

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1981/06

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to the Commission

Subject: Accession partnership with Turkey - violation of fundamental rights: confiscation of Monastery of St George by General Directorate for Foundations

Council Decision 2006/35/EC of 23 January 2006 on the principles, priorities and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with Turkey¹ expressly requires, in addition to the adoption of legislation in accordance with European standards in regard to the rights of non-Muslim minorities and communities, the suspension of all sales and confiscation by the competent Turkish authorities of properties which belong or belonged to non-Muslim religious community foundations. Both the Greek media and the US State Department have criticised Turkey's stealthy confiscation of the more than one thousand year old Monastery of St George Koudounas, situated on the hill of the same name on the island of Prinkipos, for the benefit of its General Directorate for Foundations, in violation of fundamental rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

1. Will the Commission say whether these illegal acts on the part of Turkey, as an applicant country for accession to the EU, together with its refusal to re-open the Halki School of Theology and its seizure of the orphanage on Prinkipos, are consistent with the defence of fundamental rights, which is a founding principle of the Union and an express condition of applicant countries' accession to the Union and, if not, what action or measures will the Commission take to ensure that Turkey guarantees respect and protection for fundamental rights;
2. Has Turkey complied with the express requirement to suspend all sales and confiscation of properties which belong or belonged to non-Muslim religious community foundations, as laid down in the decision on the accession partnership with Turkey?
3. Does it lie within the Commission's competence, in accordance with the framework adopted by the Council for negotiations with Turkey, to propose the suspension of negotiations in the event of serious and persistent violation of fundamental rights and, in particular, of religious freedom?
4. Will the Commission ask for a register to be drawn up of all property illegally confiscated by the Turkish State and the General Directorate for Foundations and for the Turkish authorities to introduce procedures to return that property to its rightful owners?

¹ Council Decision of 23 January 2006, OJ L 22, 26.1.2006, p. 34