

**HOW READY ARE TURKISH CYPRIOTS FOR EU MEMBERSHIP?**Ozan ÖRMECİ<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Last year (2025), with the election of Tufan Erhürman as the new President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), hopes for reunification between this de facto state, recognized only by Türkiye, and the Greek Cypriot side, which is internationally known as the Republic of Cyprus, increased significantly. The main reason for this is that Dr. Tufan Erhürman, a legal scholar, openly supported federalism during his election campaign and was elected from the CTP (Republican Turkish Party), a social democratic party with a federalist stance. Considering that the Republic of Cyprus also has a President (Nikos Christodoulides) who advocates for federalism, reunification, and the continuation of reunification negotiations from where they left off in Crans-Montana in 2017, the possibility of resolving the Cyprus Conflict, which has remained a frozen conflict for decades, and establishing a federal state on the island after many years, should be carefully examined in the coming months. In this context, this study examines Erhürman's election campaign and the new methodology he developed to resolve the Cyprus Conflict, the initial contacts between the two leaders following Erhürman's election, and the Turkish Cypriots' situation regarding potential EU (European Union) membership in the light of 'Ripeness Theory'.

**Keywords:** *Ripeness Theory, Turkish Cypriots, Cyprus Peace Talks, Tufan Erhürman, Nikos Christodoulides.*

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. of Political Science, General Coordinator of International Political Academy (UPA).  
Email: [ozanormeci@gmail.com](mailto:ozanormeci@gmail.com).  
ORCID: 0000-0001-8850-6089.

## KIBRISLI TÜRKLER AB ÜYELİĞİNE NE KADAR HAZIRLAR?

**Öz:** Geçtiğimiz yıl (2025) içerisinde Tufan Erhürman'ın Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nin (KKTC) yeni Cumhurbaşkanı olarak seçilmesiyle, sadece Türkiye tarafından tanınan bu fiili devlet ile Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti adıyla uluslararası alanda yer edinen Güney Kıbrıs Rum Kesimi'nin yeniden birleşme umutları önemli ölçüde arttı. Bunun temel nedeni, hukukçu bir akademisyen olan Dr. Tufan Erhürman'ın seçim kampanyası sırasında federalizmi açıkça desteklemiş olması ve federalist çizgideki sosyal demokrat CTP (Cumhuriyet Türk Partisi) tarafından seçilmiş olmasıdır. Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti'nin de federalizmi, yeniden birleşmeyi ve birleşme müzakerelerinin 2017 Crans-Montana'da kaldığı yerden devam etmesini savunan bir Devlet Başkanı (Nikos Hristodulidis) olduğu düşünülürse, on yıllardır donmuş bir çatışma olarak devam eden Kıbrıs Sorunu'nun önümüzde aylarda çözümlenmesi ve adada yıllar sonra federal bir devletin kurulması ihtimali dikkatle incelenmelidir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada, 'Olgun An' kavramı ışığında, Tufan Erhürman'ın seçim kampanyası ve Kıbrıs Sorunu'nun çözülmesi için geliştirdiği yeni metodoloji, Erhürman'ın seçilmesi sonrasında iki lider arasında başlayan ilk temaslar ve Kıbrıslı Türklerin Avrupa Birliği'ne tam üyelik konusunda ne derece hazır oldukları araştırılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Olgun An Kavramı, Kıbrıslı Türkler, Kıbrıs Müzakereleri, Tufan Erhürman, Nikos Hristodulidis.*

## Introduction

In October last year (2025), with the election of Tufan Erhürman as the sixth President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), hopes for reunification between this de facto state, recognized only by Türkiye, and the Greek Cypriot side, which is internationally known as the Republic of Cyprus, increased significantly. The main reason for this is that Dr. Tufan Erhürman, a legal scholar, openly supported federalism during his election campaign and was elected from the CTP (Republican Turkish Party), a social democratic party with a federalist stance. Considering that the Republic of Cyprus also has a President (Nikos Christodoulides) who advocates for federalism, reunification, and the continuation of reunification negotiations from where they left off in Crans-Montana in 2017, the possibility of resolving the Cyprus Conflict<sup>2</sup>, which has remained a frozen conflict for decades, and establishing a federal state on the island after many years, should be carefully examined in the coming months.

In this context, this study examines Erhürman's election campaign and the new methodology he developed to resolve the Cyprus Conflict, the initial contacts between the two leaders following Erhürman's election, and the Turkish Cypriots' situation regarding potential EU (European Union) membership in the light of "*ripeness theory*". To achieve this, the author will first summarize the "*ripeness theory*" to understand how, why, and how conflicts are resolved after long years of crisis. Secondly, the author will analyze the victory of Tufan Erhürman and focus on his biographical and political details to understand his worldview. Thirdly, by researching local media from both sides of the island and presidential statements, the author will analyze the earlier diplomatic efforts on the island to reinstate peace talks. Fourthly, by examining reports and scales from internationally accredited institutions, the author will try to assess the readiness of Turkish Cypriots for a possible settlement process and EU membership. Lastly, the author will try to apply the theoretical framework to the ongoing developments on the island to understand the chances of a settlement. To summarize, the study will use the "*ripeness theory*" as a theoretical framework to understand developments on the island and will focus on multiple factors that could positively or negatively affect the negotiation process.

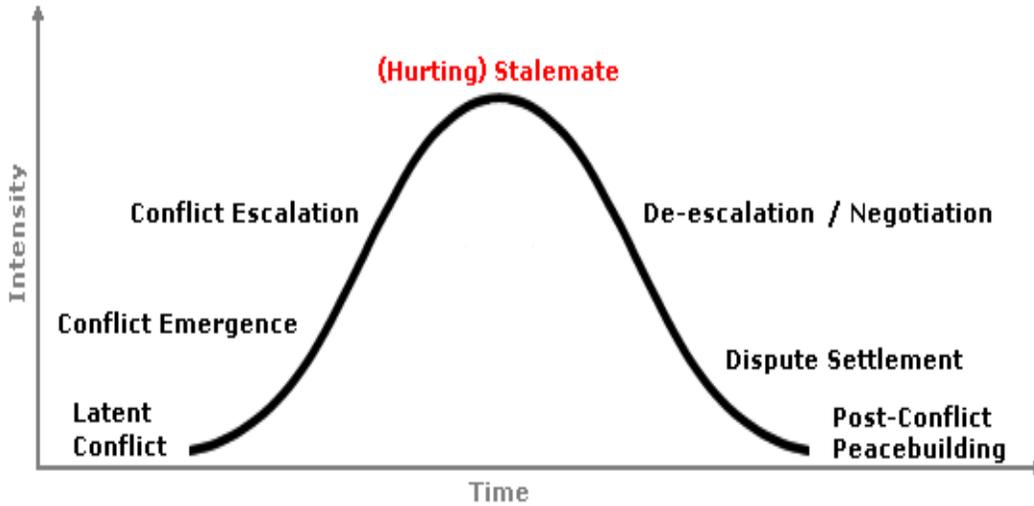
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<sup>2</sup> For understanding the background of the problem and the newly developing energy aspect of it, see; Ozan Örmeci & Sina Kısacık (2020), "Cutting the Gordian Knot: Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Cyprus During AK Party Era (2002-2020)", *Studia i Analizy Nauk Polityce*, no: 1 (2020), pp. 21-64.

## 1. Ripeness Theory and Mutually Hurting Stalemate

In the conflict resolution literature, a key theoretical framework, developed over time from specific events, is formally called the “*ripeness theory*”. In Turkish language-based literature, the theory is cited as a concept and translated as “*olgun an*” or “*olgunluk*”.<sup>3</sup> According to this theory mainly developed by William Zartman<sup>4</sup> from Johns Hopkins University, two factors are central in finding a solution by negotiation or mediation to an international conflict: (1) the substance of proposals and (2) the timing of efforts.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, the “*ripe moment*” comes when both sides to the conflict are more inclined to reach a settlement and feel it is the right time to resolve their existing problem.<sup>6</sup>

**Graph 1. Ripeness Theory<sup>7</sup>**



Reaching the “*ripe moment*” is not easy, as the comfort of the status quo should be non-existent with both parties living in the situation of “*mutually hurting stalemate*”.<sup>8</sup> This requires both parties to be negatively affected by the status quo. As seen in **Graph 1**, often conflicts emerge, escalate,

<sup>3</sup> Ben William Zartman (2008), “‘Olgunluk’: müzakere ve çatışma çözümünde zamanlamanın önemi”, *E-International Relations*, 20.12.2008, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.e-ir.info/2008/12/20/ripeness-the-importance-of-timing-in-negotiation-and-conflict-resolution/>.

