

## **Russian Church reaction over Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa's recognition of Ukrainian autocephaly**



The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on Thursday announced that it would break holy communion with the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, His Most Divine Beatitude Theodoros II — echoing similar decisions taken against the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece. The decisions were in reaction to the Ecumenical Patriarchate's recognition of the Tomos of Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in November 2018.

According to Vladimir Legoida, the Holy Synod's press secretary, the Russian Church believes recognition by the Alexandria Patriarchate was unilaterally made, by the Primate of the Church himself, and not by a vote of its hierarchs.

The Russian Church's Holy Synod also proclaimed that it would cease

commemorating the name of Patriarch Theodoros in its diptychs, and break prayerful and eucharistic communion with him.

However, in language reminiscent of the Moscow Patriarchate's reaction to a similar decision by the Church of Greece, the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate said it would maintain communion with the hierarchs of the Alexandrian Orthodox Church, "...except for those who have supported or will support the legalization of the Ukrainian schism in the future."

Other decisions were to suspend the activity of the representation of the Alexandrian Patriarchate to the Moscow Patriarchal See, and to withdraw the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church located on the African continent from the jurisdiction of the Alexandria Patriarchate, instead bestowing on them a stavropegial status.

Days ago, the Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, His Eminence Hilarion, had stated that the Russian Church was considering establishing its own parishes on the African continent.

What remains to be seen is whether the Moscow Patriarchate now proceeds with a map of so-called "unsanctioned pilgrimage" sites in Africa, as it proceeded to do with Greece, in a bid to keep Russian pilgrims from visiting Metropolises whose Metropolitans supposedly support Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Church.