



# Security Council

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## United Nations operation in Cyprus

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) covers developments from 13 December 2023 to 12 June 2024. It brings up to date the record of activities carried out by UNFICYP pursuant to Security Council resolution [186 \(1964\)](#) and subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution [2723 \(2024\)](#), since the issuance of the reports of the Secretary-General dated 3 January 2024 on UNFICYP ([S/2024/12](#)) and on his mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2024/13](#)).

2. As at 12 June 2024, the strength of the military component stood at 800 (709 men and 91 women, or 11.4 per cent women for all ranks, compared with the global peace operations target of 12 per cent women by 2025) while that of the police component stood at 68 (45 men and 23 women, or 34 per cent women compared with the overall global target for 2025 of 25 per cent women) (see annex).

#### II. Significant developments

3. During the reporting period, the number of military violations remained high as the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides proceeded with unauthorized military constructions and installations in and around the buffer zone to strengthen their defensive postures. Constraints on the mission's freedom of movement also remained in several areas, exacerbated by a record number of incursions by both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot police in the buffer zone, a direct challenge to the mission's authority. The mission undertook efforts to de-escalate tensions in and around the buffer zone further to Security Council resolution [2723 \(2024\)](#). However, while not explicitly rejecting the notion of de-escalation, neither side actively engaged in discussions to explore how it could be achieved. Although the status quo ante has not been fully restored in central Nicosia, there was some positive movement by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in Wayne's Keep Cemetery, and UNFICYP freedom of movement in that location was partially re-established.

4. The situation on the Pyla/Pile plateau continued to be calm, as construction works remained suspended throughout the reporting period. UNFICYP maintained its engagement with both sides with a view to resuming the implementation of the agreed understanding.



5. In May, the decision by the Republic of Cyprus against a backdrop of increasing migrant and refugee flows to deny access to asylum procedures to all those in the buffer zone led to an increase in migrants and refugees stranded in the buffer zone, requiring emergency humanitarian support from UNFICYP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

6. For the first time since November 2019, with the facilitation and political engagement of UNFICYP, more than 300 pilgrims from the north crossed to the south to make their pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca.

7. In March, UNFICYP commemorated its sixtieth anniversary in Cyprus through a series of events paying tribute to the 187 peacekeepers who have fallen in the line of duty and to the more than 150,000 uniformed personnel who have served in Cyprus, from 43 troop- and police-contributing countries. The anniversary served as a stark reminder that the resolution of the Cyprus issue is long overdue.

### **III. Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus**

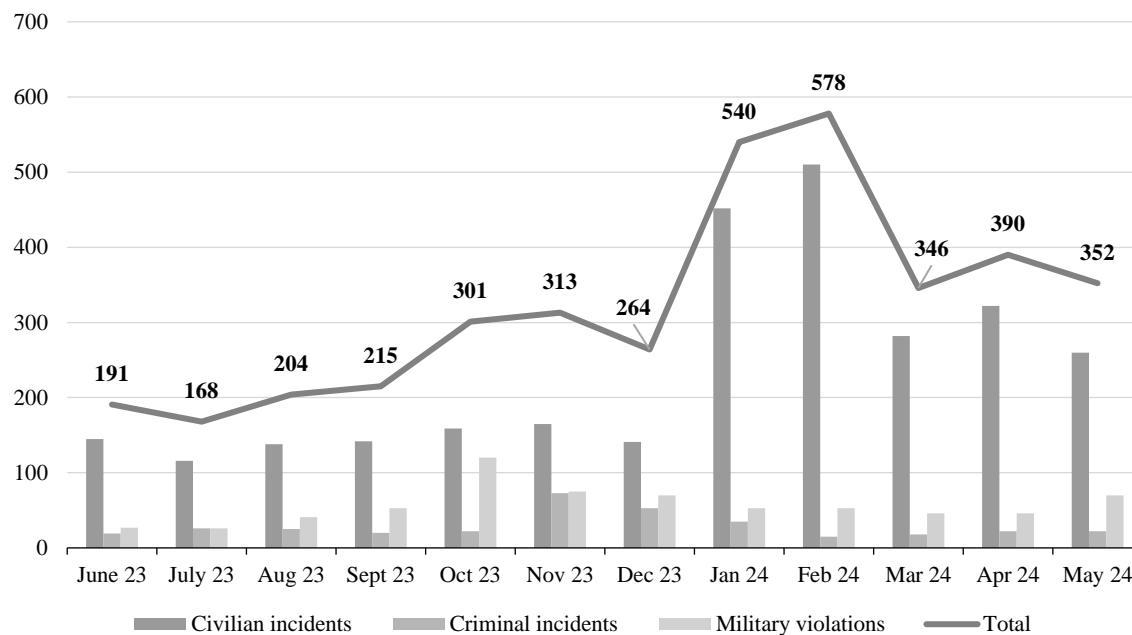
8. Although no new significant crisis emerged, the upward trend of serious military violations continued, with challenges to the mission's authority and actions altering the military status quo persisting. The reporting period was characterized by the strengthening of defensive postures by both sides in and around the buffer zone. The increased number of law enforcement incursions in the buffer zone also illustrated a growing disregard for UNFICYP authority in the buffer zone by both sides.

9. People-to-people contacts at the community level continued, and UNFICYP maintained its support for such engagements. The reporting period saw new engagement by some segments of civil society, including women's organizations, although overall fatigue amid the enduring unresolved political process could also be felt. Divisive narratives within the two communities persisted. UNFICYP, together with the mission of good offices of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, endorsed its first disability inclusion action plan in order to operationalize the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy across both missions.

