

## **Ukrainian Orthodox Church Synod says its episcopate, parishioners pressured, persecuted**



Kiev, December 7, Interfax – The Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) said its bishops, other clerics and parishioners were being pressured following the Bishops’ Assembly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on November 13.

“Following the Bishops’ Assembly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which took place on November 13, 2018, pressure has been put on and groundless criminal prosecution has been conducted against the episcopate, clerics and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In particular, hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church have been summoned for ‘conversations’ to the Ukrainian Security Service, and obstacles have been put to their crossing of Ukraine’s borders,” the Synod said in its bulletin following a meeting chaired by the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine.

Among other factors, the Synod mentioned the cancellation of the decision on registering the church’s right to use the complex of buildings comprising the Holy Dormition Pochayev Lavra (a monastery in Ukraine’s Ternopol Region), an inspection by a Culture Ministry commission of the cultural valuables of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, searches in various eparchies and the summoning of their clerics for questioning.

“Government bodies have conducted groundless prosecutions and put pressure on

the episcopate, clerics, and parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to force them to take part in the so-called unifying assembly. Such actions should be viewed as a violation of Ukrainian people's constitutional right to freedom of religion," it said.

The Holy Synod also resolved to ask Metropolitan Onufry to inform local Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada human rights commissioner, international human rights organizations and diplomatic institutions that Ukrainian Orthodox Church clerics and parishioners have been pressured and persecuted.