

# A third of Greek Cypriots believe a solution beyond reach: poll

More than a third of Greek Cypriots do not believe the divided island will be reunified despite continuing U.N.-brokered peace talks, according to an opinion poll published on Sunday.

Some 38 percent of those asked said a solution would not happen, while a combined 57 percent believed a settlement was attainable in the next two years or when Turkey joins the European Union, AFP reported citing the survey in Phileleftheros newspaper.

Although the percentage of those sceptical about reunification seems high, the figure is lower than the 44 percent who said in April 2007 there would never be a solution.

Cyprus has been divided since 1964 when Turkish Cypriots were forced to withdraw into enclaves.

Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat and his Greek Cypriot counterpart Demetris Christofias in September opened fresh reunification negotiations, hailed by the international community as the best chance for peace, in a U.N.-brokered bid to reunify the island.

But the initiative has made little tangible progress, as leaders bogged down on governance and power-sharing issues.

The launch of negotiations marked the first major push for peace since the failure of a U.N. reunification plan in 2004, which was approved by Turkish

Cypriots but overwhelmingly rejected by the Greek Cypriots.

No margin of error was given in the poll of 1,005 people, which also gave Christofias a 67 percent approval rating for his handling of the talks.

Any new peace deal will again have to be put before both communities in simultaneous referendums.

Christofias' predecessor Tassos Papadopoulos, who is gravely ill in hospital, led the rejectionist vote but the new leader was elected on a platform of reconciliation with the Turkish Cypriots.

The next meeting between the two leaders is scheduled for December 16.

## Athens riots kill Christmas for many Greek shopowners

*ATHENS, - Greece's weekend riots destroyed about 130 shops in Athens's commercial centre and owners of surviving businesses say a Christmas season already overshadowed by global economic crisis may be lost to them altogether.*

Christmas lights were up, shop windows were decorated and the municipal band was about to launch the festivities when the violence erupted, triggered by the killing of a youth by Athens police. The mayor has postponed festivities.

The Athens Shopowners Association told a news conference members needed immediate support to weather the crisis, asking for loan and tax payments to be suspended among other measures.

"I have asked the Economy Minister to explore all possibilities so that we can immediately and completely compensate citizens for damage suffered," Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis said in a televised statement.

Charalampos Xilouris, CEO of Sprider Stores (SPDr.AT: Quote, Profile, Research, Stock Buzz), whose three-storey building at the end of Ermou street was completely destroyed, said December was a lost month.

"This doesn't happen in a civilized society," he added.

Protesters angry at the boy's shooting late on Saturday clashed with police and rampaged through Athens, destroying banks, shops and torching cars. There was no official estimate of the damage, expected to come to millions of euros.

### LINGERING SMOKE

Smoke still lingered on Athens's main shopping thoroughfare, a long pedestrian alley across from parliament, usually busy with shoppers, mime artists and street peddlers. A fire engine and private security men stood guard. "There is a serious psychological



impact on the market," said Vasilios Lianos, 52, a contractor supervising workmen at women's clothes shop Ysatis, which suffered major damage. "We are racing against time to catch up with the holiday season."

Several shops appeared completely destroyed and others had windows smashed. Assistants in those that were spared said very few customers had ventured in.

"The government is only good with words, not actions," said Athanasios Ikosipentaris, 56, sitting at a cafe looking at his two-floor women's clothes

shop, Marnik, which was destroyed. "All they want is taxes for stock that has already been burned."

New taxes announced in early September added to public discontent with the conservative government's economic policies as the global crisis reaches Greece. The country's economic output growth is expected to slow to around 2 percent in 2009 from 4 percent last year.

"Nothing can justify this death. On the other hand, there is no excuse for sentencing 150 citizens to financial death," Ikosipentaris said.

## Protesters arrested at Greek embassy in London

LONDON (AFP) — Three demonstrators were arrested outside the Greek embassy in London on Monday during a protest over the fatal shooting of a teenager by Greek police in Athens, a police spokesman said.

Scuffles erupted after some 40 young demonstrators carrying anarchist banners tore down and set fire to the Greek flag outside the embassy in the upmarket Holland Park area of west London.

The protest as street battles raged for a third day across Greece in the wake of the killing by police of a 15-year-old boy, Alexis Grigoropoulos.

"Cops are pigs and murderers," they shouted in Greek, according to one of the London protesters.

Scuffles broke out between the black-clad demonstrators and police when officers tried to erect security barriers to keep back a second group of protesters outside the building, an AFP journalist said.

Police said three protesters were detained. "They were arrested for a public disorder offence, threatening behaviour," said David Morgan from Kensington police.

He said a group occupying the terrace of the embassy building left of their own volition.

Police later moved a remaining group of about 20 masked protesters down the road, away from the embassy, amid shoving and jostling.

The demonstrators issued a statement containing three demands, including a call that all those, from the police to the government, who "armed the hand of the murderer... pay for their crimes."

Their request to meet the ambassador was refused, a spokesman for the embassy said.

In Greece, youths on Monday attacked cars and shops in Salonika, the country's second largest city, clashes broke out in the central city of Trikala, and students occupied universities in Athens and other major centres. The nationwide riots have left dozens wounded, caused widespread destruction and put new pressure on right-wing prime minister Costas Karamanlis. In Berlin, some 15 young demonstrators occupied the Greek consulate, but there was no report of violence or arrests.

## Missing Children Hotline Launched

The telephone number "116000" can now be used across Europe to report missing children. Soon to operate in several languages, the hotline was inaugurated in Greece on October 29, at the conference "Missing children: Addressing the Problem," a high-level round table co-hosted by Interior Minister Prokopis Pavlopoulos and Ambassador of Belgium in Greece Pierre Vaesen. Following the European Commission's decision (15.02.2007) to reserve the number as a hotline for reporting missing children, Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding urged member states to act quickly.

Until now, only 8 countries have assigned the number to a national organisation and not all have kicked off the project yet. Greece is the 3rd to make the hotline operational. Greece and France are the only two countries in the EU with Amber Alert Hallas, an integrated alert system. Its efficacy is encouraging: in Greece a missing child has a 97% chance of being found. The Greek member of the "Missing Children Europe" Federation is "The Smile of the Child" (in Greek).