Metropolitan Hilarion on the Annulment of Anti-Church Provisions in Montenegro's Laws



At the end of January, the president of Montenegro Milo Đukanović was obliged to sign into law amendments made by parliament on freedom of conscience, thereby abolishing provisions of legislations which were discriminatory towards the Serbian Orthodox Church. The amendments to the notorious 2019 law were voted for by the new parliament, in which for the first time in thirty years the pro-presidential party found itself in opposition.

Commenting on this event on air in the The Church and the World TV programme, the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion stated that Đukanović "at the time when his party was in power enacted a law by which church buildings could be taken away from the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, and this caused a huge wave of protest throughout all of Montenegro."

"Thousands of people, in spite of the restrictions brought in at the start of the pandemic, came out onto the streets to make clear that they would not hand over their churches and holy sites. The bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, including the ever-memorable metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral Amphilochius, fought for this discriminatory law to be abolished," said the chairman of the DECR.

He believes that it was the stubborn position of the Montenegrin president, who insisted that this law be brought into effect, is what led to his party being defeated. “The people will never forgive any attempts to get rid of holy sites,” metropolitan Hilarion emphasized, noting that Đukanović “did not heed the voice of the bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church and those who had warned him what would happen.”

“And it happened – and now his party finds itself in opposition,” continued the metropolitan. “The party which called for the removal of the discriminatory parts of the law won and now these discriminatory parts have been removed.”

Metropolitan Hilarion is confident that this event is a huge victory for both the Serbian Orthodox Church and for all of canonical Orthodoxy. “Mr. Đukanović wanted to repeat in Montenegro that which happened in Ukraine under president Poroshenko. He achieved this only in as far as his political career is over in much the same way as Mr. Poroshenko’s political career is over. But the canonical church stood its ground and will stand its ground.”

At the same time, His Eminence noted that the Serbian Church’s victory came at a price. In the autumn of 2020, the metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral Amphilochius died from coronavirus; he did more than anybody to ensure that the discriminatory parts of the law on freedom of conscience in Montenegro would be removed.

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