



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Cyprus

SPEECH

Monday, 14 July 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 14 July 2014 Page 156 Questioner Speaker Vamvakinou, Maria, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Ms VAMVAKINOU (Calwell) (13:29): I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges that 20 July 2014 marks 40 years since Cyprus was divided;
- (2) recognises the continuing support of this parliament and successive Australian governments towards achieving a just and fair resolution for the Cyprus problem;
- (3) urges the Australian Government to aid the current peace process based on relevant United Nations resolutions, including United Nations Security Council resolutions 2135 (2014) of 30 January 2014 and 1251 (1999) of 29 June 1999 and subsequent resolutions, on respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus;
- (4) notes that any solution to the Cyprus conflict should result in the demilitarisation and reunification of the island for the benefit and welfare of its entire people and peace in the region; and
- (5) recognises 50 years of continuing service by the Australian Federal Police in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Cyprus that this House reaffirms.

On 20 July 1974, in violation of international law, Cyprus was invaded by neighbouring Turkey, occupying 37 per cent of its territory and leading to its effective partition ever since. In its wake, the 1974 invasion and division of Cyprus has led to hundreds of thousands of Cypriots being driven from their ancestral homelands. Forcibly displaced Cypriot refugees, many of whom have made Australia their new home, are now still waiting for justice to be restored and for their right to return.

Today's motion acknowledges that 40 years have now passed and that Cyprus and its people still remain separated. This is despite the continuous peacemaking efforts by the international community to resolve one of the world's longest conflicts. The Green Line, which divides Cyprus's capital, Nicosia, is a stark reminder of that city's unenviable status as Europe's last remaining divided city.

Yet, despite the continuing division of Cyprus, the Turkish military presence and the prevention of Cypriot refugees from returning to their homelands, and despite failed UN peace efforts, there are signs for optimism. As per the joint communique of 11 February by the two community leaders, we are currently witnessing a new round of UN led peace talks. I am certain that I express the sentiment of this parliament when I sincerely wish both leaders, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, and his Turkish Cypriot counterpart, Mr Dervis Eroglu, strength, courage, fortitude and wisdom to reach a just, lasting and peaceful settlement for the sake of all Cypriots. Australia, its people and this parliament—though far away—remain steadfast by the side of Cypriots to assist them, in whatever capacity, in making peace a reality.

During his visit to Cyprus on 21 May of this year, US Vice President Joe Biden avowed that a 'deal is possible' and that 'peace should be the Cypriots' legacy to their children'. In echoing these sentiments, I hope that the United States, as well as the international community, stay focused on the Cyprus peace process. Promising also is the joint interfaith communique by Cyprus's religious leaders—the Archbishop of Cyprus, Chrysostomos II, and the Mufti of Cyprus, Dr Talip Atalay, as well as the Maronite archbishop Youssef Soueif, the Armenian archbishop Varoujan Herkelian and the patriarchal Latin vicar George Kraj—who on 26 February welcomed the recommencement of the peace talks. Cyprus's peace talks are predicated on the premise that reunification of the island is the only solution that will integrate its people, economy and governance, for the prosperity and wellbeing of all Cypriots, allowing them to realise the full potential of their EU membership.

The road to peace is a long one. During this time there have been encouraging moments that inspire hope that, despite 40 years of anguish, a solution is both viable and desirable. In 2003, the partial lifting of movement along the partitioning line allowed Greek and Turkish Cypriots crossover passage to the north and south for the first time since 1974. Indeed, as I reported to this parliament on 23 September 2002, I had visited northern Cyprus in July 2002, with my husband, and we were taken by a Turkish Cypriot politician, Mr Ilker Nevzat, to visit my husband's home village of Ayios Epiktitos—the home that he and his family had to flee as the invading Turkish forces advanced. The subsequent friendships we have built with many Turkish Cypriots makes me believe, without doubt, that goodwill and determination for reunification exists amongst the people of Cyprus. It is they who are driving the peace agenda, and, whilst a political solution is being negotiated, people-to-people diplomacy is progressing unabated, yielding results and preparing the groundwork for integration and reunification.

