

Oppression of Serbian Orthodox Church fraught with great problems, says Russian ministry



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Encroachment on property of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro and causing people of faith to split are fraught with terrible ramifications, particularly international ones, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a comment after Montenegro's parliament adopted the law on freedom of religion.

"We are seriously concerned by the situation unfolding after the parliament of Montenegro passed the freedom of religion law," the ministry said.

The diplomatic agency noted that the new law grants opportunity to Montenegro's authorities to seize more than 650 religious properties from the Serbian Orthodox Church situated in Montenegro "possibly transferring them to the schismatic and

unrecognized 'Montenegrin Orthodox Church' in the future." "In fact, we are talking about tightening administrative grip on the Serbian Orthodox Church to force it to leave Montenegro," the ministry added.

"We are convinced that it is necessary to strictly respect legitimate rights of canonical orthodox churches," the ministry added. "Disregarding their opinion, encroaching on the historic realities, attempting to seize their properties, artificially creating conditions to split people of faith are fraught with serious consequences. The law adopted by parliament and signed by President Milo Dukanovic not only affects interests of the Serbian Orthodox Church's Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral but also elevates this topic to the international level. Unity and solidarity of the Orthodox world, preservation of its centuries-long foundations are a condition to ensure normal development of society."

The ministry also drew attention to the way the new law was adopted. During the vote in the national parliament, unrest broke out right in the meeting hall which led to arrests of 17 MPs from the opposition Democratic Front. Immediately after that mass protests spilt into streets involving religious activists and public figures.

On December 27, Montenegro's legislature passed a controversial law on freedom of religion and the legal status of religious communities amid mass protests throughout the country. Forty-five out of 45 lawmakers present voted for the law. No one voted against or abstained, since the bill was considered after the police had detained all opposition MPs. Huge protests were held in several cities in Montenegro against the new legislation. The Serbian Orthodox Church said that it was aimed at seizing its property in Montenegro.

— Source: tass.com