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UKRAINE: Nationalization of the Pearl of Russian Orthodoxy in Kyiv

Nationalization of the Pearl of Russian Orthodoxy in Kyiv: Controversies

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (05.12.2022) – The Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra has been officially registered as a monastery within the Orthodox

Church of Ukraine (OCU), according to Yevstratii Zoria, a bishop of the OCU and a Holy Synod spokesperson. The OCU was created as a national Church and affiliated with the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 2018, four years after Maidan, under President Petro Poroshenko. The then president of Ukraine was hereby hoping to reduce the influence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate (UOC/MP) and to win the presidential election against Volodymyr Zelensky. As we know, Zelensky won a landslide victory.

On 24 November, the website of the Parliament of Ukraine published the text of draft law No. 8221 banning the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church represented in Ukraine by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC).

The bill outlaws the activity of any religious organizations or institutions, which are part or in any way accountable to the Russian Orthodox Church “in canonical, organizational and other issues.”

The bill is said to prevent threats to the national security of Ukraine and *“to liberate Ukraine from the Russian Orthodox Church as yet another step towards independent Ukraine.”*

Announcement by the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)

“On December 1, 2022, the charter of the Holy Dormition Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (men’s monastery) of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Orthodox Church of Ukraine) was registered. Information about this legal entity as part of the

Local Church was entered into the Unified State Register (45081205) on 2 December.

In order to restore historical justice and overcome the consequences of the non-canonical subordination of the Ukrainian shrine to the power of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Holy Synod of the OCU at its meeting on May 23, 2022 (Resolution No. 30) decided to create a religious organization within the Local Church – the men’s monastery ‘Holy Dormition of Kyiv Pechersk Lavra.’ At the same time, the Synod instructed His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphanius to address the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine with a request to provide one of the Lavra’s churches in its upper part for divine services, and certain rooms for monastic activities.

The Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine is a sacred archimandrite, that is, the canonical and spiritual head of the Kyiv Lavra. Also, by the decision of the Synod, His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphanius was appointed to head the monastery as a legal entity.”

Press service of the Kyiv Metropolitanate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (OCU)

Reaction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate (UOC/MP)

“Under the title “On the fake about the Lavra and the OCU”, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate declared on 2 December:

“Due to the appearance of information about the registration

of a legal entity 'The Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra of the OCU' in the media and assumptions related thereto, it should be explained that this structure has no relation to the real Holy Dormition Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.

It is registered at another address, and its emergence is not a consequence of the closing down of the true Lavra of the 'Ukrainian Orthodox Church', to which its historical premises were returned back in 1988.

By the way, information about a parallel legal entity named 'The Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra' under the jurisdiction of the 'Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate' existed in the relevant register many years earlier. However, there was never any monastery of the 'UOC KP' in place of the Lavra.

We are witnessing the same now – the 'Orthodox Church of Ukraine' announced that it had registered a fake religious structure without monks."

Reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow

Under the title 'Russian Orthodox Church dismisses rumors of Kiev Lavra of the Caves takeover by Orthodox Church of Ukraine', Interfax-Religion in Moscow published the following article on 2 December:

"The Moscow Patriarchate has provided a clarification following reports on Friday evening that the management of Kiev Lavra of the Caves was being transferred to the non-canonical Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU).

'A by-laws has been registered of a 'parallel' OCU monastery, a Kiev Lavra of the Caves. The schismatics applied for its registration long ago. Now, in the words of Ivan (Yevstraty) Zorya, an OCU spokesman, they will lay claim to one of upper Lavra churches, which is officially run by the Kiev of the

Caves historical cultural reserve, and premises for 'monastic activity', Russian Patriarch Kirill's advisor Archpriest Nikolay Balashov told Interfax.

For now, the registration of the real Lavra is unaffected by the move, he said.

'But in the lawless environment that is now obvious in Ukraine, and in the event of recognition of a 'political expediency' one may expect quick subsequent decisions, which were discussed at the last meeting of Ukraine's NSDC [National Security and Defense Council] and approved by a decree of Vladimir Zelensky,' the archpriest said. He then wondered whom the OCU would populate Ukraine's main monastery with. 'There are very few monks in the splinter organization. They might then have to make a museum out of the Lavra, as it was under Khrushchev in 1961,' the patriarch's advisor said."

Photo: The Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra has been officially registered as a monastery within the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

[Further reading about FORB in Ukraine on HRWF website](#)

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