

The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace Building: The Case of Turkish Cypriots in Britain

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Diasporas' involvement in homeland conflicts and its impact have been debated extensively in the literature. This can be positive and contribute to the peace process or alternatively can be negative and hamper it. Turkish Cypriot diaspora in the UK have been actively involved in the politics of the homeland. As mainly a conflict generated diaspora, Turkish Cypriots in the UK have always been interested in the resolution of the conflict albeit with divergent views on how to attain peace. A new period towards resolving the intractable conflict in Cyprus has started with the election of Mustafa Akıncı to the Presidency of the TRNC in 2015. Since then Akıncı and Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, have involved in a negotiation process under the UN auspices to find a comprehensive solution to the conflict. This paper will examine the attitudes of the Turkish Cypriot diaspora in the UK towards this latest period of conflict resolution efforts. It will also discuss diaspora's plausible future role in post-conflict peace building efforts.

Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts

While there is no consensus on the definition of modern diasporas in the growing literature on the issue, there is one feature that many scholars agree on: the centrality of homeland in diasporic identity. It is the homeland that differentiates diaspora communities from other migrant groups. According to Gabriel Sheffer "Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origins, their homelands" (Sheffer 1986, 3). For Kim Butler, diasporas are consciously part of an ethno-national group and homeland lies at the center of this consciousness (Butler 2001, 192). Homeland is a key element in maintaining diaspora's ethnic consciousness. Diasporas identify themselves as part of the homeland ethnic community and therefore feel responsible for the well being of their homelands (Shain and Barth 2003, 452).

Contemporary diasporas become important transnational actors with the will and capacity to influence homeland politics. While changes in areas such as politics and technology in the last few decades facilitated diaspora's involvement in homeland affairs, not

all diaspora groups involve in homeland politics to the same extent. There are three major factors that affect diaspora's capacity to influence politics in the homeland. Homeland government's response to diasporic involvement is one of them. While certain homelands can be welcoming and even seek such support from diasporas, others are very cautious in allowing such diasporic activity. The second important factor is the host states that diaspora resides in. For diaspora communities to be influential actors, host state regimes should allow them to organize freely as civil society groups. Usually in liberal host states, diaspora groups have more developed opportunity structures to pursue their goals. (Shain and Barth 2003, 462). Thirdly, diaspora communities' own cohesion and unity as well as organizational skills are crucial factors that have an impact on the capacity of diaspora to act as a transnational actor, lobbying in their host states as well as other countries and international organizations with the goal to influence homeland politics. (Ogelman and Money 2002, 145)

Diaspora communities' involvement in homeland affairs is more common when homelands are involved in conflict. Diasporas can directly be involved in a homeland conflict through providing material and institutional support or indirectly as lobbying in their host states or in international organizations. (PRIO Report 2010, 2) There is a growing literature discussing whether diaspora's involvement in homeland conflicts should be assessed negatively or positively. Some scholars perceive diaspora's contribution as positive in promoting peace and development in their homelands while some argue that diasporas can worsen the conflict situation (Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009, 34). Regarding the conflict resolution efforts, diasporas' and homeland governments' views on what is best for the country's future may not be always congruent. This may further complicate the peace process especially when diaspora is an influential actor. Shain argues, "Conflict resolution in communal conflicts is often not just a two-level but a three-level game of peacemaking". In ongoing or frozen conflicts, diasporas may support the hot conflicts or hamper the conflict resolution efforts through economic, political and military means.

Diasporas can have a positive impact on homeland conflicts through different means. For example they can contribute to post-conflict peace-building efforts. Or they can be involved in lobbying activities in host states or in international agencies that may contribute to conflict resolution efforts (Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009, 34). The relevant literature suggests that encouraging diaspora to be more active and constructive in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts may actually have a positive impact (Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009, 28). In some cases diasporas can partake in peace negotiations as facilitators and

mediators between parties in conflict or in the cases where diasporas do not have the right to vote, they may have the ability to create an impact on the voting decisions on the people in the homeland (Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009, 33).

