
Romania: illegal skyscraper threatening Bucharest Cathedral to be demolished. Archbishop Perca, “a return to normality”

(Bucharest) Almost ten years have passed since a Romanian Court declared the building built next to the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Bucharest illegal, ordering its demolition. In addition to being illegal, the building also threatens the security of the Cathedral, which is a historical and architectural monument included in the Romanian and European cultural heritage. On Wednesday, 20 July, City Mayor Nicusor Dan issued a demolition order for the illegal construction, thereby implementing the Court's decision. “Demolition costs – he explained – will be paid by the Town Hall that will then claim them back from the building's owner. Our aim is to return the land and restore the harmony of Bucharest's urban landscape”. In a press release, Mgr. Aurel Perca, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bucharest, called the Mayor's decision “a victory” for the Roman Catholics of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, for the capital's inhabitants, and for Romania's citizens. “It is a return to normality, a significant step towards the conservation of Saint Joseph's Cathedral, that has been threatened for so many years”. The Archdiocese's legal battle against the illegal construction that was threatening the Cathedral began in 2006. After years of trials, protests by the Catholic community, and the appeals for the protection and preservation of Bucharest Cathedral made by the Romanian Senate, the European Parliament, and the Romanian and European Bishops, in 2013 the Court ordered the demolition of the illegal construction. “For years, the Archdiocese of Bucharest has spoken up against the tergiversation of the administration, political pressures and the predominance of private and vested interests”, the Secretary of the Archdiocese, Fr Gabriel Popa, who has followed the judicial process for the defence of the Cathedral for years, told SIR news agency. “Let us not forget - he recalled - that even the Apostolic Nuncio to Romania called the building a ‘monument to corruption’”. “Once the threat is removed – he went on to say – we can also intervene to consolidate the Cathedral”. According to Romanian and foreign experts, the construction threatens the security of the Catholic Cathedral, which is likely to collapse in the event of an earthquake. The building, named Cathedral Plaza, was erected less than 8 metres away from Bucharest Cathedral. It is a 75-metre high, 19-storey building with 4 underground levels. The Town Hall will have to take a few more administrative steps before the demolition of the illegal building can actually begin. The Archbishop of Bucharest expressed the Church's willingness to help the local authorities, and thanked “all the people of good will who, by various means, over the years, have showed their solidarity and support for the preservation of St Joseph's Cathedral”.

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