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ORTHODOX SITES REMAIN ON UNESCO ENDANGERED LIST DESPITE PROTESTS FROM KOSOVO



Four medieval Serbian Orthodox monasteries and churches will remain on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in Danger despite protests from Kosovo authorities, according to the decision of the 44th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee recently held in Fouzhou, China.

Thus, enhanced monitoring will continue to apply at the monasteries of Visoki Dečani, Gračanica, and the Peć Patriarchate, and the Cathedral of the Mother of God of Ljeviš at least until the 45th session next year, and UNESCO continues to recognize Serbia's responsibility for the objects, reports the Metropolis of Montenegro of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The Albanian leadership of Kosovo appealed to UNESCO in May to remove the four sites from the endangered list and to stop referring to them as “Serbian,” but rather as “Kosovan.” It also 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.

Kosovo seeks to appropriate Serbian churches, His Grace Bishop Teodosije of Raška and Prizren said, to try to build its own identity and culture.

The Serbian Ministry of Culture and Ambassador to UNESCO Tamara Rastovac Siamashvili drew attention to UNESCO’s decision, saying it’s extremely important “because it confirms the continuous serious threat to this property, which the Republic of Serbia constantly points out.”

The monasteries of Visoki Dečani, Gračanica, and the Peć Patriarchate, and the Cathedral of the Mother of God of Ljeviš have been UNESCO World Heritage sites since 2004 and have been included on the endangered list since 2006.

The World Heritage Committee listed the criteria leading to the sites being inscribed on the endangered list: lack of legal status of the property; lack of a legislative buffer zone; lack of implementation of the Management Plan and active management; difficulties in monitoring property due to political instability, post-conflict situation, lack of guards and security, and unsatisfactory state of conservation and property maintenance.

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