

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001699/26  
to the Commission  
Costas Mavrides (S&D)  
(27 April 2026)**

*Subject: Allegations of exhumations and desecration of cemeteries in occupied Kyrenia*

According to recent reports and complaints, there have been repeated cases of cemeteries being desecrated in occupied Kyrenia.

Specifically, the legitimate mayor of the occupied city of Kyrenia has complained about graves and religious symbols being destroyed and about sacrilegious bone exhumations. Meanwhile, according to the same allegations, foreign persons who were illegally residing in the occupied territories are being buried in spaces where graves had existed, raising serious issues of disrespect and grave robbery. Religious monuments are also being destroyed and desecrated, cases in point being the removal of symbols from historic temples and the removal of the cross from the bell tower of the historic Archangelos Michael Church in occupied Kyrenia.

All this amounts to the destruction of European cultural and religious heritage. Reminiscent of jihadist behaviour, these acts are being carried out in the occupied territories of the Republic of Cyprus and constitute a flagrant violation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Is it aware of the allegations about the desecration of cemeteries and illegal exhumations in occupied Kyrenia?
2. What specific actions could it take to help repair the damage, to ensure that the cemeteries are respected and to prevent similar incidents in the future?

Submitted: 27.4.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission  
(17 June 2026)**

The Commission's only prior knowledge of the matters raised by the Honourable Member comes from online news reports which it has not been able to independently verify.

The Commission firmly condemns any damage to religious and cultural sites and consistently stresses the importance of both protecting sites of cultural and religious significance and respecting the religions and traditions of all Cypriot communities.

Since 2012, the EU has provided EUR 35 million in funding to the bicomunal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH), covering around 80% of its budget. This funding comes from the EU Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community <sup>(1)</sup>. Thanks to the EU support, the TCCH has been able to restore or protect over 200 cultural and religious monuments across Cyprus.

More recently, the EU — through the TCCH — has supported the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in cleaning and restoring around 70 cemeteries island-wide. The restoration of cemeteries was one of the confidence-building measures agreed by the leaders of the two Cypriot communities with the UN Secretary-General in 2025.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R0389>.