<sup>4</sup> William Zartman (1989), *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, Updated Edition, A Council on Foreign Relations Book, New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Aytakin Cantekin (2016), “Ripeness and Readiness Theories in International Conflict Resolution”, *Journal of Mediation & Applied Conflict Analysis*, 3(2), p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Brahm (2003), “Hurting Stalemate Stage”, *Beyond Intractability*, September 2003, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/stalemate>.

<sup>8</sup> Aytakin Cantekin (2016), “Ripeness and Readiness Theories in International Conflict Resolution”, pp. 81-82.

and reach their peak, which is followed by a “*hurting stalemate*” situation that will eventually slow down tension, de-escalate the crisis, pave the way for negotiations, and hopefully will end with the peacebuilding process.<sup>9</sup> At this stage, the presence of willing, resourceful and acceptable mediators as well as concrete plans for getting out of the status quo situation are extremely helpful according to Cantekin.<sup>10</sup> That is why international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU), and guarantor powers of Cyprus (Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom) will be crucially important to decide whether to support and realize the settlement process or not.

## 2. 2025 TRNC Presidential Election and Tufan Erhürman

In the first round of the presidential elections held on October 19, 2025, in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the center-left Republican Turkish Party (CTP) leader and presidential candidate Dr. Tufan Erhürman, who received 62.76% of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections<sup>11</sup>, won the elections and became the sixth President of the Republic after Rauf Denktaş, Mehmet Ali Talat, Derviş Eroğlu, Mustafa Akıncı, and Ersin Tatar (see; **Graph 2**).<sup>12</sup> Erhürman’s strong rival and the fifth President of the Republic, Ersin Tatar, on the other hand, received only 35.81% of the vote.<sup>13</sup> The voting turnout was around 63%, a quite high number for European standards.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Erhürman, who advocates dialogue with the Greek Cypriots and federation negotiations to resolve the Cyprus Conflict, was surprisingly elected to this office with a landslide victory and strong support coming from people despite Türkiye’s closer stance to Tatar prior to election.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Eric Brahm (2003), “Hurting Stalemate Stage”, Beyond Intractability, September 2003, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/stalemate>.

<sup>10</sup> Aytekin Cantekin (2016), “Ripeness and Readiness Theories in International Conflict Resolution”, pp. 82-83.

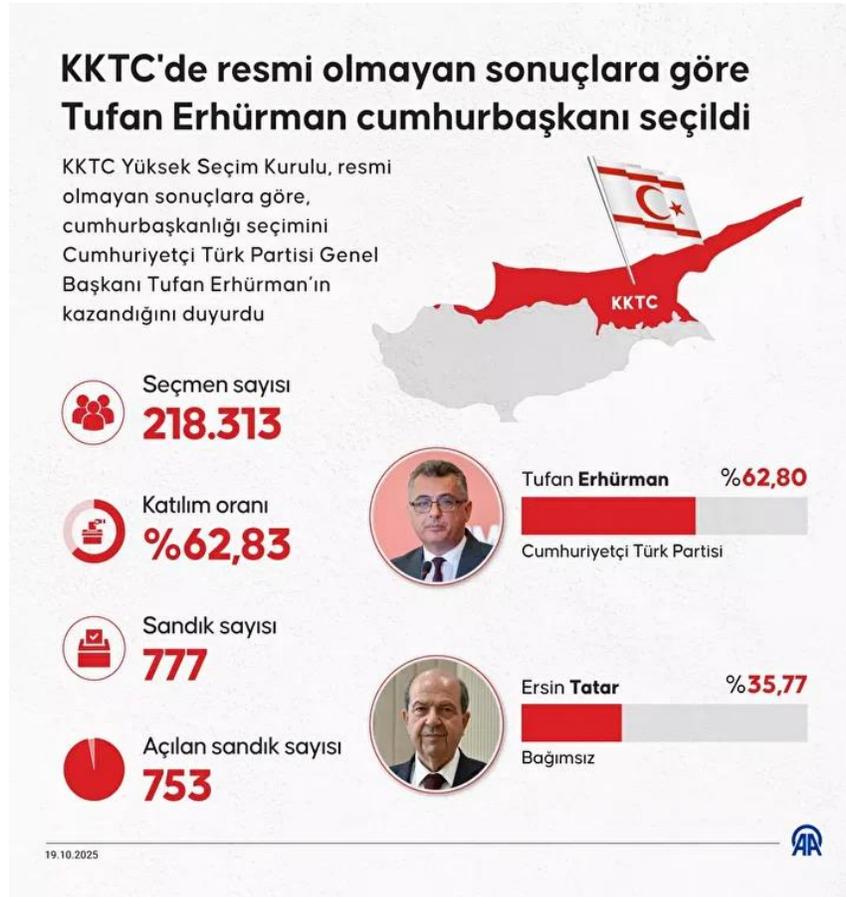
<sup>11</sup> KKTC Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (2025), “Duyuru Detayları”, 24.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://ysk.gov.ct.tr/2025/10/24/resmi-gazete-ilani-2/>.

<sup>12</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2025), “Tufan Erhürman wins presidential election in TRNC”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 19.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2025/10/19/tufan-erhurman-wins-presidential-election-in-trnc/>.

<sup>13</sup> KKTC Yüksek Seçim Kurulu (2025), “Duyuru Detayları”, 24.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://ysk.gov.ct.tr/2025/10/24/resmi-gazete-ilani-2/>.

<sup>14</sup> *Yeni Şafak* (2025), “Kıbrıs Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminde kim ne kadar oy aldı, kim kazandı? 2025 KKTC oy oranlarına göre seçim sonuçları”, 20.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.yenisafak.com/foto-galeri/ozgun/kibris-cumhurbaşkanlığı-seciminde-kim-ne-kadar-oy-aldi-kim-kazandi-ersin-tatar-mi-tufan-erhurman-mi-2025-kktc-oy-oranlarina-gore-secim-sonuclari-4760191/1>.

<sup>15</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2025), “Tufan Erhürman wins presidential election in TRNC”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 19.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2025/10/19/tufan-erhurman-wins-presidential-election-in-trnc/>.

**Graph 2.** 2025 TRNC Presidential election's results<sup>16</sup>

Born on September 11, 1970, in Nicosia (Lefkoşa), Dr. Tufan Erhürman is an academic and politician who completed his middle school and high school education at Türk Maarif College and enrolled at Ankara University in 1988 to study law. Erhürman received his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from Ankara University. He successfully completed his doctorate in 2001 with a thesis titled "Extrajudicial Control of the Administration and the Ombudsman" and was awarded a doctorate (PhD) in law.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Yeni Şafak* (2025), "Kıbrıs Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminde kim ne kadar oy aldı, kim kazandı? 2025 KKTC oy oranlarına göre seçim sonuçları", 20.10.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.yenisafak.com/foto-galeri/ozgun/kibris-cumhurbaskanligi-seciminde-kim-ne-kadar-oy-aldi-kim-kazandi-ersin-tatar-mi-tufan-erhurman-mi-2025-kktc-oy-oranlarina-gore-secim-sonuclari-4760191/1>.

<sup>17</sup> Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı, "Biyografi - Cumhurbaşkanı Tufan ERHÜRMAN", Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://kkctcb.org/tr/cumhurbaskani/biyografi>.

