



NEWS & VIEWS

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PRESS STATEMENT BY ÜNAL ÇEVİKÖZ, PRINCIPAL ADVISOR TO THE CHP CHAIR ON FOREIGN POLICY ON THE
US LIFTING ITS ARMS EMBARGO ON CYPRUS..... 3

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2 September 2020

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement that the US is lifting its arms embargo on the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) in this period of tension in the eastern Mediterranean, which, what is more, came on 1 September World Peace Day, has caused considerable concern.

As is known, it was envisaged under the "National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020" and "Further Consolidated Allocations Act" that the US President signed into law on 20 December 2019 that the arms embargo on the GCASC, which has been in place since 1987, would be lifted. The US President transferred the authority to lift the arms embargo to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo with an executive order signed on 14 April.

It is suspicious that the decision which has not been put into action until now is now being acted upon in the midst of the ongoing tension in the eastern Mediterranean. The fact that the decision has been made at a time when President Trump's election campaign is gaining momentum reinforces the idea that such a vital issue is being instrumentalized with domestic political considerations in mind. Those who were painting the management of Turkish - US relations by way of personal relationships as a success story are now the reason for this decision. The burden that comes with the AKP government pulling our relations with the US away from a ground of common sense, mutual respect, and institutional ties and reducing these relations to personal connections is getting heavier and heavier.

This decision at once aims to drive Turkey into a corner and also puts more strain on Turkish - US relations. As CHP, we informed the public on 18

December 2019 and stated that a breakdown in relations between Ankara and Washington would not benefit either side. We also explained that such a decision (Sec. 1270) would not assist in attenuating the current tension in the eastern Mediterranean nor help with the peaceful resolution of the Cyprus question. At the present juncture, this decision will not only hamper the relations between the two sides on Cyprus but will also drive up the tension in the eastern Mediterranean as well as cause Turkish-Greek relations to turn even sourer.

As CHP, we would like to reiterate that we prioritize a peaceful solution to the problems in the eastern Mediterranean whereby Turkey and Greece would come together around a table as two independent and sovereign countries and Turkey's rights would be defended at the table of diplomacy. The tension between Turkey and Greece can be resolved by Turkey and Greece alone.