



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: President of Montenegro works to divide the population of the country, on religious grounds in particular**



On September 5, in the historical center of Montenegro – Cetinje – Metropolitan Joanikije was installed as Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral. He had been elected by the Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in place of the late Metropolitan Amfilohije. Radical forces supported by Milo Đukanović, the President of the country, who had been known for his unrelenting opposition to the canonical Church, tried to prevent the celebration of this occasion in Cetinje. In response to the accusations of the attempt to excite unrest, Đukanović said: “We have become witnesses to profound disgrace of the Serbian Orthodox Church that has unprecedentedly shamed the long history of the state of Montenegro, as well as the history of Orthodoxy as a whole.”

Commenting on this statement at the request of the host of “The Church and the World” TV programme Yekaterina Gracheva, Metropolitan Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, said, “Just as Pyotr Poroshenko in his time dreamt of creating an ‘independent Ukrainian Church,’ so also Milo Đukanović is dreaming of creating an ‘independent Montenegrin Church.’ Therefore, his support is not for the canonical Church, with the majority of the

population of Montenegro among its parishioners, but for a certain schismatic group consisting of a few adventurers who have clothed themselves with episcopal or clerical vestments.”

According to Metropolitan Hilarion, what actually brings shame on Montenegro is its leader who is unable to unite the people of his country, but instead is working for their division, bringing about a conflict.”

“It was indeed a shame that the Serbian Patriarch, who came to perform the enthronement of Metropolitan of Montenegro, could not reach Cetinje unhindered, because Đukanović’s followers were placed on the road to block the Patriarch’s access to the city. The Patriarch had to reach the city by helicopter. There are video-clips showing him coming down from the helicopter under the protection of the military carrying shields to cover him and the metropolitan-elect of Montenegro against snipers’ bullets. This is what indeed shames Montenegro; and it is the President of Montenegro Đukanović who is to blame for it,” concluded the DECR’s chairman.

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