



## **Court upholds verdict against Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav to five years in prison**



**DECR Communication Service, 18.06.2024.**

On June 18, the Vinnitsa Court of Appeals left unchanged the first-instance court's ruling of August last year by which Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav, the hierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was sentenced to five years in prison with confiscation of property, the Union of Orthodox Journalists reports with reference to Vinnytsia.info.

The verdict on nonsense charges was passed by a Ukrainian court against a 75-year-old seriously ill hierarch, a composer of church music well known in the Orthodox world. As previously reported, the prosecutor demanded to sentence Metropolitan Jonathan to six years in prison. According to the lawyers, the evidence in the case turned out to be fabricated, while the legal and factual evidence of the hierarch's innocence presented by the defence was ignored by the prosecution. Metropolitan Jonathan did not admit his guilt and filed a legal challenge to a higher authority.

While the appeal was being considered, Metropolitan Jonathan was under house arrest. On 19 March

2024, he had a stroke followed by medical treatment.

The full text of the court ruling will be announced on June 21. The appellate court's decision comes into force from the moment it is announced and can be appealed to the Court of Cassation within three months.

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On 7 August 2023, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' issued a statement after the Ukrainian court of first instance passed the guilty verdict against Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav.

“We regard this court ruling driven by hatred towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as yet another act of flagrant violation of religious freedom and a manifestation of persecution because of one's faith,” His Holiness underscored and stated that the charges against the hierarch “are absolutely baseless and the so-called evidence was fabricated.”

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill has repeatedly addressed religious leaders and representatives of international and human rights organizations in connection with the flagrant cases of persecution of hierarchs and clerics, monastics and laypeople of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, stating that actions of the current Ukrainian authorities against the faithful have acquired “the character of open religious persecution.”

His Holiness has given his blessing to offering up fervent prayers for archpastors and clerics of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who are held prisoners and also for all the faithful striving to preserve church unity and performing the feat of confessors by standing up for this unity.

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