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Reconciling the longest lasting occupation in Modern European History : Cyprus

Adopted at the Council meeting in Stockholm 29 November 2025

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Preamble

For fifty one years, the Republic of Cyprus, a full member of the European Union even though it does not de facto control all the areas of the island, has lived under illegal foreign military occupation. Since the 1974 illegal invasion, 37 percent of its sovereign territory has remained under the control of Turkish forces, in direct violation of the UN Charter, the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, which prohibits partition and permits only actions strictly aimed at restoring the constitutional order, and the fundamental principles of international law and European integration.[1–3]

The so-called “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (TRNC), declared unilaterally in 1983, remains *null and void* under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).[4] [5] Its existence constitutes an affront to international legality and a permanent scar on the European conscience. The occupation caused more than 200.000 of internally displaced people and refugees out of a total population of 540.000 people at the time, severe restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, and the systematic destruction of the island’s cultural and religious heritage.[6] [7]

YEPP stands firmly with the Republic of Cyprus, its sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and unity, and reaffirms that no EU member state can remain partially occupied

without undermining the credibility of the Union itself. A just and lasting peace can only be achieved through the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the abolition of the outdated guarantee and intervention rights, and a viable and sustainable federal, bi-zonal, bi-communal settlement with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship, consistent with UN parameters and EU law.[8] [9]

Across the island, Cypriot youth are building trust and reconciliation through civic engagement, environmental cooperation, European exchange programmes, and more recently the inauguration of the Technical Committee on Youth. Their determination demonstrates that the future of Cyprus belongs to its young people — united, European, and free.[10] [11]

Recognising that

- The 1974 Turkish military invasion and subsequent illegal occupation constitute a continuing violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and the prohibition on the use of force under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.[1] [2]
- The unilateral declaration of independence of 1983 and all secessionist acts in the occupied area have been condemned by the UN Security Council as legally invalid, reaffirming that the Republic of Cyprus remains the sole legitimate government of the island.[2]
- The European Court of Human Rights, in judgments such as *Loizidou v. Turkey* (1996) and *Cyprus v. Turkey* (2001), found Türkiye responsible for systematic human-rights violations including property confiscation, displacement, and restrictions on freedom of movement and religion.[13] [14]
- Mass demographic alteration through the transfer of illegal settlers from Anatolia to the occupied area violates the Fourth Geneva Convention and undermines prospects for reunification.[6] [7]
- Protocol No. 10 to the 2003 Act of Accession suspended EU law in areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus, pending reunification, which is a legal arrangement that affirms non-recognition of the occupation and prepares for the full application of the acquis once a settlement is achieved.[15]
- The occupation is the principal obstacle to Türkiye's EU accession. Ankara's non-recognition of an EU member state and failure to implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement continue to block accession chapters and erode trust between Türkiye and the Union, and remain unsolvable without full compliance from the offending country.[16] [17]
- The EU and UN frameworks remain aligned in supporting a bi-zonal, bi-communal federative solution that preserves the unity of the state and the rights of both communities within a single sovereignty, citizenship, and international personality.[8] [9]
- Youth organisations, civil society, and educational initiatives on both sides of the Green Line, that are, among others, supported by the EU's *Erasmus+*, *CERV*, and bilateral

programmes, have shown that cross-community engagement can build durable peace and European identity among young Cypriots.[10] [11]

Acknowledging that

- The continuing presence of approximately 40,000, which has increased to over 100,000 in 2025, Turkish troops, with plans by the Turkish regime to significantly increase the occupation troops on the island, represents the only case of military occupation of EU member state's territory by a third country.[12] [15]
- Human-rights violations in the occupied area, including property expropriation, restrictions on education and religious practice, and the denial of political participation, persist despite international condemnation.[13] [14]
- The situation in Cyprus mirrors, in legal and moral terms, the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, as both involve the military invasion and subsequent illegal occupation of sovereign European territory, the displacement of civilians, and the denial of international law and human dignity. Just as the EU rightly stands united against Russia's aggression in Ukraine, we must not permit double standards or selective silence when it comes to Cyprus. Our collective security must be built on unity, consistency, solidarity and adherence to our shared principles, not on ambiguity or tolerance of violations.[20] [21]
- Reunification would yield tangible benefits for both communities, enabling the full application of the single market, Schengen integration, and shared access to natural and energy resources.[17] [18]
- The Republic of Cyprus continues to demonstrate commitment to peace, supporting UN-led negotiations, implementing confidence-building measures, and maintaining an open stance toward genuine dialogue with the Turkish-Cypriot leadership.[9] [10]
- Youth and student organisations in Cyprus play an essential role in promoting European citizenship, intercultural understanding, and non-violence, thus strengthening the island's social fabric for the generations ahead.[10] [11]
- YEPP has been calling and actively advocating for the resolution of the existing occupation of Cyprus, with several campaigns and resolutions being launched, among those being resolutions of 2002, 2011, 2013, and 2014.

