Resolution of the National Council of the Churches of Christ on the Denial of Religion Liberty in Albania

Governing Board
RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST
ON THE DENIAL OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN ALBANIA

Adopted by the Governing Board
May 12, 1983

The oppression of people for their beliefs anywhere is a threat to the human race everywhere. Officially and in practice the government of Albania has attempted to exterminate religious practice and institutions for the past three decades. It proclaims itself "the first atheist country in the world" and its 1976 constitution (Article 37) says: "The State does not recognize any religion at all and supports and develops atheist propaganda to implant in mankind the scientific-materialist worldview." Reliable reports indicate that ruthless repression of all religious practice in Albania continues to this day.

We believe it is important to call the continuing religious repression and persecution in Albania to the attention of the world community of nations and to raise our voice on behalf of the voiceless in Albania who are prevented from the exercise of any religious freedom.

International and ecumenical organizations have repeatedly stressed the importance of religious freedom:

-- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

-- The Helsinki Final Act affirms "the participating states will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief . . . ."

-- The World Council of Churches, in its 1948 Amsterdam Assembly stated: "Every person has the right to express his religious beliefs in worship, teaching and practice . . . ."

-- The 1982 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief strongly reaffirms the freedom of religion.
Therefore, the Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. resolves:

1. We call upon the leaders of the People's Republic of Albania to recognize the right of its people to religious belief and practice. We respect Albania's national independence, development and unity, and see the respect for religious freedom, as urged by the United Nations, as a potential major contribution to the development and welfare of Albania's people. We especially urge a prompt end to the imprisonment and harassment of persons due to their religious beliefs. We request to enter into dialogue regarding the present religious situation in Albania.

2. We call upon the leaders of World nations, and most especially the United Nations and United States government leaders to urge the government of the People's Republic of Albania to guarantee its citizens the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms widely recognized by the human community, including the free exercise of religion.

3. We urge member denominations of the NCCCUSA to remember in prayer the Christians and Muslims and all other citizens of Albania espousing a religious belief who are suffering for their religious convictions, and to pray for a return of religious freedom in Albania. We urge also a greater awareness of the Albanian people's long and heroic struggle for survival and human dignity, of the Albanian's religious traditions and the current denial of religious liberty. In addition, we would uphold Albanian-Americans, many of whose family members and friends are victims of current repressive policies in Albania.