Understanding views on conflict, justice and peace:

Voices of women, youth and rural communities

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MULTI-COMMUNAL RESEARCH PLATFORM

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATIONS

The following report has been authored by Prologue Consulting Ltd.

Study participants from both communities (Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities) perceive the Cyprus problem similarly, either as a problem between the two communities, or as something created and prolonged by 'outsiders', or politicians or those who benefit from it. The misrepresentation of history is evident on both sides, and there is a need for dealing with the traumas of the past in order to move forward. Social empathy projects as well as common interpretations of history would be a good place to start.

For most participants, the Cyprus problem is something that affects them personally, professionally, economically and politically. There is a shared feeling of pessimism among groups in both communities about the future of the Cyprus problem. And while each community often believes they suffer more, this study shows the issues are similar and that it is important to share stories of how the 'other' is also affected. The Greek Cypriot (GC) pessimism about the lack of a solution to the Cyprus problem is a result of factors including: the realization that negotiations for so many years have not yielded a result; the perception that GCs and Turkish Cypriots (TCs) are not the ones who are making the decisions (that the true decision-makers are international powers/ interests of those in power); the opinion that discussions should be directly with Türkiye and not TCs who are acting as the front for Türkiye's interests; the realization that as a community, GCs cannot decide even amongst themselves what type of a solution they want; and the belief that the current leaders of the two communities as of January 2023, because of personal interests, are unwilling to negotiate a solution. The TC pessimism about the non-solution stems from similar factors: the realization that negotiations for so many years have not yielded a result; the perception that GCs and TCs are not the ones who are making the decisions (international powers/ interests of those in power); the sense of realization that GCs do not want to share anything with TCs; and the belief that the current leaders of the two communities, because of personal interests, are unwilling to negotiate a solution. Participants from both communities do not believe that the status quo can be maintained indefinitely, and that the longer the problem remains unsolved, the higher the chances that their community will become extinct.

There are many fears in both communities that need to be addressed before a solution can be reached. Some of these fears may be addressed with increased communication between the two communities and understanding each other, while others stem from deeper insecurities that could be addressed through more confidence-building measures. It is important for the negotiation process to be open to understanding these fears and the public opinions in both communities. The negotiation process has suffered from a lack of transparency in the past, but it is important for the public to be able to participate and engage; mechanisms must be in place to facilitate this.

Interestingly, while the youth and women in the TC groups seem more inclined to support a solution, the youth and women in the GC groups were more hesitant. Similarly, GC participants from Limassol as well as some older TC participants, especially those from Morphou and participants of Turkish origin seemed to be more hesitant with regards to a solution. It is important also to note that although participants discuss the kind of a solution they would like to see, many are not really aware of the details of discussions that have taken place over the years at the negotiating table. It is of utmost importance to inform the public about what kind

of a solution might be possible, in order to facilitate sustainable peace on the island. A key step in this direction would be to produce information on what a possible solution might look like, something that would be given to the two communities well in advance of a given referendum, so that they can digest and understand the contours and consequences of a solution. There is a need for information campaigns on the federal model as well as the convergences achieved so far during the prior negotiations in order to set the public's expectations.

INTRODUCTION/ METHODOLOGY

The findings outlined in the following report were part of a qualitative research conducted using focus groups, carried out during November 2022.

Prologue Consulting Ltd was responsible for the fieldwork conducted in the Turkish Cypriot community while the fieldwork in the Greek Cypriot community was carried out by Mr Andreas Michael of the University of Cyprus. This report of findings and recommendations was prepared by Prologue Consulting Ltd.

The purpose of the focus groups was to seek participants' views on themes such as historical events, institutional function and transitional justice. They endeavoured to understand how participants view: the conflict today, following failed negotiations, increased and ongoing tensions, a global threat of war, the current status quo and negotiations impasse. They also aimed to understand to what extent the peace process reflects participant's ideas, perspectives on the role of the other community, and more.

A total of 13 focus group sessions were conducted in the two communities. Each session comprised of 5-8 individuals of different backgrounds. The focus group discussions were carried out with the help of a discussion guide prepared by the experts involved. The discussions have then been transcribed verbatim, shared in English and analyzed.

The FG sessions conducted for this study were as follows. Each session covered the population of the specific areas listed.

TC focus groups	GC focus groups
1. Morphou group, mixed, 18+ 2. Mesaoria group, mixed 18+ 3. Nicosia, Youth group, 18-30 yrs old 4. Kyrenia group, mixed, 18+ 5. Trikomo/İskele group- Turkish origin, mixed, 18+ 6. Famagusta/Mağusa group, mixed, 18+ 7. Nicosia, Mixed origin group, 18+ 8. Nicosia, Women group, 18+	1. Limassol group, Mixed, 18+ 2. Youth group, Nicosia, 18-30 yrs old 3. Women group, Nicosia mixed, 18+ 4. Larnaca group, Mixed, 18+ 5. Women group, 18 +

Each section in this report corresponds to a discussion question/ theme put to participants during the focus groups. The sections each contain views expressed from a variety of focus

groups in each community, with analysis and conclusion. Key findings and policy recommendations can be found in the previous section.

