

**Question for written answer E-003104/2020/rev.1  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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**Subject:** Demolition of the National Theatre of Albania and the threat to democracy and the rule of law

The European Union has a neighbourhood policy rooted in political cooperation, support for economic and social development and protection of the values that define the European project. As was apparent at the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 6 May (which resulted in an aid package of EUR 3 billion), the EU's proximity to the Western Balkans is a shining example of this policy, which incorporates six candidate countries including Albania.

On 17 May, the Albanian authorities tore down the National Theatre in Tirana, considered by Europa Nostra as one of the seven most endangered monuments in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The building's demolition was condemned by the President of Albania and by various national and European institutions.<sup>2</sup> Albanian security forces arrested several protesters during the demolition, including political activists, artists and journalists. Freedom of expression and of opinion is a pillar of democracy and rule of law. These freedoms have been violated.

Can the Commission say:

1. Is the Commission aware of how the demonstrators came to be arrested?
2. What impact does the Commission expect this to have on Albania's neighbourhood policy and accession negotiations?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://7mostendangered.eu/sites/national-theatre-of-albania-tirana-albania/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-albania-theatre/demolition-of-albanian-national-theatre-sparks-angry-protests-idUSKBN22T0FV>