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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Question of human rights in Cyprus

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report provides an overview of human rights issues in Cyprus during the period from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024, including with respect to: the right to life and the question of missing persons; the principle of non-discrimination; freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum; property rights; freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights; freedom of opinion and expression; the right to education; and the importance of adopting a gender and youth perspective in the peace process. The sixtieth anniversary since the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964 and the fiftieth anniversary since the Turkish intervention of 1974 provide a stark reminder of how long the people living in Cyprus have been waiting for a peaceful solution to the island's persisting division, which would alleviate the significant obstacles that they continued to face with regard to fully realizing their human rights.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present document after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



I. Introduction

1. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) prepared the present report pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolutions 4 (XXXI), 4 (XXXII), 17 (XXXIV) and 1987/50 and Human Rights Council decision 2/102.
2. OHCHR does not have a field presence in Cyprus. To prepare the present report, OHCHR therefore conducted a visit to Cyprus from 3 to 14 November 2024, during which it met with diverse stakeholders to gather and verify information regarding the current human rights situation across the island. OHCHR expresses its appreciation for the cooperation provided during its visit by representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot authorities, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and other stakeholders, including civil society. OHCHR also solicited and received written inputs to inform the report from sources with knowledge of the human rights situation in Cyprus, including UNFICYP, the good offices mission of the Secretary-General, the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), civil society actors and others. OHCHR also relied on the recent findings of international and regional human rights mechanisms, the Secretary-General, the Security Council and institutions of the European Union.
3. During the reporting period, OHCHR observed that the persisting division of Cyprus resulting from the Turkish intervention of 1974 continued to negatively impact the enjoyment of human rights for people across the island.
4. The year 2024 marked the sixtieth anniversary since the Security Council decided on 4 March 1964 to establish UNFICYP and to mandate the Secretary-General to appoint a mediator for the purpose of promoting a peaceful solution in response to the intercommunal violence of 1963 and 1964.¹ In addition, 2024 marked the fiftieth anniversary since the Turkish intervention of 1974 that resulted in the division of Cyprus and led the Commission on Human Rights, the precursor to the Human Rights Council, to establish the present reporting mandate in February 1975. UNFICYP, whose peacekeeping mandate was extended until 31 January 2025 by the Security Council in its resolution 2723 (2024), has maintained a buffer zone for the past 50 years, successfully de-escalating tensions and preventing conflict.²
5. While there has been some limited progress in addressing certain human rights issues, challenges have persisted with each passing year concerning the right to life and the question of missing persons; the principle of non-discrimination; freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum; property rights; freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights; freedom of opinion and expression; and the right to education. It also remained important to adopt gender and youth perspectives in the peace process.
6. Numerous people have expressed their concerns to OHCHR that the prospects for a solution to the division of the island are gradually fading.³ In a joint declaration on 18 March 2024, civil society actors called for the resumption of negotiations, adding that the status quo has continued to create a deeper social and cultural division, affecting every aspect of life in Cyprus.⁴
7. On 5 January 2024, the Secretary-General appointed a Personal Envoy to search for common ground on the way forward for the peace process. The Secretary-General also met separately with the Greek Cypriot leader, the Turkish Cypriot leader and the representatives of the Guarantor Powers (Greece, Türkiye and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) in September 2024 during the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly. Building on the efforts of his Personal Envoy, the Secretary-General invited the two leaders to an informal dinner in New York on 15 October 2024, during which he regretted that, despite the efforts of his Personal Envoy, no common ground had been found. He encouraged both leaders to consider how to bridge the gap in their positions and to rebuild

¹ Security Council resolutions 186 (1964) and 187 (1964).

² S/2024/12, para. 67; and <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/unficyp-marks-60-years-service-peace>.

³ See also S/2024/526, para. 35; and S/2024/527, para. 65.

⁴ See <https://www.cypdc.org/post/cpdc-and-determination-for-peace-apofasi-irinis-joint-declaration>.

trust to allow movement leading towards a settlement. Both leaders agreed to participate in an informal meeting in a broader format in the near future, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, to discuss the way forward and to meet in Cyprus to explore the possibility of opening new crossings.⁵

II. Challenges for the implementation of international human rights standards

8. The persisting division of Cyprus owing to the Turkish intervention of 1974 continued to pose challenges to the implementation of international human rights standards, and monitoring and reporting by international mechanisms on the human rights situation in the northern part of the island remained limited.⁶ In its concluding observations, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reminded the Republic of Cyprus that it should nevertheless take all possible measures to implement its obligations under international human rights instruments to which it is a party, which remain applicable throughout all parts of its territory.⁷

9. Against that background, the Human Rights Platform⁸ continued to monitor and report on the human rights situation in the northern part of Cyprus, conducted advocacy and capacity-building activities and provided direct support to victims of human rights violations. Subsequent to the capacity-building training provided by OHCHR in the previous reporting period, the Platform also increased its engagement with international human rights mechanisms.⁹

10. In addition, two civil society organizations have launched an online complaints registry tool to address human rights violations on both sides that have been exacerbated by the island's ongoing division.¹⁰ They informed OHCHR that, as at 30 November 2024, the online tool had received 86 complaints, revealing violations affecting both communities.

11. In the absence of formal negotiations, the 12 technical committees, established by the leaders and co-facilitated by the good offices mission of the Secretary-General and UNFICYP, remained a critical platform that continued to foster dialogue and cooperation between the two sides with a view towards improving the daily lives of Cypriots. OHCHR, however, received information that differences in positions between the two sides and negative developments in and around the buffer zone presented challenges that hindered the necessary work of some of the technical committees.¹¹

⁵ See <https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/readout-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-informal-dinner-leader-greek-cypriot-community-and-leader-turkish>.

⁶ *A/HRC/57/15*, para. 5; and *E/C.12/CYP/CO/7*, para. 3.

⁷ *E/C.12/CYP/CO/7*, para. 3.

