



# ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt

EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo

EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme

EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

WITH LAWYERS  
IN 23 COUNTRIES

Equality Privacy Social Rights  
No Racism Peace No Torture No War  
Self-Determination of Peoples Democracy  
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

Bologna, Donostia, Düsseldorf, Vienna, 12/03/2026

## Lawyers statement against the British military bases in Cyprus

The European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH) and the Cyprus Democratic Lawyers Association (CDLA) condemn the continued existence of the British bases in Akrotiri and Dhekelia as a colonial remnant, a democratic affront, and a direct assault on the sovereignty of the Cypriot people.

More than sixty years after formal independence, Cyprus remains only partially decolonized. The British bases were not created through the free will of the people. They were imposed in 1960 as the price of independence, allowing the former colonial power to retain control over part of Cypriot territory for its own military and strategic purposes. This was not self-determination. It was imperialism in a new legal form.

We reject Britain's false claim that Akrotiri and Dhekelia constitute sovereign British territory. In reality, that alleged sovereignty is legally and politically hollow. The bases are colonial remnants created in violation of the right to self-determination and the rules of decolonization. Their detachment from Cyprus was imposed at the moment of independence, under conditions of clear inequality and coercion. The United Kingdom made recognition of the independence of Cyprus conditional upon securing control over the bases. Such an arrangement cannot be presented as the product of free and genuine consent.

International law is clear. The UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted as UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) in 1960, prohibits the disruption of the territorial integrity of a colonial territory during decolonization. By severing these areas from the rest of Cyprus, Britain fragmented the territory of an emerging state in breach of these fundamental norms.

ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

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The clearest modern legal parallel is the ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences of the Separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. In its 2019 Advisory Opinion, the International Court of Justice held that the separation of the Chagos Archipelago during the decolonization of Mauritius was unlawful because it was not based on the free and genuine will of the people. The Court concluded that the United Kingdom had an obligation to bring its administration of the territory to an end. The lesson is clear: colonial detachment presented as a lawful arrangement remains a colonial wrong.

The same principle applies to Cyprus. The British bases are not an expression of legitimate sovereignty. They are the continuation of colonial domination under another name. They fragment the territorial integrity of Cyprus, deny the people full control over their land, and turn the island into a military platform for foreign interventions. They do not protect Cyprus. They expose it to danger and tie its future to imperial wars and regional escalation.

The use of the bases for military operations by third states (such as the US) or for actions that could be classified as unlawful self-defense could embroil Cyprus in conflicts and jeopardize its territorial integrity. This is contrary to the principles of the UN Charter. In its recent advisory opinion on the consequences of Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, the ICJ reaffirmed the obligations of third states not to provide assistance or support for maintaining a situation that violates international law. This could also be applicable to the role of the bases in the Gaza war.

The struggle against the bases is therefore a matter of international law, decolonization, and the effective protection of the rights of the Cypriot people. Cyprus has every right to challenge this colonial remnant in international forums, to invoke the principles affirmed in the Mauritius case, and to demand full decolonization.

We call for the end of British claims over Akrotiri and Dhekelia, the dismantling of all colonial privileges, and the return of every part of Cypriot territory to the Cypriot people.

We call on the Cypriot government to no longer tolerate the British military bases and to clarify with the British government the necessary steps for their removal.