I am proud to say that Australian governments have over the years supported Cyprus, through the UN resolutions and our peacekeeping and peace-building efforts. The AFP recently celebrated its 50 years of continuous presence on the island. I was there last year at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery of Waynes Keep, located in the buffer zone, for an Anzac Day dawn service representing this parliament.

In commemorating the 50th anniversary of Australian civilian police involvement with the UN peacekeeping forces in Cyprus, we take the opportunity to pay tribute to the thousands of Australian police officers who served in Cyprus, as well as to the three policemen, Sergeant Llewelyn John Thomas, Inspector Patrick Hackett and Sergeant Ian Donald Ward, who, with 181 other peacekeepers, lost their lives in the cause of peace.

However, this House today reaffirms Australia's continued support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, and in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions calls for the reunification of the island with a single sovereignty, international personality and citizenship; a solution which rectifies past injustices, reconciles human rights with group security, upholds the fundamental precepts of liberal democracy and fortifies the foundations for integration and unification.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ewen Jones): Is the motion seconded?

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Mr WILLIAMS (Hindmarsh) (13:35): I second the motion.

I support my parliamentary colleague, the member for Calwell, on this motion today. I acknowledge the profound impact that the tumultuous events of 1974 had on the lives of Cypriots, including those who today call Australia home. More than 22,000 Australians of Cypriot ancestry constitute a dynamic community here in Australia. They have made a significant contribution to the prosperity of our country and our multicultural society.

As we know, the resurgence of intercommunal violence in Cyprus in 1974 led to the division of the island and, sadly, it endures to this day. As a good friend of Cyprus, Australia has sought to assist the efforts by the Cypriots themselves and by the international community to reunify Cyprus. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Australia's continuous contribution to the civilian police component of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, which was originally deployed to Cyprus in 1964. Australia was amongst the first countries to contribute to the UN peacekeeping force and is currently the largest contributor to the civilian police component of the force. As we heard from the member for Calwell, 15 Australian officers of the Australian Federal Police are currently deployed and, unfortunately, over the years three Australian police officers have died on duty. The Australian government is proud that our police have served with distinction in Cyprus.

We also support the Cyprus Academic Dialogue, a major bicomunal confidence-building measure and peace-building initiative. As a nonpermanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Australia will continue to support constructive efforts to overcome the divisions on the island, including when Cyprus comes before the council later this month. We welcome the resumption of fully-fledged negotiations made possible earlier this year by the joint declaration by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders with the assistance of the then United Nations Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, Alexander Downer—Australia's former Minister for Foreign Affairs. I thank Mr Downer, who is currently the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, for his tireless efforts over the past six years to assist negotiations with Cyprus. I have met Alexander and discussed Cyprus with him over the last year or so. The Australian government encourages all parties to display the political will and leadership necessary to engage in current political negotiations to find a comprehensive settlement to the question of Cyprus.

Yesterday, I was pleased to attend a very special service, here in Canberra with the Cypriot community, which remembered all those who have fought and died for freedom and justice in Cyprus. Also attending were Ms Georgia Alexandrou, the President of the Cyprus Community of Canberra and the ACT, and the High Commissioner of Cyprus, Mrs. Malliotis, who is here in the chamber today. I thank her for attending. As the High Commissioner said yesterday at the prayer service, 'It will help in the strengthening of our own morale and determination to continue our efforts for finding a solution to the Cyprus problem.'

In closing I want to say a few words about the Cypriot community in Australia, which is home to the second-largest Cypriot community outside of Cyprus. Since being elected last year, I have been warmly welcomed by the Cypriot community all around Australia, but in particular in my electorate of Hindmarsh. Thanks to Mr Christos Ioannou, President of the Cyprus Community of South Australia. I had the pleasure of attending their Cypriot cultural community centre in Adelaide that was opened earlier this year. The centre is a wonderful facility which merges the cultural traditions and the language of the Cypriot community, where people, young and old can share activities and share their experiences and their history.

