

## **MACEDONIA: 17 Orthodox monks, nuns and believers arrested**

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At 7am on the 21 May 2012 Macedonian police forces with arrest warrants entered several monasteries and homes of the members of the Serbian Orthodox Church Ohrid Archbispopric in Macedonia.

In Štip police was looking to arrest Bishop Marko of Bregalnica, but he was not present as being in Belgrade at the spring session of the Serbian Orthodox Church Holy Sinod. Nun Pelagija was arrested.

In Skopje, police entered a monastery of the Assumption of the Holy Mother of God looking for Bishop David of Stobi and protector of the Strumica throne, but he was not to be found. Priress Kirina was arrested, and while she was trying to report of what was going on, her mobile phone was taken away. Police performed a search and arrest while video recording all.

Bishop David stated for Center 9 the following in the afternoon of 21st of May: „According to our understanding, 17 nuns and monks are arrested today. Considering that the Macedonian police was trying to arrest me this morning, I expect to be arrested as soon as I cross the border line and enter Macedonia.“ Bishop David left the Sinodal Meetings in Belgrade as soon as he heard about the events and was travelling to Macedonia.

„Bishop Marko stayed at the Sinodal meeting, since someone needs to inform the public of the events in Macedonia, as our Archbishop Jovan is already in prison. Such persecution and repression, in a desire to annihilate the whole Church, is not remembered in a modern and democratic Europe“ stated Bishop David for Center 9.

In Bitolj, police entered a monastery of St. John Chrysostom during the liturgy, in an attempt to arrest the Mother superior Olimpijada. When Center 9 called a mobile phone of Mother Olimpijada, another nun responded confirming that Mother Olimpijada is on a ‘safe place and not arrested’. However, one nun was taken to police custody. “This morning, during the service, police entered the monastery with arrest warrants and did a thorough search. No one is injured, but everything is upside down,” she said for Center 9.

In Prilep, police entered a monastery of the Assumption of the Holy Mother and arrested hieromonk Mojsej.

In all locations listed above police sequestered PCs and other material possessions, under the statement that it is doing a search for the “tax evasion fraud.”

“This is absurd,” Bishop David stated for Center 9, “since we live exclusively out of donations of our believers and support we receive from the Serbian Orthodox Church. We do not have any income, since the authorities in Macedonia reject to register Orthodox Ohrid Archdiocese, which is recognized by all canonic Orthodox churches. We live rather modestly so the tax evasion is just an excuse for another attempt to totally destroy our Archdiocese.

The Holy Sinod of the Serbian Orthodox Church at its spring session in Belgrade earlier condemned “political and not judicial” sentence of two and half years to Archbishop Jovan, who is at present serving it in Idrizovo prison. Several more court cases are pending against Jovan.

Unconfirmed sources stated that there is an investigation against 15 persons. Members of the Archbishop Jovan's family are among the arrested, in addition to the nuns and monks, and they are all brought before an investigative judge. Macedonian police announced a press conference for 22 May.