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# ARCHBISHOP OF ALBANIA WILL NOT ATTEND JERUSALEM'S PROPOSED GATHERING ON CHURCH UNITY



Archbishop Anastasios, the primate of the Albanian Orthodox Church, will not attend the Synaxis of the Primates in Jordan proposed by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem for the discussion of issues of Church unity surrounding the ongoing Ukrainian Church crisis.

In his letter to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, dated January 8 and published on the official site of the Albanian Orthodox Church yesterday, Abp. Anastasios expresses his opinion that "the Council of Primates will complicate the situation rather than help it."

The Albanian primate recalls that he also recently pointed to the urgent need to convene a pan-Orthodox council to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, though he believes that "the initiative to heal the new reality undoubtedly belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate."

"But all Local Orthodox Churches, without exception, are responsible for promoting reconciliation," he adds.

"The proposal of a meeting in Jordan, as is now obvious, instead of contributing to

healing, will complicate the situation beyond the prescribed treatment. We cannot participate in the proposed meeting," the Albanian primate writes.

Abp. Anastasios met with a delegation from the canonical Ukrainian Church late last month, where he emphasized that Church crises are solved not by letters but by Ecumenical Councils.

However, rejecting Jerusalem's invitation and insisting that only Constantinople can convene a council ensures that the crisis will continue indefinitely, as Patriarch Bartholomew has made it clear that he has no intention of convening a council to discuss the Ukrainian crisis.

Though he will not attend the council, Abp. Anastasios has been among the more vocal critics of Pat. Bartholomew's actions in Ukraine, sending him two letters (here and here) last year in which he outlined the many serious problems with creating an autocephalous church on the basis of unordained schismatics and refuting many of his erroneous historical justifications for his actions.

To date, only two Churches—of Russia and of the Czech Lands and Slovakia—have officially and publicly supported Pat. Theophilos' initiative, while Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens declared his official rejection at a session of the Greek Holy Synod, and Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus stated that he did not even intend to answer Jerusalem's letter of invitation, making the same argument as Abp. Anastasios—that only Pat. Bartholomew can convene such a gathering.

Greek media reported that His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Poland had rejected Patriarch's invitation, though the Metropolitan's assistant later refuted such reports, though His Beatitude has also not publicly accepted the invitation.

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