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## **Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church appeals upon the state authorities of Montenegro to reconsider their position on the religious rights and freedoms**



### **Communique of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church**

JANUARY 5, 2020

While preparing to celebrate the radiant Feast of the Nativity of Christ, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, under presidency of His Holiness the Serbia Patriarch Irinej, held a session at the Patriarchal Court in Belgrade, on January 4, 2020, with participation of the hierarchs who have their jurisdiction in Montenegro: His Excellency Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro-Coastlands and Their Graces Bishops: Joanikije of Budimlje-Nikšić, Bishop Atanasije of Mileseva and Bishop Dimitrije of Zahum-Herzegovina. The session was attended by Their Graces Vicar Bishops Stefan of Remesiana and Metodije of Dioclaea

as well.

The immediate reason for this extended Synod session was the adoption of an anti-constitutional and anti-civilization Law on Freedom of Religions or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities, which would be more properly called the Law against the Orthodox Church in Montenegro.

It is regrettable that the adoption of this Law has already caused numerous negative consequences in Montenegro and in the wider region. The Holy Synod of Bishops with Their Excellencies and Graces Hierarchs expressed full understanding of the justified upset of the believing Orthodox people in Montenegro and gave full support to their peaceful Christian resistance to the injustice inflicted on the Church and the people by the afore-mentioned anti-democratic and discriminatory law. Namely, this Law allows the holy shrines to be abducted and desecrated as well as violation of the testaments of their holy donors and endowers who dedicated them to God and the Church, not to any state or government.

So far, it has been shown that people's gatherings at large, on the occasion of the indicated injustice, had an explicit ecclesiastical character, and it is therefore necessary to avoid any political or party abuse of these unique national assemblies in the future.

It is obvious that the aforementioned Law is unprecedentedly deepening the existing divisions and conflicts in Montenegrin society. The Holy Synod of Bishops, from this extended session, once again appeals upon the state authorities of Montenegro to be aware of their responsibility to the past and to the future, and to reconsider their position on the religious rights and freedoms of their citizens and of the majority Church in Montenegro.

The Serbian Orthodox Church and its dioceses in Montenegro will, by all available legal and legal means, protect religious rights and freedoms and at the same time call on all relevant actors to resume comprehensive dialogue on this very important and sensitive issue.

— Source: [From the Office of the Holy Synod of Bishops](#)