



# AMERICAN HELLENIC INSTITUTE, INC.

November 19, 2015

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The Honorable  
 John Kerry  
 Secretary of State  
 U.S. Department of State  
 2201 C Street, N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I am writing to raise a number of items for your consideration as you prepare for your upcoming visit to Greece and Cyprus.

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First and foremost, I would like to congratulate you on your continued interest in the ongoing Cypriot settlement talks. As negotiations continue in Cyprus and the mood remains optimistic, we truly believe the best way to bring about a just and viable solution is direct United States' commitment to the creation of a proper environment. As such, we value any opportunity for members of the administration to visit the island and the heightened emphasis these visits provide. We appreciate your continued involvement and believe that without your strong support, and that of the administration, this issue would not have received nearly the level of public attention it has been given over the past two years.

As you know well, the projection of U.S. interests in southeast Europe and the eastern Mediterranean depend heavily on the region's stability. Therefore, the United States has an important stake in achieving a just and viable settlement of the Cyprus problem.

However, Turkey's continuing occupation of Cyprus, its intransigence in solving the Cyprus problem, its refusal to recognize the Republic of Cyprus and its veto to the accession of Cyprus to international organizations prevents this stability and damages U.S. interests.

We support a settlement of the Cyprus problem through negotiations based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in a state with a single sovereignty and international personality, incorporating the norms of a constitutional democracy embracing key American principles, the EU *acquis communautaire*, U.N. resolutions on Cyprus, the pertinent decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and of other European Courts – as in the best interests of the United States.

It is important, however, that the United States continue to pressure Turkey not to manipulate the current talks or restrict current Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci at the negotiations. If Mr. Akinci is unable to negotiate freely on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots, it will be because he is subject to external pressures from Turkey, which do not provide and chance for progress to be made. The Cypriots themselves should have ownership of the settlement process and the solution should be by the Cypriot people for the Cypriot people. Advancing these positions will underscore support for the rule of law and respect for international law. It will demonstrate the United States' dedication to solving the 41-year-old Cyprus problem.


I would also like to express our appreciation for the multiple ways in which the State Department and the Obama Administration have supported NATO member Greece through its ongoing debt crisis. As Greece continues to follow through with its obligations to its creditors, we hope more tangible actions will be taken by the United States to support one of its most valuable and faithful allies, Greece. Moreover, Greece has done its utmost to manage an extraordinary refugee crisis with limited and strained resources amid its economic crisis. Since the start of 2015, it is estimated that over 500,000 migrants have arrived in Greece from Turkey. Therefore, your visit during such a critical time further underscores the importance for U.S. involvement in the region and sends a strong message of support as Greece endures two crises.

Despite its economic difficulties, Greece continues to be of vital importance for the projection of U.S. strategic interests by virtue of its geographic location and its strong, unwavering support for NATO. As home to the most important naval presence in the Mediterranean Sea, NSA Souda Bay, Crete, Greece has been critical to the delivery of U.S. troops, cargo, and supplies, providing access and extending the U.S. and NATO's reach into the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, Greece is a top contributor to the defense efforts of NATO, spending an estimated 2.3% of its GDP on defense.

In promoting a multilateral approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, the U.S should consider Greece an immensely valuable link in this region. With its centuries-long enduring presence, its close cultural, political and economic ties to the Mediterranean countries, Western Europe, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Greece remains an ideal strategic partner for the U.S. in this region.

AHI's perspective is embodied within the fundamental principles of democracy, is founded on the rule of law, and is based on what is in the best interests of the United States. We appreciate the opportunity to bring our perspective to your attention. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis  
President

cc: Vice President Joe Biden  
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