



## **Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus emphasizes anti-church nature of bills Nos. 4128 and 4511 that were to be considered by Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine**

In anticipation of the session of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on May 18, during which the two anti-Orthodox bills were to be considered, Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, sent messages to the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and the Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

“If adopted, the abovementioned bills will constitute a ground for the violation, unprecedented in the life of the contemporary civilized society, of the constitutional rights and freedoms of millions of citizens of Ukraine, for the glaring discrimination of the vast majority of the country’s population, based on their belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church,” Metropolitan Pavel noted, expressing, on behalf of the Synod of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, the Belarusian clergy and laypeople his deepest concern over the current situation.

As the Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus emphasized, among those who came out against the adoption of the bills Nos. 4128 and 4511 were the Verkhovna Rada Chief Directorate of Scientists and Experts, the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Corruption Prevention and Counteraction, and the Verkhovna Rada Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Valeriya Lutkovska. The just criticism and condemnation were leveled against the bills by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Revd Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and by representatives of a number of the Ukrainian Christian confessions.

“The archpastors, clergymen, monastics and laypeople of the Belarusian Orthodox Church – we all respectfully apply to you, the head of the Ukrainian state, asking you to speak out in defense of the constitutional right of the Ukrainian people to religious freedom, and to withdraw the bills Nos. 4128 and 4511,” the message addressed to President Petro Poroshenko reads.

On behalf of all the Orthodox Christians in Belarus, Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavsk asked the head of the Belarusian state to appeal to President Petro Poroshenko, “coming out in defense of peace, justice and common sense, in defense of the constitutional right of the fraternal Ukrainian people to freely confess their Orthodox faith.” As Metropolitan Pavel noted, if the abovementioned bills are adopted, it “may plunge Ukraine into the chaos of unprecedented civil war on the grounds of religious persecution and repressions against the Ukrainian Orthodoxy.”

*DECR Communication Service*

*Based on the information from the official website*

*of the Belarusian Orthodox Church*

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