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1. New and Upcoming Publications/Podcasts (www.FEScyprus.org)

November

Cihan Dizdaroğlu
Moving Beyond Soliloquy: Youth Perceptions on Politics, Peace and Inter-Communal Contacts
 (In English, Greek, Turkish)



Sarah Morsheimer, Kyriaki Chatzipanagiotou, Tina Mykkänen, Hrishabh Sandilya
A Systemic Analysis of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers in Cyprus: Part I - An Overview
 FES Cyprus/Project Phoenix/Justice Project
 (In German, Greek)

December

Elias Ioakimoglou, Nicos Trimikliniotis
The Post-Pandemic Stimulus to Restart the Cypriot Economy: A Wage-led Growth Strategy Report
 (In English)



Sertac Sonan, Ebru Küçükşener, Enis Porat
Politics and Society in North Cyprus: A Survey Study, 2019 Report
 (In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



Ömer Gökçekeş, Sertac Sonan
Socio-Economic and Political Impact of Austerity Policies in North Cyprus: A Brief Assessment
 (In English, German, Greek, Turkish)



Simona Mihai-Yiannaki, Fiona Mullen
National Recovery Strategies – Cyprus Report
 (In English)



Orestis Tringides
Hate Speech in Social Media
 (In English)

Podcasts

Our podcasts can be found in the new media section of our homepage at:

<< <https://www.fescyprus.org/media/> >>



Hubert Faustmann, Sarah Morsheimer, Hrishabh Sandilya
The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on RMAs in Cyprus – Exacerbating Systemic Faults
 (In English)



Hubert Faustmann, Thorsten Kruse
The Religious Heritage in Cyprus: The City of Nikosia
 (In English, German)



Hubert Faustmann, Elias Ioakimoglou, Nicos Trimikliniotis
The Post-Pandemic Stimulus: Could a Minimum Wage Boost the Beleaguered Cypriot Economy?
 (In English)

2. FES Cyprus Events

Friday, 18th November, 11:00 – 13:00

The Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations / International Peace Institute / FES Cyprus

Focus Group

Study on UNFICYP and the Role of the Special Envoy

Online Event

3. Cyprus Problem

The completion of the presidential elections in the north during the month of October was followed with the announcement of opening a part of the fenced off town of Varosha by the Turkish side. Subsequently, the newly-elected Turkish Cypriot leader, Ersin Tatar and his Greek Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades agreed to an informal meeting for early November.

On October 18, the leader of the National Unity Party (UBP) Ersin Tatar won the presidential elections in the TRNC¹ with 51.74% of

¹ The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Ersin Tatar serves as President of the TRNC, the international community considers him the communal leader of the Turkish Cypriots. As the government of the Republic of Cyprus remains internationally recognised as the government of the whole of the island, the entire island is now considered to be a member of the European Union. However, the

the vote with strong backing by Turkey. Outgoing leader, Mustafa Akinci who was running against Tatar as an independent secured 48.26% in the decisive second round (for more on the elections please see the Turkish Cypriot section). On the Cyprus problem, Tatar is considered as a Turkish nationalist echoing Ankara's position for a two-state solution and rejecting the idea of a bizonal, bicomunal federation. In an interview with TVNET he stated that he was ready to start dialogue with the Greek Cypriot side aimed at the continuation of the existence of the TRNC and of the system of guarantees.

On October 8, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side opened part of Varosha, a Greek Cypriot suburb of Famagusta after 46 years. Varosha had been fenced off and under the control of the Turkish military since August 1974 when its inhabitants fled the advancing Turkish army during the Turkish invasion. Announcements were made in relation to works that will be carried out, ahead of the visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is expected in the north on November 15 to celebrate the anniversary of its unilateral declaration of independence. During a joint statement with newly elected Tatar, Erdogan provocatively expressed his desire to "have a picnic" in Varosha.

