# Church representatives meet with Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe




On 7 November 2017, Bishop Viktor of Baryshevka, representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the International Organizations, and Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh), representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Council of Europe and the European Union, met with Mrs. Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Bishop Viktor informed Mrs. Battaini-Dragoni of the cases of discrimination against the Orthodox Christians in Ukraine and of seizure of church buildings of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the country, and handed over to her the materials describing the facts of violation of the rights of the faithful.

The participants in the meeting devoted special attention to the bills submitted for consideration to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which discriminate against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and do not comply with the norms of the international law. Bishop Viktor also mentioned the cases of failure to comply with the Ukrainian courts decisions in defense of the rights of the Orthodox Christians, and of

dragging out the criminal cases opened on the facts of violation of the rights of the faithful. Bishop Viktor described the situation in the sphere of inter-confessional and Church-state relations in Ukraine as tense and requiring attention of the international organizations whose task is to defend human rights and ensure the rule of law.

Hegumen Philip (Ryabykh) handed over to the Deputy Secretary General a report on the violation of the rights of the Orthodox Christians in Europe in 2016. Such reports are compiled annually with the assistance of the Russian Orthodox Church's Representation in Strasbourg.

Hegumen Philip also noted the importance for the Council of Europe to hold consultations on the religious dimension of the inter-cultural dialogue, actively promoted by Mrs. Battaini-Dragoni. The representative of the Moscow Patriarchate once again spoke out in favour of an idea to create a platform which will enable the Council of Europe and religious communities to hold dialogue on a regular basis. Despite the years-long discussion, this idea still seems difficult to implement in the Council of Europe because of the position of certain countries that oppose the idea of developing dialogue with religious organizations. However, the migrant crisis in Europe urgently requires from the religious communities to engage in the dialogue not only with national governments, but with international organizations as well.

The participants in the meeting agreed to maintain contacts.

*DECR Communication Service*

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Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/48044/