

Hello everyone,

Over the last couple of weeks, we have all been involved in a heated debate as to what constitutes racialism. What we understand by racial prejudice, discrimination and bigotry. The world over we have seen massive and diverse crowds protest in solidarity against racism and hate and in support of the black lives matter movement. We too here in North Cyprus have organized two solidarity walks against racism, one in Famagusta and the other Nicosia. This would not have been possible without massive support from the local community. Even as the world continues to debate the essence of racism, we are seeing statues and symbols which either provoke or promote hurtful memories of racism, prejudice, violence, slavery and slave trade and colonization fall.

We are living and witnessing a historic moment of change, one which is forcing us all to reckon with our collective history. North Cyprus is not exempt from this wind of change which is blowing across our world. It is with this in mind that we chose to reiterate our concerns about the offensiveness and insensitivity of the 'Afrika' newspaper's logo. Our concern was always that it reinforces offensive stereotypes about black Africans and Africa.

The decision by Mr. Sener Levent that the logo of his 'Afrika' newspaper will be changed is a step in the right direction. We hope that the new logo chosen will be one which embraces diversity. We are excited for this change and celebrate the steps amassed along the route to a more free, just, egalitarian and fairer society.

It is a decision that comes with much relief to African members of our community in North Cyprus, and perhaps all over the world. Regardless, this news should not be deemed a signal of victory by us, but should rather serve as a time of collective self reflection. We are all but different parts of a whole, and when one part hurts, in this case being our African brothers and sisters, and their historical heritage, we should all seek to collectively reflect over our intended or unintended, and conscious or subconscious roles in propagating the trauma of others. This was never a witch-hunt, but an additional means of seeking accountability which is at the very foundation of our organisation's approach.

We understand that not everyone agrees with what we were asking. In fact, in some of the reaction we saw a pain we are familiar with. We understand that Turkish Cypriots feel an attack on their identity and are themselves in a struggle to keep hold of their cultural heritage. We understand that as a society, you have also witnessed and are still the victims of oppression and assimilation. We understand that the 'Afrika' newspaper is an important part of that struggle. This is why we are telling you that we stand in solidarity with you and with all communities that are oppressed, discriminated, persecuted. However, we also want you to listen to our pain and to recognize that just like you, we are victims of oppression. In the fight against injustice we must and always stick together. As Martin Luther King Jr said; "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

It is with this in mind and following recommendations by our very good friend and supporter Erman Domaci that we call for the formation of an anti-racism network where we, together, and united can work toward breaking down systematic racism and prejudice within our society. We must hold our institutions accountable. The universities who so far are only paying lip service to the struggles of their students and the organs of the state who directly or indirectly perpetuate and enable racism to continue to exist.

This moment, this moment right now is a moment of self-reflection and introspection. A moment when we must collectively recognize our biases and be anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti all forms of discrimination here and all over the world. As I always say, society must be brave enough to change! Now is the time!

From the family of VOIS Cyprus to you, we say we love you!