**Photo 1. Dr. Tufan Erhürman**

Between 1995 and 2001, Erhürman taught Public Law at prestigious Turkish universities such as Ankara University, Middle East Technical University (METU), and Hacettepe University. Between 2001 and 2006 and 2008 and 2013, he was a lecturer at Eastern Mediterranean University (DAÜ) in the TRNC. Between 2006 and 2008, Erhürman was a member of the academic staff at Near East University (YDÜ), another prestigious TRNC university, and distinguished himself within his community as a successful academic who advocated progressive views.<sup>18</sup>

Erhürman first entered active politics between 2008 and 2010 as a member of the negotiation team of Mehmet Ali Talat, the second President of the TRNC. He quickly gained fame for his legal knowledge and charismatic personality and was elected as Lefkoşa (Nicosia) MP for the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) in the 2013 general elections. During his first term as a member of parliament, Tufan Erhürman spearheaded efforts within the assembly to amend the constitution and was appointed Secretary General of his party in 2015.<sup>19</sup>

On November 13, 2016, Erhürman was elected leader of the Republican Turkish Party and the main opposition, replacing Mehmet Ali Talat. Re-elected as CTP Lefkoşa MP in the 2018 general elections, Erhürman led the coalition government during this period, serving as Prime Minister of the TRNC for 15 months and gaining significant experience. However, when the Erhürman

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

government collapsed in 2019 due to disagreements among coalition partners, Erhürman began serving as leader of the main opposition party on May 22, 2019.<sup>20</sup>

In short, Tufan Erhürman, a young academic in Law and politician, is actively seeking to create a moderate political climate in Cyprus and participating in the solution negotiations once again, thereby trying to create a renewed warming process in Turkish-Greek and Türkiye-European Union (EU) relations. Erhürman is also trying to explain to Ankara that acting in accordance with international law is more beneficial for himself and the Turkish Cypriots, without resorting to policies of confrontation with Ankara, as during the Mustafa Akıncı era. However, it is also clear how controversial international law has become in the context of the policies of states such as Israel, the United States (U.S.), and Russian Federation in recent years. Moreover, due to earlier failed processes such as the Annan Plan referendum and Crans-Montana talks, Erhürman's job will not be easy in convincing all actors of a reasonable and permanent peaceful agreement.

### 3. Tufan Erhürman's Approach to Cyprus Negotiations and His New Methodology

After his surprising victory in the 2025 TRNC presidential election, speculation has been circulating in the Turkish press about Tufan Erhürman's views on the Cyprus Conflict and the Cyprus negotiations. Driven by nationalist sentiments and a prejudiced approach, this kind of news tries to reflect the leader of Turkish Cypriots in a negative manner. In that sense, the most accurate response to these speculations is to evaluate Erhürman's commitments regarding the Cyprus Conflict, as outlined in his election manifesto.

**Photo 2.** Erhürman's election campaign: 'Signature for the Future' (*Geleceğe İmza*)<sup>21</sup>



<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Tufanerhurman.org, "Geleceğe İmza", Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://tufanerhurman.org/>.

The second heading of Erhürman’s election manifesto, entitled “Signature for the Future” (*Geleceğe İmza*), “Negotiations centered on the rights and interests of our people, solution-oriented and determined”<sup>22</sup>, outlines the commitments of the sixth President of the TRNC regarding the Cyprus Conflict and negotiations. In this section, the young President criticizes the lack of any negotiation attempts during the term of the fifth President, Ersin Tatar, and emphasizes that during his term, solution-oriented and determined negotiations will be conducted, striving to achieve concrete results for the Turkish Cypriots, who are equal founding partners of the Republic of Cyprus. In this context, Erhürman, who has criticized the energy agreements made by the Greek Cypriots without including the Turkish Cypriots, sincerely states his support for a federal Republic of Cyprus in which Turkish Cypriots will be equal founding partners.

In the third section of the manifesto, entitled “Time to commence negotiations for a comprehensive solution”<sup>23</sup>, Erhürman emphasizes that negotiations will commence once the Greek Cypriot leadership acts in accordance with UN parameters, as highlighted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. In this regard, Erhürman, to avoid repeating processes that ended in failure, such as the Annan Plan and Crans-Montana, puts forward certain preconditions and takes a rational position to ensure that the TRNC can gain something if the negotiations fail, arguing as follows:

- a-)** Greek Cypriots must accept political equality and the rotating presidency.
- b-)** A timetable for negotiations must be set, and work must not be delayed.
- c-)** Issues previously agreed upon, such as property, power sharing, relations with the EU, shall not be reopened.
- d-)** If Greek Cypriots abandon the negotiations once again, an agreement must be reached that there will be no return to the status quo and that the TRNC will gain certain advantages.

This 4-point approach is later referred as “*Erhürman’s new methodology*”<sup>24</sup> and is represented as a breakthrough for decades-old Cyprus peace talks by the Turkish Cypriot leadership and media. Erhürman on the other hand thinks that his methodology is mainly based on UN Secretary General

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *BRT* (2026), “Dört maddelik metodolojiyi anlatma fırsatımız oldu”, 11.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://brtk.net/dort-maddelik-metodolojiyi-ayrintili-anlatma-firsatimiz-oldu/>.

Antonio Guterres' remarks.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he summarizes his resolution-oriented new methodology as “no talks for the sake of talks”.<sup>26</sup>

The fourth heading in Erhürman's manifesto, entitled “Actions to be taken until comprehensive solution negotiations commence”<sup>27</sup>, recalls the activities of the Immovable Property Commission (*Taşınmaz Mal Komisyonu*), which operates in accordance with European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) rulings, and opposes the prosecution of individuals and investors. Furthermore, Erhürman reacts against the deprivation of citizenship rights of children born to mixed marriages and pledges to resolve this issue. Similarly, regarding natural gas (hydrocarbon) resources, Erhürman firmly emphasizes that their rights cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the new President has raised issues such as the non-delay of the direct trade regulation, the non-impediment of joint projects and aid activities due to the non-recognition of the TRNC, the permission of activities by Turkish Cypriot athletes, artists, young people, and civil society members, and the opening of new crossing points.

In the fifth chapter, entitled “Consultation, Dialogue, Diplomacy”<sup>28</sup>, Erhürman pledges to conduct the TRNC's foreign policy in consultation, dialogue, and agreement with Türkiye and to act in harmony with Ankara, the brother country and guarantor state.

These points demonstrate that Erhürman's policies are rational, decisive, and consistent with the traditional foreign policy line, except for Türkiye's reactive policy period that has developed over the last few years. If we are to interpret Erhürman's commitments, it is understood that his political aim is as follows:

1. Reunify Cyprus by reaching an agreement with the Greek Cypriots and establishing a new state of affairs in Cyprus, ensuring that the status of Turkish Cypriots is permanent and compatible with the international system, or, if this is not possible,
2. Establish that the Greek Cypriots are obstructing a solution and secure gains for the TRNC in matters such as recognition and participation in the free trade system.

<sup>25</sup> *Kıbrıs Gazetesi* (2026), “Cumhurbaşkanı Erhürman: Çözüksüzlüğe sebep olanın ödeyeceği bir bedel olmalı”, 18.02.2026, Date of Accession: 18.02.2026 from <https://kibrisgazetesi.com/cumhurbaskani-erhurman-siyasi-esitlik-olmazsa-cozum-de-olmaz/>.

<sup>26</sup> Yusuf Kanlı (2026), “Tufan Erhürman: No Talks for the Sake of Talks as Cyprus Debate Re-enters Strategic Phase”, *Politis*, 18.02.2026, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://en.politis.com.cy/politics/politics-cyprus-divided/987308/tufan-erhurman-no-talks-for-the-sake-of-talks-as-cyprus-debate-re-enters-strategic-phase>.

<sup>27</sup> Tufanerhurman.org, “Geleceğe İmza”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://tufanerhurman.org/>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 4. Early Contacts

With the election of Tufan Erhürman as President of the TRNC, Cyprus has seen renewed activity, and positive developments continue toward bringing lasting peace to the Cyprus Conflict, which remains in a state of ceasefire. Indeed, following the positive meeting between the two leaders (Erhürman and Nikos Christodoulides) under the supervision of the United Nations (UN) on November 20, 2025, according to behind-the-scenes information reflected in the Cypriot press, the support of the Greek Cypriot side has already been secured for three of the four preconditions put forward by Erhürman during his election campaign.<sup>29</sup>

According to a report dated November 30, 2025, published by *Gıynık*<sup>30</sup> and based on *Politis*, the positive and constructive atmosphere achieved during the first meetings between Erhürman and Christodoulides was also positively reflected in the two-hour meeting between Presidential Undersecretary Mehmet Dâna and Greek Cypriot negotiator Menelaos Menelau, and both leaders have already begun preparing for their meeting with UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus Maria Angela Holguin.<sup>31</sup> According to the news, the Greek Cypriot leadership, which has no reservations about the first three points mentioned by Erhürman, has raised the issue of what would happen if the negotiations collapse, as mentioned in the fourth point, due to the Turkish side.<sup>32</sup> In this context, Christodoulides asked what would happen if the negotiations collapsed on the Turkish Cypriot side and, for example, whether it would be necessary to hand Varosha (Kapalı Maraş) over to the Greek Cypriots.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2025), "Kıbrıs'ta Liderler Arası İlk Görüşme Gerçekleştirildi", Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 21.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2025/11/21/kibrista-liderler-arasi-ilk-gorusme-gerceklestirildi/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Gıynık* (2025), "Hristodulidis Erhürman'ın '4 maddesinden 3'üne itiraz etmiyor'", 30.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://giynikgazetesi.com/hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor/>.

