



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill replies to the appeal by His Holiness the Patriarch of Bulgaria Neophyte regarding the Russian church building in Sofia.**



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As a result of the deportation from Bulgaria of the dean of the metochion (representation church) of the Russian Orthodox Church in Bulgaria archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), as well as of the secretary and colleague of the metochion, which happened on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 under the pretext of a “threat to national security”, the work and activities of the metochion were temporarily suspended and its church building closed. Over the course of the next few days many Orthodox Christians have come to pray at the locked doors of the Russian church and people from around the Bulgarian capital have left written notes protesting against the police actions of the Bulgarian authorities.

In his appeal to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Kirill His Holiness the Patriarch of

Bulgaria Neophyte expressed his concern at the suspension of the liturgical life in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Sofia.

In his letter of reply the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted the unprecedented nature in recent history of the decision by the Bulgarian authorities and expressed his profound regret with regard to the use of humiliating and discriminatory measures towards religious ministers with the clear aim of damaging the friendly relationship between the fraternal nations and sisters Churches. His Holiness the Patriarch labelled the actions of the Bulgaria state authorities an unfriendly and unjust act towards the metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church, emphasizing at the same time that the Moscow Patriarchate was willing to continue its cooperation with the representative of the Patriarch of Bulgaria to the Patriarchal Throne of Moscow in his ministry for the good of the two Churches and assuring the Bulgarian Patriarch of his support for the work of the metochion of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Moscow.

Sharing his concern with His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte over the temporary cessation of worship and the closure of the Church of Saint Nicholas, expressing his sympathies for the parishioners and churchgoing people of Sofia and deeply regretting that at present there is no possibility of visiting the church and praying at the tomb of Saint Seraphim of Boguchar, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill made clear that full responsibility for the suspension of the work and activities of the metochion lies with those who took the decision to deport its dean and coworkers.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church notified His Holiness the Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia that the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate in the near future would appoint a new dean so that the doors of the Russian metochion would be open as soon as possible. The letter also contains a request to help the soon-to-be appointed dean settle in Sofia.

In concluding his missive, His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill expressed his belief that the political forces supported by the enemy of the human race would not tear apart the centuries-old ties of love and brotherhood in Christ that form the basis of cooperation between the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches.