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UK MP Afzal Khan Resigns Over Cyprus Visit

August 16, 2025

– Categories: General News



British Labour MP Afzal Khan has resigned as the United Kingdom's trade envoy to Türkiye following criticism of his recent visit to the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The UK, along with most of the international community, does not recognise Northern Cyprus, which declared independence in 1983 and is recognised only by Türkiye.

During his visit, Khan met with Turkish-Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, a move that drew sharp condemnation from both Cypriot officials and several British politicians.

In a statement on X, the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs said: *“The recent illegal visit of British MP Afzal Khan to the areas of the Republic of Cyprus occupied by Türkiye, as well as his meeting with Mr. Ersin Tatar, were unacceptable and provocative actions.”* The ministry added that his resignation was a significant development, particularly given ongoing regional tensions.

Khan defended his trip in a letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, explaining that it was made in a personal capacity rather than as part of his official envoy role. However, he said he chose to step down to avoid disrupting the UK’s trade talks with Türkiye.

The controversy also drew attention in Westminster, where some MPs argued that Starmer should have acted sooner to remove Khan from the role. The incident has renewed debate over the handling of trade envoy appointments and accountability in foreign relations.

The dispute has underscored the long-standing sensitivities surrounding Cyprus. The island has been divided since 1974, when Turkish forces occupied the northern part following a coup backed by Greece. The Republic of Cyprus in the south is internationally recognised, while the north remains diplomatically isolated apart from its ties with Türkiye.

Khan, who has represented Manchester Gorton in Parliament since 2017, had served as the UK’s trade envoy to Türkiye since his appointment. His resignation highlights the diplomatic complexities of balancing the UK’s relations with both Cyprus and Türkiye.

For the UK, the issue adds a new layer of sensitivity to its post-Brexit trade strategy. Britain has sought closer cooperation with Türkiye while also maintaining strong ties with Cyprus, a member of the European Union.

Khan’s departure is expected to prompt further debate in Parliament on the role of trade envoys and the future direction of UK foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.