

The Holy Synod of the Œcumenical Canonical Orthodox Church Worldwide (ŒCOCW) Calls on the Government of FYR Macedonia to Release Archbishop Jovan from Imprisonment

Office of Morals, Doctrine, and Spirituality

The Holy Synod of the ŒCOCW joins the multitude of Orthodox and Catholic jurisdictions worldwide in requesting that Archbishop Jovan, leader of the Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric who has been continually and unlawfully harassed by the government of the FYR Macedonia. This continued harassment was initiated by ongoing internal disagreement within the Macedonian Orthodox Church regarding reunification of churches separated during the Communist occupation and persecution under the former Soviet Union. Because the basis of this disagreement is completely Church, related the government of FYR Macedonia has no legitimate jurisdiction and is therefore unlawfully interfering and exercising authority not reserved to the government.

As many Orthodox jurisdictions such as the collective attendees of the International Symposium of Colloqui Dionisiani meeting in Calabria, Italy November, 2012 requested the immediate release by the government of FYR Macedonia of Archbishop Jovan. This request and many similar requests by various Orthodox Churches are based upon the unlawful interference of the Macedonian government in church affairs and the suppression of religious freedom.

The charge on which the Macedonian government has based its actions consists of unfounded charges of financial mismanagement by Archbishop Jovan. Additionally, these charges were bought before the Macedonian courts by a group of disgruntled clergy formerly of the Ohrid Archbishopric recognized as the “schismatic” Macedonian Orthodox Church, a characterization that clearly denotes internal church activities, as opposed to civil or criminal actions under the authority and guidance of the Macedonian government. A simple analysis of the above referenced charges clearly illustrate that the Macedonian government is operating under undisclosed motivation as a means of continuing the persecution of a non-political religious entity and the seeking of **Lucre** (monetary gain) and unethical dominance on the part of the schismatic and non-canonical Macedonian Orthodox Church.

As reported by pravoslavie.ru a Slavonic news source, on June 8, 2012, Archbishop Jovan was transferred from Izidrovo prison to solitary confinement in Suto Orizari prison where he is expected to encounter substandard treatment that will dramatically affect his health and wellbeing. Archbishop Jovan is reported to suffer severely from advanced diabetes and serious back pain. Therefore enforced solitary confinement, denial of medical treatment and restricted visitation from family members amounts to cruel and unusual punishment, as well as a violation of international human rights.

Metropolitan Scholarios-Gennadius III, OSB; Protohierarch of the Œcumenical Canonical Orthodox Church Worldwide and the Orthodox Old Catholic Church join the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Moscow Patriarchate, the Church of Greece, the Holy

Community of Mount Athos, the Standing Conference of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, and the Orthodox Church in America in petitioning the FYR Macedonia government for the release of Archbishop Jovan. Additionally the Œcumenical Canonical Orthodox Church Worldwide and the Orthodox Old Catholic Church call on the International Court of Justice (World Court), the High Commissioner on Human Rights and the United Nations to intervene on behalf of Archbishop Jovan, Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopj and the recognition of complete and lawful religious freedom and humane treatment.