



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## **First Hierarch of the Church Abroad: Bill No. 8371 is directed against the majority of believing citizens of Ukraine**



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Bill No. 8371, which provides for a ban on the ministry of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the territory of Ukraine, " demonstrates the lack of religious freedom in a country known for its piety and targets the majority of its religious citizens," noted Metropolitan Nicholas of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, in a letter to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine, expressing his brotherly love, support and sympathy.

"Standing before the Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God 'of the Sign,' the relics of St John (Maximovich) the Wonderworker, and other holy sites, we fervently pray in these days of sorrow for strength for you, your brother archpastors, pastors, monastics and faithful flock of the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church," the letter, **published by** the website of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, reads.

"We also pray for the enlightenment of the persecutors who have lost their sobriety.," Metropolitan Nicholas emphasised. He pointed out that the current situation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is reminiscent of the events of a hundred years ago, when some in the Orthodox world, turning away from the legitimate hierarchy of the persecuted Church, supported the so-called "Living Church" together with the atheists.

" We pray, hope and believe that the memory of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the 20th century will be immersed in the souls of each of us Orthodox Christians, helping us in these difficult times to follow the example of the faith and faithfulness of the victims and not to be on the side of the persecutors," writes the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad.

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On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted in the first reading draft law No 8371 aimed at banning the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. It allows the activity of any religious communities on the territory of Ukraine to be banned in court if they are "affiliated" with foreign religious organisations. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' sent messages to the Primate of the Local Orthodox Churches and a number of religious figures [with regard to this issue], and also addressed representatives of international organisations. In his messages, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church **shared his concern** over the Ukrainian parliament's consideration of a discriminatory draft law.

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