

Historic law in Georgia allows Church to claim lands surrounding cathedrals, monasteries



Georgia's parliament last week has passed a law allowing the Georgian Orthodox Church to claim hundreds of hectares of state-owned forests surrounding cathedrals and monasteries across the Caucasus country.

Seventy-nine MPs voted in favor of the legislation, and none against, during a plenary session on Friday.

The law will allow the Georgian Church to claim up to 20 hectares of land owned by the state's Forest Fund around every church and monastery in the country. The Church will be granted ownership of each parcel of land, upon appealing to the government.

Moreover, the law does not apply to other religious organizations.

The bill was initiated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture.

Deputy Minister of Environment Nino Tandirashvili defended the bill last week during a hearing of at the committee level, saying it would accord the Georgian Orthodox Church more responsibilities than rights, as the Church would have to care for and sustainably manage any forests it acquired.