



**ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ**

**BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

E. No. 16
January 10, 2020

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino
Secretary General *ad interim*
Religions for Peace
777 United Nations Plaza, 9th Fl.
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary General *ad interim*,

It is a privilege to greet you, on behalf of the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North, Central and South America, praying that this appeal finds you well at the beginning of a New Year and New Decade.

Relative to the enclosed Communiqué, we call to your urgent attention the blatant abuse of Religious Freedom and the right to own property in the Republic of Montenegro. Following the passing of the “*Law on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs and the Legal Status of Religious Communities*” by the Parliament of Montenegro, brutal confrontation has been used against peaceful Orthodox Christian protestors, who are merely attempting to shield their sacred shrines from hostile takeover.

This present law appears to be a pretext for the confiscation of religious properties erected before 1918 and without formal documentation of ownership. In the case of traditional religions, such as the Orthodox Church, which has an autocephalous presence spanning eight centuries, this implies the loss of cultural heritage and religious patrimony.

We call upon you to intercede with institutions, as well as the non-governmental sectors that monitor International Religious Freedom and Human Rights, to intervene with the Government of Montenegro to immediately cease and desist from faith-based persecution and seizure of centuries-old places of worship.

Respectfully yours,

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Bishop of Eastern America
The Serbian Orthodox Church



Enc: Communiqué of the Episcopal Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church in North, Central and South America, December 27, 2019.