



National Federation of Cypriots in the UK

Εθνική Κυπριακή Ομοσπονδία Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου

Working for a Free, United Cyprus

Rt. Hon. Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

28th March 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

The National Federation of Cypriots in the UK is the representative body and acknowledged voice of the Cypriot community in the UK. It is the umbrella organisation representing Cypriot community associations and groups across the UK and, as such, it leads and co-ordinates the activities of more than 300,000 Britons of Cypriot origin. We are committed to a free, united Cyprus and want to see Cyprus reunified in line with international law and the relevant UN resolutions.

Our diaspora was deeply shocked and angered to see the Ministry of Defence (“MoD”) upload a video to its social media accounts that incorrectly displayed the territory of the Republic of Cyprus as a fraction of its internationally recognised sovereign territory. Specifically, the video, for reasons only known to the MoD, omitted the areas of the Republic of Cyprus that have been under illegal Turkish military occupation since Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus in 1974 as well as the British Bases areas. In doing so, the MoD seemed to disregard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, violating an obligation under the Treaty of Guarantee.

As you are aware, Cyprus was illegally invaded by Turkey with countless and frightening parallels to Russia’s current invasion of Ukraine. Turkey’s invasion resulted in over 36% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus falling under foreign military occupation, a situation that continues to the present day. The invasion also caused 200,000 refugees, many of whom fled to the UK; missing persons, whose fates have yet to be determined; the destruction of Cyprus’ ancient and monumental cultural heritage; and engineered demographic change in the occupied areas of Cyprus.

The incomplete image of Cyprus is particularly shocking given the video was about the international community’s response to Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine. In that context, it would be akin to portraying the borders of Ukraine as only the territory over which it has effective control, thus excluding the parts that now, sadly, fall under illegal Russian military control. Of course, the Ministry of Defence would never make that mistake and it is therefore

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A complete list of member organisations and the names of all the current officers and members of the Secretariat of the Federation can be found on the Federation’s website

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inexcusable for Cyprus to be displayed in this way. At a time when the inviolability of internationally recognised borders and respect for the Helsinki Final Act is of paramount importance, the MoD video seriously undermined that message with regards to Cyprus, a key security and defence partner of the U.K. in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

Throughout Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Britain has been at the forefront of the arguments about the inviolability of borders and the importance of each independent state's territorial integrity. We entirely agree that acts of aggression should never lead to a unilateral change in borders. It is therefore, deeply disappointing that this sentiment was not extended to Cyprus, which has seen one-third of its territory under illegal military occupation since 1974. The territorial integrity of Cyprus is indivisible and cannot be altered by foreign invasion or acts of aggression.

We acknowledge that, at the time of writing, the video has been removed from the public domain and we are grateful that it was swiftly removed. However, we feel that an apology is due for the offence and pain that this has caused to the UK Cypriot community. We also ask for an explicit reassurance that the map of Cyprus does not represent HM Government policy and that it will not be repeated in the future.

The image of the Republic of Cyprus (copied below) used in the video is completely unacceptable and I look forward to a swift response in relation to this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Christos Karaolis
President, National Federation of Cypriots in the UK

Cc: Rt Hon Liz Truss MP, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs; H.E. The High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Cyprus, Mr Stephen Lillie; Tom Tugendhat MP (Chair, Foreign Affairs Select Committee); Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP (Chair, Defence Select Committee); Sir Roger Gale MP (Chair All Party Parliamentary Group for Cyprus); Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP (Vice Chair All Party Parliamentary Group for Cyprus); Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP (Vice All Party Parliamentary Group for Cyprus)

