

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education**

Ref.: AL CYP 1/2026  
(Please use this reference in your reply)

4 March 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights and Special Rapporteur on the right to education, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 54/8, 55/5 and 53/7.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the alleged delay of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus in issuing the circular concerning the participation of Greek Cypriot schools in the activities of the bicomunal trust-building programme "Imagine" for the academic year 2025-2026, and the alleged public campaign of misinformation and employment of divisive rhetoric against the bicomunal student exchange visits organized under it, which hindered the effective delivery of the programme.**

According to the information received:

The Imagine programme was established in 2016. In 2017, it was placed under the auspices of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education with the agreement of the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Since its inception, the programme has been implemented by the Historical Dialogue and Research Association and the Home for Cooperation and funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Imagine is a peace culture education programme which brings together students and teachers from both communities to build trust by fostering intercultural dialogue, solidarity and mutual understanding. The programme reflects on issues such as equality, non-discrimination, pluralism, and combating racism. It aims at developing critical thinking, recognizing prejudices and stereotypes, strengthening mutual understanding, promoting awareness of the situation of disadvantaged groups, and developing a culture of peace and solidarity.

To date, the project has brought together more than 8,000 students and 2,600 teachers and has received very positive feedback from its participants. The project has been widely recognized, including in numerous UN reports, as a key confidence-building measure contributing to the promotion of a culture of peace and reconciliation between the two communities.<sup>1</sup> The award-winning project remains the single operational mechanism in Cyprus that systematically fosters trust between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

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<sup>1</sup> S/2022/534, S/2023/685, S/2024/123, S/2025/7/Rev.1, A/HRC/58/21

On 31 October 2022, the Turkish Cypriot authorities issued a circular to Turkish Cypriot schools suspending their participation in the Imagine programme. According to the circular, a review of the programme indicated that certain elements were inconsistent with the authorities' policy of sovereign equality and two separate authorities/states on the island. The project has not been reinstated in Turkish Cyprus schools since and a new review of the Imagine programme is reportedly being conducted by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. The implementing institutions delivered a restructured version of the programme for the academic year 2023-2024.

In February and March 2025, Greek Cypriot media outlets, parliamentarians, social figures, political parties and nationalist groups reportedly employed divisive rhetoric and misinformation to criticize the bicomunal student exchange visits run under the programme, especially in connection to planned trips to the north of the island. Attacks were also directed at the Ministry of Education for issuing a circular in 2025 in connection to such activities. In this context, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus refrained from issuing the circular concerning the participation of Greek Cypriot schools in the activities of the programme for the academic year 2025-2026. It was the first time this happened since the establishment of the programme. The circular was finally issued on 18 February 2026, halfway through the academic year.

In response to the attacks, civil society members, educators and parliamentarians of the Greek Cypriot community, as well as some teachers of the Turkish Cypriot community, voiced their support to the project. Despite this backing, the attacks against schools, institutions and individuals associated with the program, led to a climate of fear resulting in schools withdrawing from scheduled study visits and other bicomunal activities.

Notwithstanding the significant challenges, the implementation of the project has continued through the convening of bicomunal meetings of students and teachers outside regular school hours and the development of educational materials.

The obstacles and attacks faced by the Imagine programme are inscribed in a wider context of significant delays in the implementation of the 2017 recommendations of the joint report of the Technical Committee on Education to promote peace education in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, despite the repeated calls from the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General and international partners.<sup>2</sup>

On several occasions, the UN Security Council has called upon the two authorities to intensify efforts to promote peace education across the island, including by further empowering the Technical Committee on Education and implementing the recommendations of the joint report, most recently in resolution S/RES/2815 (2026).

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<sup>2</sup> See for example: <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/448>, p. 6 and 11.

We express concern regarding the delay of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus in issuing the circular concerning the participation of Greek Cypriot schools in the activities of the Imagine programme for the academic year 2025-2026, which hampered the delivery of the project for this period. In addition, we express concern about the public campaign of misinformation and employment of divisive rhetoric carried out by Greek Cypriot media outlets, parliamentarians, political parties, and nationalist groups, which created a climate of fear and undermined the delivery of the bicomunal student exchange visits and other activities of the Imagine programme.

