Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Protection of freedom of religion in Montenegro

Written declaration No. 710

This written declaration does not reflect the position of the Assembly; only of those members that have signed it. It will not be considered further by the Assembly.

We, the undersigned, declare the following:

We express our deep concern following the adoption in Montenegro, on 27 December 2019, of a Law on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs and Legal Status of Religious Communities.

This law, adopted with no consultation of the religious communities and against the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the European Union External Action Service, contains serious violations of human rights.

It provides, *inter alia,* that:

– most religious properties become the properties of the State (Article 62);

– religious communities are precluded from founding primary schools (Article 54);

– existing religious communities must apply for a new registration to obtain legal personality whereas they possess it already;

– religious communities with a seat abroad, such as the majority church (the Serbian Orthodox Church), must have their seat in Montenegro in order to gain legal personality.

This law is provoking massive demonstrations and the contestation of many church leaders across Europe and the world.

We urge the authorities and the Constitutional Court of Montenegro to repeal the law and to restore a peaceful dialogue with religious communities in order to achieve a new law that would be fully respectful of international law and of Montenegro's international obligations.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

KNEŽEVIĆ Milan, Montenegro, NR
BASHKIN Aleksandr, Russian Federation, NR
EFSTATHIOU Constantinos, Cyprus, SOC
EPISHIN Andrey, Russian Federation, NR
FILIPOVSKI Dubravka, Serbia, EPP/CD
KAGRAMANYAN Igor, Russian Federation, NR
KALASHNIKOV Leonid, Russian Federation, UEL
KISLYAK Sergey, Russian Federation, NR
KOGOGINA Alfiia, Russian Federation, NR
KOVÁCS Elvira, Serbia, EPP/CD
NOVAKOVIĆ BURSAĆ Snježana, Bosnia and Herzegovina, NR
OBRADOVIĆ Žarko, Serbia, SOC
OLEINIKOV Yury, Russian Federation, NR
OMTZIGT Pieter, Netherlands, EPP/CD
PAKHOMOV Sergei, Russian Federation, NR
PANTIĆ PILJA Biljana, Serbia, EPP/CD
PARENREN Bob, van, Netherlands, NR
PIPILI Foteini, Greece, EPP/CD
RODNINA Irina, Russian Federation, NR
ROUSOPOULOS Theodoros, Greece, EPP/CD
RUKAVISHNIKOVA Irina, Russian Federation, NR
RYZHAK Nikolai, Russian Federation, UEL
ŠEŠELJ Aleksandar, Serbia, NR
SLUTSKIY Leonid, Russian Federation, NR
STYLIANIDIS Evripidis, Greece, EPP/CD
THÓRARINSSON Birgir, Iceland, EPP/CD
TOLSTOY Piotr, Russian Federation, NR
TOMIĆ Aleksandra, Serbia, EPP/CD
VAREIKIS Egidijus, Lithuania, EPP/CD
ZHUROVA Svetlana, Russian Federation, NR

Total = 30

1. EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
   SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
   UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
   NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group