Varosha was also visited on October 28 by Turkey's Minister of Environment and Urban Planning, Murat Kurum, who noted that walk-

acquis communautaire is suspended in northern Cyprus pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).

ing and cycling routes would be created and that the area will be revived and opened to the whole world. Both Tatar and Turkey had been declaring they would restore Varosha, a popular holiday resort until 1974, to its former glory to attract tourism and boost the north's economy. Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades condemned the move, as an illegal act and a violation of international law and reminded his Turkish Cypriot counterpart of UN Security Council resolutions 550 and 789². The European Council condemned the opening of Varosha and urged for respect of UN Security Council resolutions and issued a presidential statement. The UN Security Council called for a reversal of the decision to reopen Varosha and called on Turkey to adhere to UN resolutions.

On October 13, Anastasiades briefed German Foreign Minister, Heiko Mass on the opening of part of the fenced town of Varosha as well as on Turkey's activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone claimed by the Republic of Cyprus. The German Minister was in Cyprus as part of a working visit.

In reply to a letter sent to Anastasiades, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his readiness to provide his Good

Offices mission for the resumption of talks for the solution of the Cyprus problem on the basis of all that has been agreed upon, the mutual understanding achieved in Berlin on November 25, 2019, and according to the Security Council resolutions.

On October 26, Erdogan stated that it was time for a realistic proposal for a two-state solution to be discussed, suggesting that a federal model could no longer apply in Cyprus. Speaking at a joint news conference with Tatar, Erdogan said new ideas concerning the solution model were needed. Erdogan argued that no result could be achieved under the current parameters following negotiations that lasted more than half a century. He confirmed that Turkey would continue efforts to make improvements in the breakaway state on economic, diplomatic, and social levels.

On October 27, the UN spokesman in Cyprus announced that the two leaders Anastasiades and Tatar agreed to have an informal meeting on November 3 under the auspices of the Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar, in the Chief of Mission's residence in the United Nations Protected Area.

On October 27, during a phone call with Anastasiades the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson assured the former that he is willing to take a more active role in the Cyprus problem. He also condemned Turkey's actions towards Cyprus and in the wider region.

² UN Security Council resolution 550 (1984) considers any attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible and calls for the transfer of this area to the administration of the UN. UN Security Council resolution 789 (1992) also urges that with a view to the implementation of resolution 550 (1984), the area at present under the control of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus be extended to include Varosha.

4. Hydrocarbons

On October 9 Turkey issued a new Navtex for its seismic research vessel Barbaros, after it moved from an area off Famagusta to an area off the western coast of Cyprus. The new Navtex began on October 10 and ends on November 9 and will cover areas off the coast of Cyprus. The Barbaros will be accompanied by the ships Tanux 1 and Apollo Moon.

On October 22, Turkey extended the stay of its Oruc Reis survey vessel and two other ships, the Ataman and Cengiz Han, in a disputed area of the eastern Mediterranean until October 27, in a move likely to further escalate tensions between Athens and Ankara. In September Turkey had withdrawn Oruc Reis to “allow for diplomacy” only to send it back in early October, prompting an angry rebuke from Greece, France and Germany. Turkey and Greece are at odds over conflicting claims to hydrocarbon resources in the eastern Mediterranean and overlapping views on the extent of their continental shelves and their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

On October 21, the 8th Trilateral Summit between Cyprus, Greece and Egypt was held in Nicosia with the participation of the Presidents from both Cyprus and Egypt, and the Prime Minister of Greece, Nicos Anastasiades, Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Abdel Fattah al Sisi respectively. Among the issues discussed were the Cyprus problem, Turkey’s provocations in Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone, energy, immigration, terrorism, regional issues and the coronavirus pandemic. In a declaration that followed the three countries con-

demned the opening of Varosha and called on Turkey to terminate its provocative actions as well as to comply with UN resolutions and to contribute constructively towards the resumption of reunification talks. They also expressed their grave concern over the recent escalation within the maritime zones in the eastern Mediterranean and the increased militarisation of the region.