According to Brinkerhoff, diasporas can contribute to peace process in various ways such as economic remittances, philanthropy, human capital and political influence, including international advocacy and participation in peace processes (Brinkerhoff 2011, 119). In some cases, different ethnic groups from the same homeland coalesce around a unified diaspora identity to promote peace (Brinkerhoff 2011, 132). According to Koinova, diasporas may organize peaceful protests and campaigns to lobby the host states or contribute to the reframing of conflict issues (Koinova 2016, 502). Diasporas can be invaluable assets for conflict resolution efforts, as they understand the dynamics of conflict better than outside actors (Baser and Swain 2008, 17). As Cochrane highlights, “Being from outside the conflict zone but having a connection to it, might provide diaspora groups with specific abilities as third party actors in pre-negotiations or even in formal talks over a political settlement.” (Cochrane 2007, 21)

Diasporas can be essential players during the peace-building and reconstruction phase through remittances and human capital (Brinkerhoff 2011, 118). Occasionally diasporas establish new organizations to support homeland peace-building and reconstruction efforts as in the case of the second generation Afghan-Americans for the first time (Brinkerhoff 2011, 128). However, the repatriation and active participation of diaspora in homeland institutions may sometimes lead to resentment among local population; as they perceive themselves enduring the hardships of conflict and its aftermath while viewing diaspora as enjoying the benefits of peace (Brinkerhoff 2011, 130).

In order for diaspora to positively contribute to peace process, the same factors, which are listed above for diaspora’s being effectual in homeland politics, are considered as important. For example from a homeland state’s perspective, homeland governments may think that diaspora as an outside source should not be involved in the peace talks as they are just outsiders and do not live with the day to day realities of the conflict. Conversely homeland government may ask for the positive contribution of diaspora especially if it has the capacity to coordinate their efforts. Likewise host state governments may be restrictive on the activities of the diaspora, if they perceive them as peace-wreckers or encourage their participation if they have the view that they positively contribute to conflict resolution efforts. Finally diaspora groups need to have unity and cohesion among themselves as this will help

coordinate their efforts towards peace. But all these factors are also contextual, different political conditions and developments in the peace process may have an impact on diaspora's view on peace's attainability and therefore may channel their efforts in that direction (Chatzipanagiotidou 2012, 58).

Turkish Cypriot Diaspora in Britain

While Turkish Cypriot diaspora lives in various parts of the world such as the US, Canada and Australia; the community is the most populous in Britain. Turkish Cypriot migration to the UK dates back to as early as 1920s. The number of Turkish Cypriots migrating to Britain increased as of 50s, 60s and 70s. While the earlier migration waves were largely related to economic reasons, especially as of the 60s and 70s political instability contributed to large numbers of Turkish Cypriot out-migration from the island. While the exact numbers of Turkish Cypriots in Britain is unknown, Østergaard-Nielsen estimates it to be around 80,000-120,000 (2003, 687) and Bertrand estimates it to be 60,000-90,000 (2004, 93). These figures represent a major proportion, considering that the number of native-born Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus is around 200,000 (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 687).

As the Turkish Cypriot diaspora is largely a conflict-generated diaspora, the community is largely involved in homeland politics and closely monitors the conflict resolution efforts. As Shain and Barth argue even in active diasporas, not all the community members are involved at the same level in homeland affairs. They categorize diaspora members as core, passive and silent members. Core members are community leaders while passive members are activated upon calls from core members and silent members are rarely active but can mobilize under crisis situations (Shain and Barth 2003, 452)

As early as 1960s Turkish Cypriot diaspora coalesced around diaspora associations. Diasporas' motive in establishing organizations is usually twofold; to unite the diaspora and help them integrate into host society without being assimilated and to lobby the host states and other international actors for the homeland cause. This has been the case for the Turkish Cypriot diaspora as well. While on one hand they aim to hold the community together through social and cultural activities, on the other hand they work for the homeland cause. However as it is the case with almost all diaspora groups, there are divergent views on how to best achieve and serve homeland's interests. Especially as a conflict-generated diaspora, there are many different opinions on what peace means and how to achieve peace among different Turkish Cypriot diaspora groups in Britain.

While it is over-simplification and there are many views in between the two, for purposes of classification we will talk about two major groups in diaspora with opposing views on how to best serve the homeland interests and to achieve peace. One group defends the preservation of status quo on the island and emphasizes the human rights violations against the Turkish Cypriots and the negative effects of the political and economic sanctions on the Northern side. This group is more nationalist and cautious with the reconciliation efforts with the South. On the other hand the second group is oriented towards a bi-communal, bi-zonal federal solution to the problem. They also have interaction with similar minded Greek Cypriot diaspora organizations. In a way, such divisions in the diaspora are reflection of similar types of divisions on the island regarding the solution to the Cyprus problem.

