

US pushes Orthodox churches into recognizing Ukraine's Orthodox Church — Russian minister



Not a single Orthodox church has recognized the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, according to Russia's top diplomat.

The United States is pressuring Orthodox churches in the Middle East and North Africa into recognizing a new church structure in Ukraine — the so-called Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the 16th annual session of the Valdai International Discussion Club on Wednesday.

“Not a single Orthodox church has recognized these decisions [to create the OCU], completely politicized ones due to reasons well known,” Lavrov underlined. “We know for certain that Americans are pressuring Orthodox churches both in the Middle East and North Africa. When the US doesn't see them volunteering to submit, it tries to threaten them and even cause a split in certain Orthodox churches.”

Since the moment it seized power in February 2014, Ukraine's current authorities

have pressed for the idea of creating a local church not connected with the canonical Moscow Patriarchate. In April last year, President Pyotr Poroshenko asked Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew in person to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church. On December 15, Constantinople's emissaries and the Ukrainian authorities held what was presented as the Unification Council. Two schismatic organizations — the Kiev Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church — declared creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. On January 6, the Ecumenical Patriarch handed a Tomos of Autocephaly to the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine Metropolitan Epiphany.

The Russian Orthodox Church regards the controversial Tomos of Autocephaly and the so-called "Unification Council" void. In October 2018, the Moscow Patriarchate severed ecclesiastical communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church made a similar decision. Not a single local church has agreed to recognize the schismatic Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The church schism entailed numerous attacks on the clergy and parishioners of the canonical church and seizures of its buildings.

- Source: tass.com