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News in Brief



The Holy Synod of the Church of Cyprus on Monday issued a statement regarding the recent decisions regarding the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, emphasizing that the conferring of autocephaly for the latter, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, was done with an aim towards consolidating peace and unity within the Ukrainian Church.

“We do not dispute this intention, which has not, so far, been achieved. It is natural for a reasonable period of time to pass for results to appear. The Church of Cyprus is at the disposal of all parties interested in peace within the Church ‘of God which He purchased with His own blood’.”

A closely watched meeting between members of a committee tasked by the standing Holy Synod with conducting dialogue with the current government, on the one hand, and the education and religious affairs minister, will take place on Tuesday at the Petraki Monastery in northern Athens.

The latest meeting comes within the framework of ongoing deliberations over the payroll regime for clergymen in Greece, as the Church’s hierarchy as well as the association representing Orthodox clerics in the country have expressed reservations over the government’s imitative, while also requesting more

clarifications.

Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Ieronymos on Sunday announced that an extraordinary meeting of the Church's hierarchy will be convened after contacts, between members of the committee and the government, are concluded.

His Beatitude Ieronymos added that the Church's hierarchy will decide on the related matter, not the Holy Synod nor the Archbishop, in a statement he made during his arrival at the Oinofyta Center for Church Missions on Sunday afternoon.

Education Minister Kostas Gavroglu, on his part, said whatever pending issues remain are increasingly cleared up with dialogue with the Church. Gavroglu, nevertheless, referred to a "gap in information" regarding the under-discussion agreement between the Church and state, and especially over the government's intent to change the regime governing the payroll system for clerics in the country.

The minister, whose portfolio includes religious affairs, made the statements in an interview the Athens News Agency.
"For the first time, the clergy is safeguarded, in a manner in which they must be safeguarded in a modern European state," Gavroglu said.

A general assembly of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece's clergy has been convened for Thursday, Feb. 21, at the Aghios Eleftherios Cathedral in central Athens, in light of the fluid developments in Church-state relations.

Representatives of all of the Holy Metropolises around Greece have been invited to attend.

Meanwhile, in his interview to the same news agency last week, Gavroglu also referred to changes in school text books, in the wake of the recent ratification of the Prespa agreement. He stressed that changes deal with historical, archaeological and education issues, ones he said are "under the prism of irredentist references, but also issues dealing with scholarly mistakes, something cited in the agreement."

In other news, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople has reiterated its positions on matter of Church-state relations in Greece as well as issue of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's autocephaly.

The Patriarchate continues to calmly address the issues that have recently emerged, maintaining its standing positions, as enunciated by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, himself.

“The Mother Church is not affected by political circumstances and expediencies,” His Holiness said on Saturday, during an evening mass.