#### **A. Prevention of tensions in and around the buffer zone**

10. The progress achieved through the conclusion of an understanding on the Pyla/Pile plateau during the previous reporting period was diminished by the continued suspension of its implementation since 6 November 2023. New concerns raised at that time challenged the basis of the understanding. The mission repeatedly engaged with the sides at various levels to unblock implementation, showing full impartiality as had been done from the very first engagement on this issue, which had led to the conclusion of the understanding. Unfortunately, misinformation on this subject has been rife. In addition, incursions into the buffer zone on the Pyla/Pile plateau by Turkish Cypriot police, at times in civilian clothing, far exceeded those of previous periods.

Figure I  
Number of incidents in the buffer zone



Source: Unite Aware.

11. The unauthorized 14 km of concertina wire fence placed in the buffer zone by the Republic of Cyprus in 2021 and 2022, against the mission's protests, has not been removed despite previous indications that it would be.

12. In Varosha, no steps were taken to address the call made by the Security Council in its resolution 2723 (2024) for the immediate reversal of the action taken since October 2020. UNFICYP did not observe any significant change in the 3.5 per cent of the area of Varosha for which it was announced in July 2021 that the military status had been lifted in preparation for renovation; however, the mission has limited access to that area. South of the built-up part of Varosha, UNFICYP protested against the establishment of a new trench and berm system by the Turkish Forces stretching nearly 4 km along the northern ceasefire line, which, due to its proximity to the buffer zone, constitutes a military violation. This is in addition to the previously reported tank emplacements, also within 1 km of the buffer zone. Many visitors also continued to visit the parts of the town progressively made accessible to the public. The previously reported vegetation clearing, electrical work, road paving and fence building continued. Moreover, UNFICYP again observed the repeated use of commercial drone overflights, linked, in the mission's assessment, to the monitoring of civilian visits. Access to the entire area of Varosha by UNFICYP patrols has remained significantly constrained since 1974.

13. In relation to the status of Varosha, UNFICYP continues to be guided by relevant Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, the mission and the Secretariat have repeatedly expressed concern over any developments in the fenced-off part of the town. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Türkiye responsible for the situation in Varosha.

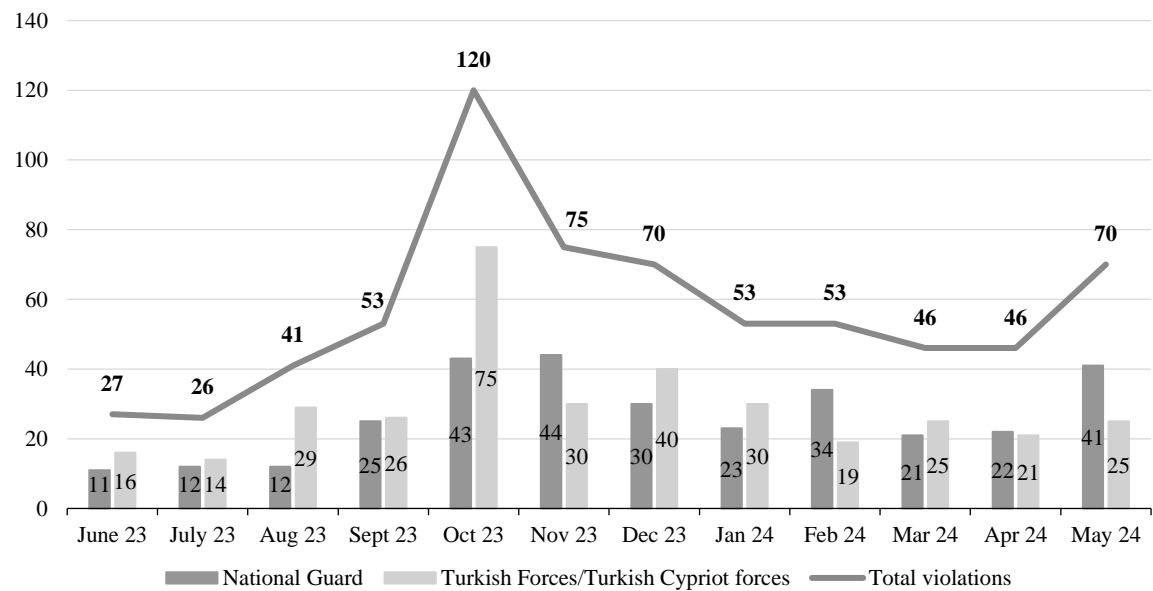
14. In Strovilia, the mission's freedom of movement remains limited and the liaison post continues to be overstaffed by Turkish Cypriot security forces. During the

reporting period, UNFICYP observed the installation of 14 closed-circuit cameras, placed on a new police container.

**B. Prevention of a recurrence of fighting and maintenance of the military status quo**

15. Further to Security Council resolution 2723 (2024), UNFICYP pursued efforts at the political and military levels towards a de-escalation of tensions in and around the buffer zone, so far with little success. The militarization along and in proximity of the buffer zone proceeded at a high pace, through the deployment of potentially destabilizing military-grade surveillance technology and defensive installations on both sides. From 13 December to 31 May, the mission observed 303 military violations, 158 by the National Guard and 145 by the Turkish Forces. Of the total number of violations, 108 were considered serious, as they involved permanent constructions, challenging the mission’s authority in the buffer zone and the ceasefire lines.

