



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Cypriot potato farmers block airport for compensation, 2002

December 13,
2002

to: December 21,
2002

Country: Cyprus

Location City/State/Province: *Larnaca*

Goals:

That the government of Cyprus compensate the potato farmers for their weather-damaged crop as the government had done previously

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 016. Picketing › in front of government offices

Methods in 2nd segment:

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 138. Sitdown
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction › of airport.

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Cypriot Potato Farmers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Cypriot Potato Farmers

Partners:

Not known

External allies:

House Agricultural Committee

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Cypriot Potato Farmers; House Agricultural Committee

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: *Approximately 32 hours*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Agriculture Minister Costas Themistocleous and the government of Cyprus

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

0 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Cypriot potato farmers continue to organize for compensation today. It is not clear if they ever received the compensation they demanded and that had been previously promised to them.

In Cyprus, farmers are often sustained by government subsidies during crop overproduction or blight. Since the mid-1990's, potato blight has become more and more common, leading to struggles between potato farmers and the government about the extent to which sustained subsidy should occur. A tradition of popular nonviolent struggle has emerged in response to this conflict with the government.

After sustained struggles with the government over compensation for crops destroyed by a potato blight, Cypriot farmers mounted a brief nonviolent campaign. On December 13, 2002, they held a rally outside of the House of Representatives, requesting 5.6 million pounds in compensatory aid. Many of the farmers live below the working class, and were requesting subsidies to feed their families. Much of the Cypriot public condemned the rally, but there wasn't a public response from the government.

Eight days later, on December 21, 2002, about 150 potato farmers occupied the main runway at the airport in Larnaca, in support of their demands. Approximately 300 police force members surrounded the farmers. For four hours, the farmers prevented any air traffic from entering or leaving the island, meaning that mostly tourists were stranded. The tourists became riotous, threatening the occupiers with assault. No violence was documented.

After about 4 hours, the Justice Minister Alecos Shambos, convinced the protesters to leave the runway, assuring them that the compensation would be decided before Christmas Day. The protesters left the runway of their own volition, and were fed a meal in the VIP lounge of the airport. The Cypriot government was meant to discuss the issue of the farmers' demands for compensation on January 8, 2003. It is unclear whether their demands were ever met by the government of Cyprus. The farmers continue to organize for compensation today.

Research Notes

Sources:

"Potato Farmers Demand £5.6m Compensation." Cyprus Mail. HR-Net, 13 Dec 2002. Web. 14 Mar 2011.

"Cyprus Protest Ends in VIP Lounge." CNN World 22 Dec 2002. Web. 14 Mar 2011.

"Potato farmers play havoc with pre-Christmas flights to Cyprus." Agence France Presse. 21 Dec 2002. Accessed through LexisNexis, 15 Jun 2011.

Efty, Alex. "Potato farmers block Cyprus's main airport demanding payment for hail-damaged crops." Associated Press Worldstream. 21 Dec 2002. Accessed through LexisNexis, 15 Jun 2011.

Additional Notes:

Campaign classified as "defense" because the government usually granted subsidies and compensations for damaged crops. It seemed that the compensation had been promised in this situation, but had not yet been fulfilled.

Edited by Max Rennebohm (15/06/2011)

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Hanna King, 14/03/2011

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