

SECULARISM OF ALBANIAN GOVERNMENT THROUGHOUT 1920-1930 AS A GUARANTEE TO THE RELIGIOUS MINORITIES' RIGHTS

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Referring to the statistic data available for the years 1920-1930, three main religions existed in Albania; consequently, the population was divided in Muslims, or also known as Mohammedans, in Catholics and in Orthodox. However, such population division criterion was not uniform in the territory of the Albanian country. Adherents to Muslim religion made the greatest community with regard to numbers, and they lived in almost the entire territory of the country. The Orthodox religious were concentrated mainly in the South and Middle Albania, whereas the Catholic population made the smallest community and was concentrated mainly in the North areas of the country. The division of the population in three religions made Albania one of the most liberal countries of Europe. Such liberalism was affirmed not only to the Fundamental Statutes of Albania, but also to the International Agreement that the Albanian government would sign prior to becoming a member of the League of the Nations. The extended Statute of Lushnje clearly affirmed that Albania had no official religion and that all religions had to be respected. Such approach from the Albanian government was in full compliance with the commitments it would make to the international arena during the signing of several treaties. One of such treaties was the "Declaration on Minorities", signed by the representative of the Albanian government on October 02nd, 1921 to the League of Nations. Such document, of international character, constrained the Albanian government to guarantee to its citizens full protection of their life and freedoms, regardless of their age, nationality, language, race and religion. Furthermore, the document provided that all Albanian citizens could freely practice their religion, unless they were in breach of the public order and customs. Every citizen had the right to change religion upon their wish. The effective laws of that time created a quite environment for the religions to always be respected.

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