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KOSOVO ALBANIANS SEEK TO APPROPRIATE SERBIAN ORTHODOX HISTORY, SAYS SERBIAN HIERARCH



Earlier this month, the Albanian leadership of Kosovo called upon Europa Nostra to remove Visoki Dečani Monastery from its list of the seven most endangered cultural heritage sites in Europe, saying the Serbian Orthodox site was added under political pressure, and that its inclusion in the list hurts the image of Kosovo.

This week, Kosovo authorities sent a similar letter to UNESCO, demanding that four historic Serbian monasteries be removed from its own list of World Heritage Sites in Danger, reports the Orthodoxia News Agency.

Moreover, the authorities demand that UNESCO stop referring to the monasteries as “Serbian,” but rather as “Kosovan,” and that it stop referring to Kosovo as an “autonomous province. They also seek an end to Serbia’s right to protect the religious monuments in Kosovo.

Such demands are a desperate attempt to demonstrate a history that does not exist, the local Serbian Orthodox hierarch believes.

“We are witnessing something very paradoxical today: Strangers are appropriating our churches,” His Grace Bishop Teodosije of Raška and Prizren said following the Liturgy at St. Nicholas Church in Pristina on Sunday.

“Why are they doing this?” His Grace asked. “Because they don’t have their own, and they need to appropriate what doesn’t belong to them, in order to build their identity this way, to show that they also have a culture,” Bp. Teodosije answered, reports the Metropolis of Montenegro.

As His Grace noted, it has been well known for centuries that the holy sites of Kosovo and Metohija are Serbian Orthodox. The churches and holy monasteries of Kosovo “have their own history, their own identity,” the hierarch said.

And churches are not just monuments to be displayed, but are first and foremost houses of prayer: “We know who created them and why. Not just to be cultural monuments, so someone could brag about them, their beauty and grandeur, but so they would be houses of prayer.”

Bp. Teodosije also emphasized that prayers are offered for the whole world in the churches in Kosovo and Metohija. “We will glorify God, and so God will preserve and glorify us in this life,” he stressed.

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