

## **Contentious issue of Ukrainian Church autocephaly briefly discussed in Moscow meeting between Greek, Russian FMs**



**Greece's foreign minister, Nikos Dendias, met in Moscow on Wednesday with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, with talks also briefly touching on the contentious issue of autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.**

Both men more-or-less concluded that recent developments over the complex matter will not affect bilateral relations.

**On his part, Dendias said the Greek state fully respects the independence of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece and its distinct role, with the state avoiding any interference in strictly ecclesiastical issues.**

Nevertheless, on his part, **Lavrov referred to "...an obvious external influence", as he said, regarding the Ukrainian Church issue and in relation to the decisions taken by the Church of Greece.**

**In a related development, a website operated by the Moscow Patriarchate's department of pilgrimages has posted a list of Metropolises in Greece that do not have the blessing of the Russian Patriarch, for the purpose of visiting cathedrals, monasteries and other**

## **pilgrimage sites.**

The reason for the prohibition, according to past statements by Russian Orthodox Church hierarchs and spokesmen, is that Greek Orthodox Metropolitans that are the target of the boycott have come into Holy Communion with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which the Moscow Patriarchate considers as non-canonical and schismatic.

The Tomos of Autocephaly was granted to the Ukrainian Church last November by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His All Holiness Bartholomew, with the Church of Greece's Holy Synod last month recognizing the Ecumenical Patriarch's right to do so.

The ban on pilgrimages by Russian Orthodox faithful includes the Holy Archdiocese of Athens, which has ecclesiastical jurisdiction over most of the dioceses and parishes in the greater Athens area.