

Romania takes action against clerical impersonation



On Wednesday, the plenary session of Romania's Chamber of Deputies passed a bill that clarifies the prohibition against the unauthorised exercise of clerical and monastic functions and ensures the exclusive right of religious denominations over modes of veneration for canonised, beatified, sanctified individuals, or those recognised as righteous or symbolic identity figures.

According to Agerpres, the bill amends Law No. 489/2006 on religious freedom and the general regime of religious denominations.

"The unauthorised exercise of duties as a priest, rabbi, imam, or other clerical or monastic functions, including those assimilated at the request of the religious denomination by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, constitutes a criminal offense and shall be punished following Law No. 289/2009 on the Penal Code, with its subsequent amendments," the bill states.

"Religious denominations have the exclusive right over the religious methods of venerating canonised, beatified, sanctified individuals, those included among the righteous, or recognised as their own identity symbols," the newly adopted legislation clarifies.

The legislative initiative belongs to MP Silviu Vexler, who is a representative of national minorities. It is grounded in "numerous incidents (widely reported in public discourse) in which individuals have unlawfully and deliberately assumed clerical or monastic roles, causing serious harm to both religious denominations and their faithful, including reputational damage, legal difficulties, and emotional distress."

The bill also aims to clarify the enforcement of existing prohibitions for all functions equivalent to those of a priest—such as pastors, rabbis, imams—and other religious officiants, as well as monastic personnel.

The Senate had previously passed the bill. The Chamber of Deputies, acting as the decision-making body, has now given its final approval.

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