political results if a EU member state is guaranteed by a non-EU member state, Turkey or any other power. Additionally, K08, a business owner stated that, the idea of the EU was attractive to people in the past, but currently numerous countries inside the EU are struggling with bankruptcy. He further lamented the lack of fairness in the fact that Turkish Cypriots had not been taken into the Union even though they voted 'yes' in the referendum. The speaker expressed his opinion on the EU membership beneath:

*“The TRNC is not ready to be a member of the Union and in case of membership it is obvious that well educated politicians are needed to prevent it from collapsing. Unfortunately there is a TRNC which remains behind in many fields such as jurisdiction, health, management, security, economy and diplomacy. Rooted reforms are needed. To regain the confidence of the government, qualified people with clean pasts should be involved in the government.”*

K14 who is a retired ambassador says that the TRNC hasn't gone through a preparation period regarding the EU membership and expresses his worries by emphasizing that they are under a very serious isolation.

K13 who is a director of an association, and also a specialist on economy and international trade, emphasizes the economical differences between two sides of the island with these words:

*“It is a fact that in both communities, there are serious economical problems. In the Turkish side, the constant economical problems can be overcome if the island unites in the form of a federation. The north of the island also hasn’t gone through the harmonization process with the EU. I think in case of a possible unification of the island, this side should be harmonized and only in this way, can it compete with Southern Cyprus. I believe at least 3 years are needed for the harmonization process. I also think the Turkish Cypriots will gain political equality with the resolution and they will achieve bizonality while the people will be integrated into the international community and the European Union. In this way, embargo on Northern Cyprus will be lifted and there will be a big jump in the service sector. Especially, the natural gas situated around Cyprus can be delivered to Europe via Turkey. It can benefit both sides only if this agreement is achieved.”*

When we talk about the EU’s role in the process regarding the island, K02 who works for a newspaper, states that Turkish Cypriots don’t trust the EU as much as they used to do in 2004. Recently, the EU has been giving its attention to immigration issues. Currently, there’s not an ongoing project on the resolution for the island’s situation. K21, a civil society activist, has a similar view on the EU. The speaker says Cyprus’ accession to the EU membership is not beneficial for himself and adds that the European Union which was once seen as a beautiful phenomenon through the Annan Plan years, now is struggling with refugee crises, economical crises and increasing racism. These are the only things the people see today.

K03, a young realtor, expresses his expectation from the EU with these words: “I want the EU to be involved more in the process of a possible resolution, it should help find the compensation money needed to be paid.”

A business manager K07 summarizes his opinion with these words:

*“Without Turkey’s accession to the EU membership, the Cyprus dispute cannot be solved. Besides there’re problems inside the European Union and this is why I do not trust the EU. To eliminate this distrust, the EU should take constructive steps. For example; I think it would be a good start to lift the embargo on the TRNC’s sports teams. Those of the EU’s should render the TRNC’s laws necessary. I believe this is the only way through which they can stake claim for the Union’s economical assistance in a possible resolution.”*

K10 who had been the Prime Minister of the TRNC, says the EU cannot have a role in the process and adds that it should only help on the issues such as a common security policy. The editor in chief of a local newspaper K11 says the EU doesn't have the capability to act on the legal level in the island. And he also says that he sees the Southern Cyprus's accession to the EU membership as a mistake because it has deepened the conflict. According to him, the real actors who can contribute to the resolution of the problem are the United Nations and NATO.

## 4. The Bizonality And The Bicommunality

Another topic that arose during our interviews is the social rights of the Turkish Cypriots and their strong will to maintain their presence as a community. In this context; topics, which should be highlighted, are the conservation of the bizonality and bicommunality, equal rights for both the Greek and Turkish Cypriots respectively alongside a rotating presidency.

K01 who is an advisor of a rightist political party says that the bizonal and bicommunal structure of the island should be protected while explaining his expectation regarding the resolution of the Cyprus dispute. In this context, there should be an obvious majority in terms of property and population in the Northern part. He continues with these words: "I am not saying there should not be any Greeks on this side, but there should be a notable majority on this side. In numerical terms this should be 2 to 3 majority or 60-65 %. But the Greeks want to disrupt this situation."

K07 who is a director in a company, emphasizes that the Turkish Cypriots should have equal status as the Greek Cypriots because of the TRNC's constituent state status and adds that he finds the rotating presidency system positive. Similarly, K09, one of the senior executives in a political party, defends that both communities should have the same status as the constituent states in the federation, but he also says that the Greek side is not ready for this thought yet.