It is my hope, as well as the hope of Cypriots in Australia and around the world, that we find a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem. Such a solution will not only be in the interests of Cyprus, the region and the European Community but also in the interests of the international community. Finally, as the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, put it:

We seek a solution that will unify the country and safeguard the human rights of all Cypriots: Greek Cypriots, our Turkish Cypriot compatriots and all lawful Cypriots, irrespective of where they belong, what language they speak or what religion they believe in.

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 14 July 2014 Page 158 Questioner Speaker Albanese, Anthony, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler) (13:40): This Sunday, 20 July 2014, marks 40 years since the invasion of Cyprus. Forty years later we still have no peaceful resolution. Cyprus is still divided, 37 per cent of the landmass is still occupied, over 200,000 people have been displaced and families' lives have been torn apart. But the hope of peace and justice lives on: here in this place; in the hearts and homes of 80,000 Cypriot Australians; written in the resolutions of the United Nations. In 1998 I said in this chamber:

What is clear is that the Cypriot people, regardless of their origin, do want a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

Nothing has changed. Peace is possible—I know that because I see it every day in my electorate of Grayndler.

My electorate is a microcosm of our great nation, an example of making multiculturalism work. In Grayndler I see peace is possible: Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots live in harmony, side by side. I see it in the actions of people like Michael Christodoulou, a tireless champion of peace and harmony, in the spirit in which the Cyprus Community Club in my electorate brings together our community to celebrate life in our multicultural community; in the sister-city relationship between Marrickville and Larnaca which we have had since 2005. So today let this be a reminder to us and to the world that we have not forgotten Cyprus. Let this bipartisan motion, moved by the member for Calwell and seconded by the member for Hindmarsh here in our national parliament, be a call for each of us to renew our hope in the future, to direct our energies to promote peace and justice and to call on the Australian government to support the implementation of United Nations resolutions.

I am proud to have been a longstanding advocate of justice for Cyprus. In 2012 I returned to Cyprus for the second time as a parliamentarian but my first as a minister in the government. During my visit I had the honour of meeting some of our Australian Federal Police officers serving as part of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. I was given a tour of the buffer zone by the commander of our force, Superintendent Peter Bond. Australian police officers have served continuously as part of the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus since 1964. There are currently 15 serving in the force. I am proud that Australia is playing its part in the peace process in Cyprus. I acknowledge and thank them for their work.

I also met the Minister of Communications and Works, Efthemios Flourentzou; the Secretary-General of AKEL, Andros Kyprianou; the Mayor of Limassol, Mr Andreas Christou; the Mayor of Larnaca, Mr Andreas Louroutziatis; and His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus.

It was a great visit. However, amongst the warmth of the people, I was struck by the tragedy of that divided island. Let me be clear about where Australia stands on the substance of the motion that is before us today. Australia supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus. We recognise the republic as the only legitimate authority on the island. Any solution must ensure that there is a single sovereignty in Cyprus; a single international personality; and a single citizenship, with independence and territorial integrity safeguarded. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots need to once again live side by side under the government of the Republic of Cyprus.

I am proud to support this motion today. In two weeks time I will again gather at the Cyprus Community Club in my electorate to commemorate the invasion. Importantly, events at the Cyprus Community Club have brought together people of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot backgrounds to recognise the cultural benefit that comes from mutual respect and understanding. I witnessed when I was in Cyprus the fact—as the member for Calwell has said—that the people of Cyprus as a whole are suffering from the fact that the island remains divided. I look forward to going back there to a unified island under the circumstances in which that can occur. I think this parliament as the Australian parliament has an important role to play through measures such as this motion today, but also in support of justice for Cyprus through the multilateral forums, including through the United Nations. I commend the motion to the House.

Debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 13:45 to 15:59