



## **The Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church makes an appeal over the Ukrainian authorities' actions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**



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On July 4, 2023, the Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church issued an appeal over the continued actions of the Ukrainian authorities against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Appeal reads:

With deep sorrow, the Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church has taken reports on the developments taking place in the Kiev Pechersk Lavra.

Despite the protests of dozens of thousands of civil believers and the international community's disapproval, the Ukrainian authorities have continued perfidiously encroaching upon the great shrine for all the Orthodox believers without stopping the godless attempts to ravage the cradle of the Orthodox faith of the Eastern Slavic nations.

For several months, the abbot of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, the Most Rev. Metropolitan Pavel (Lebed') has been under arrest on far-fetched accusations. The Lavra clergy are deprived of the opportunity to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other services and its novices and numerous faithful to worship freely in the cathedral churches of the monastery. The clergy and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are regularly subjected to lawless actions aggravating the situation.

At the end of June 2023, a vast publicity in the mass media was gained by reports that the Kiev city authorities, using a plausible pretext of 'saving' cultural conserves from missile blows, plan to remove from the Kiev Pechersk Lavra the most venerated shrines of the Orthodox Church - holy relics and old icons with the aim to give them 'into the charge' of museums in Italy, France, German and the Vatican. In doing so, the leaders of the country and the Ukrainian capital city do not consider the opinion of Orthodox believers while their concern for the earlier 'inventory' of the Lavra's shrines was lulled by false promises to ensure that the religious, historic and cultural valuables of the Ukrainian people will never leave the territory of Ukraine.

In case these schemes against Orthodoxy are realised, the Holy Church and the Ukrainian people may be deprived of the spiritual support and consolation at such a difficult time as they find them in payer at the Lavra's venerated icons and holy relics of God's saints lying in rest in churches and caves of this old monastery. There is also a great danger that the shrines can be damaged or lost altogether as a result of transportation. A special sorrow is caused by the fear that icons and relics of holy ascetics, cherished so much by every believer, may be found in museum collections or even private collections of those who are far from faith and piety, thus repeating the tragic fate of our Byelorussian shrine - the Cross of Euphrosyne of Polotsk.

An infringement of law and demonstrative act of disregard for common human values and the rights of believers are evident from another order of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture to the novices of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra to leave the territory of the monastery, as well as all likelihood that the monks will be evicted from the Lavra.

The Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church expressed its position in view of the developments taking place in Ukraine and the Kiev Pechersk Lavra in its official Appeal of March 28, 2023. On behalf of the clergy, monastics and laity, the Synod members again resolutely condemned the actions of the Ukraine's and Kiev's authorities as contradicting Ukrainian and common human law and continuing to contradict to this time with regard to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, its abbot and brethren and the clergy and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Expressing support for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in this difficult time, we called upon the Ukrainian authorities to prevent the removal of church relics and shrines, which stayed in the Kiev

Pechersk Lavra for centuries and which are a spiritual support for all the Slavic peoples. We are against the banishment of the brethren of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra from the monastery in which they have been working for decades to please God and pray for the good of the Ukrainian people.

The Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church testifies that in case of a violent eviction of the monks from the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, they may find a place for further monastic feat in monasteries of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church.

We call upon all the faithful of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church to intensify their prayers for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and her faithful.

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