

## **Poroshenko signs law renaming Ukrainian Orthodox Church**



President Pyotr Poroshenko has signed into law a bill compelling the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to specify its affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church in its name, a statement on the presidential website said.

The bill “On changes to the Ukrainian law on the freedom of conscience and religious organizations,” approved by parliament on December 20, concerns the names of religious organizations which form part of a larger religious organization headquartered outside Ukraine, “in a state which was found by law to have carried out a military aggression against Ukraine and (or) temporarily occupied a part of Ukraine,” the statement reads.

“People have the constitutional right of free choice of religion. Said legal changes are creating the best conditions for the exercise of this right by those who will decide which Orthodox jurisdiction to belong to: either to the newly-created autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine or to the Church which insists on preserving its link to, and dependence on, the ROC,” Poroshenko said when signing the bill.

“It is easier to make a choice when all things are called by their names.

Implementation of the law will give citizens full information,” he said.

The legal changes conform to the principle of the freedom of religion and equality of religions, citizens will not have their constitutional rights restricted, the president said.

The bill passed final reading and was backed by 240 deputies on December 20.

It reads: “a religious organization which forms part of the structure of a religious organization headquartered in a state which has carried out a military aggression against Ukraine and temporarily occupied its territory, should have its name reflect this affiliation to such foreign-based religious organization.” Such a religious organization in Ukraine will be obligated to include in its full name the name of the foreign-based organization it is part of, and allowed to add the words “in Ukraine.”

Rada speaker Andrey Parubiy signed the bill on the same day and sent it to the president for signature.

The UOC asked Poroshenko to veto the bill. “We believe this law is anti-constitutional and we intend to defend our rights by every legal means. We ask the president of Ukraine to apply his right of veto to this law,” the UOC legal department said in a statement.

The law will come into effect once published. After that, the central executive authority in charge of the religious policy is to carry out an appraisal of the charters of religious organizations. Should it identify circumstances regulated by this law, the authority will notify the religious organization accordingly via the official newspaper Uriadovy Kurier.

*Source: Interfax*