

# M.Ali TALAT President

H.E. Mr. Mehmet Ali Talat is President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. He was born on 6 July 1952 in Kyrenia. He completed his secondary education in Cyprus. He continued his further education in Turkey.

He gained his M.Sc. degree in Electrical Engineering from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering Middle East Technical University in 1977. Mr. Talat also completed his M.A. degree in International Relations at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Cyprus.

He was assigned as the Minister of Education and Culture in the first Democrat Party (DP) – Republican Turkish Party (CTP) Coalition Government, formed after the Parliamentary Elections held in December 1993. He continued in the same position during the second DP-CTP coalition Government. In the third DP-CTP coalition Government he was assigned as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State.

He was elected as a Member of Parliament from Nicosia in the 1998 Parliamentary Elections. He became the prime minister of the RTP-DP Coalition Government formed



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following the 14 December 2003 Parliamentary Elections. Winning a victory in the February 20, 2005 Parliamentary Elections, Talat formed the second RTP-DP coalition, serving as Prime Minister until his election as the TRNC President on April 17, 2005. He is married and has a son and a daughter.



M.Ali Talat said that the growth of the economy in Northern Cyprus would help resolve the Cyprus issue to great extent: "The solution to political problems we face about Cyprus is directly related to economy. As long as our economy grows, we can become a country that is more easily accepted by the European countries. In order for our economy to grow, first the embargoes and sanctions against our country must be lifted. Primarily European Union countries exercise these embargoes and we cannot directly trade with them. The sanctions against us are preventing the development of our economy. If the EU countries cease to exercise these embargoes and sanctions against us, our economy will of course flourish and develop."

"The best example of these isolations is the fact

that, direct flights to Northern Cyprus from England and other European countries are not allowed. Flights are connected through Turkey; hence the trip is twice as long. Due to this embargo, Cypriot and European passengers not only pay a lot more but also travel longer distances lasting 7-8 hours for what should be a 4 hour-long trip. This way, the EU is also putting an embargo on its own citizens, which is against human rights. Our endeavors to attract foreign tourists and entrepreneurs to Northern Cyprus are greatly curbed. Yet, these are not issues for Southern Cyprus."

"Due to the embargoes imposed by the EU and backed by Greece, Northern Cyprus is not able to use its existing ports, which is the second biggest sanction we are facing. For this reason, we can not trade with ships and this, in turn,



decreases our economic competition. We cannot sell our products to Europe directly. Another issue is the difficulties we face in the banking sector. Money transfer to and from Northern Cyprus is difficult due to these embargoes. Lifting these embargoes and sanctions will strengthen us both economically and politically. Thereby, we can reach a level where we meet the economic standards of the EU. The most important and honoring consequence of this would be becoming a country capable of supporting its own economy, without imposing the financial cost of resolving the Cyprus issue to Europe and without being a burden to the EU."

"The EU has not done what it was supposed to do about the Cyprus issue; European parliamentarians too, admit that they have not kept their promises. Yet, they made a lot of promises to us. As the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, we want to unite our country under the umbrella of the United Nations. We take every positive and flexible step to ensure this. As Turkish Cypriots, we indicated and proved through discussions at every level, that we want to bring the Cyprus issue to a resolution. Now, the European countries need to take up the Cyprus issue and push for a solution. They should clearly state that the Greek Cypriot side cannot pressure the Turkish Cypriots by using their EU membership to their advantage. For this, we should tell them,

on relevant platforms, about the Cyprus issue and inform them about the difficulties that we face. We need to work harder to better explain ourselves. To do this, we should have a reasonable and comprehensible policy. We are experiencing our current troubles because we have had a fixed and incomprehensible policy for many years. We started the course to improve our policy and to express ourselves in 2004. If we do not count the years lost due to this reason, we have only recently started our efforts to present our country, to put forward our wishes and our concerns, and we will continue to do so."

Mr. Talat remarked that Turkish Cypriots have big responsibilities when it comes to presenting Northern Cyprus: "Turkish Cypriots living in Europe have had the opportunity and the platform for easily expressing themselves and the problems that they face. They have helped getting the Cyprus issue known to Europeans; they embraced this as a duty. I would like to thank our citizens living in Europe. These people, in their business environments and in their own businesses as entrepreneurs, should continue to express the difficulties that the Turkish Cypriots face. Especially the Turkish Cypriots living in the UK should regard themselves as ambassadors. They should communicate our rights, interests and goals to the people around them. If they have better opportunities, they should also make use of them. They should handle this issue professionally, by serious structuring. They should organize themselves and they should especially get actively involved by joining political parties. They should communicate our policy and goals. They should present the Turkish Cypriots by accurate and historical facts, not by false and incomplete information. In the end, it is those parties that will come to power and they need to learn about the Cyprus issue from the correct sources. Turkish Cypriots, especially businessmen, need to communicate the Cyprus issue and keep it alive by integrating and orienting themselves into the society that they live in."

Having pointed out that there are many active, wealthy businessmen with a Turkish Cypriot descent in the EU countries, Mr. Talat expressed that channeling these investments to Cyprus would be a great economic power. "Fields like catering may be difficult to bring back to the Island since the amount of people and the demand is higher in Europe. On the other hand, investments by businessmen with a Turkish Cypriot descent will benefit not only our economy, but also our diplomacy. Our expectation from them is to invest here and strengthen their ties with us."

"Our expectation is foreign direct investment. This is our expectation, because there is already and continues to be investments from Turkish and Turkish Cypriot businessmen. What we want are foreign investors. Foreign investments coming from sources outside of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Turkey will make this island more attractive. This is my call: If you want to encourage lifting of the sanctions, invest in the northern part of Cyprus."

