

To all Library Associations

The Library Association of Cyprus wishes to bring to your notice the following facts which have resulted from the recent Turkish invasion of Cyprus with very negative repercussions on the idea of international understanding through books and libraries.

a) All books which were concentrated at the central book-store of the Ministry of Education for distribution to the schools of the island at the beginning of the current school year have been burned to ashes with napalm bombs.

b) A great number of the school buildings of the island and libraries with their books are out of use either because they are in areas occupied by the Turks or in close proximity to such areas. Thus, 35 % of the Greek Elementary Scholl buildings, 40 %

of the Greek Secondary Schools (Gymnasias), 38 % of the Greek Technical Schools and 50 % of the Special Education Institutions have been seized by the invaders who have set on fire some of them and have destroyed most of the school libraries with their books.

c) The school population and its teachers have in a vast number of cases been dispersed and are now living as refugees in camps or in the grossly over-crowded homes of friends and relatives. Thus, 42% of the Greek elementary school population (25.107 out of 62.221), 44% (15.000 out of 36.000) secondary school students, 29% (3.000 out of 10.379) of Technical school students and more than 50% of the Special Schools population have lost their homes and schools and they live under conditions of deprivation, hunger and fear.

d) Public Libraries:

37% of the Public Libraries of Cyprus, serving a population of 120.000 are in areas controlled by the invading Turkish army. A mobile Library presented by UNESCO to Cyprus was captured by the invaders. Most of the public libraries have been either burned or looted. The books of the mobile library, as far as we know, have been burned.

e) Private Libraries:

Six private libraries in Famagusta and Kyrenia, with very rare books and incunabula have been looted. It took their owners generations to collect these books.

As we mention many libraries in the island have been destroyed by napalm bombs or looted by the invading Turkish army; thus many valuable books, mainly incunabula have been lost or destroyed. The cultural heritage of Cyprus which stretches over 8.000 years is in danger of complete extinction.

We believe that this tragic situation which is most destructive to the idea of international understanding, will be the subject of serious consideration by the libraries of the civilized world and that they will exert their maximum influence to save the libraries and the cultural heritage of Cyprus.