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Sources: 3 options left for govt on contentious positions for Church-state



Only a laconic statement this week by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, referred to developments regarding Church-state relations.

The government's proposals for changes in Church-state relations have been the object of a dialogue between members of a committee appointed by the Church of Greece's Holy Synod and the education ministry's leadership.

On Wednesday, His Beatitude Ieronymos merely said that "life continues", when asked about the course of the dialogue.

According to information learned by the Orthodoxia news agency, the Church of Greece is now waiting for a signal by the government.

On its part, the government is examining three options.

Sources that spoke to the Orthodoxia news agency said the Tsipras government's options are:

– Firstly, to try and find common ground in order to continue the dialogue, and in the best-case scenario, compose a mutually acceptable draft bill that will be tabled in Parliament for ratification.

– A second option is to ignore the Church and unilaterally table a draft bill in Parliament based on the original framework, one agreed to by Ieronymos and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. Such an action, however, risks creating a major clash with the influential Church of Greece amid an election year. Nevertheless, this option is favored by the current Education and Religious Affairs Minister, who maintains that the government has the final say in any proposed legislation.

– A third option is to merely “freeze” the entire process and wait for the next Parliament, and whatever government arises from general election.

An ecclesiastical source close to the Archbishop of Greece said the latter’s very terse statement on Wednesday indicates that the dialogue and related issues are “put on ice”.