DEFINITION OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM

The Cyprus problem has been a longstanding and unresolved conflict for many years. Although the beginning date is contested, the fact remains that it being unresolved affects everyone living on the island.

For the TC participants, there was not much debate on when the Cyprus problem started: it started in the 1960s, with aggression from the GCs.

'*My husband was from Morphou and had 2 people in his family who were killed during the conflict. I have heard from his family about the trauma they have been through when the GCs killed his uncle and grandfather. The children in the family all went through that trauma.*' (TC Participant, FG2)

What some TC participants questioned about the history and the beginning of the conflict in the 1960s was not the date, but whether the conflict was bad enough to justify this prolonged and unsolved situation.

'*How long it went for, why it started, why it went on this long, I don't know. When I read about the history, I see it. Was the problem that big to lead to something between the two communities? Seriously, was it something we could not manage?*' (TC Participant, FG4)

For the GC participants, although the majority believed the Cyprus problem was the result of invasion and hence started in 1974 with the Turkish military operation, some agreed with the TCs that the problem started earlier, in the 1960s, and that mistakes have been made by the GCs as well.

'*If you analyze the Cyprus issue more deeply, I bear responsibility for the nationalism of the GCs and the TCs, but the big problem was the first president, Makarios, I was also a pure citizen who adored Makarios, but when I analyzed him in detail, I find that the first mistake was his, for the whole situation and constantly the other parties the new ones that I see that they want to be in power to maintain Cypriot society, that is, to get comfortable.*' (GC participant, FG1)

Focus group discussions confirm that the Cyprus problem means different things to different people. A TC participant explained this as follows:

'*As we can see around this table everyone has a different Cyprus problem. And we have to solve all these problems to solve the Cyprus problem since it affects everyday life differently for everyone. It's different for someone who lives in a GC property, different for a civil servant or a worker. There are different ideas of a future, so for everyone it's different. So, there is not one Cyprus problem.*' (TC participant, FG1)

Although there were some TC and GC participants who defined the Cyprus problem as lack of trust between the two communities and an issue of security, many participants from both

communities blamed the problem on outside powers. Evidently, those TCs who are in the first group, blamed the Cyprus problem on the GC's wish for *enosis* – union with Greece – arguing that the Greek Cypriot community (GCc) can never be trusted as long as the church, which they claim instigates this wish for *enosis*, is at the center of GC politics. This group is mostly comprised of older male participants.

Many GCs who are in the second group defined the Cyprus problem as invasion by Türkiye, instead of a conflict between the two communities, while TC participants in the second group defined the Cyprus problem as part of the interests of the major international powers.

'*The Cyprus problem for me is related to the United States of America, England and Russia. Because of the course of the Middle East, it is part of the plans made here. And I don't believe things will change. Once these 3 powers decide what to do here, then our problem will be solved.*' (TC participant, FG1)

Some TC and GC participants believed that the problem is not between the two communities but between the politicians or extreme groups in both communities.

'*I agree that the Cyprus problem is no longer a problem between individuals. It is a problem related to the administrations. People in either community do not have problems living with each other. It became a problem of politicians and the church.*' (TC Participant, FG4)

Some participants from both communities also blamed the conflict on those who do not want to solve the Cyprus problem because they benefit from non-solution. According to this group of participants, there are individuals or interest groups that benefit from the Cyprus problem economically and politically and therefore do not want to find a solution.

Participants from both communities also argued that the educational systems on both sides cultivate nationalism and add to the problem at hand.

Hence, participants from each community perceived the Cyprus problem similarly, either as a problem between the two communities, or as something created and prolonged by 'outsiders' or politicians or those who benefit from it. The misrepresentation of history is evident on both sides and there is a need for dealing with the traumas of the past in order to move forward.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM

For most participants, the Cyprus problem is something that affects them personally, professionally, economically and/or politically. For some, on the other hand, especially the younger GC participants as well as some participants from Limassol, it is a 'distant' problem. One GC participant explained this as the effects of the 'indifference of the younger generations, corruption and the financial situation of each household.' For the younger GC participants, who have less ties with the northern part of Cyprus, the priorities seem to be mostly economic, while the 'nostalgic ties' to the northern part of Cyprus seem to be lacking. For many, the Cyprus problem was regarded as 'a way of living.' Consequently, there is a shared feeling of pessimism among TC and GC participants about the future of the Cyprus problem. Although participants from both communities felt they suffer more from the conflict

than the other community, the feelings of hopelessness, pessimism and uncertainty were common.

The consequences of the Cyprus problem listed by the TC participants are as follows: lack of human rights and freedoms in the TCC; Turkification and Islamification of the TCC; pressure from Türkiye; uncertainty and depression within the community; lack of a future for young people; economic problems; embargoes; isolation from the world; low quality of life; corruption; fear of extinction; trauma of war; the feeling of being stuck between Türkiye and the GCc. As one TC participant put it, 'it is the reason for everything that goes wrong in the TCc'. Some TC participants also claimed that because of the Cyprus problem, every other problem in the TCc has been treated as a secondary issue and allowed to mount up until they became unsolvable.

