

## **Ukraine's autocephalous church will depend on Constantinople - Russian Orthodox Church**



MOSCOW, December 15 - The Ukrainian church will not be able to make independent decisions if granted autocephaly as it will be closely controlled by the Constantinople Patriarchate, Spokesman for Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia Rev. Alexander Volkov told Russia's NTV channel on Saturday.

"The noose is tightening and now the schismatics will be kept on a short leash, they will not be able to make any independent decisions concerning personnel and spiritual matters," he said.

According to Volkov, all documents and key decisions are prepared by the Constantinople Patriarchate. "They are drafting all documents, while representatives of the schismatics are not permitted, they are just given completed documents they need to endorse," he noted.

### **Ukraine's church crisis**

Kiev has been making attempts to create a Local Orthodox Church in Ukraine,

independent of the Moscow Patriarchate, since 1991. In April 2018, Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko wrote a letter to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople asking for autocephaly for the Ukrainian church.

On October 11, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople confirmed its decision to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church, and revoked the 1686 decision on transferring the Kiev Metropolitanate under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. In addition, Constantinople lifted the anathema from the leaders of Ukraine's two non-canonical churches, Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate and Makary of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church. In response to these decisions, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church ruled on October 15 that full communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople was no longer possible.

On November 13, the Council of Bishops of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church announced that the Church did not recognize Constantinople's decisions on Ukraine and severed full communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church also spoke out against joining the process of granting autocephaly to Ukraine's church.

On December 5, Poroshenko announced that the so-called unification council to create the Ukrainian autocephalous church would take place on December 15. He said that Patriarch Bartholomew had sent letters to bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church "inviting them to take part in that historic event." However, bishops from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), taking a cue from Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine, upon receiving these invitations promptly returned them to their sender.

On December 7, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod said that Constantinople had no canonical right to convene any church meetings in Ukraine, while the planned "unification" council would be considered illegal, since it would be attended by schismatics.

Source: TASS