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RUSSIA: Patriarch Kirill congratulated Putin on Defender of the Fatherland Day

23 February: Patriarch Kirill wished Putin peace of mind on Defender of the Fatherland Day

Human Rights Without Frontiers in Brussels calls upon the US, the EU and the UK authorities to deny the access to their territory to Patriarch Kirill and the clergy of the Russian

Orthodox Church

HRWF/ RIA NOVOSTY (24.02.2022) – On 23 February, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia congratulated Russian President Vladimir Putin on Defender of the Fatherland Day and wished him peace of mind, health and God's help in his ministry, according to the message published on the website of the Russian Orthodox Church:

"I cordially congratulate you on Defender of the Fatherland Day. <...> I wish you good health, peace of mind and abundant help from the Lord in your high and responsible service to the people of Russia," Patriarch Kirill wrote.

He noted that with the *"active participation and support"* of the president, *"many important temple-building, educational and social projects of the **Moscow Patriarchate** are being implemented, church-state cooperation aimed at preserving national historical memory and affirming the principles of traditional morality in the lives of contemporaries is developing fruitfully.*

According to him, the Russian Orthodox Church makes a significant contribution to the patriotic education of compatriots. *"Now we honor the feat of those who carry out responsible military service, guard the borders of their native country and take care of strengthening its defense capability and national security. Valor and courage, courage and determination, ardent love for the Fatherland and readiness for self-sacrifice – these qualities have distinguished our people for centuries, who have passed through the crucible of many trials and tempered their character and strength of spirit in them,"* Patriarch Kirill emphasized.

The Primate also congratulated **Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin on holiday**, the relevant reports were published on the ROC website. In his address to Mishustin, the patriarch noted that the Russian Church gratefully remembers the feats of their ancestors and prays for them. *“By praying for the repose of all leaders and soldiers who were killed on the battlefields,”* the Russian Orthodox Church calls for God’s blessing on all those who now guard the independence of the Fatherland and work for the benefit of their native land,” the patriarch concluded

Putin said no one will be able to destroy traditional Russian values

Today, 24 February, President Putin declared to Interfax “No one will be able to destroy traditional Russian values and replace them with attitudes that would corrode the people of Russia from the inside.”

“Until recently, attempts haven’t stopped to use us to their advantage, to destroy our traditional values and impose their pseudo-values on us, which would corrode our people from the inside, those attitudes that they are already aggressively planting in their countries and which directly lead to degradation and degeneration, since they contradict the very nature of man,” Putin said in a video message to the Russians.

“This is not going to happen. This has never worked out for anyone. It won’t work now either,” he added.

Earlier on Thursday, Putin announced a special military operation in connection with the situation in Donbas. Source: Interfax

Lavrov called what’s happening in eastern Ukraine an attack on Orthodoxy and the “Russian World”

The latest statements of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are a source of serious concerns about the defence of the “Russian world” and the future of neighboring countries having Russian-speaking minorities within their borders.

On 21 February, Minister Lavrov said he saw no other option but for Russia to recognize the Donbas self-proclaimed republics.

“Thus, we will send a powerful signal to the Russian world. Throughout these eight years, we have not been looking indifferently at how our compatriots, our citizens have been mistreated. That’s why I do not see any other option,” Lavrov said at a special meeting of the Russian Security Council on Monday.

“All arguments” in favor of adopting a decision to recognize the independence of the Donbas self-proclaimed republics have been put forth at the Russian Security Council’s meeting, he said.

“I also see here an aspect such as the term ‘genocide’, which you mentioned at the press conference with [German Chancellor] Olaf Scholz. The fact that they are now trying to support this blatantly neo-Nazi, Bandera regime in Kyiv is a manifestation of genocide,” Minister Lavrov said.

Slavic people, Orthodox people, “everything that is Russian” are under attack in Ukraine, he said.

Putin accusing Kiev of persecuting the persecution of the Ukrainian Church of Moscow Patriarchate

On the same day (21 February), President Putin “announced” in an address to the Russian nation that Kiev was planning to crack down on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

“The Ukrainian authorities have cynically turned the tragedy

of the church split into an instrument of state policy. The current leadership of the country does not respond to the requests of the Ukrainian citizens to repeal the laws that infringe on the rights of believers,” he went on to say.

“Moreover, new bills directed against the clergy and millions of parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate have been registered in the Rada,” Putin said.

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