

Orthodox Church in Montenegro categorically refutes claim by govt over tax evasion



The Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, again bemoaned what it called efforts by the government in the small Adriatic country to sabotage dialogue over a controversial law on religious institutions, which was passed by the latter.

The latest provocation by the Montenegro government was a claim that the Church pays no taxes, and that the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral, the largest eparchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church, has declined previous invitations to resume dialogue.

In a stern rebuke to a claim made by the country's prime minister over tax evasion, a Church statement read:

"You must know that the Church has paid huge amounts of taxes over the past years as well as contributions to social security funds."

Earlier, the Church accused the Montenegrin government of trying to abuse the dialogue over the contested freedom of religion law for election purposes, as parliamentary elections are due on Aug. 30.

On Tuesday, representatives of the Church and state failed to agree on changes to the controversial law, which the Metropolitanate deems as discriminatory, with the former's Episcopal Council stated that "...We see the government request to re-register in Montenegro as an ultimatum. This request is inappropriate because, as a Church institution, we have existed in Montenegro for a full eight centuries...We can't register as some new religious community. The government call for dialogue obviously served for political marketing, and we don't want to be part of it."
