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Prime Minister of Montenegro Marković: We proposed to Metropolitan Amfilohije suspension of law application until Constitutional and European Court deliver ruling, but he called for continuation of processions



Prime Minister Duško Marković said this morning that he and President of Montenegro Milo Đukanović recently proposed to Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) Amfilohije (Radović) the suspension of the application of the Law on Freedom of Religion until the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights deliver ruling and the continuation of the dialogue, but the Metropolitan, in spite of that, called for the continuation of the processions, and the Serbian Orthodox Church continued to violate the law at every opportunity.

“As you know, and as I told the public, on several occasions I responded to

invitations and met with Metropolitan Amfilohije regarding the Law on Freedom of Religion and other important issues that arose in the relations between the state and the Orthodox Church. The same happened a few days ago, when President Milo Đukanović and I, as the highest representatives of the executive power in Montenegro, responded to the invitation of Metropolitan Amfilohije and Bishop Joanikije. That meeting was a confirmation of our respect for the Metropolitanate and other dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church, but also a confirmation of our lasting commitment to conduct a dialogue and seek common and best solutions. The conversation we had was meaningful, long and constructive, and ended with clear proposals that President Đukanović and I offered, and whose goal is to get out of the current situation that burdens the overall social environment. Specifically – the Government was ready to suspend the implementation of the Law on Freedom of Religion until the Constitutional Court of Montenegro and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg decide on its legitimacy. At the same time, we offered and proposed for the next week the continuation of the started negotiations at the expert level, for which the Government team was preparing during the previous period” – said Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković.

The Prime Minister said that these are facts and truth that citizens and believers could not hear from church dignitaries these days.

“Unfortunately, on the other hand, Metropolitan Amfilohije’s call to organise processions followed in response to our proposal, which is interpreted as a continuation of lack of understanding and confrontations that we do not want in the Government, because they represent an obstacle to our civic harmony and prosperity. In addition to rejecting the dialogue, and thus the possibility of finding a sustainable solution, the Serbian Orthodox Church continues to violate the law at every opportunity, even when it comes to the established practice of illegal construction within and outside church properties,” said the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Duško Marković said that Montenegro is a democratic society of European and Euro-Atlantic values in which public gatherings are allowed as long as they do not endanger the rights of others, and added that the Government will ensure their realisation in accordance with the law and current rules.

“Therefore, the announced processions must be organised in a way that implies the application of epidemiological measures and recommendations, while respecting the health and lives of all citizens, all in the spirit of equal application of the law, which is a standard that binds every individual and every collective. Alongside the call to respect the law, we still leave the Metropolitanate and the dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church the opportunity to jointly seek solutions in the best

interest of Orthodox believers within the dialogue and the legal system of Montenegro. Our intention is to leave an environment and a legacy that will not be a burden to future generations. So we are open to dialogue and seeking solutions, but not to blackmail and pressure. And until that happens, the laws will be valid for everyone in Montenegro, including the Serbian Orthodox Church and its believers,”
- Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković said in his address to the public.

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