Figure II  
Number of military violations



Source: Unite Aware.

Note: Figures may differ from those previously published due to the subsequent revision of data based on newly available data and/or the correction of errors.

16. The installation of advanced surveillance technology along the southern ceasefire line continued unabated. During the reporting period, the Republic of Cyprus erected surveillance cameras at 31 additional sites along the buffer zone, 6 of them located inside the buffer zone in and around Nicosia, bringing the total number of such installations by the Greek Cypriots to 79. The Republic of Cyprus explained these violations by claiming that their purpose was to monitor irregular migration. The cameras were mounted on military observation posts. In addition, the Republic of Cyprus installed 26 large surveillance towers along the southern ceasefire line, with surveillance cameras so far installed at six of these sites. UNFICYP has determined that these military-grade cameras offer long-range surveillance capabilities, well beyond the buffer zone, and as such are particularly destabilizing.

17. Turkish Forces installed four additional camera sites during the reporting period, bringing the total number of its camera installations along the northern ceasefire line to 110. Furthermore, the camera and satellite dish installed by the Turkish Forces atop an abandoned house inside the buffer zone known as “Maria’s House” during the previous reporting period remained in place. Turkish Forces also installed six long-range surveillance towers along the ceasefire line, five of which were equipped with cameras with similar long-range capability to those installed by the Greek Cypriot forces.

18. In all instances, UNFICYP protested against the installations and urged their removal with engagement at both the political and military levels. There was no progress on the Security Council’s request to unstaff opposing forces’ positions along the ceasefire lines for which certain types of cameras could be considered a reasonable replacement.

19. Both sides also maintained their prefabricated concrete firing positions in or along the buffer zone. The National Guard has 329 such positions along the southern ceasefire line, 13 of them inside the buffer zone, and during the reporting period it placed 2 additional positions in civilian residential areas in the vicinity of the buffer zone. Turkish Forces have 11 positions along the northern ceasefire line.

20. The hardening of the northern ceasefire line was further confirmed through the renovation and extension of defence trench systems along the buffer zone in the western part of the island, for the first time since 2008. Extended by 250 m, the systems are in addition to the trench extended south of Varosha. The National Guard also maintained a trench system comprising 11 concrete bunkers on the southern ceasefire line in the middle of a civilian photovoltaic park that is partly inside the buffer zone. The mission has not achieved any progress in seeking a halt to the disguising of military positions inside civilian structures along the buffer zone by the Greek Cypriot side, despite repeatedly raising concerns regarding the ethics of such a practice and the danger that it poses to civilians. Overmanning and “move forward” violations by both the Turkish Forces and the National Guard also continue to be regularly observed.

21. At the end of the previous reporting period, UNFICYP freedom of movement was obstructed by Turkish Forces in the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery known as Wayne’s Keep, in the buffer zone in Nicosia, and both soldiers and police moved forward at various times into the area. This amounted to a seizure of control over an area of the buffer zone that they have disputed. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General engaged actively with Turkish Cypriot authorities and Türkiye to seek a return to the status quo ante and have the move forward violations addressed. UNFICYP freedom of movement was partially restored in April, and the mission resumed regular patrols on an agreed schedule. While this does not resolve the constraints placed on UNFICYP freedom of movement in this area, it was a rare positive development during the reporting period.

22. UNFICYP continued to follow up on the call made by the Security Council in its resolution [2674 \(2023\)](#) for the sides to agree on “a plan of work to achieve a mine-free Cyprus”. No progress was made during the reporting period regarding the clearing of the 29 remaining suspected hazardous areas on the island, including the 4 active minefields in the buffer zone, 3 of which belong to the National Guard and 1 to the Turkish Forces. The mission’s Mine Action Service has prepared options for a new phase of clearance activities, with a special focus on the buffer zone and on remaining anti-personnel mines.

### C. Management of civilian activity and maintenance of law and order

23. The reporting period was marked by a record number of incursions by Turkish Cypriot police in the buffer zone, a total of 611 as at 31 May, due mainly to their heightened presence on the Pyla/Pile plateau and in Wayne's Keep Cemetery. In some instances police personnel were in uniform, while in others they operated in civilian clothing. These incursions were in both cases associated with challenges to the long-standing United Nations delineation of the buffer zone.

24. The reporting period was likewise marked by a record number of incursions by Greek Cypriot police (31 in total) towards the end of the reporting period, presented mainly as an effort to prevent irregular migration. Indeed, on 15 May, UNFICYP patrols liaising with Greek Cypriot police over third country nationals in the buffer zone were informed of a new Republic of Cyprus policy refusing access to asylum procedures to such individuals. Greek Cypriot police and the National Guard subsequently entered the buffer zone to enforce the policy and maintained a sustained presence there. They then positioned personnel to prevent third country nationals from leaving the buffer zone towards the south. In this respect, both UNFICYP and UNHCR recalled the obligations of the Republic of Cyprus under international refugee law. As at 7 June, 29 third country nationals, including 7 minors (some unaccompanied), remained stranded in the buffer zone. UNFICYP continues to provide emergency shelter, food and other immediate necessities in close coordination with UNHCR.

25. In the past, the mission had observed on nearly a dozen occasions the movement of people at night across the buffer zone, which may be linked to smuggling networks, particularly considering movement trends on the island. Based on other sources of information, the mission assessed that these cases were not isolated, although it remained constrained by its limited detection capabilities. UNFICYP continues to exchange information with both police services in this regard.