K12, a businessman and an investor, expresses his views on the social rights in this way:

*"What is important for the Turkish Cypriots is to protect their social rights, not their individual rights. As the Greek side gained superiority after joining the European Union, they said no in the referendum. But in the following years they have realized the situation is not that simple and straightforward. During the negotiations, Turkish Cypriots gained some rights. But, this cannot be easily told to the Greeks by the extremist nationalists in the south. The general elections are going to be held soon in the Southern Cyprus, so the leaders will make a statement on this after the elections even though they have finalized the agreement."*

K14, a retired ambassador, also addresses this issue by touching upon the common accord signed and announced by the two leaders on 11 February 2014:

*"The common accord signed on 11 February 2014 which I have been actively involved in its formation, though is not fully comprehensive, constitutes a base for the negotiations. Inside the accord, there are*

*articles including the issues of bizonality, bicomunal federation, single sovereignty and single international identity against the outside world as well as the concepts to form a new republic. The issues like guarantee and security are not included in the accord, it is important to note that the territory and mapping issues should be the last ones to discuss.”*

The Ambassador indicates that one of the topics which was not agreed upon by the two sides is the rotating presidency. He says that the Greek side is not comfortable with the idea that in the United Cyprus, a Turkish can be the president as well. He declares his views on this issue regarding the Greeks this way: “...either they haven’t really been comfortable with the political equality or they are aiming to achieve a big compromise in return of it.” Besides, while talking about the bizonality, he adds that the Greek side doesn’t accept the fact that the Turkish Cypriots have the majority of property and population in the north as they see themselves as the political majority.

Another participant that we talked with in Morphou says that it is important that both sides are equal regarding the bizonality issue and politics. Also he indicates that Anastasiadis’ speech on Turkish language’s recognition in the European Union as an official language is a sign of good faith.

## 5. From Annan Plan To Today: Views On The Negotiations

We directed some questions to understand participants' views on the negotiation process today and to compare it with the Annan Plan process, which was approved by the majority of Turkish Cypriots through a referendum, held in 2004. When asked about the failed Annan Plan, most of the participants reiterated the positive atmosphere at the time of its inception and their hopes for a possible resolution.

People who have a different stance to the Plan say that even though the Plan was incomplete, they approved of it during the referendum because they didn't want to continue living under the embargo and isolation alongside being disconnected from the international community. Additionally a participant mentioned that, EU membership was an element that attracted The Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots were not added to the European Union despite the fact that The Turkish Cypriots accepted the Annan Plan in the referendum. As the EU hasn't fulfilled its promises, it partly lost its attractiveness.

But when asked today's negotiation process, the speakers complain that the negotiations are not transparent enough. Even though Akinci and Anastasiadis are content for creating a positive atmosphere, they are wondering at which stage the negotiations are and how to solve important problems like property issues as these concern their future too. According to the speakers, not communicating the negotiations to the public fully creates uncertainty and causes the society to have question marks in their minds for a secure future.

According to K01, who is a middle aged rightist, the Annan Plan Process was designed beforehand to result in 'yes' vote from the Turkish side and 'no' vote from the Greek side in the referendum. He indicates that this plan was devised to make Cyprus a EU member as a whole and continues like this: "While the Greek Cypriots are asked if they approve the entrance of United Cyprus in the EU in this process, the Turkish Cypriots are asked if they approve both the idea of a united Cyprus and this United Cyprus' entrance to the EU."

K04, who is a director of an association, indicates that the Greek side seems to be looking for a solution on the table but in reality they continue to make agreements with other countries in the ongoing process. K07 who is a rightist and who has negative views on the continuing negotiations says that in spite of the good will of the parties, they can still be in conflict with each other on the property topic and adds: "The negotiations are reflected to the public positively but that was the same atmosphere during President Talat's period. I believe that in order to eliminate the confusion in people's minds, the negotiations should be conducted more transparent and explicit."

K02 who has a more positive view on the Annan Plan and who has been actively involved

in the negotiations says that the failure of the plan caused the people to withdraw into themselves. The participant who had been involved in the activities regarding the Annan Plan during the period, says because the Annan Plan was offering the Turkish Cypriots better life standards, the international law and a better education system, it was embraced by the society as well.

He is adamant about the ongoing negotiations; the process is carried out by the moderate leaders and he believes that both sides have positive feelings. Compared to the Annan Plan period, the Greek side is more moderate in the ongoing negotiations. He adds that the people have lost the enthusiasm of 2004.

A young realtor K03 who has similar opinions on the negotiation process summarizes his thoughts with these words:

*“I have observed that the resolution is very close in the current negotiations. I think the Turkish side would say yes once again in a referendum and I believe what is missing in the process is that both of the leaders are not giving enough information to the public in respect of the negotiations.”*

K09 who is a secretary-general of a political party in the TRNC points out that the biggest missing part in the Annan Plan was the lack of an adequate level of dialogue between the opinion leaders and the politicians from both sides. He adds that at that time, the Northern part didn't fully understand the precisions of the demands of the Southern part. According to him, the reasons which have led the Plan to fail were the big media campaign which was initiated by Papadopoulos to make sure that it comes out a 'no' from the referendum and the uncertain future for the people who were going to lose their properties. About today's ongoing process, he says that the negotiations are proceeded very slowly and adds that they haven't gone further than those in Talat - Christofias period. But he also says that it is an advantage that the criteria for the property issue is already designated and it is a chance that the negotiations are conducted between two leaders who said yes to the Annan Plan.

