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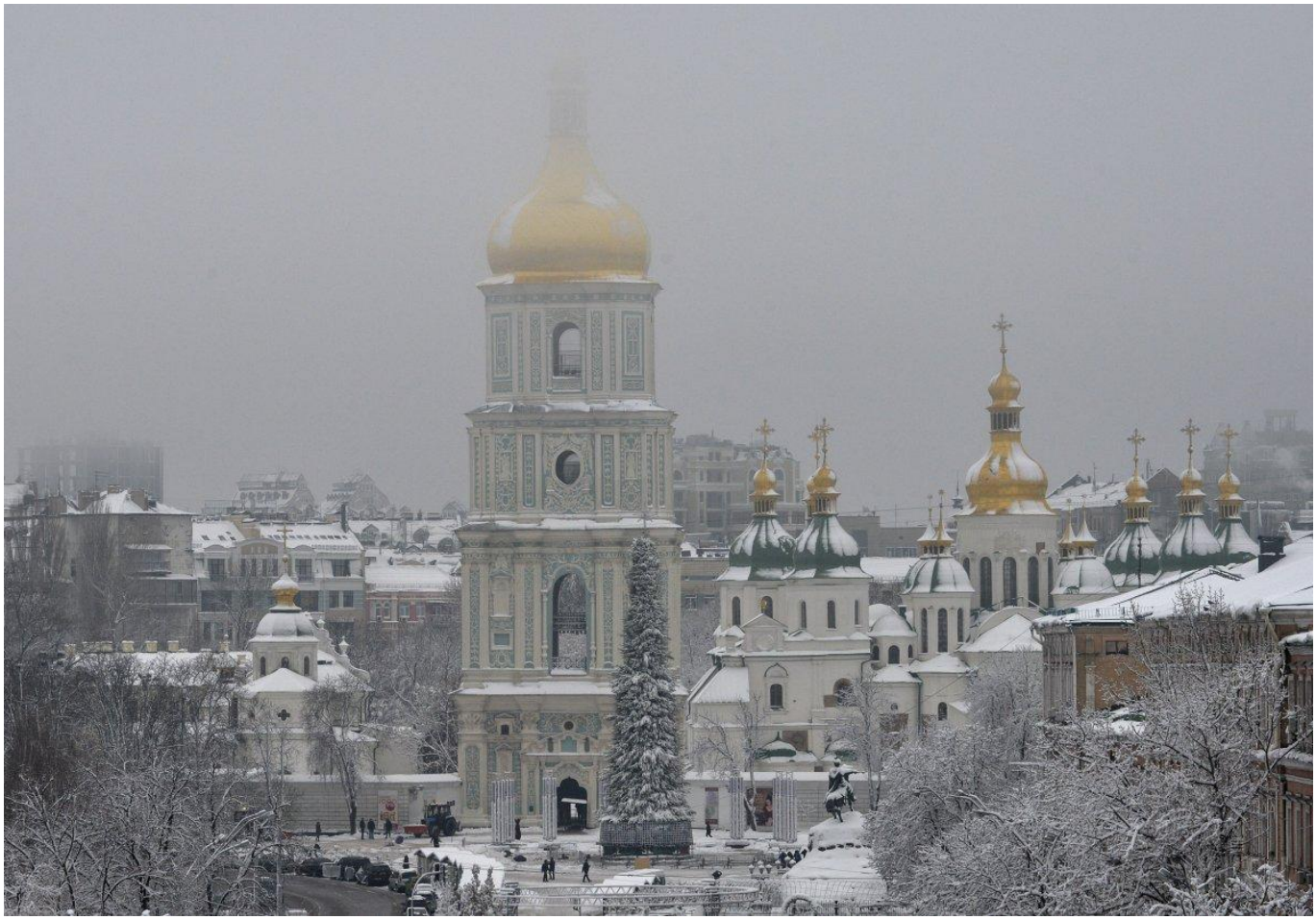
UOC denies reports that its Synod excommunicates two metropolitans



The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has denied media reports that its Synod has excommunicated two metropolitans who attended the unification assembly on December 15.

“They have not been excommunicated. They have only been banned from conducting religious services,” Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich, the deputy head of Department for External Church Relations of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), told Interfax on Tuesday.

UOC spokesman Vasily Anisimov told Interfax that the Synod has no right to excommunicate or defrock priests, which is the prerogative of the Bishop’s Council. The Synod can only dismiss priests from their posts and impose bans, he said.

“Usually, a person is given time to think, repent, and return,” Anisimov said.

In this case, two UOC metropolitans – Simeon and Alexander – breached the bishop's oath, because every bishop must obey the church's collegiate opinion, which was expressed several times, including at the Bishops' Council meeting, which was attended by more than 80 people and where it was unanimously decided not to attend the unification assembly, he said.

"Subsequently, if these metropolitans fail to repent, they will be disgowned, and if they persist in their lies and continue harming the church, as [Kiev Patriarchate leader] Filaret once did, they may be excommunicated through anathematizing them," Anisimov said.

Excommunication is the most severe punishment, and it is thought that "an excommunicated person will go to hell, without any doubt," he said.

Metropolitan Simeon of Vinnitsa and Bar and Metropolitan Aleksander of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky and Vishnevskiy defied the UOC's ban on Saturday and attended the unification assembly, at which the Ecumenical Patriarchate created a Ukrainian church independent of Moscow with the Ukrainian authorities' backing. The canonical UOC dismissed the assembly as insignificant from a canonical standpoint and refused to recognize the new religious structure.

Source: Interfax