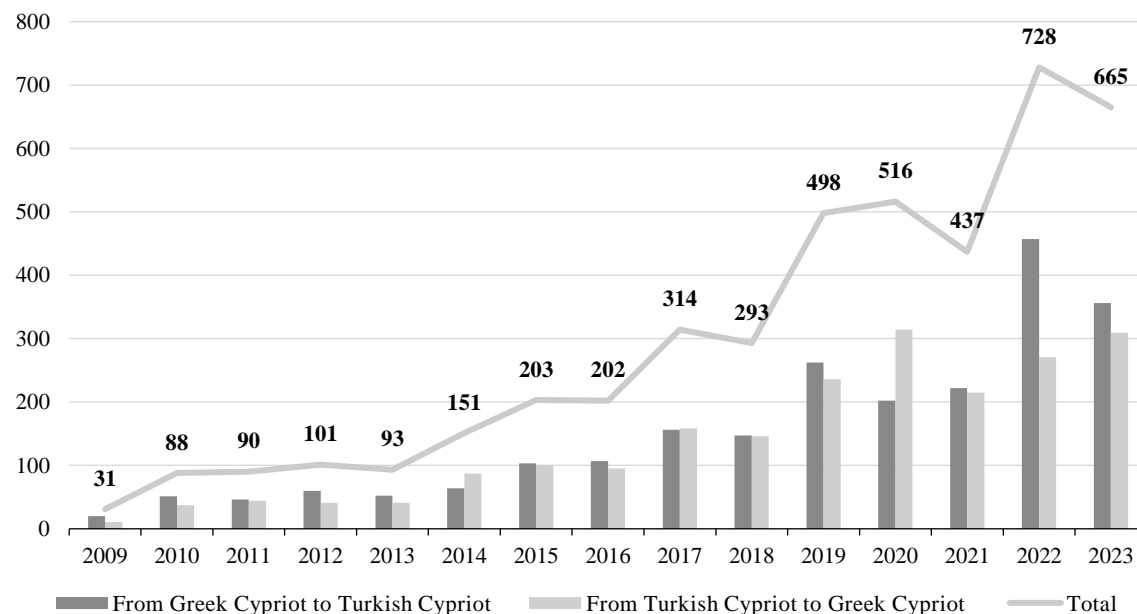
26. The reporting period also saw an increase in other civilian incursions in the buffer zone, 1,156 against 793 during the same period the previous year. Although these incidents were considered to be of low severity, they nonetheless complete the picture of a general erosion in the respect for UNFICYP authority in the buffer zone. Incidents of dumping, unauthorized farming, foraging and dog training activities were observed regularly, mostly of Greek Cypriots in line with seasonal trends. In response, the mission adapted its patrols to deter such activities. Criminal incidents also occurred in the buffer zone, albeit to a lesser extent than during the previous reporting period.

27. The construction of a highway between Astromeritis and Evrychou in the south, skimming inside the edge of the buffer zone along the way, proceeded without UNFICYP authorization. In the mission's engagement with the Greek Cypriot authorities, the latter have produced historical evidence that lends some support to their position that the highway's route did not infringe upon the buffer zone, despite UNFICYP protests to the contrary. Although the highway does not alter the military status quo of the buffer zone or significantly erode its integrity, UNFICYP continues to consider this construction to be a violation.

28. The Joint Contact Room, under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, continued to serve as an essential channel for the exchange of information on crimes and police matters between both sides of the island. During the reporting period, this cooperation led to the handover of five suspected criminals, including third country nationals. While the overall number of exchanges of information is much higher than in the past, there was a slight dip in 2023 due to the absence of the senior Greek Cypriot member in the second half of the

year. Figures since the beginning of the year suggest that the upward trend continues in 2024. The Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters also continued to hold monthly meetings with the facilitation of UNFICYP. More details are provided in the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/526).

Figure III  
Number of information exchanges in the Joint Contact Rooms



Source: Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System.

29. In the bicomunal village of Pyla/Pile, the number of illegal casinos and nightclubs remained the same as during the previous reporting period (10 casinos and 1 nightclub). The Joint Contact Room in Pyla/Pile continued to serve as an avenue for exchange of information regarding local issues, including exchanges beyond crime-related matters. UNFICYP also established foot patrols throughout the village to increase its engagement with the local population.

30. The university in Pyla/Pile continued to operate in the buffer zone without authorization from UNFICYP. No progress was registered in resolving the matter of the large unauthorized construction project associated with the university, despite the continued engagement efforts of the mission.

## D. Intercommunal relations, cooperation and trust-building

31. The reporting period saw renewed enthusiasm and interest from civil society in peace efforts. UNFICYP sustained efforts in building bridges between the communities, organizing or supporting 159 intercommunal or peacebuilding events, 23 of which were focused on women or youth.

32. UNFICYP hosted an intercommunal event on the role of civil society in support of peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts over the past six decades, with the participation of 150 people from both communities, including academics and civil society activists. Participants spoke of the contributions by civil society to peace efforts on the island despite negative political discourses and stressed their frustration regarding the unresolved political issue and their lack of inclusion at the political

level. UNFICYP also hosted over 120 participants from both communities for an intergenerational discussion on how best to support a potential future peace process. Furthermore, as part of sensitization efforts on UNFICYP work in the context of the anniversary, the mission launched a public information campaign across the island to raise awareness and understanding of its role, which also contributed to efforts to counter the misinformation/disinformation prevalent in the public sphere.

