

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_header\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

**Notice:** Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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## **UKRAINE: The Russian Orthodox Church annexes Ukrainian dioceses**

### **The Russian Orthodox Church annexes dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in occupied territories**

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (10.06.2022) – The Dzhankoy, Simferopol and Feodosia dioceses of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) of the Moscow Patriarchate have been annexed by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC).

This decision was made on June 7 at the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, allegedly “out of the need to maintain an effective canonical and administrative connection with the central church authorities.”

It should be noted that after the occupation of Crimea in 2014, the dioceses of the UOC remained in formal subordination to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU)/ Constantinople Patriarchate which had been banned on the peninsula.

Now, by the decision of the Synod of the ROC in Moscow, the Crimean Metropolitanate has been formed on the territory of the peninsula, headed by Metropolitan Lazarus of Simferopol and Crimea.

### **Why the annexation of UOC dioceses in Crimea, Donetsk and Gorlovka?**

In April, over 400 priests of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church/ Moscow Patriarchate (UOC) signed a **petition** condemning the role of Patriarch Kirill in the war. A number of clerics stopped mentioning the Moscow Patriarchate in their church services.

On this occasion, Fr Andrei Pinchuk, Archpriest of the Dnipropetrovsk Diocese of the UOC (some 240 miles southeast of Kyiv), who launched this initiative, gave an interview which is worth watching.

On 27 May, the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) brought amendments to its charter, confirming and reinforcing its existing independence from Moscow because of “disagreement with the position of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia about the war in Ukraine.”

However, several dioceses in occupied territories of Ukraine – the Donetsk, Gorlovka and Crimean dioceses – did not support

the amendments to the charter. The ROC immediately jumped on this opportunity to unilaterally annex these dioceses without the approval of the UOC. The clerics in occupied Crimea who had hereby prioritized their faithfulness to the Moscow Patriarchate rather than to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will certainly be kept in place by Patriarch Kirill.

In recent months, a number of local authorities in many regions of Ukraine have banned the activities of the UOC and re-registered their communities in the OCU (Orthodox Church of Ukraine/ Constantinople Patriarchate), sometimes on their request, sometimes on the priest's sole request without the approval of the parishioners, sometimes under pressure of the local parishioners and against the priest's will.

Due to all these fractures inside the UOC, Moscow Patriarchate perceives the UOC as less and less solid and reliable.

In more and more Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia, we may see more annexation cases of UOC churches by Moscow Patriarchate, and their (Ukrainian) priests be replaced by Russian ones if they signed the protest petition in April.

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

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