

DISASTER EMERGENCY SERVICES AND HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES WITH THE GOAL OF DISASTER RESILIENT SOCIETY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS, NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS, INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

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ABSTRACT:

The national and international organizations operating in the field of Disaster Management mainly carry out studies in order to minimize the loss of life and property in disaster and emergency situations. In order to achieve this goal, while traditionally developing intervention elements, the tendency of the measures to be taken before the disaster occurs will be more effective in preventing these damages. While implementing these practices, firstly the risks in the region where the implementation will be carried out are assessed, then activities aimed at mitigating the risks are planned and implemented. The basis of these practices is to educate and raise awareness of all segments of society about disasters and the right way of action in such cases. Another important and indispensable point in reducing disaster risks is the intervention phase. Preparations for search, rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to be carried out in case of a situation that will hit the country in spite of all the precautions to be taken before the disaster occurs also play an important role in reducing the damages to be encountered. Measures to be taken in line with the economic development level, social, cultural and political situation of the countries vary within the framework of the concept of disaster risk reduction. Countries with a nationally stable structure face significant difficulties due to the challenges they face internationally. Although the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has an identity that fulfills the requirements of being a state with all its institutions in this sense, it continues to exist in the field of disaster management as a “de facto” state which is ignored by the international community for political reasons, but also against the disasters affecting other states and communities in the region has a sensitive stance and offers assistance and, if requested, the first teams to reach the disaster area. In this study, the difficulties encountered as a result of the initiatives carried out with the aim of integration to the international system with the successfully implemented international actions, as well as the activities, practices and measures taken by the Civil Defense Organization, which is an important element of the disaster management system of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, will be discussed. This study on the case of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus reveals that the difficulties experienced in the field of humanitarian disaster and emergency services can cause problems not only regionally but also globally.

KEYWORDS: Disaster, Resilience, Humanitarian Aid

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a need to develop disaster and emergency services that are needed worldwide due to a wide range of factors such as global warming and related climate change, mass migration movements as a result of political and military developments. Along with the emerging needs, local, national and international organizations operating in this field strive to meet this need and even to develop their capacity and capabilities for unexpected threats. Although equity is of primary importance in disaster management, as in all other areas, cooperation between actors will minimize the damage to the parties. Cooperation is a vital and humanitarian

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field, such as disaster management should be kept away from distinctions like ethnic, political, geographical, cultural and so on. Due to the nature of the activity to be carried out, it is inevitable to take steps such as rapid decision making, the ability to intervene immediately and facilitation of diplomatic procedures.

The organizations operating in the field of disaster management have focused on risk reduction activities that are at the top of the disaster management cycle in recent years. The reason for this is that the risks and damages that may be encountered before disaster or emergency occur are determined in advance and life and property loss can be kept at a minimum level. In doing so, first of all, identifying the risks that may be exposed and determining the measures that can be taken against these risks are the first and most important steps. Accurate risk analysis will enable the effective and efficient use of the measures to be taken against these risks, and will also ensure the proper management of available resources. In the risk analysis, not only the nature and man-made disasters such as earthquakes, fire, floods, industrial accidents, but the geographical location of the country, political and military factors such as armed conflict, mass migration movements, and epidemics, etc. threats should also be considered. In particular, countries that are close to or on the transit route of migration movements arising from these regions are seen as safe havens for people who are forced to leave their countries. Although extending humanitarian aid to these people is a humanitarian duty, this duty can cause many difficulties such as epidemic risk, terrorism threat and lack of resources.

In addition to these, natural disasters with increasing frequency and intensity can exceed the extent to which the affected country can cope with their capacities and opportunities, and on the other hand, can go beyond national borders and threaten more than one country at the same time. In such cases, the importance of interstate cooperation emerges. In this study, the good practices put forward by the Civil Defense Organization Presidency, which operates within the Disaster Management System of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the above-mentioned issues, initiatives to improve the sharing of these practices at the international level as well as the humanitarian activities carried out at this level and also challenges that are faced will be addressed. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is dealt with in this study, is a state which is not recognized for political reasons on the international level, although it has the characteristics of being a state while it is threatened by many natural and man-made disaster risks. The TRNC example aims to have a structure that has successful implementation at the national level in the fight against disasters and emergencies and has the opportunity and ability to assist international demanding countries have made many attempts to cooperate in this field but has faced political and diplomatic obstacles.

2. THESIS

In this study, it is emphasized that no matter how prepared the disaster and emergency services at the local and national level, because the country's resources may become unusable in case of a possible disaster, the importance of interstate and international cooperation on humanitarian issues should be kept separate from political, geographical, economic, cultural, etc. conflicts. In fact these states bear the same concern as the "de jure" states in order to protect the security of life and property of the people living in their geography. So protecting human life has nothing to do with legal status and should not be. Consequently, the exclusion of the above-mentioned areas of cooperation, exchange of information, exchange of experience and mutual assistance in case of a disaster will increase the loss of life and property in disaster and emergencies.

