01/06/2021

Patriarch Porfirije to the Ministry of Culture: Postpone the adoption of the Law on Cultural Heritage



His Holiness Porfirije, Serbian Patriarch, the Chairman of the Holy Synod of Bishops, sent a letter to Mrs. Maja Gojkovic, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Serbia, stating that the Serbian Orthodox Church is the largest individual owner of spiritual, movable and immovable cultural heritage in the Republic of Serbia, but that it was unfortunately not involved in the drafting process of the very important Law on Cultural Heritage, which also affects its internal functioning.

For that reason, pointing out the shortcomings of certain articles of the Draft of this law, and knowing that the common goal is the preservation of cultural heritage, His Holiness suggested to Ms. Gojkovic to postpone its adoption until further notice. Among other things, the primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church pointed out that the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is mentioned in six articles of the draft law, while the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija not in any article, where cultural heritage is most endangered and exposed to attacks and devastation. In this regard, His Holiness indicated the possibility of ill-intentioned conclusions that by omitting the southern Serbian province from the text of this draft law, the province was excluded from the system of state care, which is certainly not the case and may diminish the state's enormous efforts the state is doing in the protection of Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija.

The Patriarch also pointed out the fact that Art. 102 of the respective Draft Law, the Serbian Orthodox Church, de facto, was deprived of the right to use the cultural

heritage whose owner it is for its own mission, for which these cultural goods have been created for centuries. Legal experts pointed out to His Holiness that the strict application of this article would reduce the Church from the owner to the user, who after eight centuries would be denied the basic property rights that are sacred in all democratically organized societies and states.

With the amendments to the proposed Draft, the law will not be in conflict with the Law on Churches and Religious Communities, which is undoubtedly the case now.

Concluding his address, His Holiness Porfirije, the Serbian Patriarch believes that the adoption of such a law would not contribute to the joint two-decade-long intensive struggle of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the state to preserve their cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as in the constitutional and cultural protection system of the Republic of Serbia.

spc.rs

