



Statement by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning the law adopted in Estonia with the aim of banning the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church



DECOR Communication Service, 10/04/2025

*On 10th April 2025, the Holy Synod **issued a statement** after a law had been adopted in Estonia with the view of banning the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church.*

On 9th April 2025, the Parliament of Estonia passed in the third reading Bill No 2-5/25-00033 on Amendments to the Churches and Congregations Act of the Republic of Estonia. It is de facto aimed at banning the activity of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church, which is a self-governing Church within the Moscow Patriarchate.

The new law compels the faithful to sever canonical ties with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. This decision runs counter to the will repeatedly expressed by the clergy, monastics and laypeople of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church, loyal to their Supreme Authority. It subjects to discrimination 250 thousand believers who are Estonian citizens, depriving them of the freedom of religion.

The necessity to adopt the aforementioned law was justified based on a false claim that the canonical bond between Orthodox Christians in Estonia and the Moscow Patriarchate poses a threat to the security of the Estonian state, the constitutional and public order in the country. Meanwhile, the fact that the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church is not involved in political life or inter-state relations was totally disregarded. So far, there have been no documented cases indicating that its bodies or faithful might pose a threat to the national security or public safety.

However, it did not hold back the Estonian political forces that began their fight against the Russian Orthodoxy, which for centuries constituted a part of the cultural heritage of the Estonian people. Among the prime targets of the current persecutions is the Pühtitsa Convent – a shrine of the world Orthodoxy and a pilgrimage site for believers from various countries.

Today's actions of the Estonian authorities imitate the methods used against the Church in times of the atheistic theomachy.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church expresses its full support for His Eminence Metropolitan Eugene of Tallinn and All Estonia, the archpastors, clergy and faithful children of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church as it is suffering mounting oppression, urging them to remain loyal to the sacred canons. The Orthodoxy was brought to Estonia by the Russian missionaries a thousand years ago, and its history knows many vivid examples of people standing firm and brave in the faith, starting from the Holy Hieromartyr Isidore of Yuriev and those who suffered with him, and ending with St Platon the Bishop of Revel and other new martyrs of the Estonian land. We believe that through their prayerful intercession the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church will endure with dignity the ordeals that have befallen it.

We call on the international community to condemn the facts of violence against the Orthodox Christians' conscience and the unlawful interference of the Estonian authorities in the internal affairs of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church, as these actions are being taken with obvious disregard for the internationally accepted principles of religious freedom.

Photo by Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'

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