In the first group of more nationalist organizations, it is possible to consider the London Cyprus Community Organization (Cemiyet), the Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations Abroad (Konsey), and Embargoed. The London Cyprus Community Organization (Cemiyet) is one of the oldest of these organizations and was established in 1952 (Canefe 2002, 68). The organizational activities include publications and lobbying activities; however in recent years this organization has not been very active. After a long period of inactivity, in 2015 the association announced that it would start working with a new vigor and aims to unite the people of Turkish origin under their roof. A prominent representative of the Cemiyet, Selçuk Akıncı stated that their activities would prioritize the youth to gain consciousness about their identity through language classes and cultural activities. Akıncı also emphasized that in the new period; they would particularly give great importance to lobbying activities. (<http://olaygazetesi.co.uk/turk-toplumu/cemiyet-yeniden-kapilarini-acti.html>)

Cemiyet has recently had its general assembly meeting in April 2016 and Selçuk Akıncı was elected as the chair of the association. Akıncı announced that they decided to hold the meeting, since the previous administration of the organization under the Presidency of Emir Osman has neither convened the regular meetings nor undertook any activities; therefore the association was practically not active under Osman's administration. (<http://www.londraposta.com/avrupadaki-en-eski-turk-derneği-yeniden-calismalara-basladi/>) In June 2016 however, the association had another general assembly under Emir Osman, where Osman was re-elected to the presidency. Osman stated that he was elected to this position in 2013; however due to some problems regarding the ownership of the

organization's building, they could not be very active since then. He also condemned the alternative general assembly meeting convened in April under Akıncı and claimed that he is the official President of the Association (<http://olaygazetesi.co.uk/turk-toplumu/emir-osman-yeniden-cemiyet-baskani-secildi.html>). As this incident with Cemiyet suggests, in diaspora communities such controversies even within the same organization is common and hampers the unity of diaspora.

Another organization that advocates the continuation of the status quo on the island is the Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations (CTCA-Konsey). This is an umbrella organization, which consists of 22 similar other smaller scale organizations (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 689). According to Bertrand, CTCA is not very powerful anymore as it used to be in the past (2004, 103). For example the UBP Solidarity Association is no longer under this federation. CTCA-UK branch was established in 1983. On their website, the goals of the association is highlighted as “to empower the British Turkish Cypriot community through civic engagement, and to support strong UK-Turkish Cypriot relations through education and advocacy.” (<http://ctcauk.com.gridhosted.co.uk/about-2/>) Konsey keeps close ties with the Turkish Embassy and the official representatives of the TRNC. Recently Konsey highlighted that as an umbrella organization; they would like all their member organizations to be actively working towards their common goals (<http://www.avrupaajansi.com/gundemdekiler/5655-ingiltere-kibris-turk-dernekleri-konseyi.html>). In the March 2015 General Assembly of the Association, Çetin Ramadan was elected as the President of the Konsey (<http://cyprusscene.com/2015/03/02/new-ctca-council-of-turkish-cypriot-associations-uk-committee-elected-2015/>)

The last organization with a more nationalist stance is a relatively new one, established in 2004: “Embargoed.” As the name of the organization suggests, the primary goal is to raise awareness on the international isolation of the TRNC and to call for “an end to such isolation as well as the full restoration of political, economic and social rights of the Turkish Cypriot people.” The members of the group consider themselves as a human rights advocacy group that are involved in lobbying activities with the goal to end to the unjust treatment of the Northern Cyprus and its citizens. However they also emphasize that protecting Turkish Cypriots' rights should not be at the expense of the Greek Cypriot rights and as a group they are committed to helping both communities to reconcile their past and present differences. Currently Fevzi Hussein acts as the chair of the organization (<http://www.embargoed.org/who-we-are.php>).

