



Archbishop Theodosius of Sebastia: We protest against the persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and condemn violence against it



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Archbishop Theodosius of Sebastia (Patriarchate of Jerusalem) announced that he had joined the international human rights organisation "The Church against Xenophobia and Religious Discrimination". It **was established** in December by a number of hierarchs and clergymen of the local Orthodox Churches together with the non-governmental organisations Public Advocacy, VSI Zmogaus teisiu apsauga and European institute for religion and law, which have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

According to **the** press service of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, expressing his gratitude for the invitation to join this association, Vladyka Theodosius stressed that while praying for peace in Palestine, it is necessary to pay attention to Ukraine, where there are serious violations of

human rights, including the believers of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, headed by Metropolitan Onuphry.

The hierarch stated that the Ukrainian state authorities are carrying out unjustified, inadmissible systematic **persecution of the hierarchs** of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as a result of which a **number of bishops** have been **harassed** on false accusations. The main danger is that the Ukrainian authorities are planning to **adopt a bill** to restrict and, in the future, ban the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. All measures being implemented, including the confiscation of churches and church property, attacks on the institutions and lands of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and violent actions directed against Orthodox Christians in Ukraine, are serious violations of human rights.

"From Jerusalem, from the Holy Land, we call on all Christian Churches of the world, religious and human rights organisations and all high-ranking persons to oppose the arbitrary actions of the Kiev authorities, which can be seen as a persecution of the Church," Archbishop Theodosius stressed. – "No one should be persecuted because of their religious affiliation! The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, its bishops, priests and people are being persecuted because of their adherence to the ancient Church, which is the oldest Church in Ukraine and is canonical and legitimate".

He called for all measures to be taken to stop the bloodshed, disasters and sufferings to which believers in Ukraine are subjected, because "the sufferings of our brothers in faith in Ukraine make us suffer ourselves," in the words of the Apostle: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. You are the body of Christ, but apart you are members" (1 Cor. 12. 26-27).

"Expressing solidarity and support for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, led by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry, all bishops and priests, we protest against its targeted persecution and condemn the violence against it," said Archbishop Theodosius. – "We appeal to all human rights, international and humanitarian organisations to take urgent measures to stop this persecution: living in the XXI century, it is impossible to imagine how the Church, which has always carried the message of peace, love, brotherhood and mercy to people, can become an object of persecution".