33. During the reporting period, UNFICYP prioritized efforts to expand and diversify its audience and hosted intercommunal activities with new constituencies outside of Nicosia on a range of issues of common concern, including environmental matters, entrepreneurship, business, youth activism and sports. The mission facilitated the organization of intercommunal chess and sports tournaments to sustain intercommunal contacts, including in Pyla/Pile, where a renewed interest in intercommunal activities was observed, and in Morphou/Güzelyurt, where an intercommunal event was facilitated for the first time in a decade. In addition, the joint working groups of UNFICYP and the mission of good offices on environmental peacebuilding and on business, innovation and entrepreneurship continued their work. The working groups held events on the role of youth in climate change and the fourth edition of the business and networking fair.

34. In this context, the technical committees continued to serve as an avenue to address issues of shared importance across the island. The Special Representative/Deputy Special Adviser engaged regularly with representatives of the two Cypriot leaders, and this dialogue served to support the work of the technical committees. More details are provided in the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus ([S/2024/526](#)).

35. Trade across the Green Line, regulated by Council regulation (EC) No. 866/2004 of the European Union (the Green Line Regulation), reached a record value of €16 million in 2023, the highest value reached since Green Line trade began in 2004. During the reporting period, the Republic of Cyprus authorized six new products of processed food of non-animal origin for Green Line trade provided that they fulfil required standards. While the development is welcome, its practical implementation has yet to be seen, as no additional trade has taken place so far.

36. The European Commission continued to encourage an increase in Green Line trade and support Turkish Cypriot producers in particular in complying with all the necessary European Union standards and regulations to enable them to trade admitted products over the Green Line. Turkish Cypriot producers continued to make progress in addressing these requirements, including for the production of Halloumi/Hellim cheese as a European Union Protected Designation of Origin product. The European Commission's "EU One Stop Shop" also continued to serve as an avenue to facilitate Green Line trade, including by providing information on Green Line trade procedures and applicable European Union standards to traders on both sides.

37. Overall, administrative and psychological barriers continued to prevent Green Line trade from achieving its much greater potential. Such barriers also affected "reverse trade" – the sale of Greek Cypriot products to the Turkish Cypriot community, which was hampered in particular by double taxation of value added tax and by "import duties" imposed by the Turkish Cypriot local bodies. There was also limited progress concerning Turkish Cypriots' ability to open bank accounts in the Republic of Cyprus, and there was no progress in establishing an efficient payment system for Green Line trade. As a result, most such transactions continued to be cash based or required expensive transfers via several correspondent banks.

38. Representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties continued to hold monthly meetings under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia



(see the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/526) for more information).

## **E. Facilitation of access and humanitarian functions**

39. In accordance with its mandate, UNFICYP continued to engage with the Greek Cypriots and Maronites residing in the north and Turkish Cypriots residing in the south. Weekly delivery of humanitarian assistance was provided to 287 Greek Cypriots and 44 Maronites in the north, and three post-mortem transfers were facilitated through the checkpoints. The mission also facilitated the transfer of textbooks for the Greek Cypriot schools in Karpas Peninsula and the appointment of teachers in the Maronite village of Kormakitis and liaised with relevant authorities on both sides to this end. Turkish Cypriot authorities rejected 44 of 231 schoolbooks which the Greek Cypriot authorities intended to use at the Karpas schools and alleged that the language was “divisive” and not “suitable” for the peaceful coexistence of Turkish and Greek Cypriots.

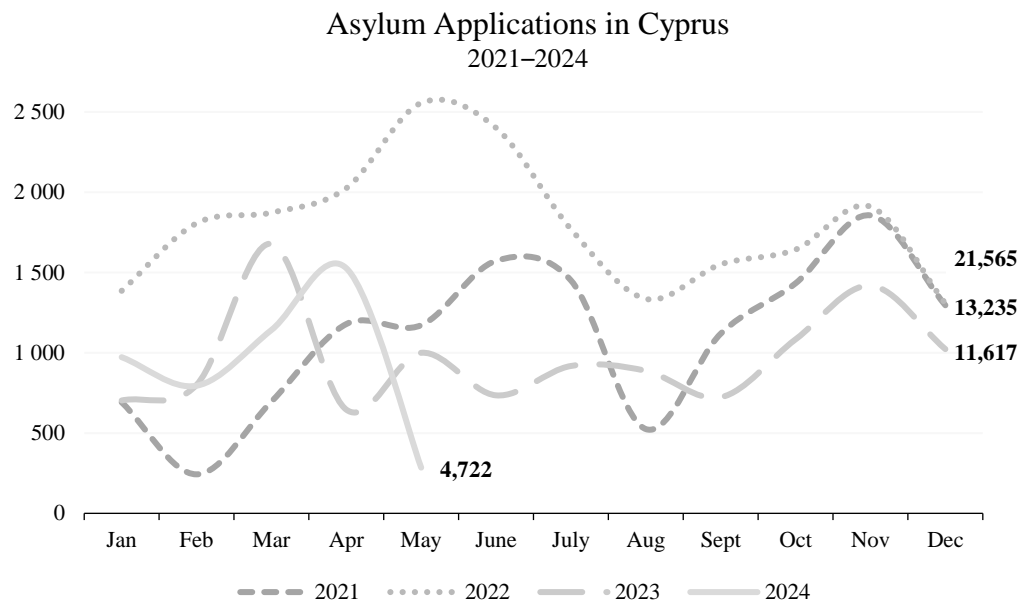
40. UNFICYP also facilitated the passage of people for 36 religious and commemorative events which were held in the buffer zone or required crossings to either side. The number of requests channelled through UNFICYP that were approved by the Turkish Cypriot authorities was almost the same as that for the equivalent period in 2023: 60 per cent of such requests were approved by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, compared with 61 per cent in the same period in 2023. A notable event during the reporting period was the resumption of the pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca, for the first time since 2019. With political engagement and facilitation by UNFICYP, more than 300 pilgrims from the north crossed to the south. The Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, continued its work. More details are provided in the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/526).