The second group of diaspora organizations consist mostly the left-leaning ones and supports reconciliation efforts aiming for a permanent peace on the island. Cyprus Turkish Democracy Association (CTDA) was established in 1972 in the UK. CTDA includes leftist parties' solidarity associations such as the CTP-UK and the United Patriotic Movement Solidarity Association (Yurtsever Birlik Hareketi Dayanışma Derneği). CTDA conducts active lobbying activities and maintains relations with the like-minded Greek Cypriot diaspora organizations (Bertrand 2004, 106). CTP-UK branch established in 1978 is particularly active in organizing such activities. Current president Gizem Utkan was elected as the president of the organization after the long-time served İlker Kılıç, who is still an active member of CTP-UK. Organization actively follows the politics in the homeland and does not refrain from criticizing CTP's role in homeland politics (<http://www.londragazete.com/2014/12/12/ingilteredeki-ctplilerden-parti-yonetimine-cagri/>).

As we mentioned above, this second group of Turkish Cypriot organizations often get together with the Greek Cypriots in the UK in order to contribute to solutions for permanent peace on the island. There are indeed few bi-communal organizations that have Greek and Turkish Cypriots as members. Haringey Cypriot Community Center is one of the largest and most active of such organizations with 17 member associations, three of them being Turkish Cypriot. Established in 1980s, the organization has close ties with AKEL. (Chatzipanagiotidou 2012, 55) There is also Friends of Cyprus group but this organization cannot be classified as a purely diasporic organization as most members are British MPs along with Greek and Turkish diaspora members. As AKEL-UK representative Bambous Charalombous highlighted, there is a need for the creation of a unified Cypriot identity and such bi-communal organizations support this goal (Chatzipanagiotidou 2012, 54; <http://www.londragazete.com/2013/11/27/greek-turkish-cypriot-representatives-meet-london/>). Another bicomunal organization in the UK is the Hackney Cypriot Association (HCA) dedicated to Cypriot community cohesion and developmental need. HCA was set up in 1976 and provides services to improve the living conditions of Cypriots, Turkish and Greek ones alike (<http://www.hackneycypriotassociation.org/current-projects/>)

There are many Turkish Cypriot diaspora organizations that are active in Britain. As discussed above they are involved in mostly communal activities along with lobbying activities. In terms of their involvement of homeland politics, they have divergent opinions about what is best for homeland's future and they lobby accordingly. While diaspora

members do not have the right to vote in elections, they are known to contribute financially to political parties election campaigns through donations as well as political advertising in the homeland media (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 694). Diaspora organizations have also traditional media activities such as publishing newspapers such as *Londra Toplum Postası* and *Londra Gazete* or London Turkish Radio. In recent years diaspora members also benefit largely from the new media such as the social media platforms to communicate and to advocate their cause.

Members of the Turkish diaspora in Britain express their despair with homeland politicians not viewing them as legitimate actors with a right to involve in homeland politics. They claim that homeland media often perpetuates this view as they portray diaspora as outsiders and does not have the right to involve in homeland affairs, as they are not affected by the negative consequences of the events as homeland society does. Diaspora argues that they care about the homeland as much as the people living in Cyprus and they would like to contribute to homeland's well being economically, socially and politically. So for diaspora, some circles' othering attitude towards them is undeserved (<http://olaygazetesi.co.uk/turk-toplumu/kibrisli-turkler-dislanmamali-ve-otekilestirilmemeli.html>).

One major issue that the Turkish Cypriots has raised is the right to vote in homeland elections. The Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations (CTCA-Konsej) particularly active in demanding voting rights for the diaspora. CTCA established even a special committee dealing solely with this issue. Through organizing meetings and conferences, CTCA aim to create awareness among the diaspora about their right to elect and be elected. President of the CTCA, Çetin Ramadan talked about the desire of the diaspora to be more involved in the homeland politics and demanded homeland politicians to hear their rightful demand on voting rights. Ramadan stated that they conducted a survey among diaspora members in Britain and 95 percent is in favor of voting rights (<http://haberkibris.com/yurtdisindaki-kibrisli-turkler-secme-ve-secilme-hakki-istiyor-2015-06-26.html>).

The special committee of the CTCA “the Rights of the Turkish Cypriots Abroad” views the unwillingness of the homeland on giving voting rights to diaspora members as related to the number of diaspora being almost higher than the voters on the island and how this may influence homeland politics to a great extent (<http://www.londragazete.com/2015/09/22/yurtdisi-kibrisli-turkler-6-ekimde-toplaniyor/>). The committee highlights the contribution of the diaspora as being vital for the homeland and how

the political involvement of the diaspora through voting will also increase investments by diaspora and therefore contribute to the homeland economy as well (<http://www.londragazete.com/2015/07/11/anayasal-hakimizi-istiyoruz/> , <http://www.sonhaberkibris.com/yurtdisinda-yasayan-kibrisli-turkler-secme-ve-secilme-hakki-istiyor/.html>, <http://www.detaykibris.com/yurt-disi-kibrisli-turklerin-haklari-komitesi-kuruldu-78185h.htm>).