3. APPLICATION

The Civil Defense Organization, which is the subject of this study, is an institution within the Disaster Management System of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which operates in risk reduction, preparation and response phases in the disaster management cycle, and also faces the difficulties mentioned above due to the international status of the TRNC.

3.1 Legal Status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

In order to understand the status of the TRNC, one should first look at the recent history of the country. The island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean has been the home of many civilizations due to its geopolitical importance throughout history. The island was ruled by the Ottoman Empire after its conquest by the Ottomans in 1571 and it was transferred to the British colonial administration in 1878. In 1914, the island was annexed by England on the basis of World War I and legally was left by the Republic of Turkey by the Lausanne treaty signed in 1924 where it remained under British colonial rule until the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. As a result of the independence movements that emerged after the end of the Second World War, a part of the Greek community living on the island makes armed attacks against the British administration and the Turkish community. As a result of this, the British administration decided in 1958 to ensure the independence of the island and to share the administration between Greek and Turkish communities. Based on these developments, the "Republic of Cyprus" establishment agreement is signed by the Greek and Turkish communities, the guarantor powers Turkey, Greece, and Britain. The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities share the new administration, but this sharing ends with the inter-communal conflicts that began in 1963 with the Greek Cypriot aims of ENOSIS (Annexation of the island to the Greece). The clashes that escalated from time to time between 1963-1974 reached a climax on July 15, 1974, when the junta in Greece intended to annex the island. After this intention of Greece, Turkey intervened militarily the island using the right mentioned in the Treaty of Guarantee for the aim of reestablishment of the order in the island. Following this intervention, a new de facto situation emerges on the island and a bi-zonal order is maintained, which will continue to date and will be reflected in many documents and decisions.

The inter-communal negotiations at the auspices of the United Nations (UN) since 1968 have not yielded any final results, but the framework of the political solution to be reached is largely determined. According to the 1977-1979 High-Level Agreements signed by the leaders of the two communities, a solution to be reached on the island is stated as a bicomunal federation based on political equality. The "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus", which was formed by the political leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community in 1975, was established for this purpose and continued to exist until 1983. During the negotiations in 1983, under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, the idea of a "meeting of political equals" emerged. The claim of the Greek Cypriot administration as the representative of the "Republic of Cyprus", which was ended and lost the structure in 1960, and regarding the Turkish Cypriots as "society" "undermined the goal of a solution. This development brought Turkish Cypriots closer to the idea of declaring independence by exercising their right to self-determination. Thus, both equal state structures could be on the table in the negotiations for the solution and the political uncertainty that had been experienced for many years would come to an end for the Turkish Cypriots. As a result, with the declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on November 15, 1983, both Turkish Cypriots' long-standing struggle for social existence has been concluded with a state, and the two sides settled with equal status in the negotiations for the solution of the Cyprus problem.

However, with the proclamation of the TRNC, the Greek Cypriot Administration initiated an intense diplomatic initiative to isolate the Turkish Cypriots in the international arena and put pressure on the newly established state and concluding the solution negotiations by the Greek Cypriot theses. Consequently, the Republic of Turkey recognized the new state together with the declaration of the TRNC and so far the international community ignored the TRNC side as a state. (Bostancı, 2015)

3.2 The National Activities of the Civil Defense Organization as an institution of the TRNC

In spite of the above mentioned problems, TRNC, together with all its organs, works to ensure the existence of the Turkish Cypriot community in every field by fulfilling the necessity of being a state. Disaster and emergency management system, which is perhaps one of the most important of these areas, is being carried out to make the society more resilient to disasters by following the developments in the world and adopting international standards.

There is a disaster management system in the TRNC under the Prime Ministry with the name of "Disaster and Emergency Management Committee" which includes private sector organizations and public authority. Under this system, the Civil Defense Organization has an important role as a coordinating member to ensure cooperation between committee members. In addition to its professionally trained, fully equipped and staffed personnel spread throughout the country, the TRNC Civil Defense Organization has support units to ensure immediate response to threats in case of disasters and emergencies and to keep the situation under control until the support of professional teams is provided. These units are basically composed of two main structures. The first of these is the "Public Organization", which was established within the civilian population and supported by regular training and exercises. Thanks to this structure, immediate response to disasters and emergencies that may occur in every part of the country is ensured and necessary measures are taken to facilitate the work of professional teams with first aid, simple search and rescue activities.

