



Austrian Albanian Society

The President

H.E.
Mrs. Elva Margariti
Minister of Culture
Rruga "Aleksandër Moisiu" nr. 76
Tiranë

Vienna, 20 May 2020

Madame Minister,

I am writing to you regarding the recent demolition of the National Theater in Tirana.

The Austrian Albanian Society is based in Vienna. Since the early 1990's the Society has been active in fostering bilateral relations. Through hundreds of aid projects it could help Albanians in their daily life. And – among other commitments – it is active in promoting cultural exchange.

We were saddened by the news about the forceful demolition of the National Theater on 18 May 2020. We regret that, after months of protest, it was not possible to find a common solution and to save the building as national cultural heritage.

Austria has been investing a lot in maintenance and renovation of cultural and historic sites in Albania. This includes architecture. I would like to recall a recent exhibition in Vienna, in autumn 2019, under the title "Albanien, bauen im politischen Kontext der Jahrzehnte" (Albania, constructing in the political context of decades) which had an enormous positive response.

Moreover, it is sad to see how Government used police force in order to execute the demolition. All this in the morning at 4.30 a.m. during a strict Corona virus lockdown. This is neither suitable to build-up trust in Government nor does this action show any respect for the civil society in Albania.

For the historic building of the National Theater it is too late, it is lost. The Austrian Albanian Society regrets that. But I can assure you that we will continue to assist Albania also in cultural affairs. However we in Austria – as people in many other countries – are frustrated by the fact that Albanians seem to be unwilling/unable to resolve problems in the way of dialogue and compromise.

Sincerely yours,

(Arno Riedel)

Former Ambassador to Albania

President of Austrian Albanian Society

Mrs. Elva Margariti

Minister of Culture - Ministër i Kulturës

Rruga Aleksandër Moisiu nr. 76,

Tiranë,

Albanien