



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Office of the Chairman

January 16, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

As Chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America, I have the particular honor of bringing to your attention our concerns as Orthodox Christians in this country for our brothers and sisters in Montenegro, who are suffering a violation of their religious freedom after the recent passing of the “Law on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs and the Legal Status of Religious Communities” by the Parliament of Montenegro.

The implementation of this law seems to function as a means for the confiscation of religious properties built before 1918 and which lack formal documentation of ownership. Our brothers and sisters in the Orthodox Church in Montenegro are directly impacted by these measures, which threaten eight centuries of continuous spiritual presence and cultural heritage. I am deeply concerned by the increasing tensions in Montenegrin society, as Orthodox Christians continue to peacefully protest in an effort to protect their sacred sites.

I call on you to protect Orthodox Christians in Montenegro against any violations of their human and religious rights, and I fully support you in your championship of international diplomatic approaches to achieve a fair resolution both in this situation and in other situations involving religious freedom worldwide.

I pray for peace in Montenegro, religious freedom for all, and an open conversation with all parties about this law. I pray also for you and your family and the United States of America.

Prayerfully yours,

† Archbishop ELPIDOPHOROS of America
Chairman