<sup>31</sup> *Cyprus Mail* (2026), "'Constant and direct dialogue is essential' says Holguin after meeting", 28.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://cyprus-mail.com/2026/01/28/christodoulides-takes-five-point-plan-to-trilateral-talks>.

<sup>32</sup> *Kıbrıs Postası* (2025), "Rum basını: Hristodulidis, Erhürman'ın 4 maddesinden 3'üne itiraz etmiyor!", 30.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY\\_KIBRIS/n583845-rum-basini-hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY_KIBRIS/n583845-rum-basini-hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor).

<sup>33</sup> *Gıynık* (2025), "Hristodulidis Erhürman'ın '4 maddesinden 3'üne itiraz etmiyor'", 30.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://giynikgazetesi.com/hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor/>; *Kıbrıs Postası* (2025), "Rum basını: Hristodulidis, Erhürman'ın 4 maddesinden 3'üne itiraz etmiyor!", 30.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY\\_KIBRIS/n583845-rum-basini-hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY_KIBRIS/n583845-rum-basini-hristodulidis-erhurmanin-4-maddesinden-3une-itiraz-etmiyor).

Speaking to the press after the meeting, President Tufan Erhürman of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) stated that his first talks with Christodulides had been positive and announced that a 10-point proposal had been presented to the Greek Cypriot side to create an atmosphere conducive to a solution. These 10 points are as follows:<sup>34</sup>

1. Citizenship rights for mixed marriages and children born from these marriages,
2. Three-cabin crossing arrangement in Metehan,
3. Implementation of a navigation system for crossings in Bostancı and Derinya,
4. Proposal for U14 friendly matches within the scope of the Youth Technical Committee,
5. Two-leader visit to the Missing Persons Committee,
6. Discussion of arrests related to property,
7. Difficulties in trade under the Green Line Regulation,
8. The need to sign an agreement on “*hellim*” (halloumi),
9. Re-establishment of the EU ad-hoc Committee, which was abolished after Crans-Montana,
10. Establishing a communication channel between security forces.

Thanks to the positive atmosphere created by Erhürman, the federal solution atmosphere in Nicosia, Europe’s last divided capital, has warmed up again and has also managed to gain open support from the European Union (EU). Following reports that the two leaders began official negotiations under the supervision of the United Nations (UN), and following reports that the talks were positive, the sixth President of the TRNC, Tufan Erhürman, met with Johannes Hahn, the European Commission’s Special Representative for Cyprus, and succeeded in obtaining confirmation of Brussels’ support for the process.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, the EU officials have begun to express their full support for a federal solution in Cyprus. For example, Johannes Hahn, the European Commission’s Special Representative for

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<sup>34</sup> *Anadolu Ajansı* (2025), “KKTC Cumhurbaşkanı Erhürman ile GKRY Lideri Hristodulidis ara bölgede görüştü”, 20.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kktc-cumhurbaskani-erhurman-ile-gkry-lideri-hristodulidis-ara-bolgede-gorustu-/3749225>.

<sup>35</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2025), “EU pushes for federal solution in Cyprus”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 22.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2025/12/22/eu-pushes-for-federal-solution-in-cyprus/>.

Cyprus, who met with the leaders of both communities on the island and announced that the EU is prepared to add a clause to the 2028-2034 budget to reflect the reconciliation that will emerge in the event of reunification and the additional financial needs.<sup>36</sup> Hahn also reminded the EU's financial commitment to the Turkish Cypriot community and pointed out that the bloc has already provided it with €760 million (\$888 million) in support over the past 20 years.<sup>37</sup> In doing so, Hahn sent a clear message that Brussels could provide the necessary material/economic resources to bridge the development gap between the two sides of the island and prepare the Turkish Cypriot community for EU membership. Stating that the resolution of the Cyprus Conflict would also positively affect Türkiye-EU relations, Hahn conveyed the message that the EU is “*ready to work for peace, security, and prosperity in Cyprus*”.<sup>38</sup> In an interview with the *Yenidüzen* newspaper<sup>39</sup>, Hahn also reminded that a two-state solution in Cyprus is not possible, stating that a federal solution is the only valid and feasible solution method in terms of UN parameters and international law. Moreover, he described the leader of the Turkish Cypriots, Tufan Erhürman, as “*open-minded and constructive*”.<sup>40</sup>

President Erhürman recently announced his diplomacy team composed of 5 key people: Mehmet Dâna, Seniha Birand, İpek Borman, Cise Zekai Faruk, and Ali Tuncay.<sup>41</sup>

**Mehmet Dâna** is Erhürman's Undersecretary and has already featured heavily in talks held since Erhürman's election in October, holding meetings with Greek Cypriot chief negotiator Menelaos Menelaou.

**Seniha Birand** is a long-serving diplomat and first appeared on a Turkish Cypriot negotiating team in 1999, under late Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş, while also working on the team that negotiated the Annan Plan. More recently, she was charged with coordinating confidence-building measures and bicomunal technical committees for the Turkish Cypriot side.

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<sup>36</sup> *Kıbrıs Postası* (2025), “Johannes Hahn: AB, Kıbrıs'ta yeniden birleşme halinde 2028-2034 bütçesini revize etmeye hazır”, 20.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY\\_KIBRIS/n586206-johannes-hahn-ab-kibris-ta-yeniden-birlesme-halinde-20282034-butcesini-revize-etmeye-hazir](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY_KIBRIS/n586206-johannes-hahn-ab-kibris-ta-yeniden-birlesme-halinde-20282034-butcesini-revize-etmeye-hazir).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Yenidüzen* (2025), “‘AB, Kıbrıs'ta barış, güvenlik, refah için çalışmaya hazırdır’”, 20.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.yeniduzen.com/ab-kibris-ta-baris-guvenlik-refah-icin-calismaya-hazirdir-190119h.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Cyprus Mail* (2026), “Erhürman announces Cyprus problem negotiating team”, 08.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://cyprus-mail.com/2026/01/08/erhurman-announces-cyprus-problem-negotiating-team>.

**İpek Borman** is an academic who has worked at three universities in the North, and also served on the negotiating teams of both Mehmet Ali Talat and former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı.

**Çise Zekai Faruk** began her career in marketing and spent 8 years working for *Reuters*, before later joining the north's 'foreign ministry', beginning her time in the public sector as an archive officer.

**Ali Tuncay** has served as the Turkish Cypriot co-chairman of the bicomunal technical committee on cultural heritage since 2008.

**Photo 3.** Erhürman and Christodoulides



Erhürman announced that talks are expected to resume in late January upon United Nations (UN) special envoy Maria Angela Holguin's return to the island.<sup>42</sup> The meeting is planned as an enlarged talk with the inclusion of the Republic of Cyprus' three guarantor powers, Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom (UK), and the UN, in addition to the Greek and Turkish Cypriot political leadership and diplomacy team. Erhürman also criticized the Greek Cypriot administration for

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<sup>42</sup> *Cyprus Mail* (2025), "Erhurman: Holguin to return in January, enlarged meeting possible afterwards", 19.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://cyprus-mail.com/2025/12/19/erhurman-holguin-to-return-in-january-enlarged-meeting-possible-afterwards>.

ignoring Turkish Cypriots' rights over gas pipeline plans with Israel and Greece.<sup>43</sup> The trio met in late January as expected, but due to the lack of progress, an enlarged meeting with the inclusion of guarantor powers is delayed for the moment.<sup>44</sup>

During this “*pause*” period, to encourage settlement in the island and to show that Greek Cypriots do not have hostility towards their Turkish citizens, Greek Cypriot leader and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides recently made two concrete proposals to accelerate the integration process of Turkish Cypriots into the new federal state and the EU. These proposals included:<sup>45</sup>

1. Enabling Turkish Cypriots to access healthcare services in Southern Cyprus more easily,
2. The duty-free shipment of various goods from south to north and their sale in the north without VAT being added.

