



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill issues statement following guilty verdict against Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchyn and Bratslav**



*His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia issued a statement after the Ukrainian court had delivered a guilty verdict against Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchyn and Bratslav.*

On August 7, the Vinnytsia City Court brought in a verdict against the ruling hierarch of the Diocese of Tulchyn and Bratslav of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Metropolitan Jonathan (Yeletskikh).

Prior to that unlawful court ruling, numerous attempts had been made to put pressure on Metropolitan Jonathan but he remained faithful to his Church and his brothers and sisters in Christ.

I got to know Metropolitan Jonathan when he studied and then worked at the Leningrad Theological Academy. As far back as the 1980s, national security bodies of the atheistic regime tried to intimidate him, but to no effect. And now their successors – those who fight against the Church of Christ today – continue their shameful work by delivering that unjust verdict. The hierarch of advanced age with a serious illness, who is a church composer well known in the Orthodox world, was sentenced to 5 years in prison and confiscation of property based on absurd charges, in particular, of “committing actions aimed at forcibly changing or overthrowing the constitutional regime” and “encroaching on the territorial

integrity of Ukraine.”

All these charges are absolutely baseless, and the so-called evidence was fabricated. His Eminence Jonathan, together with the whole Church, prays for peace, calls for spiritual unity of the Holy Rus’ and defends the rights of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, unmasking the canonical untruth of the schism. That is why he was convicted.

We regard this court ruling driven by hatred towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as yet another act of flagrant violation of religious freedom and a manifestation of persecution because of one’s faith.

Once again I call on the world community, religious and political leaders and human rights organizations to direct their attention to the Ukrainian authorities’ deliberate policy aimed at destroying the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as well as to continued persecution against its hierarchs and clerics, monastics and laypeople that goes unpunished.

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