



THE SERBIAN PATRIARCH

Syn.no.2721/rec.1466

26 November 2003

Belgrade

TO THE COURT COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Skopje

We regretfully inform you that the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church has made a decision at the session held on 20 November 2003, under SBno.1-III/rec.39 and 40, to send you a letter of PROTEST because of your unconstitutional violation of the basic human rights and the rights of freedom of religious confession to the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje and Exarch of the Serbian Patriarch for all the eparchies of the Ohrid Archbishopric, kyr John, and to his congregation. The Metropolitan is unconstitutionally and unlawfully convicted by the Primary Court in Bitola only because he entered the temple of St. Dimitry in Bitola in order to baptise his sister's daughter.

During the political process initiated by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the R. Macedonia, urged by the schismatic organisation that calls itself "Macedonian Orthodox Church", and is unrecognized by any Orthodox Church in the world, the Court has violated the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, according to which the Church and the state are separated and all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are guaranteed their religious rights and freedom, by the act of convicting the Metropolitan John for the crime of "autocracy", as if he presents himself to be a metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in his own name. The Highly Reverend kyr John is recognised as Orthodox Metropolitan by every local Orthodox Church and, of course, it is more than clear that he did not appoint himself as a Metropolitan.

The greatest evidence that the Court has been working unlawfully and that it was incompetent for this trial is the fact that according to art.14 of the Law on religious communities and religious groups in the Republic of Macedonia, all the decisions of the religious communities and religious groups should be internal and are valid only for those religious communities.

It is obvious that the state and the court have two different measures in regard to human rights and religious freedom, so on one hand, according to the Constitution, they treat the Church as separate from the state, so they don't interfere in the choice and election of the religious primates, and on the other hand, in practice, they try the Metropolitan John for "autocracy" only because he entered the church in the regalia of a metropolitan.

During the process, the Metropolitan delivered to the court documents that showed that he is a metropolitan recognized in the Orthodox Church, but the court showed such disinterestedness in the facts and the truth, that the trial must be characterised as political.

Because of all the stated facts, we ask the Court Council of the Republic of Macedonia to re-examine the unconstitutional and unlawful conviction of the Primary court in Bitola, which has

sentenced the Metropolitan John to a one year of imprisonment, only because he had different religious beliefs from the judge who conducted the trial procedure.

With respect,

President of the
Holy Synod of Bishops
AEM and Patriarch of Serbia
+Paul