⁸ The European Union supports the Human Rights Platform under its aid programme for the Turkish Cypriot community (see <https://insanhaklariplatformu.eu/about?lang=en>); see also Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eighteenth Annual Report for 2023 on the implementation of the Union assistance under Council Regulation (EC) No. 389/2006 of 27 February 2006 establishing an instrument of financial support for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community, sect. 4.2.3, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0268>; and Council Regulation (EC) No. 389/2006 of 27 February 2006.

⁹ See *A/HRC/WG.6/46/CYP/3*, p. 10.

¹⁰ See <https://www.cypdc.org/embrace>.

¹¹ See also Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 7 (a); *S/2024/12*, para. 76; and *S/2024/526*, paras. 12–13, 30 and 37.

III. Human rights concerns

A. Right to life and the question of missing persons

12. According to article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.¹² Article 1 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance provides that any act of enforced disappearance is an offence to human dignity, placing the persons subjected thereto outside the protection of the law and inflicting severe suffering on them and their families. Any act of enforced disappearance also violates or constitutes a grave threat to the right to life.

13. As a result of the intercommunal violence of 1963 and 1964 and the events of July 1974 and thereafter, both communities officially reported 1,510 Greek Cypriots and 491 Turkish Cypriots as missing to the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. The tripartite Committee continued its bicomunal project on the exhumation, identification and return of the remains of missing persons. As at 30 November 2024, the Committee had exhumed the remains of 1,688 individuals on both sides and identified 1,051 missing individuals. During the reporting period, 19 persons were exhumed, and 15 individuals were identified as missing persons and returned to their families for dignified burial. Four other individuals not on the official list of missing persons were also identified and returned to their families. The Committee had identified 86 potential burial sites ready for excavation and conducted 10 excavations in military areas in the northern part of Cyprus to which access had been granted, during which three recoveries were made. Two excavations in military areas were ongoing. The Committee also continued its efforts to gain access to information on the location of the burial sites of missing persons from the archives of countries that had maintained a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963 and 1964 and 1974.¹³

14. In its resolution 2723 (2024), the Security Council commended the ongoing work of the Committee on Missing Persons and called upon all parties to enhance their cooperation with it, including by providing full access without delay to all areas and responding in a timely manner to requests for archival information on possible burial sites.

15. OHCHR received information that the families of missing persons on both sides have become increasingly frustrated at the slower rate of progress in recent years in the search for the missing persons as a result of several challenges beyond the control of the Committee on Missing Persons. The significant passage of time since the intercommunal violence of 1963 and 1964 and the Turkish intervention of 1974 has resulted in the deaths of witnesses, fading memories and changing landscapes (including new building construction), making it increasingly difficult to obtain and corroborate reliable information to improve the success of excavations and identifications. Several individuals expressed concern to OHCHR that the Committee has not yet been provided with all potentially relevant information that would aid it in locating possible new burial sites.¹⁴ Several actors, such as the authorities of Türkiye, stated that they do not have additional information on burial sites, including from military archives.¹⁵

16. In that context, OHCHR welcomes information received that the Committee on Missing Persons is examining the possibility of deploying new technologies, such as ground penetrating radar, to increase its efficiency and success rate in excavating new remains for identification.

17. On 14 March 2024, the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe recalled the progress made with regard to determining the fate of Greek Cypriot missing persons since the *Cyprus v. Turkey* judgment in May 2001, in particular the assistance provided by the authorities of Türkiye to the Committee on Missing Persons and the work of the Missing Persons Unit and their ongoing commitment in this regard. They welcomed the commitment

¹² See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6 (1).

¹³ S/2024/527, para. 54.

¹⁴ See also A/HRC/51/31/Add.1, paras. 14, 18–23, 25–29 and 72.

¹⁵ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1492nd meeting, 12–14 March 2024, notes concerning *Cyprus v. Turkey* (CM/Notes/1492/H46-33).

by the authorities of Türkiye to provide continuing assistance to the Committee on Missing Persons, including unhindered access to all areas, as well as all information relevant for its work, and to continue the work of the Missing Persons Unit. However, the Ministers' Deputies strongly urged Türkiye to pay the just satisfaction awarded in *Cyprus v. Turkey* and in *Varnava and Others v. Turkey* without further delay.¹⁶

18. On 14 June 2024, the Ministers' Deputies issued a decision on the supervision of the execution of the judgments in *Kakoulli and Isaak groups v. Turkey*, which concerned substantive right to life violations and the lack of effective and impartial investigations into four killings and one life-threatening injury of Greek Cypriots in 1996 due to the excessive use of force by Turkish or Turkish Cypriot military or police. They decided to close examination of the individual measures in the *Kakoulli* and *Kallis and Androulla Panayi* cases¹⁷ and also outlined the outstanding individual measures or clarifications required in the *Solomou*, *Isaak* and *Andreou* cases. Concerning general measures, in addition to recalling the positive steps adopted by the authorities of Türkiye regarding training, humanitarian interventions, effectiveness and independence of the investigations, they invited Türkiye to clarify whether the law specifies that firearms may only be used proportionately by the military and by the police in response to a threat to physical integrity or a violent offence.¹⁸

19. The presence of landmines and explosive remnants of war can negatively affect several rights, including the right to life. Despite the repeated requests of the Security Council,¹⁹ no progress was made towards clearing the 29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the island to achieve a mine-free Cyprus. The Mine Action Service of the United Nations prepared options for a new phase of clearance activities, with a special focus on the buffer zone and on remaining anti-personnel mines.²⁰

B. Non-discrimination

20. According to article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Article 7 provides that all people are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.²¹

21. In 2023, an estimated 248,000 people, including their descendants, remained internally displaced in Cyprus owing to the events of 1963 and 1964 and 1974, the fifth highest number of internally displaced persons in Europe and Central Asia.²² UNFICYP continued its engagement with the Greek Cypriots and Maronites communities living in the north, including through the weekly delivery of humanitarian assistance, and with Turkish Cypriots residing in the south.²³

22. Several actors highlighted to OHCHR that the continued isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community has disproportionately hindered their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including by limiting their economic, social, cultural and sporting contacts. In its concluding observations, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern about reports that the socioeconomic gap between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots continued to widen, to the disadvantage of Turkish Cypriots.²⁴ Despite the

¹⁶ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1492nd meeting, 12–14 March 2024, on *Cyprus v. Turkey* (CM/Del/Dec(2024)1492/H46-33); and *Varnava and Others v. Turkey* (CM/Del/Dec(2024)1492/H46-37).