The other important structure that constitutes the second pillar of Civil Defense in TRNC is the organization of the Civil Defence branches in institutions. In this structuring, it is aimed to carry out responses such as light rescue, first aid and evacuation that will be needed in the structure of the public and private institutions with the teams established in their disasters and emergencies and to take the measures that will help the professional teams to work. The main objective in this structure is to enable the Department / Organization to become operational again as soon as possible after a disaster or emergency and to provide the services that the society needs. Together with these two structures, more than ten thousand people are regularly trained in the above-mentioned issues throughout the country and these trainings are reinforced with the exercises.

The focus of these activities is on the importance of the disaster management cycle and the creation of a disaster-resistant society that can be protected from the negative effects of disasters and emergencies. Civil Defense Organization also organizes activities in order to raise awareness of disaster among primary and secondary school students in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education and Culture and to adopt the correct school course of action in case of a possible disaster. These activities include first aid and fire extinguishing trainings within the scope of "Disaster Ready School Project", and trainings on how to respond to disasters. (Eker & Yilmabaşar, "Disaster Resilient Society With Youth" Project Of The Civil Defence Organization Aiming Disaster Risks Reduction, 2018) In addition to educational institutions, comprehensive training and exercises are carried out in order to make the health institutions in the country resilient to disasters and to provide uninterrupted health services to the public in case of disasters and emergencies.

Another important role of the Civil Defense Organization is its support to the International Universities Search and Rescue Council (IUSARC). IUSARC was established in April 2012 with the contribution of 30 universities from 20 countries, with the initiative of the Civil Defense Organization and the universities operating in Northern Cyprus. The aim of the Council is to provide young people with the opportunity to operate internationally in the areas of disaster risk reduction, civil defense, search and rescue and humanitarian aid. As of 2019, IUSARC has a total of 52 member universities from 22 countries. Since 2012, the representatives of the member universities have been invited to the TRNC with the programs, trainings, seminars and exercises organized by IUSARC, conducted in April and May of each year. Civil Defense Organization, in cooperation with IUSARC, organizes the "13 October United Nations World Disaster Risk Reduction Day", "Social Responsibility Week", "22 March World Water Day" activities and I IUSARGames Search and Rescue Games at international level each year. (Eker & Yilmabaşar, "Disaster Resilient Society With Youth" Project Of The Civil Defence Organization Aiming Disaster Risks Reduction, 2018) "International Universities Search and Rescue Games", which was added to the IUSARC's activity calendar in 2016, has a special importance in terms of being the first and only organization in the world with the theme of life saving. The idea of realization of the games is based on the principle of "A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted" stated in the guiding principles of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. (UN General Assembly, 2015) It is aimed to integrate young people who are suitable for multidisciplinary structure of disaster management cycle in 18-25 age range and are physically fit to carry out search and rescue activities and they belong to various faculties and departments of universities. The games were performed in light of the possible scenarios in the first response to possible disasters based on the standards determined by International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) in national level

at 2017 and in international level at 2016 and 2018. The main reason for the adoption of these standards is the principle of spreading the acquired knowledge and experience internationally through students from different countries of origin within the founding principles of the Council. This choice will enable the use of the same language with the world in the activities performed and the results obtained will be in harmony with the standards set in all countries. (Eker, Afet Yönetimi Döngüsüne Üniversite Gençliğinin Dahil Edilmesi: IUSARC Örneği, 2018)

3.3 International Activities of the Civil Defense Organization

Under the discipline of disaster management, the Directorate of Civil Defense Organization makes initiatives in international level based on the fact that national/local knowledge and experience will not be sufficient, benefiting from the experiences of international organizations in this field is compulsory and the fact that disasters recognizes no boundaries. These initiatives consists of educational activities, conferences, workshops and symposia. By attending such events in international level, CDO made several contributions to the literature by conducting presentations of the paper prepared related with the area of disaster management. CDO also participated to the regional and global Disaster Risk Reduction Forums organized by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). CDO and IUSARC activities were introduced during the European Disaster Risk Mitigation Forum (EFDRR), which was held in Istanbul in 2017. The main principle aimed at these promotions is to share the measures taken against the risks and the response power created especially in small island countries such as TRNC and how the existing capacity can be supported through the supplementary elements mentioned above. In addition, a live example (IUSARC) was presented to visitors about how the potential in universities could be incorporated into the disaster management system through training and equipment. Then, the Global Platform meetings in 2017, in Cancun, Mexico and in 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland were attended respectively.

In addition to the activities abroad, CDO aims to contribute to the academic development of all stakeholders in the country by carrying out international activities in the TRNC. The most prominent example of this is the “International Disaster Resilience Certificate Program” organized on 07-10 October 2019 in TRNC in cooperation with the International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS). The training was conducted by academicians from the USA, Croatia, Italy and China who came to the TRNC and were experts in their fields. With this training, representatives of public and private institutions/organizations in the disaster management system in the TRNC, and those who have indirect connections with the system were informed about the developments in the world in addition to basic disaster management information.

