Statement made during the OSCE session on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination concerning the violation of the rights of the Ukrainian Orthodox believers



On 14 September 2017, at the session on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting that took place in Warsaw, Poland, Bishop Viktor of Baryshevka, head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Representation to the European International Organizations, made a statement concerning the violation of the rights of the believers and religious organizations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

As is noted in the statement, in 2015-17 numerous cases of violation of the rights of members of the canonical Church were documented, such as seizures of churches, beatings, arsons and damages to the church property. Even with regard to the high-profile cases, in which the violations are evident and leave no room for doubts, the law-enforcement bodies did not take any effective measures to restore the

rights of the faithful. Among such cases are beatings in the Yekaterinovka village of the Ternopil region, the ongoing confrontation in the Ptichya village of the Rovno region, as well as over 30 criminal procedures initiated by petitions of the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Among other issues discussed at the OSCE session were the developments in the Kolomyia town, wherein this year attempts have been made, backed by clerics of the Greek Catholic Church, to seize a Ukrainian Orthodox church, as well the violations of the rights of the Ukrainian Orthodox community in the city of Nikolayev.

Bishop Viktor of Baryshevka pointed out to the discriminatory nature of Bills Nos. 4128, 4511 and 5309, that, despite negative conclusions of the Verkhovna Rada Chief Scientific Experts Office, protest demonstrations of the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and numerous critical comments from representatives of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, have been once again submitted for consideration to the legislators. The hierarch noted that the unprecedented two-year delay in the registration of amendments to the statutes of dioceses and monasteries of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was a sign of compound crisis in church-state relationships, and that the hate speech, widely spread in the mass media, only aggravated the conflict.

The head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Representation to the European International Organizations stated with regret that, considering the current church-state relations, one could not say that the rule of law is observed in Ukraine. On behalf of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Bishop Viktor called upon the OSCE, state-participants in the meeting and the authorities of Ukraine to take urgent measures to prevent the violation of the rights of the Orthodox Christians in the country.

The cases of violation of the rights of the Ukrainian Orthodox Christians in 2015-17 gained wide publicity at the international level, as is shown, for instance, by the statements made by the international human rights organizations in support of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church during the OSCE meeting.

DECR Communication Service

Based on the information from the Information and Education Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

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