41. The crossing points across the island continued to operate, although queues continued to be observed at the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point in Nicosia. The Technical Committee on Crossing Points met thrice during the reporting period, and in a welcome development its members agreed on a detailed enlargement project for the Agios Dometios/Metehan crossing point. More details on the work of the Committee are provided in the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/526).

## **F. Refugees and asylum-seekers**

42. Asylum applications in Cyprus decreased significantly in 2023, at 11,617 applications, representing a decrease of 46 per cent compared with 2022. Most applicants originated from the Syrian Arab Republic (3,668), representing 83 per cent of all asylum applications submitted during the first quarter of 2024, more than three times compared with the same period the previous year. Arrivals shifted from a mixed migration movement to a refugee situation, with 82 per cent of Syrians arriving directly by boat in the south of the island and the rest arriving from the northern part of Cyprus. Furthermore, the backlog of pending applications had reached 25,516 by the end of April, of which 14,365 concerned Syrian nationals. In addition, another 5,390 applicants awaited the outcome of their appeals at the International Protection Administrative Court.

Figure IV  
Number of asylum applications in the Republic of Cyprus (data available to May 2024)



Source: UNHCR.

43. Between 13 December and 28 May, 59 boats arrived in the south, all of them having departed from Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, carrying a total of 3,221 persons on board. Twenty-one boats, a record number, arrived within a period of two weeks between the end of March and mid-April. On 13 December, a boat carrying on board some 90 Syrians, among whom were 7 women and 21 children, was reported missing. Six bodies were eventually found in the northern part of Cyprus and one in the south, presumed to belong to the missing persons. Six additional bodies were found in Türkiye and two in the Syrian Arab Republic, one of whom was identified through DNA testing as one of the missing persons.

44. Several boats issued distress calls during the reporting period. Two children died of dehydration and four men went missing when their boats got stranded at sea in three different incidents in January and February 2024. Despite search-and-rescue operations, the boats were not identified before six and nine days had elapsed, respectively, in the last two incidents. In addition, the increased boat arrivals led to a resumption of interceptions and returns of Syrians to Lebanon, which had been halted in August 2023 following the return of 109 Syrians from Cyprus to Lebanon and from there to the Syrian Arab Republic, contrary to the principle of non-refoulement. A boat carrying 104 Syrians was intercepted on 11 February and the group was eventually taken back to Lebanon, but was not allowed readmission. The passengers were eventually admitted to Cyprus on 13 February. Following the surge in arrivals in late March, Cypriot Coast Guard vessels started patrolling the Lebanese shores as of 16 April, with five boats intercepted, carrying approximately 500 persons on board. Four boats were confirmed to have returned to Lebanon, while one has reportedly returned to the Syrian Arab Republic. On 16 May, a boat carrying 20 Syrian nationals which approached Cyprus was intercepted by the Cypriot Coast Guard. Its passengers were handed over to the Lebanese Navy and were subsequently returned to the Syrian Arab Republic.

45. During the reporting period, the Republic of Cyprus announced the suspension of the processing of asylum applications of Syrians. It was reported that the duration

of the suspension would be 21 months, during which Syrian asylum-seekers would be hosted at reception centres, despite the limited reception capacity, and would not be entitled to receive any welfare benefits. In addition, the Republic of Cyprus announced the revocation of the international protection status granted to Syrians who travelled back through the northern part of Cyprus and Türkiye in the past 12 months. By the end of the reporting period, 29 such revocations had taken place, according to an announcement of the Ministry of the Interior.

46. The increase in the arrival of Syrian nationals regrettably led to an increase in anti-refugee and migrant sentiments. On 5 January, a bomb attack took place against the premises of a local non-governmental organization working on anti-racism, migration, asylum and human rights, based in Nicosia.

47. Irregular arrivals through the Green Line persisted, although the percentage of the total number of asylum-seekers who arrived from the northern part decreased from 57 per cent in 2023 to 33 per cent during the first five months of the year. The lack of access to asylum procedures at the crossing points on the Green Line remains a fundamental problem, placing asylum-seekers at risk of exploitation or of being stranded in the buffer zone.

48. Since 15 May, access to asylum procedures has also been denied to third country nationals in the buffer zone. As at 12 June, a total of 29 persons remained stranded in the buffer zone without access to basic reception conditions. Many of them have been victims of persecution, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence and continue to face serious medical issues, including women and children with mental health conditions. Their vulnerabilities, coupled with their being stranded in the buffer zone for several weeks, often in extreme heat, have led in many instances to their urgent transfer to hospitals in the Republic of Cyprus. However, from there they have repeatedly been pushed back to the buffer zone, despite their explicit requests to seek asylum and their evident protection needs.

