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HRWF (05.04.2018) - At its next meeting (Monday 9 April 2018), a panel of five judges will examine the following Grand Chamber referral request: "Orthodox Ohrid Archdiocese (Greek-Orthodox Ohrid Archdiocese of the Peć Patriarchy) v. "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (no. 3532/07), judgment of 16 November 2017 (<https://www.strasbourgconsortium.org/common/document.view.php?docId=7459>).

The applicant is a religious organization not granted official status at the national level. It appealed the refusal to register it to the Court, saying that the decision violated its rights under Articles 9 (freedom of religion) and 11 (freedom of association), and that its members were put in disadvantaged positions in relation to members of recognized churches. In its judgment of 16 November 2017 found, unanimously, that Macedonia's refusal to register the association as a religious entity violated its rights under Article 11 interpreted in the light of Article 9. "It could not be said that the reasons provided by the national authorities, taken as a whole, were 'relevant and sufficient' to justify the interference and the manner in which the domestic authorities refused the recognition of the applicant association as a religious organisation could not be accepted as necessary in a democratic society."

Under Article 43 of the European Convention on Human Rights, within three months from the date of a Chamber judgment, any party to the case may, in exceptional cases, request that the case be referred to the 17-member Grand Chamber of the Court. In that event, a panel of five judges considers whether the case raises a serious question affecting the interpretation or application of the Convention or its protocols, or a serious issue of general importance, in which case the Grand Chamber will deliver a final judgment. If no such question or issue arises, the panel will reject the request, at which point the judgment becomes final. Otherwise Chamber judgments become final on the expiry of the three-month period or earlier if the parties declare that they do not intend to make a request to refer.