**Citizens of Decani yesterday protested in defense of the 23 hectares of land**

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Decan, January 29 - Citizens of Decan for the second time in two weeks by protests in the streets have opposed the “forgiveness” (restitutinon) of 23 hectares of socially owned enterprises, "APIKO" and "ILIRIA" to Decani Monastery.

In protest, which took place on Monday, nearly 2000 citizens marched through the main street of the town expressing their revolt once again, as they said, for political and discriminatory decision from the Milosevic era which was damaging for property of Decani citizens. They have critically addressed the country's political institutions, the presidency, the government and MPs because they have overlooked this issue, which, according to them, is a priority. They also required the foreign embassies, primarily that of the U.S. to use influence in resolving this case. Meanwhile, the citizens, who said that they appreciate the cultural and religious values, expressed determination that they will defend their property at any price.

Adem Lushaj, from the organizational council has repeated once again that the protest is organized with determination to protect their property which was occupied in political and discriminatory manner.

"The people of Decani will not accept the decisions that were made at the time of Slobodan Milosevic, because they are politically discriminatory. The people of Decani know how to preserve cultural values, but also (know) how to oppose the claims over their properties, "said Lushaj.

In his speech Lushaj called higher local political institutions to show responsibility to protect the property of Decani citizens on which, according to him, the future development is prevented. Also request has been sent to the courts not to get involved in political decisions.

"We call on those who have come from foreign countries here not to give away our property. We oppose our institutions, the presidency, the prime minister and members of the Assembly for the neglect and lack of interest because this is a top priority. From here we appeal on the courts not to fall prey to political pressure, " Lushaj said. He demanded from the internationals intervention to find the right solution.

"We request the U.S. Embassy and other offices in Kosovo, to resolve this situation and not to allow provocations with the judiciary system," he added.

Lushaj told the protesters that these harmful decisions are preventing economic development of Decani, together with the future of the people of this area.

"Without the econommic development in Decani the prospects of archaeological sites, summer and winter tourism, border roads, the way to Plav have been destroyed" said Lushaj, who announced that activities will continue further in protecting citizens' property.

The damage to economic development of Decani was highlighted by Blerim Bajraktari, who said for the newspapers that these issues lead to the economic damage.

"We are dealing with an issue that has damaged the economic development of Decani. The activities and KPA laws treat differently other enterprises in comparison to enterprises 'APIKO' and 'ILIRIA' "said Bajraktari. He added that the organizational council will not stop until their demands are fulfilled, which is to establish justice in the country.

Selim Lokaj, from the association of historians of Decani, "Ali Hadri," said that what is happening today is paying the price of the Vienna talks. While the politics is silent he evaluated that they are held hostages by internationals.

"The Case of Decani Monastery is the price of the Vienna talks, while Mitrovica (is the consequence) of the Brussels talks. The main problem is that they (politicians) want to get elected and want to avoid problems with internationals to keep their careers. This looks an expensive policy”. He also added that these actions are leading to establishing "a Mini Serbia or Mini Vatican".

In the focus of the criticism is, as they say, restitution of 23 hectares of land, as well as decisions of the Special Chamber of the Supreme court and other local courts. Their legality will also be investigated by the Ombudsman. In a round table that was held on Friday to discuss the issue, the Ombudsman, Sami Kurteshi, said that the institution he leads will investigate the entire process and appear with a conclusion.

"The Ombudsman is not a party to the proceedings. We have not come to you in defence but for the right. Will try to assess the legal basis and see whether it was a political decision or not, "said Kurteshi in Decani on Friday.

In addition to self-determination leader, Albin Kurti, who did not want to give a statement for the media, no other political representative was present at the protest.

The citizens are decided to protect the property of 23 hectares. They even say that at the price of blood they will not leave their property (treasure).

Rexhet Canëkuçi, senior citizen from Decani, has joined other fellow citizens in protest. He said he knows well the history of the Monastery of Decani, because he says that the monastery was built on the property of his forefathers.

"Decani Church was built on Catholic foundations, Orthodox then built the walls. They pulled down the churches which were built by Albanians. The church land was mine, (the church) was built on my land, my elder Ili Decin gave them the land, which was Catholic at the time, "said Canëkuçi.

He said that he is ready to defend the land at any price.

"We are ready to give the soul, otherwise Sava will not allow us to pass along the road" said the citizen.