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His Grace Bishop Irinej of Eastern America of the Serbian Orthodox Church held a telephone conference with Mr. Matthew Palmer



On Monday, May 18th, 2020, His Grace Bishop Irinej of Eastern America of the Serbian Orthodox Church held a telephone conference with Mr. Matthew Palmer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs with responsibility for the Western Balkans and the Aegean.



In a friendly and constructive conversation, Bishop Irinej and Mr. Palmer discussed the current situation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. Special attention was paid, once again, to concerns regarding the 2019 Law on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the Legal Status of Religious Communities. They discussed the possible negative consequences the law might have on the stability of Montenegro and the region if outstanding issues were not resolved in a fair and transparent manner.

In light of the same, special attention was paid to the recent detention of Bishop Joanikije and seven of his priests. Bishop Irinej and Mr. Palmer agreed that although the United States of America would not interfere in the affairs of Montenegro, it is still necessary to do everything possible to ensure that basic human rights and religious freedom, which are at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy, are respected and implemented to the fullest extent, while also respecting public health protocols.

The Bishop spoke in favor of advancing lawful and constructive dialogue, while fully respecting the right of all citizens of Montenegro to peaceful assembly. Mr. Palmer assured Bishop Irinej that the U.S. government is closely monitoring the situation in Montenegro and will encourage all sides to find a mutually agreeable solution to the current situation within the Montenegrin legal system and without political or religious discrimination of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its faithful.

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