

Albania, a Wonderful Example of Coexistence and Religious Tolerance

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Abstract

If we refer to the history of humanity we note that the tolerance of human society is too early, it was born together with the man. It should be noted that religious beliefs in Albania are and has always been characterized by a strong feeling and a sincere harmony which is reflected in the relations between people with different religious beliefs, as well as between religious people and atheists. Albanians are both Christian and Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Bektashi. For centuries territories populated by Albanians has been remarkable for a unique interfaith tolerance. Religion has never been in the past and is not now a source of conflict in society. In the history of the Albanian religious, communities have always succeeded with a peacefully cooperation. This tolerance stems from the awareness of the Albanians that they belong to the same nation having a strong ethnic identity regardless of external factors affecting the determination of Albanians from other religions. In the Albanian national tradition, religious tolerance is one of the main characteristics of Albanian people morality. The interest of the nation has always been primary in relation to religious matters, it is first of all being Albanian. Albanian as well said Pasko Vasa in the nineteenth century "never churches and mosques can separate us because the religion of Albanians is Albanianhood" and so, because of this we create a big example, a wonderful cooperation, a peaceful atmosphere and open the way for peace and friendship between people not only in Albani but worldwide.

Keywords: religion, tolerance, cooperation, people

Introduction

Tolerance a term that we use occasionally instead of words respect, compassion, generosity or forbearance is the most essential element of moral systems, the most important source of spiritual discipline and a very valuable virtue for perfect people¹. So tolerance is a positive term that shows mutual respect for all beliefs and opinions, so toleration means to tolerate the attitudes and opinions that are different from yours². Referring to the history of humanity we note that tolerance to human society is developed too early. She was born with man. God gave the humans tolerance which created the miracle of human coexistence on the planet. It should be noted that religious beliefs in Albania has always characterized a strong feeling and a sincere harmony which is reflected in the relations between people with different religious beliefs, as well as between religious people and atheists. Albanians are both Christian and Muslim, they are Catholic and Orthodox, Sunni and Bektashi³. Albanians are distinguished people for centuries for a unique interfaith tolerance which links with the history of the presence and coexistence of different religious faiths in the territories populated by Albanians. In Albania has a remarkable religious pluralism. Religions have not been and are not a source of conflict in society. In the history of the Albanian religious communities have always succeeded to coexist peacefully. This tolerance stems from the awareness of the Albanians that they belong to the same nation having a strong ethnic identity regardless of external factors affecting the determination of the various religious. Albanians are aware that these changes are unavoidable external factors causing religious differences Albanians have always been aware that they belong to the same nation and despite often are found in wars they have never had conflict between their religious nature. Also another factor that contributed to the consolidation of tolerance and intelligence cooperation between religious communities is the atheist policy was followed by Enver Hoxha. The spirit of good will and the harmony that characterizes traditional religious communities are affected by common difficulties they have encountered in the communist past. So today on the basis of freedom of conscience and religious belief in Albania, along with four main religious communities also operating nearly 62 Christian, Protestant, Evangelical,

¹ Kruja G;(2008) Shqiptar përballë sfidave të Mirëkuptimit Ndërfetar; Arbëria; fq28

² Magris C.(2001), Panairi I Toletancës, Instituti Shqiptar i Medias, fq12

³ Morozzo della Rocca R;(2003); Fetë dhe Civilizimet në mijëvjeçarin e ri;; Botim i Qëndra shqiptare për të Drejtat e Njeriut; fq 142