While President Erhürman did not positively respond to these proposals due to reciprocity problems, he reminded that the EU gave a clear promise in 2004 about the implementation of the Direct Trade Regulation (*Doğrudan Ticaret Tüzüğü*) in the northern part of the island as well. Erhürman also criticized Brussels for failing to honor this promise for 21 years due to the Greek Cypriot barrier.<sup>46</sup> In fact, EU's economic relations with Taiwan prove that the Direct Trade Regulation could be easily implemented in Northern Cyprus as well, which would facilitate Turkish Cypriots' integration into the EU standards, improve economic conditions, and increase confidence towards the EU's objectivity. In that sense, this could be the key issue for Erhürman's fourth precondition: not going back to the status quo in case negotiations fail due to Greek Cypriot objections.

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<sup>43</sup> *Cyprus Mail* (2025), “Erhurman criticises Christodoulides for ‘ignoring’ Turkish Cypriots over gas pipeline plan”, 04.11.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://cyprus-mail.com/2025/11/04/erhurman-criticises-christodoulides-for-ignoring-turkish-cypriots-over-gas-pipeline-plan>.

<sup>44</sup> *Gıynık* (2026), “Holguin’in bir araya getirdiği Erhürman ve Hristodulides, ilerleme sağlayamadı”, 29.01.2026, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://giynikgazetesi.com/holguinin-bir-araya-getirdigi-erhurman-ve-hristodulides-ilerleme-saglayamadi/>.

<sup>45</sup> *Kıbrıs Postası* (2026), “Hristodulidis’ten Kıbrıslı Türklere yönelik iki tek taraflı adım geliyor”, 20.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY\\_KIBRIS/n589360-hristodulidisten-kibrisli-turklere-yonelik-iki-tek-tarafli-adim-geliyor](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY_KIBRIS/n589360-hristodulidisten-kibrisli-turklere-yonelik-iki-tek-tarafli-adim-geliyor).

<sup>46</sup> *Kıbrıs Postası* (2026), “Erhürman’dan AB’ye 21 yıllık hesap: Kamuya açık sözünüz Direkt Ticaret Tüzüğü nerede?”, 30.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS\\_HABERLERI/n590264-erhurmandan-abye-21-yillik-hesap-kamuya-acik-sozunuz-direkt-ticaret-tuzugu-nerede](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS_HABERLERI/n590264-erhurmandan-abye-21-yillik-hesap-kamuya-acik-sozunuz-direkt-ticaret-tuzugu-nerede).

After the meeting of two leaders under the auspices of the UN Special Representative María Ángela Holguín on January 28, 2026, Erhürman admitted that they were not yet at the desired point in terms of confidence-building measures but added that the meeting was “*not productive but useful*”.<sup>47</sup> The TRNC President explained that the issue of “*political equality*”, which should include effective participation and rotating presidency, was a matter of principle for them, implying that negotiations might not begin if no progress was made on this issue.<sup>48</sup> Noting that the four preconditions remained valid for moving to substantive negotiations, the Turkish Cypriot leader indicated that full agreement had not yet been reached on this issue. Nevertheless, Erhürman did not close the door on negotiations, pointing to new talks in the coming days and saying that the two leaders could meet without the UN Representative.<sup>49</sup>

Two leaders are expected to meet in the coming days, and there is a renewed hope among Turkish Cypriots about a possible political settlement on the island. In the meantime, President Erhürman recently announced that the website of the Presidency of TRNC will make publications in the Greek language as well to address Greek Cypriot citizens.<sup>50</sup> Stating that this step was taken to establish more direct and transparent communication with the Greek Cypriot community, Erhürman said: “*If a solution is desired, we must also be in contact with the Greek Cypriot people and opinion leaders*”.<sup>51</sup> In addition, Erhürman emphasized that they wanted to evaluate his 5-year term as a “*period of rebirth*” (Renaissance) for the Turkish Cypriot people.<sup>52</sup>

President Erhürman also met with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on February 11, 2026, in New York. Erhürman explained his 4-point methodology to the Secretary General and underlined that unjust limitations and restrictions on Turkish Cypriots should be lifted.<sup>53</sup> Erhürman stressed that he observed no decline in Guterres’ interest in developments related to the island,

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<sup>47</sup> *Kıbrıs Postası* (2026), “Erhürman, Hristodulidis ile görüşmesini değerlendirdi: Verimli değil ancak yararlı bir görüşmeydi”, 28.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS\\_HABERLERI/n590135-erhurman-hristodulidis-ile-gorusmesini-degerlendirdi-verimli-degil-ancak-yararli-bir-gorusmeydi](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c35-KIBRIS_HABERLERI/n590135-erhurman-hristodulidis-ile-gorusmesini-degerlendirdi-verimli-degil-ancak-yararli-bir-gorusmeydi).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Kıbrıs Gerçek* (2026), “Cumhurbaşkanlığı’na Yunanca Sayfa Geliyor”, 02.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.kibrisgercek.com/cumhurbaskanligina-yunanca-sayfa-geliyor>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Anadolu Ajansı* (2026), “KKTC Cumhurbaşkanı Erhürman, BM Genel Sekreteri Guterres ile görüşmesini değerlendirdi”, 13.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/kktc-cumhurbaskani-erhurman-bm-genel-sekreteri-guterres-ile-gorusmesini-degerlendirdi/3828601>.

adding that the UN Secretary General continues to closely monitor all progress.<sup>54</sup> Erhürman also underlined that he is in constant contact with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and there is no disagreement between Northern Nicosia and Ankara.<sup>55</sup> Christodoulides, on the other hand, began to criticize Erhürman's methodology and stated that if Erhürman defends the “*two-state solution*” as Ankara, he should express this openly.<sup>56</sup>

According to the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to Cyprus, Maria Angela Holguin, conditions are not yet ripe for substantive negotiations to resume, but peace talks could resume in July this year if the two leaders continue to meet independently and prepare a roadmap for the settlement.<sup>57</sup> Holguin, in a recent article for *Politis*, wrote that a different model of interaction is needed in the coming months which would demonstrate “*a genuine interest in resuming negotiations*” to alter the status quo.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, in the February meeting with Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis in Ankara, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan did not refer to “*two-state solution*”, while Kyriakos Mitsotakis pointed out a solution based on previous UN Security Council decisions.<sup>59</sup> This shows that the two guarantor powers are not seeking new conflicts, which might facilitate the initiation and smooth progress of peace talks in Cyprus, since Türkiye and Greece are the two key guarantor powers that enjoy support from local Cypriot populations (Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots). In addition, the third guarantor power the United Kingdom also does not pose a barrier for peace talks. For instance, recently, Stephen Doughty, the Minister of State for Europe at the UK Foreign Office,

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<sup>54</sup> *Daily Sabah* (2026), “TRNC leader meets Guterres, calls promise of closer contact significant”, 13.02.2026, Date of Accession: 18.02.2026 from <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/trnc-leader-meets-guterres-calls-promise-of-closer-contact-significant/news>.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Genç Tv* (2026), “Hristodulidis: Erhürman iki devletli çözümü savunuyorsa bunu açıkça söylemeli”, 19.02.2026, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.kibrisgenctv.com/hristodulidis-erhurman-iki-devletli-cozumu-savunuyorsa-bunu-acikca-soylenmeli>.

<sup>57</sup> The Levant Files (2026), “Cyprus Negotiations at a Dead-End: UN Pushes the "Pause" Button”, 15.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.thelevantfiles.org/2026/02/cyprus-negotiations-at-dead-end-un.html>.

<sup>58</sup> María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar (2026), “The Challenge: Building Common Ground Through Dialogue Between the Leaders”, *Politis*, 15.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://en.politis.com.cy/the-hive/the-hive-podium/986588/the-challenge-building-common-ground-through-dialogue-between-the-leaders>.

