



Patriarch Irenaeus of Serbia describes amendments proposed to Ukrainian law as discriminatory towards the faithful of the canonical Church

In connection with the Ukrainian Supreme Rada's plan to consider two bills, one of which creates prerequisites for illegal capture of churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church while the other grants the state the broadest possible powers to control her internal life, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has appealed to the Normandy Four members, the Primate of the Local Orthodox Church, the Pope Francis of Rome and the Secretary General of the World Council of Churches.

In his letter in response to the appeal, His Holiness Irenaeus, Patriarch of Serbia, states in particular, 'Having read your appeal, we have learnt with deep regret that Bills No. 4128 and No. 4511 have been drafted in Ukraine, which imply not only an unprecedented discrimination of the faithful of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, but also practically the open persecution of most of the Ukrainian citizens, denial of their freedom of conscience and their rights to belong (or not to belong) to the Church or religious community to which they themselves wish to belong (or not to belong).'

Having assured Patriarch Kirill that the Serbian faithful will intensify their prayers to the Lord 'for our brothers and sister *in a very severe trial* (2 Cor. 8:2), Patriarch Irenaeus informed him that 'as a sign of fraternal solidarity with the great martyr Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch and the Bishops' Council of the Serbian Orthodox Church will send appropriate letters about this situation to religious, cultural, political and state leaders and international organizations.

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