



Statement of Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media on persecutions against the monastic community of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra



DECR Communication Service, 06.07.2023.

On July 6, a statement was published by the Synodal Department for the Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media.

On June 30, 2023, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and Information Policy sent to the Kiev Pechersk Lavra a letter notifying that the national preserve 'Kiev Pechersk Lavra' adopted a decision "on the cessation of the monastery monks' Access" to five buildings in the Lavra" *Nos 45, 54, 69, 71). The address also contains a demand that these facilities should be vacated and their keys should be handed over to the preserve. According to the text, "in case of the monastery's refusal to hand over the keys from the buildings (facilities)... the locks will be replaced and the buildings (facilities) will be sealed up".

From the 4th of July, the Ukrainian authorities have attempted to implement the above-mentioned lawless decisions, which are peacefully opposed by the faithful assembling in the Lavra, only to be subjected to unjustified violence.

In connection with the foregoing, the Moscow Patriarchate Synodal Department for the Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media deems it necessary to state the following:

The Ukrainian authorities including the Ministry of Culture continue the persecution against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a whole and the brethren of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra in particular, rudely trumping upon the generally recognized rights of believers and religious organizations.

Guided by exceptionally political motives and under a false pretence the Ukrainian authorities have actually proceeded to the liquidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which presumes that it will be deprived of its most venerated shrines among which is the Kiev Pechersk Lavra.

The prosecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have as its final goal to rewrite the history of the Ukrainian people, to deprive Ukrainian people of their identity connected with the Vladimir Baptism, one for all the peoples of historical Rus'. The Ukraine authorities regard the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as an enemy while giving support to a schismatic community created by the state and encouraged to use violence.

The decision of the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture to end the access of monks to several facilities of the Kiev Pechersk Lavra is another act of persecution against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which can be compared to the antireligious repressions in the period from the 1920s to the 1930s of the 20th century.

The glaring arbitrary rule and terror with regard to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are carried out with the connivance of international human rights organizations who actually ignore the obvious violations of the religious rights of millions of believers. Amidst the pressure on the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, there appear reports about the plans to transfer abroad the monastery's venerated shrines.

The Russian Orthodox Church for another time appeals to the international community to pay attention to the persecutions against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; they should be stopped immediately. We call to hold an independent international investigation in view of the continued destruction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.