



Fears of retaliation in just-liberated Kherson

'Sick of everything': Beijingers fed up with restrictions

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## Foreign university students sold 'dreams' in north Cyprus

Universities pay recruiters \$1,040 in commission per student

**NICOSIA:** Foreign students are big business in northern Cyprus, a tiny, breakaway statelet only recognized by Turkey, but some warn university recruiters are selling "dreams" in the internationally and economically isolated territory. One Nigerian student, who requested anonymity, said he expected to arrive in the country whose football teams compete in European tournaments. Instead, when he saw the currency was the embattled Turkish lira, he realized this was "not the Cyprus I thought it was".

Turkey. International students pay tuition in euros or US dollars, and sometimes also for accommodation - a windfall for the territory's isolated economy.

The Republic of Cyprus, an EU member, is facing record numbers of new asylum-seekers, most arriving from across the UN-patrolled buffer zone, and accuses Turkey of encouraging the influx. Almost half of the north's more than 108,000 "active" tertiary students were from outside the TRNC or Turkey in the 2021-22 academic year, official figures showed, with about

national embargo. Relatively low tuition fees - sometimes less than \$3,000 per year - are a major selling point, and are often presented as if marked down by "scholarships" of up to 75 percent. But a university official who requested anonymity told AFP this was a "trick". "It is not like we are giving these scholarships" to international students, he said, explaining that the marked-down price is the actual tuition cost.

Real international tuition waivers were few, he added. Universities pay recruiters between several hundred and 1,000 euros (\$1,040) in commission per student, sources told AFP. While many are companies, the number of informal agents - often current or former students - has reportedly ballooned. Some students said they had been misled about study or work opportunities, or were not told they were coming to a divided island.

Cameroonian Rictus Franck Ngongang, 28, said he wanted "the magic" of easy entry but was duped by a recruiter. The business student's "first shock" was finding "there were 10 of us in a two-room flat", after he paid 300 euros for a month's accommodation. He was also not enrolled in the course he expected. He has since started a support association - also involving agents - to try to help other students in difficulty. Some recruiters "sell dreams", he cautioned.

At northern Nicosia's small American University of Cyprus - which officials said currently has no stand-alone US university accreditation - foreign students were learning Turkish in a classroom with Ottoman-style windows as the Muslim call to prayer rang out over the divided city. But Hazan Sherifli, head of student affairs, said half the institution's 200 international students were not attending.

Some "lose their (financial) sponsors... or some other things happen", said public relations and marketing director Engin Sirvan, adding it was not the university's role to police attendance. A report by the north's Center for Migration, Identity and Rights Studies said impoverished foreign students risked falling "into the hands of criminal elements", and that the situation "facilitates human trafficking and exploitation".—AFP

## Chad opposition in shock and disarray

**N'DJAMENA:** Some have fled or gone into hiding while for others, just to walk in front of their party's now abandoned headquarters stirs dread. More than a month after a crackdown on anti-junta protestors that left scores dead and spurred an international outcry, dissidents in Chad remain in shock and disarray.

"People are traumatized," said Gabin, a 30-year-old member of the Transformers party that co-staged the demonstration that was bloodily suppressed on October 20. "They are still being hunted. They're afraid of even walking in front of the Transformers (building), afraid of being arrested." The head of the Transformers, Succes Masra, told AFP on November 10 that he had fled to an unnamed country, saying he was being sought by the presidential guard—the elite force of Chadian leader General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno.

The same day, Max Loangar of the Wakit Tamma opposition group said that he was hiding "somewhere" in Chad to avoid arrest. Opposition groups had encouraged demonstrations on October 20 to mark the date when the ruling military had initially promised to cede power—a timeline that Deby has now extended by two years. The 38-year-old succeeded his iron-fisted father, Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled for 30 years before dying in an operation against rebels in April 2021. According to the official version of events, around 50 people died, including a dozen members of the security forces, after the opposition mounted an "insurrection" in the capital N'Djamena and several other cities. But Transformers and Wakit Tamma say dozens more people were killed and at least 300 wounded when security forces opened fire on protestors.—AFP



**NICOSIA:** Students sit together at the American University Of Cyprus, which officials said currently has no stand-alone US university accreditation, in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), north of the divided Cypriot capital Nicosia.— AFP

The Mediterranean island is divided between the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and a northern statelet established after Turkey launched a 1974 invasion in response to a Greek-sponsored coup. The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is home to just several hundred thousand people yet hosts a whopping 21 universities officially recognized by the breakaway authorities and by

17,400 from Nigeria alone in the spring semester. Education minister Nazim Cavusoglu estimated the university sector and its indirect revenues fuelled some 35 percent of the north's GDP - "far ahead of tourism".

'A trick'

Many foreign students can enter the TRNC without pre-issued visas. All must fly via Turkey due to an inter-

# CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times management and staff convey our deepest condolences to our colleague

**Antonio Coelho**

and his family members on the sad demise of his

**Brother**

*May his soul rest in peace*