

Data di pubblicazione: 31 maggio 2023

*State Department Report highlights plight of Albanian orthodox church
Tirana, Albania, May 31, 2023*

The U.S. Department of State recently published its [2022 report on religious freedom in Albania](#), including much information about the Albanian Orthodox Church.

The report notes that according to the most recent consensus, the Orthodox Church represents about 7% of the Albanian population.

The government has a formal agreement with the Church, as with several other religious organizations, that recognizes it as one of the country's main faith communities and addresses property restitution and other arrangements. However, the Church has its complaints about how well the state upholds this agreement.

According to the government, throughout 2022 it continued the process of legalizing buildings constructed by religious groups without government approval after the fall of communism in the 1990s, including 21 churches and other buildings of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

However, the Church, in fact, reported no legalizations in 2022 and criticized the slow process.

The Church reported that it filed for compensation for approximately 890 properties, but only 10% of the claims were even considered by the Agency for the Treatment of Properties (ATP). The Church had to pursue the rest in court, but there are lengthy delays.

The government has also failed to implement its agreement to return religious objects and properties, the Orthodox Church and other religious communities say.

The Church also has serious complaints about the government's failure to return sacred items confiscated by the communist regime:

The AOC [Albanian Orthodox Church] again said that despite numerous requests, the government had not returned all sacred objects, relics, icons, and archives confiscated during the communist regime. The AOC stated that although the legal procedures were almost finalized, the government had not taken steps to return the Church of Entry into the Temple of the Holy Mary in Permet, the Church of the Evangelization of Mary Mother of God in Tepelena, and the Church of Saint Nicolas in Saranda. By year's end, authorities had not allowed reconstruction of the Saint Procopius Church in Tirana to begin, even though the Ministry of Culture returned the land where the church is located to the AOC in 2020.

The Albanian Church also objected to having to pay the value added tax and other taxes that it says violate its agreement with the government. The Church "reported it received 26.5 million lek (\$249,000) in government funding but paid 113 million lek (\$1 million) in annual taxes and social and health insurance, which had not been reimbursed as called for in its agreement with the government. The AOC stated the government had not responded to its request for reimbursement."

The Department of State's report notes that U.S. Embassy officials met with representatives of the Church and other religious communities and "urged [them] to propose joint solutions to the problems they faced regarding property legalization and restitution."

OrthoChristian [earlier reported](#) that the Albanian Church had fully restored 63 churches and monasteries between 1991 and 2019.

Follow OrthoChristian on [Twitter](#), [Vkontakte](#), [Telegram](#), [WhatsApp](#), [MeWe](#), and [Gab!](#)