Human Rights Alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination" calls for release of arrested Metropolitan Arseny of Sviatohirsk



DECR Communication Service, 25/04/2024

The arrest of Metropolitan Arseny of Sviatohirsk, abbot of the Holy Assumption Sviatohirsk Lavra, is unjustified, unlawful and political in nature, the ***statement*** *of the International Human Rights Alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination" says. The full text of the statement is given below.*

After discussing with the participants of the international human rights alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination" the fact of arrest of Metropolitan Arseny, the hierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, abbot of the Holy Assumption Sviatohirsk Lavra, we declare on behalf of the members of our organisation the following:

1. Participants of the international human rights alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination" express their confidence in the fact that the arrest of Metropolitan Arseny is unjustified,

unlawful and political in nature. Such conclusion follows from the official statements of the Security Service of Ukraine and media reports, determining that the reason for the arrest was Metropolitan Arseny's disclosure of information about the place of deployment of the Territorial Defence Forces in autumn 2023. As it follows from open sources, Metropolitan Arseny's disclosure of such information, if it took place in reality, did not lead to any damage to the Armed Forces of Ukraine and was due to certain reasons, namely blocking the access of believers to religious services at checkpoints. Thus, this fact should not have been the basis for the application of such a severe preventive measure as imprisonment.

2. At the same time, we deem the arrest of an influential and authoritative church hierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Arseny, almost simultaneously with the suspicion of the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Department of External Church Relations, Fr. Mykola Danylevych, as well as the arrest and detention of journalists of the "Union of Orthodox Journalists", the prohibition, by decision of the state body, of access to information resources on the problems of violations of the UOC believers' rights as a systematically related phenomena of suppression of legal activity and religious activity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including the VR's [Verkhovna Rada's] run-up to the adoption in the second reading of the so-called law "on banning the UOC".

3. Participants of the international human rights alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination", human rights organisations with consultative status at the UN ECOSOC, international lawyers and journalists, members of the organisation, will take all measures to ensure a full range of international legal protection, media campaigns and communication on this case with the diplomatic and international corps of the UN, UNHRC, OSCE, committees and commissions of the EU and the USA, whose mandates provide for the human rights monitoring in different countries.

4. The participants of the international human rights alliance "Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination" call on the State of Ukraine to immediately release Metropolitan Arseny, replacing, if necessary, his preventive measure with a milder one that does not involve imprisonment. We are convinced that Metropolitan Arseny will not interfere with the investigative actions and will appear before the law enforcement agencies when summoned. For their part, the foreign members of the Alliance are ready to provide the State of Ukraine with a personal guarantee for Metropolitan Arseny, so that he will be immediately released from custody.

5. The International Human Rights Alliance, in response to the systematic persecution of the UOC believers, announces the creation of an open international broad movement to protect religious freedom and defend the rights of believers, and begins a time-unlimited international legal, diplomatic and media campaign to defend the rights of believers, notably the arrested hierarchs and clerics of the UOC. We urge all those who care to join this movement by expressing their desire for support by sending a short message to the following e-mail address: **ngopublic@proton.me**.

On behalf of the International Human Rights Association

"Church against Xenophobia and Discrimination"

Head of the human rights organisation with consultative status at UN ECOSOC "Public Advocacy"

Oleg Denisov

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The International Human Rights Association "Church against Xenophobia and Religious Discrimination" **was established** in December 2023 by a number of hierarchs of clergymen from various Local Orthodox Churches in cooperation with the following non-governmental organizations – "Public Advocacy", "VSI Zmogaus Teisiu Apsauga" and European Institute for Religion and Law – that have a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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