

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0317/05

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to the Commission

Subject: Condemning the destruction of the cultural heritage in the part of Cyprus occupied by Turkey

Turkey has maintained its illegal occupation in Cyprus in violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions since 1974, and one of the inevitable consequences has been a progressive alteration of the character of the occupied part. Turkey has, regrettably, destroyed cultural treasures, religious sites, ancient and contemporary symbols and anything that might remind the local population of the Greek-Cypriot presence in the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus. Even Christian and Hellenic monuments, thousands of years old, were destroyed. The occupiers have changed place names which have remained constant for hundreds of years, commemorating the continuity and complexity of modern Cypriot culture.

There is an urgent need for a reaction to the gradual and systematic demolition of the cultural heritage of Cyprus. Although the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the destruction of the cultural heritage in the part of Cyprus occupied by Turkey in 1988, the destruction, looting and plundering of monuments in Northern Cyprus is still going on, despite the fact that the Republic of Cyprus has been a full Member State of the European Union since May 2004.

What can the Commission do to exert further pressure on the Turkish Government, which is about to open EU accession negotiations, so that it respects what is a profoundly European cultural heritage? What funds allocated as EU aid to the northern part of the island under Turkish occupation will be devoted to the restoration of the churches and other damaged or destroyed Greek or Christian monuments and symbols?