

DECLARATION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES IN ALBANIA (GENEVA, OCTOBER 2, 1921)

Article 1.

The stipulations of this Declaration are recognised as fundamental laws of Albania and no law, regulation or official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation or official action now or in the future prevail over them.

Article 2.

Full and complete protection of life and liberty will be assured to all inhabitants of Albania, without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

All inhabitants of Albania will be entitled to the free exercise, whether public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, whose practices are not inconsistent with public order or public morals. They will have the right to change their religion.

Suitable provision will be made in the case of Mussulmans for regulating family law and personal status in accordance with Mussulman usage.

Article 3.

All persons born in Albania who are not born nationals of another State shall, ipso facto, be Albanian nationals.

Persons habitually resident in Albania before the war will be allowed, together with their wives and children under eighteen years of age, within two years from the date of this Declaration, to become Albanian citizens if they make application to that effect.

Albanian nationals habitually resident at the coming into force of the Treaty between the Principal Allied Powers and Greece signed at Sèvres on August 10, 1920, in territories transferred to Greece by treaties subsequent to January 1, 1913, shall be recognised as becoming Greek nationals ipso facto and without the requirement of any formality. Nevertheless, they will have the right to opt for the Albanian nationality as provided for in Article 3 of the said Treaty of Sèvres, and no hindrance shall be put in the way of the exercise of this right. This right must be exercised within one year of the coming into force of that Treaty.

Albania is prepared to comply with any recommendations which may be made by the Council of the League of Nations with respect to the reciprocal and voluntary emigration of persons belonging to ethnical minorities.

Article 4.

All Albanian nationals shall be equal before the law, and shall enjoy the same civil and political rights without distinction as to race, language or religion.

An electoral system giving due consideration to the rights of racial, religious and linguistic minorities will be applied in Albania.

Differences of religion, creed or confession will not prejudice any Albanian national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employments functions and honours, or the exercise of professions and industries.

No restriction will be imposed on the free use by any Albanian national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the Press or in publications of any kind, or at public meetings.

Notwithstanding any establishment of an official language, adequate facilities will be given to Albanian nationals of non-Albanian speech for the use of their language, either orally or in writing, before the Courts.

Article 5.

Albanian nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities will enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Albanian nationals. In particular they shall have an equal right to maintain, manage and control at their own expense or to establish in the future, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein.

Within six months from the date of the present Declaration, detailed information will be presented to the Council of the League of Nations with regard to the legal status of the religious communities, churches, convents, schools, voluntary establishments and associations of racial, religious and linguistic minorities. The Albanian Government will take into consideration any advice it might receive from the League of Nations with regard to this question.

Article 6.

Provision will be made in the public educational system in towns and districts in which are resident a considerable proportion of Albanian nationals whose mother-tongue is not the official language, for adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools, instruction shall be given to the children of such nationals through the medium of their own language; it being understood that this provision does not prevent the teaching of the official language being made obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Albanian nationals belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, these minorities will be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budgets, for educational, religious or charitable purposes.

Article 7.

The stipulations in the foregoing Articles of this Declaration, so far as they affect the persons belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, are declared to constitute obligations of international concern, and will be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. No modification will be made in them without the assent of a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Any member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction or danger of infraction of any of these stipulations, and the Council may thereupon take such action and give such direction as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances.

Any difference of opinion as to questions of law or fact arising out of these Articles between the Albanian Government and any Power a Member of the Council of the League of Nations, shall be held to be a dispute of an international character under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Any such dispute shall, if the other party thereto demands, be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The decision of the Permanent Court shall be final and shall have the same force and effect as an award under Article 13 of the Covenant.

(Signed) F. S. NOLI.

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