A trilateral meeting between the respective foreign ministers of Greece, Cyprus and Israel, Nicos Dendias, Nicos Christodoulides and Gabi Ashkenazi was held in Athens on October 27. According to Christodoulides he and Dendias briefed each other on the continuous Turkish provocations in the wider Mediterranean region and especially in Cyprus’ EEZ, where Turkey keeps drilling illegally. The foreign minister also praised Israel’s recent deal with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) aimed at restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries. Further cooperation in the energy and tourism sectors were also discussed during the meeting, as well as the economy.

5. Greek Cypriots

Economic Developments

On October 26 Finance Minister, Constantinos Petrides presented the 2021 state budget to the House finance committee. Next year’s balance sheet comes to €7,61 billion (excluding loan repayments and interest expenses), 8.7% larger than last year. The main reason being that the government seeks to boost the budget’s social welfare dimension, including

emergency measures to support vulnerable groups, employees and companies. Petrides appealed to legislators to pass the state's balance sheet for 2021, calling it an "emergency budget" designed to ride out the coronavirus situation and lay the groundwork for economic recovery.

According to a market survey commissioned by the Bank of Cyprus one in four Cyprus households saw their income drop significantly after the outbreak of the pandemic

According to data released by the statistical service Cystat, the general government posted a deficit of €800m during the period of April to June 2020 compared with a surplus of €140m in the respective period last year. The second quarter of 2020 included a full month of lockdown imposed as part of the measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus, while government spending increased in the context of measures to support the economy.

According to data released by the statistical service (Cystat) revenue from tourism amounted just to €235.6m for the period of January to August 2020, a fall of 87.3% year on year, due to the pandemic. Revenue from tourism for the respective period in 2019 was €1.8bn. Tourist arrivals in January to August 2020 plunged 84% to 424,650 compared with 2.7m in the respective period of 2019.

On October 30 the European Commission sent a reasoned opinion to Cyprus for failing to transpose the 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive into national law. The transposition deadline for the directive elapsed on January 10, 2020 and, to date, the Cypriot authorities

have not notified the Commission of any transposition measure. Without a satisfactory response from Cyprus within the next two months, the Commission may decide to refer the case to the Court of Justice of the European Union. The European Commission also decided to refer Cyprus to the Court of Justice and to request the payment of financial penalties because it has failed to transpose the rules on the protection of undisclosed know-how and business information (Directive 2016/943) into national legislation. The Directive, also known as the Trade Secrets Directive, harmonises the legal protection of trade secrets across the EU and ensures a sufficient and consistent level of civil redress and compensation in the Single Market in the event of unlawful acquisition, use or disclosure of a trade secret. The deadline set by the Directive expired on June 9, 2018.

Domestic Developments

In October the epidemiological profile of Cyprus deteriorated as the confirmed COVID-19 cases more than doubled from 1,755 to 4,366. The total number of deaths now stands at 33, 26 of which are directly attributed to COVID. The health ministry announced strict measures to contain the spread of the virus including the obligatory use of masks in both private and public spaces and in all districts. In Limassol and Pafos, authorities were forced to impose curfews and business closures at certain times. The rise in the coronavirus cases which remained in triples digits over the last weeks of the month, prompt the UK govern-

ment to remove Cyprus from its “green” travel corridor list meaning that travellers arriving to the UK from Cyprus will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