Many TC participants felt that their existence and identity are in danger. They declared feeling pressure from Türkiye, while the changing demographics in the northern part of Cyprus was seen as a threat to TC existence. The issue of the increasing number of people from Türkiye being given citizenship in the northern part of Cyprus was seen as many as an intervention by Türkiye to affect politics in the TCc. It has been raised several times in different focus groups in the TCc that elections were becoming futile now that there is an increasing number of 'imported citizens'. There were claims that there is a significant democratic backsliding in the TCc due to these pressures and interventions from Türkiye. The discussions show that the feeling of helplessness and depression among TCs manifests itself in different ways in the TCc, such as feelings of depression, anomie, individuals becoming more self-interested, and the loss of a common Turkish Cypriot identity.

The ambivalence felt by the TCc – that of needing a solution and the feeling that it will never be achieved- seems to manifest itself in the feeling of being stuck between Türkiye and the GCc. The TCs' feeling of urgency in seeking a solution to the Cyprus problem as a means of escape from global isolation and dependence on and pressure from Türkiye as well as the everyday problems in the community was evident in the groups. Although this was true for most TC participants, a few older participants and those of Turkish origin seem to be more hesitant with regards to a solution as well. While the fact that the Annan Plan and the Crans Montana Process failed has led to disappointment among pro-solution participants, it reconfirmed the feelings of those who were more hesitant about a solution that 'GCs do not want to share anything with us.'

It is not only in the TCc but also, many GC participants argue, in the GCc that the conflict has evolved into many other problems and affects the lives of many GCs.

The GC participants listed the consequences of the Cyprus problem as follows: corruption; economic consequences; uncertainty; lack of security; loss of property; lack of justice for the pain, suffering and losses of the GCc; fear of extinction or loss of identity; trauma of war; having to show a passport when traveling to the other side; and the fear of the permanent division of the island.

Many younger GC participants admitted they have less ties with the northern part of Cyprus compared to older GC participants who have somewhat of a deeper connection, and acknowledged that the Cyprus problem affects them only because it affects the economy and that it creates uncertainty and security problems for the GCc. Indicatively it was the younger

participants in the GCc who suggested that a two-state solution would be the 'easiest' solution. Conversely, it is the younger participants in the TCc who felt they are affected by the Cyprus problem the most, indicating the adverse effects and economic consequences of the isolation of the TCc. In contrast to their GC counterparts, younger TC participants reported more contacts with the GCc and were closer to a federal or even a one state solution.

Although TC participants claimed there is a greater sense of urgency among TCs for the Cyprus problem to be solved, there appears to be a different sense of urgency among GC participants. Many GC participants emphasized the need for finding justice for the pain, suffering and losses of the past generations. Some also asserted that there is an urgency to solve the problem in order to prevent the permanent division of the island or the annexation of the northern part of Cyprus (or the entire island) to Türkiye. Some, especially younger GCs, expressed feeling insecure with the ceasefire in Cyprus, considering that the GCc might be under attack (from Türkiye) one day, possibly leading to its extinction.

'*We are in a state of cease fire, everyone wants to live their life and it is a matter of security on both sides, (…) that you just want to live your life, not to think that in the next day there anything can happen and you'll be in a state of insecurity, that the Turks will enter Cyprus, (…) without understanding it, essentially in a phase of war between the two regions that creates insecurity.*' (GC Participant, FG5)

Corruption was mentioned as a major consequence of the Cyprus problem by both TC and GC participants. TC participants spoke about the 'ganimet culture' (the culture created by the captures of the war) as the main root of corruption that became common in the TCC. Similarly, some GC participants mentioned TCs' leaving from the government as a major reason for the government structure in the GCc not having the checks and balances the Republic of Cyprus(RoC) originally had. Additionally, some GCs claimed that the benefits given to refugees and relatives of the missing people did not entail a fair process, benefiting some more than others. Corruption seems to lead to a distaste of politics among participants from both communities, which may cause further apathy and disengagement from politics or the negotiation processes.

Both TC and GC participants complained that one of the consequences of the Cyprus problem is the feeling of hatred that is caused by misrepresentation of history or the education systems on both sides.

'*For me I consider it a problem because it is something that has not yet been solved and causes us hatred without wanting it.*' (GC Participant, FG5)

'*For me, when I was born, I was imposed an enemy. It started at school when we were being taught TC history. I was taught that GCs were my enemies. So, when I was a kid, my biggest dream was to become a soldier and get a large grader and throw all GCs into the sea.*' (TC Participant, FG7)

Participants from both communities also expressed fears that unless a solution is found to the Cyprus problem, there will be a permanent separation of the two communities or division of the island.

