

Kyrenia



City occupied by
Turkey since 1974



A Brief Historical Review

3500 years of Hellenism



Kyrenia is the capital of the homonymous district in the northern part of Cyprus which stretches along the northern coastline from Cape Kormakitis in the west, and covers most of the Pentadaktylos mountain range (its most famous peaks are those of Kornos, Kyparissovounos, Prophet Elias, Saint Hilarion, Voufaventos, Pentadaktylos, Kantara), and ends approximately in the middle of the northern coast of the island, which is also known as "Achaion Akti" (Achaean's Coast). After the Trojan War (1250–1240 BC), many Achaeans from Greece moved to Cyprus and founded the first Greek cities. The Achaeans brought with them their language and religion, laying the foundations of Greek culture in the island.

Cepheus from Achaia is thought to be the first to settle in Kyrenia. He was the leader of the people of Bura, who, according to the ancient poet Lycophron (3rd century BC), came to Cyprus together with Praxandros (founder of Lapithos). It is said that he also brought with him people from various cities of northern Peloponnese. One of these cities was ancient Kyrenia in the Peloponnese, from which the town of Kyrenia in Cyprus also took its name.

Kyrenia prospered thanks to its maritime trade. The discovery of an ancient shipwreck of a merchant ship which began its journey from the Aegean islands and sank at the beginning of the 3rd century BC northeast of the Kyrenia harbour, testifies to the relations between the city of Kyrenia and the Aegean cities as well as the broader Greek world. The sanctuary of Apollo and Aphrodite in Kyrenia is another testimony of the close relations between Kyrenia and the Aegean cities.

From the rich findings of many ancient tombs of the Hellenistic era that have been excavated, it is evident that Kyrenia was prosperous even in the years of the successors of Alexander the Great.

1700 years of Christianity



The Roman conquerors [58 BC–330 AD], with the building activity that characterized the Romans, protected the entire harbour of the city, which was then located further east, building fortifications and a breakwater in front of the harbour, so that they could safely anchor their ships. Kyrenia at this time seems to have been a large community and was organised into a municipality, as evidenced by an inscription on the base of a statue, referring to the “Municipality of the Kyrenians”.

The message of Jesus did not take long to spread to Kyrenia. The old quarries near Chrysokava become catacombs and tombs of the first Christian martyrs. One of the early Christian monuments was the Chapel of Agia Mavri which is situated in an early Christian cemetery semi-hewn into the rocks, adorned with beautiful frescoes.

The Byzantines [330 – 1191 AD], built castles in the city of Kyrenia, at Agios Hilarion, Buffavento and Kantara, in order to protect Kyrenia from Arab raids prevalent at the time. The Byzantine castle of Kyrenia was founded on the old Roman fortifications.

The island of Cyprus was later sold to the Lusitanian Franks [1192 AD] by the crusader Richard the Lionheart, King of England, who conquered Cyprus in 1191 AD.

During the Frankish period [1192–1489 AD], Kyrenia became the administrative and commercial centre of the region, and the surrounding villages became fiefdoms. The Lusignans, for better protection, surrounded the city with walls and towers and fortified the castle and the harbour, as well as the Byzantine castles of the Kyrenia mountain range.

In 1489 AD, Cyprus was ceded to the Venetians by Catherine Cornaro, the last queen of the island, marking the beginning of the Venetian rule. During the 16th century AD the Venetians further fortified the castle, building three large curvilinear towers in the place of three old Lusignan towers, to withstand cannon fire from the sea. Thus, the castle took on the final form it has today.

On September 14, 1570, after the fall of Nicosia to the Ottomans, the castle of Kyrenia was also surrendered to them. With the fall of Famagusta in August 1571, the Ottomans dominated the whole of Cyprus. A sharp decline was noted throughout Cyprus during this period, because the conquerors followed a policy of tax collection, without paying any attention to the problems of the inhabitants.

During the years of the Ottoman conquest the Bishopric of Kyrenia was the church of Panagia Chrysopolitissa, which was renovated in 1783. It is located in the narrow streets behind the Kyrenia Harbour. Despite the great decline of the city in 1860 the church of Archangel Michael, patron saint of the city since Byzantine times was rebuilt by the people of Kyrenia, on a hill overlooking the sea.

In 1878, after secret agreements between the British and the Ottomans, the island was ceded to Great Britain. Kyrenia continued to be the administrative centre of the district and the growth of the town continued. Improvement works were carried out on the harbour, a road was built connecting Kyrenia with Nicosia, the Town Hall was reconstructed, a hospital was built and as the city began to attract many tourists, the first hotels by the sea made their appearance, initially the “AKTAION” and later the “SEA VIEW” and “DOME HOTEL”, to be followed by many others; Kyrenia slowly began to evolve into one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Cyprus.

In 1918, a Higher Education Greek School was founded, which later became a Gymnasium, and in 1922, the seat of the Bishopric returned to Kyrenia.

After independence [1960], progress in Kyrenia was suspended for a while following the intercommunal riots of 1963–64. Although the conflicts in Kyrenia were almost non-existent, the armed Turkish paramilitary organisation (TMT) cut off the Nicosia–Kyrenia road and captured the castle of Saint Hilarion overlooking Kyrenia.

