

## MACEDONIA: Archbishop Jovan Sentenced to 3 Years in Prison, All Church Property Confiscated, 18 Others Sentenced

Drasko Djenovic, Center 9, Belgrade ([www.center9.info](http://www.center9.info)), 2 July 2013

On 2 July 2013, the First Municipal Court of Skopje, Macedonia, under the leadership of Judge Ivica Stefanovski, sentenced the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje Jovan (Vraniskovski) to three years in prison. The judge also ordered that all property of the Archbishopric of Ohrid is to be confiscated. Bishops Marko of Bregalnica and David of Stobi and additional 14 priests, monks and nuns were all sentenced to two years and then suspended to five years of probation. Among sentenced are Archbishops mother and sister as well.



All convicts were sentenced in the case initiated by the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) that is not canonically recognized by any canonical Orthodox Church in the world, and of which all the accused were not members. The MOC does not have a status of the state church in Macedonia, however, de facto extols all the power as if would be.

The Archbishop Jovan was arrested on 12 December 2011 and since then was held in Suto Orizari prison, among the criminals and other serious law offenders.

In May 2012 Macedonian police has arrested monks, nuns and believers:

(see <http://www.centar9.info/archive/article/pdf/173/en-EN/MACEDONIA:-17-Orthodox-monks,-nuns-and-believers-arrested>

and <http://www.centar9.info/archive/article/pdf/176/en-EN/MACEDONIA:-Arrested-released-%E2%80%92-without-passports> )

This is the sixth imprisonment of Archbishop Jovan in the last 10 years.

At its annual conference in May 2013, all the Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued an appeal to all democratic institutions in the country and internationally to help release Archbishop Jovan who is in prison under torture, as stated in a release by Bishop Irinej, the SOC port-parole officer.