An editor in chief in a newspaper, K11, delivers his opinions on the negotiations with these words:

*“During the negotiations there was a favorable atmosphere derived from the leaders, however, it was not the same positive atmosphere as it was in the Annan Plan period. I believe the reason for this is the Turkish Cypriots' fear of losing their homes. I think the negotiations are in a bad stage right now and when the time comes to discuss the rotating presidency and the property issue, the talks will be interrupted.”*

The Ambassador K14 who was in office during the Annan Plan period and now retired, compares that period and today in a different perspective:

*“I was one of those who were opposed to the Annan Plan. It was because of the possibility of a new conflict that will be caused by the agreement in the future again. The Plan was based on ambiguity, however I think it had favorable parts like the property issue. The Russian influence had a major role in the rejection of the Annan Plan. In the beginning AKEL and Christofias said they were going to say yes to the plan but later, probably on the suggestion of Russia, they didn’t accept the plan. Maybe it was going to be rejected anyway but the percentage of the no vote wouldn’t be up to 76%.”*

A textile shop owner in Morphou, K19, indicates that there is not a concrete result out of the negotiations and there is still an uncertainty. He says that he has confidence in Mustafa Akinci. He believes that Mustafa Akinci wouldn’t take a wrong decision. While expressing his thoughts on the leaders, the speaker says, “When compared to other presidents, Mustafa Akinci can be empathetic with the Greek side whilst at the same time the Greek leader understands the Turkish side. K19 thinks that the leaders should continue the negotiations, understand each other’s positions, and have an egalitarian attitude. Yet, the leaders are not alone in this process, and they remain under the influence of the external powers, he adds. He states that if there were only the Turkish and the Greeks on the table, the problem would have been solved.

K20, a civil society activist from Morphou, says that in 1975, Turkey came to the island and established the republic of Cyprus, but at that time there was already a written constitution and a community council in the island. In spite of these, a new constitution was prepared and this was perceived by the world as the formation of a new state. He states that in 2004, the Turkish were deceived. The Turkish wants to adapt them into the international system, as such should there be a resolution, everybody should get used to the common areas of work.

He further indicates that when compared to the South, the Turkish Cypriot community is more laic. For him, both of the communities have marginalized each other. He sees the 2004 period as beautiful political activism on a social level and he adds that he is happy that they went through that period.

Another civil society volunteer K21 touches upon another issue regarding the negotiations. He says the negotiations have never been this intense since the Annan Plan. He states that there is optimism, but it is still not possible to say that there will be an ultimate resolution. He maintains that the younger ones have never been included in

the negotiation process. This also happened in the case of the Annan Plan. He says he used to be very hopeful for the negotiations conducted in 2008 in that period and adds that they are trying to find financing for the ongoing negotiations. Young people are not taken into account a lot; there are only some joint events of few political organizations and youth branches. He believes that if there were many people from different parts of the community contributing to the negotiations, it would be more beneficial. He says that both communities speak different languages and both of the languages should be compulsorily taught at schools.

An artisan from Morphou, K22, says that his Greek friends who voted no in the Annan Plan period did so with the instructions given by political parties of the Greek side and it was a disappointment for him. The speaker says in a possible referendum he would say yes once again and adds that non-reconciliation will bring a higher cost. The speaker shares that he has a son studying in Europe. However he doesn't want to return to Cyprus because of the low life standards. K22 says he would say yes in the referendum though he believes that the yes votes won't be as high as before in Morphou.

## **A Possible Alternative**

After the interviews we conducted, it is understood that up to some extent, the Turkish Cypriots are ready to make some sacrifices regarding the solution of the property issue. However in return of these sacrifices, they think the state or the sponsors of the resolution should provide them with financial resources. According to many of them, the most challenging issue, which could block the resolution path, is the difficulty of the reconstruction of property.

Unlike 2004, the EU membership seems to have lost its attractiveness to a large extent in the eyes of the Turkish Cypriots. Almost none of the participants that we interviewed think that the EU membership is a compensation for the problems they will encounter including the property issue. Obviously, the reaction of the other EU member states to the economic crisis that Greece and the Greek Cypriots have been facing has shaken their confidence to the European Union. Besides it is observed that the belief that the Turkish Cypriots are not ready to be a member of the EU has consolidated the notion that the EU's possible added value won't compensate the Turkish Cypriots' loss on property rights.

