

Your Excellency,

It is with joy that we communicate with Your distinguished Excellency, wishing you and your faithful people every divine blessing from above.

In recent days, at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we were informed with consternation that you expressed support for the creation of an Orthodox Church in Montenegro and that the Government of your land has ratified a draft legislation regarding freedom of religion, which envisions the nationalization of all Orthodox Churches constructed prior to 1918, as well as of ecclesiastical property. This means that your nation is expropriating the churches and property of the Holy Metropolis of Montenegro as well as of another three Eparchies of the Orthodox Church of Serbia.

Your Excellency, we hereby boldly apprise you that the Ecumenical Patriarchate, along with all the other Orthodox Churches, recognize as the only canonical Orthodox jurisdiction in Montenegro that which lies within the jurisdiction of His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro, a Hierarch of the Most Holy Church of Serbia. The Church of Montenegro has never been autocephalous, while today's so-called Orthodox Church of Montenegro under Miraš Dedeić does not belong to the Orthodox Church. Mr. Dedeić is not a Bishop of the Orthodox Church, but a person defrocked by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The sole canonical Hierarch there is our brother Metropolitan Amfilohije, who belongs to the Patriarchate of Serbia that is recognized on a Pan-Orthodox level.

We are addressing this letter to you because we do not want our beloved people of Montenegro to reach the point of ecclesiastical isolation and severance from the body of the entire communion of Orthodox Churches, inasmuch as no single Church among them will recognize or support the anti-canonical fabrication of Dedeić.

We repeat what we wrote to you in the year 2000: "We are convinced that Your beloved Excellency also understands the danger facing the spiritual cohesion of the people of Montenegro, as entailed by the movement of the said Dedeić, and that you will wish to disassociate yourself from him for the sake of the unity of your people."

Your Excellency, we entreat you not to consider the above as interference into the internal affairs of your nation, but as a desire on the part of our Mother Church in Constantinople to assist your pious people at a critical crossroads of its history.

Wherefore, we remain with esteem, love and wholehearted wishes.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the 21st of June, 2019

Your honorable Excellency's
fervent supplicant before God,

Ⓐ BARTHOLOMEW

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch

His Excellency Milo Djukanović,
President of the Republic of Montenegro