¹⁷ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1501st meeting, 13 June 2024, on *Kallis and Androulla Panayi v. Turkey* (CM/ResDH(2024)123).

¹⁸ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1501st meeting, 11–13 June 2024, on *Kakoulli and Isaak groups v. Turkey* (CM/Del/Dec(2024)1501/H46-32).

¹⁹ Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 19.

²⁰ S/2024/12, para. 24; and S/2024/527, para. 22.

²¹ See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 26; and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2 (2).

²² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024* (Geneva, 2024), pp. 95 and 121.

²³ S/2024/527, para. 39.

²⁴ E/C.12/CYP/CO/7, paras. 23–24.

repeated calls of the Secretary-General and the Security Council for increased efforts to address these issues,²⁵ OHCHR observed persisting challenges to the achievement of greater economic and social parity between the two sides. Despite a circular issued by the Republic of Cyprus in April 2023, Turkish Cypriots continued to face challenges in opening bank accounts in the south,²⁶ which has also impacted the effective functioning of civil society organizations based in the north as certain donors do not transfer funds to banks operating in the north.

23. Numerous stakeholders also informed OHCHR that Turkish Cypriot children from mixed marriages continued to face delays and denials with regard to their citizenship applications, thereby limiting their freedom of movement and their educational opportunities within the European Union.²⁷ The Cyprus Administrative Court held in two cases that there were unjustified and excessive delays in responding to citizenship requests that had been submitted 7 and 10 years ago, respectively.²⁸

24. On 28 March 2024, the Cyprus Administrative Court held that an October 2019 decision of the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Republic of Cyprus to place an applicant's request for citizenship on a waiting list for future consideration was correct and legal. The applicant, a Turkish citizen, was born to a Turkish Cypriot mother and a Turkish father in Cyprus in 1995. In the October 2019 decision, the applicant was informed that his application had been placed on a waiting list because the relevant law prohibited granting citizenship to people born in Cyprus where the entry or stay in Cyprus of either parent was deemed illegal and that his case did not fall within any of the five exceptional criteria established by the 2007 decision of the Council of Ministers. The Administrative Court also rejected the applicant's argument that the relevant law and the 2007 decision discriminated against Turkish Cypriots on the basis that the applicant did not provide sufficient details to substantiate his claim as required.²⁹

25. Several actors noted that announcements issued by the Republic of Cyprus regarding available services, resources and job openings continued to be published mostly in Greek, even though Turkish is also an official language, hindering their access to services and the overall enjoyment of their rights.³⁰

26. On 26 January, the Republic of Cyprus announced 14 measures to address issues impacting Turkish Cypriot daily life, including the examination of all pending applications for Cypriot citizenship within the framework of the 2007 decision of the Council of Ministers, access to human resources and vocational programmes, measures to facilitate the freedom of movement through the crossing points, hiring of staff with knowledge of Turkish at the Nicosia Citizen Service Centre and facilitating access to Muslim monuments in areas under its effective control.³¹ However, OHCHR received information that some of the measures were only available to Turkish Cypriots with identification cards issued by the Republic of Cyprus, effectively excluding Turkish Cypriots affected by mixed marriage issues.

27. Some actors raised additional concerns that it would not be possible to resolve problems regarding applications for Cypriot citizenship because the 2007 decision of the

²⁵ S/2024/527, paras. 65–66; and Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 10.

²⁶ See also S/2024/12, para. 39; S/2024/526, para. 22; S/2024/527, para. 37; and E/C.12/CYP/CO/7, paras. 23–24.

²⁷ See also E/C.12/CYP/CO/7, paras. 23–24; see also <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/05/03/cypriot-citizenship-given-to-14-children-from-mixed-marriages/>; <https://orato.world/2024/04/01/we-are-the-only-cypriots-without-citizenship-silenced-in-trnc-for-years-says-turkish-cypriot-peace-activist/>; and <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/02/04/the-turkish-cypriots-fighting-for-citizenship/>.

²⁸ Administrative Court, *S.Y. and A.Y. v. Republic of Cyprus*, Case No. 120/2020, 5 November 2024; *K. T. E. v. Republic of Cyprus*, Case No. 1520/2019, 13 March 2024, available at <https://www.cylaw.org/cgi-bin/open.pl?file=administrative/2024/202411-120-20.html&qstring=%F4%EF%F5%F1%EA%EF%EA%F5%F0%F1%2A> (in Greek).

²⁹ Administrative Court, *.N. K. v. Republic of Cyprus*, Case No. 1/2020, 28 March 2024, available at <https://www.cylaw.org/cgi-bin/open.pl?file=administrative/2024/202403-1520-19.html&qstring=%F4%EF%F5%F1%EA%EF%EA%F5%F0%F1%2A> (in Greek).

³⁰ See also <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/local/ombudswoman-publishing-scholarship-announcements-in-greek-discriminates-against-non-native-speakers/>.

³¹ See <https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/press-releases-article.html?id=39466#flat>.

Council of Ministers was the source of discrimination.³² The Republic of Cyprus, however, announced it would examine citizenship application that did not meet any of the five criteria in the 2007 decision in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations.³³

28. For European Parliament elections held in June 2024, the Republic of Cyprus reported that the law provided for the automatic inclusion in the electoral list of all citizens, including Turkish Cypriots living in the north who had identity cards issued by the Republic of Cyprus. As a result, as of April 2024, more than 90 per cent of eligible Turkish Cypriots were registered in the electoral list to vote in the European Parliament elections.³⁴ The Republic of Cyprus also reported that it had opened 32 special polling stations in areas close to the crossing points and had provided free bus transportation to polling stations that were located further than one kilometre from the crossing points. Several Turkish Cypriots informed OHCHR, however, that the existence of polling stations only in the southern part of Cyprus presented obstacles to their right to vote, especially for those living in more remote areas in the north. The Republic of Cyprus has asserted that it could not establish such polling stations because it does not exercise effective control in the northern part of Cyprus.

C. Freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum

29. According to article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State and the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.³⁵ Article 14 provides that everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution.

30. Despite repeated calls by the Secretary-General and the Security Council to open new crossing points,³⁶ crossings between the northern and southern parts of the island remain possible only through nine official crossing points owing to the continued division of the island since the Turkish intervention of 1974, which limits freedom of movement and intercommunal interactions. During the reporting period, UNFICYP reported 3,144,340 official buffer zone crossings, compared with 2,951,417 crossings over the previous period.

31. Numerous individuals informed OHCHR that the lack of progress in opening new crossing points continued to hinder their freedom of movement and their daily activities. OHCHR learned that the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point for civilian vehicles in Nicosia, where approximately half of the island's crossings occur, continued to be subject to long queues and traffic, discouraging some individuals from even attempting to cross. In this regard, Turkish Cypriots were disproportionately affected because they cross more frequently from the northern part of Cyprus to the southern part. Greek Cypriots and Maronites who live in remote villages in the north were also disproportionately impacted, resulting in some deciding to move to the south to access education and employment opportunities more easily.

32. At the informal dinner hosted by the Secretary-General with the Greek Cypriot leader and the Turkish Cypriot leader on 15 October 2024, the two leaders agreed to meet to explore the possibility of opening new crossing points. The members of the Technical Committee on Crossing Points also agreed on a detailed enlargement project for the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point, which could help alleviate traffic issues.³⁷

33. Despite repeated calls by the Security Council and the Secretary-General to respect applicable international law in the handling of asylum-seekers and refugees,³⁸ the Republic

³² See also https://upr-info.org/sites/default/files/country-document/2024-02/FactSheet_Mixed_Marriages.pdf.

³³ See <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/01/26/block-on-turkish-cypriot-mixed-marriages-for-citizenship-lifted/>.

³⁴ A/HRC/57/15, para. 125.

³⁵ See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 12.

³⁶ S/2024/12, paras. 73 and 74; S/2024/526, para. 40; and Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 10.

³⁷ S/2024/527, para. 41.

³⁸ Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), preamble; S/2024/12, para. 77; and S/2024/527, para. 68.

of Cyprus continued to engage in pushbacks of asylum-seekers across the Green Line, which, according to UNHCR, led to 154 persons (including 35 children, of whom 16 were unaccompanied) being stranded in the buffer zone between 16 May and 14 November 2024. The stranded individuals included asylum applicants originating from countries affected by conflict or serious human rights violations, persons with disabilities and serious health conditions and women in vulnerable situations. Some of the stranded individuals had reached the Pournara first reception centre before being pushed back into the buffer zone.³⁹ UNHCR also received 107 reports of alleged physical violence, arbitrary detention and mistreatment of asylum-seekers by Greek Cypriot immigration police officers.

34. UNFICYP and UNHCR established two camps within the buffer zone for the stranded individuals and provided them with emergency shelter, food and other immediate necessities.⁴⁰ The Republic of Cyprus also provided supplies to meet their basic needs and an ambulance to ensure their access to healthcare.⁴¹ OHCHR visited one of the camps housing the remaining stranded asylum-seekers and observed that they had faced a very difficult situation as a result of being stranded in the buffer zone.

35. Six special procedures mandate holders issued a communication on 23 July 2024 to the Republic of Cyprus to raise concerns regarding the pushbacks of asylum-seekers into the buffer zone in violation of the principle of non-refoulement and the negative effects of the pushbacks on their physical and mental health.⁴² In its reply of 30 October, the Republic of Cyprus stated that the stranded asylum-seekers had entered irregularly into the northern part of Cyprus and had transited through Türkiye, adding that Türkiye should have been responsible for examining their asylum claims.⁴³ The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the obligations of the Republic of Cyprus under international refugee and human rights law continued to apply in all areas under its jurisdiction, including the buffer zone.⁴⁴

36. As a result of continuous advocacy by UNFICYP, UNHCR and others, the Republic of Cyprus gradually began to grant the stranded individuals access to asylum procedures in the southern part of Cyprus beginning on 30 September, with all remaining asylum-seekers granted such access on 14 November.

37. The are remaining concerns regarding the lack of an asylum system in the northern part of Cyprus. Reportedly, efforts were still being made to prevent irregular movements, with about 7,386 persons prevented from entering areas in the north and about 1,610 persons detained and subsequently deported in 2023.⁴⁵

38. Human trafficking in Cyprus, in particular in the northern part, has become a growing phenomenon owing to serious protection gaps resulting from the continuing division of the island.⁴⁶ While the Joint Contact Room, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, continued to serve as an essential channel to exchange information on criminal matters between both sides,⁴⁷ several stakeholders informed

³⁹ See also communication CYP 3/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29206>; and S/2024/527, paras. 5, 24, 47–48 and 68.

⁴⁰ S/2024/527, paras. 5 and 24; see also <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/statement-situation-migrants-inside-buffer-zone>.

⁴¹ See reply to communication CYP 3/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29206>.

⁴² See communication CYP 3/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

⁴³ See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=38730>.

⁴⁴ See <https://rm.coe.int/letter-to-the-president-of-cyprus-by-michael-o-flaherty-council-of-eur/1680b21289>, p. 1.

⁴⁵ European Commission, Twentieth Report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 of 29 April 2004 and the situation resulting from its application covering the period 1 January until 31 December 2023, COM(2024) 265, 4 July 2024, p. 3, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0265>.

⁴⁶ See also E/C.12/CYP/CO/7, paras. 37–38.

⁴⁷ S/2024/527, para. 28.

OHCHR that there was insufficient cooperation between the two sides to effectively address human trafficking, resulting in serious protection gaps for the victims.