Turkey's EU membership is also another topic that has often been articulated. The uncertain situation of Turkey's membership also shakes the trust of people to the EU. As shown up in our interviews, the Turkish Cypriots who have been living under the shadow of the past, care about their social rights as much as they care for their individual rights and this underlines the fact that the bizonality should not be lengthened. In this context, as it was mentioned in the first section of the report, they don't want to give up their active security warranties which they believe Turkey will provide them. Accordingly, both the leaders who are conducting the negotiations and those who take action in the name of the international community should take into account the expectations of the Turkish Cypriots who will say yes to the plan that will be offered to them.

## **Participant Profiles**

- The participant K01: Media Advisor of a political party, Nicosia.
- The participant K02: Journalist, former member of the negotiation team, Nicosia.
- The participant K03: Independent realtor, Nicosia.
- The participant K04: Director of an association, Nicosia.
- The participant K05: Taxi driver, Nicosia.
- The participant K06: Business manager, Nicosia.
- The participant K07: Director of a company in public-private partnership, Nicosia.
- The participant K08: Business manager, Nicosia.
- The participant K09: Senior member of a political party in the TRNC, Nicosia.
- The participant K10: Former Prime Minister, Politician, Nicosia.
- The participant K11: Editor in Chief of a local newspaper, Nicosia.
- The participant K12: Businessman/woman, Investor, Nicosia.
- The participant K13: Director of an association, Nicosia.
- The participant K14: Retired Ambassador, Nicosia.
- The participant K15: Manager of an NGO, Nicosia.
- The participant K16: Civil society activist, Morphou.
- The participant K17: Factory owner, Morphou.
- The participant K18 : An interview with a group of teachers in Morphou.
- The participant K19: Textile shop owner, Morphou.
- The participant K20: Civil society activist, Morphou.
- The participant K21: Civil society activist, Morphou.
- The participant K22: Artisan, Morphou.
- The participant K23: Civil society activist, Morphou.

## Cyprus Dispute: Chronology

- 1959** In February 1959, Zurich-London Agreements were signed between Turkey and Greece.
- 1960** On 16 August 1960, Cyprus became a republic with a Constitution interlinked with three Treaties: the Treaties of Establishment, Guarantee and Alliance.
- 1963** Makarios proposed constitutional changes, which would abrogate power-sharing arrangements. Inter-communal violence erupted.
- 1964** United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was set up.
- 1974** On 15th of July, the military regime in Greece has organized a coup d'état in Cyprus in Turkey intervened on 20th of July, under the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee.
- 1975** In August 1975, Turkish Cypriots established their independent administration with Rauf Denktas as president.
- 1975** Denktas and Clerides agreed with the Vienna Talks to a population exchange with the assistance of UNFICYP.
- 1983** In May, the Greek and the Greek Cypriots brought the issue to the UN General Assembly.
- 1983** On 15<sup>th</sup> of November, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was announced with a declaration read by Rauf Denktas. The new state was recognized only by the Turkish Republic.
- 1985** The constitution of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was approved by a in a referendum on 5 May 1985.
- 1997** UN mediated peace talks held in two rounds in July and August failed. The European Union announced the commencement of the EU membership negotiation with the Greek Cypriots.
- 1998** The negotiations started between Cyprus and the EU were launched in March.
- 2002** Copenhagen summit of 12-13 December 2002 invited Cyprus to join the EU along with nine other countries.
- 2004** On 24<sup>th</sup> of April, double referenda were held to accept the Annan Plan for the reunification. The Plan was accepted by the Turkish Cypriots with a majority of 64,9% while the Greek Cypriots rejected it with 75,5 %. The EU agreed to take steps to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community
- 2004** Cyprus has become one of the 10 states that joined the EU Customs Union, but as a divided island.

- 2006** The Property Commission was established in the Northern part as a local remedy to the ongoing Property problem on the island.
- 2006** With the support of the United Nations, in July it was agreed that Tasos Papadopoulos and Mehmet Ali Talat reconvened the negotiations.
- 2006** Turkey refused to open its airports and harbors to the planes and ships that carry Greek Cypriots' flag. The negotiations stopped,
- 2008** The leaders met to discuss the progression of the negotiations on 23rd of May. Christofias and Talat made an announcement of the goal of a federal state which has a unified international identity.
- 2013** On 28<sup>th</sup> of February, Nikos Anastasiadis was elected as the new President of Cyprus.
- 2014** The negotiations started between Nikos Anastasiades and Dervis Eroğlu and on 11 February, the leaders published a 2 paged joint declaration which consists of 7 articles.
- 2015** Mustafa Akinci was elected as the new President of TRNC in April 2015.
- 2015-2016** The Cyprus negotiations gained momentum under the leadership of Akinci and Anastasiades.





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