Another diaspora organization, the Association of Turkish Cypriots Abroad (ATCA) emphasizes the need for diaspora to acquire their voting rights as many diaspora members have families and property on the island. Voting rights should also include voting in a future referendum, as the consequences of the referendum would have an impact on the diaspora especially in terms of their investments and property rights (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYyy0I0WZaA&feature=youtu.be&t=14m34s>).

As the issue of voting rights suggests, diaspora members demand more say in the homeland affairs and are frustrated that homeland does not always have a very inclusive approach towards them. On the other hand, homeland representatives have certain views about diaspora. For example in a meeting with diaspora representatives in 2004 in the UK, the then Foreign Minister of the TRNC Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu raised concerns about the fragmented structure of the diaspora organizations in the UK. He argued that while diaspora organizations should be empowering the homeland, instead they expect the homeland to support them. According to Ertuğruloğlu, such organizations should work more in cooperation towards common goals with the homeland (http://www.brtk.net/?video_post=ertugruloğlu-diaspora-ulkeye-guc-katan-bir-yapi-olmalı).

Turkish Cypriot Diaspora's Position on the Current Peace Process

In the case of conflict-generated diasporas, attempts towards the resolution of the conflict generally lead to diaspora's more active involvement in the politics of the homeland. This has been the case with the Turkish Cypriot diaspora in the UK. For instance, the referendum of the 2004 on the UN Peace Plan on April 24th was one such event, which led to a more vigorous involvement of the diaspora in the pre and post-referendum periods. After years of negotiation and preparation, the UN plan (the Annan Plan) was put to vote through two separate simultaneous referenda conducted on April 24 2004. The plan basically proposed the reunification of the two sides of the island on a decentralized federal system, with both sides retaining autonomy on many issues (Loizides 2014, 239-240). According to the results

of the referendum, 65% of the Turkish Cypriots voted for the Annan plan while 76% of the Greek Cypriots voted against the plan (Loizos 2006, 179-182).

While Turkish Cypriot diaspora in Britain did not have the right to vote (as mentioned earlier) and therefore could not participate in the referendum, they were actively engaged in the 2004 referendum process. Major division lines among diaspora continued on the Annan Plan. While more nationalist, pro-status quo diaspora groups opposed the Plan, diaspora groups with leftist tendencies formed a platform supporting the plan and even engaged in bi-communal activities (Bertrand 2004, 108)

After the rejection of the plan by a majority of Greek Cypriots, similar kind of disappointment was felt by the Turkish Cypriot diaspora like the one felt by the Turkish Cypriots on the island. Bi-communal activities in the UK decreased and the number of Turkish Cypriots attending the Haringey Cypriot Community Center diminished (Chatzipanagiotidou 2012 in *Cyprus and the Politics*, 100). In her fieldwork, Chatzipanagiotidou observed the frustration among Turkish Cypriot diaspora especially those who supported peace on the island and involved in the bi-communal activities organized by AKEL (2012, 68). According to Chatzipanagiotidou “The failure of the plan to lead to re-unification and re-conciliation shook the very notion of Cypriotism as a long-term ideological narrative and practice” (2012, 68).

After the initial disappointment, some prominent diaspora members asked the community members to stay calm and not to abandon hopes for a permanent solution to the conflict (<http://www.cyprus-forum.com/cyprus8634.html>). However, some other diaspora groups kept indicating the referendum results and ongoing international sanctions thereafter as a sign for solution to the conflict being far off. Embargoed for example argued that sanctions should be lifted immediately and not tied to any political settlement of the conflict, as an embargo-free life is a fundamental human right (<http://www.embargoed.org/faqs.php#1>).

The referendum of 2004 was an important political event in which even passive members of the diaspora were mobilized. While the results of the referendum led to an initial disappointment, the referendum process showed the Turkish Cypriot diaspora that they have clear stakes in the homeland’s political processes. Voting rights for the Turkish Cypriots abroad has been a major issue that diaspora members from various organizations voiced after 2004. This issue can be seen as a strong sign of diaspora’s desire to be involved in the homeland politics even after the referendum. Perhaps it was the referendum process, which

showed the diaspora the need to be more engaged in the politics of the homeland.