39. The Republic of Cyprus also asserted that it was not in a position to prevent criminal offences in the northern part of the island, including the smuggling of migrants, on the basis that it does not have effective control over that part of the island.⁴⁸ While the Republic of Cyprus supported recommendations from its fourth cycle universal periodic review to bolster its efforts to combat human trafficking, it did not “support” but rather “noted” recommendations to enhance such efforts by strengthening the resources of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters and cooperating with the Turkish Cypriot authorities.⁴⁹ While they previously criminalized human trafficking in 2020, the Turkish Cypriot authorities have also reportedly been unable to implement effective policies to address human trafficking and to protect victims.⁵⁰

D. Property rights

40. Under article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others, and no one is to be arbitrarily deprived of their property.⁵¹

41. The Turkish Cypriot Properties (Administration and Other Matters) (Temporary Provisions) Law No. 139/1991 continued to provide for the administration by the Guardian of Turkish Cypriot properties in the south falling under that law. While Turkish Cypriots retain legal title to their property, sale, exchange or transfer is prohibited without the Guardian’s consent. Several actors expressed their concern to OHCHR that this legal framework restricted Turkish Cypriot property rights given that the administration by the Guardian, subject to certain discretionary factors, would continue until a final settlement on the Cyprus issue.⁵² The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that the Republic of Cyprus remove obstacles that Turkish Cypriot property owners reportedly faced in accessing their properties and seeking restitution.⁵³

42. In March 2024, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Cyprus proposed amendments to Law No. 139/1991, which were still pending as at 30 November, to make the relevant procedures for allocating and managing Turkish Cypriot properties more clear, equal and meritocratic in order to limit the Guardian’s discretion and, by extension, the phenomena of abuse and exploitation. On 4 November, the Ministry reported that it found violations in 511 out of 3,755 lease agreements (or one in seven) regarding Turkish Cypriot properties in the south and that legal action had been initiated to recover those properties.⁵⁴

43. On 15 March 2024, the Cyprus Court of Appeals rejected an appeal by the administrators of the estate of a deceased Turkish Cypriot contesting the decision of the court of first instance, which determined that the disputed properties attached to the estate of the deceased had been legally seized by the Republic of Cyprus and then legally placed under the management of the Guardian in 1991. The court of first instance ruled that the appellants were not entitled to compensation from 1975 until 2010 because the decedent and his heirs had not claimed the property until 2010 as their own conscious choice and not as a result of coercion. In its decision, the Court of Appeals relied on existing Supreme Court decisions that previously held that Law No. 139/1991 was constitutional and did not violate the European Convention on Human Rights, although the cited decisions of the European Court of Human Rights concerned the non-exhaustion of domestic remedies and did not address

⁴⁸ See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadFile?gId=38730>.

⁴⁹ A/HRC/57/15, paras. 129.77 and 129.81; and A/HRC/57/15/Add.1, para. 2.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/cyprus/>; see also <https://freedomhouse.org/country/northern-cyprus/freedom-world/2024>.

⁵¹ See also International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 15.

⁵² See also <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2024>.

⁵³ E/C.12/CYP/CO/7, paras. 41–42.

⁵⁴ See <https://www.gov.cy/esoterika-themata/anakoinosi-tou-ypourgeiou-esoterikon-gia-ti-diacheirisi-tourkokyriakon-periusion-apo-topikes-arches/>.

possible substantive violations of the Convention.⁵⁵ The Court of Appeals also found that management by the Guardian, including for Turkish Cypriots living abroad, was not illegal and did not constitute adverse discrimination.⁵⁶

44. In October 2024, 46 Turkish Cypriots filed cases in courts of the Republic of Cyprus to seek compensation for alleged violations of their property rights and contesting the Guardian's authority under Law No. 139/1991 to manage properties that were abandoned in the southern part of Cyprus owing to the Turkish intervention of 1974.⁵⁷

45. Concerning property claims of Greek Cypriots in the northern part of Cyprus, as at 29 November 2024, the Immovable Property Commission has resolved 1,774 claims (1,739 through friendly settlements and 35 through formal hearings) out of 7,849 applications (or 22.6 per cent) it has received since it began operating in 2006. Thus far, the Commission has awarded a total of £499,978,461 (approximately \$631,615,290) in compensation. During the reporting period, the Commission ruled for compensation in 152 cases. Previously, the Commission had ruled for exchange and compensation in two cases, for restitution in five cases, for restitution and compensation in seven cases, for restitution after the settlement of the Cyprus issue in one case and for partial restitution in another case.

46. While the European Court of Human Rights previously held that the Immovable Property Commission provides accessible and effective redress,⁵⁸ OHCHR received information that there was a backlog of unresolved claims, partly due to delays by the relevant Turkish Cypriot authorities, and that payments had not yet been effectuated on claims finalized in the past few years.⁵⁹ In 2024, the Commission issued decisions resolving 135 cases that had been initially filed more than 10 years ago. It has reportedly started a project to digitalize its work and case files, which would help improve its efficiency.

47. The Republic of Cyprus also arrested several individuals accused of allegedly engaging in the illegal sale and exploitation of Greek Cypriot property in the north.⁶⁰ It was alleged, however, that those arrests had contradicted decisions taken by the Immovable Property Commission.⁶¹

48. On 19 September, the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe closed their supervision over 1 of the 33 cases in *Xenides-Arestis group v. Turkey* on the basis that the Immovable Property Commission had paid a global sum covering the applicant company's property claims.⁶² The Ministers' Deputies also exhorted the Turkish authorities to comply with their unconditional obligation to pay the sums awarded in the other 32 cases without further delay.⁶³

Varosha

49. The Security Council and the European Union continued to call for the immediate reversal of unilateral actions taken on Varosha since October 2020 that run contrary to

⁵⁵ See European Court of Human Rights, *Kazali v. Cyprus*, Application No. 49247/08, 6 March 2012, para. 153; European Court of Human Rights, *Mehmet Yilmaz v. Cyprus*, Application No. 4722/05, 28 August 2012, para. 19.

