



## **Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia: Father Superior of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra given custodial sentence for his religious affiliation**



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On July 22, His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia, sent written appeals to several religious leaders, representatives of international organizations and human rights advocates calling upon them to use their authority in the world to help release Father Superior of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, so that he could continue his evangelical mission.

On July 14, Metropolitan Pavel was detained under the decision of a district court in Kiev and put into prison. Earlier, he had been under round-the-clock home arrest for several months.

Among the addressees of the Patriarch's messages are Primates of Local Orthodox Churches, Pope Francis of Rome, head of the Anglican Community Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, as well as World Council of Churches, Commission of Bishops' Conferences in the European Union, Amnesty International and Freedom House, the website of the Serbian Orthodox Church reports.

As His Holiness Porfirije points out, during the large-scale, grave and dangerous historical changes, which certainly are such today, everyone who advocates justice, whatever his or her religion, nation, ideological or political convictions may be, must point to the injustice committed against individuals and their fundamental rights. An example of such an injustice is the situation of Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl.

The messages point to the non-legal nature of the grounds for such a decision. His Holiness stressed that on the one hand it is a consequence of the grave situation in Ukraine, where the military conflict is continued, and from the other hand, an expression of the present authorities' intention to seize the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, one of the most important shrines of the entire Orthodox world.

Appealing to religious leaders and international figures, Patriarch Porfirije pointed out with pain and bitterness that Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, who has always called to peace and cessation of conflicts and a search of decisions through dialogue, cannot be convicted and subjected to imprisonment for his political convictions; he should not be charged with words, all the more so, with his way of thinking.

Metropolitan Pavel has found himself in prison for his religious affiliation, and this is a glaring example of human rights violation, stated His Holiness noting. "His was put in prison because he is an Orthodox hierarch faithful to his Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Universal Orthodoxy"; Metropolitan Pavel is "a steadfast guardian of the monastery and its abbot". And as such, he represents an unsurmountable obstacle on the way of those who seek to give "an appearance of lawfulness and legality" to the capture of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra by a different structure having an appearance of a church.

His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije has called to defend Metropolitan Pavel and to do all that is possible for his discharge.

As was reported earlier, on 15 July 2023, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia addressed himself to the Primates of Local Orthodox Churches, several religious leaders and representatives of international organizations with several messages informing them about the persecution against the Father Superior of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, calling upon them to pay attention to the persecution carried out in Ukraine against the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.