

Question for written answer E-006002/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
Notis Marias (ECR)

Subject: Return of the holy relics of the Holy Monastery of Ikosifinissa in Drama stolen by Bulgaria

On 27 March 1917, the Bulgarian occupation army invaded the Holy Monastery of Ikosifinissa in the prefecture of Drama, and looted it, stealing holy relics and handwritten codices of great historical and material value, which are part of the cultural property and heritage of Greece.

For a hundred years now, the Bulgarian authorities have refused to return these stolen cultural and ecclesiastical treasures, despite the constant formal notices of the Greek authorities and the Church of Greece, the most recent one being an intervention by the Metropolitan Pavlos of Drama on 26 June 2017, on the occasion of a statement by the Bulgarian President Rumen Radev on 25 June 2017, refusing the return of the stolen ecclesiastical treasures.

These ecclesiastical treasures, including among others 907 holy objects of worship, 430 handwritten codices and 467 incunabula, are currently in Sofia, in the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies with 'Prof. Ivan Dujčev' and the National History Museum of Bulgaria.

Pursuant to Council Directive 93/7/EEC on the return of unlawfully removed cultural objects to the territory from which they were taken and the UNESCO UNIDROIT Convention of 1970 providing for the restitution of cultural objects, will the Commission say:

What kind of measures will it take in collaboration with the Greek authorities so that the Bulgarian authorities return to the Holy Monastery of Ikosifinissa the above stolen ecclesiastical treasures?