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Sweden cuts funding to Russian Orthodox Church after it's deemed a security threat



Following an investigation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sweden, Stockholm authorities have decided not to grant organizational grants to the Church in 2024.

Säpo, the Swedish Security Service, “assess that the Russian state is using the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in Sweden as a platform for the purpose of conducting intelligence gathering and other security-threatening activities in the form of influence against Sweden,” the service said in a statement reported on by Swedish outlets.

The churches in Sweden have received funding from the Russian state, according to the Säpo statement.

And based on the Security Service’s analysis, the Agency for Support to Religious Communities has decided not to give any funding to the Russian Church in 2024.

The Agency took note of various statements in support of the war made by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the Agency's statement notes, and thus it "conducted a dialogue" with the Church in Sweden to "obtain information about the religious community in its activities supporting the war in Ukraine."

Despite its decision to withhold funding, the Agency notes: "Representatives of the faith community have stressed at the talks that they do not support the war in Ukraine or advocate violence, and that the faith community pursues exclusively spiritual and peacemaking goals."

However, the Agency is following the Säpo report, which says otherwise.

"A prerequisite for state support for religious communities is that they contribute to strengthening the basic values of society. Religious communities do this by giving people support at all stages of life, which means that they are especially important in various social crises," said Agency director Isak Reichel.

"However, the Agency for Support to Religious Communities believes that the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) no longer lives up to this criterion because of their actions in connection with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine."

A parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was evicted last June from the church it had been renting in Malmö, Sweden, since 2020, because it is part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

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