We note with serious concern that these actions have the potential to undermine and revert the progress made by the Imagine programme since 2017 and could contribute to weakening the prospects of non-recurrence in the country. We underscore that as a core bicomunal peace education programme, praised by multiple actors including UN entities for its role in fostering trust, coexistence and mutual understanding, the Imagine programme should be afforded the necessary political and institutional support, including from government officials and other civic and political actors, to ensure it is able to deliver its preventive mandate effectively and without hindrances or attacks. To avoid regression in this delicate area and ensure compliance with the duty of States to adopt guarantees of non-recurrence of past serious human rights violations, we call on the relevant authorities to facilitate the reinstatement of the programme to its prior operational framework.

We take note that these developments have taken place in a context of withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot authorities from the Imagine programme since 2022, a matter which also raises our serious concern.

In addition, we note with serious concern the allegations of significant delays in the implementation of the 2017 recommendations of the joint report of the Technical Committee on Education, despite the repeated calls from the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary General and international partners. We wish to recall that in several opportunities, most recently in resolution S/RES/2815 (2026), the UN Security Council called upon the two authorities to intensify efforts to promote peace education across the island, including by further empowering the Technical Committee on Education and implementing the recommendations of the joint report, particularly those related to policymaking and the removal of obstacles to peace. The resolution highlights the need for a joint review of school materials to build trust between communities and calls for support to peace education projects that promote contact, collaboration and meaningful youth participation in the peace process. In addition, it notes with concern that the Technical Committee on Education did not meet during the reporting period, and that no cross-community cooperation on student engagement or textbook review occurred (paragraph 7.a).

In this connection, we wish to recall that international standards place a duty on States to take measures to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations. The duty to prevent recurrence is integral to the obligation to ensure human rights and closely linked to the obligation of cessation of an ongoing violation. It is also integral to the right to reparation for past serious human rights violations. International standards stipulate that to effectively prevent the recurrence of violence, States must implement institutional reforms and other measures aimed at ensuring respect for the rule of law, foster and sustain a culture of respect for human rights, and restore or establish public

trust in Government institutions. As part of the guarantees required to prevent recurrence, States should promote education on human rights issues and adopt mechanisms to prevent, monitor and address social conflicts. To function as effective prevention tools, measures in the field of education should help nurture dialogue, democratic citizenship and respect for human rights. States should also adopt policies in the fields of culture and the media aimed at promoting mutual understanding, cultural diversity and coexistence. Furthermore, to comply with this duty States must address any forms of advocacy to national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, in full compliance with the applicable international human rights standards. Negligence in these matters, whether by action or omission, may lead to the State being in breach of international law.

We wish to recall that international human rights law establishes the obligation of States, in all spheres and at all levels, to respect the obligations contained therein, and that failure to comply with these obligations by the relevant state powers, entities, and authorities at any level - national, regional or local - may entail the responsibility of the State as a whole.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information about the reasons for the delay of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Cyprus in issuing the circular concerning the participation of Greek Cypriot schools in the activities of the programme for the academic year 2025-2026. Please indicate how this decision complies with the aforementioned international standards in the field of guarantees of non-recurrence.
3. Please provide information about the measures adopted by the relevant authorities to address the public campaigns of misinformation and divisive rhetoric employed by Greek Cypriot media outlets, parliamentarians, political parties, and nationalist groups, against the bicomunal study visits of the Imagine programme, to address the climate of fear that undermined the delivery of the activities of the programme, and to ensure that accurate information about the role and characteristics of the project are disseminated to the general public.
4. Please provide information about the measures adopted by your Excellency's Government to implement the recommendations of the 2017 joint report of the Technical Committee on Education, and the progress made in this area. If no measures have been adopted, please explain why.

5. Please provide information about the measures adopted by your Excellency's Government in the field of education, culture, institutional building and legal reform to prevent the recurrence of violence and serious human rights violations, in accordance with international standards. If such measures have not been adopted, please explain why.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to guarantee the non-recurrence of serious human rights violations in compliance with international standards.

Please be informed that a letter on this subject matter has also been sent to Turkish Cypriot authorities.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Bernard Duhaime  
Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of  
non-recurrence

Alexandra Xanthaki  
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

Farida Shaheed  
Special Rapporteur on the right to education

## **Annex**

### **Reference to international human rights law**

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, and without prejudging the accuracy of these allegations, we would like to draw the attention of your Excellency's Government to the relevant international norms and standards.