YEPP Condemns

- The illegal occupation and partition of the Republic of Cyprus, and all attempts to legitimise or perpetuate the division through "two-state" rhetoric.[4] [5]
- Any actions by Turkey and the occupation regime to promote the so-called "TRNC" as an independent state that should be legally recognised by member-states of the UN

and international/european institutions, promoting false claims of isolation of Turkish Cypriots.

- The ongoing violation of international law and UN resolutions, including the presence of foreign troops and the colonisation of occupied territories.[12]
- The systematic destruction and illegal sale of cultural and religious heritage in the occupied areas: churches, monasteries, and archaeological sites.[6] [7]
- The exploitation of Greek Cypriot property in the occupied areas, particularly in Varosha (Famagusta), by the occupying authorities and settlers, as contrary to UN Security Council Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992).
- The exploitation of humanitarian issues, such as the missing persons and enclaved communities, for political leverage.[14]
- The instrumentalisation of migration by Türkiye, including via routes that exploit the Green Line, as a means of political pressure on the Republic of Cyprus.
- The militarisation of the Eastern Mediterranean and threats against Cyprus's sovereign rights in its Exclusive Economic Zone, including illegal drilling activities.[19]
- Attempts to draw false moral equivalences between the illegal Turkish occupation of Cyprus and legitimate EU or UN actions in defence of international law — just as Europe rejects Russia's aggression against Ukraine, it must reject Türkiye's occupation of Cyprus.[20] [21]
- Any foreign interference, propaganda, or disinformation that undermines the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and the unity of the European Union.[16]
- The illegal arrest of five Greek Cypriots by the occupation authorities in July, while visiting their properties, who face serious human rights violations for 3 months. In response, the European Parliament adopted, on 11 September 2025, a resolution (2025/2860(RSP)), condemning the actions of the occupying regime and calling for the immediate release of the detainees, as well as full respect for human rights and EU law in the occupied areas of Cyprus.

YEPP Calls On:

1. United Nations and Guarantor Powers

- The UN Secretary-General to resume direct negotiations under UN auspices for a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation settlement, ensuring full support for the diplomatic efforts of the Republic of Cyprus, the full withdrawal of foreign troops and the abolition of obsolete systems of guarantees.[8] [9]
- Türkiye, Greece, and the United Kingdom (as guarantor powers) to commit to a binding timetable for renegotiation and to endorse a security framework rooted in EU law and the UN Charter.[12]

2. European institutions

- The European Commission to prepare a Reunification Facilitation Package focused on infrastructure, property restitution, green transition, and youth cooperation, funded through the *Cohesion Fund* and *CERV* programme.[17] [18]
- The European Council, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament to reaffirm that Türkiye's EU accession cannot advance until it complies with UN resolutions, ECtHR judgments, and its obligations toward the Republic of Cyprus.[16] [17]
- The European Council, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament to reaffirm that any negotiations to update the Customs Union treaty with Türkiye and its inclusion in defense and other mechanisms of the EU, such as SAFE, must be examined after Türkiye's solid commitment to solving the Cyprus problem.
- To support in their development and actions those youth organizations, that are directly and indirectly active in the promotion and actualization of the end of the illegal Turkish occupation of Cyprus and that work for the earliest possible peaceful resolution of the currently longest existing regional conflict in Europe.
- The European Council and the Council of the EU **to set a unified EU line and, where necessary, adopt** CFSP restrictive measures **in response to Türkiye's instrumentalisation of migration, and** the European Commission **to coordinate and fund operational support to Cyprus, reinforce border management, and ensure full compliance with EU asylum law and** non-refoulement.
- EU agencies, such as Frontex, Europol, Eurojust and the EU Asylum Agency (EUAA) **provide the required operational, intelligence, judicial and asylum-management support to the competent Cypriot authorities.**

3. Türkiye

- To recognise the Republic of Cyprus, implement the Additional Protocol to the Ankara Agreement, and cease illegal activities in Cypriot and Greek waters.[16] [19]
- To immediately and totally withdraw its military personnel, land, air and seafaring vessels from the Cypriot territory (land, sea and sky).
- To end the demographic alteration of the occupied area and guarantee respect for property, cultural, and religious rights in line with ECtHR jurisprudence.[13] [14]
- To cease all actions in international and European fora promoting the recognition of the occupied entities as an independent state.

4. Confidence Building and Youth Engagement

- On the TRNC and all entities acting on the behalf of Türkiye to join the legitimate Cypriot Government in its efforts to open new crossing points towards the occupied territories, support joint educational and cultural projects, protect shared heritage, and encourage youth leadership in reconciliation.[10] [11]

5. YEPP

- YEPP will continue to advocate in the EPP family and European institutions for a free, united, and European Cyprus, and to support the young generation as the driving force of peace, democracy, and European integration.[10]
- On YEPP and its member organizations to cease and desist from any and all communication, cooperation and fraternization with all stakeholders, including youth organizations, NGOs and party youths (among others), which in any way support or endorse the existing illegal Turkish occupation of Cyprus, the "TRNC" or its subsidiary entities, or that have been in the past considered a supporter or participant in any of the previously listed entities and actions.

Resources:

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