

MACEDONIA: Arrested released – without passports

Draško Đenović, Centar 9, Beograd (www.centar9.info) 24 May 2012.

From 21st to 23rd May the First Court in Skopje interrogated all arrested members of the Orthodox Archbishopric of Ohrid. Bishop David of Stobi stated for Center 9 on the 24th of May the following: „We are



expecting that the charges will be brought against us and that the court hearings will start soon. The total number of people that were detained is 19. To all of us, including Bishop Marko of Bregalnica, hieromonks Mojsej and irinej, prioresses Kirina and Olimpijada, nuns Pelagija and Magdalina, and arrested believers, and also to me, passports were taken away, and we were given a mandatory sentence forbidding us to leave the country, and to report to a police station every week. Those arrested on the 21st of May were released in the evening of the same day, and the rest of us who were coming later were in custody only for several hours.“

Macedonian government and courts are refusing to register the Serbian Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric, and in the last 10 years, Archbishop Jovan was imprisoned six times. After the latest verdict to Jovan, the Macedonian judicial system is after the bishops, priests and nuns, and believers. Under the pretext of „money laundering“ police and courts are terrorizing some citizens of Macedonia, which is not remembered in modern democratic countries in Europe, it is stated in the Ohrid Archbishopric's press release. (Photo: at the court, waiting to give away their passports).

„This persecution started right in a moment when the bishops were outside of the country, at the Holy Synod meetings in Belgrade, and in time when there is a general discomfort in Macedonia as the country was not accepted in the NATO organization, while in Serbia there is no seated president and government is in making after the recent elections. They calculated no one will pay attention to such events in Macedonia while Serbia is busy with its internal issues,“ Bishop David stated for Center 9.

„What is very worrying is the fact that, apart from PCs, phones and finances, police sequestered all parish register books in which we kept all the names of baptized and married people of our Church, and all empty forms – certificates for baptisms and weddings. Police took away our archive, all Synodal minutes and other writings, all with a religious content only. We are afraid that they might destroy our register books. If they are persecuting us because of alleged money laundering, what it has to do with the register books, Synodal minutes and alike documents?“ discussed Bishop David for Center 9.

Some are afraid that the Macedonian authorities might start harassing people listed in the register books.

Accurate ethnic and religious situation in Macedonia is unknown, since the last census, from October 2011, was cancelled. It is estimated that among 2 million people, one third is of ethnic Albanian and also Muslim background.