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OUTGOING GOV'T ATTACKING CHURCHES IN MONTENEGRO TO CAUSE UNREST AND ENMITY, SERBIAN CHURCH BELIEVES



The Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro believes that a recent series of attacks on churches and also Islamic sites is an attempt by the outgoing government to provoke discord and unrest.

The opposition coalition took a majority of seats in the nation's recent Parliamentary elections, marking the first time in 30 years that President Milo Đukanović's Democratic Party of Socialists could not claim victory.

Their defeat is largely attributed to the people's strong reaction to the government's persecution of the Orthodox Church.

Among the recent targets is the ancient Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Bijelo Polje, which was attacked on the night of September 2, reports the Metropolis of Montenegro.

The church was built in the 14th century and was an important center of book writing. Its sacristy still contains manuscripts and printed liturgical books from the 14th to 18th centuries.

“Given that last night there was a verbal attack on a priest in Rožaje, the desecration of a mosque in Pljevlja, and a false report of damage to the Waqf’s property in Berane, we cannot but recognize one and the same handwriting of the mercenaries of the outgoing government in all these incidents,” the Metropolis’ press service writes.

With such acts, the authorities are attempting to preserve the seed of enmity that they have sown over the past 30 years of their rule.

“We pray to the Lord and the Most Holy Theotokos to enlighten them and immediately stop such tricks,” the Church statement reads. The Metropolis also calls on the competent authorities to identify and prosecute those responsible for all the recent attacks.

“We also ask all faithful and God-loving people not to succumb to provocations, but to obey the voice of the Church and help the new government work peacefully and with dignity,” the statement reads.

In stark contrast to the authorities that have ruled Montenegro for three decades, after learning of the election results, opposition leader Zdravko Krivokapić immediately went to the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Podgorica to give thanks to God and receive the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro.

Concerning the mentioned verbal attack against a priest in Rožaje, the Metropolis writes: “Encouraged by the recent disconcerting moves on the part of the out-going government in which the people proclaimed their lack of confidence at the ballot box, dozens of people in the northern Montenegrin city of Rožaje chose to utterly disgrace themselves by participating in an incident which, despite the silence on the part of local officials, cannot remain hidden from the public eye.”

According to the statement, about 100 cars draped with Montenegrin flags surrounded the local church, blaring their horns and shouting, trying to provoke an

incident, thinking that Fr. Slobodan Radojević and his family were in the parish house.

“Get out, Father! This is Montenegro, this is our country!” they screamed.

The incident went on for about an hour and a half, ending when Fr. Slobodan returned to Rožaje and informed the local chief of police, who immediately intervened, though it seems nothing else was done.

The local mayor, however, made a plea for peace, calling on his citizens to refrain from any activities that would incite nationalist or religious enmity.

Orthodox faithful have also been gathering to protect Islamic sites throughout the nation, to thwart the outgoing government’s attempts to incite enmity and hatred.

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