

Ecumenical Patriarch receives high-level appeal for autocephaly by schismatic Church in Balkans



The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, this week received a letter by the president of the newly christened Republic of North Macedonia, Stevo Pendarovski, who appealed to the Patriarchate to recognize the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in his small south Balkan country.

According to media reports, Pendarovski's letter to the Patriarch, in part, stated "... I turn to you, on behalf of a large portion of my fellow citizens, who identify themselves as Orthodox Christians and whose only wish and need is to reconcile with their close ones and focus on a common future, co-existence and true freedom."

The letter added: "...Let me ask Your Holiness to esteem the call of our people and our Church to use Your prerogative and finally give our citizens of the Orthodox Christian faith the opportunity to be equal with the other Orthodox Christians

across the globe.”

The Orthodox Church in what was then one of six people’s republics in the one-time Yugoslavia seceded in 1967 from the Serbian Orthodox Church and proclaimed itself the so-called “Macedonian Orthodox Church”, an ecclesiastical entity which is not recognized by any Orthodox Church in the world.

A bilateral agreement between Athens and Skopje last year ended the “name dispute”, whereby the UN-recognized former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia was recognized by Greece as the Republic of North Macedonia, a name now recognized worldwide.

Greece had long objected to a stand-alone name of “Macedonia” for the former Yugoslav constituent state, given that the province of Macedonia, which more closely approximates historical and geographic Macedonia, lies in northern Greece and is part of Hellenic civilization.