The election of Mustafa Akıncı to the Presidency of the TRNC in April 2015 raised hopes once again for a solution to the conflict. Akıncı is known to have actively worked for securing a 'Yes' vote for the Annan plan referendum of 2004, through the Peace and Democracy Movement (Direkli 2016, 135). Within almost a month after his election, Akıncı entered into negotiation process with Anastasiades under the UN auspices. An important phase of the efforts was the Geneva Negotiations of January 2017. Not only the two leaders of the island attended this meeting but also Turkey, Greece and the UK as three guarantors along with the EU was present at the Geneva talks (<http://in-cyprus.com/politics-preview-2017-solution-in-the-balance/>; <http://www.ntv.com.tr/dunya/cenevrede-tarihi-kibris-konferansi,u67ZSaFVXU27Zjv7qoKFCg>). As of the date of this writing; a solution has not been reached albeit the hopes are still high for a substantial resolution.

I will now review the issues that are central to the negotiation process before discussing the Turkish Cypriots attitude towards them. One of the main issues is the structure of the state and the power sharing between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The UN formula since 1977 involves a two-region (territorially) and two-society (constitutionally) federal system on the basis of political equality between the two communities (Direkli 2016, 133). However, Greek Cypriots are more in favor of a single state solution (continuance of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus) whereas Turkish Cypriots prefer a two state solution, which would bring international recognition to the TRNC. Also if a federal state is the outcome, Greek side prefers a more centralized one while Turkish side favors a loose one. (<http://in-cyprus.com/politics-preview-2017-solution-in-the-balance/>; Direkli 2016, 135-136). This problem is indeed connected to the population ratio of the two communities. Greek Cypriots view the Turkish Cypriots as political minority; while Turkish Cypriots consider themselves as politically equal partners (<http://haberkibris.com/turkesten-nufus-cikisi---2017-01-26.html>).

A central issue that forms a major obstacle for the conciliation efforts has been the territory. During the Geneva Talks, both sides presented their own map proposals, which were later, submitted to the UN representatives. In terms of ratio, there is not much difference between the two maps (29.2 and 28.5). However there are major disparities between the two, in terms of the borders of the two states (<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/38618309>; <http://www.havadiskibris.com/kibris-muzakereleri-haritalar/>). Another connected issue is the

problem of return of property to the Greek Cypriots who were relocated from the North after the 1974 intervention by Turkey (Direkli 2016, 137-138). This issue forms one of the most persistent problems so far in all negotiations since 1977. The Real Estate Property Commission established in 2006 by the TRNC attempts to serve as an effective alternative to deal with the problem of Greek properties in the Turkish administration (Direkli 2016, 138-139).

The free movement of goods, services, capital and persons within the EU (known as four freedoms) created another problem after the Republic of Cyprus' accession to the EU. Since the EU law demands the movement of goods, services, capital and persons freely within the Union, this would allow Greece the freedom of movement in all these areas as an EU member state, whereas Turkey would be left out as the country is not an EU member. After the Geneva Talks, Tuğrul Türkeş who is the deputy prime minister of Turkey responsible for Cyprus affairs announced that Turkish citizens should also enjoy four freedoms. He stated that they proposed this during Geneva talks and added that if this demand would not be met then neither Greek citizens should enjoy these rights (<http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/01/26/ankara-wants-four-freedoms-turks-solution/>; <http://haberkibris.com/turkesten-nufus-cikisi---2017-01-26.html>; <http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/02/05/four-freedoms-debate-not-new/>).

Turkey's guarantor status along with Greece and Britain has been one of the contentious issues during the talks, as Turkey would like to remain as a guarantor whereas Greek Cypriots are against this (Direkli 2016, 143; <http://in-cyprus.com/politics-preview-2017-solution-in-the-balance/>). In the same statement, Türkeş also brought up the population issue and said the figures concerning Greek and Turkish Cypriots (820, 000 and 220,000 respectively) are wrong as there are over 300,000 Turkish Cypriots living abroad. He said: "It is not important if they live in Cyprus or not. What is important is that they are Turkish Cypriots." (<http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/01/26/ankara-wants-four-freedoms-turks-solution/>) And therefore should be included in the total Turkish Cypriot population. Türkeş stated that Turkey, in close cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot diaspora organizations, is working on calculating the exact number living in the UK (<http://haberkibris.com/turkesten-nufus-cikisi---2017-01-26.html>).

