



## **Discriminatory laws prepared against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – a report at the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians**

The World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians took place in Washington from May 10 to 13, 2017. It was attended by some 600 representatives of various Christian confessions from 136 countries.

Along with the problem of oppression and sometimes direct elimination of the Christian population in the Middle East countries, the forum dealt with the situation of Christians in other regions of the world. Reports were made about various forms of persecution, both direct and indirect.

One of the sessions heard a report by the deputy chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich. He spoke about the violations of rights of the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Among other things, the priest mentioned discriminatory Bills No. 4511 and 4128 placed on the agenda of the Supreme Rada expected to vote on them on May 18, 2017.

Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich pointed to the paradoxical nature of the Ukrainian situation, as discriminatory actions are carried out in a state with a predominant Christian population and targeted at the largest religious community in the country.

Bill No. 4128 on 'the change of subordination' of religious organizations proposes to introduce in the religious legislation the notion of 'the belonging of a person to a religious community' to be determined on the basis of 'self-identification'. As critics of the bill have pointed out, in fact it means that any outsider who claims his or her belonging to a particular religious community will be given the right to vote in making decisions important for the community, such as its move to another jurisdiction. According to experts, the aim of the bill is to legalize the practice of fictitious 'referendums' of a settlement people used as a basis for already captured scores of churches belonging to the canonical Church in Ukraine. As His Beatitude Onufry, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, noted in his report to the Bishops' Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on January 29, 2016, during the so-called vote of general parish meetings for re-subordination 'there is a substitution of notions when a territorial community is identified with a religious community'.

Bill No. 4511 'On the Special Status of Religious Organizations Whose Governing Centers Are Located in the State Recognized by the Supreme Rada as Aggressor-State', actually proposes to oblige all the

UOC religious communities to re-register and conclude a discriminatory agreement with the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture 'on a special status' only because 'its center of canonical subordination' is located in Russia. Moreover, the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture will be empowered to control the appointment of bishops and clergy, visitations of bishops and clergy from Russia and will be granted the right to abolish religious organizations 'with a special status' for a number of reasons.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Materials from the official site of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church*

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