President of Ukraine V. A. Zelensky did not receive members of Synod of Ukrainian Orthodox Church



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On March 20, 2023, President of Ukraine V.A. Zelensky did not receive members of the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by His Beatitude Onuphry, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, who came to the presidential office in Kiev with an appeal to the head of the state. This was reported by the UOC official website and the websites of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Union of Orthodox Journalists.

‘We have come to inform the president about the position of not only the Synod but also millions of the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In 1992, the UOC hierarchs already came to meet the president, and it brought its fruits. <…> the faithful of the UOC deserve to be heard and not to be treated by the state as second-class people, so that there would not be enmity in society’, said the head of the Synodal Information-Education Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Clement of Nezhyn and Priluki.

At the Ukrainian Presidential Office, they were told that V. A. Zelensky did not plan to meet with representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; therefore. the meeting would not take place. The delegation met with officers of relevant departments who were to receive the appeal, to register it and to hand it over for further consideration. However, the members of the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church insisted on a personal meeting with the president and refused to hand over the appeal.

'We very much regret that the state avoids the direct contact and direct dialogue with a considerable part of Ukrainian society - the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Clement noted.

After a few hours of waiting, the Synod members had to leave the presidential office because of an air-raid alarm.

'We have come here in the hope that we will meet with our esteemed President Vladimir Aleksandrovich Zelensky, We understand that the president is a busy man. Unfortunately, an air-raid alarm has begun and we cannot wait any longer, but we hope that this meeting will take place in the future', His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry said.

The chairman of the Russian Orthodox Church Department for the Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media, V. P. Legoida, commenting on the situation, stated, 'Today, the President of Ukraine Zelensky by refusing to meet with members of the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has demonstrated once again disrespect and contempt for millions of the Ukrainian faithful who are defending their right to pray in the Church in which their forefathers baptized their children and buried their dead'.

'And all this happens because somebody over the ocean has decided that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has no right to exist. Such a decision was made in its time also by those who came to power in 1917. The further history is known to all', V. P. Legoida stressed.

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