



## **Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia has asked the WCC to take immediate action to end persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**



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During a meeting with the delegation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Jerusalem on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia said that the persecution to which the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church is currently subjected by the authorities in Kiev is an example of "real criminal acts".

"All Christian churches in the world, together with the World Council of Churches, need to stop these truly terrible crimes against this world-renowned Church. Orthodoxy has existed on Ukrainian soil for over a thousand years, and now this land itself is suffering from war and ongoing violence. As we can see, the real purpose of the current pressure on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church is to promote an alternative non-canonical structure. It has been created by agreement between Western countries and the authorities in Kiev, who have dragged their country into war, wishing to serve the greedy and overbearing claims of the West," the appeal reads.

Wishing for an early end to the war, the archpastor considers it a special duty to draw public attention "to the need for an early end to the persecution of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which includes persecution of its hierarchs and the closure of parishes, especially the Kiev Pechersk Lavra".

"It is obvious that the Kiev authorities are doing everything to hand over the Lavra to a schismatic structure whose canonicity we cannot recognise," said Bishop Theodosios.

He also asked the World Council of Churches to take "all appropriate action to protect and assist the suffering Ukrainian Orthodox Martyr-Church, which is under terrible persecution today".

Archbishop Theodosios recalled that the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have sent many messages to various church and legal organisations of the world: "We hope that they will be delivered and taken into account for the sake of ending persecution.

In conclusion, Vladyka Theodosios said: "The persecution of the bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church must stop and Kiev Pechersk Lavra must be returned to its true owners. This monastery holds the relics of many of the reverend fathers, and there are continual services and prayers there. It is a centre of spiritual life, but not a museum, as President Zelensky wants it to be, as he wants it to be given to a non-canonical schismatic structure - an alternative to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church".

Archbishop Theodosios has previously spoken out in support of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and against the persecution unleashed by the Ukrainian authorities.