

## **Leader of Catholic Church in Belarus condemns Aug 26 actions of security services, demands those guilty be punished**



Minsk, August 27, Interfax - Metropolitan of Minsk and Mogilyov and President of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Belarus Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz has described the actions of officers of security services on the premises of the Church of Saints Simon and Helena in Minsk on Wednesday evening as “inappropriate and unlawful” and demanded an investigation.

“The inappropriate and unlawful actions that took place on the premises of the Church of Saints Simon and Helena should be investigated and those guilty should be held to account in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Belarus,” Kondrusiewicz said in a statement published on the website of the Roman Catholic Church in Belarus.

“Such conduct on the part of officers of security services does not help ease tensions for the sake of the soonest possible restoration of peace and accord in Belarusian society at a time when the Catholic Church calls for reconciliation and dialogue with the aim of ending the social and political conflict, which has no precedents in our country,” he said.

Kondrusiewicz said that, being abroad, “it pained him to hear the meager news that armed riot police officers blocked the entry and exit at the Red Church in Minsk on August 26.”

“The Constitution of the Republic of Belarus allows people to pray, entering the church for this and exiting it unhindered. Blocking the church’s entrance and hampering people’s unhindered entry and exit is a grave violation of religious rights and freedom of conscience,” he said.

“As president of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Belarus, I express my resolute protest against these unlawful actions of security services, whose duty is to protect the main rights of citizens, including the right to freedom of conscience, rather than hindering their exercise guaranteed by the legislation of the Republic of

Belarus,” Kondrusiewicz said.

Belarusian security services dispersed a protest on Independence Square in Minsk on Wednesday evening. Some demonstrators were blocked inside the Church of Saints Simon and Helena. Several protesters were detained.

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