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Serbian Patriarch decries verdict against president of Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina)



His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije views the recent verdict of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina against Milorad Dodik, President of Republika Srpska, as unconstitutional and contrary to the Dayton Agreement, believing it aims to delegitimize the existence of the semi-autonomous entity and the democratic will of the Serbian people.

Pres. Dodik received a one-year prison sentence and six-year ban from public office this week for defying Christian Schmidt, the international High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Dayton Agreement, signed in December 1995, brought an end to the Bosnian War and established the single state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, composed of the largely Serb-populated Republika Srpska and the mainly Croat-Bosniak-populated Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The High Representative was established as an international diplomatic and external

oversight position.

The primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church said about the verdict against Dodik:

I received with deep concern the news about the decision of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by which the legally elected president of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, was sentenced to one year in prison and a six-year ban from political activity, against any legal framework.

This verdict, undoubtedly unconstitutional and against the Dayton Agreement, has the potential to jeopardize everything that has been done over the past 30 years to heal war wounds and reconcile the peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is therefore extremely dangerous. Offering prayers to the Lord, the Giver of peace, to grant us in these difficult times the spirit of peace and the inspiration to build it mutually, I appeal to all actors in this unfortunate situation to give their best to stop and prevent the rise of tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, God forbid, could disturb the stability of the Balkans and the wider region, and plunge the fragile and arduously built process of interethnic reconciliation into the abyss of some new, unnecessary and unwanted tragedy.

The Patriarch and several other hierarchs then met with Pres. Dodik and other officials in Banja Luka yesterday.

The president outlined Republika Srpska’s planned response to what he described as ongoing “legal violence” since the 1995 Dayton Agreement, culminating in what he characterized as a politically motivated court case against him. Dodik emphasized the unified stance of Republika Srpska’s leadership in defending the Dayton Agreement through legal and political means, expressing gratitude for the Church’s support in preserving Serbian identity.

In response, Pat. Porfirije and the other hierarchs issued a statement expressed their conviction that the court’s verdict aims to undermine the democratic will and delegitimize both Republika Srpska and the Serbian presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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