

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

1960-2010

50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

In 2010 Cyprus proudly celebrates its fiftieth anniversary as an independent state. In 1960, Cyprus gained its independence, was recognised as an independent and sovereign state and joined the family of nations as the Republic of Cyprus. Unfortunately, since the 1974 military invasion and continuing occupation of part of its sovereign territory by Turkey, the Cyprus Republic remains forcibly divided.

Cyprus was proclaimed an independent state on 16 August 1960. However, Independence Day is celebrated on 1 October.

The people of Cyprus won their independence after a long and multifaceted anti-colonial struggle against British colonial rule that kept denying the people of Cyprus the right to self-determination. Between 1955-1959 the anti-colonial struggle took the form of an armed struggle under the direction of the EOKA movement. In order to serve its strategic interests, Great Britain applied the well-known policy of "divide and rule" so as to undermine relations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and stir up conflicts between the two communities. Unfortunately, extremist nationalist groups from both communities in Cyprus fell into the trap of this colonial divisive policy.

Against the background of Great Britain's divisive policy but also through the contradictions of the anti-colonial struggle that resulted in deadlocks, a settlement of independence with a given constitution, which was dysfunctional and contained the seeds of division, was imposed upon the people of Cyprus.

Despite the shortcomings of the given constitution, and an independence under guardianship as provided by the Zurich and London agreements, the establishment of the Cyprus Republic is nevertheless a great historical achievement, which created legitimate expectations paving the way towards progress for Cyprus and its people.



Official ceremony of the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus on 16 August 1960, in the House of Representatives in Nicosia. The last British Governor Sir Hugh Foot (centre) transfers power to President Makarios in the presence of the Vice-President Dr Fazil Kutchuk

The establishment of the Republic ended colonial rule and has constituted a basic framework of free governance for the people of Cyprus, in which both communities could foster a relationship of mutual understanding and cooperation, and chart a common course for the future.

The conditional independence, as it was imposed under coercion and without the consent of the people of Cyprus, amassed, from the outset, dark clouds for the state of Cyprus. The conspiracies and designs of foreign centres of power at the expense of Cyprus continued.

Worst of all, though, was the fact that certain circles from both Cypriot communities felt that independence did not meet their aspirations and visions: union with Greece for the Greek Cypriots and partition of the island for the Turkish Cypriots. These circles began to act disruptively against the Cypriot state resulting in the intensification of the mistrust and suspicion that had developed between the two communities from the first intercommunal clashes in 1958. The intercommunal disturbances of 1963-64 and 1967 that followed were the prelude to the tragedy of 1974 that Cyprus experienced.

Following the conflicts of 1963-64, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership forced the Turkish Cypriot community to withdraw from the Government of Cyprus and the administration of the state, and compelled many Turkish Cypriots into confinement in enclaves.

This development was the first population segregation of the people of Cyprus. The criminal and treacherous coup against the legitimate President of the Republic, on 15 July 1974, gave a long-sought pretext for Turkey to invade Cyprus in order to implement its partitionist plans.

The invasion of Cyprus by Turkey, on 20 July 1974, is undoubtedly the most dark and tragic chapter in the turbulent history of Cyprus. The blow was heavy and the human suffering indescribable: About 37% of the sovereign territory of the Republic of Cyprus was occupied by Turkish troops; one third of the population was forcibly expelled from their homes and properties and became refugees in their very own country; thousands of people were killed while hundreds of families are still waiting for the ascertainment of the fate of their loved ones who have been missing since then.



The Presidential Palace

The economic disaster in the occupied area, which was the most developed area on the island at the time of the invasion, was massive and forced thousands of displaced people to rebuild their lives from scratch. Turkey transferred more than 160.000 Turkish settlers from Anatolia as part of its organised plan to alter the demographic structure of Cyprus and to falsify the will of the Turkish Cypriots, whom Turkey uses as a tool for its expansionist plans.

However, in spite of the great and tragic reversal in their course of development, the people of Cyprus have managed not only to survive, but also to recover and face the future with confidence and optimism.

