

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3874/07

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to the Commission

Subject: Cancellation of a concert by a Greek singer in Turkey for nationalist reasons

The Turkish authorities in Istanbul recently decided to cancel the concert by the Greek singer and UNESCO international goodwill ambassador Giorgos Dalaras, claiming that missing papers prevented the necessary permit being issued, although the permit had already been granted one month previously. The concert by Dalaras was to have taken place during an international congress under the aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. Press reports suggest that the real reason for the concert's cancellation is that nationalist groups in Turkey have recently been threatening the Prefecture of Istanbul that, if it allowed the concert to go ahead, they would provoke such unrest that there might even be fatalities. At the same time, a large section of the Turkish press had already stirred up a climate of hostility to Giorgos Dalaras, representing him as 'an enemy of Turkey'. However, Posta, a large-circulation newspaper in Turkey, strongly criticised the Turkish authorities, considering that this kind of behaviour was not appropriate in Turkey, when Istanbul was preparing to become the European Capital of Culture in 2010.

With regard to the above, I ask the Commission the following questions.

1. Is this censorship measure consistent with the right to free expression enshrined in the Copenhagen criteria?
2. Decision 1419/1999/EC¹ on the European Capital of Culture, and the later Decision 1622/2006/EC², adopted by the European Parliament on 5 April 2006 after negotiations between Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education, under the responsibility of the committee chairman and co-author of this question, and the Council of Ministers under the Austrian Presidency, states that the aim of this measure is 'to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual understanding between European citizens' (Article 1). What action does the Commission intend to take during preparations for the city of Istanbul's programme, which will receive Community funding, to ensure that it will fulfil this aim?

¹ OJ L 166, 1.7.1999, p.1

² OJ L 304, 3.11.2006, p.1