



## **Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia: We demand an immediate end to persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**



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On August 16, Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, hierarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, issued a statement that reads:

"Beginning the fast before the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, we offer fervent prayers for ending the war in Gaza and for the triumph of true peace throughout the world. We also pray for Ukraine, for peace and well-being of its people. We feel aggrieved by the unabating unprecedented persecution against the canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine headed by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy. The Kiev authorities are persecuting the Church as if their goal is the complete destruction of this ancient, rich in its history Church, the foundation of which dates back to the beginning of Christianity in Ukraine.

“The accomplices and conspirators of these dreadful acts against the canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine are Western political forces that are making every possible effort to destroy it, put an end to its existence, and find an alternative to it. To our great regret, all this is happening in close cooperation with well-known church organizations.

“It is regrettable and sad that the current persecutions go along with the destruction and looting of churches, the theft of donations, the arrests of bishops and priests, the persecution of them and of those believers who do not want to change their church affiliation. Unfortunately, all this is happening today before our eyes, and the whole world is watching, but no one is doing anything.

“Where are all the Christian Churches at this time of severe persecution, and why do we see tacit indifference to these actions reeking with injustice?

“Where are all the human rights organizations and institutions of our world? Those who claim to care about democracy, respect for freedoms and protection of human rights and even animal rights, but ignore and turn a blind eye to these inequitable acts and cruel persecution against the ancient Orthodox Church, which is the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

“We would like to remind all Christian Churches of the world, especially the Orthodox Churches, of their spiritual, religious, ecclesiastical and moral duty to reject and resist these persecutions and demand their immediate end. We demand prompt and concrete actions aimed at ending the persecution against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

“St. Paul the Apostle said, ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together’ (1 Cor. 12:26). Today, when the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is being crucified, suffering and persecuted, each of us must support and defend it until these systematic and unfair acts against it are stopped.

“During the Dormition Fast, we pray fervently in the Church of Gethsemane in front of the empty tomb of the Heavenly Queen, asking for the intercession, blessing and prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos for the preservation of the persecuted martyred Church in Ukraine, so that the Lord God enlightens the conscience of all those involved, and measures are taken to stop this unjust and horrific persecution against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.”