

PHILARET ANNOUNCES PUBLIC FORUM IN SUPPORT OF KIEV PATRIARCHATE, INTENDS TO HOLD KP LOCAL COUNCIL



According to the still-functioning official website of the “Kiev Patriarchate” (KP), a public forum of Ukrainian intelligentsia, “For the Ukrainian Orthodox Church! For the Kiev Patriarchate!” will be held on June 11.

The announcement claims that the event will be held “at the initiative of wide swaths of the public” and will be attended by “well known-political and public figures, notable academics, artists, and writers, journalists, and representatives of the Cossacks and veterans of the ATO [the Anti-Terrorist Operation in eastern Ukraine—O.C.].”

Meanwhile, a group of Ukrainian intelligentsia earlier appealed to Philaret Denisenko, the “Patriarch” of the KP and “Honorary Patriarch” of the so-called “Orthodox Church of Ukraine” (OCU), to cease making any statements about acute Church issues that could cause anxiety and uncertainty among the Orthodox people and “please the enemies of the state,” referring to the fear that the “Kremlin Church” runs propaganda campaigns against the OCU.

The announcement of the pro-KP forum comes against the background of reports that Philaret also wants to hold a Local Council of the KP, despite the fact that the KP formally entered into a union with the “Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church” to form the OCU.

On June 3, Philaret held a meeting of the rectors of Kiev churches at his private residence. Though he was not chosen as primate of the OCU, he was placed in charge of the Kiev Diocese of the OCU at the first session of its Synod of Bishops.

According to KP website, Philaret informed the clergy about current events in the OCU and discussed topical issues of Church life with those present.

Although Philaret ordered the priests not to speak with the media, it became known that the possibility of holding a Local Council of the KP was discussed, reports BBC Ukraine.

In order to participate in the “unification council” on December 15, Philaret promised Constantinople to liquidate the KP, though it is now known that the proper documents for legal liquidation were never submitted. The Ministry of Justice has officially stated that the KP still exists. A video has recently surfaced of the KP hierarchs voting and signing in support of liquidation on December 15, though the KP has published a statement explaining why the gathering of hierarchs did not constitute a Local Council of the KP, which, according to the statutes of the KP, alone has the right to liquidate it.

A Local Council includes not only the hierarchs of a Local Church, but also clerical and lay representatives.

As OrthoChristian has reported, Philaret is displeased with the subjugation to Constantinople imposed by the statutes and tomos of autocephaly of the OCU and his diminished role in the new structure, and thus is aiming to revive his KP, where he would be the ultimate authority.

According to BBC, one of the participants in the meeting on June 3, “Fr.” Sergei

Stankevich said the meeting dealt with Philaret's intention to convene a Local Council of the KP, though no final decision was made on the matter.

To the BBC journalist's remark that the statutes of the OCU say nothing about the KP, while the question of the right to convene a council of the OCU is clearly defined, Stankevich retorted: "What statutes, Greek?" referring to the fact that the statutes for the OCU were written by the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and include several stipulations that keep the OCU dependent upon Constantinople, despite its supposed autocephaly.

Other participants confidentially reported that that Philaret asked the rectors of the Kiev churches not to reregister their statutes with the OCU and confirmed that he announced the intention to gather a Local Council and cancel the decision of the Synod of the OCU that every parish should be reregistered by June 25. Further, the OCU Synod has reportedly stated that if a parish does not reregister, it can initiate procedure of parishes to come directly under the OCU primate Epiphany Dumenko, instead of under Philaret.

Reportedly only a few priests objected to Philaret's position.

Philaret's actions and public statements as of late have caused different reactions within the OCU. "Metropolitan" Anthony Makhota has reminded Philaret that he could be sent into retirement for his insubordination, while religious scholar and participant in the "unification council" Alexander Sagan believes the conflict between Philaret and Epiphany could lead to a coup in the upper management of the OCU.

Moreover, "Metropolitan" Joasaph of Belgorod has warned that if today Philaret's parishes are taken from him, tomorrow they could be taken from Epiphany. In May, Philaret suspended "Priest" Alexander Trofimlyuk, who succeeded Epiphany as rector of the Kiev Theological Academy. In response, Epiphany took Trofimlyuk's parish, Holy Protection in Kiev, directly under his own control—a move which Philaret supporters strongly object to.

“Met.” Joasaph called on OCU representatives to stop “making themselves the laughing stock of the whole world” by their lawless actions. Joasaph has even gone so far as to say that Epiphany is a liar and that it is difficult to commemorate him as primate during the services. It is known that a deal was made before the “unification council” by which Epiphany would be officially elected primate, as Constantinople would not allow Philaret to take that position, but Philaret would continue to de facto rule. Epiphany now denies having made such an agreement.

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