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Georgian Patriarchate concerned by position of Russian Orthodox Church official



The Georgian Orthodox Church sees signs of a 'threat' in an interview given by the Chairman of the Department of External Relations of the Russian Patriarchate Metropolitan Hilarion, says the statement of the Georgian Patriarchate released today.

Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) said in a TV interview with Russian national broadcaster Russia 24 'it is unimaginable that the Georgian Orthodox Church leaders [would] recognise the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church'.

Alfeyev did not directly answer a question regarding the Russian Patriarchate's potential response to the Georgian Church recognizing the independence of the Ukrainian Church.

The question was: 'could a possible response entail a change in the status of the Georgian Patriarchate in the Georgian occupied regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali (South Ossetia)?' [For now, the Russian Church recognizes the Georgian Church's dominion in these territories.]

At a time when, in the Tskhinvali [South Ossetia] region on a Russian military base

the construction of a church is ongoing without any negotiation with us, and in Abkhazia the clerics [under] the Russian Church conduct non canonic liturgies, the ambiguity of his statement sounds threatening,” reads the Georgian Patriarchate’s statement.

The Georgian Patriarchate also confirmed that representatives of the Georgian Church in Moscow requested explanations from the Metropolitan Hilarion during a face-to-face meeting. He explained that under ‘threats’ he meant ‘problems that are expected for several churches including the Georgian church in case of the recognition of the tomos [independence for Ukrainian church] and he did not mean the threat of recognition of the autocephaly of the churches in Abkhazeti and Tskhinvali’.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Metropolitan Epifaniy, head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, attended a signing ceremony marking the new Ukrainian Orthodox church’s independence on 5 January in Istanbul, Turkey.

The decision has been criticised by Russia.

The Orthodox church is still split across the world concerning the move while Russia threatens to break off relations with Constantinople due to Bartholomew’s decision while Orthodox churches in other countries are deciding on whether to align with Moscow or Constantinople

Georgian Foreign Minister David Zalkaliani has not sent an official congratulatory letter to Kiev, explaining that this decision should be made within the Georgian Orthodox Church and it is unacceptable for the state to interfere in the Church’s affairs.

The Georgian Orthodox Church has not yet made a decision.

(Source: agenda.ge)