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Russian Patriarch Alexy II offers help in mediating the Kosovo crisis

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The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexy II, said on Tuesday in Strasbourg that Kosovo was “sacred” for Serbs and offered his help in mediating the crisis in the region.

"The Russian Orthodox Church has considerable experience in peace-building and peacemaking and we stand ready to help," he told the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

He also decried the destruction of Orthodox churches in the province, which he said was carried out with tacit consent of the ethnic Albanian majority.

“There are many monuments that are sacred to the people of Serbia and we cannot silently stand by when those monuments are being destroyed, despite the fact that they are under the protection of UNESCO and were built in the 12th, 14th or 15th century," Alexy II said.

He also argued Kosovo was a subject of political bargaining by people who did not appreciate the province's history and its importance for Serbs.

"Those people have never been to Kosovo and have never seen with their own eyes what Kosovo means for the Serbian people," the patriarch said.

Some 150 Serbian Orthodox churches have been destroyed or vandalized in Kosovo since 1999.