For many GC participants, loss of property is a significant consequence of the Cyprus problem. It seems to be a cause for a lot of economic problems for those who have lost property, even affecting the next generations. Similarly, there was a sense of uncertainty, associated with the issue of property, expressed by TCs who live in border villages that might be given back to their GC owners following a possible solution. TCs living in these villages have shied away from investing in these villages, even burying their dead in cities like Nicosia or Famagusta, so as not to leave behind their dead. Many people in Morphou have been buried in Nicosia instead of Morphou for this reason. Similarly, people in Kontea/Türkmenköy or other neighboring villages have been doing the same thing, burying their dead in Famagusta. Participants in the Pergamos/Beyarmudu focus group claimed that people living in the neighboring villages have started building in these villages, reflecting the loss of hope and/or belief that there will be a solution.

There appeared to be somewhat of a similar feeling of uncertainty among people of Turkish origin, although not related to property but to citizenship. The fear expressed by some participants of Turkish origin was of being sent back to Türkiye following a solution, or at best becoming second class citizens in a united Cyprus. There was resentment among these participants towards TCs or TC parties in the sense that TCs do not raise the needs of people of Turkish origin in negotiations or with their counterparts.

'*No politician (TC) has made it an issue (people of Turkish origin not being able to cross to the RoC.*' (Turkish Origin, FG8)

Another major consequence of the Cyprus problem mentioned by the participants is of course the trauma associated with war and that of people killed or missing. It seems from the responses that unless the traumas of the past are talked about and dealt with, there cannot be true peace on the island.

Many participants also spoke about the economic consequences of the Cyprus problem. GC participants who were refugees talked about the loss of their properties and the struggle to find their way again for a long time. Similarly, GC youth talked about the conflict affecting the GCc and the youth economically. While GC participants argued that, the economic consequences of the conflict have been devastating economically for some GCs, it was felt that others might have benefited because the value of their properties went up following the conflict. Similarly, TC participants argued that they suffer economically from the Cyprus problem for the most part due to the economic embargoes. This they argued makes the TCc dependent on the Turkish economy.

While many GC participants complained about other GCs who interact economically with the TCs, many TC participants said GCs provide a major income for the TC economy and argued that the fact that the two communities interact economically without any problems shows that the two communities can live together peacefully.

Overall, there are numerous consequences of the Cyprus problem in both communities. Almost every participant said they are affected personally, economically, socially or politically. The focus group discussions show that there might be enough reason and incentive in both communities to want to get rid of the Cyprus problem. And while each community thinks they suffer more from the problem, this study shows similar issues and suffering among participants

from both communities and that it is important to share stories of how the 'other' is also affected from the problem.

STATUS QUO

'There is not one status quo. There are different status quos that feed and push each other. There is the Republic of Cyprus that operates with the Doctrine of Necessity, which contradicts with its constitution. There is also an ethnically cleansed piece of land that calls itself a state but is not. Within these there are different struggles and concerns. With changing times, demographies and identity concerns, these concerns are now more important than the Cyprus problem. 'I am losing my identity' might be a primary concern for some people while it is not for others. The Cyprus problem is the area where these status quos feed each other or struggle. There are also status quos within and outside the island. While the status quo in the region changes, it affects the status quo on the island. For example, there is a new thing, hydrocarbons that affects everything here. That is also added to the original problem and the status quo of the sea. As if we had solved the land!' (TC Participant, FG1)

Participants from both communities complained about the status quo and see it as something that cannot be maintained indefinitely. Some defined it as something that has been stuck and is not changing. For others, status quo meant instability and something that is getting worse over time. These were TC as well as GC participants who believed that over time the status quo will get worse, for different reasons: GCs were more scared of their security and the final division of the island, while TCs were more scared of losing their identity or becoming part of Türkiye.

'*The status quo is instability for the economic crisis with 40000 troops on the other side, so the status quo is not considered a solution. Although for some it is considered to be, I believe it's an unstable situation. Therefore, there is no such thing but a situation that is getting worse all the time'* (GC Participant, FG1)
'*I think we are in extinction. I see that probably when I get old, there will not be a TC community.'* (TC Participant, FG4)

Younger TC participants complained that there is no future for them on the island, while similar grievances existed among GC youth.

Hence, although status quo is not something that is desired, and might even be something that is feared to get worse by participants from either community, the alternative to the status quo is a big unknown for many. There is a lack of information about what alternatives are being negotiated by the leaders and there is a general fear, especially among the GCC, about the unfamiliar alternative to the status quo. The negotiations taking place in order to change the status quo arguably do not involve opinions of the public and the two communities are dissociated from the process. Hence, better the devil you know than the devil you don't know.

CORRUPTION
Both TCs and GCs complained that corruption is an everyday occurrence in their communities. The general perception is that politicians and those holding power are corrupt and serve their

personal interests. This, some participants in both communities argued, is why politicians on either side do not want to solve the Cyprus problem; because the status quo serves their interests.

