Metropolitan Hilarion comments on the situation with the arrest of Bishop Joanikije of Budimlye-Niksic and seven clergymen in Montenegro

In his comment to RIA Novosti news agency, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, expressed the position of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning the arrest in Montenegro of Bishop Joanikije of Budimlye-Niksic and seven clergymen from the cathedral in the city of Niksic. The archpastor noted:

The Russian Orthodox Church is deeply alarmed by the news of the arrest of Bishop Joanikije of Budimlye-Niksic and seven clergymen from the cathedral in Niksic by the Montenegrin police for up to three days, as well as by the incoming information about degrading treatment of Orthodox clergy. His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Episcopal Council in Montenegro issued an appeal for the soonest release of the detainees. We express our full support for this appeal, as well as for an appeal for constructive dialogue between the authorities of Montenegro and the supreme authority of the Orthodox Church in this country. It is only such dialogue that can help re-establish civil peace and accord in society, undermined by a series of manifestations of unfriendly attitude towards the Serbian Orthodox Church. Suffice it to remind that in the end of last year the Parliament of Montenegro adopted an undoubtedly discriminatory law "On the Freedom of Religion or Beliefs and Legal Status of Religious Communities." A proper assessment of this document was immediately given by the Russian Orthodox Church in the Patriarchal and Synodal Message Concerning the Situation in Montenegro.

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