
MITOTAKIS URGES TIRANA TO RESPECT ETHNIC GREEKS IN ALBANIA

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Opposition leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Monday urged the government in Tirana to respect the rights of the Greek minority in Albania, reminding the Balkan country that its performance in this respect is key to determining its aspirations for European Union membership.

The message we send today to the neighboring country [] with whom we always strive to have very good neighborly relations and respect [] is unequivocal: Albania's path toward the European Union and the European institutions is intrinsically linked to respect for the rights of the ethnic Greek minority, Mitsotakis said. This is something we will not back down on.

The conservative leader made his comments during a presentation of traditional Christmas songs at the party's Athens headquarters by the Omonia Association of Albanian Greeks.

The comments in the wake of tension between Athens and Tirana following a local authority decision last month to demolish a number of houses belonging to ethnic Greeks in the Himara area, ostensibly as part of plans to revamp the city. There has also been tension over the killing of an ethnic Greek during the Greek national holiday of October 28 by Albanian police during a shootout.

The number of ethnic Greeks in Albania was above 24,200 in the 2011 census, representing less than 1 percent of the total population.

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