

27 July 2002

HELSINKI COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

MEMBER OF THE HELSINKI FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
THE CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND EUROPEAN COUNCIL
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To
Mr. Goran Mitevski
The Manager for Public Security
Police Service

Dear Sirs,

The Helsinki Committee for human rights of the Republic of Macedonia has observed with interest and concern the events referring to His Eminence, Metropolitan John, who was until recently the head of the Diocese of Veles and Povardarje.

Metropolitan John was received for a discussion at his request on 10 July 2002. On that occasion he complained that some of his civil rights had been violated, which is of concern for our organization. Namely, it is claimed that the police assisted illegally during the intrusion of the representatives of the Macedonian Orthodox Church for overtaking the building of the Diocese of Veles and Povardarje on 6 July 2002. The entering and the search of the people and the premises of the administrative building were performed without an injunction. During the search, bishop John and the other people who were present in the building were treated rudely and with insults. The representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs did not want to present their identification and as far as the entering and the search are concerned, there was no minutes created. The hierarch was not allowed to take his personal belongings with him. He was only allowed to do that on 9 July 2002. The bishop complained that certain things were missing, among them, a golden cross, worth 500 euros, and his wallet containing his salary of around 50.000 denars.

The Helsinki Committee neither wants nor has a mandate to interfere with the internal affairs of the MOC. Yet, the committee has an interest in the state and its bodies, particularly the Commission for relations with the religious communities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to act in accordance with the law and to respect the Constitution, regulations and the ratified international agreements for human rights and freedom. In this respect we would kindly ask you to inform us of the following:

- 1) On the ground of what authorization the Ministry assisted the intrusion in the Diocese of Veles and the Vardar Region.
- 2) Was there an injunction for entering and searching, issued by the court, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the legal procedures?
- 3) What was the injunction, as long as there was one, presented?
- 4) What was the legal ground for the search and why were legal procedures not respected (injunction, witnesses, minutes, etc.)?
- 5) Did the Ministry of Internal Affairs make efforts to protect the personal belongings of the people who were forced to leave the building (including the mentioned valuables which disappeared, personal computers, etc)?

We hope to hear from you soon and, once again, we appeal to the Ministry to accomplish their assignments within the legal frames and with dignity, without interfering in the church affairs, even when they are of national interest. We particularly appeal to you to make efforts in order to protect the personal security of bishop John and those who accompany him.

Skopje, 12 July, 2002

Best regards,