

Embargoed! Speech to the OSCE HDIM Human Rights Conference
WARSAW, October 6th 2009

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Embargoed! is again extremely honoured and privileged to address this very important gathering of OSCE members and respected fellow NGO's.

Embargoed! is a multi-ethnic human rights group based in London campaigning to bring an end to the unjust isolations faced by Turkish Cypriots living in North Cyprus.

Since we last we were here some 12 months ago Cyprus has been in the spotlight on a fairly regular basis – particular quite recently, where the solution talks between Mehmet Ali Talat and Demetrious Christofias have been positively welcomed around the world.

The reason why we are addressing the HDIM meeting today is our wish to refer to and put on record during this discussion the continuing intolerance and discrimination faced by Turkish Cypriots living in North Cyprus.

The inequality and discrimination experienced by Turkish Cypriots is still glaringly clear and real to witness. Turkish Cypriots living in North Cyprus are literally cut off from the rest of the world.

It is still not possible to:

- Trade freely with the rest of the world
- For our democratically elected leaders to participate in political forums and be representative of Turkish Cypriots to express their political equality
- Participate in sporting, social and cultural events
- Travel and communicate directly with the rest of the world and for example post sent to North Cyprus has to be delivered via a PO Box in Turkey.

Following the Annan Plan referenda of 2004 all of these things were promised to Turkish Cypriots by many countries seated around the table today. It is regrettable that to date not one single embargo has been lifted or eased.

Clearly there are many groups of people who face intolerance and discrimination, all simply as a result of the colour of their skin, or for their national identities, or maybe for their religion or sometimes for other reasons. But seldom has there been put in place and legitimised a regime

of embargoes which systematically promotes intolerance and discrimination of an entire people.

Last year Embargoed! made a plea to the Greek Cypriot authorities to facilitate ongoing capacity building projects aimed at promoting dignity and respect. This plea has not been listened to.

Instead, what we have seen in Cyprus is business as usual

We are not here today to play about with words – when it comes to Cyprus it seems one group of people has basic human rights and another set of people i.e. Turkish Cypriots have none. This leads to a situation where discrimination and intolerance are allowed to go unchecked.

I can give you some examples such as:

The producers of Turkish coffee and Turkish delight find it difficult if not impossible to trade across the Green line unless they remove the word “Turkish” from packaging.

The denial of the basic right of Turkish Cypriot school children living in Limassol, South Cyprus to receive an education in their mother tongue.

The failure of the Greek Cypriot authorities to list Turkish, which is an official language of the Republic of Cyprus, as an official language of the EU.

These are just three basic examples. There are many more. Unfortunately Turkish Cypriots live in a situation where racism and intolerance is the norm.

We'd like to end our submission by calling upon you to recognise that a permanent viable and long lasting solution to the Cyprus problem is much more likely to happen when the Greek Cypriot authorities commit to and implement measures which address the issues we have raised today.