



Appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill over the situation around the Kiev Lavra of the Caves



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On March 16, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia made an appeal over the situation around the Kiev Lavra of the Caves, the Patriarchal Press Service reports.

His Holiness said:

The Kiev Lavra of the Caves is the first monastery in Kievan Rus', which has existed since the 11th eleventh century. This monastery is the founder of the common spiritual monastic tradition of the Russian, Ukrainian and Byelorussian peoples. It is the cradle of our civilization and national culture. Here the primary chronicle of Old Rus', 'The Tale of the Bygone Years' was written to become the origin of the written language and literature of our peoples. Throughout its millennium-long history, the monastery repeatedly suffered from forays, foreign invasions and blunt persecutions against Christians. But it was only under the militant atheistic rule in the 20th century that monastics were driven away from the Kiev Lavra of the Caves.

The new generations of monks have revived the monastery applying tremendous efforts and considerable funds (with a minimal help from the state or no help at all) to restore the monastery, to

reconstruct the now taken-away Church of the Assumption and the Refectory Church, but most importantly, to recreate the spiritual traditions and full-fledged monastic life. The Lavra remains one of the largest Orthodox monasteries in the world uniting over 200 monks and novices. Located in its territory are the administration center of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the living quarters for hundreds of future clergy - the students of Kiev Theological Academy and Seminary.

The ultimatum presented by the state authorities to the Kiev Lavra of the Caves constitutes a monstrous deed comparable with the persecutions against the faith at the times of atheism. As they did at that time, the authorities openly ignore law, not to mention a minimal respect for the rights of fellow citizens. The work of a certain commission for searching violations in the monastery's accounting were non-transparent. Its repressive aim is the full banishment of monks from the Lavra. This aim was not concealed by public officials and representatives of other religious organizations in Ukraine influenced by the secular authorities. It is regrettable that while the Ukrainian state leaders declare their commitment to democratic norms, the European way of development and respect for human rights and freedoms, these rights and freedoms are trampled upon today in the most glaring way.

I ask you to exert all possible efforts to prevent the coercive closure of the monastery as it will lead to the violations of the rights of millions of the faithful to the freedom of faith guaranteed by the Ukrainian Constitution, the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and many other acts of international importance. I very much hope that my words will be heard.

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