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Barnabasfund (31.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2t7LXxn> - The Bulgarian Parliament has agreed not to pass into law prohibitive amendments to the nation's Religious Denominations Act after thousands of Christians protested against a crackdown on the religious activity of minority religions.

The parliamentary Committee for Religion and Human Rights met on 19 December 2018 to discuss changes to the Religious Denominations Act with representatives of minority religions, including members of the Bulgarian Evangelical Alliance. The final vote on the changes, without the severe amendments, took place two days later on 21 December.

Christians had gathered in Sofia on three consecutive Sundays on 11, 18 and 25 November to protest against oppressive amendments that would have placed limitations on evangelising, banned worship outside officially recognised buildings and restricted church leader training. Religious groups would also have needed 300 members before being officially recognised.

"We are relieved to state that the most discriminatory and limiting clauses which affected us have been successfully removed or changed appropriately," wrote Teodor Oprenov, pastor of an evangelical church in Sofia. "We are fully aware that this would not have happened without the strong international support and prayers that questioned the intentions of our lawmakers and the strong and consistent protesting and lobbying within the country," he added.

The Bulgarian constitution itself guarantees freedom of religion stating, "The practising of any religion shall be unrestricted."