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METROPOLITAN OF MONTENEGRO SUBMITS PROPOSAL TO AMEND CONTROVERSIAL NEW LAW THAT THREATENS CHURCH PROPERTY



The Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro, has submitted proposed amendments to the new “Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities” that has caused waves of protests throughout the country since it passed in late December.

Several hierarchs from the Serbian Church met with Prime Minister Duško Marković on Friday, February 14, to discuss the law that gives the government the authority to confiscate properties the Serbian Church has held for more than a century.

The meeting comes after previous statements from state representatives that there was no possibility of amending or canceling the law, and statements from Met. Amfilohije that he would agree to meet with government officials only to discuss the possibility of repealing or mending the law.

A joint press release was issued after the meeting, which reads:

Podgorica, Montenegro (14 February 2020) – The Government of Montenegro and

the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral and other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro discusses today the Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief and the Legal Status of Religious Communities, at the invitation of Prime Minister Duško Marković.

Today's meeting ended in a spirit of mutual respect with the assessment of both sides that the meeting was held in a constructive and open atmosphere. Both sides fully expressed their views on outstanding issues related to the Law. The Church continues to maintain the view that it is necessary to speak of amendments to the Law, not of its implementation, because in the Church's view, the Law is not in accordance with the Constitution or international standards. The Government believes that through dialogue and mutual trust, as well as through the provision of additional and appropriate guarantees, this Law can be applied as a modern one and in line with the Constitution and European standards.

Representatives of the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović), submitted to the Government a proposal that included changes to certain provisions that the Church sees as controversial. The Government took notice of this initiative, assessing that a comprehensive consideration of not only this Law but also of other opportunities offered by the legal system was required to provide an answer to this question.

It was agreed that the talks would continue at expert level.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO
EPISCOPAL COUNCIL OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MONTENEGRO

Meanwhile, massive protests continue throughout the country.
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