

## **Moscow Patriarchate's Holy Synod warns: Communion with Archbishop Ieronymos will cease if Church of Greece commemorates 'head of schismatics'**



**The Moscow Patriarchate's Holy Synod today sharply condemned recent decisions by the Church of Greece's hierarchy regarding the Tomos of Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, warning that it will break communion with the Greek Church if proceeds with recognition, although a spokesman later clarified that the Russian Church will maintain relations with individual Greek Orthodox hierarchs who decline to recognize the Ukrainian Church's autocephaly.**

The Tomos of Autocephaly was granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople last November to the Ukrainian Church, a move bitterly opposed by the Moscow Patriarchate.

**A statement issued by the Russian Church in Moscow read:**

“The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Russia authorizes His Holiness, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, to desist in the prayerful commemoration for His Eminence, the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Ieronymos I, in case the Primate of the Church of Greece begins to commemorate, in the Divine Liturgies, the head of one of the Ukrainian schismatic factions or assumes other initiatives that will testify to the recognition, by him, of the Ukrainian ecclesiastical schism.

The Holy Synod announcement, taken after an extraordinary session in Moscow, dismissed an argument by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, who previously cited the absence of the Russian Orthodox Church from a Pan-Orthodox assembly of Churches, held in Crete in 2016.

“... the statement by Archbishop Ieronymos does not correspond to reality, namely, that ‘due to the absence of the Patriarchate of Moscow’ from the synod of Crete in 2016 that there was “no opportunity to discuss the issue of autocephaly. In reality, the issue of autocephaly was excluded from the synod’s agenda much earlier, after the insistence of (Ecumenical) Bartholomew”.





**Nevertheless, in a later statement, the high-profile spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchate, Vladimir Legoida, said the Russian Church will maintain relations with clerics of the Church of Greece who do not recognize what he called the Ukrainian schismatics.**

Specifically, he said "... we appreciate the eucharistic communion with our brothers in the Church of Greece, and we will maintain the canonical and eucharist relationship with them through the arch-priests and congregations, which have already spoken or will announce that they will not recognize the Ukrainian autocephaly, and not sully their names with a con-celebration with schismatics.





**The unscheduled meeting by the Holy Synod hierarchs of the Russian Church was held at the Patriarchal residence, within the St. Daniel Monastery in Moscow. The Holy Synod members met a day before the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, is due to arrive in Thessaloniki, northern Greece.**

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