<sup>59</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2026), “Erdoğan-Miçotakis Görüşmesi: Krizsiz, Daha Sakin Bir Dönemin Sinyalleri”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 11.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2026/02/11/erdogan-micotakis-gorusmesi-krizsiz-daha-sakin-bir-donemin-sinyalleri/>.

stated that the UK government supports finding a fair and sustainable solution to the Cyprus Conflict, but noted that the resumption of negotiations depends on the two leaders.<sup>60</sup>

### 5. Cyprus Negotiations from the Perspective of ‘Ripeness Theory’

Applying “*ripeness theory*” to Cyprus negotiations, it can be claimed that the non-recognition of Turkish Cypriots’ state (TRNC) creates many problems for its citizens, which is a key factor in understanding Tufan Erhürman’s all-time high votes (around 63%) received a few months ago in the presidential election against the incumbent President who is openly supported by Turkish Government and defended “*two-state solution*”<sup>61</sup>. The non-recognition of their state forces Turkish Cypriots not to be able to contest in international sports and cultural activities, not knowing and foreseeing their future, in addition to many psychological problems related to their mixed and complex identity. In that sense, Erhürman’s momentous success is not caused by the socialist/leftist renaissance in Northern Cyprus, but rather because of Turkish Cypriots’ reaction to decades of the Cyprus Conflict’s non-resolution.

Looking from the Greek Cypriot perspective, on the other hand, having troubled relations with Türkiye, a giant neighbor with a strong military on the north side of the small island and not being able to control its own territories despite its highly developed life standards and EU membership, is a sign of weakness, creating the perception of a “*failed state*” on the international stage. That is why Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, who recently assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union as well, might try to become the savior of his country, reinstate peace talks, and solve a historical conflict by becoming a modern-day De Klerk. It should be added that the recent rapprochement between Nicosia and NATO, and potential membership discussions<sup>62</sup>, could also facilitate Türkiye’s green light to a settlement on the island if Ankara’s national security interests are not harmed.

<sup>60</sup> *Gündem Kıbrıs* (2026), “İngiltere’den Kıbrıs Mesajı: Müzakereler Liderlere Bağlı”, 18.02.2026, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.gundemkibris.com/ingiltereden-kibris-mesaji-muzakereler-liderlere-bagli>.

<sup>61</sup> Cengiz Özbek (2025), “Kuzey Kıbrıs sandık başında: İki devlet mi, federasyon mu?”, *DW Türkçe*, 19.10.2025, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.dw.com/tr/kuzey-k%C4%B1br%C4%B1s-sand%C4%B1k-ba%C5%9F%C4%B1nda-i%CC%87ki-devlet-mi-federasyon-mu/a-74391569>.

<sup>62</sup> *Euronews* (2024), “Cyprus eyes future NATO membership amid US talks to boost military standards”, 28.11.2024, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/11/28/cyprus-eyes-future-nato-membership-amid-us-talks-to-boost-military-standards>; *BBC News Türkçe* (2024), “Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti, NATO’ya üye olabilir mi?”, 27.11.2024, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/articles/c154j0k043xo>.

Moreover, it is a fact that the peak of the crisis was in 1974 when Türkiye intervened in the island as a guarantor power to restore democracy, and following 1974, ethnic violence and bloodshed stopped sharply in Cyprus. In that sense, the de-escalation process has begun a long time ago in Cyprus, free passage from both sides has been possible for more than 20 years, and ten thousand of Turkish Cypriots already acquired their Cypriot and EU passports. Thus, it can be claimed that the solution of the problem depends on reaching the “*ripe moment*” rather than structural conditions or major disagreements.

## 6. A New Member in the EU? An Analysis of Turkish Cypriots

The EU’s relationship with the Turkish Cypriot community reflects a complex relationship. According to a *DW* report, this complex relationship is rooted in what is known as the “*Cyprus Problem*”, “*Cyprus Conflict*” or the “*Cyprus Dispute*”, the de facto division of the island — after almost a decade of bicomunal violence, a Greek-backed military coup and a Turkish military intervention in 1974 — into the Republic of Cyprus, which is now a member of the EU, and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is not recognized by the international community except Türkiye.<sup>63</sup>

Despite joining the EU as a de facto divided island and the EU’s *acquis communautaire* being suspended on the northern part in line with Protocol 10 of the Cypriot Accession Treaty of 2003, in fact, the whole of the island of Cyprus is part of the EU’s territory.<sup>64</sup> This means that most Turkish Cypriots living in the north of the island are citizens of both the Republic of Cyprus and, therefore, the EU — and of the TRNC, which is under Turkish military control and administered by its institutions. Türkiye, on the other hand, is not yet a member of the EU, but remains still a full member candidate country despite accession talks being halted for many years. It should be also noted that, as of 2018, the number of Turkish Cypriots having Cypriot identity and/or passports was around 185,000<sup>65</sup> and the number could be much higher now. That shows the absurdity and also the complexity of the situation.

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<sup>63</sup> *DW* (2026), “Turkish Cypriots: The EU’s invisible Europeans”, 13.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-cypriots-the-eus-invisible-europeans/a-75493865>.

<sup>64</sup> Hacer Soykan Adaoğlu (2009), “Special Territories in European Union and North Cyprus: A Sui Generis Relationship Under Community Law”, *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, 6(23), p. 135.

<sup>65</sup> According to Greek Cypriot officials, as of 2018, the number of Turkish Cypriots who have obtained a Republic of Cyprus identity card and passport is 80,664, while the number of Turkish Cypriots who have only obtained an identity card is 110,734, and the number of those who have only obtained a passport is 83,950. See; *Kıbrıs Postası*

**Map 1. Divided Cyprus**<sup>66</sup>

In 2004, a peace plan prepared by the then-UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, the “*Annan Plan*”, was approved by Turkish Cypriots (64.9%), but rejected by Greek Cypriots (75.83%).<sup>67</sup> As a result, the EU Council of General Affairs made a political commitment to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community, promote the reunification of Cyprus by encouraging economic development, integrate the island economically and strengthen the community’s ties with the EU — all of which would be helped by the implementation of the community acquis in the northern part of the island. To further this commitment, the European Commission submitted three proposals to the European Council to support the Turkish Cypriots ahead of Cyprus’ accession to the EU. These included both financial support and specific legal arrangements to facilitate the community's economic activity.

(2018), “Güney Kıbrıs verileri açıkladı: “Kıbrıs'ta yaşayan Kıbrıslı Türk sayısı 175 bin””, 02.04.2018, Date of Accession: 19.02.2026 from [https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY\\_KIBRIS/n247015-guney-kibris-verileri-acikladi-kibrista-yasayan-kibrisli-turk-sa](https://www.kibrispostasi.com/c58-GUNEY_KIBRIS/n247015-guney-kibris-verileri-acikladi-kibrista-yasayan-kibrisli-turk-sa).

<sup>66</sup> DW (2026), “Turkish Cypriots: The EU's invisible Europeans”, 13.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-cypriots-the-eus-invisible-europeans/a-75493865>.

<sup>67</sup> Corinne Deloy & Helen Levy (2004), “Failure of the referendum on the reunification of the Island”, Fondation Robert Schuman, 24.04.2004, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/monitor/290-failure-of-the-referendum-on-the-reunification-of-the-island>.

**Graph 3.** Annan Plan referendum's results<sup>68</sup>

On 29 April 2004, the European Council approved the “*Green Line Regulation*”, which is aimed to manage the Green Line that separates the government-controlled areas from the rest of the island.<sup>69</sup> In addition, on 7 July 2004, the Commission proposed a package of aid and trade measures to encourage the economic development of the Turkish Cypriots. Two proposals were introduced: “*The Regulation on Establishing a Legal Instrument for Encouraging the Economic Development of the Turkish Cypriot Community*” (Financial Aid Regulation) and “*The Regulation on Special Conditions for Trade with those Areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of Republic of Cyprus does not Exercise Effective Control*” (Direct Trade Regulation).<sup>70</sup> Direct Trade Regulation has remained with the Council for consideration since 2004. However, the Council has approved the Financial Aid Regulation on 27 February 2006. The legal basis for those regulations is the Protocol 10 of Act of Accession of Republic of Cyprus, and these documents are the legal links between the EU and Northern Cyprus.<sup>71</sup>

The policy of the EU regarding the Turkish Cypriot community was set out by the General Affairs Council on 26 April 2004, just before Cyprus joined the EU: “*The Turkish Cypriot community has expressed its clear desire for a future within the European Union. The Council is determined to put an end to the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community and to facilitate the reunification of*

<sup>68</sup> Haritaveri (2024), Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.instagram.com/p/C5391SRINPE/>.