Adventist, Baha'i, Mormon, coming mostly from Western Europe and the US, as well as the Islamic religious charities. So despite diversity by religion the unity exist always among Albanians. Religious tolerance has always been present in the Albanian lands. Religious holidays not only respected by believers of different religions, but they often also a cause for celebration regardless of which religion belongs concrete holidays. Specifically Shkodra is a concrete example of tolerance and coexistence that characterizes also the whole Albanians. Muslim population is mixed with Catholics and Orthodox Christians. But in Shkodra were generous Muslim families who defended the Catholic church building when some fanatics began destroying them at night. We can say that in Albania can often find two different religions within the same family or a tribe or does no wonder that even one person practices follow the rites of religious holidays of both religions whether or Muslim or Catholic. Between communities exist a full tolerance and the good understanding by making proud Albanians. That religious tolerance in the Albanian national tradition is one of the main characteristics of the morality of the Albanian people. The vast majority of the Albanian people of Islamic faith but everyone knows that their fathers were Christian and one of them does not deny this historical fact. On the other hand family and tribal ties have made the Albanian national has always been first and foremost remained Albanian, while religion has been and is conviction, determination and a private problem. Since Albanians belong mainly three religions, has made that they do not dominate social life, in any period of time, in any system and state government in Albania, religion was not a state component. They have been separated from the state who respect them, except dark period of dictatorship, the communist regime of Enver Hoxha (1945-1991) when religious tolerance was heavy tread, when Albania necessarily turned atheist. It seems that the Albanians throughout their history have been and are oriented towards Western Europe, towards its Christian culture, democracy, politics, economy and their national interest. The interest of the nation has always been primary in relation to religious matters, it is first of all Albanian, as well said by Pasko Vasa in the nineteenth century "do not let churches and mosques to separate us that the religion of Albanians is Albanianhood!" In the modern world many common goals and high ideals can be achieved not through assimilation but through integration, not through violence but through dialogue. For this reason, dialogue remains the only way forward humanity, who wants to build a better future². Cooperation between religious communities is an important element that can serve as a tool to prevent possible conflicts in the world, being prone to respect, tolerance of other religious beliefs. A key role is also for the government which should always protect the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right, without forgotten that religion is one of the most influential forces that makes the legitimization of power and moral order at a global level. Religion and tolerance constitute one of the most powerful forces, with great impact on human society. Religion and faith are based on the norms, rules well-defined behavior. Religious norms are a set of rules built behavior based on tolerance, implementation and practice which can bring order and harmony in society. Religion is a tool, religion and belief educate the people with high ideals. It affects the formation of the unity of the members of society through control and enforcement through preaching unique values and norms. Likewise Vacanta protection of the rights of freedom and faith finds in Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, as one of the fundamental rights of the individual. Thus becoming proof that freedom of religion is accepted and recognized in international legal and political thought from the community of civilized nations, as one of the fundamental rights of indivitit. Every citizen may freely choose his faith and to manifest religious beliefs freely. The individual in every istitucion and public space has the right declare their religious faith without fear of discrimination. Article 10 establishes the Albanian state neutrality in relation with religious communities and to report on matters of faith and conscience in general. Also is known state secularism. The relationship between the state and religious communities are regulated on the basis of agreements signed between their representatives and the Council of Ministers. The state can not interfere in the affairs of religious communities, but only through agreements mentioned above. The way of continuous improvement and development, bringing together people between them, elevates the sense of protecting each other, develop the personal freedom and strengthens society. So independence of religious communities, implying that they are regarded as foreign troops to the state. Regarding the scope of these agreements can say that they guarantee the exercise of rights guaranteed by the Constitution and laws relating to freedom of conscience and religion, to recognize and guarantee respect for the rights of the religious community, institutions and its structures, as well as legal persons established by them, to freely develop their mission religious, educational and charitable, to recognize and guarantee the integrity of the institutions of worship, to the extent that their activity does not clash with exercise of freedom of conscience and religion, as well as with the Constitution and the laws in force and the sacred canons and traditions of the religious community that operates within the bounds of the state. To guarantee freedom of the individual to choose or change religion, to manifest it individually or collectively religious institutions, or outside them, through worship,

¹ Krasniqi M; Toleranca në traditën shqiptare; Botime te Shkencave; Prishtine; fq 184

² Simpozium;(2008); Domosdoshmëria e Dialogut Ndërfetar për Paqen në Botë; Prizmi; Buletini nr 2;; fq 9

