

RESPECT THE ELDERLY

FOREIGN national residents have been urged to support efforts to improve the quality of life of elderly people living in the TRNC.

The call was made by the North Cyprus-based Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health ahead of "Respect to Elderly Week", which runs from March 18-24 and which is marked in Türkiye to raise awareness about old age and elderly health.

"We call on foreign residents to join our currently 200-strong members in our struggle to improve the quality of life of the elderly community in this country, in accordance with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity," a press release issued by the Association said.

"We need people to come forward with their problems so that we can convey these issues accurately in our lobby work."

The Association will be holding an online seminar on Wednesday, March 15, called "Investment Needs and Incentives in the Elderly Care Sector" as part of a bid to encourage investment.

It will also be marking Respect to Elderly Week with a video campaign "highlighting the fact that care homes can be pleasant places to live for the elderly, providing they have sufficient funds and proper facilities".

'LANGUAGE BARRIERS'

The Association currently provides free training in elderly care and care management under an EU-funded "Elderly Rights Movement Project".

"As part of this project, the Association is currently working on the 'Elderly Care Home Bill', which aims to improve the quality of elderly care homes and ensure proper regulation," the press release said.

"Once passed, we hope this law can also help improve the

Association calls on expats to join 'struggle to improve the quality of life of the elderly community in this country'



Photo: Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health

quality of lives of the foreign elderly community in North Cyprus, who also feel the detrimental effects of not having access to quality elderly care and health care.

"Vulnerable people needing full-time care suffer language barriers at care homes, face huge private hospital fees for staying in long-term care, and are even left with no place to go due to bureaucratic issues, which even prevent them from getting free access to care in their home countries, which they have no choice but to return to."

The project has enabled the Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health to develop "strong relations" with care home owners, many of whom are also members of the group, who "share with us the problems they face, such as huge staff turnover, difficulties finding qualified staff, low income and lack of funds to build proper care homes".

The statement added: "They remain helpless without any government support. One of the main problems is that the monthly care fee, which should be at least equal

to the minimum wage (around 14,000TL) to cover operating costs, is actually 5,000- 8,000TL in order to stay affordable for the low income elderly who are on social welfare payments of the state.

"Our Association, through its donations from the public, tries as much as it can to provide urgently needed supplies to care homes, such as diapers, bedding, and food."

The Association also said the need for quality care for the elderly will only become greater as the population of the TRNC ages.

They said that despite the growing number of elderly people, who make up around 13 per cent of the population according to State Planning Organisation projections, there has been "no increase in elderly services" and elderly care homes are "crippling under the increasing inflation, lack of capacity and lack of financial means", adding that it is "no surprise that they are starting to close down".

'HORRIFIC SCENES'

The Association said that two privately owned care homes have shut down in the last two years.

Recalling the "horrific scenes of a viral video" from the Sınırüstü Elderly Care Home in İskele, which shocked the country in January last year, it said that the centre has yet to reopen.

"This place was closed down by the government with a promise to renovate and reopen it within a few months," the Association pointed out.

"We are eagerly awaiting the renovation of the building, which was promised to be finished last year but unfortunately it is far from finished.

"Although our Association had made continuous complaints to

several government departments regarding the facility way before the video was shared, unfortunately it took a viral video and public shaming for the government to take any action.

"The residents there were relocated to other private care homes but they are still at risk due to the poor conditions of care homes. In addition, we received news that another private care home in Lefkoşa has closed down."

'BURDEN OF WOMEN'

Meanwhile the Association has also highlighted how the burden of caring for elderly relatives falls almost entirely on women.

In a Facebook post to mark March 8 International Women's Day, it said that the results of a survey conducted in Gazimağusa last September showed that 14 out of 15 family members who take care of the elderly are women.

"It is unfortunate that in an age where women work jobs, do unpaid work at home, and look after their children and grandchildren, the burden of caring for elderly parents is still on daughters," the post said.

"Women suffer due to social pressure and a lack of support regarding elderly care at home. This burden should not be carried only by women.

"As society changes and the elderly population increases, there should be social policies in place to support elderly in their old age. If sufficient social and financial support is in place, elderly care no longer becomes a 'burden'."

For more information about the Association of Elderly Rights and Mental Health visit the website elderlyrightsandmental-health.org or call 0548 855 40 65.

Tatar: 'Women should have a voice in all areas'

WOMEN should have a say in all areas of society, President Ersin Tatar said in a statement to mark March 8 International Women's Day.

He said the day was being marked in the "shadow of great sorrow" following the devastating earthquakes in southern Türkiye last month.

The President said that "as we commemorate this day, I would like also to underline the importance of recognising the social gender equality mechanism within our modern and democratic State".

His statement continued: "International Women's Day is about paying tribute to our women and ensuring that women have a voice in all areas, from education to business life, from politics to all areas in the society.

"It is a day when the will is put forward and shared within all the institutions and organisations of the state, and supported by the public. . . As the President, I would like to emphasise that I am determined to continue – with much more confident steps today – the will and the policy I have always pursued when I served as a Member of Parliament, Minister of Finance and Prime Minister, which is to raise the status of our women to the same level as in contemporary countries.

"I believe that the Turkish Cypriot women, who have set an example to the whole world with their knowledge, vision and courage in every step of social, political and economic life, from the days of struggle for social existence of the Turkish Cypriot People to the present, will continue to be a



President Ersin Tatar

symbol of solidarity and courage in the future.

"Our women will continue to lead the way of putting forward and carrying out pioneering projects that will benefit our country, allow our people to live with contemporary norms and values and for our state to stand firm and last forever.

"In the spirit of the fact that strong women create a strong society and a strong

society create a strong State, I reiterate that I will continue to support the much more effective representation of our women in every field.

"Furthermore, I would like to commemorate the mothers of those who were martyred for our sovereign State, and once again convey my condolences to the families for the loss of our loved ones in the recent devastating earthquakes in Motherland Türkiye."

Farmers' drought warnings

FARMERS have warned of a serious threat of drought in North Cyprus if rainfall in March is below normal levels.

Cyprus Turkish Farmers Union (KTÇB) chairman Mehmet Nizam stated that the height and development of barley crops is currently two months behind were they should be for this time of the year.

"There is a drought in a large region and we see that many crops are starting to wither," he said.

"If we don't start to get some rain in the coming days, they are going to become desiccated. Our hopes have been crushed; bad days lie ahead for producers."

Livestock Producers and Breeders Association president Mustafa Naimoğulları said that breeders "cannot continue to produce in this drought".

Mr Naimoğulları noted that there has been a six to seven per cent decrease in milk production compared to the same period last year.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Ministry Undersecretary Emirali Deveci said the government is following the situation closely.

"We have to see wait and see what the rainfall in March will be and the country's production potential, then a programme can be carried out accordingly," he said.