<sup>69</sup> Hacer Soykan Adaoğlu (2009), “Special Territories in European Union and North Cyprus: A Sui Generis Relationship Under Community Law”, pp. 138-139.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

*Cyprus by encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community. The Council invited the Commission to bring forward comprehensive proposals to this end with particular emphasis on the economic integration of the island and on improving contact between the two communities and with the EU.”<sup>72</sup>*

The first proposal, which was approved by the European Council, involved direct financial support for the Turkish Cypriot community through the Aid Regulation for the Turkish Cypriots. This remains the EU’s primary tool of presence in the community, channeling over €760 million since 2004 into infrastructure projects such as water and sewage system construction and upgrades, and wastewater treatment facilities.<sup>73</sup> Part of the annual funding program also supports education and civil society. In 2025 alone, €5 million in grants were awarded to Turkish Cypriot students to study at European universities. Grants are also provided to Turkish Cypriot farmers and producers to align with EU food safety standards. Implementation is carried out by UN agencies such as the UN Development Programme and the UN Office for Project Services, thus avoiding involvement of the authorities in the TRNC or political recognition of it.<sup>74</sup>

Most EU funds for Turkish Cypriots are directed to bicomunal committees, operating with UN support, to facilitate cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots primarily on humanitarian issues. Such committees include the Bicomunal Cultural Heritage Committee for the restoration of monuments and the Committee on Missing Persons. Turkish Cypriot politicians have on occasion criticized the mechanism of providing funding through bicomunal committees. They argue that EU aid should be used to develop the Turkish Cypriot community itself, rather than being shared with Greek Cypriots.

The second major area of EU involvement concerns the Green Line Regulation. Also approved by the European Council, this regulation provides a legal framework for the movement of people and goods across the Green Line — the de facto border between the two parts of the island — without recognizing or legitimizing the northern administration as a state entity.<sup>75</sup> This regulation allows

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<sup>72</sup> European Commission, “Turkish Cypriot Community”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from [https://cyprus.representation.ec.europa.eu/about-us/turkish-cypriot-community\\_en](https://cyprus.representation.ec.europa.eu/about-us/turkish-cypriot-community_en); Erginel Law, “EU and Northern Cyprus: Aid Programme for Turkish Cypriot Community and Green Line”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://erginellaw.com/relationship-between-eu-and-northern-cyprus/>.

<sup>73</sup> DW (2026), “Turkish Cypriots: The EU’s invisible Europeans”, 13.01.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.dw.com/en/turkish-cypriots-the-eus-invisible-europeans/a-75493865>.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

Turkish Cypriots to trade specific products with the Republic of Cyprus and, through it, into the EU without paying duties, provided those products meet EU standards.

According to Turkish Cypriot scholar and politician Dr. Niyazi Kizilyurek, the first Turkish Cypriot MEP, who stood for the Greek Cypriot left-wing AKEL party, economic support for the Turkish Cypriot community does not, on its own, constitute a policy of integration of Turkish Cypriots into the EU. Kizilyurek told *DW* that the EU needs to reassess its approach and take bold, substantive steps toward integration.<sup>76</sup> Referring to the founding vision of European unification by Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet — which is based on practical cooperation and shared interests — Kizilyurek advocates for European projects that he says would strengthen meaningful cooperation between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.<sup>77</sup> He proposes, for example, projects such as a bicomunal hospital under EU auspices, joint education initiatives such as mixed schools or a shared university, and joint platforms such as a bicomunal radio station or television channel.<sup>78</sup>

To solve the problem, both sides of the island underlined the importance of the “*Guterres Framework*” to continue negotiations and finalize it this time with success. As will be recalled, the “*Guterres Framework*”, named after the current UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, is a historic set of principles on the Cyprus Conflict that made a solution highly probable in Crans-Montana in 2017, but ultimately failed due to the last-minute withdrawal of the then Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Anastasiades.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, the Guterres Framework can be summarized as follows:<sup>80</sup>

**1. Security and Guarantees:** In the new federal Cyprus, the old-style guarantee/security systems of the 1960 Republic of Cyprus will not be applied. However, this does not mean “*zero troops, zero guarantees*”. Instead, a new security/guarantee system that satisfies both sides will be established because of negotiations. With the solution, there will be a significant reduction in the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Ozan Örmeci (2025), “Kıbrıs’ta Barış Süreci Hızlanıyor”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 01.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2025/12/01/kibrista-baris-sureci-hizlaniyor/>.

<sup>80</sup> Unite Cyprus Now, “Historical Documents: Guterres Framework”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://unitecyprusnow.org/cyprob/historical-documents/120-guterres-framework>; Cyprus Dialogue From, “Guterres Framework”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://cydialogue.org/knowledge-resources/guterres-framework/>.

number of soldiers, and the issue of soldiers will be discussed between the parties. The presence of a certain number of soldiers from Greece and Türkiye on the island may be on the agenda.

**2. Land:** During the Mustafa Akıncı period, the parties reached a broad agreement on the issue of land, and the TRNC committed to ceding a certain amount of land to the Greek Cypriot side.

**3. Property:** The parties also reached a broad agreement on property, agreeing to prevent the loss of rights of individuals from both sides in accordance with the principle of “*equivalent treatment*”.

**4. Administration and Power Sharing:** A 2/1 ratio of rotating presidency has been agreed upon for power sharing. This means 4 years for the Greek Cypriot President and 2 years for the Turkish Cypriot President.

**5. Political Equality:** There are no issues regarding political equality, and the Greek Cypriot side supports this principle.

The warm reception of this framework by both leaders has raised hopes that a historic process could be initiated and a solution reached in the Cyprus Conflict. However, it is no coincidence that, with the winds of peace beginning to blow in Cyprus, extreme right-wing politicians from both sides have also begun initiatives to change the agenda and sabotage the negotiations.

Turkish Cypriots constitute a small but well-educated secular Muslim community, having 40 years of democratic experience. In free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections, the presidency and government can shift from left-wing to right-wing parties<sup>81</sup>, or vice versa, freely in the northern part of Cyprus. While the level of English-speaking citizens in Northern Cyprus is remarkably high, the number of bilingual Turkish- and Greek-speaking Turkish Cypriots is also on the rise.

According to the U.S. Department of State’s official 2024 Human Rights report<sup>82</sup>, there are still some problems in Northern Cyprus such as the disrespect of authorities for the freedom of expression, Turkish interference into governance, limitations on the freedom of press, low minimum wage standards, and the spread of antisemitic conspiracy theories, but in fact there was

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<sup>81</sup> Among TRNC Presidents, Rauf Denктаş, Derviş Eroğlu, and Ersin Tatar were supported by the right-wing UBP (National Unity Party) whereas Mehmet Ali Talat, Mustafa Akıncı, and Tufan Erhürman were supported by left-wing CTP (Republican Turkish Party) and other socialist parties such as TDP (Socialist Democracy Party).

<sup>82</sup> US Department of State (2025), “2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cyprus”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cyprus/>.

no significant setback in terms of overall human rights standards. Moreover, in many other areas, the Turkish Cypriots' de facto state performs surprisingly well.

In addition, according to Freedom House, Turkish Cypriots have already enjoying living in a democratic state with a grade of 76/100 and identified as a “free” (democratic) territory.<sup>83</sup> According to the institution, civil liberties are almost perfectly provided in this de facto state. This shows that complying with EU standards and upholding democracy would not be a major problem for the Turkish Cypriot community.

**Graph 4.** TRNC's score in Freedom House



In the same report, the Republic of Cyprus on the other hand reaches 91/100<sup>84</sup>, showing that still much could be done to improve standards in the north. The EU has all the necessary means to realize this transformation in case Türkiye would also support this project as in the early 2000s. Türkiye on the other hand scores only 33/100 and is classified as “not free” country<sup>85</sup>, which proves the authoritarian transition and democratic backsliding in recent years.<sup>86</sup> However, with the solution of the Cyprus Conflict and the warming of relations between Ankara and Brussels, Türkiye's democratic and economic performance could also rise rapidly as in the early 2000s.

