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Ecumenical Patriarchate and Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne Condemn Actions of Russian Orthodox Church in Africa

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September 3, 2024, the Ecumenical Patriarchate issued a resolute announcement condemning the illegal actions of the Russian Orthodox Church. This condemnation comes in response to a heartfelt letter from His Beatitude, Pope and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa, dated August 31st, 2024.

At the concluding session of the Holy Synaxis of the Hierarchy of the Ecumenical Throne in Istanbul, Türkiye, His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria's letter to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne was delivered and discussed. Condemning recent actions by the Russian Orthodox Church in Africa as "completely unjust, anti-brotherly, anti-church, and anti-canonical" attempts to undermine Christian unity, His Beatitude alerted the Hierarchy to the appointment of a hierarch as Patriarchal Exarch in Africa on October 11, 2023.

He also indicated that this hierarch has established himself illegally in Cairo, within His Beatitude's jurisdiction, and begun operations across Africa more broadly. The letter was presented to inform the Hierarchy of the troubling and uncanonical incursion by the Patriarchate of Moscow, which has caused scandal and division among the faithful in Africa. Stressing that these actions violate Church canons, His Beatitude expressed his dismay at the "deafening silence" from the Hierarchy, including both Patriarchal Thrones and the Autocephalous Churches. Referring to this silence as "unacceptable, unjust, and unholy," His Beatitude concluded his correspondence by imploring the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne to act as "angels of light" and to draw attention to the violations suffered by the Patriarchate of Alexandria, using their voices to restore canonical order. Read His Beatitude's full letter here.

At the Holy Synaxis, the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne strongly denounced ideology that seeks to transform the Church into a secular instrument for advancing state interests, a practice that is entirely contrary to true ecclesiology.

They met the weaponization of religion in this manner, coupled with the ongoing war in Ukraine following the unprovoked invasion by the Russian Federation, with unanimous and unequivocal condemnation. The Ecumenical Patriarchate stands in unwavering support of the beleaguered Patriarchate of Alexandria and the suffering Orthodox Church of Ukraine, affirming its commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of the Church.

After receiving the letter and His All-Holiness's final remarks, the Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne officially ended the synaxis with the Closing Service of the Holy Synaxis, which His All-Holiness held alongside the V. Rev. Grand Ecclesiarch Aetios, the V. Rev. Grand Syncellus Iakovos, Grand Archdeacon Deacon Alexander, and Patriarchal Deacon Barnabas.

In a social media statement today, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America likewise condemned the actions of the Russian Orthodox Church in Africa as alleged by His Beatitude as well as the recent Russian missile strike in Poltava, Ukraine, which struck an educational institution and a hospital, killing at least forty-one and injuring another 180. His Eminence wrote:

"At the conclusion of the Synaxis of Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne, we stand even more firmly with our Mother Church and Her canonical leadership in the world. As our revered Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has declared, we are united in support of His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria in condemning the unjust and anti-canonical actions of the Moscow Patriarchate in Africa. Their installation of a Russian Hierarch as Patriarchal Exarch in Cairo, within the sacrosanct jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, is a grievous violation of the holy canons and an affront to the unity of the Orthodox Church.

We are reminded of such secularist interventions of the Moscow Patriarchate by today's tragic loss of life. Caused by the Russian missile strike in the Ukrainian city of Poltava, it claimed more than forty civilian lives and injured many more. We must never turn a blind eye to the horrors unfolding in Ukraine. This is all the more reason to strongly denounce the ideology that seeks to transform the Church into a secular instrument supporting such senseless crimes. The Orthodox Church must be a beacon of peace, and we must continue to raise our voices against all forms of injustice and violence."

Find the Ecumenical Patriarchate's report of the Holy Synaxis of the Hierarchy and their response to His Beatitude's letter here.

Photos: GOARCH/Dimitrios Panagos.

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