On October 12, Al Jazeera released a video-documentary, filmed by undercover reporters, showing the House president Dimitris Syllouris, the AKEL MP Christakis Giouvanis, and a prominent lawyer, Andreas Pittadjis, willing to bend the rules in return for cash and offering help to secure Cypriot citizenship for a fictitious Chinese businessman with a criminal record. Among others, the documentary revealed a business lunch at Giouvanis’ house in October 2019, along with Syllouris and the developer’s associates and the undercover journalists, during which Syllouris offered “full support” to the businessman despite having a criminal record and being convicted to seven years in jail in absentia by China for money laundering. Syllouris even went on to offer his contacts with heads of other foreign parliaments if they faced a problem with the application process in Cyprus. In another occasion, during a meeting in a hotel room in Cyprus, an estate agent who was also implicated in the scandal and who worked with Giouvanis, told journalists that they had a 100% success rate in securing passports for people because of Giouvanis who was characterized as the “most important person” for having connections with the Permanent Secretary of the Interior Ministry who oversaw the program. The agent told undercover journalists that they had problematic clients before, but with Giouvanis’ links they managed to break the rules and get the passport issued in an “unprecedented way”. Journalists also met with

Pittadjis, a lawyer, who even suggested changing the Chinese businessman’s name to secure the passport, via an affidavit which could be prepared in just minutes and by exploiting a gap in the Cypriot legal system. In other occasions he also admitted that no passport was totally legitimate.

Prompted by public outrage the two state officials Syllouris and Giouvanis resigned, while the government which was already under pressure by the EU, announced the termination of the controversial programme from November 1, giving time for pending and new applications to be examined. Adamos Adamou from AKEL was voted as new House president following Syllouris’ resignation who continued to deny allegations of any wrongdoing. Two investigations are currently under way, one by an independent committee probing all the applications and citizenships since 2007, and a police probe into the allegations emerging from the video.

On October 21, the European Commission announced it was launching infringement procedures over Cyprus’ citizenship by investment programme. The government, and Anastasiades personally, had defended the programme, suggesting Cyprus was being targeted by other countries. As recently as August, when Al Jazeera broadcasted a report claiming Cyprus was granting citizenship to dubious individuals, the government argued that it was an organised attack against the island implicating Turkey.

The scandal prompted a huge public backlash with several protests being held against corruption in Cyprus. Green Party MP Giorgos

Perdikis and independent MP Anna Theologou submitted a proposal calling for the dissolution of the parliament and the president's resignation. The Parliament voted 30 to 26 against the proposal while MPs referred the accompanying proposal calling for the President's resignation to the legal affairs committee. Opposition parties AKEL and DIKO also called for the President's resignation. A presidency statement however responded to the calls noting that the President will not betray the clear mandate handed to him by the people to govern the country for five years.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

The decision of the Ministry of Labour to classify workers in the afternoon and evening programs of the Ministry of Education from employees to self-employed was ruled illegal by the Administrative Court. The ruling came on October 8, following an appeal by the PEO trade union to the court against the Ministry of Labour and Education. In March 2013, the first political decision of the newly elected government was to cancel the employment status of workers employed in the afternoon and evening programmes of the Ministry of Education and to convert them to self-employed by buying services. The decision concerned a total of 14 projects and about five and a half thousand employees. With this decision these workers saw a reduction in their income of around 35%. This came as a result of their new obligation to pay their Social Insurance. Moreover, they did not have access to social funds, nor they could receive

the unemployment stipend for the months they did not work. Additionally, they were not able to take sick leave and in case they were absent for any reason their leave was unpaid. At the same time, the Court's decision rejected the government's position that PEO had no legitimate interest as a trade union in taking them to court and at the same time called for the appeal application to be annulled. The Court held that they do have a legitimate interest and can represent their members. This aspect of the Court's decision means that from now on, trade unions can go to court by representing various groups. The Minister of Education announced that he would appeal against the decision once again.

On October 21, the General Assembly of the employees of CyBC was held, where they authorized the PEO trade union to sign an agreement with the CyBC as it was formed after the many months of negotiations and which has the acceptance and support of the Ministry of Interior.

The agreement can be summarized in the following points:

1. The issue of the existence of many different "categories" of workers in the CyBC shall be addressed, by accepting that the permanent needs of the CyBC will be gradually covered by a structured process. This will mean that even if the staff will be reduced compared its current numbers, it will consist of permanent staff with regulated working conditions. Moreover, none of the current employees will

lose their job, and the working conditions will remain as is.