In addition to these activities, a full-equipped search and rescue team is sent to the countries that accept the calls for assistance as a result of disasters in the region within the scope of the capabilities. In this context, CDO has sent humanitarian aid and search and rescue teams to the disasters at Kaynaşlı, Marmara, Turkey in 1999, at Pakistan in 2005 nad at Kyrgyzstan in 2008 to support them.

3.4 Challenges in International Activities

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, the importance and necessity of international cooperation on a humanitarian issue such as disaster management should be kept away from undisputed political interests. In line with this principle, in addition to academic congresses, conferences, etc. activities attended by the Civil Defense Organization, effort is made participate in activities where important decisions are made on the subject, information and experience are shared, and the areas of cooperation, which are the most important issues, are identified and developed. Perhaps the most important pillar of these environments, the UNDRR, has created obstacles that are contrary to the essence of the issue during the participation in the global and regional platforms. In addition, the same challenges are encountered in activities that are not under the umbrella of UN and bring together stakeholders from an academic perspective in the field of disaster management. For instance, the conference titled “Geographic Information Systems in Disaster Management” (Gi4DM), which was planned to be held in Kyrenia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 2018, despite the organization of all participants and the determination of the participants completed, has been taken to İstanbul, Turkey as a result of threatening letters sent by the Greek Cypriot Administration to the speakers, participants and diplomatic missions in their countries. In spite of this, the Civil Defense Organization

Presidency, was attended the conference and made a presentation on the “Disaster Resilient Society With Youth Project Aiming Disaster Risks Reduction”. The paper was later published in the “International Journal of Engineering Sciences & Research Technology” (IJESRT).

4. FINDINGS

In the context of international law, in addition to the Montevideo Convention, which regulates the existence of states, their status, the conditions of dissolution and formation, there are also criteria on a political basis in practice. Meeting the criteria of “population”, “land”, “authority” and “independence” in this convention will not lead to recognition alone, but it is seen that states can exist without these criteria. (Montevideo Convention, 1933) In addition, it is seen that the parties advocate their own arguments by putting forward concepts such as “Doctrine of Necessity” in disputed regions such as Cyprus. In the light of the thesis advocated in this doctrine, if there is no solution for a disputed issue, the importance, urgency of the subject and the necessity of continuation of the current conditions are compulsory to be carried out by taking into consideration the legal conditions. (Özersay, 2004) All the implementations of the Greek Cypriot Administration to date without suspending and / or amending the provisions of the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus on many issues are based on this thesis.

Based on the same principle, Turkish Cypriots and the authority representing them on a subject that cannot be discriminated against in any way such as religion, language and race should not be prevented from appearing in this area with the necessity. In other words, it is contrary to the spirit of the fact that all attempts on emergencies are prevented again on political grounds the reasons given for the continuation of the so-called “Republic of Cyprus” by an authority that bears the responsibility of its disintegration and the support given to these reasons lacking legal basis by the international community, directly affects the Turkish Cypriot right to life, which is one of the fundamental human rights.

5. CONCLUSION

Societies such as Turkish Cypriots, who are disadvantaged for political reasons, will be deprived of cooperation in the event of major disasters when they are excluded from the international system, no matter how prepared they are for local disasters and emergencies. In addition, the fact that the developments in this field can be followed by the societies in question (in other words, providing this opportunity to these societies) will again be an important step that will directly affect human life. It is the duty of all local, national and international actors to adopt the principle of “Every Life Counts” is important in disasters and emergencies, and to implement humanitarian messages in practice, such as the theme of “Leaving No One Behind” at the Global Platform Meeting held in Geneva in 2019. (UNDRR Dialogues, 2019) It should not be forgotten that when disasters occur, neither border nor nationality nor religion or any other distinction is made. In this context, supranational international organizations have a great responsibility. At this point, it is useful to remind the UN Secretary-General's recent report to the two sides on the island that he called local and international actors. In its report of 10 July 2019, to the Security Council, the Secretary-General calls on the parties concerned to cooperate without any obstacles and without waiting for a solution. (United Nations, 2019) It is especially important to cooperate without any obstacles on natural disasters and other issues that affect human life and fall within the scope of civil defense. Turkish Cypriots should be able to participate in the Global and Regional Platforms, an environment in which international policies on disasters and emergencies are addressed under the UN umbrella. However, the applications made for participation in the European Platform meeting held in Rome, Italy by the Turkish Cypriot community in 2018 were rejected, and despite the difficulties experienced in the Global Platform meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2019, the representatives who attended the meeting were removed from the conference upon the complaint of Greek Cypriot representatives. Under these circumstances, it should be acknowledged that human values, which are emphasized by this study and accepted by the international community, are not actually implemented by the holders of ideas.

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