

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002293/24
to the Commission
Loucas Fourlas (PPE)
(29 October 2024)**

Subject: Humanitarian tragedy of missing persons

I am writing to the Commission on the occasion of the Day of Missing Persons, as designated by the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus to commemorate 29 October 1974: the final day of the occupying army's prisoner releases, when the last of their prisoners were set free.

I would like to remind you that, for hundreds of families of missing persons, the tragedy of trying to ascertain the fate of their loved ones continues. This is a humanitarian issue that has remained unresolved for 50 years, causing unspeakable pain and sadness to the relatives of the missing and to Cypriot society as a whole.

The European Union, as a protector of human rights, must take action to bring this crime to an end.

In view of the EU's actions to support efforts to find and identify missing persons, can the Commission answer the following:

1. How does it intend to further pressure Türkiye to grant access to the occupying army's archives, which contain valuable information?
2. What other initiatives can the Commission take to strengthen investigations and support the relatives of missing persons?

Submitted: 29.10.2024

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(20 December 2024)**

The Commission is conscious of the human dimension of the consequences of the tragic events of 1963-1964 and 1974 for the population throughout the island of Cyprus. Unanswered questions, especially those about missing relatives, prevent Cypriots from both communities from leaving their painful past behind.

It is crucial that the families concerned learn what happened to their loved ones, obtain their remains, and are able to organise dignified burials and mourn their passing.

For this reason, the Commission has been fully supportive of the work of the bi-communal Committee on Missing Persons since 2006.

The EU is the main donor to the Committee with an overall contribution of EUR 38.5 million since 2006 through contribution agreements with the United Nations Development Programme under the Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community ⁽¹⁾.

The Commission has allocated another EUR 2.6 million for 2025, which is scheduled to be contracted before the end of 2024. The EU's support accounted for 80% of total funding to the Committee on Missing Persons in the period 2006-2023 ⁽²⁾.

It has allowed the Committee to exhume, identify and hand over the remains of 1,051 persons from an official list of 2,002 missing persons ⁽³⁾.

It is the Committee's role to be in contact with the two communities and the relevant authorities, including those of Türkiye, to conduct its investigations, identify excavation and burial sites, and exhume, identify, and return the remains of the missing persons to their families.

The Commission stands ready to support the Committee's efforts whenever requested by the Committee.

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 389/2006 of 27 February 2006 establishing an instrument of financial support for encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community and amending Council Regulation (EC) No 2667/2000 on the European Agency for Reconstruction, OJ L 65, 7.3.2006, p. 5-8: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R0389>

⁽²⁾ Commission annual report on the implementation of the Union assistance under Council Regulation (EC) No 389/2006 of 27 February 2006 for the year 2023, Brussels 4 July 2023, COM(2024) 268 final: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/ca821174-2038-46c8-962b-2f51dde0bde4_en?filename=COM_2024_268_1_EN_ACT_part1_v4_0.pdf

⁽³⁾ Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, Statistics: <https://www.cmp-cyprus.org/statistics/>