Moreover, corruption is seen as something that has penetrated the entire society. Participants from both communities acknowledged that people who do not participate in corruption are seen as 'stupid' by others. It was reported as something that has been normalized by both communities.

'*For me, corruption is not so much what happened, that is, the passports and all that, but something worse, the fact that it has penetrated the feeling of helplessness and the results of corruption have almost penetrated the ordinary citizen and it almost seems normal.*' (GC Participant, FG1)

'*When the system is a system of corruption, which makes the strong stronger, how can you stay away from corruption?*' (TC Participant, FG3)

Moreover, there were participants from both communities that blamed the Cyprus problem for the corruption that exists in their communities.

'*Corruption exists since the constitution does not work. And this thing allowed the Greek Cypriot government to squander and exploit the wealth of its state. The fact that there is no control and the constitution does not work properly, that the constitution works in this case the Archbishop as prime minister and the President of the Republic has the privileges that even Erdogan does not have, this certainly allows him, if he decides not to open another discussion, allows all individuals who have an appeal or intended to operate politically or civilly, to exploit the wealth of the state, there is no control so they give them the opportunity.*' (GC Participant, FG2)

'*Corruption here is connected to the Cyprus problem. TCs have been hanging in the air after 1974. The politics here became 'the distribution of money arriving from Türkiye' and you knew who to go to get that money... that is where corruption began. Afterwards, the youth at that time went into the military and had to miss out on their education. What they learned in the military was gambling and smoking or other bad habits developed in that male environment. These were also results of the conflict. After that was the distribution of the winnings of war (ganimet) and we all know what kind of a wild thing that was.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

Participants from both communities also believed that corruption is common on both sides and that corrupt people from both communities cooperate with each other.

'*I think this is certain, if we talk about mafia, killings, drugs, even human trafficking, whether refugees, immigrants or workers, I think it is certain not a possibility. I don't think it needs any evidence to say it exists, I think it's a sure thing.*' (GC Participant, FG5)

'*Clearly! If Akıncı loses the election and Tatar wins a big part of the blame for this result is our side, we made the scene this way and we helped get Akıncı out of the way of our*

government and Tatar comes and we all know that he is a bisectionist, ELAM supports this situation and they certainly helped.' (GC Participant, FG4)

'*There is a lot of trafficking over the Green Line. Mafias cooperate as well. Sale of TC properties in the south. Same for GC properties here.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

'*Getting citizenship for children born to a TC and a Turkish parent: usually these children do not get the citizenship of the RoC but with money (bribes) that citizenship all of a sudden becomes possible.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

While there is a perception among many participants that corrupt parties in both communities cooperate with each other, a few GC and Turkish origin participants claimed that they do not know much about the 'other' community and do not cross to the other side to know about corruption there.

It seems that corruption is considered common in both communities and is seen as one of the consequences of the Cyprus problem by some participants. While it is perceived that corrupt parties in both communities easily cooperate with each other over the Green Line, it seems harder for the leaderships to do the same.

DEMOCRACY
Some participants defined democracy as a place where human rights and freedoms are protected, some defined it as equality, and some as lack of discrimination. Others spoke about the importance of information in the pursuit of democracy.

There was a serious concern among TC participants concerning the state of democracy in the TCc. They argued that with more and more pressure from Türkiye, there was a democratic backsliding in the TCC. The need for a more democratic society manifests itself in the overall desire of the TC participants for a solution to the Cyprus problem. The belief among many TC participants is that democracy in the GCc might be better than in the TCc.

'*We are democratic as long as it does not affect the system that is set up. People can say whatever they want until they are seen as a threat to the status quo.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

Similarly, GC participants also questioned about the state of democracy in the GCc and in the TCc, concluding that they might be better off than the TCs. Some GCs argued that after the GCc became part of the EU, the state of democracy in the GCc has improved.

'*I feel as an adult that I were when we joined the European Union how much my confidence to demand has changed.*' (GC Participant, FG1)

'*I have argued that I want a solution and I want to return to my place, we're considered "friend of Turks", these are deprivations of my own freedom. The church is also responsible, ecclesiastical democracy.*' (GC Participant, FG2)

Some GCs, although a few, held more radical ideas on the democracy in the TCc, namely that it is an instrument of Türkiye and that because of this, the negotiations should be held between the GCc and Türkiye, instead of the TCc.

Discussions on democracy have demonstrated the desire in both communities for a stronger democracy in their own communities as well as the lack of awareness on the condition of democracy and life in general in the 'other' community. It seems that there is a general void in people's minds about life, especially political life, in the other community, which is more evident among those who have no ties or contact with the other community.

JUSTICE IN THE CYPRUS PROBLEM
This question was designed to understand how each community defines justice in terms of the Cyprus problem. For many GCs, a just solution would mean the return of properties to their GC owners and the Turkish troops leaving the island. While a few argued that only the uninhabited properties should be returned, many would like to see the return of all properties. Similarly, while a few GCs saw power sharing as a possibility, others argued that justice would entail that the president should always be GC. Those who considered giving up some claims for property or power said they would do so for a stable future.

