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SERBIAN PATRIARCHATE RESPONDS TO KOSOVO ACCUSATIONS AGAINST VISOKI DEČANI MONASTERY



The Serbian Patriarchate issued a statement yesterday in response to accusations against Visoki Dečani Monastery and its abbot Archimandrite Sava (Janjic) made by Kosovo Albanians after the European organization Europa Nostra included the monastery in its list of the most threated European cultural heritage sites.

“Media reports about the extremely unfounded and malicious accusations of the third-rate Pristina non-governmental organization against Archimandrite Sava Janjic, the abbot of Visoki Dečani Monastery, were received with indignation in the Serbian Patriarchate and in the whole of society,” reads the statement published on the official site of the Serbian Patriarchate.

“It is clear that this is an attack on the Dečani shrine and an attempt to endanger the very survival of the Visoki Dečani brotherhood, and thus monasticism in other Serbian Orthodox holy sites and the remaining Serbian population in Kosovo and

Metohija," the statement continues.

"We again emphasize and proudly repeat that Visoki Dečani Monastery, with its abbot and brethren, throughout its history, and especially during the war of the 1990s, was a refuge for many victims, regardless of their religion and nationality. Thus, the monastery and the monks are proud to serve not only their Diocese of Raška and Prizren, but also the entire Serbian Church," the statement concludes.

In December, the monastery was included in Europa Nostra's list of the 12 most endangered cultural heritage sites, and earlier this month, it was announced that it was chosen as one of the 7 most endangered sites.

This decision was protested by Kosovo officials, who sent a letter to Europa Nostra claiming that the monastery doesn't meet the criteria for the list and that the monastery's report was "inaccurate, biased, and unacceptable," reports Orthodox Life.

The non-governmental Albanian organization "Council for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms of Pristina" demanded an investigation against Abbot Sava, doubting that the monastery had taken in any Albanians during the war in the 1990s.

The Serbian government's Office for Kosovo and Metohija denied the unfounded accusations and assessed them as attempts by Kosovo Albanians to hide the truth about the ongoing threat to the monastery.

"Visoki Dečani Monastery didn't shoot shells at itself, and Fr. Chariton didn't cut his own head off in 1999. Therefore, attempts to declare the self-proclaimed Kosovo an oasis of multiculturalism and religious tolerance are absurd at a time when we have daily incidents on the ground, which are reported to the European Union, as well as all relevant international institutions in Kosovo and Metohija," the Office said.

Churches and monasteries in Kosovo are repeatedly attacked. There were a number of attacks in a two-week period last month.

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