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Holy Synod of Greek Church opposes proposed change in priests' status



Meeting in an extraordinary session on Friday, November 16, 2018, the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church voted against the proposed change in the status of priests and decided to create a special commission to study the proposals of the Greek government to change the position of the Church in the state, reports the site of the Greek Orthodox Church.

On October 2, the ruling radical left SYRIZA party introduced a draft constitutional amendment to Parliament that would reinforce the religious neutrality of the state, while maintaining “the recognition of the Orthodox Church as the dominant religion for historical and practical reasons.”

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens, the primate of the Greek Orthodox Church, discussed the reform on November 6, signing a joint statement that defines the conditions for the separation of Church and state within the framework of the proposed constitutional

reform. A significant part of the statement is devoted to changes in the payment of salaries to clergy, which until now the state pays in exchange for Church property it acquired. Under the plan, priests will no longer be on the state payroll though the Church will receive a subsidy for priests' salaries.

To go into effect, the statement requires the approval of the Greek government and the hierarchy of the Greek Church. Several hierarchs of the Greek Church had already spoken out forcefully against the proposed changes, viewing them as the atheistic government's plans to continue to marginalize the Church and secularize the nation.

At Friday's meeting, Abp. Ieronymos informed the bishops about the government's proposals which were then discussed by the Synod, with many hierarchs offering their thoughts and remarks.

After the discussion, the hierarchs unanimously decided to "insist on the existing status of the payment of salary to the clergy and serving laity of the Greek Church."

They also resolved to continue the dialogue with the state on matters of common interest, and to form a special commission consisting of bishops, lawyers, clergy, and experts to study issues of common interest, the results of which will then be presented to the hierarchy of the Greek Church for final approval.