2. Corrective arrangements will be made to address discrimination and injustice faced by many employees with contracts that foresee “indefinite duration”, who have been working in a state of job insecurity and uncertainty for decades, and have no prospect of being promoted while performing upgraded tasks.
3. The issue of the payment of the so-called “Marginal Benefit”, which has remained stagnant for decades, is resolved in a way that regulates its continuation.

The Nicosia bus company and its employees protested due to the many challenges faced in their daily work and operations. According to an announcement by the relevant trade union, the responsibility lies with the company, but also with the relevant ministries of Transport and Labour which have failed to oblige the company to implement the agreements between the company and its employees, as well as the relevant legislation. As the trade union points out, the most important problems concern the continuing violation of the Collective Labour Agreement, the legislation on drivers' working and rest hours, contributions to the Licensing Fund, the lack of infrastructure in several bus stations, and finally, the way in which the company calculates the work hours.

6. Turkish Cypriots

Economic Developments

Since the end of August, the exports of TRNC in 2020 have reached USD 77.5 million while imports were at the level of USD 655.9 million. According to the data provided by the Trade Department, the exports increased by 22.9% despite the pandemic, while at 28.1%, the decline in imports which has been the trend in recent years has accelerated. In the January-August 2019 period exports were 63.1 million and imports were 912.1 million. The decline in imports indicate that the economy has been shrinking and demand in foreign goods has fallen due to the decline in purchasing power of the people. In October alone, Turkish Lira shed around 8% of its value against euro.

According to KTEZO (Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Shopkeepers and Artisans) more than 1,100 workplaces have been permanently closed since March as a result of the pandemic. General Coordinator Hurrem Tulga said that their present situation is worse than how things were in March 2020. The latest drop in the value of the Turkish Lira against foreign currencies has brought the construction and real-estate sectors to a grinding halt. Reportedly, sales have dropped drastically.

Employees in the private sector are continuing to draw money from their retirement savings. Reportedly, a total of 53,000 people applied to the Provident Fund in the past six months to withdraw 2,000 TL (€214) per month, which is the allowed amount. The

fund has paid out 105m (€11.2m) so far. The government allowed employees to withdraw this specific amount from their retirement pot as part of its measures to alleviate the economic effects of the pandemic.

Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce chairperson, Turgay Deniz told the Turkish Cypriot weekly paper Cyprus Today that the devaluation of Turkish Lira was a “crisis” for north Cyprus because property prices, rents, university fees and the prices of many imported goods are based on foreign currency. *“The devaluation of the Turkish lira against foreign currencies, coupled with the lack of tourists and foreign students arising from the pandemic, will put many businesses under a lot of financial difficulties,”* Deniz said.

Relations with Turkey

Incumbent President and Presidential candidate Mustafa Akinci complained about the involvement of Ankara against him (and in favour of particularly Tatar) in the presidential campaign, and responding to a question on a private TV channel just before the first round, revealed that he had been told it would be in his and his family’s best interest not to run as a candidate. Akinci, without giving any names, said the “advice” came from authorities close to Ankara. He added that he had invited the Turkish Ambassador to his office to inquire about it but the Ambassador did not accept the invitation. The Turkish Embassy denied this.

Two days before the first round of the election, 2000 TL was deposited to the bank accounts of 9872 people (mainly social benefit recipients) as “social pandemic support”; the payment was financed by the Turkish government. The move, which was seen as a support for Tatar, sparked reaction from other presidential candidates including Republican Turkish Party (CTP) leader Tufan Erhurman, and independent candidate Serdar Denktas.