For many TC participants, justice in the Cyprus problem would entail getting rid of the isolation and embargoes against the TCc and having political equality. They argued it is of utmost importance for the TCs that the TCc does not become a minority in united Cyprus. In return, TCs tended to agree that some property may be returned to its owners in return for political rights.

'*But before we get to that stage, we must have empathy. We must clean people's psychologies. Getting rid of the enmity and embracing the other's pain... That is what we should start with. Without this, we will not have the right balance and that will lead to new mistakes.*' (TC Participant, FG7)

'*I said at the beginning there are two kinds of invasion here. But as time passes it is becoming harder to find or reach justice. Property owners have rights but as time passes those living in those properties acquired rights as well. The solution will have to keep in mind both sides' rights and freedoms. In terms of the state, it is necessary to have mechanisms in the state to include and respect all sides. It cannot be majority rule.*' (TC Participant, FG 1)

Some participants- a few in the TCc and more in the GCc, feared that a just solution would not be implemented. These are some of the older TC participants, especially from Morphou, and participants of Turkish origin in the TCc, and the younger and female GCs as well as some from Limassol. Interestingly, while the youth and women in the TC groups seem more inclined to support a solution, the youth and women in the GC groups were more hesitant. Similarly, GC participants from Limassol seemed to be more hesitant with regards to a solution.

Some who felt there might be problems in the implementation of a solution that they consider just, argued there is a need for more confidence-building measures between the two communities. Similarly, participants reported that many people in each community are consumed by their own community's suffering and are more concerned about finding justice

for themselves. Hence it is important to share stories of the 'other' in both communities to demonstrate that 'justice' on the island cannot be achieved unless both communities feel some sense of justice at the end.

VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

Many participants from both communities see ordinary people (TCs and GCs) as the victims of the conflict and 'outsiders' or the nationalists in both sides as the perpetrators.

There were participants in the GC community who recognized the role of the GC leadership or EOKA in the conflict in the 1960s, while they blamed Türkiye for 1974. Some GC participants also saw international actors such as the US, NATO, UK, CIA and 'those who did not help during the invasion' as the perpetrators.

'*Depends on when we think things started. Because in school we were taught that things started in 74 'from Türkiye, who was the perpetrator and we the victims, so we see that the victim line is not clear, what happened between the two phases of the invasion, the massacres that I did not learn at school, I learned them afterwards, so the perpetrator/victim line is not clear, even if a huge force which was Türkiye invaded, again we cannot say clearly that the GCs are the victims, because something preceded the invasion and triggered the invasion and then there were very large massacres. I'm not saying there were equal deaths.*' (GC Participant, FG1)

'*Regarding the victims, I agree for the entire Cypriot people. America, NATO and the CIA when EOKA B opened the door here and to those who continue to perpetuate whether they want or perpetuate the current situation.*' (GC Participant, FG1)

While many TCs blamed the outsiders or the church or the nationalists in the GCC, they also acknowledged the role of TCs in the conflict and argued that both sides should apologize to each other in case of a solution.

'*The primary victims are TCs. But it would not be fair to say the GCs are not affected by this. They have lost a lot as well. They have left their properties here. It would be too selfish to say they have not suffered.*' (TC Participant, FG2)

'*They have experienced a lot of pain as well.*' (TC Participant, FG2)

'*If there is a need for apologies, both sides should apologize.*' (TC Participant, FG2)

It is important to note that in both communities, there appeared to be an acknowledgement of the mistakes of the past, as well as the damage done by the misleading interpretations of the past. The role of an educational system that cultivated animosity against the other community was also acknowledged by both TCs and GCs. As the misrepresentation of history is evident on both sides and there is a need for dealing with the traumas of the past in order to move forward, social empathy projects as well as common interpretations of history could be useful in helping the two communities understand each other.

HOW THE OTHER COMMUNITY SEES THE PROBLEM

There were GC participants who believed TCs cannot act independently from Türkiye, while there were TCs who believed GCs want enosis and are not willing to share power with TCs.

'*They want to rule the entire island.*' (TC Participant, FG4)

Although many GCs believed that the majority of TCs want a solution, TCs argued that GCs do not want a solution.

'*If we are talking about the TCs (…) I think they are a lot more ready than we are to accept it.*' (GC Participant, FG1)

'*They go to the church every Sunday. The younger generations are growing up with the speeches from the church that Cyprus is a Greek island, and that Cyprus is theirs. This is what they are fed every Sunday. This has to end. I mean the church has a huge influence on the public.*' (TC Participant, FG6)

Some TCs also complained about the indifference among GCs for the Cyprus problem or the TCC.

