



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner notes the continuing pressure on the Church exerted by Ukrainian authorities



**UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER**

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The latest report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that covers the period from 1 June to 31 August, 2024, describes the situation in Ukraine. In the section on freedom of religion or belief it is noted that in the reporting period, OHCHR continued to document cases impacting the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC).

In particular, it is mentioned that on 17 June 2024, the Lvov District Administrative Court upheld a decision of the Drohobych City Council to ban the activities of the UOC in the area due to national security considerations. "The court held that the local UOC religious community had not proven a violation of its rights, without however sufficiently explaining how the ban was deemed necessary and proportional to protect public safety or order, as required by Article 18 of the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights," the report states.

Moreover, the OHCHR is aware of at least seven similar judgments since February 2022. Five of them have become final, with no further possibility to appeal.

Also mentioned is the the situation with Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav, who was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and confiscation of property, and the Vinnitsa Court of Appeal upheld the verdict on June 18.

Earlier it was reported that a Ukrainian court delivered a judgment on absurd charges against a 75-year-old seriously ill bishop, who is well-known in the Orthodox world also as church composer. On 19 March 2024, it became known that Metropolitan Jonathan had suffered a stroke and needed medical treatment. Upon a petition of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and as a result of negotiations, Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav was released to the Russian Federation during a prisoner exchange on June 22.

"In both this and another case documented by the OHCHR, clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church reported pressure to admit guilt and agree to exchange with the Russian Federation," the report says.

The persecution of Metropolitan Arseny of Svyatogorsk, abbot of the Holy Dormition Svyatogorsk Lavra, is widely known. He was detained by law enforcement officials on April 24 and since then has been held in a pretrial detention centre without the right to bail. In his addresses to the Primate of the Local Orthodox Churches, other religious figures and representatives of international organizations, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' underscored that "The arrest of Metropolitan Arseny which lasted several days and was carried out on artificial, far-fetched grounds is yet another punitive measure aimed against the UOC's public speakers and its sources of information."

The OHCHR report also mentions the law "On the protection of the constitutional order in the sphere of activities of religious organizations" adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on August 20, 2024. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted that its actual purpose "is a legislative ban of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church."

"The law raises concerns regarding its compliance with international human rights standards. In particular, it refers to national security as a ground for restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief and the freedom of religious associations. However, neither the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, nor the European Convention on Human Rights include 'national security' among the permissible grounds for such a restriction," the OHCHR report stated.

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