



Three church buildings in Chernigov taken away from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under the pretext of “restoration”



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On the morning of October 5, armed people in camouflage uniforms surrounded the Holy Trinity cathedral, the Transfiguration cathedral, and the Yelets convent in Chernigov, reports the Information and Education Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) with reference to the information provided by the Chernigov diocese.

The faithful could not go to churches to pray and attend divine services. The entrance to the nuns' cells was blocked.

The police was called in, and it was deduced that such actions had been taken for ensuring the work of

the Commission of the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy. However, neither the police, nor the persons blocking the entrance to churches could provide any documents confirming the legality of their actions. The Diocesan Administration explained that the legal dispute over these churches and premises of the monastery was not over and that the court has not yet reached a verdict.

The commission that arrived from Kiev is headed by Ms Marianna Tomin, director of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture, who earlier supervised the sealing of the premises of the Kiev Lavra of the Caves. The Union of Orthodox Journalists cites this information published by Suspilne.media. Representatives of the Ministry inspected the churches and stated their 'unsatisfactory condition' and urgent need of conservation, detailed examination and restoration.

Under this pretext, the Chernigov cathedrals of the Trinity, the Transfiguration and the Dormition used by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church had been closed. The Liturgies have not been celebrated since then, and the faithful cannot pray at the holy relics and the wonderworking icons. "Divine services are totally out of the question because experts will be working," said Marianna Tomin.

She suggested that clergymen take their belongings not included in the museum funds, but during several hours they were not allowed inside the cathedrals and could not take items of property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church communities.

Mr. Alexander Shamko, a lawyer of the Chernigov diocese, believes that the actions of the Ministry of Culture and of its local structure – the "Chernigov Ancient" National Reserve are contrary to law. He says that during two years the diocese has been requesting the Reserve's administration to give its consent to restoration works, including the restoration of the Transfiguration cathedral, but representatives of the museum either said 'no' or made no reply. He added that "they sealed the cathedrals and changed the locks, having done it illegally and by force and not waiting for the court rule."

Representatives of the Ministry of Culture promise to inspect all twenty-six architectural monuments belonging to the Reserve's property. Yet, they do not hide the true goal of the commission headed by Ms Tomin, which is to take away the cathedrals from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Ministry's press service calls it the "commission for the transfer of state property" and says that "one of the commission's tasks is to transfer the state immovable property of the "Chernigov Ancient" National Architectural and Historical Reserve from temporary users to state ownership."

The Union of Orthodox Journalists reported that in February 2023 the Reserve had announced the expiration of contracts for the use of architectural monuments – the Yelets convent, the Trinity monastery and the Transfiguration cathedral and demanded that the Chernigov diocese of the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church vacates them. The diocese invoked the law 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations' and filed lawsuits with a request to hold contracts in force and operating.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/90857/>