

Instead, for the past 28 years, there has been a Turkish Cypriot leader presiding over a regime recognized only by Turkey and condemned as legally invalid by the U.N. Security Council. Cyprus has been divided by the Green Line, a 113-mile barbed wire fence that runs across the island. Greek-Cypriots are prohibited from visiting the towns and communities where their families have lived for generations.

With 35,000 Turkish troops illegally stationed on the island, it is one of the most militarized areas in the world. This situation has also meant the financial decline of the once-rich northern part of Cyprus to just one-quarter of its former earnings.

Perhaps the single most destructive element of Turkey's fiscal and foreign policy is its nearly 28-year occupation of Cyprus. We now have an atmosphere where there is no valid excuse for not resolving this long-standing problem. Cyprus is set for entrance into the European Union in 2004, and I am hopeful that this reality will act as a catalyst for a lasting solution of the Cyprus challenge. EU membership for Cyprus will clearly provide important economic, political, and social benefits for all Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish alike.

This is why both sides must continue to negotiate. There is also a new climate of cooperation between Turkey and Greece with many positive signs. More has been achieved in the past 2 years than in many years before.

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While the U.S., the EU, Greece and Cyprus have all acted to accommodate Turkish concerns, it is time for Turkey to complete the peace process in good faith. Make no mistake about it, if Turkey wants the Cyprus problem resolved, it will happen. Now is the time for a solution to the Cyprus problem. It will take diligent work by both sides, but with U.S. support and leadership, I am hopeful that we will reach a peaceful and fair solution soon. Twenty-eight years is too long to have a country divided, it is too long to be kept from your home, and it is too long to be separated from your family.

We have seen many tremendous changes around the world.

It is time for the Cypriots to live in peace and security, with full enjoyment of their human rights.

I am hopeful that their desire for freedom will one day be fulfilled.

In recognition of the spirit of the people of Cyprus, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the Cyprus Federation of America, and in solemnly commemorating the twenty-eighth anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus.

I hope that this anniversary will mark the advent of true freedom and peace for Cyprus.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend

their remarks on the subject of my special order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JEFF MILLER of Florida). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

CYPRUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, as I have done every year and as the gentlewoman from New York just did, we usually do this together, I rise again today to reiterate my fierce objection to the illegal occupation of the island of Cyprus by Turkish troops and declare my grave concern for the future of the area. The island's 28 years of internal division make the status quo absolutely unacceptable.

In July 1974, Turkish troops captured the northern part of Cyprus, seizing over a third of the island. The Turkish troops expelled 200,000 Greek Cypriots from their homes and killed 5,000 citizens of the once peaceful island. Over a quarter of a century later, about 1,500 Greek Cypriots remain missing, including four Americans. The Turkish invasion was a conscious and deliberate attempt at ethnic cleansing. Turkey proceeded to install 35,000 military personnel. Today these troops, in conjunction with the United Nations peacekeeping forces, make the small island of Cyprus one of the most militarized areas in the world. Turkey is the only nation, Mr. Speaker, in the world which recognizes the Turkish Northern Republic of Cyprus.

Twenty-eight years later, the forced separation of these two communities still exists despite efforts by the United Nations and G-8 leadership to mend this rift between north and south. The U.N., with the explicit support of the United States, has sponsored several rounds of proximity talks between the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and Mr. Rauf Denktash, the self-proclaimed leader of the occupied northern part of the island.

In January 2002, direct negotiations between President Clerides and Mr. Denktash began. Thus far, these negotiations have not produced any breakthroughs. Regrettably, the progress on an agreement has been thwarted by the intransigent position taken by Mr. Denktash with the full backing of the Turkish government. However, it is encouraging that the two leaders are continuing their direct talks which maintains the possibility that a comprehensive settlement can still be reached.

The recent political events in Turkey and the decision to hold early elections in November of this year will have a direct effect on the outcome of the Cyprus negotiations. While we support the call for elections in Turkey and trust the democratic voice of the Turk-

ish people, we hope that the Cyprus negotiations will not be undermined by election year politics. We hope that all parties running for Parliament will declare their support for a resolution of the Cyprus problem before the end of the year so that a united Cyprus can enter the EU.

Despite the division of the island constantly taking center stage, the Republic of Cyprus has flourished and grown as an economy and society. It is a Europe-oriented nation that is of strategic, economic and political importance to the region and to the rest of the world. Sadly, the people living in the northern part of the island continue to be mired in poverty as a direct result of their leadership's and Turkey's separatist policies. Cyprus is one of the leading candidate nations to join the EU in the next round of enlargement. European Union membership has the potential to act as a catalyst for resolving the problem of Cyprus which has been poisoning the relations among the parties to the conflict and their NATO allies and the United States.

It would also be in the best interest of Turkey to cooperate with the U.N. on Cyprus in order to advance its own membership in the European Union. Northern Cyprus will perhaps be the greatest beneficiary of Cypriot membership and resolution of the entire affair. It is currently in a state of economic distress which is being exacerbated by Turkish intransigence. Turkey spends more than \$200 million annually to sustain northern Cyprus. With settlement on the matter of Cyprus, this huge financial obligation would be eliminated. By joining the rest of Cyprus, northern Cyprus would become part of an already progressive economy, eliminating its financial dependence on Turkey.

We are all standing at the threshold of an historic opportunity that will shape the futures of generations of Cypriots, Greeks and Turks. We have a responsibility to these ensuant generations to secure their futures by contributing to the efforts to create a peaceful world. It is precisely, Mr. Speaker, to express the above stated points that I have felt compelled to introduce House Concurrent Resolution 164, a bill which expresses the U.S.'s support for Cyprus' admission to the European Union according to the Helsinki Conclusions of 1999. These specifically state that while a solution to the political crisis in Cyprus is preferable prior to EU accession, it is not a precondition for entry.

Mr. Speaker, we have a moral and ethical obligation to use our influence as Americans, as defenders of democracy and as defenders of human rights to reunify Cyprus. There have been 28 years of illegitimate occupation, violence and strife. Let us not make it 29.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Co-Chairs of the Hellenic Caucus, Representatives MICHAEL BILIRAKIS and CAROLYN MALONEY for organizing this special orders on Cyprus and for their leadership on this important issue.