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## **RUSSIA'S PATRIARCH KIRILL CELEBRATES MASS IN ALBANIA**

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Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, celebrated Mass in Tirana on April 29 during his first visit to mainly Muslim Albania.

"We, Orthodox Christians living in various countries, share the same values, and we must follow them," Kirill told hundreds of faithful in Tirana's Orthodox cathedral.

Most of Albanias 3 million people are Muslim, but there are Orthodox and Catholic communities. The 2011 census estimated that Orthodox Christians make up about 7 percent of the population.

Kirill, 71, praised the Albanian church's "resistance" during the long period of Communist rule.

More than 100 clergy members, including seven bishops, died in detention or were executed by Communist authorities, and more than 1,800 churches were destroyed between 1945 and 1985.

Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, the head of the Albanian Orthodox Church, said that "our Church is marked by the spirit of peaceful coexistence among all religious communities, and the visit by Patriarch Kirill is an affirmation of these values."

Kirill is scheduled to meet with Albanian President Ilir Meta and Prime Minister Edi Rama on April 30, the final day of his three-day visit.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-orthodox-church-patriarch-kirill-albania/29199839.html>

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