⁵⁶ Court of Appeal, *Oguz v. Republic of Cyprus*, Civil Appeal No. 271/18.

⁵⁷ See <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/insider/turkish-cypriots-pursue-compensation-claims-despite-guardian-law-protections/>.

⁵⁸ See European Court of Human Rights, *Demopoulos and Others v. Turkey*, Admissibility Decision, 1 March 2010, para. 126.

⁵⁹ See also <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2024>.

⁶⁰ See <https://www.gov.cy/mfa/en/documents/legal-consequences-for-foreign-citizens-purchasing-greek-cypriot-owned-property-in-the-area-of-cyprus-occupied-by-turkey/>; see also <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/local/hungarian-woman-detained-over-occupied-land-usurpation/>.

⁶¹ See <https://cyprus-mail.com/2024/07/08/pace-rep-calls-for-investigation-into-cyprus-over-property-arrests/>.

⁶² Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1507th meeting, 17–19 September 2024, on *Rock Ruby Hotels LTD v. Turkey* (CM/ResDH(2024)207).

⁶³ Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, 1507th meeting, 17–19 September 2024, on *Xenides-Arestis group v. Turkey* (CM/Del/Dec(2024)1507/H46-38).

Security Council resolutions, with the Secretary-General adding that the United Nations continued to hold the Government of Türkiye responsible for the situation.⁶⁴

50. OHCHR visited the part of Varosha that the Turkish Cypriot authorities re-opened to the public in October 2020 contrary to Security Council and Commission on Human Rights resolutions calling for the reversal of that course of action.⁶⁵ While Varosha remained largely uninhabited, OHCHR was informed that some beachfront hotels have reopened for visitors and that Turkish soldiers were being housed in some buildings. OHCHR also received information that the construction of facilities to provide access to the beach, electrical work and road paving continued.⁶⁶

E. Freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights

51. Under article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, which includes freedom to, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.⁶⁷ Article 27 of the Declaration provides that everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.⁶⁸

52. During the reporting period, 113 requests to hold religious services and events in the northern part of Cyprus were submitted to UNFICYP for facilitation, of which 58 were approved and 55 were rejected. While these decisions are purportedly based on objective criteria, OHCHR met with several religious actors who expressed frustration that the Turkish Cypriot authorities do not provide the reason for denying certain requests, leaving them in a state of uncertainty and hindering their access to information.

53. Several individuals reported to OHCHR that they were unable to hold religious services in recently renovated churches in the northern part of Cyprus, for example in Agios Georgios Church in Ardana. Some actors also indicated that several religious sites in the northern part of Cyprus were being used for alternative purposes and OHCHR received information indicating that the Ayios Georgios Church in Komi Kebir was being used as a gymnasium. In the southern part of Cyprus, the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque, the most important mosque for Muslims in Cyprus, continued to follow civil opening hours, allowing worshippers to pray only three times per day instead of five.

54. Despite these challenges, there were some positive developments. OHCHR was informed that previously reported plans to convert a section of the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the Karpas peninsula into a mosque/place of prayer had been abandoned. In addition, the Ayios Georgios Church in Goufes/Çamlıca in the north, which had been inaccessible since 1974, was opened for worship for the first time. For the first time since 2019, with the facilitation of UNFICYP, almost 1,300 pilgrims were allowed to cross from the northern part of Cyprus to worship at the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca on 11 April, 19 June and 12 September.⁶⁹

55. Efforts also continued to sustain and develop the dialogue and cooperation among the religious leaders of Cyprus in order to uphold and advance human rights and to build confidence within the framework of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden in Cyprus. While these efforts faced some challenges, representatives of religious communities met regularly with facilitation by the Religious Track and advocated for each other's right to pray and free access to their respective places

⁶⁴ Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 4; S/2024/526, para. 45; and S/2024/527, paras. 12–13 and 63; <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16707-2023-INIT/en/pdf>, para. 59.

⁶⁵ Security Council resolution 550 (1984), para. 5; Commission on Human Rights resolution 1987/50 (1987), para. 2.

⁶⁶ See also S/2024/527, paras. 12–13 and 63.

⁶⁷ See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 18; and Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, art. 1.

⁶⁸ See also International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 15.

⁶⁹ S/2024/527, paras. 6 and 40; see also S/2024/12, para. 43, and S/2024/527, paras. 6 and 40.

of worship.⁷⁰ Within the global Faith for Rights framework,⁷¹ on 10 December 2023, members of the Religious Track also joined in a hybrid interfaith annual walk event on “Faith for Rights” in Nicosia, Geneva and Collonges-sous-Salève, France, to promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

56. On 12 March 2024, the European Court of Human Rights issued its judgment in *Kanatlı v. Türkiye* concerning the claim of Mr. Kanatlı that he had been convicted for refusing to perform his one day of military service each year as a reservist in accordance with legislation applicable in northern part of Cyprus despite his conscientious objection. The Court held that Türkiye had violated the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion on the basis that the relevant legislation did not allow conscientious objectors to perform an alternative form of service other than military service.⁷²

57. Despite external political challenges in the first half of 2024, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), continued its work to conserve and restore cultural heritage sites across the island, including by finalizing work on the Hamidiye mosque in Lefkara and the Agios Sergios and Vakhos church in Neta/Taşlıca. With the support of the European Union and UNDP, the Committee also launched a new website to preserve and make the island’s cultural heritage accessible to all.⁷³

F. Freedom of opinion and expression

58. According to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.⁷⁴

59. During its visit, OHCHR received information that civic space in the northern part of Cyprus has been steadily declining, including reports that plainclothes police officers occasionally monitored civil society events, which could have a chilling effect on the freedom of expression.

60. On 23 August 2024, an Ankara court convicted Turkish Cypriot journalist Şener Levent in absentia and sentenced him to six months of imprisonment in relation to his 2016 article “Zorba the Cypriot”, in which he was deemed to have insulted and been critical of Türkiye and its institutions.⁷⁵ This case appears to violate the right to freedom of expression as Mr. Levent’s conviction and sentencing may be neither proportionate nor necessary to achieving a legitimate purpose, while his conviction in absentia also raises concerns for his fair trial rights.