The surprise Varosha/Maras decision, which was announced by Prime Minister and Presidential candidate Ersin Tatar during a joint press conference with Turkish President Erdogan in Ankara on October 6th was also seen as a clear sign showing Ankara’s support for Tatar. Tatar was in Ankara to take part in a ceremony to mark the resumption of flow of water from Turkey to Cyprus via the pipeline after the completion of the repair works. The water flow has been disrupted since January.

“The term at the TRNC presidency which targeted Turkey and the Cyprus cause is over,” the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Spokesperson Omer Celik said after Ersin Tatar’s election. Celik said that a new era, one based on positive relations with Ankara, had begun with the newly elected Turkish Cypriot President Ersin Tatar.

Domestic Developments

The lowest turnout in the TRNC’s history was recorded during the first round of the presidential election. The voter turnout which was 93.5% in 1990 went down to 58.3% in 2020. A

regional breakdown of the first round results showed that Mustafa Akinci polled in first place in Nicosia, Morphou and Kyrenia, while Ersin Tatar was the most popular candidate in Famagusta, Trikomo (Iskele) and Lefka. The first round results were as follows:

Candidate	Percentage	Total votes
Ersin Tatar (UBP)	32.34	35,872
Mustafa Akinci (Independent)	29.80	33,058
Tufan Erhurman (CTP)	21.71	24,075
Kudret Ozersay (Independent)	5.74	6,365
Erhan Arikli (YDP)	5.41	5,999
Serdar Denktas (Independent)	4.17	4,627
Fuat Ciner (MDP)	0.30	329

In the run up to the second round between the two candidates with the most votes, the DP and YDP declared their support to Ersin Tatar, while the CTP threw its support behind Mustafa Akinci. The HP, on the other hand, chose not to take a stance. Serdar Denktas who received lower than 5% in the first round broke his ties with the DP to which he had served as its leader for the past 21 years. He said he would be preserving his honour by not voting for Tatar. His son, Rauf, however, said he would be supporting Tatar in the second round. Eventually, Tatar won the second round with 51.7%. The turnout was significantly higher (67.3%).

An independent working group named “Reporting Meddling and Interference” has been established by a group of lawyers, activists and researchers to launch a probe into allegations of election meddling. The working group issued a statement and asked people with any information on the elections to come forth. There were serious claims of meddling and interference particularly between the two rounds. *“Therefore, we have decided to collect and report on all the available data that prevented the Turkish Cypriot community’s political will to be reflected in the ballot boxes,”* the statement read. The group added that the findings of the report would then be shared with international organizations, human rights groups, the UN and the EU to prevent similar actions to be repeated in the future. It also assured the public that the identities of those who share information will be kept strictly confidential (see also the Labour Relations and Trade Unions section).

On October 23, Ersin Tatar was sworn in as the fifth president of the TRNC at parliament (in a ceremony attended by the Turkish Vice-President Fuat Oktay), and took over the office of the president with a ceremony from the fourth president Mustafa Akinci. Speaking at the ceremony, Tatar gave a message to the UN and the international community and appealed to the Greek Cypriot side: *“No one can punish us for fighting for our freedom, for protecting our sovereignty and for establishing our state,”* Tatar stressed, adding that lifting the economic isolation and the embargoes imposed on the north will be among his top priorities. Tatar said he also welcomed Turkey’s proposal of holding a five-party con-

ference to table the two-state solution based on sovereign equality and to see if it is possible to reach an agreement or not.

“Even those closest to me told me I didn’t have a chance... and that I couldn’t win,” said Tatar in his first official interview to the state-run TAK news agency. Tatar who won the election under a shadow of speculation from his rivals that he owed his victory to Ankara’s interference, said he was deeply hurt by such claims. *“The people made their choice. No one was forced to vote for me. Everyone knows that. The difference of 5,000 votes cannot be underestimated,”* he said.

