



• The Strasbourg judges rule... The European Court of Human Rights delivers its verdict against Turkey.

Turkey condemned in historic ruling

The Cyprus Government described as "historic" a ruling on 10 May by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) finding Turkey guilty of gross human rights violations in the occupied area of Cyprus. The judgement was given in response to the Cyprus Government's fourth inter-state suit against Turkey, lodged in 1994, claiming that the post-1974 Turkish occupation had resulted in multiple violations of the European Convention of Human Rights.

Attorney General Alecos Markides, who was present in Strasbourg for the judgement, said that it was Cyprus' biggest legal victory against Turkey since the 1974 invasion and the most serious case tried by the ECHR since the creation of the Council of Europe in 1950. Mr Markides noted that the Court had postponed the question of "just satisfaction" to a later date, but stressed that the obligations of Turkey under the ruling began immediately and that a refusal to comply would bring Turkey into further conflict with the Council of Europe.

In a closely reasoned 126-page judgement, the ECHR confirmed that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is the sole legitimate Government of Cyprus, that the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" is illegal under international law and that Turkey has "effective overall control over northern Cyprus". It went on to find Turkey guilty of 14 separate gross infringements of the Convention, notably:

- violation of the property rights in the occupied area of Greek Cypriots residing in the Government-controlled area, thus confirming the 1997 ECHR ruling in the Titina Loizidou case;
- violation of the right of Greek Cypriot

refugees to return to their homes;

- violation of the right to life and right to personal freedom of the Greek Cypriots missing since the 1974 conflict, because Turkey has consistently refused to conduct an effective inquiry into their fate;
- inhumane treatment of the relatives of the Greek Cypriot missing persons;
- violation of the human rights of Greek Cypriots and Maronites still resident in the occupied area.

Turkey's predictable reaction was to dismiss the ruling as "wrong", while Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denkash yet again defied logic by claiming that it gave him a good reason not to participate in further UN peace talks. Nevertheless, Cyprus Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou on 14 May urged the Turkish side to reconsider its stance, pointing out that the ruling "offers the island's two communities the chance to deal with the Cyprus problem on the basis of international law and order and the rule of law".

Mr Papapetrou added that Turkey had to understand that it could not hope to pursue its European aspirations if it continued to ignore ECHR rulings, and that "sooner or later the noose around Turkey will tighten".

- The Cyprus Government on 23 May announced that it would comply fully with an ECHR ruling that it had violated the human rights of nine Turkish Cypriots who had been ill-treated by the police and expelled. Confirming that compensation and costs of some C£45,000 would be paid to each of the nine, as ordered by the Court, Mr Markides pointed out that the case concerned an isolated incident and bore no relation to the ECHR ruling against Turkey. □

Bombing reflects crisis in occupied area

Tensions in the Turkish-occupied area of Cyprus were highlighted by a bomb attack on the opposition newspaper *Avrupa* on 24 May, as the "government" collapsed amidst political machinations apparently aimed at installing one more favourable to the intransigent line of Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denkash.

The bombing of *Avrupa* ("Europe") came after persistent persecution of the newspaper and its editor by the "authorities", because of its outspoken opposition to the Turkish military presence and the division of the island and its people. The attack was attributed by the Turkish Cypriot opposition to a shadowy new terrorist movement linked to the regime.

The collapse of the "government" followed a decision by the National Unity Party (UBP) of "prime minister" Dervis Eroglu to end its coalition with the pro-EU Communal Liberation Party (TKP) and to enter into coalition talks with the Democratic Party (DP) headed by Serdar Denkash, the son of the Turkish Cypriot leader.

Cyprus Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou commented on 25 May that events in the occupied area showed that Mr Denkash was engaged in "internal cleansing" and urged the international community "to protect the political forces which will most probably bear the consequences". □

Joint front agreed in Athens talks

A joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of a state visit to Greece by President Glafcos Clerides on 2-4 May reconfirmed "the mutual willingness of Greece and Cyprus to support the UN Secretary General's efforts aiming at finding an overall, just and permanent solution based on Security Council decisions for the creation of a bizonal, bicomunal federation".

The visit took place as the Cyprus peace process remained in limbo and attention focused on Turkey's increasingly threatening response to the progress of Cyprus towards accession to the European Union (EU). It was later confirmed that the two sides had discussed the possibility of a Turkish-provoked conflict in Cyprus or the Aegean on the eve of accession.

Received by President Stephanopoulos, Mr Clerides had talks with Prime Minister Costas Simitis and other Greek leaders, as well as receiving the Gold Key of the city of Athens. The Greek side stressed its determination to ensure Cyprus' accession to the EU, making it clear that Greece would veto any enlargement which did not include Cyprus. Mr Simitis also reaffirmed that a Cyprus settlement remained Greece's first national priority, which would not be diluted by Greek moves to improve relations with Turkey.

Cyprus Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou confirmed on 25 May that the Athens talks had covered the possibility of a Turkish-provoked conflict in the region, following the leaking of Greek Foreign Ministry document referring to this scenario. Mr Papapetrou said that "the Government takes the threats into account, studies them and prepares for any possibility, but does not exaggerate and thus play Turkey's game". □

Three more steps in EU harmonization

Three more chapters in Cyprus' European Union (EU) accession negotiations, covering energy policy, transport and provision of services were provisionally closed on 17 May, two days after the 19th session of the Cyprus-European Union (EU) Association Council held in Brussels under the co-chairmanship of Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides.

Chief EU Negotiator George Vassiliou, reported that valuable five-year transition periods had been agreed for harmonization with the EU's *acquis communautaire* covering compulsory reserve stocks of oil and the co-operative banking sector. Currently maintaining 45 days of oil stocks, Cyprus would build up to stocks for 60 days' consumption by 2003 and to the EU's 90-day requirement within five years of accession. Co-operative credit societies would also have a five-year grace period in which to apply EU rules, thus enabling them to secure their social and economic role before being exposed to full EU competition.

The three settlements meant that 21 of the 29 negotiating chapters had been closed. Mr Vassiliou said that closure on environmental policy and free movement of people was expected in the near future and that his target was to complete negotiations on most of the remaining six by the end of 2001. The anticipated exceptions, he added, were budget issues and environmental policy, and possibly agriculture, which France wanted to postpone until after its elections in the first half of 2002. □