61. OHCHR received information during its visit that the case of Ali Kışmir, the President of the Turkish Cypriot Journalists’ Union, was still pending before a court in the northern part of Cyprus on charges of “insulting and mocking the security forces” in relation to an article he had written at the time of the Turkish Cypriot leader’s election in 2020. The case against Mr. Kışmir could result in his imprisonment for up to 10 years.⁷⁶ Mr. Kışmir’s initial hearing, which was supposed to commence in October 2023, had been postponed nine times up until 26 November 2024 and was still pending as at 30 November 2024, keeping him in a state of legal uncertainty. While some postponements were at his lawyer’s request, several

⁷⁰ S/2024/13, para. 11; S/2024/526, para. 8; and see www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/religion/faithforrights/Faith-for-rights-P2Pweek2023.pdf.

⁷¹ See www.ohchr.org/en/faith-for-rights.

⁷² European Court of Human Rights, *Kanatlı v. Türkiye*, Application No. 18382/15, judgment of 12 March 2024, paras. 25 and 64–69.

⁷³ S/2024/526, paras. 20–21; see <https://www.cyprusdigitalheritage.com/#About>; see also <https://www.undp.org/cyprus/press-releases/completion-hamidiye-mosque-lefkara>.

⁷⁴ See also International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 19.

⁷⁵ See <https://in-cyprus.philenews.com/opinion/support-from-all-for-sener-levent/>.

⁷⁶ See <https://fom.coe.int/en/alerte/detail/107637185>.

postponements were reportedly due to the fact that the prosecuting authorities were not ready for the initial hearing.

62. In November 2024, 20 civil society organizations called for the withdrawal of Mr. Kışmir's case, adding that his trial represented an attempt to silence critical voices within the Turkish Cypriot community.⁷⁷ The Vice-President of the European Federation of Journalists added that Türkiye was attempting to interfere with the judiciary, politics and the media in the northern part of Cyprus.⁷⁸

63. On 15 January 2024, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression issued a communication to the Government of Türkiye and to the Turkish Cypriot leader to raise concerns that the judicial harassment, intimidation and censorship of Mr. Kışmir is a direct result of his journalistic work expressing his political views and criticism of the Turkish authorities and Turkish Cypriot authorities.⁷⁹ The Turkish Cypriot authorities and the Government of Türkiye replied to the communication on 11 and 18 March, respectively.⁸⁰

G. Right to education

64. According to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to education, which should be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education should promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.⁸¹ Education, including human rights education and training, for children also provides a critical tool to promote peace and tolerance and to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.⁸²

65. Despite the repeated calls of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, OHCHR observed during its visit that little progress has been made in promoting peace education across the island, including with respect to jointly reviewing school materials and implementing the recommendations in the 2017 joint report of the Technical Committee on Education.⁸³ OHCHR also observed that that bifurcated nature of the educational system in Cyprus continued to perpetuate divisive narratives and intergenerational trauma related to the intercommunal violence of 1963 and 1964 and the Turkish intervention of 1974.⁸⁴ In particular, OHCHR received information that the children on both sides were exposed to divisive narratives on the fiftieth anniversary of the Turkish intervention of 1974, hindering intercommunity trust building.

66. In this context, it is welcome that the Technical Committee on Education met in December 2023 after two years of inactivity, resumed its regular monthly meetings in 2024 and initiated discussions regarding possible new projects to implement recommendations in its 2017 joint report.⁸⁵ Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks on history teaching

⁷⁷ See https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c140-DAILY_NEWS/n541664-solidarity-for-ali-kismir-20-organizations-call-for-support-for-freedom-of-expression.

⁷⁸ See <https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/northern-cyprus-basin-sen-union-leader-faces-heavy-jail-charges-for-criticising-turkish-politics>.

⁷⁹ See communications TUR 1/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28721>; and OTH 1/2024, available at <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TmSearch/Results>.

⁸⁰ See <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

⁸¹ See also International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, arts. 13–14, and Convention on the Rights of the Child, arts. 28–29.

⁸² Human Rights Council resolutions 57/24, paras. 3, 5 and 7, 55/17, para. 10, and 54/5, paras. 2, 4–6; see also <https://www.ohchr.org/en/children/ensuring-quality-education-peace-and-tolerance-every-child>.

⁸³ See also Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 7 (c); and S/2024/526, paras. 23 and 36.

⁸⁴ See also <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2024> (noting that textbooks contain negative language about Turkish Cypriots and Türkiye).

⁸⁵ S/2024/526, paras. 15 and 23.

were also exchanged through the Technical Committee on Education with a view to jointly reviewing those materials.

67. OHCHR regrets, however, that the Turkish Cypriot authorities would not agree to resume their support for the award-winning “Imagine” project, which was carried out under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education and implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research and the Home for Cooperation. This award-winning peace education project has been the only mechanism in Cyprus that successfully brought together thousands of students and teachers from both communities, thereby increasing trust between the communities.⁸⁶ The Association nevertheless continued to implement a restructured project with the organization of bicomunal meetings outside of school hours, activities reaching about 1,200 students and 350 teachers and the production of educational material on antiracism. It also launched efforts to compare the history textbooks and educational curricula in Cyprus with a view to promoting a better understanding of history and dialogue between the communities.

68. During its visit, OHCHR received information from several actors highlighting persisting challenges to realizing the right to education for Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the northern part of Cyprus. In addition to the limited educational opportunities in the European Union faced by Turkish Cypriots from mixed marriages, the Republic of Cyprus continued to not recognize the validity of degrees from universities located in north, further limiting educational and employment opportunities for those concerned. In its concluding observations, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended that the Republic of Cyprus simplify procedures for recognizing academic degrees to allow for the academic and professional development of those affected.⁸⁷ OHCHR welcomes the support provided by European Commission under its Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community to facilitate their right to education, including the 129 scholarships provided to Turkish Cypriot students for the 2023/24 academic year to address their limited access to European Union universities.⁸⁸

69. OHCHR received reliable information that Türkiye had replaced some sections of primary school textbooks that had contained scientific and historical information with content that was perceived to be more ideological and religious, including traditional concepts of gender roles and the position of women in society. The changes required teachers in the northern part of Cyprus to develop alternative lessons plans until they were able to remove those references.

