

In 2012 Cyprus proudly celebrates its fifty-second 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 Republic of Cyprus remains tragically and illegally divided by the force of arms of the occupying power.

Cyprus was officially proclaimed an independent state on 16 August 1960. However, it was subsequently decided that Independence Day be celebrated on 1 October.

The people of Cyprus won their independence after hard and long, sociopolitical anti-colonial struggles against the colonial power 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" thereby undermining relations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and stirring up clashes 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 led to 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 imposed constitution, and an independence under guardianship, that were provided by the Zurich and London agreements, the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus 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 the 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 by 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 the Republic 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 Turkey's 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 destruction 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 an overall plan to alter the demographic structure of Cyprus and to subvert the will of the Turkish Cypriots, whom Turkey uses as a tool for its expansionist designs. However, in spite of such great and tragic reversal in their natural progression, the people of Cyprus have managed not only to survive, but also to recover and to face the future with confidence and optimism.

Despite the inconceivable destruction brought about by Turkey's 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, demonstrating 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, and from July to December 2012 proudly holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Throughout this difficult course, the primary and firm objective of the people and the governments 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 consistently and in every way possible, its determination to proceed with a functional and viable compromise that will address the legitimate concerns of all the



The House of Representatives

citizens of the island. The framework of this 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.

To be viable, this settlement must liberate 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, within the framework of a true federation with political equality, as provided by the relevant UN resolutions.

As we mark yet another anniversary of the Independence of Cyprus, the process toward a settlement of the Cyprus issue, which began in 2008, continues under the auspices of the UN. 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.



The President of the Republic of Cyprus at the 2012 European Council Meeting in Brussels

We achieved our independence and got rid of the colonial yoke through the struggles and sacrifices of the people of Cyprus, which lasted for decades. The heroes of this struggle sacrificed their lives so that freedom and democracy be firmly established in our beloved homeland.

... we promise to continue, firmly and consistently, the noble struggle to get rid of the occupation and colonization, and for the prevalence of freedom, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The independent Republic of Cyprus is our common achievement, our common home. The survival of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in our common homeland will depend on how much we become aware of this reality. Getting rid of the occupation, of the continuous colonization by settlers and of the division will also depend on the recognition of this reality. So will the preservation of our distinct identities as Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, but also the preservation of our common identity as the people of Cyprus. We must, at long last, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots as one people, safeguard our common future.

The solution to the Cyprus problem will herald the salvation of Cyprus from permanent division, from the loss of half of our homeland. The solution to the Cyprus problem will vindicate the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for democracy and freedom; it will vindicate the mothers draped in black. For our people, the solution to the Cyprus problem means living under conditions of security, without occupation forces. It means the preservation of the cultural heritage of our ancestors. It means development and prosperity. A better future for us and our children.

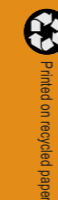
Let us all work together, in unity, for a free, reunited Cyprus, an island of peace, of joy and prosperity for its people; for Cyprus to become a bridge to peace, assembly and co-operation for Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

President Demetris Christofias
Excerpts from his speech on the 50th Anniversary
of the Independence of Cyprus, 1 October 2010

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

1960 – 2012

52 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



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