

Peaceful rally in Belgrade for rights, protection of Serbian Orthodox faithful in region



Thousands of people participated in a peaceful rally in Belgrade this week to decry the persecution faced by the Orthodox faithful and members of Serbian minorities in a handful of countries in the region.

The rally was called by the Serbian Orthodox Church, with participants marching from the St. Savva Cathedral in order to pray for the Serbs in Montenegro, Kosovo and Metohija, Bosnia, Croatia and elsewhere in the Balkans.

The main focus of the protest were recent developments Montenegro, where the government in the small Adriatic country passed legislation in parliament dealing with religious freedom. Nevertheless, according to the Church, the contentious law entails a distinct threat of confiscation of its property in the country by the state.

The law stipulates that religious institutions must present proof of ownership for their properties dating before 1918.

In the same region, the Patriarch of Serbia, His Holiness Irinej, this week met with Bosnian-Serb officials and members of the Holy Eparchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Banja Luka, the second largest city in the country and the de facto capital of the Republika Srpska entity.

A doxology service was held at the city's Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in honor of the Serbian Patriarch.

In a statement, His Holiness noted that "...for the Serbian people, unity, faith in God and love of country are of primary importance."