



Cyprus



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	Up to 201,000
Percentage of total population	Up to 22.3%
Start of current displacement situation	1974
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	210,000 (1975)
New displacement	0
Causes of displacement	Internationalised and internal armed conflict, generalised violence, human rights violations

In 1974 groups backed by Greece's military government ousted the Cypriot leader, and Turkey sent troops to the island in response. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced from their homes: Greek Cypriots fled to the south, while Turkish Cypriots took refuge in the north. Both groups suffered significant loss and needed large-scale assistance. Attempts to find a diplomatic solution failed and in 1975 the Turkish Cypriots declared their own state, which in 1983 became the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC), which only Turkey has recognised. A UN-monitored buffer zone has since divided the island in the absence of a political solution.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus (GRC) reported in 2009 that about 201,000 Greek Cypriots could not return to their homes due to the Turkish military invasion and occupation. The Turkish Cypriot administration contended that the Turkish intervention had liberated them from Greek Cypriot domination since they faced multiple rounds of displacement up to 1974, and that internal displacement had ended in 1975, when the Vienna III agreement enabled residents to move with assistance or remain where they were with protection guarantees. While many Greek Cypriots still expected to be able to return and receive a remedy for lost property, most Turkish Cypriots considered their displacement to the north a permanent move and were more concerned in 2009 with what would happen to the property they were currently living in should the division of the island end.

By 2009, IDPs on both sides of the buffer zone appeared to share living conditions of a fairly high standard with the non-displaced population. The GRC continued to provide housing free of charge to holders of the Refugee Identity Card, and some 15,000 families were due to receive title deeds for these homes by the end of 2009. Nevertheless, IDPs still faced particular problems related to their displacement, such as the impossibility of return, the lack of information on the fate and whereabouts of missing relatives, and limited solvency due to their loss of property. 11 Greek Cypriot families who asked to permanently return to the north were still awaiting a decision in 2009 since there are no agreed criteria for returns. By the end of the year, the bi-communal Committee for Missing Persons had returned the remains of 196 identified missing individuals to their families, but some 2,000 people were still missing.

There is no mutually-recognised remedy for lost property, and Greek and Turkish Cypriots have applied to the European

Court of Human Rights (ECTHR) to assert their property rights, as well as to the relevant institutions on each side. At the end of 2009, the Immovable Property Commission (IPC) in the TRNC had issued 139 decisions on property claims, awarding mainly compensation, but the ECTHR had yet to rule on the effectiveness of its remedies. Also in 2009, one displaced Greek Cypriot recovered property in the north after the European Court of Justice ruled that a court judgment of one EU member state is enforceable in another, and so the UK Court of Appeal should uphold the 2004 GRC court decision ordering the British occupants to surrender the land.

The situations of IDPs and their children continue to be unequal in GRC law. Children of men with "displaced person" status are entitled to the Refugee Identity Card and associated benefits, but children of women with the same status are entitled only to the Certificate by Descent, which does not allow them to access those benefits. In 2009 approximately 51,000 people were affected by this discrimination. During the year, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged the government to end this discrimination, as did several UN member states during the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review. With no domestic remedy available, some 100 internally displaced mothers and their children have applied to the ECTHR on the issue.

Peace efforts gained pace in 2009, with UN-supported talks intensifying between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders and a seventh crossing of the "green line" buffer zone opening as part of confidence building measures. During the year, international experts on governance, power-sharing and property met the negotiating teams of both sides. However, areas of divergence remain, there has been little preparation of the communities for a solution and IDPs have not been involved in the peace process. Leaders plan to launch a new and intensified phase of reunification talks in 2010.