The surprise ‘Varosha opening’ brought an end to the governing coalition between the National Unity Party (UBP) - People's Party (HP). The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Kudret Ozersay (HP- supported independent candidate) said that he had not been informed about this move by the Prime Minister. He accused Tatar of *"not recognising state organs"* and not *"fulfilling his responsibilities to his coalition partner"*. HP officials said that while they approved of the opening of Varosha in accordance with international law, they were against it being used by Tatar for his *"own advantage in the election"*. There has been no cabinet change yet, however, because Tatar did not tender the resignation of the government to the president creating a government crisis.

In the meantime, the UBP held its extraordinary congress on October 31 to elect a new party leader following Tatar’s election as the new president. None of the five MPs, Faiz Sucuoglu (Nicosia MP and the Minister of

Labour), Nazim Cavusoglu (Trikomo MP and the Minister of Education), Dursun Oguz (Trikomo MP and the Minister of Agriculture), Hasan Tacoy (Nicosia MP and the Minister of Economy) and Unal Ustel (Kyrenia MP), who ran in the first round managed to secure a majority. The two front runners Faiz Sucuoglu who received 2,706 votes and Hasan Tacoy who received 2,102 votes will be competing in the second round, which will be held on November 7. The turnout was 6,801.

The government crisis which emerged after the HP’s withdrawal from the coalition a week before the election continued. Tatar said that he would continue to head the government until UBP elected its new leader, adding that the new UBP leader would be tasked with forming a new government. He pointed out that this was permitted by the constitution. The leader of the main opposition Republican Turkish Party (CTP) Tufan Erhurman slammed Tatar saying *“It is not possible for the president-elect Ersin Tatar to continue to rule the TRNC as the prime minister. This is not possible legally.”*

Erhurman stated that from a legal perspective, Tatar needed to submit his resignation to Mustafa Akinci the moment his coalition partner quit the government and subsequently days before the first round of the presidential election. *“There are tens of thousands of unemployed people, thousands of businesses closed down and many people concerned about their or their loved one’s health. It is not right to create legal debates at such a time,”* Erhurman warned. Erhurman pointed out that Tatar following his election should have ap-

pointed one of the ministers in his cabinet as acting head of government.

Labour Relations and Trade Unions

The Trade Unions Platform, which is made up of 15 trade unions, have decided to declare support for independent candidate Mustafa Akinci in the second round of the elections. The platform said: *"We are faced with a public referendum in the second round,"* and added that *"the platform chooses a federal solution, secularism and freedom over discrimination and secessionism and submission to others"*. The platform also stressed that a *"federal solution is the joint goal of all the trade unions that form the platform."*

After the election, the Trade Unions Platform said it did not recognize the outcome of the election. The platform, in a written statement, said that there had been direct and open interference in the election by Ankara and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP). It claimed that PR experts and MPs from the AKP and Turkey's Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) as well as staff from the Turkish embassy in Nicosia had actively worked and campaigned for Tatar's election. *"Moreover, the conclusion of the repairs on the water pipeline project and Maraş (Varosha) were used to win votes for Tatar,"* the platform noted. It said that there were even reports that people were pressured by high-ranking public officials to vote for Tatar. *"While we as the members of the platform reject the outcome of the elections, we also need to underline that the 'Vi-*

chy Government' in the north does not represent the political will of the Turkish Cypriots," the unions stressed. The platform argued that Tatar's election was the first step in the process for the north's annexation to Turkey and concluded by stressing that they will not give up their struggle to protect the Turkish Cypriots' rights and to work towards unification of the island. The Platform statement was signed by the Turkish Cypriot Teachers' Union (KTOS), the Turkish Cypriot Secondary School Teachers' Union (KTQEOS), the Turkish Cypriot Public Servants' Union (KTAMS), Turkish Cypriot Revolutionary Workers' Unions Federation (Dev-İs), the Turkish Cypriot Press Workers' Union (Basin-Sen), the Turkish Cypriot State Workers' Union (Çag-Sen), the Turkish Cypriot Cooperative Workers' Union (Koop-Sen), and the Turkish Cypriot Trade Unions' Federation (Turk-Sen).

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