There are various issues among the above-discussed points of negotiation that concern the Turkish Cypriot diaspora. Similar to the referendum period of 2004 , Turkish Cypriot

diaspora in the UK shows a keen interest in this new peace talks under the leadership of Akıncı. CTCA has been one of the most involved diaspora organizations in this regard. The following statement by Tuğrul Yiğitoğlu (CTCA secretary) on the Facebook page of the CTCA posted for the commemoration of the 20th July Turkish intervention in 1974, highlights their stance on the new peace process: “For the Turkish Cypriots not to experience the same painful experiences of the past, we demand that no mistake should be made in a possible referendum after 42 years. We wish that the negotiation process would be widely shared with the society and civil society organizations. The will of the Turkish Cypriots’ is very important in this regard for the future generations” (https://www.facebook.com/ctcauk/?hc_ref=PAGES_TIMELINE&fref=nf). On November 2016, the chief negotiator Ergün Olgun met with the CTCA board representatives to inform them on the negotiations process (<https://www.gundemkibris.com/muzakereci-ergun-olgun-londrada-98639h.htm>); <https://www.facebook.com/ctcauk/photos/a.180757725326576.44108.142705429131806/734497139952629/?type=3&theater>). CTCA also paid a series of visits including the Foreign Ministry of TRNC as well as the relevant state institutions in Turkey in the same month (<https://www.facebook.com/ctcauk/photos/a.638648156204195.1073741826.142705429131806/1148748551860817/?type=3&theater>).

The following public announcement posted by Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations Abroad (CTCA) is important considering Turkeş’s statements on the Turkish Cypriot diaspora: “At a time when Cyprus Talks are in progress and Brexit is gathering speed, we thought it would be a good idea to review our position as British subjects from Turkish Cypriot backgrounds, consider the implications and decide on the most appropriate action. We call on all members of our community from Turkish Cypriot backgrounds who live abroad and do not have Turkish Cypriot citizenship to apply to get one.” The organization urges everyone to apply for the TRNC citizenship for the following reasons: If we secure citizenship status with the TRNC, it would be unlawful for it to be discarded; to ensure that we do not have to obtain a visa to visit our home country in the event of Brexit and not having citizenship will impose problems in inheriting, buying and selling ancestral property, and engaging in business in our own country (<http://ctcauk.com/announcements/urgent-announcement-from-ctca/>). Diaspora organization Embargoed criticizes the one-sided international attention to the peace talks, which highlights only the return of the Greek

Cypriots to the North and neglects other problems such as the impact of the embargoes on Turkish Cypriots (<https://www.embargoed.org>).

On the other end of the spectrum, Cyprus Turkish Democracy Association (CTDA), has adopted a position fully supportive of the current peace process and criticized the outside powers whose interest dictates the continuation of the status quo on the island (<http://www.adabasini.com/haber/kibris-turk-demokrasi-dernegi--kibrista-baris-zamani-gelmistir-368876.html>; <https://www.facebook.com/14AgustosBagimsizKibris/posts/845266432247861>). The position of the CTDA has always been in favor of a permanent solution to the conflict. It defended a two-region and two-society solution based on the political equality of the two communities. CTDA has supported the previous peace talks while adopting the motto “Cyprus belongs to Cypriots” (<http://ktdemokrasidernegi.blogspot.com>)

Turkish Cypriot diaspora has always engaged actively in homeland politics. As a conflict generated diaspora, they are interested in the resolution of the conflict on the island while there are divergent views on how. Turkish Cypriots in the UK entered into an active mobilization process in the period following 2004. In a way, the referendum and the consequent developments showed the diaspora how much stake they have in the homeland related political developments. Thus they become more adamant on demanding voting rights in the homeland elections for instance. Currently there are new attempts towards the resolution of the conflict on the island. Diasporas’ role and positive contribution in the negotiation process can be an important asset for both sides of the island. Also as the examples of other diasporas indicate, Cypriot diaspora can become critical in the post-conflict reconstruction process by bringing their skills and resources to the homeland.

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