<sup>83</sup> Freedom House (2025), “Northern Cyprus”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/northern-cyprus>.

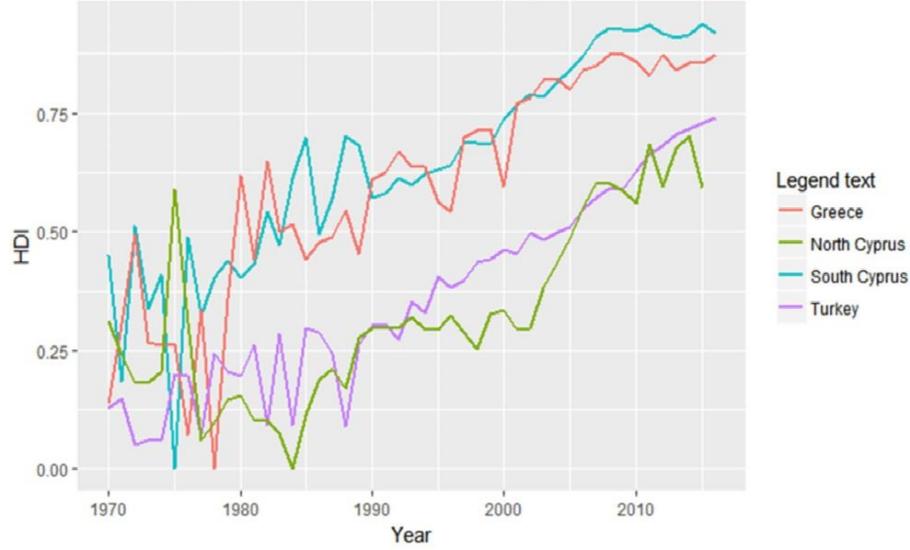
<sup>84</sup> Freedom House (2025), “Cyprus”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus>.

<sup>85</sup> Freedom House (2025), “Turkey”, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey>.

<sup>86</sup> Oğuzhan Göksel (2023), “Trading State or Machiavellian State? Re-evaluating the Political Economy of Turkish Foreign Policy under Erdoğan”, *UPA Strategic Affairs*, 4(2), pp. 72-107.

Lastly, recent scientific assessments of human development in Northern Cyprus, as UNDP reports, have shown that life standards in the TRNC match those of Türkiye<sup>87</sup> and there is little gap between the north and south of the island in terms of human development.

**Graph 5.** HDI for Northern Cyprus, Turkey, Southern Cyprus, and Greece, 1970-2016<sup>88</sup>



**Graph 5** above shows the progress of human development in Greece, Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Southern Cyprus (Republic of Cyprus), and Türkiye (Turkey) between 1970 and 2016, using the UNDP methodology applied to the TRNC's conditions. This proves that, despite lagging behind Cyprus and Greece, Northern Cyprus and Türkiye have made considerable improvements in human development, especially since the 2000s. This shows that, through EU integration, both countries could be easily transformed and brought up to European standards.

Moreover, the European Union's field research on Northern Cyprus proves that although people are generally satisfied with their lives in the de facto state (%81), compared to full EU members, their situation is not very bright and the TRNC ranks at number 28.<sup>89</sup> In addition, almost half of the population in Northern Cyprus (47%) trusts the EU's *acquis communautaire* and a high majority of the population (61%) thinks that implementing the EU's laws would benefit them.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Ali Cevat Taşiran & Ceylan Ünver (2016), "Calculation of the Human Development Index for Northern Cyprus Using Economic Measurements from the Post-Conflict Period", *Ekonomi-tek*, 5(3), pp. 1-20.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> Avrupa Komisyonu (2024), *Avrupa Birliği'nde Kamuoyu*, Ulusal Rapor: Kıbrıs Türk Toplumunu, Ekim 2024, Standard Eurobarometer 102, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Moreover, the very high majority of Turkish Cypriots (79%) in 2023 thought that they were not going in the right direction and things are going well for them<sup>91</sup>, which proves the reasons for Erhürman's landslide victory. For Turkish Cypriots, two essential problems are inflation (45%) and the economic situation (41%)<sup>92</sup>, which again explains the strong orientation towards Brussels.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, although nowadays great powers such as the U.S. (Maduro Operation), Russia (invasion of Ukraine), etc. engage in wars and operations without considering international law, the dangers that are increasing due to the lawlessness in international politics may soon further strengthen the United Nations (UN) and remind people of the necessity of complying with the existing rules and institutions to avoid major conflicts as in the case of WWI and/or WWII.

In that sense, although it still seems difficult without taking the consent of Türkiye<sup>93</sup>, in the coming months, a new negotiation process could start in Cyprus. The success of reunification in Cyprus is not a utopia for a fundamental reason. Due to the infamous “*Loizidou Case*”<sup>94</sup>, Türkiye has been paying substantial compensation to Greek Cypriots since 2003 because they are unable to use their properties in Northern Cyprus and these properties were given to individuals from Türkiye without their permission. This figure has already exceeded £624 million.<sup>95</sup> If all Greek Cypriots whose properties remain are sued by Türkiye, the compensation that Türkiye and the TRNC (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus) will have to pay to the Greek Cypriots through the Immoveable Property Commission (*Taşınmaz Mal Komisyonu*) could easily exceed £2 billion.<sup>96</sup> This would become a very difficult economic burden for Türkiye and the TRNC, which are already facing

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> For a detailed analysis on Türkiye's foreign policy, see; Ozan Örmeci (2026), *The Dynamics of Turkish Foreign Policy: Key Concepts and Strategic Approaches*, Berlin: Peter Lang.

<sup>94</sup> European Court of Human Rights (1996), “CASE OF LOIZIDOU v. TURKEY”, 18.12.1996, Strasbourg, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-58007%22%7D>; European Court of Human Rights (1998), “CASE OF LOIZIDOU v. TURKEY”, 28.07.1998, Strasbourg, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-58201%22%7D>.

<sup>95</sup> KKTC Taşınmaz Mal Komisyonu Resmi İstatistikleri (2025), “Genel İstatistikler”, 31.12.2025, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://tamk.gov.ct.tr/tr-tr/%C4%B0statistikler-Grafik-%C3%87a1%C4%B1%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1/Genel-%C4%B0statistikler>; Ozan Örmeci (2026), “Loizidou Davası ve KKTC ile Türkiye'ye Olası Etkileri”, Uluslararası Politika Akademisi, 02.02.2026, Date of Accession: 16.02.2026 from <https://politikaakademisi.org/2026/02/02/loizidu-davasi-ve-kkctc-ile-turkiyeye-olasi-etkileri/>.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

economic difficulties. Therefore, Ankara and Northern Nicosia may give the green light to peace negotiations and a federal solution in order to get rid of this burden.

Finally, it can be stated that, with the EU's already existing norms and standards, Northern Cyprus could be easily transformed into a prosperous and democratic European territory. To achieve this, the Turkish Cypriot leadership should be remarkably successful in establishing trust-based relations with Ankara. Turkish Cypriots should assure Türkiye that they will be the most supportive voice of Türkiye's membership into the EU, and Ankara's concerns related to security, etc., should be taken with utmost respect by Brussels and Nicosia. Moreover, this process should be followed by Türkiye's return to democracy, the EU's reform agenda, and harmonization efforts with the *acquis communautaire*, in addition to Turkish language becoming an official language of the EU. Due to the risks posed by the lawlessness of great powers, the EU might seem the safest option for Ankara as well over the coming years.

As expressed throughout the article, in light of the "*ripeness theory*" and the negative consequences hurting both sides (hurting more Turkish Cypriots but also Greek Cypriots), also known as the "*mutually hurting stalemate*", peace talks could soon recommence in Cyprus and could be finalized with a concluding peace treaty. This is possible due to various factors explained within the article. In doing this, two leaders, Tufan Erhürman and Nikos Christodoulides, are key figures in convincing their societies and the international community. In the final word, peace in Cyprus would not only solve the problems of the two local communities but also be a hope for peace and diplomacy for future generations.

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