## **G. Gender and women and peace and security**

49. In line with its mandate to advance women and peace and security efforts, UNFICYP focused its efforts on broadening engagement on gender equality with the population outside of Nicosia. As part of its Peacebuilding in Divided Societies programme, the mission worked to strengthen the capacities of intercommunal youth groups on peacebuilding, gender-inclusive peace practices and negotiation and mediation skills. As an outcome of the programme, an alumni network of youth activists was created to engage in gender-inclusive peacebuilding. UNFICYP is organizing activities for the alumni to enhance sustainability and to create opportunities for new partnerships. The mission also provided support to a partnership among civil society organizations on an initiative to challenge gender norms and stereotypes, which included a video message launched on International Women's Day that profiled Cypriot women's activism, as well as a social outreach panel discussion in Larnaca on the role of women in various aspects of public life. Furthermore, within the scope of the project, a broader social media campaign, including podcasts, profiling Cypriot women and men was launched, addressing gender roles in the Cyprus context and promoting efforts to challenge gender stereotypes.

50. In the context of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations presence on the island, UNFICYP organized a networking event that was focused on presenting a civil society declaration, signed by researchers, politicians, academics and other civil society members, that stressed the unsustainability of continuing the status quo and called for the resumption of negotiations. The declaration emphasized that negotiations should ensure the effective participation of women and youth, and it

featured both prominent women and youth activists represented in this initiative. During the reporting period, UNFICYP, with the Embassy of Ireland, supported the launch of the Cyprus Women Bi-Communal Coalition. Comprising prominent women from across the divide, the Coalition strives for a renewed peace process that is inclusive and transparent, with women's full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels and the inclusion of a gender perspective, along with enhanced support for women's roles in peacebuilding efforts.

51. At the internal level, the mission's military component finalized its gender action plan for the period 2024–2026, aimed at mainstreaming gender considerations in all areas. During the reporting period, the mission also held a seminar with the military component on operationalizing the women and peace and security agenda within the latter's work, and the United Nations police held a discussion forum to profile the experiences of its female personnel. Ongoing capacity development in all components also continued, focusing on such topics as the women and peace and security agenda, gender-responsive peace operations, and unconscious gender bias.

#### **IV. Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus**

52. The bicomunal teams of scientists of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, supported by the United Nations and mandated to recover, identify and return the remains of persons who went missing during the events of 1963/64 and 1974, exhumed the remains of 16 persons during the reporting period, and seven teams of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot scientists were carrying out excavations throughout the island at the time of writing. Since the start of its operations in 2006, the Committee has exhumed or received the remains of 1,200 persons on both sides of the island. The European Union remains the Committee's main financial contributor.

53. To date, of 2,002 missing persons, 1,047 have been formally identified and their remains returned to their families for dignified burials, including 11 during the reporting period.

54. The Committee continued its efforts to gain access to additional information on the location of the burial sites of missing persons from the archives of countries that had maintained a military or police presence in Cyprus in 1963/64 and 1974. The Turkish Cypriot office of the Committee continued to have access to Turkish army aerial photos taken in 1974, and the Greek Cypriot office of the Committee continued to research the Republic of Cyprus National Guard archives of 1974. The Committee is also using a shared web-based geographic information system application that allows for the visualization and sharing of information among the Committee's three offices and is accessible to field- and office-based employees.

#### **V. Conduct and discipline and sexual exploitation and abuse**

55. UNFICYP continued to prioritize training and awareness-raising of personnel on the United Nations policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. In close coordination with the Regional Conduct and Discipline Section based at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the mission implemented activities related to prevention, enforcement and remedial action regarding misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and prohibited conduct in the workplace.

56. During the reporting period, UNFICYP did not receive any allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse.

## VI. Financial and administrative aspects

57. The General Assembly, by its resolution [77/308](#) of 30 June 2023, appropriated the amount of \$56.2 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$19.4 million from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece.

58. As at 28 May 2024, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNFICYP amounted to \$19.0 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$2,682.6 million.

59. Reimbursement of troop costs and contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2023.

## VII. Observations

60. While UNFICYP contributed to a relative calm during the reporting period, this should not obscure the reality of the gradual militarization that is under way on the island. It is regrettable that neither side has seriously engaged on the implementation of Security Council resolution [2723 \(2024\)](#), in which the Council called for cooperation with UNFICYP towards a de-escalation of tensions in and around the buffer zone. Actions by both sides during the reporting period considerably altered the military status quo of the buffer zone, as unauthorized permanent constructions – especially military – multiplied despite protests and engagements by the mission. Security and military surveillance installations only serve to increase mistrust between the sides and encourage a tit-for-tat response. Similarly, the strengthening of defensive postures on both sides, through prefabricated concrete firing positions and defence trench systems, among others, only prompts the strengthening of offensive preparations on the other side. These actions are destabilizing and illustrate that the build-up of military capabilities on the island is proceeding at a rapid pace, with each side seeking to gain an advantage in the buffer zone.

61. I am also concerned by the use of security arguments to justify unconnected military violations and by the use of law enforcement personnel to advance military objectives. For UNFICYP, the deployment of any equipment or construction along the ceasefire lines that has potential military application is a violation. At the same time, the policy of deliberately blurring the lines between military and civilian infrastructure by disguising military positions within civilian structures raises serious concerns, as it may put civilians at risk. Likewise, the pattern of security officials operating in the buffer zone in civilian clothing remains worrisome.

62. The record number of incursions by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot police authorities in the buffer zone, in addition to move forward violations by both sides, further signals a concerning erosion of respect for the mission's authority in the buffer zone. I am concerned by the disregard shown by both sides towards the mandated authority of UNFICYP. I appeal to both sides, in line with the repeated calls by the Security Council, to respect the mission's authority in, and delineation of, the buffer zone.

