

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

## **Djukanovic: Montenegro must have its own church to resist interference from Serbia**

*Milo Djukanovic believes that Montenegro must have its own Orthodox Church in order to consolidate its national identity and oppose interference from Serbia.*

World Remit (14.02.2020) – <https://bit.ly/20Xzvvh> – Djukanovic, who has been running the country for three decades, spoke about the controversial law on religious freedom, which triggered mass protests of the tens of thousands of believers who regularly take to the streets, a few months before the parliamentary elections in Montenegro.

The Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC), based in Belgrade, represents the vast majority of Orthodox believers in Montenegro. However, her relations with Djukanovic, who was an advocate of separation from Serbia in 2006, with whom Montenegro has been together for almost 90 years in 2006, have worsened in recent years.

The SPC is accused of being linked to the pro-Serbian and pro-Russian opposition to the ruling party, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), headed by Milo Djukanovic, who has dominated political life in Montenegro since the 1990s.

According to him, Belgrade is using the SPC to interfere with Podgorica's internal affairs.

Djukanovic believes that SPC is one of "important instruments used by the ideologists of Greater Serbia nationalism against Montenegro, against its independence, its national, cultural and religious identity".

The law, passed in late December, provides for the state to take control of property that religious communities cannot prove to have belonged to them before 1918. That year, Montenegro lost its independence and integrated itself into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slavs.

The text of the law could refer to a large part of 650 churches and monasteries in Montenegro. The SPC accuses the government of wanting to confiscate her property, with mass prayers being held twice a week, and at these rallies, it is called for the law revocation.

"SPC uses a skillful form of manipulation to believe that the state wants to take away their holy sanctuaries," Djukanovic said, adding that state-controlled churches would continue to receive Orthodox believers.

"It is a blackmail. The SPC is trying to use believers as a way of pressure on the state to give up the law, or to force

it to capitulate. This is absolutely unacceptable", the Montenegrin President said.

According to him, Montenegro should have its own church as a way of asserting its national identity 14 years after independence.

"We are driven by the indisputable need to improve spiritual, social and state infrastructure in order to strengthen citizens' awareness of their identity," he said, adding that there should be an autonomous Orthodox Church in Montenegro that would bring together all Orthodox believers, "the members of the Serbian, together with the members of the Montenegrin nationality".

For 30 years, the small Orthodox Church of Montenegro, in the minority, has been trying to revive, but it has not been recognized in the Orthodox world. As parliamentary elections scheduled for fall are nearing, critics accuse Djukanovic of using this controversy to divert attention from economic problems, mass emigration or corruption. Djukanovic, who has almost continuously changed his position from prime minister to president, has also been criticized for being an obstacle to democracy.

He responds that voters have always been free to express themselves and that his opponents are bad losers.

"My opponents are deceived if they think we will do them a favor and give them power without elections," he said, adding that Montenegro, which has made the most progress in EU membership negotiations, will continue its path of reform.

"I think that we will be able to fulfill our commitments and that Montenegro will be able to join the EU in 2025," he said, adding that the issue of the date of accession is not a priority, but to succeed in the Europeanization of Montenegrin society is among the priorities.

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1266

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1266

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1267

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268