



## Vice-chairman of Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media speaks at UN Security Council meeting



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On November 17, 2023, Mr Vakhtang Kipshidze, vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media, spoke remotely at a United Nations Security Council meeting. He briefed the Council on the plight of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) in Ukraine.

As [patriarchia.ru](https://patriarchia.ru) **reports**, citing the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media, in his 10-minute speech Mr Kipshidze reminded the Council members that the Russian Orthodox Church had gone through decades of persecution unleashed by the atheistic regime. A hundred years ago, in the wake of the October Revolution, believers were declared enemies of the state and persecuted for their faith; their churches were either blown up or requisitioned; any remembrance of the

religious past was being obliterated.

“Never could it occur to us that nowadays people in Ukraine would once again be persecuted for their faith. An analysis of the situation leads us to the conclusion that the authorities of the country have an objective of completely annihilating the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – a religious community of the majority of Ukrainians,” said Vakhtang Kipshidze.

As the representative of the Russian Church also noted, facts of violation of believers' rights were confirmed by both the UN bodies and independent experts. They were mentioned, for instance, in the Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine published by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on October 4, 2023, and by a Ukrainian journalist, Yan Taksyur, who addressed the UN Security Council on July 26, 2023. In September, the said issue was discussed by a U.S. lawyer, Bob Amsterdam, and a popular television host, Tucker Carlson. European Christian researches also acknowledge facts of violation of the religious freedom in Ukraine. In September 15, 2023, Prof Dr Thomas Bremer of the University of Münster, when commenting on the situation, challenged conclusions of the so-called expert religious examination carried out in Ukraine with the view of justifying the liquidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

As Mr Kipshidze pointed out, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', sent repeated appeals to the UN Secretary-General and the OSCE and the Council of Europe leadership in a bid to draw their attention to mass violations of the rights of the UOC worshippers.

“It seems that no one in the world community is concerned that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which unites tens of millions of people, is being brazenly annihilated. Moreover, when Russian religious leaders speak up in defence of the UOC members, the Ukrainian security services see it as yet another excuse for persecution,” said the vice-chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media.

“The first step to the restoration of peace in Ukraine is the end to persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church,” Mr Kipshidze added, calling on the UN Security Council members to set political differences aside and protect common believers from the unprecedented persecutions. Priests and laypeople, monks and bishops must not be treated as collateral damage of global politics.

“If you, esteemed members of the United Nations Security Council, fail to take consistent steps towards re-establishment of the worshippers' rights in Ukraine, religious persecution will continue,” he said in conclusion.

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