Despite the inconceivable destruction brought about by the Turkish invasion and occupation of part of the country, the Republic of Cyprus has demonstrated significant achievements in all areas. Through hard work, the people of Cyprus have managed to rebuild their economy, achieving a remarkable level of development and prosperity. In the political field they have managed to consolidate a democratic, pluralistic system based on democratic discourse.

Throughout all these years after independence, the existence of the Republic of Cyprus as an independent and sovereign state, has been the bulwark and the shield of protection for the survival of our people. From the beginning of its independence, Cyprus became an equal member of the international community, with its importance often disproportionately large with regard to its small size.

An active member of the Commonwealth and the United Nations, Cyprus did not take long to acquire its natural position within the Council of Europe, indicating its European identity and orientation. Furthermore, Cyprus became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, within which it played a leading role. From that Movement, Cyprus drew support and solidarity. The Republic of Cyprus has been, as of 1 May 2004, an equal member of the European family of nations following its accession to the European Union.



Throughout this difficult course, the primary and firm objective of the people and the Government of Cyprus has remained the achievement of a negotiated compromise settlement to the Cyprus issue. An honourable compromise, which will allow all the citizens of the island, irrespective of ethnic origin, to survive in the land of their forefathers by building a secure and peaceful future for themselves and their children.

The Government of Cyprus has declared with consistency and in every way possible, its determination to proceed with a functional and viable compromise that will address the legitimate concerns of all the citizens of the island. The framework of the compromise is a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with one single sovereignty, a single citizenship and a single international personality, as described in the two High Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979 between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and in the relevant United Nations resolutions. The solution must be based on the principles of International and European Law.



The House of Representatives

In order to be viable, this settlement must free Cyprus from the occupation, terminate the colonisation, reunite the country, the people, the institutions and the economy, and restore and safeguard the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, in the framework of a true federation with political equality, as provided by the relevant UN resolutions.

The fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Independence of Cyprus coincides with the continuation of full-fledged direct negotiations between the two communities, which began in 2008. The aim is the achievement, under the circumstances, of a just, viable and functional solution. The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Demetris Christofias, with determination and flexibility and always faithful to the principles that form his policy, will continue to work towards the achievement of a solution that is in the interests of all the people of Cyprus, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins.

The Greek Cypriot community strives towards reconciliation and cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot community in order to build a peaceful and happy future. Learning from history and leaving behind the mistakes and the traumatic experiences of the past, it is ready to walk, together with the Turkish Cypriots, along the path of reunification, peace and prosperity.



2010 European Council Meeting in Brussels

“ In 2010 Cyprus proudly celebrates its fiftieth anniversary as an independent state. The anniversary marks the appearance and the modern historical course of our country and our people. It marks our successes and accomplishments but also the tragedies our country has experienced during the fifty years of its existence. The Republic of Cyprus marks half a century of life but its territory and people unfortunately remain divided by the force of arms. Understandably, this tragic development casts a sad shadow over the joyful fiftieth independence anniversary.

In 1960 Cyprus gained its independence and joined the family of nations officially as the Republic of Cyprus, after a protracted and hard anti-colonial struggle by our people to win the right to self-determination. Since winning their independence, it became necessary for our people to undertake new hard struggles to defend it, and to defend the sovereignty, the freedom and the territorial integrity of our country.

As we honour the independence anniversary, we pay tribute to all those who made sacrifices for the liberation of our country, in defense of its independence as well as for the protection and strengthening of its democratic institutions. Drawing the right lessons from the hardships we have experienced and the mistakes we have made, we continue the struggle and the effort with optimism and determination in order to meet the challenges and the demands of our time and to move Cyprus forward.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic of Cyprus, I convey my warmest congratulations and my best wishes to all the citizens: Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Armenians, Latins and Maronites. We are committed to carry on the struggle to reunite Cyprus and to transform it into an island of everlasting peace and prosperity for all our people.”

Demetris Christofias
President of the Republic of Cyprus



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ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
YIL KIBRIS CUMHURİYETİ

1 October
Cyprus Independence Day