Representative of World Russian People's Council speaks at UN Human Rights Council on violation of religious freedom in Ukraine

During the debates in the United Nations Human Rights Council, Archpriest Mikhail Gundayev, representative of the World Russian People's Council (WRPC) in Geneva, spoke on the violation of believers' rights and religious freedom in Ukraine.

As Fr. Mikhail emphasized, the WRPC expresses its deep concern over the gross interference of the Ukrainian state authorities in the internal life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The speaker noted that the so-called "Orthodox church of Ukraine" was artificially created in December 2018 by merging the religious organizations, unrecognized in the Orthodox world. Later, on December 21, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, acting in the OCU interests, adopted the discriminatory bill No. 5309, aimed at depriving the historical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of its legal name because its governing bodies are allegedly located in Russia.

As Archpriest Mikhail Gundayev pointed out, the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a fully independent institution, united with the Moscow Patriarchate by the historical and spiritual ties only. It is the Church of the Ukrainian people, registered in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, and its centre is located in Kiev.

Although the bill No. 5309 adopted by the Verkhovna Rada does not mention the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Ukraine's Ministry of Culture, which is in charge of relationships with the local religious associations, already publically stated an intention to apply this law to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The WRPC representative emphasized that this law violates the right to the freedom of religion and discriminates against millions of citizens of Ukraine belonging to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Besides, it runs counter to the constitution of the country, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the WRPC website reports.

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