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Authorities sign an agreement with Serbian Orthodox Church

HRWF (05.08.2022) - On 3 August 2022, Patriarch Porfirije of the [Serbian Orthodox Church](#) and Prime Minister of Montenegro Dritan Abazović signed the Basic Agreement on relations between the Serbian Church and the state. This is reported by the official [website of the Government of the Republic](#).

The Basic Agreement was first signed by the Prime Minister on 8 July. It was afterwards approved by the Government and by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The treaty regulates the relations, mutual rights and obligations between the state and the Church and stipulates the following:

- The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in Montenegro is separated from the state;
- The Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) is separated from the State; the SOC is recognized as a legal subject and has had continuity since 1219;
- The State of Montenegro guarantees to the Serbian Orthodox Church that no security measures can be taken on its premises by public authorities without prior approval of the competent church authorities;
- The Serbian Orthodox Church is vested with public legal powers;
- The State guarantees the inviolability of the property of the Church and undertakes to register (enter into the cadastre) previously unregistered immovable property belonging to the dioceses of the SOC in Montenegro;
- The introduction of religious education in public educational institutions is allowed.

The end of a controversial law

Serbia and Montenegro were part of a federation until 2006, when Montenegro declared its independence.

As of late December 2019, a newly adopted Law on Religion, which de jure transferred the ownership of church buildings and estates built before 1918 from the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Montenegrin state. That is the year when Montenegro - predominantly Orthodox Christian - joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Montenegrin Orthodox Church was then subsumed by the Serbian Orthodox Church, losing all of its property in the process.

The 2019 law sparked large protests and road blockages. Seventeen opposition Democratic Front MPs were arrested prior to the voting for disrupting the vote. Demonstrations continued into March 2020 as peaceful protest walks, mostly organised by the [Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral](#) and the [Eparchy of Budimlja and Nikšić](#) in the majority of Montenegrin municipalities.

In the [2020 parliamentary election](#), the opposition won more votes than the ruling party. The new government -- which came to power after elections -- said it would rewrite the law to ensure the properties stay in the hands of church, which is based in neighboring Serbia.

Montenegro is a member of NATO and aspires to join the European Union.

Further reading

[Legal framework on freedom of religion and actual application](#) (Annual FoRB Report of Aid to the Church in Need)

[Montenegro clashes as Serb Orthodox church leader installed](#)
[Montenegro rocked by violent clashes over inauguration of new Serbian church independence](#)
[Montenegro: Clashes erupt over inauguration of church leader](#)

*Photo : Patriarch of the SOC Porfirije and Prime Minister of Montenegro Dritan Abazović.
Photo: gov.me*