education, practices or the performance of religious rites; ensure freedom of the individual to not stop and neither compelled to join a religious community or participate in practices, rituals and its management structures. Regarding the rule of faith and religion Albanians have always been characterized by feelings of tolerance and understanding. Since ancient times George Kastrioti Skanderbeg became a symbol of civilization and tolerance kristjano-Islamic by many treasured unity of the nation and the unity of the Albanians. Even in the years ahead would be institutionalized religion more and more in the service of faith and nation. In 1967 the religious communities had a crisis as a result of a totalitarian regime who took legal recognition of religious communities unable to conduct any religious activities. Through the period of communist regime during his 50 years has been destroyed indiscriminately facilities such as Muslim, Catholic or Orthodox being justified as atheist youth movement. But faith and religion has been never faded in the hearts of Albanians. End of atheist rule in Albania was closed with the advent of democracy in the November 4, 1990 the date on which after so many years of censorship first. While it should be noted that religious beliefs in Albania has always characterized a feeling strong and sincere harmony which is reflected in the relations between people with different religions and between religious people and atheists. This tolerance stems from the awareness of the Albanians that they belong to the same nation having a strong ethnic identity regardless of external factors affecting the determination of the various religious Albanians. The spirit of good will and harmony that characterizes traditional religious communities are affected by common difficulties they have encountered in the communist past. Civil religion is a set of beliefs and rituals that intersect with the past, present and future of a nation, we can say that civil religion is itself the expression of the cohesion of a nation. Can therefore also say that civil religion is similar to nationalism, which is reflected strong identification with the nation through national interest rises. While many important religious affiliation and nation is the degree of religious homogeneity within the nation. Tolerance is in the interest of every individual, every families every collective and every state. It creates atmosphere humanities and opens the way for peace and friendship between people worldwide. Albania is the best example of coexistence and religious tolerance, has been and will always be. Today, more and more human rights and fundamental freedoms are in the spotlight because they constitute the essence of human existence, the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. Fundamental human rights, each specifically are very important and constitute the basis for the consolidation of the rule of law. Freedom of religion and conscience in particular as well as all other rights are universal fundamental human rights, they have the same origin and are strongly interrelated. A great attention and interest is spread worldwide about human rights and fundamental freedoms because they lie at the basis of the internal legal order in any democratic state. Religious freedom is a right guaranteed by international and national acts. Constitution of the Albanian Republic as the fundamental law of the state, makes clear that in a social democratic state based in the rule of law. Freedom of religion is an universal right as well as other fundamental rights of the human being based on spirit of tolerance and coexistence. So albanian society appears tolerant of different religions. Therefore it is very important to argue that the practiced of freedom of religion must be made through peaceful means respecting the laws, ethical standards and norms of religious tolerance for not reaching extreme expressions of religious which bring chaos in the modern world. Religion is an important factor of social integration, it ought to have the purpose to become a factor of stability in society. So it feeds its members with the values and norms as well as helping their consensus for moral issues¹. With all religion definitions the social role of religion and its institutions is an integral part of society, as one of the fundamental rights of the individual. So one of the essential purposes of religion is man's return to the "citizen". The essence of religious institutions is that they are addressed human, to revive confidence, to meet and meet their own spiritual needs. People in life are often faced with cases with violation of law and abuse of power, position and profession, realizing their different interests at the expense of others. In all such cases the human morality is crucial. God judges on all the works of men, the true goals, our desires and feelings. Belief in this form of justice encourages the man for every good work that he has done and does, believing that any criminal and illegal work, however somewhere and will become known, and hypocrisy and autocracy will be punished. Society today despite numerous attempts appears increasingly chaotic. Thus emerges the primary role of the religion as a major social factor, of hope, faith, courage positive social and source, in which the individual finds support, fulfilling one of his natural rights, thus establishing a fair balance between the elements religious and social. Religious feelings are feeling social, community feeling, realized not only individually, but also as a social group together in associations, religious organizations and institutions. Religion elevates man with high human virtues and moral, to strengthen, enrich and exalt the soul. It is a tool or way of continuous improvement and development, bringing together people between them, elevates the sense of protecting each other, developing the personal freedom and strengthens the society. Religion and belief also educate the people with high ideals. It affects the formation of the unity of the members of society through control and enforcement

¹ B. MC GURE M;(2007); Religjoni konteksti shoqëror; Qendra për hulumtime të administratës publike Logos-A, fq 308

preaching the unique values and the norms. Also it promotes group solidarity, helps in the normal function of the society to stabilize its main institutions. Has great influence on the whole life of man in particular in his bodily integrity and spiritual. So by faith it is preserved the identity of the national religious community, spiritual and moral history. Today's conflicts in fact are not religious wars or conflicts but unfortunately they use religious justifications. However it should be noted that religion itself is not cause for conflict, but can be used as a factor and as a symbol in the conflict. We are realistic that religious differences often lead to conflict. There in the world as bigotry and intolerance that a small spark could lead to war when the social, economic, military, are not on track. Moreover religious intolerance and oppression may be favored by the inequality in material terms. The development of policy and human rights must go together ¹. The role of religion in maintaining peace and strengthening policy dialogue can not be limited to the level of international geopolitics. Another important aspect of the problem relates to the impact of religion on relationships between groups with different religious affiliations in multifunctional societies. Even in this regard, today's world is like a contradictory in its historical reality. Religion tends towards establishing understanding between individuals in society, towards on establishing tolerance among people with different religious beliefs, to strengthen relations and for understanding solidarity between different social groups.

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¹ Sinani Gj;(2008) Kontributi I Fesë për Paqen Botrore; Prizmi; Buletini nr 2; fq 18