



## **Patriarch Kirill addresses Primates of Local Orthodox Churches, Christian Leaders, Heads of State, and International organizations regarding law banning the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church**



### **DECR Communication Service, 11.04.2025**

On April 10, 2025, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church issued a statement concerning the law adopted by the Estonian Parliament, which discriminates against a large number of faithful citizens of Estonia, depriving them of religious freedom. The Synod also requested His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' to send appeals to the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, heads of non-Orthodox Christian Churches and inter-Christian associations, as well as leaders and representatives of international organizations.

In the appeals sent on April 11, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill stated in particular:

"With deep concern, I inform you that on April 9, 2025, the Estonian Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on Churches and Congregations, which effectively aim to ban the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church—a self-governing Church within the Moscow Patriarchate.

This law, stripping it of legitimacy, violates the fundamental principle of freedom of conscience and religion, guaranteed by the Constitution of Estonia and relevant international agreements."

Addressing His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and All Palestine, His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II of All Georgia, His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania, His Holiness Patriarch Daniel of Bulgaria, His Beatitude Archbishop Joan of Tirana and All Albania, His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, His Beatitude Metropolitan Rostislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada, and His Beatitude Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid and Macedonia, Patriarch Kirill made a fraternal request for fervent prayers for the persecuted Estonian Orthodox Christian Church, noting: "I count on your brotherly support during this difficult time for Estonian Orthodoxy."

The recipients also included heads of non-Orthodox Churches and leaders of inter-Christian organizations, such as: His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Orthodox Church; His Holiness Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church; His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; His Holiness Mar Awa III, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East; His Beatitude Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rahi of the Maronite Church; His Holiness Mar Thoma Mathews III, Catholicos of the East and Metropolitan of the Malankara Church; His Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; His Holiness Abune Basil, Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church; The Most Reverend Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York and Primate of England; Mr. Franklin Graham, President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill called on Christian leaders, "who can 'open their mouths for justice' (Prov. 31:9)," to stand in support of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church in this difficult time.

He also addressed foreign political leaders, including: President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia; Prime Minister Viktor Orbán of Hungary; President Donald Trump of the United States of America, acknowledging their efforts in defending Christian values and the rights of Christians.

Additionally, letters were sent to leaders and representatives of international and human rights organizations, including: UN Secretary-General António Guterres; UN High Commissioner for Human

Rights Volker Türk; OSCE Secretary-General Feridun Sinirlioğlu; ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci; Council of Europe Secretary-General Marija Pejčinović Burić; OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Kairat Abdrakhmanov; UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance Ms. Ashwini K.P.; UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Ms. Nazila Ghanea.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill also shared with the recipients the statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church dated April 10, condemning the legislative act adopted in Estonia.

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