'*I work in the south. They don't have any economic problems. Someone in my office gets paid 1800 Euros per month, goes to Italy for a vacation has a nice car and just bought an apartment. They don't have any economic concerns. They are not victims. There is an assistant in my office who says she will never cross to the northern part of Cyprus. She told me the things her grandfather told her about us. They all have prejudices against us and they have been brainwashed. I have met someone who was 23 and she told me I was the first TC she has met. Can you imagine not meeting a TC until you are 23! That is their mentality.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

'*Friends I see are pro solution, just like me. But that is not a measure. Majority sees Cyprus as GCs, they see us as captives of Türkiye who cannot act on their own. They see Cyprus as their own. They see us as poor and themselves as rich.*' (TC Participant, FG1)

Indicatively TCs who work in the Republic of Cyprus asserted that there is a discrimination against TCs working there. The claim was that a TC doing the same work gets paid less than a GC. These occurrences seem to diminish trust between the two communities.

'*As TCs in the south you get into different arguments and when you come to the north, you get into another argument. … There is a 300/400 Euros difference between what I make and what a GC who does the same job makes. When you go to unions like PEO, which work for a solution and complain about this inequality, they say you live in the north and you can manage with this. Can you imagine PEO wants a solution in this country and that's what they say. I don't know if this is second class citizenship but this is what we face.*' (TC Participant, FG 5)
Interestingly, some GC women participants claimed the TCc wanted a unitary solution but were scared of the settlers to voice this wish.

It is important to have more communication and a deeper understanding between the two communities. Although some participants talk about the contacts they have with the other

community, while many in the GCc have none, any negative experience can intensify the existing biases and feelings of distrust. Furthermore, irrespective of contact, when it comes to politics and the Cyprus problem, the stereotypes appear to prevail.

FEARS
Fears of Non-solution
Both TCs and GCs agreed that non-solution, or the continuation of the status quo is a dangerous outcome. They feared that the continuation of the status quo is likely to lead to the extinction of both communities on the island. Participants from both communities also tended to believe that non-solution is unsafe for the future of their communities and that it holds a possibility of armed conflict.

*'I want to say about the political issue of Cyprus, if we analyze it with modern history after the 60's I see that we are a society a little blind that does not act properly all political parties have made big mistakes, the stagnation of the Cyprus issue and as a people I think we have a lot of guilt and if this continues soon there will be no Cypriot citizens left in this country.' (*GC participant, FG1)

'*If there are no negotiations and federation is completely dead, then I will pack up and leave. Our hopes will die completely because this thing called "trnc" does nothing but block our way. Especially us, the youth, we cannot go anywhere with this*.' (TC Participant, FG3)

Fears of Changes to the Status Quo
GC participants feared that any changes to the status quo short of a solution could be catastrophic. They tended to believe that lack of a solution might mean either the annexation of the northern part of Cyprus to Türkiye or the recognition of the northern part of Cyprus as an independent "state". Either of these options, they argue, is likely to lead to the disappearance of TCs from the north. Some GC participants also feared that Türkiye might start an armed conflict with Greece, and possibly with the Republic of Cyprus (RoC). Some also acknowledged that the economic interests of countries that are friendly with the RoC might require that they abandon the RoC and get into alliances with Türkiye.

TC participants had similar fears that any changes to the status quo, other than a solution to the Cyprus problem, would not be good news. They argued that the status quo itself is very problematic for the TCc and the only thing worse than the current situation would be armed conflict. They saw this as a not so distant possibility, due to the increasing tensions between Türkiye and Greece and the tension around hydrocarbons in the region. Additionally, annexation to Türkiye was a possibility that scared many TC participants.

'*It scares me a lot that we could become part of Türkiye. (…) That would scare me*'. (TC Participant, FG1)

Younger GC participants tended to believe that there will eventually be two recognized independent states on the island, and that this might be the easiest solution.

Fears of Solution

There were various concerns or fears expressed by GC participants with respect to a solution. One concern was about the implementation of a solution, more specifically, concerns with regards to issues that might arise during the implementation that could turn into a repetition of troubles of the past. Another concern was about the functionality of the solution. Some also expressed concerns with how power would be shared and exercised. One GC participant claimed that the majority of the GCc is afraid of a solution, claiming there is a lot that remains unknown about what a solution might entail and that there is a need for more information.

Some participants, both TC and GC, feared the nationalism and racism engrained in the 'other' community or in both communities, might lead to troubles following a solution. There were more GCs who worried about what might happen after a possible solution, than TCs. Among GCs, women and younger participants and those from Limassol seem to be more hesitant about a solution, especially with regards to a bi-communal bi-zonal federal solution.

TCs also expressed some fears with regards to a solution, stating that the GCc cannot be trusted. Some TCs feared that without changing the educational systems and what is taught in schools or in church regarding history, there might be extremist elements in the GCc (or on both communities) that might lead to problems of the past. Others argued that the GCs will never change; that they are not willing to share anything with the TCs and that they see themselves as superior to the TCc. These participants were mostly the older participants, as well as those of Turkish origin.

TC participants tended to believe that a solution is the only way to escape the current problems facing the TCc. Therefore, despite possible fears or hesitations with regards to a solution, most TC participants tended to have a hopeful mindset that everything will work out somehow. TCs in this category, felt so helpless with the current situation that they said any trouble after a solution will not be worse than the situation they are currently in.

