

Home in north may threaten EU assets

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Apostolides nearly £10,000 in damages. The judgment cannot be enforced in Cyprus due to the occupation of the north, but under EU law it can be taken to the UK, where British courts could enforce the judgment against the Orams' home in Hove in East Sussex.

First, however, the courts in Cyprus must decide whether the November 9 judgment should be invalidated or if a stay of execution can be granted to the Orams.

The result of the legal proceedings could affect hundreds of EU citizens who have properties in the north.

David Orams, 60, and Linda, 58, said what they had bought in the north and moved to 18 months ago was "a shell of a property on a plot of about a third of an acre". They had bought it from a Turkish Cypriot who runs the local hardware store. "He transferred the legal title and freehold title with title deeds to the Orams," a statement said.

SAVINGS

The couple said they have since spent several thousand pounds from their savings to have the property completed, furnishing it, adding a swim-

ming pool and planting out the garden with hundreds of shrubs and fruit trees.

"We have spent hundreds of hours working in the garden cleaning it up and watering the plants," said Mrs Orams, a former museum assistant.

"We had always dreamed of owning a home in the sun but never thought we could afford it," she added. "But when my husband took early retirement and we were on holiday in North Cyprus we realised that we could manage to buy a property there.

"Friends and family have been to stay with us and have enjoyed the sunshine and the warmth and friendliness of the Turkish Cypriots."

The first whiff that their 'dream home' was in danger was on October 27 when the court papers were delivered in Greek. The couple claim that by the time the papers had been translated, the November 9 deadline had expired and the judgment been passed.

"We bought the house in all good faith and have the Turkish deeds to say that we are the rightful owners of the land and property," said David Orams, who returned to England before the problem arose.

"As I understand it, when

the island was split around 1974, the Greek Cypriots who left their homes in the north were given equal land and property in the south. We believe that the Greek Cypriots who formerly owned our land have no right to it 30 years later. If they were allowed to have the property, it would mean that Greek Cypriots would be moving back into north Cyprus before the political situation of the past 30 years has even been settled," he said.

Mrs Orams added: "Many of the British who have properties in the north are now very worried as to what will happen to them. Some of them sold up completely in England and went to live in north Cyprus permanently."

Apostolides, who has the original title deed to the land, told The Times on Monday: "The place is very dear to me and I am very much a person who wants to go back and to find a solution to the problem. The thing I will try to do is at least stop this feeling that it (Britons buying Greek Cypriot land) is an easy thing to do without consequences."

Apostolides has no intention of capitalising on what has been built on his property, Candounas said.

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