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Serbian church: Decision not to return property to Decani monastery undermines peace

KosovoCompromise Staff

Serbian Orthodox Bishop Teodosije said in a letter to UNMIK head Joachim Ruecker on that a decision of the Decani municipality president not to return the property to the Mediaeval Serbian Orthodox Monastery of Visoki Decani under an executive decision of the UNMIK head deeply undermined peace and order in the province.

The Decani Municipal Assembly on Wednesday refused to implement the UNMIK head's decision on returning the land to the monastery before competent courts made their decision, and it discontinued all contacts with UNMIK representatives in the western Kosovo municipality.

Priest Sava Janjic of Decani said that the decision of the Decani municipality represented a challenge for UNMIK because it threatened the local staff of the UN mission and added that Bishop Teodosije would inform UN peacekeeping operations head Jean-Marie Guehenno and Belgrade representatives about the developments.

The Decani monatory, in the western region of Metohia (Greek for "church land"), is one of the most important jewels of Serbian Orthodox architecture and is under the protection of UNESCO.

Ethnic Albanian extremists attacked the monastery with rocket launchers on five occasions since 1999.

Meanwhile, three Serb returnees to the town of Decani, left again their homes, fearing for their security.

The three had returned to Decani a few months ago, but one of them – Bozidar Tomic – was attacked in late May.

“Due to constant pressures from Albanians lately, we are obliged to leave Decani”, Milanka Popovic said.

Practically all of the Serb population from the region has been ethnically cleansed by Albanian extremists since 1999.