

Church opposition to draft bill by Montenegro govt; risk of property confiscations



The situation faced by the Serbian Orthodox Church in the small western Balkans country of Montenegro continues to generate sharp reactions.

The Serbian government, the Church and many of the Orthodox faithful in the country have publicly and vocally reacted to a legislative initiative by the Montenegro government, which could possibly open the path for the confiscation and appropriation of Serbian Orthodox Church properties in the country.

The country's president, Milo Đukanović, in fact, rejected pleas that the draft bill be withdrawn, while claiming that he will "... not allow anyone to remove what belongs to Montenegro".

Nevertheless, the controversial draft law stipulates that religious communities can retain the ownership of properties only if they have what the state considers as legitimate ownership documentation and titles – whereas the Serbian Orthodox Church has countered that the draft law is a thinly veiled attempt to seize properties.