63. Beyond the buffer zone itself, I have repeatedly stressed the importance of the parties refraining from taking unilateral actions that could raise tensions and compromise a return to talks, while also calling upon all parties to engage in dialogue to resolve their differences. In that respect, I reiterate my concern over the situation in the fenced-off area of Varosha and the lack of response to the Security Council's call for a reversal of the actions taken since the announcement of the partial reopening

of the fenced-off town in October 2020. I further recall the Council's decisions related to Varosha, notably its resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992), and the importance of adhering fully to those resolutions, underscoring that the position of the United Nations on this matter remains unchanged. I also deplore the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNFICYP imposed in the area and elsewhere, as in Strovilia, particularly given new military installations, and reiterate my expectation that the ability of the mission to patrol and implement its mandated activities will be restored in full. I recall that the mandate provided by the Council to UNFICYP is not limited to the buffer zone but extends to the entire island. In this regard, while I am encouraged that the mission's freedom of movement was partially restored in Wayne's Keep Cemetery, I urge Turkish Cypriot authorities to respect the mission's mandate in the buffer zone and terminate all impediments to the mission's full access to the area.

64. It is also unfortunate that the implementation of the understanding for arrangements on the Pyla/Pile plateau remained suspended during the reporting period. I once again urge both sides to work collaboratively with the mission to find a way forward. The stalled implementation of the agreement for over six months sends a concerning message and affects the overall level of trust on the island. UNFICYP will continue to support good-faith implementation of the understanding and will remain guided by the principle of impartiality in conducting its mandate.

65. Despite the tense atmosphere and the polarized political context, I am encouraged that civil society actors sustained their engagement with the United Nations. I continue to call for active involvement at the political decision-making level, notably of women, minorities, youth groups and persons with disabilities. Sixty years have passed since the United Nations established its presence on the island, and we will soon reach the point where no one remembers a time when the two communities on the island lived together in harmony. Despite the opening of crossing points 20 years ago, the more time passes, the wider the divide will grow, in particular as the postures of both sides become increasingly defensive and the political narrative remains divisive. While the United Nations will continue to support all Cypriots in pursuing dialogue, it remains the case that the status quo is not static and the long-standing lack of agreement creates further hurdles, both practical and psychological. I therefore call upon both leaders to take genuine steps towards facilitating reconciliation and supporting intercommunal contacts, while also ensuring that the voices of civil society organizations are meaningfully included at the political decision-making level.

66. Despite my repeated calls and those of the Security Council, efforts in Cyprus to achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation remain limited. Crossing points should facilitate the flow of traffic, and the full implementation of the Green Line Regulation would significantly help to increase the volume of trade and should be pursued with renewed vigour. Increased cross-island trade, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would help to enhance intercommunal contacts, address the increasing concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding their isolation and promote trust between the communities.

67. In their efforts to promote closer cooperation between the communities, local and international actors continue to be confronted with challenges and obstacles linked to the status of the north and concerns relating to "recognition". While the United Nations policy on Cyprus is maintained and decisions of the Security Council on the matter are upheld, I reiterate that concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an obstacle to increased cooperation.

68. I take note of the increase in the arrival of migrants and refugees on the island in the light of ongoing developments in the region, and I am saddened to learn of the plight of some, including children, who have been reported missing, and in some cases have died as a result of being stranded at sea. I reiterate my strong concern regarding the pushback and interception of boats without the necessary protection being provided and reiterate to all the necessity of abiding by the principle of non-refoulement. I am also concerned at the situation of asylum-seekers currently stranded in the buffer zone, including unaccompanied minors, without access to asylum procedures. These recent developments underline the need to ensure that asylum-seekers and irregular migrants are provided with an adequate level of support. I call upon the Republic of Cyprus to rapidly resume the processing of asylum applications for all and to reinstate full access to asylum procedures, which would go a long way towards preventing smuggling and trafficking of individuals and other irregular movements.

69. I would like to thank the partners, in particular the European Commission, that have provided support for the work of the United Nations missions in Cyprus, the United Nations Development Programme and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and have contributed to the implementation of important confidence-building measures. I also thank the 43 countries that have contributed troops, police or both to UNFICYP since 1964 and pay tribute to the 187 peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the service of peace in Cyprus.

70. Finally, I express my gratitude to my Special Representative in Cyprus, Head of UNFICYP and Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Colin Stewart, for his leadership of the United Nations presence on the island. I also express my appreciation to all the women and men serving in UNFICYP for their steadfast commitment to the implementation of the mandate of the mission and the cause of peace on the island.

## Annex

### Countries providing military and police personnel to the United Nations operation in Cyprus (as at 12 June 2024)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of military personnel</i>
Argentina	260
Austria	3
Bangladesh	1
Brazil	2
Canada	1
Chile	6
Ghana	1
Hungary	11
India	1
Mongolia	3
Pakistan	3
Russian Federation	4
Serbia	8
Slovakia	239
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	257
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>800</b>

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of police personnel</i>
Bangladesh	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5
Brazil	1
China	3
Finland	5
Hungary	1
Indonesia	1
Ireland	15
Italy	4
Jordan	7
Montenegro	5
Nepal	5
Russian Federation	6
Serbia	4
Slovakia	5
<b>Total<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>68</b>

<sup>a</sup> Of the military personnel, 709 are men and 91 are women. Of the police personnel, 45 are men and 23 are women.