Synod of Ukrainian Orthodox Church reports pressure put by Ukrainian state authorities on episcopate, clergy and faithful of canonical Church



Ukrainian state bodies are carrying out groundless criminal prosecutions and putting pressure on the episcopate, clergy and faithful of the canonical Church with the aim to make them attend the so-called uniting council, the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church stated at its meeting on December 7, 2018 at the Kiev-Pechersk Laura of the Dormition. In its decisions, the Synod also stated that such actions represent ‘a violation of the constitutional rights of the Ukrainian citizens to freedom of faith’.

The Bishops’ Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on November 13, 2018, has been followed by quite a number of events that can be explicitly interpreted as facts of pressure put on representatives of the canonical Church. In particular, bishops have been summoned for ‘talks’ to the Ukrainian Security Service and obstacles have been created for crossing the state border.

On November 23, 2018, the Ukrainian Ministry of Justice revoked its decision on the state registration

of the right to own buildings at the Pochaev Laura – the Cathedral of the Dormition, Cathedral of the Trinity, monastic cells, belfry, Bishop's House and Holy Gates. A few days later, the Cabinet of Ministers revoked its Instruction of July 17, 2003, 'On Exclusion of the Pochaev Laura of the Holy Dormition as a part of the Kremenets-Pochaev State Historical-Architectural Preserve'.

On November 28, for the first time in 30 years, a Ukrainian Ministry of Culture commission inspected the cultural valuables kept in the Kiev-Pechersk Laura of the Dormition. Two days later, law-enforcement bodies carried out a search in the territory of the Kiev-Pecherks Laura's farm at the village of Voronkov, Borispol district, Kiev region.

On December 1, summons for questioning at the Ukrainian Security Service were received by twenty clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church diocese of Rovno and Sarny.

On December 3, searches were carried out in cathedrals, diocesan administrations, churches and even private houses of Ukrainian Orthodox Church clergy in Zhitomir, Ovruch and Korosten.

On December 5, 2018, twenty clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church diocese of Rovno and Sarny were interrogated in the framework of the criminal proceedings under Ukrainian Criminal Code Article 111 on High Treason and Article 161 on Incitement of Religious Enmity.

On the same day, the Kremenetsk-Pochaev Preserve carried out an examination of the church valuables at the Pochaev Laura of the Dormition.

In connection with these events, the Synod requested His Beatitude Onufry, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, to inform the Local Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Supreme Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, international human rights organizations and diplomatic establishments about the pressure and criminal prosecution of hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

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