



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Watch Country Report: Cyprus

On July 20, 1974, following a coup d'état by the Greek military junta, Turkey invaded Northern Cyprus under the pretext of protecting the island's Turkish Cypriot minority from extremist Greek nationalists. Turkey cited its role as a guarantor power under the [1960 Treaty of Guarantee](#). Despite the rapid collapse of the Greek military junta, Turkey launched a second, larger invasion on August 14, 1974, [again citing the Treaty of Guarantee](#). Turkey occupied 37% of Cyprus. The island was de facto partitioned.

In November of 1983, the Turkish occupied zone unilaterally declared independence, forming the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The TRNC [lacks international recognition, with the sole exception of Turkey](#). The TRNC claims legitimate authority in Northern Cyprus. It maintains full diplomatic relations with Turkey, violating UN Security Council [Resolution 550](#), calling on all states to refuse to recognize the TRNC.

Between [210,000-272,000 ethnic Greek and Turkish Cypriots](#) – nearly a quarter of the one million total inhabitants of Cyprus – have been internally displaced since 1974. The situation is the [longest-standing case of internal displacement in Europe](#). [Severe limitations](#) are imposed on the movements of the Greek and Maronite minorities that remain in Turkish occupied Northern Cyprus.

Many [properties have been looted and repossessed](#). Extensive destruction of [cultural heritage and religious sites](#), as well as looting of [archaeological excavations and illegal exportation](#) of objects continue in Northern Cyprus.

Turkey is in violation of [Article 49\(6\) of the Fourth Geneva Convention](#) through its transfer and resettlement of [150,000-160,000 settlers from mainland Turkey](#). The United Nations and the Council of Europe have [condemned this process](#) as a deliberate attempt to alter the demographic character of the island, shift the balance of power in the occupied region, and prejudice resolution of the Cyprus conflict. Turkey has created a potentially irreversible *fait accompli*.

Turkey's colonization of the occupied area infringes upon the property rights of displaced Greek Cypriots, whose properties are now occupied by Turkish settlers. It also dilutes the voting power of the original Turkish Cypriots, who now constitute [less than half](#) of the Turkish population of Northern Cyprus. Over 57,000 unemployed Turkish Cypriots have [emigrated](#) from Northern Cyprus.

In May and October of 2019, Turkey dispatched drill ships and military vessels to Cyprus's territorial waters in areas where the Greek Republic of Cyprus had granted exploration rights to international oil companies. In October 2020, Northern Cyprus reopened the town of [Varosha](#), violating UNSC resolutions [550](#) and [789](#), and ignoring [condemnation by the European Parliament](#).

The election of [Ankara-backed](#) right-wing nationalist Ersin Tatar over incumbent Mustafa Akinci in Northern Cyprus's elections in October 2020 exacerbated tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Tatar [stated in November 2020](#) that he would not stop "until every last square metre" of Varosha was reopened. Tatar's pro-partition administration uses [divisive Turkish nationalist rhetoric to polarize Cyprus](#).

Genocide Watch considers the situation in Cyprus to be at Stage 6, Polarization. The presence of [43,000 Turkish troops in Northern Cyprus](#) and Turkey's alteration of the demographics of Northern Cyprus have made resolution of the Cyprus conflict unlikely. Turkey's [military exercises](#) in Northern Cyprus in September 2020 do not bode well for peace.

Cyprus is also at Stage 2, Symbolization due to Turkey's [destruction](#) of Greek Cypriot [cultural heritage sites](#).

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The EU and US should maintain their unified position opposing Turkey's illegal occupation of Northern Cyprus and favoring full Turkish military withdrawal from Northern Cyprus.
- The EU should make reunification of Cyprus a pre-condition for Turkish EU membership.