



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Representatives of the Churches – Participants in the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee issued a statement regarding the persecution of Christians in a number of countries



**ХРИСТИАНСКИЙ МЕЖКОНФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫЙ
КОНСУЛЬТАТИВНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ**

*A **statement** by representatives of the Churches – Participants in the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee (CIAC) — has been published on the website of the Committee in connection with the ongoing persecution and violations of the rights of Christians in several countries. The full text of the statement is provided below:*

Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee

Statement by the Church Participants

We, representatives of the Churches – Participants in the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee (CIAC), the largest inter-Christian association in Eurasia – express our concern over the

ongoing oppression and violation of the rights of Christians in a number of countries.

It is our witness as disciples of Christ that the ministry of peace and love has at all times been the mission of Christian Churches. Any attempt to use religion in political interests inevitably leads to division and mutual enmity, which runs counter to the very core of Christian teaching.

We have always spoken out in defence of the rights of believers and churches in different countries – the rights of Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Christians of Evangelical Faith and Adventists. And today, it particularly hurts us to see what has been going on in Ukraine, Moldova, Estonia, Armenia and other countries where the clergy and the faithful are being subjected to persecution and the freedom of conscience is being curtailed.

In Ukraine, the state authorities continue to put pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, having as their goal its liquidation and total destruction. The pressure takes the form of church seizures, discriminatory laws and persecution against the clergy and laity.

In Armenia, the Armenian Apostolic Church is suffering unprecedented and mounting pressure; its hierarchs are being placed under arrest; attempts are being made to interfere in internal church affairs on political grounds.

In Estonia, causing concern is the adoption of the Churches and Congregations Act, which affects the internal life of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church, as well as the deportation of Metropolitan Eugene of Tallinn and All Estonia, which violates the religious freedom principles.

In Moldova, stronger administrative and judicial measures have been taken, targeting the Orthodox Church of Moldova. Court trials are under way, aimed at depriving it of its previously restituted property; proceedings are being brought against the clergymen and laypeople defending their churches; voices are being raised in favour of imposing a total ban on the Church. All this threatens to cause a further split and destabilisation in Moldovan society.

Expressing solidarity with our brothers and sisters subjected to persecution and slander, we pray for peace and freedom of worship for all people of good will, mindful of our Saviour's commandment to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us and pray for them that wrong and persecute us (Mt 5:44). We call on the international community to take note of the current developments and help protect the fundamental human rights and the freedom of conscience.

May the Lord strengthen His disciples who are suffering afflictions and hardships, and may He establish Christ's love, peace and justice in all countries!

The statement is signed by:

1. **Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk**, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, CIAC Co-Chair;
2. **Oleg Goncharov**, First Deputy Chair of the Euro-Asia Division of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, CIAC Co-Chair;
3. **Archbishop Ezras (Nersisyan)**, head of the Diocese of Russia and New Nakhichevan of the Armenian Apostolic Church;
4. **Metropolitan Eugene of Tallinn and All Estonia**, Primate of the Estonian Orthodox Christian Church;
5. **Archbishop Vladimir Provorov**, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Russia;
6. **Sergei Ryakhovsky**, Presiding Bishop of the Russian United Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals);
7. **Peter Mitskevich**, President of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists;
8. **Eduard Grabovenko**, Head Bishop of the Russian Church of Christians of the Evangelical Faith;
9. **Bishop Ivan Laptev**, head of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria;
10. **Cor-Bishop Samano Odisho**, Representative of the Assyrian Church of the East in Russia;
11. **Leonid Kartavenko**, Chairman of the All-Union Fellowship of Evangelical Christians.