We would like to refer to article 2 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Cyprus on 2 April 1969, which establishes that States must adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant, and to undertake measures to ensure that persons whose rights or freedoms are violated shall have an effective remedy. We would like to recall that according to article 4 of general comment No. 31 of the Human Rights Committee, the obligations contained in the ICCPR are binding on every State as a whole and that all branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial), and other public or governmental authorities, at whatever level - national, regional or local - are bound by these obligations and are in a position to engage the responsibility of the State Party.

In addition, we wish to recall the duty of States to take measures to prevent the recurrence of human rights violations. In general comment 31, the Committee established that the purposes of the Covenant would be defeated without an obligation integral to article 2 to take measures to prevent a recurrence of a violation of the Covenant. Accordingly, it has been a frequent practice of the Committee in cases under the Optional Protocol to include in its Views the need for measures, beyond a victim-specific remedy, to be taken to avoid recurrence of the type of violation in question. Such measures may require changes in the State Party's laws or practices. As stressed by the former Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, the general commitment to adhere to a right involves making efforts to ensure that its violation ceases and is not repeated. The duty to prevent recurrence is hence closely linked to the obligation of cessation of an ongoing violation. On this basis, guarantees serve a preventive function and may be described as a positive reinforcement of future performance (A/HRC/30/42, para. 18). We recall that negligence in this regard, whether through action or omission, may lead the State to be in breach of international law.

In this connection, we wish to recall that the Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity (Updated Set of Principles) stipulate that States must take appropriate measures to ensure that victims are not subjected to further violations of their rights. To this end, States must undertake institutional and legal reforms and other necessary measures to ensure respect for the rule of law, promote and maintain a culture of respect for human rights, and restore or establish public confidence in government institutions (principles 18 and 23). In addition, the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (Basic Principles and Guidelines) also stipulate the obligation to provide redress to victims in the form of guarantees of non-repetition. This should include measures such as providing, on a priority and continued basis, human rights and international humanitarian law education

to all sectors of society and promoting mechanisms for preventing and monitoring social conflicts and their resolution (principles 18 and 23).

In his report on international legal standards underpinning transitional justice, the former Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence underscored that States must promote mechanisms for preventing and monitoring social conflicts, ensure respect for the rule of law, foster a culture of respect for human rights, and promote trust in government institutions. He further recalled that education measures must be part of the reforms adopted to prevent the recurrence of serious human rights violations, and noted that such policies should help nurture dialogue, democratic citizenship and respect for human rights. Moreover, he called on States to adopt policies in the fields of culture and the media that promote mutual understanding, cultural diversity and coexistence. In addition, he noted that in order to avoid messages that fuel violence, States should regulate the acts of ideologues and spreaders of hateful and discriminatory speech in accordance with international human rights standards on the matter and the related test of proportionality and necessity (A/HRC/54/24 p.18-20).

We would also like to recall that, following her visit to Cyprus in 2016, the former Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights recommended that the Technical Committees be recognized for their achievements, commitment and expertise, and receive increased financial and political support (A/HRC/34/56/Add.1, para. 103).

Furthermore, in her report on the contribution of the right to education to the prevention of atrocity crimes, the former Special Rapporteur on the right to education warned that the content of teaching – what is being taught and what is being silenced – may be used in all disciplines to foster hatred and violence, either explicitly or implicitly, through so-called hidden curricula. Conversely, curricula can be used to promote peace, mutual understanding and acceptance, to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of atrocity crimes and mass or grave human rights violations and to provide some form of reparations for past crimes. The Special Rapporteur recommended that a multi-perspectivity approach be adopted throughout all disciplines as the most effective method of informing learners about viewpoints of others and encouraging them to practice critical thinking and understand the complexity of events or situations. Multi-perspectivity fosters learning about diversity, the complexity of identities with their multiple layers and dimensions, the inclusion of the “other” and empathy. In the end, the objective remains to build a world of justice, peace, prosperity and solidarity. (A/74/243, paras. 88-89)

Finally, we wish to recall Human Rights Council resolutions 57/24 (paras. 3, 5 and 7), 55/17 (para. 10) and 54/5 (paras. 2, 4 and 6), which call on States to provide child education that promotes a culture of peace and non-violence, including lessons in mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and human rights; and on civil society and the international community to actively support such efforts.