

## **North Cyprus: University Students say take your hands off our scholarships !**

By Feslikan

I am a Turkish Cypriot student who is currently studying in Istanbul, Turkey. All my life I had to fight for something to get it, nothing was easy; like education. I was going to school but school was not enough so I had to take some private lessons to go to universities I dreamed.

About a month ago, I had to fight again for something with other Turkish Cypriot co-students. We had to fight for our "Scholarship" right. Normally, Turkish Cypriot government should be paying the students 800 Turkish Liras monthly; who study in Turkey and in the universities in the north. However from the beginning of October, or even some from the summer of 2011 couldn't receive scholarships! Imagine the situation; a lot of students depend on that scholarship and maybe even some survive with that scholarship OR maybe even some decided to go to Turkey depending on that scholarship and nothing else! However the Turkish Cypriot Government "couldn't" pay us. We made demonstrations like all electricity workers, teacher's union and like all these unions who cannot get what they have as a "right".

We made our demonstration on 1<sup>st</sup> of February in front of the ministry of education in North Nicosia. This demonstration aimed a regular paying of scholarships but not only that; all the problems we are facing in the education system in North Cyprus .

One issue concerns the fact that ; Islamic teachings have taken place more than ever in the curriculum. Schools should be the places where people learn how to be open minded, they are not the places to teach extreme nationalism and extreme religion. At the end of the day we are supposed to be a "secular country".

Another issue concerns that the state has introduced cameras in the schools watching us like we are criminals!

So two more demands we had were a secular education in the school meaning none Islamic teachings, and to take away the cameras and barbed wires at schools.

The demonstration started at Grand bus stop of Nicosia and ended in front of the ministry of Education. There, we as students were asking for our demands and rights: TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF OUR SCHOLARSHIPS ! Our demonstration was very lively ;with music and with pasta – maracas to make noise so that they can hear our demands. Some of our slogans were funny but mainly were very true like "Dürüst -Değil!". Meaning:"Honest-No he isn't playing with the minister's name! Since nobody came to listen, we threw the papers in which our demands were written like little toy planes to the entrance of the ministry and maybe one day they will read them!

Unfortunately the Minister of Education never showed up. I think he was very busy with going to some openings. From the day UBP had taken the power; the best they did was opening up new places like hotels or some furniture stores or some kind of luxury stores which would be totally useless for public in the time of economic crisis but very important as it seems for the "honest" man!

They don't care about the hotels which never pay their electricity bills, but instead they save some money by not paying the students scholarships! This has no end. We have been suffering because of bad economy and because of legislations and systems for all our lives. Where are the human rights?

We had a small victory and we received our money in a month however the struggle is not over. If we want to change our future, for ourselves, for our children and for our island we need to stop hesitating and start empathizing and fighting.

This was my first demonstration and I felt like a much better person ! I was actually shouting for something which was my right, I was giving a response against the government ! We will keep on struggling for our rights and as we keep on making demonstrations ,instead of small victories we will have what we and what our next generations deserve in our own land. This struggle made me think that as a Turkish Cypriot I cannot just live within my identity in my own country within a human way! And finally that unification is very important both for Turkish and Greek Cypriots. We are Cypriots; we are speaking different languages but in the same way. Eating same food, singing same songs, laughing for same things all the time. Let's make the way to be living together again!