

Calls for elderly care law to be implemented

Association head speaks of British expats selling up and returning to UK due to lack of care options

A NEW law covering nursing homes for elderly people should be implemented without further delay, the head of the Elderly Rights and Mental Health Association has said.

The call was made by Prof Hatice Jenkins, who recently appeared as a guest on Kibris TV.

During the interview with presenter Akay Cemal, Jenkins highlighted the TRNC's ageing population, noting that people aged 60 years and over now account for 14 per cent of the population.

"There's a gaping void in state policy concerning elderly care services," she commented, calling for the urgent implementation of the "Nursing Home Law".

"Politicians do not have a plan regarding the elderly. Since we founded our association, the only thing we have seen them do is buy carnations and go to the Lapta Nursing Home on the International Day for Older Persons.

"The rate of elderly people over the age of 60 is 14 per cent in our country. This shows that we have a very elderly population in comparison to international standards."

Jenkins shed light on the plight of elderly British residents in need of comprehensive care and services, emphasising the economic sector related to catering to their needs.

"If you look at the average age of the British people living here, it is over 75," she said.

"These people need care. They need various services at home. In a way, this is an economic sector. We can create jobs from this.

"I know many British people who sold their possessions and returned to the UK because they could not find a caregiver or a nursing home here."

Explaining that it is "very difficult" to find a caregiver in North Cyprus, Jenkins noted that they are the only organisation focused on assistance and service in this field and that the state should also contribute to this.

"I often get calls asking if I know of any caregivers," she continued. "Some people are trying to provide caregiving services themselves.

"I am trying to help but this is not my job. People

are desperate and do not know where to turn to.

"We are the only service-oriented, assistance-oriented institution here that can make its voice heard as an association.

"We have nursing homes in Lapta and Kalkanlı but the state does not do its duty there either."

Discussing the state of nursing homes in Lapta and Kalkanlı, Jenkins described the long-standing issues.

The Lapta Nursing home, which was demolished in 2011 to be rebuilt, had been due to be finished on November 15 but was not, Jenkins pointed out, adding that she was "not surprised".

Jenkins outlined the existing Nursing Home Law, highlighting its lack of enforcement and the absence of a policy on converting retirement homes into nursing homes.

"The law remains ineffective because we do not have a state policy on how to provide services to the elderly," she stated.

"We have a nursing home law but there are no nursing homes, they have all become retirement homes. . . These laws are insufficient to supervise nursing homes. These nursing homes are opened under municipalities and nursing homes are expected to be connected to the Labour and Social Security Ministry."

The current legislation is "outdated", Jenkins stressed. Despite a well-prepared Bill two years ago, it faced hurdles in Parliament she explained.

"It's perplexing why this crucial law hasn't been passed and enacted. The misplacement of Kalkanlı Nursing Home under the Health Ministry in 2019, without proper legislation, raises serious concerns.

"Elderly care is not an individual problem, it is a societal one. Today, private nursing homes are trying to provide services with very limited resources.

"We need caregivers and nursing homes. We need policies that will provide economic support and incentives in this field.

"Gazimağusa Municipality has a registered population of 3,000 people over the age of 65. Lefkoşa has just over 3,000. There is a large elderly British population in the Girne area. The state should increase

its contribution to municipalities in line with the elderly population."



Prof Hatice Jenkins with Kibris TV presenter Akay Cemal



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