70. In addition, Greek Cypriot and Maronite children living in the northern part of Cyprus still faced restrictions to their right to education. UNFICYP continued to facilitate the delivery of school textbooks and educational equipment and the appointment of teachers for Greek Cypriot schools on the Karpas Peninsula. The Turkish Cypriot authorities continued to review all textbooks, rejecting 42 out of 118 textbooks for primary schools in Rizokarpaso/Dipkarpaz and Kormakitis, as well as 51 out of 197 textbooks for the secondary school at Rizokarpaso/Dipkarpaz, alleging that the books contained divisive language. This process also led to delays in the appointments of teachers and the delivery of textbooks after the commencement of the academic year. UNFICYP also engaged with both sides regarding the reopening of a kindergarten and a primary school in the Maronite village of Kormakitis.⁸⁹

H. Gender and youth perspective

71. In its resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015) on women and youth in the context of peace and security, the Security Council called upon all actors, when negotiating and

⁸⁶ See also [S/2024/526](#), para. 23.

⁸⁷ [E/C.12/CYP/CO/7](#), paras. 49–50.

⁸⁸ Report from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Eighteenth Annual Report for 2023 on the implementation of the Union assistance under Council Regulation (EC) No. 389/2006 of 27 February 2006 establishing an instrument of financial support for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community, pp. 5–7, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024DC0268>.

⁸⁹ See also [S/2024/12](#), para. 42, and [S/2024/527](#), para. 39.

implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective and to take into account the participation and views of youth.

72. Despite the repeated calls of the Security Council to ensure the meaningful participation of women and youth in the peace process,⁹⁰ OHCHR was informed that the work of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality had largely stalled during the reporting period and that little progress had been made in implementing the January 2022 joint “Action Plan on ways to ensure women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process”.⁹¹

73. OHCHR was informed, however, that the 12 technical committees had achieved gender parity for the first time and had also made some progress in increasing the number of youth in their membership. UNFICYP organized a networking event that was focused on presenting a civil society declaration that emphasized that negotiations should ensure the effective participation of women and youth, which featured prominent women and youth activists. UNFICYP, with the assistance of the Embassy of Ireland, supported the launch, in April 2024, of the Cyprus Women Bi-Communal Coalition, which was working towards a renewed peace process that is inclusive and transparent, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.⁹²

IV. Conclusions

74. **The sixtieth anniversary since the establishment of UNFICYP and the mandate of the good offices of the Secretary-General following the intercommunal violence of 1963 and 1964 and the fiftieth anniversary since the Turkish intervention of 1974 provided a stark reminder of the significant passage of time that the people of Cyprus have been waiting for a just and durable peaceful solution to the island’s continued division. Meaningful progress in advancing human rights for all people in Cyprus remains elusive owing to the island’s continued division since the Turkish intervention of 1974.**

75. **As the 12 technical committees could help advance human rights for all people living in Cyprus, it remains imperative to improve their performance and insulate them from wider political developments.**

76. **Over the recent years, several challenges beyond the control of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus have slowed progress in the search for the missing, hindering the right of the families to the truth about the whereabouts of their loved ones and prolonging their agony. All actors should continue to support the work of the Committee in bringing closure to the families, including by supporting its efforts to deploy new technologies.**

77. **As the last crossing points were opened in November 2018, it has become increasingly imperative to enlarge existing crossing points and to establish new crossing points given the growing need for new crossing points to facilitate the right to freedom of movement, which would also help facilitate intercommunal contacts and trust building. Further cooperation also remains necessary to address ongoing and growing challenges related to migration and human trafficking.**

78. **Persisting challenges to the right to non-discrimination and the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, especially for Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the north, continue to hinder social cohesion and intercommunity trust building, requiring targeted policies and initiatives aimed at eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting inclusivity.**

⁹⁰ Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), para. 8.

⁹¹ See also [S/2024/526](#), para. 25.

⁹² See also [S/2024/526](#), paras. 10 and 14; and [S/2024/527](#), paras. 50–51; see <https://www.cypdc.org/post/cpdc-and-determination-for-peace-apofasi-irinis-joint-declaration>.

79. Challenges continued with regard to property rights for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and further efforts are needed to ensure their right to effective remedies, including, where appropriate, compensation, restitution and exchange.

80. Quality education for peace and tolerance for every child holds the potential to transform Cypriot society given the important role that children can play, including as future leaders, in advancing social inclusion and cohesion, which are essential components to ensure the success and sustainability peacebuilding efforts. Urgent action is thus needed not only to develop and improve relevant educational material, including history and other textbooks, but also to ensure that all teachers are effectively trained to shape attitudes and behavioural patterns based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and mutual respect.

81. Enhanced efforts are also needed to ensure the meaningful participation of women and youth in the peace process, including by effectively implementing the joint action plan to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process/an eventual settlement process.

82. Despite these challenges, representatives of civil society, religious leaders and actors and many bicomunal technical committees continued to promote and protect human rights for all. Civil society actors in the northern part of Cyprus continued to support victims of human rights violations, while a bicomunal civil society initiative was launched to address human rights violations affecting both communities.

83. As human rights apply to all people everywhere, it remains imperative that all stakeholders uphold the human rights of all people in Cyprus in accordance with relevant international human rights law and standards. OHCHR encourages increased engagement with international human rights mechanisms in this regard and underlines that it remains paramount that OHCHR and other relevant actors have access to the whole island, and to all persons affected, and that they enjoy the full cooperation of the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot authorities.

84. OHCHR again underscores that urgently and effectively addressing human rights protection gaps and issues in Cyprus remains essential not only to ensure the realization of human rights for all people in Cyprus but also to support efforts to reach a just and lasting peaceful solution regarding the division of the island.