Some TC participants who feared things might deteriorate with a solution, believed that a transition period might be needed where confidence building measures would help bring the two communities closer before full integration can take place.

Young participants, both TC and GC, talked about the possibility of leaving the island in case the Cyprus problem is not resolved.

'*We don't know what's going to happen. This thing creates insecurity, we have second thoughts, for example to leave from our land, and it's a shame.*' (GC Participant, FG5)

Clearly, there are many fears in both communities that need to be addressed before a solution is possible. Some of these fears may be addressed with increased communication between the two communities and a deeper understanding, while others stem from deeper insecurities that could be addressed with more confidence building measures. In any case, there needs to be more work done to prepare the two communities for a solution.

IDEAL SOLUTION
The majority of TC participants saw a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality as an ideal solution for the Cyprus problem. Bi-zonality and political equality are two things the

majority of TC participants were not willing to give up. On the other hand, the majority of participants of Turkish origin as well as some older TCs feared a federal solution and argued it is safer to have two separate states.

There was more disagreement among GC participants on what the ideal solution is. While many GC participants believed a unitary state solution is the best solution, some believed in a federal solution and others in a two state solution. Younger GC participants tended to believe that there will eventually be two recognized independent states on the island, and that this might be the easiest solution, while women tended to see a unitary state as a better option. Some GC participants believed that because there are differing opinions within the GCc regarding a solution, it is important that GCs first decide on a solution amongst themselves.

'*I have seen that the problems between us, the [Greek] Cypriots, are so big, that they are the ones that we have to solve first in order to prove to the Turks that we are united and that we want them with us peacefully, and in a special way to solve the Cyprus issue. Since we are Turks on our own, we eat each other.*' (GC Participant, FG3)

Although participants spoke about the kind of a solution they would like to see in Cyprus, many are not really aware of the discussion that goes on at the negotiating table. It is of utmost importance to inform the public on what kind of a solution might be possible and is on the table, to facilitate sustainable peace on the island.

PARTICIPATING IN THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS
Most of the participants complained about a lack of transparency in negotiations. It seems there is a need for information on what a possible solution might look like, something that will be given to the two communities well in advance of referenda, so that they can digest and understand the consequences of a solution.

It is important to note that although people in both communities spoke about a federal solution, they did not know exactly what it would entail.

Additionally, some GC participants pointed out that they have been fed untruths by politicians about what a solution would look like. They said they now realized that a solution might look very different. It seems it needs to be explained to people why a solution would need to be a compromise. For that to happen, both communities need to understand where the other community is coming from and what their fears and concerns are.

Participants argued that there needs to be mechanisms that allow for the participation of the public in the negotiations. Although the Bicommunal Technical Committees aim to bring the two communities closer and create a channel for this, the few participants who actually know about the work of technical committees said that they are prevented from functioning properly by the leaderships of both sides.

'*There is a need for mechanisms not at the leadership level that will bring together the opinion leaders from both sides as well as the youth and women. Although Akıncı asked for this, the GC leadership refused because they do not want transparency.*' (TC Participant, FG4)

PEOPLE OF TURKISH ORIGIN

There was a separate focus group composed of people of Turkish origin in the TCc, thus their arguments are summarized here separately. Participants of Turkish origin see the Cyprus problem as something that affects the lives of Turkish origin people only and that the two communities (TCc and GCc) are happy with the current situation. They argued that if these two communities were not happy, they would have solved the problem, and that it is people of Turkish origin who suffer for it. They mainly defined the Cyprus problem as something which prevents them from becoming citizens of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), or having the freedom to travel within the island and within the EU.

Additionally, participants of Turkish origin or those born in Cyprus to parents of Turkish origin, defined the Cyprus problem as a problem of discrimination. They believed people of Turkish origin are discriminated against and feel that they are considered second class citizens to TCs, who are in turn considered second class citizens to GCs.

'*As a woman born in Türkiye, it is hopelessness.*' (TC participant, FG6)

Participants of Turkish origin also expressed the feeling of being stuck between Türkiye and the GCc. They complained that they do not feel like they belong in Türkiye when they visit, but in Cyprus are worse off than the TCs and GCs because they cannot cross to the RoC like the rest of the TCC, cannot be citizens of the RoC, and cannot travel freely to Europe or anywhere else. Some also felt there are tensions between TCs and people of Turkish origin. They also argued that in case of a solution, the lives of TCs or GCs would not change, while the lives of people of Turkish origin would change in a major way. That is why, they argue, TCs and GCs do not solve the Cyprus problem- because nothing will change for them.

The majority of participants of Turkish origin did not believe a solution is possible for various reasons. Some said the GCs do not need a solution, while others argued that mistrust is high between the two communities. Conversely, a few believed a federal solution is possible. Interestingly, there seems to be a lack of awareness among participants of Turkish origin, not only with regard to what GCs face, but also about TCs. It seems that people of Turkish origin also need to be better informed on the negotiation process and about a possible solution.