



TRNC - freedom in a cage

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The history of Cyprus is the harrowing tale of the miseries suffered by the peace loving people of the island.

What to talk of the bygone era monarchical rule or dictatorships, even during the twentieth century, the fundamental rights of the minority Turkish Cypriots were ruthlessly usurped by religious godfathers under the every noses of the cosignatories of the Human Rights Charter. History witnessed innumerable traumatic events taking place on the island, wreaking unparalleled misery and dislocation on its inhabitants.

It is said that the majority Greeks Cypriots cannot remember what happened between 1963 and 1974 and that the Cypriot Turks cannot forget. In July 1974, Turkey came to rescue the minority. The island was then ethnically divided into North Cyprus and South Cyprus, dominated by Turk Muslim Cypriots and Greek Christian Cypriot respectively. The resulting peace prevailed on both sides.

In February 1975, a semi-independent Turkish Cypriot state was proclaimed in North Cyprus. Subsequently, on November 15, 1983, the Cypriot Turks declared their independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The Turkish intervention was first welcomed by the West but the European Commission of Human Rights declined to recognize the new setup.

The declaration of independence by parliament was not acceptable to the hawks occupying the corridors of power in the UN. The UN Security Council declared the purported secession 'legally invalid'. Sanctions were then unjustifiably imposed on the newly born state, at a time when it needed all the support from the international community that it

ate the existence of the minority.

Kofi Annan had described the referendum as the 'last throw of the dice for the much sought-after Cypriot unity' but the 'NO' vote by Southern Cyprus completely destroyed his plan. The unexpected verdict of the majority left no reason but to accept the legitimacy of the existence of TRNC as an independent and sovereign nation.

By now, too much water has flowed under the bridge. The agony of injustice to TRNC by awarding 'freedom in cage' through a generations old embargo is now being realized fractionally by other countries.

The European Union has now started opening its doors to TRNC by ending its traditional policy of isolation. The EU frankly and forthrightly announced a 256 million euro economic aid package. Similar actions are also likely to be taken by the US.

Some other countries are also considering recognizing Northern Cyprus as a sovereign state. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan also stressed to take concrete action to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that have the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots and impeding their development.

Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has rightly said, in an article published in the Washington Times, one of the leading dailies of United States, that "If the Turkish Cypriots people hope for future and their continuing vision for a settlement are not to be dimmed, the international community must act now."

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The package of largely economic measures announced on July 7 by the EU commission gives us hope. It is disheartening, however, that the Greek Cypriot administration