In 1973 the population of Kyrenia numbered 2,635 Greeks, 1000 Turks and 254 other minorities, mainly British.



INVASION — OCCUPATION

20 July 1974
Turkey invades
Cyprus

The town of Kyrenia and the entire Kyrenia district have been occupied by the Turkish army since the illegal invasion carried out by Turkey in 1974, forcibly expelling all lawful residents and preventing them from returning to their homes and properties. The same situation prevails in all occupied areas of the island where all residents were forced to abandon their homes. In numbers, the occupied areas represent 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus.

The displaced Kyrenians, including women, children and the elderly, were forced to seek refuge in the south of the island, which remained under the control of the government of the Republic of Cyprus. As a rule, most of the people of Kyrenia left their homes and fled to the south, taking with them only what they could carry in the way of clothing, abandoning everything to the mercy of the conqueror.

After occupying the northern part of Cyprus, Turkey implemented the long —time plans of national separation of the two communities on the basis of ethnic origin and the final partition of Cyprus. In essence they forced the Turkish Cypriots living in the south of the island to move to the northern occupied part of the island. In consequence, along with the Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots were also forcibly displaced by Turkey and they were forced to settle in the northern (occupied) part of Cyprus.

Turkey blatantly violated international law and all principles of international law in Cyprus, even violating fundamental human rights. The occupation troops have committed horrific crimes against civilians, such as rapes, murders and cold blooded execution of civilians and prisoners. Many Kyrenians were killed, many are unaccounted for and declared missing, and many were taken prisoners to and were tortured in Turkish prisons.

Houses, churches, government buildings and schools were looted and destroyed by the conquerors and the occupation regime, in an attempt for a total cultural and ethnic cleansing and to erase any evidence which could testify who the lawful residents of Kyrenia were until 1974, thus serving Turkey's long-standing goal of Turkification of the occupied areas of Cyprus.

Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have lived together for centuries and shared the same social identity. Many Turkish Cypriots are opposed to the fait accompli created by Turkey in Cyprus and openly support the return back to Turkey of the thousands of Turkish settlers who were sent to the occupied part of the island from Anatolia, in order to change the demographic character of Cyprus.

The European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights have repeatedly condemned Turkey for the inhuman and systematic violation of human rights in Cyprus. Any attempt on the part of Turkey for a de facto support of its partition plans in Cyprus is in direct conflict with and violates international laws and treaties. There is an expressed and explicit reference and stance in this regard in United Nations resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984).

The Mayor of Kyrenia and the Municipal Council, now in exile

Wishing to honour the memory of all Kyrenians who lost their lives during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and the memory of those still missing, and in memory of all those people of Kyrenia who died as refugees, displaced from their homes and away from their ancestral and historical roots.

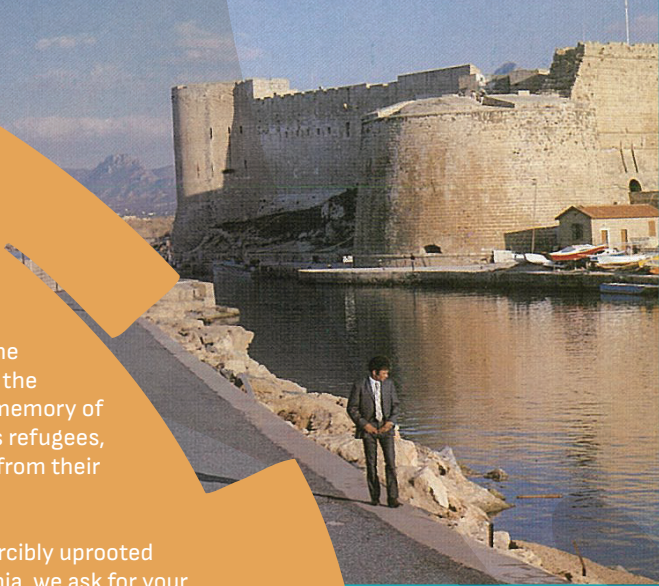
On behalf of all Kyrenians who were forcibly uprooted from their beloved hometown of Kyrenia, we ask for your full support in our efforts for:

- / The restoration of our fundamental human rights, in order to stand equal to all European citizens, as provided for by international law and as prescribed by the European Acquis.
- / The restoration of the right to return to our city, to our ancestral homes and the right to return to properties and live there in conditions of safety, freedom, security, justice, and free from Turkish troops, Turkish illegal settlers and without Turkey's long arm looming over with a right to any form of intervention.
- / The restoration, respect and protection of our cultural, religious and historical heritage which is an integral part of the European heritage.

We demand

- / Implementation of United Nations resolutions on Cyprus
- / Implementation of the European Acquis

We will not accept any political bargaining over Kyrenia which will endeavour to write-off the rights of the people of Kyrenia. The right of the refugees to return to their homes is an inalienable legal and political right for all people in the world, including Kyrenians.





Please support us in our return to our homeland!

The Mayor of Kyrenia and the Municipal Council

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